But The Greatest Is Love

by sarahkwut

Summary

The acheron captured Lucifer Morningstar, but their problems are far from over. The coven is decimated, the Church of Night is no more, Father Blackwood is on the run, and Nick and Sabrina's relationship is in ruins. How do they pick up the pieces and move on? There are more questions than answers and the consequences could be of biblical proportions.

Notes

Shall we do this again? I had so much fun writing Off The Record I thought I'd give it another go, this time in the witch world. The title is derived from 1 Corinthians 13:13: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

Let's dig in, explore the space between Heaven and Hell.
Chapter One

It was anticlimactic in the end.

The glamours. The dancing. The song that became a spell. Sabrina Spellman declared victory, Ambrose rolled the acheron, and Lucifer Morningstar dissolved into it.

She approached the blue-green contraption apprehensively. She picked it up with delicate hands, expecting it to be different. Hotter, perhaps, or maybe vibrating with evil power. It felt the same. It was still cool to the touch, wasn’t even heavier than it had been just minutes earlier.

A full minute passed in silence as they all waited, eyes on the acheron, expecting something. Anything. Nothing had gone according to plan. It was too good to be true that the acheron configuration had worked and now contained Satan in a prison strong enough to hold him and save the world.

A second minute passed before someone dared to break the silence.

“Well planned, Spellman,” Nicholas Scratch said.

“Yes,” Zelda agreed, “Edward would be proud.”

Sabrina turned to Lilith.

“What happens now?” she asked

“You give me my crown,” she answered with a satisfied smirk. “And I take that contraption into the deepest depths of Hell.” She took a couple of steps towards Sabrina.

“Wait,” Sabrina ordered. Lilith raised an eyebrow, but stopped her progression. She understood why the girl didn’t trust her, but she was genuine in her intentions. “How do we know you won’t release him the moment you the gates close behind you?”

“The Dark Lord has misled me for centuries,” Lilith said with such malice it couldn’t be faked. “I’m taking what is rightfully mine – the kingdom of Hell – and giving him what he deserves. Eternal life in the very pit he created for those that betrayed him.”

“Don’t make me regret trusting you.” Sabrina passed Lilith the archeron, noted how she held it tight, as though she were afraid it would get away. She took the heavy crown from her head, glad to be rid of it. Lilith stooped for her to place it on her own head. “All hail Lilith,” Sabrina said in a monotone. “Queen of Hell.”

Lilith smirked, liking how that sounded.

“Before I go…”

She passed the acheron back to Sabrina and placed her hands on the young witch’s face. She kissed her forehead. Sabrina gasped as what felt like both electricity and ice coursed through her. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Nick step forward, ready to intervene, concern etched on his face. There was no need.

“My powers,” she said, realizing the buzz throughout her body was essentially her essence restored. “Thank you, Lilith.”
“You are a witch like no other,” Lilith replied. “Use your powers justly, Ms. Spellman.”

The group followed her to the gates of Hell. It was never said, but they each wanted to make sure Lilith went through them – and took the Dark Lord with her.

“Lilith?” Sabrina stopped her just before she walked into Hell. “Just so you know, if you let him escape, I will end you.”

It was a promise, delivered in Sabrina’s sure way that left no room for argument.

“There will be no need for that,” Lilith promised.

With that, she turned on her heel and walked into Hell, the acheron in her hands, the crown on her head. The gates closed behind her as the sound of wild cheering made its way to their ears as the residents of the underworld welcomed their new queen.

“I suppose we should go home,” Hilda said after a moment, “check on everyone.”

The group walked through the mines and surfaced in the cool night air. In spite of their victory, the mood was somber. There was little left of their coven. The Church of Night was no more. Father Blackwood was on the run, wild and dangerous. In the span of twenty-four hours, absolutely everything had changed.

“Sabrina.”

His voice was soft, pleading, meant only for her ears. She closed her eyes for a moment, steeling herself. She wasn’t ready to face him, to deal with his betrayal. The ruins of whatever relationship she had thought they had were still burning. It was too soon for this conversation.

“What, Nicholas?” He cringed at the use of his formal name. She had always used it when she was annoyed or mad at him, and this, whatever she was feeling, went well past anger.

“Can we talk?” He had never begged, but this felt like the time to start. “Please?”

“No.”

She didn’t give him a chance to respond, didn’t allow herself to register his crestfallen face. She picked up her pace and joined Zelda at the front of the pack.

“Give her some time,” Roz offered, having witnessed the exchange. Nick could only nod in response as he fought back a storm of emotions that threatened to pull him under.

He trailed behind the group, his pace slower on purpose, watching Sabrina’s white blonde hair in front. What was left of the coven was recovering at the Spellman Mortuary. He supposed they expected him to be there as well, even if he wasn’t exactly popular with them at the moment. He let the pack continue to outpace him, somehow thinking about everything and nothing all at once.

Everyone was wrapped up in whispered conversations. The mortals were comparing notes about what they had just witnessed, making sure it all added up, that they hadn’t imagined any of it. Prudence and Ambrose plotted to hunt down Blackwood. Zelda, Hilda, and Sabrina debated on what to do with those waiting at the mortuary.

No one noticed him slip away, disappearing quiet as a mouse through the woods.

At the Academy, he was cautious as he let himself in. He avoided the rooms where bodies still lie,
recognizing that he wasn’t emotionally strong enough right then to deal with seeing his classmates and teachers lifeless, and climbed the stairs to his dormitory, growing more confident with each step that Blackwood had truly fled.

His dormitory felt empty. It was empty. He had been afforded the luxury of a private room several years ago and he crossed through the room that used to be brimming with raucous warlocks pulling pranks and comparing notes on their latest conquests. It didn’t feel right, to be there this way. Still, he felt it was right for him to return to his quarters, to leave Sabrina her home.

He sat down on the edge of his bed and tried to process everything that had happened. Most importantly, Sabrina was safe. That was what he cared about the most. She hated him, didn’t trust him, but she was safe, and that had to be his silver lining, tarnished as it was.

It was confusing, being in love. He had always been curious about the feeling, fascinated by the way mortals seemed to just pick a person and devote themselves to them forever. He had thought they were insane. Why sleep with one person for the rest of your life when you could sleep with so many more?

But then Sabrina Spellman had walked into choir class and his world tilted.

At first, he wanted to steal her from the mortal. That was the plan – even if she didn’t break up with the guy, he wanted her attention. He would happily share, as long as he got to have her. But as he got to know her, he realized there was so much more to her. Her mortal side helped her feel things differently, react differently. She saw a different world, one of fairness, where right versus wrong meant something. And somewhere along the line, she helped him to believe it was possible too.

He thought, maybe, he understood love long before he recognized that he was in love. It was when he put his own feelings aside, willing to be her friend and nothing more if it meant she would be happy with the mortal. He could have used Harvey’s query into why he had shown up to help him to drive them further apart, but he chose not to, chose to try to give her what she wanted – even if it wasn’t him. But when she told him they had broken up, he didn’t hesitate to move in, to sway the girl he had fallen for. He had his devotion from the Dark Lord by then, but it never felt like a devotion. It felt like falling in love with Sabrina Spellman was what he was meant to do.

Maybe he had been foolish to think she would forgive him when he appeared in her bedroom, letting her see how heartbroken he was, how desperate he was for her to believe him. He had put every ounce of knowledge and magic he had into fixing that acheron, thinking maybe it would sway her, convince her he was telling her the truth about his feelings for her if he could just get it to work. He really should have known Sabrina Spellman wasn’t going to forgive and forget that easily.

He kicked off his boots and removed the elaborate costume he still wore. Still in pants and an undershirt, he laid back on his bed, hands laced behind his head, considering his options.

He wondered what the mortal would do. How would he go about righting a wrong like this? He didn’t know much about the mortal world, but he didn’t think the answer lay there. Sabrina was unique. Her heart was unique. She had given him a precious piece of it. He wasn’t prepared to give it back, but he wasn’t sure how to keep it. He certainly didn’t deserve it.

Somehow, his troubles with Sabrina felt bigger than the fact that his coven was essentially nonexistent now, that the only home he had was no longer, that Blackwood was out there, plotting something sinister, powerful and dangerous. It wasn’t that he wasn’t worried about the state of his world. It was that he only had the capacity to focus on one overwhelming problem at a time and his relationship was the one he wanted to fix most.
“Mr. Scratch?”

He sighed as Zelda Spellman’s voice floated through the Academy.

“Nicholas, are you here?”

He pushed himself off the bed and didn’t bother with making himself more presentable. Let Zelda Spellman see him disheveled and miserable. Maybe she would tell Sabrina and she would soften towards him even minutely.

“Ms. Spellman,” he greeted, stepping out of the dormitory to find her down the hallway, systematically searching rooms, whether for him or for survivors he didn’t know.

“There you are.” She seemed almost relieved. “It’s not safe to be here, Nicholas. What’s left of the coven is at the mortuary. You’ll join us there.”

He shook his head.

“With all due respect, Ms. Spellman, I think it best I remain here.”

“Sabrina,” Zelda guessed.

“She expressed that I’m not welcomed,” he said. “I’m in a position in which I need to respect her wishes.”

He didn’t want to. He had considered teleporting to her room, or at least to the mortuary yard, and trying, again, to talk to her, convince her to give him a chance to prove he meant his confession of love. Still, his instincts told him Roz was right – she needed space from him, and he had to give it to her. She deserved that from him.

“That was before Blackwood destroyed our coven,” Zelda replied. “You and Sabrina are capable of putting aside your differences in the name of ensuring our survival. Gather whatever you may need. We’ll leave in a moment.”

“I’m staying here,” he insisted. “At least tonight. I’ll re-evaluate things in the morning.”

Zelda studied him. He was resolute in remaining at the Academy. She could tell in his defeated body language, the messy nature of his normally buttoned up appearance. She decided to allow him his wishes for the night, feeling a bit sorry for the boy, all things considered. Perhaps she could convince Sabrina to rescind her dismissal, at least from the mortuary.

“If you must stay here tonight, put some protections in place, Mr. Scratch,” she said. “Blackwood appears to have fled, but we have no way of knowing who remains to do his bidding. Tomorrow, I expect you at the mortuary.”

Nick nodded, not sure if he would turn up tomorrow or not.

“Thank you, Ms. Spellman.”

“Sister Spellman,” she corrected, not bothering with an explanation. She appraised him. “Brother Scratch, have you ever wondered why Blackwood took you in?”

“I was an orphan warlock being raised by a familiar,” he said. “Where else was I supposed to go?”

Zelda shook her head.
“You’re no ordinary warlock, Nicholas. You know you’re powerful, but I daresay I don’t think you know just how powerful you are.” She saw his brow furrow in confusion. “Something else for you to think about, I suppose.” She nodded once. “Tomorrow,” she reminded him. “At the mortuary.”

She turned and disappeared on the spot.

He blew out a breath.

How was it that just last night, he had kissed Sabrina goodnight and walked confidently through the woods to sleep in his own bed, a little worried about whatever was brewing, but confident in his relationship, his place? How had everything – _everything_ – gone so wrong in such a short amount of time?

Deciding to take Zelda’s advice, he re-entered his dormitory and set to work, warding it with protections. He stopped at the trunk at the foot of his bed and opened it. He reached in blindly and landed his hand on his flask, engraved with the Scratch family crest. He twisted off the top and took a swig of the potent bourbon inside.

Tonight, he would wallow, he decided, settling against his headboard, the flask in hand. Tomorrow, he would face the world – or at least, Sabrina.
Chapter Two

Chapter Notes

Oh my goodness - BLOWN AWAY by all the responses to the first chapter! This is going to be a RIDE and I think the title will really start to make sense in the coming chapters. Thank you so much for being excited about this!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“You’re positive this is all that’s left?” Sabrina asked, surveying the recovering bodies of her classmates and teachers laying on every available surface of the mortuary’s living room. “There was no one else at the Academy?”

“No one previously unaccounted for,” Zelda answered. “Twenty-one, counting us, Prudence, and Ambrose. That’s all that’s left of the former Church of Night.”

“Bloody unbelievable,” Hilda muttered. “Just bloody unbelievable.”

Sabrina counted, just in case her aunt was wrong.


“Nicholas has chosen to remain at the Academy,” Zelda said. “I spoke with him earlier.” She cut her eye at Sabrina. “It seems he’s been banned from the mortuary.”

Sabrina sighed, wondering for the umpteenth time that night how things had gone so very sideways. “It’s not safe for him there,” she said. Her heart tugged at her to go to him, to coax him back to the safety of the mortuary. He would come if she asked him to. Her head told her to let him risk it, the traitor.

“No,” Zelda agreed. “It’s not.” She left out the fact that she had instructed him to join them in the morning, eager to see what Sabrina would do. “I know Nicholas betrayed you. I don’t forgive him for it. But we do need him, Sabrina. He’s the best binder and conjurer since your father, and I believe he has no idea of what his true potential is.”

“He really should be here,” Hilda fretted. “I’d like to toss him in the witch’s cell for what he did, but he’s a member of this coven and there are things more important right now than matters of the heart.”

“He’s a fool,” Sabrina announced, her mind made up. “I’ll be back.”

She marched out of the living room. They listened to the front door open and close.

“She won’t kill him, but she may maim him,” Hilda mused. “Rightly so, if you ask me.”

“This coven needs Nicholas Scratch if we’re going to survive,” Zelda stated, hoping her niece was successful in bringing the warlock back with her. “And I don’t just mean for the inevitable necessity of repopulating our numbers.”
She paused outside the door of his private room. She wasn’t exactly sure what she was going to say to him. She wasn’t entirely sure she wasn’t going to hurt him, at least a little, because she certainly wanted to wring his neck for his betrayal. But the matter at hand was the fact that he needed to be at the mortuary where it was safer. She exhaled a breath. If he could show up in her room unannounced, she could do the same. She pushed open his door without knocking.

The sound of a thousand squawking crows filled the air and she found herself wrapped tightly in spider’s web. She should have thought about protection spells. In spite of his flawed judgment, Nick was smart. He would protect himself, at the least.

“Sabrina!”

He stumbled from his bed. She couldn’t move or respond, but she saw the flask fall out of his hand, noted how he was unsteady on his feet. Of course he had chosen to cope with bourbon. The fact only made her more annoyed with him.

He had to try the spell to dissolve the web and banish the crows twice. Without the noise from the crows filling the air, the silence was deafening. It had nothing on the distance between them, however, even as they stood mere feet apart.

“You’re not safe here,” she said, going right to her point. “Get your things and come back to the mortuary with me.”

“I told your aunt – it’s best for me to stay here.” He looked afraid to move, afraid to say or do the wrong thing. She didn’t feel pity for him.

“Nicholas, I don’t have the energy to argue with you,” she stated. “It’s safer at the mortuary. I’ll take you by force if I have to. You’re drunk, shouldn’t be hard.”

“You don’t want me there.” They both knew it was the truth. “I’ve done enough to hurt you. I won’t intrude on your home.”

“You’re a part of this coven,” she tried. “You’re right in the fact that I don’t want you around me.” Her words were a punch to his gut that hurt more than a physical blow ever could. “But I recognize the importance of your place among us.”

“I told Zelda I will be there tomorrow.” Two of her swam before his vision. It made it twice as hard to face the fact that she didn’t want him. “Leave me be tonight, Sabrina. I’ll be fine.”

“But Blackwood…”

“Blackwood isn’t coming back,” he interjected. “He wouldn’t return to the scene of the crime. He will have taken his gang of thugs with him in the name of all the protection he can get. Go back to the mortuary, Sabrina. I’ll be there in the morning.”

“I don’t believe you,” she said, calling his bluff.

“You don’t believe anything about me,” he countered. “Go home, Sabrina. Help your aunts. I’ll be around tomorrow.”

She considered making good on her threat to take him by force. With her powers and him in his current state, it wouldn’t hard. But if he wanted to drink himself stupid and risk his life, who would she be to stop him?

“Fine,” she decided. “Do try not to fall down the stairs in a drunken accident? It would be a shame to
survive all of this only for it to end that way.”

“Life as I knew it ended when I stepped from behind that curtain to confess my sins,” he said, his inhibitions low, his feelings raw. “Whatever happens from now…” he shook his head. “It can’t be worse than that.”

They stared at one another for a long moment.

“I’m leaving,” she announced. She didn’t trust herself to stay. “Do what you want, Nicholas. You always have.”

She disappeared.

Nick cursed and picked up the nearest item his hand could land on – a candlestick – and threw it across the room with force. It ricocheted off the stone wall and fell to the ground with a clatter. He didn’t bother to replace the protection charms, not sure he could in his inebriated state anyway, and fell back to his bed.

_Damn the world_, he thought as he turned up the flask again. _Damn it straight to Heaven._

“He’s not coming,” Hilda hissed to Zelda.

“He’ll be here,” she hissed back. “If I have to go get him myself.”

“If Sabrina couldn’t get him to come…”

“Sabrina may have faced down the demise of the world and won, but in many ways, she is still a child,” Zelda reminded her sister. “I have no doubt that she flew off the handle last night or at least fired off a passionate response or two that convinced Nicholas to remain where he was.”

“What a mess,” Hilda hummed.

Footsteps sounded in the hallway. Zelda smirked.

“Told you he would be here.” A moment later, Nick appeared in the study. The eyes in the room looked his way. “Brother Scratch. Thanks for joining us.”

“I was summoned,” he said by way of greeting. Sabrina dutifully ignored him. He was careful not to look her way as well. “I have a feeling I would have ended up here whether I abided or not.”

“I’m glad you’re here,” Zelda replied. “Close that door behind you and have a seat.”

Nick closed the door, but he didn’t sit down. He stood near the back of the room, hands in the pockets of his leather jacket, curious as to what was going on. It was an interesting assortment of people gathered in the room. Sabrina was there. Melvin and Elsbeth. Agatha and Dorcas. Three teachers that had survived the poisoning. It was a mix of people that made little sense.

“As you all know, our coven has suffered a devastating blow,” Zelda began. “Father Blackwood’s attempt at instituting the Church of Judas failed, given many of our coven’s desires to follow a better way set before us by my brother, Edward Spellman.”

The room was rapt with attention.

“Our numbers were already lower than they have ever been in centuries past,” she continued. “We have been utterly decimated in Blackwood’s wake. In total, twenty-one of us remain. The nineteen
of us here at the mortuary now, plus Prudence and Ambrose who have undertaken the treacherous journey of finding Blackwood and bringing home his head. With good fortune, our numbers will swell by two with the return of the Blackwood twins.

“What some in this room may not know is the Dark Lord walked the earth in his human form yesterday.” Surprise echoed around the room, from all except Sabrina, Nick, and Hilda. “He planned to use Sabrina to bring about the apocalypse, a plan that has been in place for centuries. He was, obviously, not successful.”

“Where is he now?” Dorcas asked with a hint of fear. “What happened?”

“Did Sabrina defeat him?” Melvin added, looking at Sabrina. He trusted her blindly.


“Mortals?” Agatha asked. “How?”

“They showed great bravery,” Zelda said. “They are our allies now.” She glanced from Sabrina to Nick and back again. Neither provided more details. She was a bit perplexed by Nick’s silence. If Sabrina was brash and fiery, he was a know-it-all, always with answers to questions posed in his presence. His silence was as concerning as it was welcomed in the current moment. “Sabrina had her father’s acheron configuration which she solved earlier this year. She knew it was powerful and could hold Lucifer Morningstar. Nicholas used his knowledge of my brother’s work and his own unique abilities to repair it. The acheron now resides in the deepest depths of Hell, put there by Lilith herself, the new Queen of Hell.”

“Lilith?” Elsbeth asked. “You mean…”

“She’s been pretending to be my teacher, Ms. Wardwell,” Sabrina explained. “And manipulating me into performing acts of the false god to bring about the apocalypse.” She couldn’t help herself. “She had help.” Across the room, Nick hung his head. Hilda felt a bit sorry for him. “But when she learned that the Dark Lord never intended to make her queen, she had a change of heart and helped us bring about his demise.”

“Can she be trusted?” Agatha asked.

“She knows not to betray us again,” Nick spoke up for the first time. He looked at Sabrina. “Her regret was genuine.”

“She wanted the crown more than anything,” Sabrina said, dutifully ignoring Nick’s double entendre, replying with one of her own. “Lilith, at least, is on our side now. I believe that.” Nick blew out a breath to steady his emotions.

“Who helped her?” Dorcas pushed. “Where are they now?”

“That is of no consequence now,” Zelda spoke up, not giving Sabrina or Nick a chance to fire another shot at one another. She didn’t want the coven to know Nick was involved if she could help it. She needed the rest of them to trust the warlock. “We are now in a position in which we have to decide how to move forward. Those of you in this room have been gathered because you have a unique set of skills that will be needed to help us rebuild as,” Zelda took a breath, “the Church of Lilith.”

“And you are our High Priestess,” Nick deduced. He had seen this coming. He thought he knew what came next as well.
“I’m appointing myself to the role, yes,” she confirmed. “We will pray to Lilith and follow the doctrine of Edward Spellman.”

Nick’s suspicions were correct.

“You want us to live among the mortals,” Melvin said.

“Not yet,” Zelda shook her head. “Perhaps one day, but we need to focus on our coven now – build a foundation, strengthen our numbers. We must first convince the others to join us.” She stopped for a moment. “Assuming those in this room will agree to join me in the founding of a new church, of a better way.”

“My father’s teachings weren’t just of co-existing with mortals,” Sabrina explained. “He envisioned a world in which our powers were used for good. For betterment. Not for barbaric rituals or creating havoc simply because we can.”

“Edward Spellman believed in a peaceful existence,” Nick added. “He wanted equality. Acceptance.” He made sure to look at Sabrina. “He believed warlocks and witches to be good, capable of making decisions based on right and wrong, not what felt good or what was easy. His doctrine is worth a chance.” He pursed his lips for a moment and took a chance. “I know I want the redemption it offers.”

Sabrina looked away, again hearing everything Nick was trying to tell her, but not willing to listen.

“I’m willing to learn more,” Elsbeth spoke up. “Sabrina had already mostly convinced Melvin and I, anyway.” Melvin nodded along.

Slowly, the room came into agreement. Zelda looked relieved.

“Now, your assignments,” she said. “Hilda, I’m placing you in charge of the coven’s well-being – their lodging, food, health. Whatever they may need. You’re empowered to make decisions in the name of the coven’s best interest.”

Hilda nodded. They had discussed this beforehand. It was a role she was meant for. Zelda was the spokesperson, the leader. She was the helper, the doer. She would take care of each member of the coven as though they were her own.

“Melvin and Elsbeth, as you are already familiar with the doctrine, your duty is to help convince the others. To show them that you believe in this direction and inspire others to do the same.”

They pledged their services.

“Sister Mullins, Sister Chambers, and Brother Rosemary,” Zelda continued, addressing the Academy teachers in the room. “You are our educators. It is imperative that our young witches and warlocks resume their studies. We shall give them time to recover, mentally and physically, but their education must continue. In the meantime, you will repair and construct the Academy to suit their needs. You will work together with Hilda and I to determine curriculum. Prioritize getting the Academy suitable for housing. The mortuary can only be a temporary solution.”

They readily agree.

“Dorcas, Agatha, I’m counting on your telepathic skills and sometimes questionable morals to be my eyes and ears. I won’t tolerate tattling or purposeful eavesdropping, but I do request that you come to me in the name of brewing trouble. And remember, I’ll be watching you.”
“Yes, Sister Spellman,” they echoed. They heard her warning, understood the chance they were being given. For the first time, they weren’t overshadowed by Prudence. They had a role. A purpose. They liked it.

“Sabrina.”

“Auntie?” Sabrina asked, eager for her role.

“You will continue your work of spreading your father’s gospel. You will be our evangelist, if you will. You will also be the liaison between us and the mortal world. We can no longer pretend the mortals don’t exist, nor can we continue to believe we are superior.”

“That’s all I’ve ever wanted,” she said in response. Zelda nodded. She turned to Nick.

“And you, Brother Scratch. We need your brain. I have no doubt your magical abilities will be called into practice, but for now, you are to dig into my brother’s doctrine, learn everything you can about it and what inspired it. You will give me regular updates.”

Nick was certain there was more at work than simple research.

“But Aunt Zelda, shouldn’t I research my father’s work?” Nick and Zelda both heard Sabrina’s question for what it was – a challenge. “I am the evangelist, after all, and he is my father.”

She emphasized the words “my father.”

“I’m sure Nicholas won’t oppose your help,” Zelda said pointedly. “But Nicholas has a knack for magical theory. You may be Edward’s daughter,” she, too, emphasized their connection, “but he is the right person for this job.”

Sabrina’s lips formed a thin line. She didn’t like the answer, but she knew not to argue – at least not right then.

“Now,” clapped her hands together, “we have our orders and will reconvene in a day or two to discuss progress. For now, it is time for lunch. Hilda?”

“Ah, yes,” she said, “roast today, with potatoes and carrots. A hearty meal to help with recovery…” She ushered everyone out of the room. Sabrina tried to hang back, ready to confront Zelda over her assigning her father’s doctrine to Nick. “Come, Sabrina dear,” Hilda took her by the arm, aware of what she was up to. “Eat while the food is hot.” She noted Nick hanging back as well. “Nicholas, you too. You missed breakfast…”

“Brother Scratch will be along in a moment,” Zelda said. “I require a word with him.”

Sabrina looked over her shoulder as Hilda dragged her from the room.

“Ms… Sister Spellman,” Nick corrected. “Is this the part where I learn there is more behind my research assignment?”

“Ever the clever one, Nicholas,” she replied. “I do want you to research Edward’s doctrine and what went into its creation. But more than that, I want you to research Sabrina – her powers, the prophecy, anything you can think of…”

He shook his head.

“I’ve done enough damage,” he said. “She won’t like me poking around in her life.”
“You’re no fool, Brother Scratch. You know as well as I do that there is more at play here. She has powers no other in our world posses.” Nick’s silence told her he agreed. “The prophecy, too, had more to it. I’m certain of it. I’m also certain my brother knew more than we know right now. He may not have been her biological father, but he loved that girl as though he were. He wouldn’t have stood idly by if he believed this prophecy was going to end her.”

“You’re asking me to create a dossier on her,” Nick said. “It’s not that I disagree – there is more to this. There is more to Sabrina’s powers and likely more to the prophecy. But I won’t dig into her life without her permission. And I can assure you she won’t grant it.”

“Do you love her, Nicholas?”

The question surprised Nick. It was blunt and forward. He had no choice but to be honest.

“I do,” he confirmed. “She won’t believe it, but I do.”

“Then you will make the right choice,” she told him. “Our desires are the same – keep the girl we both love safe.” She crossed the room and opened the door. “Go get some lunch, Brother Scratch. As Hilda said, you missed breakfast.”

Nick took a few steps towards the door, but stopped, seizing his opportunity to negotiate.

“Sister Spellman, I’ll need the library at the Academy for research. It’s still intact. I spent some time there this morning. Blackwood likely didn’t believe there was anything of value among its contents.”

“There will be no restrictions,” Zelda said. “You know your way around those shelves and the sanctum better than anyone, maybe even dearly departed Cassius.”

“Then I suppose there will be no objections to me staying at the Academy.”

Zelda narrowed her eyes at him. She had to begrudgingly give him credit for his cunningness.

“Well played, Brother Scratch.” He nodded once. “You may stay at the Academy, but you will be at the mortuary for meals until the Academy is suitable for habitation.”


“And you will take proper precautions to secure your safety until the Academy is deemed fit for occupation.”

“I will,” he nodded. “Anything else?”

“May I once more suggest you look into yourself, Nicholas?” Zelda asked. “I knew your parents…”

“You did?” he interrupted. “You knew them?”

“I did,” she confirmed. “They were a fine witch and warlock, and their loss was a great one.” She fixed her gaze on Nick. “Don’t let their deaths be in vain, Nicholas. You were young, but you still remember them. Think of them and their sacrifices to guide your decision making.”

Nick could only look at her. She tilted her head in the direction of the dining room.
“Lunch. Since you’re here.”

Under obligation, and because there was something he needed to do, he walked the familiar hallway to the dining room. Fate would, of course, ensure the only open seat was next to Sabrina. She continued to ignore him as he greeted some of the others, polite but perfunctory, in no mood to make small talk. Hilda swooped in to heap his plate with food.

“Eat now, Nicholas,” she said before she flittered away.

“Pass the pepper?” he asked Sabrina, trying to chisel away at the thick sheet of ice between them. She passed the mill without looking at him. “Thank you.”

She excused herself a few minutes later.

“How are you feeling?” Melvin asked. “She seemed – upset.”

He didn’t really care how Melvin felt, but he didn’t plan to confess his sins to Melvin either. He ate quickly, then excused himself as well. He climbed the stairs and stopped outside of her bedroom. He took a big breath and knocked.

Please Lilith, he prayed as he waited. Let her listen.

The door swung open. Her brows knitted together when she realized Nick was on the other side of it.

“Five minutes,” he requested before she could turn him away. “Just give me five minutes. Set a timer, if you must, but give me five minutes.”

She glared at him for what felt like an eternity.

“Three minutes,” she said. “Talk fast, Scratch.”

“Are you okay?”

His question surprised her. She had expected a long-winded speech about how sorry he was, how he never meant to hurt her.

“What?” she asked.

“Are you okay?” he repeated. He nearly added “tell me the truth” but knew that line wouldn’t win him any favors.

“Well,” Sabrina started. “Let’s see. I was the pawn in a prophecy to bring about the end of the world, manipulated by someone I trusted, and very nearly did, in fact, cause the apocalypse. My coven is nearly gone, Father Blackwood is on the run, my cousin and sometimes friend are trying to track him down to kill him and take his children, and now we’re trying to create a new church. My father isn’t my biological father, the devil himself is.” She locked eyes with Nick. “And the person I was falling in love with never really loved me.”

He opened his mouth to reply, to argue that he did love her, but he stopped. He was certain she was timing him. If he only had minutes, there was something else he wanted to say.

“I didn’t know if the acheron would work.” Again, she was caught by surprise. “To hold a normal demon? Absolutely. But I didn’t have a lot of time. I did everything I knew to do and even some
“Which was?” Sabrina countered impatiently.

“The only thing stronger than an acheron is the human body,” he explained. “I’m the best binder and conjurer since your Edward Spellman. I knew I could hold the Dark Lord, if it came down to it. I was prepared to absorb him.” He reached into his jacket and produced a wrinkled envelope. “There wasn’t time to tell you, so I wrote it all down.” He offered the envelope to her. She took it, eyeing him suspiciously. “To be absolutely clear, I wouldn’t have done it to save the world.” He returned her steady gaze. “I would have done it to save you.”

A thick silence passes between them. He seized the opportunity to keep talking.

“I love you, Sabrina.” She was stoic, but he continued, because he had to. “You taught me how to love.” He had to work against his instinct to reach for her hand. “I told you that I admired how mortals could give themselves to one another. I hoped, even then, that maybe, one day, even if it were a hundred years from then and your mortal had passed on, that you would allow me the opportunity. That’s how long I was – how long I am – willing to wait for you.”

Sabrina took a breath, clearly affected by his speech, but still hanging onto her will not to let him in.

“Time’s up, Scratch,” she nearly whispered.

“I’ll be staying at the Academy,” he said, not fighting her for more time. “I arranged it with your aunt. Should you want to help with research, I would welcome the company.”

“The Academy isn’t safe,” she said, ignoring his offer to help.

“It’s safe enough,” he countered. “It’s the right thing for me to do.” He gazed at her with longing in his features. “I’m done doing the wrong things.” She looked away, unable to meet his eyes. If she did, she would fold. “Everything is going to be okay,” he promised. “Maybe not today or tomorrow, but everything is going to be okay.”

He left then, worked hard not to look back, to convince himself that everything really would be okay.

Sabrina closed her door softly, and crossed the room to her window. A few moments later, Nick appeared in the yard, hands once more shoved in his pockets, his gait less confident, wearier than what she was used to. She watched him stop just outside of the gate and hesitate, almost as though debating on what his next move would be. And then, he was gone, having teleported back to, she hoped, the Academy.

She sighed heavily and moved to her bed. Salem meowed at her.

“I don’t know if I believe him, Salem. I want to, but even if I did, I don’t trust him.”

Salem meowed again.

“I’m going to read it,” she said, waving the envelope he gave her. “Calm down.”

She opened the flap and pulled out the folded piece of parchment inside. Of course Nicholas Scratch had used parchment. Regular paper would be below him. She unfolded it to reveal line after line of his messy scrawl.
My Sabrina,

If you’re reading this, the acheron didn’t work. I did everything I could to fix it – you were counting on me, and I didn’t want to fail you yet again – but the Dark Lord is strong, and I suppose my magic wasn’t enough. But, there was another way. The only thing stronger than an acheron configuration is the human body. I knew there was a possibility the acheron wouldn’t work, and so I was prepared to absorb him.

I’ve sacrificed my life for one of eternal damnation, but if it means you’re safe, that you aren’t forced into a role you don’t want, then it is worth it. You may never believe me, but I do love you, Sabrina Spellman. I wish I could have told you differently. I wish I could have told you how you taught me what love is, how to love. There isn’t enough time – or paper – for that, but I hope someday, maybe down the road when all of this is less raw and you’re less angry, you will be able to believe that, even if just partially.

You’ve been the light of my life, Spellman. The first safe place I’ve had since my parents died. The first person to see me more for who I am and less for what I tried to be. I did this for you, and I would do it again, over and over.

If I may make one request?

In my dormitory in the trunk at the foot of my bed there is a small wooden box with my family’s crest on it. Keep it safe? There are no more Scratch family members to pass it along to. You were the closet thing I had to family.

I love you, Spellman.

Please, forgive me.

Yours always,

Nick

She wiped furiously at the tears rolling down her cheeks. Again, she found her heart and head at war. Her heart wanted her to go to the Academy and tell Nick to prove it – prove he loved her, that he had always loved her, that she could trust him. Her head told her to stay put, to keep her distance, that he wasn’t one to be trusted, and hadn’t she known that all along? Hadn’t she questioned that from almost the very moment he looked her way?

“Everything is a mess, Salem,” she sighed. “Everything.”

Salem meowed.

“It sure doesn’t feel like everything is going to be okay.”

She took a breath and sat back on her bed. There were a thousand things to do. A thousand tasks she could be helping with. A thousand things she should say to the people who needed to hear them.

But she couldn’t.

“One day,” she told Salem. “I get one day – or what’s left of today – to sit in this room and feel sorry for myself. Tomorrow morning, I’ll wake up and face whatever the day brings.”

Salem meowed his agreement.
She leaned into her pillows, the letter still in her hand. She would feel it all today. Tomorrow, she
would face it all.

But today, she would just feel.

And wonder what was in the box Nick had wanted her to keep for him had things turned out
differently.

Chapter End Notes

One of my favorite scenes is when Nick tells Sabrina "I failed you" after the whole
Amalia debacle and I can't help but think of him sitting in her bedroom, doing
everything he can not to fail her again. In my head, that's a big thing for him. But I'll
stop rambling. :)

Let me know what you thought of this one!

(And... while there will be angst, there will be LOTS of Nabrina. :))
Chapter Three

Chapter Notes

That letter of Nick's really ripped at the heartstrings last chapter, it seems. I can promise it won't be ALL angst, but, well, you just can't betray Sabrina and get her back, can you?

Thank you a MILLION times for reading! Back on that Monday/Friday update schedule!

It was strange, having the run of the Academy.

It wouldn’t be like this for long. It would still feel empty without the hoards of students it once held but soon enough, what remained of the students would be back and with any luck, they would recruit more. He doubted Sabrina would be among them though. The idea of her in school was almost laughable. She had done so much, experienced so much – she didn’t need formal education. She had learned through trial by fire in the most literal sense. He, too, wondered what his future held. He had been studying independently for the most part, any subject he wanted, any time he wanted. It was hard to see himself back in a classroom.

The teachers had already been to the Academy, surveying the magical damage, considering what they needed to do to make it safe and livable again. He didn’t much care what they did, so long as they left the library alone, but there had been a lot of talk about protection spells, hiding the Academy from the mortal world, and renovating parts of it, particularly where the coven had been poisoned and Blackwood’s office and quarters. They planned to wipe out any trace of the former High Priest, and he supported that notion.

With the Academy at his fingertips, he found himself in Blackwood’s office. It had been largely cleaned out, no doubt by Blackwood making sure to take any incriminating evidence with him and then Prudence and Ambrose, searching for the same, but he still systematically went through it, looking for anything at all that might give him insight into Blackwood’s plans. There were a few books on the shelves on conjuring and demonology that he pilfered to his quarters. He took inventory of the various trinkets and artifacts around the room. There were some worth preserving for historical purposes, others that seemed trivial. He would mention them to Zelda the next time he saw her.

He ventured to Blackwood’s private quarters. He doubted a student aside from Prudence and maybe Agatha and Dorcas at her insistence had breached the doors. He knew for a fact not even Sabrina had found herself in there. He pushed open the door and wasn’t surprised by how dark and cold the place was, and not just because it hadn’t been inhabited in a few days. It reflected Blackwood’s very soul.

There weren’t many personal trappings. Nick assumed it was possible that Blackwood had taken them with him, but the man didn’t strike him as the sentimental type and he hadn’t allowed personal affects displayed in their dorms. Again, he found more books. He used magic to send several more volumes to his room. Blackwood had clearly left in a hurry, judging by the clothing left behind. He would suggest to Zelda that they burn it. They weren’t in a position to waste resources, but he didn’t
think it was right to put someone else in clothing that had belonged to a man so evil.

Blackwood’s private study was eerily similar to the man’s office, right down to the furniture and how it was arranged. Nick sat down at the desk and opened the top drawer. It held things like parchment and quills, nothing noteworthy. He felt around the depths, searching for hidden compartments and the like. Nothing showed itself. He moved on to the next drawer.

It was the bottom drawer in which he found something useful. He opened the leather cover to find a ledger listing each student’s name. It was heartbreaking to read through it, knowing most of them were no longer of this world. He flipped the page and stopped cold.

There, in Blackwood’s dated cursive penmanship, were notes on certain students. He sat back and read through them.

*Agatha Night. Orphaned at age three. Has shown tremendous talent for spiritualism. Telepathy and mind control are also strongly prevalent, especially when she is combined with her “sisters,” Prudence and Dorcas.*


*Prudence Night. My bastard daughter. Her fool of a mother drowned herself when refused marriage. Powerful beyond what is considered standard, hence why I took the girl with me. Shows great ability in mind control and telepathy. Her greatest asset, may well be her ability to instill fear in others to do her bidding. Devout in her faith.*

*Nicholas Scratch.*

Nick’s heart rate picked up as he read his name.

*Orphaned at age four. Raised by a wolf familiar until we located him at age eight after a lengthy search. Gifted conjurer and binder. Has shown himself to be adept at demonology. Has an encyclopedia-like memory and a thirst for knowledge. Has also displayed a tendency to disregard the rules and a like for promiscuity. Has also shown interest in the mortal world, however. Will be an asset to this coven as long as kept on the path of Night.*

He frowned and re-read the paragraph, longer than the others, again.

“Until we located him,” he muttered. “A lengthy search.” Blackwood, it seemed, had sought him out, brought him into the coven with a purpose. “An asset to this coven as long as kept on the path of Night.”

Had he been manipulated? Had he, like Sabrina, had someone pulling the strings? He recognized that he had always enjoyed more privilege and freedom than his classmates. He thought that came from his sizable wealth, left to him by his parents whom had accumulated various holdings and properties around the world over their two plus centuries. Now, he wasn’t sure.

He continued to read.

*Sabrina Spellman. Half witch, half mortal. A peculiar combination. Not the first, but one of very few half-breeds.*

He cringed at her being called a half-breed, remembered the night they had argued at Dorian’s when she called herself that before he could say it himself. She was more of a witch than any of them, if
facts were laid on the table.

Daughter of Edward Spellman. Believed by church elders to be powerful beyond measure. Perhaps even a leader in the future. Resistant to our ways. Wants to hold on to her mortal nature. Will need to be monitored closely and shown our ways. Cannot be allowed to live into the full extent of her dual nature.

A hint, too, of Sabrina’s abilities. Had Blackwood known what she was truly capable of? Nick knew for sure that Blackwood had set his sights on Sabrina early on. He had witnessed her failed Dark Baptism, brought along as a part of the contingency Blackwood had assembled. He hadn’t known much about her then, just that she was Edward’s daughter and dual in nature. He had been curious, but otherwise distracted. He had been trying to woo a now deceased classmate at the time, feeling the need for an evening romp.

He continued to read through the pages of notes Blackwood had kept on a select few students, including himself. There were people like Melvin and Elsbeth that were initially believed to be “worthy” of Blackwood’s inner circle, only to be regulated to a standard student as he learned more about them. Then there were those like him, Sabrina, and the Weird Sisters that were detailed in great length through bulleted paragraphs.

For his part, it seemed Blackwood had missed nothing. Nick had forgotten some of the things he had done, like conjuring a first hierarchy demon in his first year of conjuring class when his classmates were struggling to conjure anything at all. A number of his conquests and excursions had also been noted.

Sabrina was detailed later in the ledger. His initial notes expressed concern that she wouldn’t sign the Book of the Beast. There was near euphoria when she eventually did, then growing concern as her rebellious and outspoken nature became more apparent. He had given her the acheron configuration as a test to figure out just how powerful she was.

Blackwood had documented their growing relationship as well.

It seems Nicholas has taken an interest in Sabrina. It’s unsurprising, as Nicholas does enjoy a pretty girl, but a bit troublesome. Nicholas has shown signs of being intrigued by Edward’s work. He appears more progressive than his classmates, not entirely devoted to the status quo. While a pairing of Nicholas and Sabrina could be advantageous to this church, it could also prove detrimental.

Another paragraph stood out.

I’m growing concerned about Nicholas’ devotion to Sabrina. He has direction from the Dark Lord to get close to her, but I don’t believe he’s doing it out of true allegiance to the Church of Night. He seems to care greatly about the girl. I do wonder if he forgets his orders.

He sat back for a moment. Blackwood had known about his devotion. How? For how long? Had the former high priest done anything to help him along, ensure he kept to his word? He picked the ledger back up, hoping to find the answers.

Sabrina must be stopped. I will destroy her and those close to her, if needed, to maintain order. She and Nicholas are too powerful together. They don’t know how powerful their paring can be. Sabrina possesses powers I’ve never seen and Nicholas is capable of magic he hasn’t tapped into yet, but will likely discover soon – he’s too intelligent, too strong, to not realize he can do more. Both of them need to be put into place.

That was the last and most recent entry. He had no answers, but more questions. What was he
capable of? Why had Blackwood swooped in and brought him into the Church of Night? Why was Blackwood so afraid if Sabrina? Of him and Sabrina together? How had Blackwood known about his devotion.

He closed the book and tucked it safely in his jacket. He would share it with Zelda when he went for dinner later.

It was bewildering, he thought as he made his way out of Blackwood’s quarters and towards the library, that even Blackwood had seen his love for Sabrina, but Sabrina herself couldn’t. He understood why, but it didn’t make him feel any better about where things stood with them.

In the library, he stopped in the entrance and considered where to start. After a moment he started towards the sanctum.

“May as well start at the beginning,” he muttered.

He pulled the first volume of Edward’s journals from it’s protective case and began to read, this time with fresh eyes and insight into how a Spellman thought.

“Auntie?”

“Sabrina,” Zelda replied. “Come in.” Sabrina stepped into Zelda’s study and closed the door behind her. “Is everything okay?”

“As okay as it can be,” Sabrina said, settling on an armchair.

“I suppose that’s not an inaccurate statement,” Zelda agreed. “How can I help you?”

Sabrina chewed her lip for a moment, then took a breath. She had to know.

“Aunt Zelda, had the acheron not worked, would a human body be a strong enough prison for the Dark Lord?”

“It would be,” she confirmed. “There are no bindings more sacred than those of the human body.” She peered over her glasses. “But the acheron worked. The Dark Lord is contained for all of eternity. Why the question?”

“Yesterday, Nick told me he hadn’t been sure the acheron would be strong enough,” she revealed. “He had been prepared to sacrifice himself if it didn’t.”

“He’s fortunate it didn’t come to that,” Zelda said carefully, sensing Sabrina was working through something. “He would have sacrificed himself to an eternity of damnation. He would have been tortured, endlessly.”

“I wouldn’t have let him,” Sabrina said. “I would have stepped forward.”

“He wouldn’t have let you,” Zelda countered. “I have no doubt that he would not have allowed you to be the one to sacrifice yourself.”

Sabrina considered the thought. She wanted to disagree with her aunt, but she found she couldn’t. It was yet another instance of her heart and her head battling over what to believe.

“Why are you so set on Nick being the one that researches my father’s work?” she asked, changing the subject. “Again, I’m his daughter. Perhaps not biologically, as we’ve recently learned, but in all the ways that matter. I should be the one that reads his work, determines what he meant by it all.”
“As I said yesterday, you are welcomed to help Nicholas.” Zelda peered over her glasses again. “I don’t think he would turn down your assistance.”

“Why him?” she pressed. “Why Nicholas?”

“Nicholas is a talented warlock, Sabrina. But what makes Brother Scratch exceptional isn’t his ability to conjure and bind. It’s his capacity for knowledge. Witches often underestimate the value of intellectual prowess. You’ve seen it yourself in Nicholas. He remembers everything he reads. He sees the threads that tie those things together, threads most of us would miss. While you are more than capable of study, especially when it something you care about, Nicholas will be quick, efficient, and most importantly, correct.”

Sabrina again took a moment to consider what her aunt had shared. Zelda wasn’t wrong. Nick was exceptionally good at research, navigating ancient texts with alarming ease. He tended to remember everything, even the minutest detail. She had accused him once, jokingly, of having a photographic memory but now she wondered if he really did.

“I don’t trust him,” she finally said.

“Perhaps you don’t trust him with your heart,” Zelda countered. “But I do think you trust him, Sabrina. I would go as far as to say you trust him with your life.”

Once again, Sabrina found herself unable to argue. That was something she kept coming back to – she did believe Nick would have sacrificed himself so she wouldn’t have to. She thought, too, that he would do anything for her – he had already done so much for her. She just wasn’t sure what was real and what wasn’t.

“Aren’t you mad at him?” she asked. “For what he did to me? He betrayed me, Aunt Zelda. He made me believe he loved me, but he was working for the Dark Lord the entire time…”

“I am displeased with him,” Zelda admitted. “But I recognize that in our current position, I can’t allow the tiff between the pair of you to cloud my judgment on what’s best for this coven.”

“Still…”

A knock sounded at her door.

“Who is it?” Zelda called.

“It’s Nick.”

Sabrina rolled her eyes.

“Please, Brother Scratch, come in.”

The door opened to reveal Nick, wearing his standard black ensemble, but with a deep red t-shirt breaking the darkness. Sabrina knew that t-shirt. It was one of her favorites. It was soft and she liked to lay her cheek against it and listen to his heartbeat when they had a moment alone together.

“Sister Zelda,” he greeted. “Sabrina.” He said her name almost hesitantly. “Am I interrupting?”

“No, we’re done here,” Zelda said, giving Sabrina a pointed look. “Sabrina, I’m sure Hilda could use some help with dinner.”

“She can stay,” Nick said hurriedly. “This pertains to her as well.”
Sabrina said nothing, but sat forward in anticipation. Zelda raised an eyebrow.

“Well then, Brother Scratch, please, don’t keep us waiting.”

He closed the door and took a seat in the armchair opposite Sabrina.

“I thought I’d start my research by digging through Blackwood’s office,” he began.

“Ambrose and Prudence searched it thoroughly before they left,” Zelda interrupted. “It appeared to be cleared of anything useful.”

“It was,” Nick confirmed. “I found nothing, other than a few books I found interesting and a few historical artifacts worth preserving. I went through his private quarters as well.”

“As did Ambrose and Prudence,” Zelda said again.

“I found this in the bottom drawer of his study,” Nick said, unfazed by Zelda. He produced the ledger from his jacket and placed it on Zelda’s desk. He saw Sabrina lean forward even more, unable to hide her curiosity. “At first glance it’s a ledger of students at the Academy, likely why Prudence and Ambrose didn’t see it as important.”

Sabrina opened the cover and ran a dainty finger down the ledger of names.

“So many of them are gone now,” she said, stating what they were all thinking.

“Such a shame,” Zelda shook her head, genuinely saddened. “I suppose there is more than just a list of names here, Nicholas?”

“There is.” Nick turned the page. “Blackwood kept detailed notes on a select group of students. Me, Sabrina, Prudence, Agatha, Dorcas, and a few others. He noted our strengths, how we each came to the Academy, how we progressed in our studies. Some faded out of his odd circle when they stopped impressing him, but the notes cover years, best I can tell.”

“Let me see that.” Sabrina reached for it.

“In a moment.” Zelda picked up the ledger and scanned through the notes. “I’m sure you’ve read the entire thing. What are the highlights, Brother Scratch?”

“His last several entries are focused mostly on Sabrina and I.” He chanced a glance at Sabrina. She was watching him, hanging onto his every word. “He was concerned about Sabrina’s powers, her rebellious nature. He was initially supportive of the pair of us. He believed we could do great things together.” Another glance at Sabrina. She was still looking at him, but he thought he saw a flash of hurt cross her beautiful face. “But then we became a danger to him.”

“You both certainly created chaos in his last days at the Academy,” Zelda mused. She looked at Sabrina. “Especially you.”

“I don’t regret it,” she informed her aunt.

“You shouldn’t,” Zelda said simply.

“In his last note, which I’m judging to be within days of his fleeing, he wrote that Sabrina needed to be stopped. He said he would destroy her, and those close to her, to maintain order.” He looked at Sabrina again. She held his eye this time. “He believed we were too powerful together, that we didn’t know how powerful our pairing could be.”
A moment of heavy silence filled the room. He pushed forward, not able to allow himself to think of what could have been.

“He wrote that Sabrina posses powers he’s never seen and that I’m capable of magic I haven’t tapped into yet, but thought I would discover soon. The last thing he wrote was that both of us needed to be put into place.”

“What are you capable of?” Sabrina asked. “What magic can you do?”

“I don’t know,” Nick shrugged. “He was afraid I would find out.”

“I suspected there was more to you,” Zelda said. “Blackwood collected orphans like trophies. Even without his notes, I had deduced from my time as his wife that he had a purpose for bringing you all under one roof.”

“Why?” Sabrina asked.

“I don’t know that yet,” Nick shook his head. He looked at Sabrina again, deciding to push her a little further. “He knew about my devotion. He mentioned it in one of his last writings. He believed that I was forgetting that I had orders from the Dark lord.” He took another chance. “He was right, in that sense at least.”

Sabrina looked away. Zelda felt the tension erupt between them with just the one sentence.

“Did you find anything else in your search?” she asked. Nick shook his head.

“Nothing of consequence. I took a few more books and started reading through Edward’s writings again. I’m about halfway through the first volume.”

“You’ll keep me posted.”

It wasn’t a request.

“Of course.”

“I’m going to keep this.” She indicated the ledger. “But if you find yourself in need of it, it will be here.”

“Any word from Ambrose and Prudence?” he asked.

“Ambrose made contact last night, actually.” Sabrina perked up.

“He did?” she asked. “Why didn’t you get me? I wanted to talk to him…”

“You seemed to be otherwise occupied,” Zelda said pointedly. Her locking herself away in her room hadn’t gone unnoticed. “He and Prudence are safe. They are currently moving about Romania, following a lead. He didn’t have much else to add.”

“If I can help them…” Nick offered.

“If you happen to find something at the Academy that may be of use, do let us know,” Zelda said. “But you are needed here, Brother Scratch.” She checked the time. “Now, I want to freshen up before dinner. Surely the pair of you can behave yourselves in the few minutes between now and the time the chicken is on the table?”

She left them alone. Nick nervously bounced his knee and searched his mind for the right thing to
say. Not for the first time, he wished relationships came as easy to him as learning and conjuring demons.

“When?”

He looked at Sabrina, caught off guard by her addressing him.

“What?”

“When did the Dark Lord ask you for a devotion?”

Honesty was his only choice.

“The day I gave you your father’s journal,” he confessed. “I had already taken it from the library, but I hadn’t given it to you yet when he came to me.”

Sabrina looked crestfallen.

“So nearly our entire relationship was based on a lie.”

“No,” he shook his head. “I know I can’t convince you otherwise, not right now, but everything between us was real, Sabrina. Blackwood wasn’t wrong when he hypothesized that I forgot my devotion. My true devotion has only ever been to you.”

It still is, he added to himself.

“You could have said no,” she said.

“I know that now.” He gripped the arm of the chair to keep himself from reaching for her hand. “I didn’t know that then, Sabrina, not at that point in our friendship. The Dark Lord asked and you said yes. That’s how I thought it worked. Asking was really a formality. You were expected to do what he asked. He asked me to show a pretty girl a wicked time, and so I did. Because I wanted a chance with you, regardless of his ask. It doesn’t make it right, but that’s the truth.”

“I suppose it doesn’t matter now,” she said.

“I think it does,” Nick said. “But I won’t push the matter.” He stood. “I meant what I said yesterday. If you want to help with research, your company is welcomed. No strings attached.”

“There’s always a string with you, Scratch,” Sabrina said, standing as well.

“Not with you.” He tilted his head towards where the ledger lay on Zelda’s desk. “Read through that. You should at least know what he wrote about you.”

He left, shoulders back, head high. When he was in the hall, however, he took a moment to rest against the wall and take a few deep breaths. All he could do was work to earn Sabrina’s trust again. It was going to take time, but he would do it, he vowed. And when he did, he wouldn’t lose it again.

He wouldn’t lose her again.

Chapter End Notes

And the plot thickens...
I've always wondered why there were so many orphans at the Academy. So I decided to make up why. :)
Chapter Four

Chapter Notes

I'm so grateful you guys are loving this story so far. We're transitioning into a tangled web here - but maybe we can have some sweetness? Maybe?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“How are things?” Roz asked. “At the mortuary? With your coven?”

It was weird, Sabrina thought, to be able to speak so openly with her friends about her witch life.

“Chaotic,” she answered honestly. “Zelda has appointed herself high priestess and is trying to create the Church of Lilith and institute my father’s doctrine. She’s assigned a few of us special tasks to make it happen.”

“Which… Father?” Harvey asked.

“Edward,” Sabrina answered. “As far as I’m concerned, Edward Spellman is my father, not Satan.”

“What is this doctrine?” Theo wondered. “Is it like, a religion?”

“Not so much a religion as a way of life,” Sabrina explained. “My father believed in co-existing with mortals. Obviously – he married one. But he also saw a world in which we used our powers for good, existed peacefully. His doctrine truly was beautiful – if we can get our kind to accept it.”

“Will they?” Roz asked.

“I think we have what’s left of our coven convinced to at least consider it. I know we will eventually have to go out into the world and recruit others, but my Aunt Zelda isn’t wrong when she says we need to solidify the foundation of our own coven first.”

“Is everyone still at the mortuary?” Theo asked.

“For now,” Sabrina nodded. “It’s crowded, but it’s working. A few teachers that survived are working to get the Academy back up and running. They will move there once it is.”

“Can’t they just – magic it fixed?” Harvey questioned. The question sounded dumb, even to his own ears, but he found it hard to understand Sabrina’s life now.

“They can’t just snap their fingers and everything fall back into place.” Sabrina was patient, understanding that they were still processing the fact that she was a witch – that she had an entire other life. “The Academy was protected by ancient magics and suffered several attacks over the last little while. We have to ensure there aren’t any dark curses hanging over the place, that it’s protected from mortals and ill-intended witches alike. Not to mention there is some repair work that has to be done. Blackwood did a number on the place.”

“What about Nick?” Roz asked carefully. “What’s going on there?”

“Nicholas is researching my father’s doctrine,” she answered in a hoity sort of manner. “Zelda claims
his intelligence is as big of an asset to us as his magical ability. So far, he’s found that Blackwood had a list of students, he and I included, that he kept tabs on. We don’t know why, but in his last days, Blackwood was seeking to subdue both of us. I read through his notes Nicholas brought to the mortuary last night. I think he would have killed me, if he had the opportunity, but I think he would have tried to, for lack of a better word, save Nicholas.”

“Why would he want to subdue the two of you?” Theo asked. “What were you doing in those last days?”

“Thwarting his every move,” Sabrina answered honestly. “Trying to implement my father’s doctrine even then. He was concerned Nicholas and I were too powerful together.” She played with the straw in her milkshake. “He knew, too, about Nicholas’s devotion to the Dark Lord.”

“I don’t understand the devotion stuff,” Harvey said. “What do you mean, Nick’s devotion?”

“And why do you keep calling him ‘Nicholas?’” Theo added.

“He prefers the people close to him call him ‘Nick,’” Sabrina explained. “I am no longer close to him, so he’s Nicholas.” Roz held her tongue. She needed to talk to Sabrina about something, but she didn’t want to do it front of Harvey and Theo. “As for the devotion, when the Dark Lord was in power, he would come to his subjects and make a request of them to prove their loyalty. As Nicholas accurately put it, his asking was merely a formality. You were expected to do it, or suffer the consequences.”

“Did he ask you for a devotion?” Harvey asked. He sounded almost afraid of the answer. Of her friends, he was the one that struggled with her witch nature the most.

“Yes,” she nodded. “He asked me to steal a pack of gum.”

“That’s it?” Theo scoffed. “He asks Nick to lead you on, but he asks you to steal a pack of gum?”

“I said no,” Sabrina continued. “So, he haunted me. He showed me terrible things. He asked again, but this time my devotion was to burn down Baxter High.” There was a collective gasp. “I was going to do it, too. He was slowly harming the people I loved. I didn’t have a choice.” She didn’t tell Harvey about the mark on his chest. “I was just about to strike the match when he appeared and told me the equivalent of ‘good enough.’”

“Wow,” Harvey said, sitting back in their booth. “What an asshole.”

Sabrina snorted at his definition of the Dark Lord.

“I suppose that’s one way to put it.”

“But he’s gone, right?” Theo asked. “He’s not coming back?”

“As long as that acheron holds, we don’t have to worry about Lucifer Morningstar,” she confirmed. “He is in the deepest deaths of Hell, a kingdom he no longer presides over. If all the cheering for Lilith we heard when she entered Hell is a reflection, I’d say his subjects are glad he’s gone.” She took a breath. “I know I am.”

“Nick worked really hard on that acheron,” Roz chanced. “I watched him while you and your aunts were doing all of those glamour spells. He was intense, so focused, muttering to himself, casting spells, I suppose.”

“He didn’t know if it would work,” Sabrina confided in them. “I had broken it when I solved it a
while back, and the Dark Lord is – was – powerful. Nicholas wasn’t sure his magic was strong enough to repair it. He had a plan B if it failed to hold him. I only just found out.”

“And what was that?” Harvey asked.

“Nicholas was going to absorb the Dark Lord into his own body.” The more she read about it in the limited books she could find at the mortuary on the subject, the more horrifying it sounded. “The only thing stronger than an acheron are the bindings of the human body. Nicholas is gifted in conjuring and binding, so much so that he’s believed to be the most powerful binder and conjurer since my father. He would have likely been strong enough to hold Satan, but it would have cost him everything.”

Roz squirmed uncomfortably. She needed to get Sabrina alone. She watched Sabrina check the time on a clock over cash register of Dr. Cerberus.

“I should go,” she said. “It’s getting late and my aunts are a little touchy about me being gone past dark right now, given everything that’s happened.”

“I’ll walk out with you,” Roz said, jumping at the chance to have a few minutes alone with Sabrina. “I need to run an errand in that direction anyway.”

“But Roz, I thought we were going to a movie?” Harvey asked, confused.

“We are,” she confirmed. “I’ll meet you there.”

“What was that about?” Sabrina asked when she and Roz were outside. “You were a little too quick to volunteer to walk out with me.”

“I need to talk to you,” she said. “Harvey is still a little skittish about all of this witchcraft stuff and while Theo is all in, he gets a little too excited. I wanted to tell you – I’ve been having visions.”

“About what?” Sabrina asked wearily. Roz’s visions were never wrong.

“Well, first, Nick… His feelings for you are very real, Sabrina. I know he did a terrible thing, but his regret, when he comes to me in my visions, is palpable. He really didn’t mean to hurt you. He did what he thought he had to do at the time, but he started to see there were options. His life hasn’t been easy, not like it appears to have been. I don’t think even he realizes just how difficult things have been for him. He’s only just started to realize there is more for him than debauchery and being the most intelligent warlock in the room.”

“What’s he doing in these visions?” Sabrina asked.

“Reading, mostly. I’m guessing it’s the library at the Academy where I see him. It looks late, there’s candlelight. Sometimes, he gets up abruptly and exits the room, but I never see where he goes.”

“He’s just – reading?” Sabrina clarified.

“I don’t think those particular visions are meant to show me anything negative,” Roz explained. “I think they’re meant to show Nick as being regretful and truly sorry.”

“You said first,” Sabrina prompted. “There’s more?”

“I keep seeing Nick engaged in combat. Not hand-to-hand, but magical. I can’t see what he’s fighting, though. I only see him alone, struggling to maintain his position. Whatever he’s fighting is strong, and he’s fading fast.”
“You don’t see anything else?” Sabrina pushed. “No minor detail that seems unimportant, even?”

“He’s somewhere with a lot of stonework,” Roz said. “It’s always the same location, and I’ve had the vision three times now. I try each time to see more, but it feels like there’s something blocking me – something that doesn’t want me to see what’s happening. Whatever he’s fighting is that strong, Sabrina. It can keep me out.”

“Is there anything else, Roz? Any feeling or details…?”

“There’s desperation, from Nick,” she said. “That’s the only thing I feel. He’s tired, but he’s desperate. It doesn’t feel like he’s desperate for himself, though.” She looked at Sabrina. “With absolutely nothing to base this on, I would say its something to do with you. The way he’s fighting… He feels like he has a purpose, and he will either win or die trying.”

“You’ll tell me the moment you see anything more, right?” Sabrina asked. “Like the very moment?”

“I will,” Roz promised. “If I see anything else, I’ll come right to you.”

Sabrina nodded.

“Thank you, Roz.”

Roz reached for a hug.

“Don’t be so hard on Nick,” she encouraged. “He messed up. I’m not saying he didn’t. But I’m saying that he regrets it all, and if he could change things, he would. He really didn’t mean to hurt you.”

“But he did,” Sabrina said as she pulled away. “I don’t trust him, Roz. Not with my heart.”

“But you trust him with your life.”

Sabrina smiled slightly.

“You’re the second person to say that to me in as many days.” She sighed then. “I don’t think you or Aunt Zelda are wrong.”

“For what it’s worth, I think, should you let him have another chance with your heart, he won’t waste it.” Roz smiled a bit this time. “I think Blackwood was right to be concerned about you two together. You could do great things with Scratch. Sabrina sneezed, suddenly and violently. “You okay?” Roz asked with concern.

“I’m fine,” Sabrina nodded. She cleared her throat which felt a little scratchy. “Must be something in the air.”

They parted ways, Sabrina’s mind racing. She trusted Roz’s visions. She had to share them with Nicholas. Or at least, the one about him fighting something. She checked the time and picked up her pace, eager not to be late for dinner, even though she had filled up on a milkshake at Cee’s. She would pull him aside and talk to him, she decided, see if he had any ideas as to what Roz could be talking about.

She wondered, too, what Roz had meant about his life not being easy. He had lost his parents and been raised by a familiar, but he seemed pretty at ease with himself, his past. There was also the fact that Roz said he himself didn’t know just how difficult things had been for him. Blackwood had looked for him for years, said he had powers he hadn’t tapped into. None of it made sense.
“Damn you, Scratch,” she muttered to the wind. “It’s always something.”

She stopped several feet from him, taking in his silhouette. He was bent over a book, the sleeves of his dark gray henley pushed up to his elbows. His hand was shoved into his hair as he leaned on his elbow, completely engrossed in whatever was on the page. She bit her lip. She had always liked when she could catch him like this, a little disheveled, his guard down when he thought no one was looking.

She hadn’t been able to talk to him at dinner. He had shown up barely on time, sat at the opposite end of the table, been uncharacteristically quiet, and disappeared almost as soon as dessert was over. She had told Salem where she was going, just in case, and teleported herself to the Academy where she had gone straight to the library, certain he would be there.

“These are my notes,” he said, holding up a sheath of papers without looking at her. “You’re welcomed to read them, although they probably won’t tell you anything you don’t already know.”

“You knew I was here?” she asked.

“Never try stealth without the use of magic, Spellman,” Nick said. “I heard you when you entered the corridor.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” She took the seat next to him, because it was the only one at the table. She cleared her throat again. It seemed like a tickle had settled in and she couldn’t quite get rid of it. She decided to have some tea when she got home. “You didn’t stay long for dinner.”

“My deal with your aunt is that I show up,” Nick said, still focused on his reading. He seemed to be in an irritable mood. “Nothing was said about how long I have to stay.”

“I needed to talk to you about something. You took off before I could.”

She had his attention now.

“What?” he asked with a hint of trepidation.

“Roz told me something after we left Dr. Cerberus today…”

“So that’s why you barely touched your dinner,” Nick muttered. Sabrina raised an eyebrow.

“Were you watching me?”

“No,” he answered honestly. “I just notice things about you. I always have.” He studied her for a moment. “I can’t figure out if that’s a blessing or a curse.”

Sabrina took a moment to absorb the comment. She pushed forward, deciding not to dwell on it at the moment.

“She’s been having a vision of you.” If she hadn’t had his attention before, she had it now. “She said you’re fighting something. She can’t see what, but whatever it is is powerful enough to keep her from seeing more. She said you’re fighting hard, but struggling to hold your position. Wherever you are, there’s a lot of stonework, and she said you seem almost desperate, and that’s what’s keeping you going.”

“She can’t see anything else?” Nick asked. He, too, trusted Roz’s visions without question. “Nothing at all?”
“Like I said, Roz says whatever it is is strong enough to basically push her out. She said she would tell me if she saw anything else.”

Nick sighed and sat back in his chair.

“That’s not all that helpful.”

“No,” Sabrina agreed. Again, she cleared her throat. “But it’s a warning? Something we can try to prevent?”

“I guess,” he agreed. “We’ll have to rely on Roz to share more if she gets it, but otherwise, we’ll be vigilant.” He looked at her. “You think we’ll ever get to just – be? Will we ever have a time in which we can just sit and eat dinner without worrying about what evil tide is going to fall on us next?”

“We can always hope.” She reached for his notes. “Find anything good?”

“Good? Yes. Helpful? Not really. Edward’s earliest writings, what I’m reading now, were more hypothetical in nature. It’s the dream he had, the inklings of an idea. It shows how all of this started.” He picked up a book to his left and held it out to her. “This is his earliest known writings. Read it. You deserve to know about him.”

She took the book, remembering how he handed her a volume of her father’s work the first time, right after, she knew now, he had been given his devotion. Nick went back to reading without another word. There was something about him that made him feel distant – like he had something weighing on him. They weren’t together anymore, but she was surprised to find herself feeling like he was pushing her away.

“Are you okay?” she asked carefully. “You seem – upset.”

“I’m fine…”

“Nicholas.”

He sighed and sat back in his chair again.

“Are you ever going to call me Nick again?” he asked, letting his exasperation show.

“I don’t know,” she answered honestly. “You should just be glad I’m not calling you ‘Brother Scratch.’”

“Fair enough,” he mumbled. He tossed the quill in his hand to the table and returned to his reading. He felt Sabrina’s eyes on him. He dutifully ignored her, wished she had chosen any other day to come to the library. Any other day, he would have welcomed her. He would found something – anything – to grab her attention enough to keep her there, work to repair the rift between them, even if just by a stitch. Today though, he just didn’t have it in him.

“So that’s all you’re going to say?” she asked after a few beats of silence. She cleared her throat again. “You’re only going to ask if I’m ever going to call you by your preferred name?”

He flipped the page of Edward’s journal.

“Some days are better than others,” he said without looking at her, noting that the cough that escaped her sounded a little deep. “Today – just not my day. That’s all.”

“You don’t have to be a jerk,” she stated, ever persistent. “Your having a bad day doesn’t have to
subject the rest of us to your bad mood.”

He sat back in his chair again, frustrated with her pressing.

“It’s the anniversary of my parents’ death,” he informed her. “For some reason, it’s hitting me harder this year. So I’m sorry if I’m not sunshine and daisies right now.”

Her expression turned from one of annoyance to one of understanding. He realized then that if anyone could relate to how he felt, it would be her. He should have told her from the start. Surely it would have won him some points in his favor.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered. “I had no idea…”

“It’s okay,” he shook his head. “I shouldn’t have been so short with you. I should have just told you. I know you understand.”

“Too well,” she agreed. “Do you want to talk about it? About them?”

“It’s been fifteen years,” he said. “I don’t know why it’s bothering me more this year.”

“A lot has happened this year,” she chanced. “You were four when they died, right?” He nodded, not quite meeting her eye. “Do you remember anything about them?”

“Not really,” he sighed. “Just…” He hesitated. No one had ever asked about his parents before, not past inquiring about how they died. Sabrina asking made him feel something inside. A warmth that hadn’t been there before. “I can remember my mom’s laugh. It sounded like bells.” He smiled a bit. “Your laugh reminds me of her, actually.” The corner of her lips turned up. He thought the ice around their relationship thawed by a fraction. “And my dad… He smoked cigars. Expensive ones. I think of him when I smell them.”

“That’s sweet,” Sabrina said, meaning it. “I’m sorry you lost them.”

“I’m sorry you lost yours,” he countered. “I’ve never really…” He faltered for a moment. She coughed again. “Are you okay?”

“I’ve got a tickle in my throat or something,” she dismissed. “I’ll have Aunt Hilda make me some tea when I get home. You were saying?”

“I’ve never really had someone to talk to about them,” he revealed.

No matter her conflicted feelings towards Nick, her heart clenched for him. He was being vulnerable, letting her see a part of him he worked hard to hide. For just a moment, she considered reaching for him, wrapping him in her arms. Her instincts told her that was what he needed. She couldn’t, though. His vulnerability didn’t change anything between them. Not right now.

“I’m glad you told me about them,” she offered.

“It’s… Not bad to talk about them,” he replied.

“I should probably go back to the mortuary,” she said, “let you have some time…”

“Stay.” It came out as a plea, even if he didn’t want it to. “Read through my notes, start on that journal. You know Edward Spellman better than anyone, all things considered. Maybe there’s something in there that makes sense to you that wouldn’t make sense to me.”

She saw the request for what it was. He didn’t want her to leave, maybe because he didn’t want to be
alone, maybe because he was hoping to win her over. Regardless, she nodded, because for the moment, she was going to listen to her heart.

“For a little while,” she agreed. “I do want to read my father’s work.”

They settled into silence, Nick making notes and occasionally getting up to fetch a reference book. Next to him, Sabrina read through his notes, then started on her father’s journal. Nick was right. The first writings were a lot of pondering, a lot of “what if.” Still, she felt a certain connection as she read them. She was so absorbed in his work that she didn’t notice Nick glancing at her, growing more concerned with each cough or clearing of her throat. She was reading about Edward’s thoughts on the Old Testament when a coughing fit overtook her.

“Sabrina?” Nick asked, turning to her. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

She tried to nod, even as she coughed hard. It felt like forever until she got her breath back.

“I’m… Fine…” Her voice was raspy, nearly gone.

“No you’re not.” Nick placed the back of his hand on her forehead. She smacked it away, but not before he felt what he needed to feel. “You have a fever.”

He muttered an incantation, his fingers pointing at his chest.

“What did you…”

“A immunity charm,” he said. “You, Spellman, have Witch’s Flu.”

“Witch’s Flu?” she asked with a frown.

“It’s like the flu mortals get, but for witches. You probably felt fine this morning, didn’t you?” She nodded, unable to ignore the fact that her throat suddenly felt like it was on fire, or that her joints had started to ache out of nowhere. “It comes on suddenly and is highly contagious without an immunity charm. We need Hilda. I’ve got a witch’s mirror in my dormitory.”

He stood. She tried to do the same, but the world spun. She sat back down.

“Need help?” he asked. He hated that she was sick, but selfishly, he liked that he was the one there to take care of her.

“Just… A minute…” She was certain she managed to feel worse in a matter of seconds. “Okay,” she said. “Let’s go.”

She stood. The floor tilted below her. She started to fall, her suddenly weak limbs betraying her. Nick’s arm wrapped around her.

“Careful, Spellman. I’ve got you.”

She was in his arms before she could protest. She had no choice but to allow him to carry her out of the library. She rested her head on his shoulder as he cradled her close. He still smelled like him, she thought. Leather, sandalwood, and pine. She missed that smell.

He navigated the stairs easily, her small body light in his arms, his determination to get her into bed and under Hilda’s care only slightly outweighing his joy of having her close to him again, no matter her capacity. She sighed and he could feel the heat coming off her through his shirt. He was concerned about how quickly she had gotten sick, but he trusted Hilda would take care of her.
In his dormitory, he carefully placed her on her feet. He made sure to keep a hand on her, just in case. She was shaky, and he didn’t trust she wouldn’t fall again.

“Sit down.” He helped her ease onto the edge of his bed. “I’m going to call Hilda.”

“Cold…” she replied, suddenly freezing. Nick flicked his wrist and a jacket zoomed across the room. He caught it easily.

“Here.” He draped it around her shoulders. “Better?” She nodded. “Let’s get Hilda.” He went to his bureau and picked up a gilded mirror. Sabrina listened to him request Hilda and within moments, Hilda filled the glass.

“Nicholas, dear,” she greeted. “Is everything alright?”

“I’m fine,” he said. “But Sabrina seems to have Witch’s Flu.” He moved the mirror so Hilda could see her. “She’s been coughing all evening, but she’s gotten a lot worse in the last hour or so. She’s weak, has a high fever. I brought her to my dormitory.”

“When did she leave the mortuary?” Hilda wondered. She shook her head. “Never mind that. I need to gather a few things, and I’ll be right there. Keep an eye on her until I arrive.”

She disappeared from the mirror. Nick put it down and turned to Sabrina.

“Do you need anything?” he asked. “Some tea, maybe?”

Sabrina shook her head. She wondered how it was possible to feel progressively worse as the minutes ticked by. She fought the urge to lie down in Nick’s bed.

“How long… Does this… Last?” she asked in a raspy, wheezy voice.

“A few days to a week.” Nick perched on a nearby chair. “I imagine you’ll be staying here for the next several days. You’re contagious, and it’s too risky to send you back to the mortuary with so many witches there.”

Sabrina looked as unhappy as he expected her to. For something to do, aware of the tension between them, he busied himself with conjuring a fire in the grate. He was certain she was going to be with him for the next few days, and he planned to use every moment of it to his advantage.

“Nicholas?” came Hilda’s voice. “Sabrina?”

Nick used magic to open his door for Hilda. She bustled in, her face etched with concern as she took in Sabrina’s appearance.

“Oh, love,” she said. “You don’t look so good.”

“Thanks,” Sabrina said wryly.

“Let’s take your temperature, shall we?” Hilda put the back of her hand to Sabrina’s forehead. “Oh my, that’s high. Here – we’ll do this part the mortal way.” Nick watched with curiosity as Hilda pulled a thermometer from her bag and placed it under Sabrina’s tongue. “Nicholas, you said she’s gotten worse as the evening progressed?”

“Especially in the last hour,” he confirmed. “I put an immunity charm on myself. I think I should be okay, but she’s too weak to even walk right now.”

“You were right to call me,” Hilda said. She removed the thermometer. “104,” she sighed.
“Goodness, that’s high… Let’s get you into bed, love.”

“Wait… Home…”

“I’m afraid you’re not going back to the mortuary. There are too many witches there and their immune systems are still weak from the poison. An immunity charm wouldn’t do them much good, and we just can’t risk an outbreak. You’ll have to stay here, with Nicholas.”

“But…”

“No buts,” Hilda cut her off. She snapped her fingers and Sabrina’s clothes were replaced by pajamas. “Into bed you go. Nicholas, dear, I’m certain you won’t mind having her here?”

“Not at all,” he confirmed. “I’ll watch over her.”

“Knew you would.” Hilda pulled back the covers. “Under the covers you go, love. I’ll give you a potion to help with some of the symptoms, but you’re just going to have to let this work through your system. It’ll be a few days, maybe a week.”

Without energy to argue, Sabrina slid under the covers. Hilda tucked the blankets around her. She could smell Nick on his sheets. It was oddly comforting.

“Nicholas, I’ll be in and out to check on her, but I want you to use the witch’s glass if you need anything,” Hilda told him. “I’ll keep mine with me. She’ll need her potion every four hours, and I want you to check her temperature periodically. If it gets higher than 108, call me immediately. Try to have her eat and drink as best she can. I’ll bring you both meals from the mortuary. You’re sure you’re immune?”

“I should be,” he confirmed. “I’ll take care of her, Hilda. You don’t have to worry.”

Hilda studied him. She had mixed feelings towards the young warlock. She wanted to string him up by his toenails for betraying her niece, but she also saw, quite clearly, how much he loved Sabrina. She believed he wanted redemption, but she was certain he had an uphill battle ahead of him.

“That’s my niece,” she told him in a thinly veiled warning. “I expect her to be safe and sound and cared for.”

Nick heard the warning. He didn’t back down.

“Always,” he promised. “I’ll take care of her. I’ll take extra precautions with the protection wards as well. She will be safe and taken care of, I swear it.”

Sabrina could only cough violently.

“Okay then,” Hilda nodded. She surveyed Sabrina. “I’ll need your help in sitting her up. I don’t think she has enough strength to do even that right now.”

Nick went to one side of his bed. Hilda went to the other, pulling the potion out of her bag. Nick sat down beside her and ever so gently, slid an arm around her.

“It’s okay,” he whispered when she groaned. “I’ve got you.” He let her lean against him and watched as Hilda carefully fed her a bubbling purple potion. Sabrina sputtered.

“That horrible,” she wheezed.

“Isn’t it?” Hilda agreed. “Drink up, love. You haven’t much of a choice.”
“Do you have any cinnamon?” Nick asked, suddenly remembering something. “I had Witch’s Flu when I was small. My mother put cinnamon in that stuff to make it more palatable.”

“That could work,” Hilda mused. “Let’s see.” She rummaged in her bag. Nick wasn’t surprised when Hilda pulled a cinnamon stick from her it. She added a bit to the potion and gave it a swirl. “Try now, Sabrina.”

“Better,” she admitted after a sip. “Not great though.”

“Better will have to do,” Nick said. When the potion was gone, he helped Sabrina back to the pillows. It was different, having her need someone to take care of her. He didn’t like that she wasn’t her usual spirited self, but he selfishly liked the chance to be the one to care for her. It was also a chance to prove she could depend on him. “Anything else, Hilda?”

“I think that’s all we can do for her tonight,” she said. “I’ll be back first thing in the morning. Where were the pair of you when you noticed she was sick?”

“In the library,” Nick said. “I’ll use a disinfecting charm when I go down to gather my things.”

“Do that,” Hilda agreed. “Why was she here?”

“She wanted to read her dad’s work.” It wasn’t the entire truth, but it also wasn’t a lie. “You know she wants to be a part of the research.”

“Right.” He heard the doubt in Hilda’s voice. “I mean it, Scratch. You take care of her or you’ll have to answer to me.”

“I screwed up Hilda,” he said, owning his mistakes. “I know that. I get that no one trusts me. But I’m trying to make things right. I know it won’t happen overnight, or maybe in the next century, the way things stand, but I’m trying. I’ll take care of her. You don’t have to worry.”

Hilda nodded, the romantic in her swayed a bit by his speech.

“Make sure that I don’t.” She patted his cheek. “I’ll be by with breakfast in the morning.”

Nick walked her out of the dormitory with another round of assurances that he would take care of Sabrina, would call if they needed anything. When he returned, Sabrina was asleep, blankets pulled up to her chin and tucked around her.

Quiet as a mouse, he left the room and went back to the library where he performed the disinfectant charm like he had promised Hilda, hoping it was good enough. Household spells weren’t exactly his specialty. He collected his notes, neatly stacked Edward’s writings until the next day, and returned to his room. He used magic to float a now empty bed out of the main dormitory and settled it near Sabrina. He changed in the bathroom, choosing to wear actual pajamas instead of strip down to his underwear like he normally would, and returned to his bedroom. He grew the flames in the grate a little bigger, ensuring she was warm, then set about casting wards around them, adding extra protections for her sake.

He told himself he just wanted to check on her, see if her fever had gotten worse, if she needed anything. He did promise Hilda he would take care of her, after all. He perched gingerly on the edge of his bed.

His fingertips were feather light as they grazed over her hot forehead. She sniffled in her sleep, snuggled deeper into his blankets. He soothed a light hand over her curls and tugged the blanket up just a little higher. He leaned down and ghosted his lips to her temple. He could feel the heat
radiating off of her, nearly considered waking her to take her temperature, but reminded himself Hilda had done it just a half hour ago.

“Sleep well, Spellman.”

He climbed into his makeshift bed, noting that the mattress was thinner, the sheets scratchier than his. He didn’t mind, so long as Sabrina was comfortable.

He fell asleep with his gaze on Sabrina, his mind filled with a laugh that sounded like bells. He swore he could smell a cigar.

Chapter End Notes

I don't know about you, but I trust Roz's visions too... And those witches get some really high fevers, don't they?

Let me know your thoughts on this one! I'm already excited to share the next update....
Salem woke him up with a swat to the face.

“What?” he asked sleepily. “Salem?” Of course the cat was there. He would guess Hilda sent it to keep an eye on them.

The familiar meowed loudly and jumped from Nick’s makeshift bed to Sabrina’s. Nick lifted his head to see Sabrina fitfully tossing and turning. He threw his blanket back and went to her.

“Sabrina?”

He sat on the edge of the bed and placed a hand on her shoulder. She mumbled incoherently and wrenched around on the bed.

“Sabrina.”

His hand went to her forehead. She was burning up, hotter than before. He didn’t know if she were having a nightmare or if the fever was making her hallucinate. He had to wake her, get more potion into her.

“Sabrina, wake up,” he coached. Salem meowed loudly. Nick slid an arm under her and moved her to an upright position. The change in position woke her with a start.

“Wha…”

“You’re okay,” he soothed. He moved his body so she could lean on him, sensing she was too weak to sit up under her own power. “I need to check your temperature again, okay?”

“Where…”

“You’re at the Academy,” he reminded her. “You have Witch’s Flu. You’re staying with me while you’re contagious.” He kissed her hair, because in the moment, he could. “Let’s take your temperature.” He flicked his wrist to draw the thermometer to him and mimicked what he watched Hilda do earlier, shaking the glass tube, then placing it under her tongue. She lulled against him. “You’re okay,” he promised.

He removed the thermometer and read the results.

“107. Higher than it was a few hours ago.” He moved her carefully, not liking how listless she was, and went for the potion Hilda left on his bureau. She had also left the cinnamon. He followed the instructions she had scrawled on a scrap piece of parchment and returned to Sabrina. Salem meowed, willing him to help his charge.

“Sabrina?” He perched on the bed again. He was relieved to see her eyes, hazy and heavy as they
were, track with his voice. “I’m going to sit you up against the pillows so you can take this, okay?” The nod of her head was so subtle he nearly missed it.

As carefully as he could, he arranged the pillows and sat her up against his headboard, noting that she tried to help navigate her body. It was another good sign. He held the potion for her and while she made faces, she didn’t protest this time.

“Can I get you anything?” he asked.

“Cold,” she muttered. “And hot.”

“It’s the fever,” he nodded. “I’ll be right back.”

He hurried out of the room and into the adjoining bathroom. He found a cloth and wet it with the coldest water he could manage. He wrung out the excess liquid and returned to her. She had slid down in the bed and was back under the covers. He resumed his perch on the side of the bed and gently placed the cold rag over her forehead. She sighed in relief. He used magic to grow the flames again, then just sat at her side, watching her for any sign of discomfort.

“Nick?”

His heart both squeezed and expanded at the sound of his name – his shortened name – falling from her lips.

“I’m here,” he answered. “What can I do?”

“Go… Sleep.”

“I’ll sleep when I know you’re okay.” He took advantage of her vulnerable state to run a hand through her hair. He thought she leaned into his touch. “Are you still cold?” She nodded. He made to remove the cold cloth.

“No. Feels good.”

“Another blanket, then?” She nodded again. He didn’t hesitate to take the blanket from his cot and spread it over her. “Better?”

“Still cold.”

He hesitated. He knew one way to warm her up, but he wasn’t sure how she would react. Salem meowed again, prompting him. Waiting for any sign that he was making her uncomfortable, he laid down next to her, on top of the blankets. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her to him, his chest to her back.

“Better,” she sighed. He held her close, rested his forehead on the top of her head. Satisfied, Salem curled up on her pillow.

Nick stayed awake until Sabrina fell back into a peaceful sleep. He held her close, a little too warm himself between her fever-ridden body and the fire in the grate. He could have found another blanket in the empty dormitory, but he didn’t need it with the warmth in the room. And he didn’t want to leave her.

“I love you, Spellman,” he said into the dark, again because he could. He kissed her shoulder. “I’ll prove it.”
“Nicholas.”

Nick looked up from the journal he was reading. Sabrina was awake, still pale, still with dark circles under her eyes, but awake. He smiled at the sight of her buried under blankets, her head on his pillow, her hands tucked under her cheek as she lay on her side to look at him.

“You're awake.”

She took in how his feet were kicked up on the frame of a small rickety desk that hadn’t been there before, how he leaned back in a wooden chair, teetering on two legs. He looked comfortable, relaxed, this time in dark jeans and a white thermal shirt. His hair was messy, a little long. She blamed her still flu-addled brain for finding him nearly irresistible.

“How long have I been asleep?” she asked.

“Most of the last three days,” he answered. “How are you feeling?”

“Better,” she said with a nod. “I still feel a little weak and sleepy, but my throat is only a little sore and I think I’ve stopped coughing.”

“You have,” Nick nodded. “Your fever broke overnight.” He studied her for a moment. “You had us worried for a while. Your fever reached 109 at the worst of it. I called Hilda and she and I took turns keeping a cooling spell floating over you.”

“What’s the normal temperature for a witch?” she wondered.

“100,” Nick answered. “103 is cause for concern. You do like to do things to their fullest potential.” That made her lips tug upward into a smile. He tapped the journal. “Can I read you something?” She nodded. He turned to a marked section in the journal and began to read.

“Sabrina joined us today. She’s everything we prayed for, to the False God and the Dark Lord alike. She’s beautiful, like her mother, has her mother’s alabaster skin and big, expressive eyes. She’s special, and I don’t say that just because she’s ours. I can feel it when I hold her. She’s the best of both of us – all of our best parts, in one perfect child. It is my vow that she will live in a world where she can be her true self, where she is accepted for who she is and not feared for what she is. Diana and I have been blessed and we will not take this blessing for granted.”

Her eyes watered.

“My dad wrote that?”

“On the day you were born,” Nick confirmed. He looked back at the text, giving her a moment to herself. In a different time, he would have gone to her, held her. Not now.

“Thank you,” she said softly. “For reading that to me. It – means a lot.”

“I brought the rest of his journals up with me,” Nick told her. “I didn’t want to be too far away if you needed something. Feel up for picking up where you left off?”

“Not yet,” she shook her head slightly. “I still feel weak.”

“I’ll bet by tomorrow morning you’ll feel a lot better,” Nick offered. “You may even be able to go home.”

He had mixed feelings on the matter. He was relieved that she was feeling better, but he would no
longer have her with him, relying on him. He wouldn’t be able to brush her hair back or kiss her forehead without being pushed away.

“You’ve been stealing furniture,” she commented, taking in the bed, the desk, the chair. She recognized the desk from the ones found in the demonology classroom.

“Borrowed,” he corrected. “Like I said, I didn’t want to be down in the library and you need something.”

“Have you found anything?”

“Nothing noteworthy we don’t already know,” he answered. “I’ve been trading off between your father’s writings and texts he’s referenced.” He smirked just a little. “I’ve been re-reading the False God’s book. For all of his preaching of abstinence, the Song of Songs is reminiscent of a harlequin novel.”

“What’s it about?” Sabrina asked.

“It’s a love letter,” he told her. “A bride and groom, expressing their love and desire for one another.” He sat her father’s book aside and picked up the Bible. In spite of the disagreement of his kind with the works, he found himself pulled in by some of the verses of Song of Songs. He had marked a passage there as well. “Listen.”

You have captured my heart, my treasure, my bride. You hold it hostage with one glance of your eyes, with a single jewel of your necklace. Your love delights me, my treasure, my bride. Your love is better than wine, your perfume more fragrant than spices. — Song of Solomon 4:9-10

“He sounds lovesick,” Sabrina commented.

“I suppose he is.”

Nick didn’t know if he was talking about Solomon or himself. He picked her father’s journal back up, intent to go back to reading. A miniscule mark at the end of the passage he had read to Sabrina caught his eye. He brought the book closer. It was hard to make out, small and cramped, but it looked to be ‘SS1’.

“Sabrina, if you were your father, and you wrote ‘SS1’ as a notation next to the passage I just read you, what would you mean by that?”

“‘SS1,’” she repeated. “Next to the passage about me?” Nick nodded. “Well, wouldn’t ‘SS’ be – Sabrina Spellman? I don’t know what the one could be…”

She could practically see the cogs turning in Nick’s head.

“Your father’s notations were always references, usually to a text that could be found in the library. I would bet ‘SS1’ is his own work, but I haven’t seen anything like it…”

“You think he kept a journal on me?” Sabrina asked.

She was comfortable, cocooned into Nick’s blankets, still a little weak, a little tired, talking through a mystery the way they did before she knew the truth. The moment, combined with how attentive Nick had been while she was sick, made her want to forget his betrayal. Almost.

“Don’t mortals do that?” he replied. “Keep a memory book of their child’s milestone?”
“Some do,” she confirmed. “I don’t know that my parents did. I could always ask my aunts, but I was an infant when they died. If my aunts didn’t fill it in, there’s probably not much there.”

Nick realized she was right. If Edward had intended to write about his daughter, any volume of work he started would be succinct at best. But the thought led him down another path.

“Blackwood would have had files… Student files…”

“He likely took anything of consequence with him,” Sabrina said.

“Maybe…” Nick put the journal down and stood. In his mind, he could plainly see Blackwood’s private study. Something told him he had missed something during his search. “I’m going to Blackwood’s quarters.”

“Why?” Sabrina pushed herself upright. “What’s there?”

“I think I missed something on my search, something Ambrose and Prudence missed too.” He brought his witch’s mirror to Sabrina. “If I’m not back in a half hour, call Zelda.”

“Wait.” She tossed back the blankets, not caring that she was still in pajamas. She hadn’t brushed her hair in days, was sure she looked terrible. But it was Nick – he wouldn’t care. “I’m going with you.”

“No you’re not.”

“Yes, I am…” She stood. The room spun. She tried to play it off. “You seem to think something dangerous is in that study…”

“All the better reason for you to stay put.” He put his hands on her shoulders and guided her to sit back down on the bed. She was still too weak to protest. “Thirty minutes.” He left.

She heard him cast the spell, knew what he had done, but she had to check anyway. She crossed the room and tried to pull the door open. It stuck.

“Damn you, Scratch,” she yelled through the thick wood. He had sealed her in.

With nothing to do but wait, she turned with intentions of getting back in bed. The trunk at the end of Nick’s bed caught her eye.

“Well, if you’re going to leave me alone…”

She kneeled in front of it and opened the lid.

The flask she’d found him with the night they imprisoned the Dark Lord was haphazardly thrown on top. She picked it up and studied the engraved Scratch family crest. She was unsurprised to find it centered around a wolf.

“Vincit qui se vincit,” she read the worlds over the shield out loud. Her Latin wasn’t great, but this was something she knew. “He conquers who conquers himself.”

It was a fitting family motto. Nicholas Scratch was surely his own worst enemy. The rest of the crest was comprised of bells and oak leaves. She tried to recall what she had learned about the various symbols often used in a crest. The wolf was noble and courageous, represented the rewards of perseverance after a long siege. The oak or its leaves meant great age and strength. Bells escaped her, however, and she didn’t have time to ponder on it if she wanted to see what else was in the trunk. She wondered what colors the crest was as she sat it aside.
There were books, notebooks full of his school notes. She found a number of mortal magazines and books on all subjects, most of them dated, but a few of them from within the last few months. She was careful not to move anything too far from its original position, not sure of how much time she would have, nor how Nick would react to find her going through his things. She lifted the lid from a cardboard shoebox and gasped.

Nicholas Scratch was sentimental. There was a yellow piece of fabric, stained with mud and blood, that she knew to have been Amalia’s. There were two more pieces of fabric, one blue and floral, the other dark gray. She was sure they had been cut from a dress of his mother’s, a suit of his fathers. There were ticket stubs, too, from the horror movie double feature they had gone to a few days after Lupercalia. The photos snapped in the photo booth at the Baxter High Valentine’s Day dance were there. She had a copy of them in a similar box at home.

Her heart squeezed as she put the lid back on, trying to remind herself that Nick had hurt her, betrayed her trust. A few mementos didn’t change that.

The box he had referenced in the letter he gave her was in the bottom corner. The Scratch Family crest was, it turned out, red and black.

“Red for warrior, black for constancy,” she said. She tried to open it. It was shut tight. She held it at eye level, trying to decipher a way to open it. None appeared.

She heard footsteps.

She quickly tucked the box back into place and made sure to drop the flask back on top before closing the trunk and climbing into bed, just as Nick finished saying the words to remove the spell sealing her in. The door opened a moment later. Nick carried a stack of files, but his hair was a mess of curls and his clothes disheveled. There was what looked like a smear of black dust across his cheek.

“They were well-hidden and well-guarded, but I found Blackwood’s files on us.” He dropped the files onto his desk and checked the time. “And I’m back with six minutes to spare.”

“Where were they?” Sabrina questioned.

“There’s a secret room in his private study,” Nick explained. “It was heavily protected. I managed to break through the enchantments, but found a demon inside. I banished him, but he got a few swipes in first.” He picked up a folder. “This one is on you.”

Sabrina took it, but her eyes were on him.

“Are you okay?” she asked. “Breaking enchantments, banishing demons…”

“I’m okay,” he assured her. “All in a days work, right?”

She looked at him curiously. He was a little off, trying just a little too hard to come across as himself.

“Nicholas.” He looked at her as he shuffled through the files. “Tell me the truth.”

“I’m fine…”

She shook her head.

“You’re acting weird,” she told him. “And for someone who is oh so sorry for lying to me for months, lying right now isn’t a good look on you.”
She had him. She knew he knew it. He pursed her lips, knowing he was caught.

“The demon was a drude,” he explained. “They’re known for causing nightmares. This one trapped me in a waking sleep and forced me to re-watch some of the less enjoyable moments of my life, including, but not limited to, confessing my betrayal and my parents dying. It’s not really something I want to talk about.”

She realized then she didn’t know how Nick’s parents had died. She sensed now wasn’t the best time to ask.

“Let’s hope these files were worth it,” she said. Nick relaxed, grateful she was letting it go, but not foolish enough to think she wouldn’t bring it back up at a later date.

“I guess there’s only one way to find out.” He picked up the thickest folder and took a seat at the desk.

“That’s a thick file, Scratch…”

“I’ve caused a lot of trouble, Spellman,” he countered. He left it at that. They each began to read, lost in Blackwood’s words about them.

“Nothing,” Sabrina declared after a while. “There is absolutely nothing in this file that we didn’t already know. Blackwood wanted me to sign the Book of the Beast and then I got too powerful for him. Other than a couple of paragraphs about how he knew my father, also stuff we already know, there’s nothing else.”

Nick didn’t reply, completely engrossed in his files.

Sabrina took a moment to account for how she felt, both physically and emotionally. Physically, she felt better. Still a little weak, maybe sleepy, but better. Emotionally, she was as torn as ever. Everything with the coven aside, she still had feelings for Nick, but her trust in him was all over the place. He had been incredible while she was sick. He was at her side at the slightest indicator that she might need something, made sure she took her potion, did his best to get her to eat and drink even when it was the last thing she wanted. She was sure she hadn’t dreamed that he had held her one night, whispered ‘I love you’ and ‘I’ll prove it.’ But his betrayal had cut deep, and a few nights playing nurse didn’t make that go away.

“Anything in your files?” she tried again. Still no response. “Nicholas?” Curiosity was replaced by concern. She tossed back the blankets and went to his side. “What is it?” She was certain there was something important in his files that had him this oblivious to her. “Nicholas!”

He startled, as though he had just realized she was there.

“Sabrina.” Her name sounded almost like a relief. “Anything in your files?”

She shook her head, her concern growing.

“Nothing new.” She perched on the edge of his cot. “What’s in those files, Nicholas? You’ve been somewhere else for the last few minutes.”

He sighed and sat back in his chair.

“He documented every misdeed I ever did, even the ones I thought he didn’t know about,” he admitted. “But more than that…” He plucked a paper from the stack. “Listen to this:
Nicholas is aware that he is exceptional at conjuration and binding. With such skill at this young age, I daresay he may prove to be even more powerful than Edward Spellman himself. What Nicholas doesn’t realize is his power to banish. It’s more than the standard banishment most witches are capable of. He can destroy the most powerful of demons. I suspected as much, given his lineage, but it was witnessed when he was charged with banishing the demon he conjured during his first attempt in conjuring class. My sources reported back that the demon returned to its realm as a pile of ashes. At this point, it is imperative that he doesn’t know his ability, particularly if he ever decides to further explore some of the more progressive ideas he’s shown interest in.

“What does that mean?” Sabrina asked. “I don’t understand.”

“Most any witch or warlock can banish a demon,” Nick explained. “Some may have more trouble with it than others, but the magic is truly rather simple. Typically though, witches will trap demons in a jar or some other container…”

“Like an acheron,” Sabrina supplied. “Although we trapped Batibat in a jar.”

“Acherons aren’t something witches have just lying around,” Nicholas said, trying to help Sabrina understand. For all her power, there was still so much about the general principles of magic that she didn’t know or understand. “So it is typically a jar or vase, something they can seal and as long as it remains unbroken, it will keep the demon at bay for eternity.

“To banish a demon back to its depths isn’t all that hard, all things considered, but it does require a bit more magic, precision, than trapping them in the jar. The way it is supposed to work is essentially you perform the banishment spell – remember how Blackwood twisted his fist into his hand during the Head Boy competition? – and the demon goes back to where it came from, intact. Apparently, I have the ability to literally destroy a demon.” He shook his head. “I’ve never heard of that before.”

“Aren’t there other ways to kill demons?” Sabrina questioned. “A seraph blade, for instance?”

“Well, yes,” Nick confirmed. “And according to Christianity, heavenly fire, holy water, angels… But for a witch or warlock to be able to reduce one to ashes… I’ve never seen that, Sabrina.”

He was as anxious as he was curious, she realized. He, too, had powers other didn’t have. He was caught off guard, and she was slowly learning that Nicholas Scratch didn’t like life to go off script.

“What about your lineage?” she pressed. “Maybe there was someone in your family that had those power. Blackwood even said it – ‘given his lineage.’ It sounds like there might be something there.”

“I don’t know much about my ancestry,” he confessed. “I never really thought much about it, if I’m being honest. My parents died, Amalia raised me, and then I ended up at the Academy.” He tapped the files in front of him. “Apparently by design.”

“I’m planning to look into my mother’s side of my family,” Sabrina confided, slyly planting the seed that he should look into his family without outright suggesting it. “I know next to nothing about them, and I feel like I need to know – something.”

“If you want help…”

“I know who to ask,” Sabrina finished. They shared a tentative smile.

“You’re feeling better?” Nick asked again.

“I am…”
“Good.” He turned the page in his file. “Feel free to help yourself to the rest of those. Find out what we can about everyone else.”

Sabrina was about to press him for more on the contents of his own files when Zelda’s voice filled the air.

“Nicholas? Are you there?”

“What’s Aunt Zelda want?” Sabrina asked.

“Probably checking on you,” Nick replied. “She’s called once a day. Although she did call earlier…” He went to his bureau and picked up his witch’s mirror. “Sister Spellman,” he greeted. “Nice to hear from you again…”

“Never mind that,” she cut him off. “I need you at the mortuary as soon as you can get here.”

“Why?” Nick asked.

“Is everything okay?” Sabrina asked at the same time, coming to stand beside him.

“Bring Sabrina with you,” Zelda directed. “She should be well enough and no longer contagious now that her fever has broken. It’s time she slept in her own bed.”

She was gone before he had a chance to ask any more questions.

“What the heaven was that about?” Sabrina asked.

“Guess we’ll have to go to the mortuary to find out,” Nick replied. “You up for co-teleporting?”

“I can teleport myself…”


She told herself he was right, she was too weak to safely teleport on her own, not that she was swayed by the way he said ‘please.’

“I’m ready when you are,” she agreed.

“Okay then.” Nick linked his arm with hers, then laced their hands together. Sabrina raised a suspicious eyebrow at him. All he had to do was simply touch her. This seemed excessive. He winked. “An added precaution.”

His bedroom vanished. A moment later, they were in Zelda’s study.

“Good, that was quick,” she greeted them. “Sabrina, go upstairs, change your pajamas, and get into bed. I’ll have dinner brought to you later.”

“I’m not going anywhere until I know why you summoned us,” Sabrina challenged.

“I summoned him,” Zelda clarified, pointing to Nick. “We couldn’t well leave you at the Academy alone and as I said, you should be well enough to sleep at home now.” She peered over her glasses. “Although I’m sure Nicholas will miss the company.’”

He had the good sense not to answer. He was cautiously optimistic that he had made some progress with Sabrina over the last few days. He wouldn’t mess it up by saying something cheeky now.
“What’s going on?” he asked. “Why am I here?”

Zelda knew from experience that Sabrina wasn’t going anywhere.

“Blackwood has been located,” she informed them. “Prudence and Ambrose are ready to bring him down. But they need a bit of help.”

“Where are they?” Sabrina asked. “What can we do?”

“You can go upstairs and get into bed,” Zelda informed her. “Brother Scratch, however, is being asked to put his magical prowess to use.”

“Where are they?” he asked. The familiar pump of adrenaline had already started to course through his veins. “What do they need?”

“They’re in a small village in the mountains of Romania,” Zelda answered. “It seems Blackwood is using an assortment of demons to guard him and the twins.” Sabrina and Nick exchanged glances, both thinking of what they had just learned about Nick. “Your conjuring and binding abilities are necessary to gain access to Blackwood.”

“I’ll go at once,” Nick nodded.

“I’m going too,” Sabrina piped up.

“Absolutely not.” Nick’s disagreement drowned out the protests that emitted from Zelda. “It’s too dangerous, and you’re still getting over Witch’s Flu. You’ll stay here.”

“I can help…”

“You can help by staying here,” Nick challenged.

“I will bind you to the spot myself if I have to,” Zelda agreed. “You’re needed here, Sabrina. I can’t have you gallivanting around Europe just because you don’t want to be left out of the action.”

She simmered, glaring at first Zelda then Nick.

“You’ll check in when you arrive,” Zelda continued, eyes on Nick. “And remember, Brother Scratch, I want Blackwood’s head and those twins alive and well.”

“We’ll deliver both,” Nick promised. “I need a few things from the Academy and then I’ll teleport there.”

“Can you do that?” Sabrina asked, concerned. “Teleport that far?”

“I can,” Nick nodded. “I’ve teleported to the Unholy Land several times. This isn’t quite as far.”

Sabrina made a mental note to ask about his Unholy Land visits.

“Very well then,” Zelda nodded. “Go forth and be safe, Brother Scratch.”

Sabrina followed Nick out of the study. She had to talk to him before he left.

“Nicholas…”

“You’re not coming with me,” he said again, turning to face her. “I need you to stay here. For one, I might need help. I don’t know what I’m walking into. If I need a text from the library…”
“What if this is Roz’s vision?” she cut him off. “What if you’re walking right into what she’s been seeing?”

“Then I’ll be better prepared,” he stated. He took a breath. The thought had occurred to him as well, but for Sabrina’s sake, he tried not to show his concern. “Go through those files while I’m gone, see what you can find out,” he said to distract her. “Read your father’s journals. I don’t think I’ll be gone long…”

“I’ll read them, the files and the books,” she nodded. She looked up at Nick and felt the familiar tug of emotions in her chest. “You’ll… Be safe?”

“I will,” he promised. He gazed right back at her, riding his own storm of emotions. “I have plenty of reasons to come home.” One reason. He had one reason. She was standing in front of him. “Try not to get into too much trouble while I’m gone. Without me or Ambrose…” He meant it as a joke, but she didn’t smile.

“I’ll see what I can do,” she retorted without humor. She continued to study him. “Thank you, Nicholas, for taking care of me.”

He took a chance.

“I will do anything for you, Sabrina. Anything.” He placed his hands on her cheeks and kissed her forehead because despite his bravado, he knew there was a chance that this would be the last time he saw her. “I’ll see you soon.”

He was gone.

Her breath hitched.

“Please, Lilith,” she whispered, “let him come back safe. Ambrose and Prudence, too.”

She turned on her heel and hurried upstairs. She dialed Roz as soon as she was in her room.

“Hello?”

“Roz, it’s me…”

“‘Brina, hey!” Roz greeted. “How are you feeling? Your aunts said…”

“I’m better,” she interrupted. “Still a little weak, but better. Never mind that now though. Have you had anymore visions of Nicholas and what he was fighting?”

“No,” Roz answered. “I would have told you, sick or not. Why? What’s going on?”

Sabrina sighed.

“He just left to help Prudence and Ambrose. They found Blackwood, but he’s being guarded by demons. Because that wasn’t bad enough, we just found out Nick’s capable of destroying demons. Not banishing them. Destroying them. That’s not something we can typically do.”

“And you’re worried,” Roz deciphered.

“Yes,” Sabrina admitted. “What if this is your vision? What if he’s about to face whatever you were seeing? He doesn’t know how this ability works and he’s walking right into the hornet’s nest.”

“Are you home?” Roz asked.
“I am…”

“I’ll be there within the half hour.”

She hung up. Sabrina blew out a breath and fell back on her bed. In the back of her mind, she had worried about Ambrose and Prudence. Their mission was dangerous and the stakes were high. But now that Nick was involved…

“Damn you, Scratch,” she exhaled for the second time within the hour.

It felt like forever instead of twenty minutes before Roz tapped on her door.

“You sure you’re feeling better?” she asked Sabrina, eyeing her pajamas and knotted hair. “No offense, but you look – rough.”

“I’ve been passed out in Nicholas’ bed for three days,” she retorted. “Of course I look terrible.” Her eyes grew big. “Nicholas saw me like this before he left.” She sat down on the edge of her bed. “That’s comforting.”

“You sure seem to care a lot about how you look for someone who claims to want nothing to do with Nick – olas.” Sabrina narrowed her eyes at her friend for calling her out. “I’m just saying.”

“So you’ve seen nothing?” Sabrina tried, getting right down to business. There was no time to waste if there was any hint of what Nick, Ambrose, and Prudence were about to face. “Nothing new?”

“Nothing new,” Roz confirmed. “I haven’t had the vision again since we talked. But, I can try to see what’s going to happen? I can’t guarantee anything – I can’t just turn it on and off – but I can try.”

“Please?”

Her request betrayed just how worried she was. Roz nodded and joined Sabrina on the bed. She took Sabrina’s hands, closed her eyes, and bowed her head. Sabrina watched and waited, daring to breathe.

“This isn’t it,” she said, raising her eyes to Sabrina’s eventually. “Where he’s going – there are mountains. A desecrated church even older than the one in Greendale. That’s where the demons and Blackwood are. Blackwood is well-protected, but Nick is more than capable. The way it stands right now, he will be fine.”

“The way it stands… Things could change?” Sabrina asked.

“My visions show outcomes based on current choices,” Roz reminded her. “If Nick – and everyone involved – make the decisions they are currently set to make, things will turn out okay.”

“And if they change their minds?”

“Then the outcome will change.” Roz squeezed her hand. “I’ll check in often until they’re back, if you want.” Sabrina nodded.

“Thank you, Roz.” She bit her lip. “This is all so complicated.”

“Nick?” Roz prompted. She knew Sabrina’s sudden urgency to know about the Blackwood outcome wasn’t directly correlated to the fact that her cousin was in the thick of it.

“He was perfect while I was sick,” Sabrina confessed. “I went to the Academy to tell him about the vision you had of him and found him in the library.” She half-smiled and shrugged a shoulder. “He’s
always in the library.” She shook her head a bit, dismissing the image of a slightly disheveled Nick buried in research. “He was in a bad mood, a little short with me. I called him out and he told me it was the anniversary of his parents’ death.”

“How long ago did they die?” Roz asked curiously.

“Fifteen years ago,” Sabrina answered. “He doesn’t talk about them much, but he told me a little about them that night. I was going to leave, give him some space, and it’s not like we’re together, but he asked me to stay and I didn’t feel right leaving him when he was so vulnerable.” She saw the knowing look Roz flashed her and ignored it. “Within the hour, Witch’s Flu settled in. He carried me to his bedroom and called Hilda.”

“It’s really hard to see him as the bad guy when you talk about him like this,” Roz told her, trying to help her friend see the obvious.

“Ugh!” Sabrina fell back against her pillows. “I know, Roz. Trust me. I’ve been at war with my feelings since he showed up in my bedroom to apologize the night of the coronation. I want to trust him. I know that if you told the Dark Lord no, he would make terrible things happen, which meant Nick truly didn’t think he had a choice. He was willing to absorb Satan to save me. And it seems small in comparison, but he did everything right while I was sick. But I can’t explain just how deeply he hurt me. It was more than a white lie. The Dark Lord asked for his devotion early into our friendship. So much of what we had was built on that…”

“But was it?” Roz interjected. “I’m Team Sabrina here, but I can’t help but point out how devoted Nick has been to you. He loves you, Sabrina. All of you, witch and mortal.”

“I know,” she admitted. For all of his faults, she wanted to believe he loved her. “I went through his things while he was out of the room…”

“Of course you did,” Roz muttered. Sabrina shot her a dirty look.

“He’s kept mementos – movie tickets, pictures. He had all of these mortal books and magazines, like he was studying mortals. Not the texts we have in our Mortal Studies class…”

“That’s a class?” Roz interrupted.

“I’m not exactly one of many half mortals,” she reminded Roz. “Witches tend to not know much about the mortal way of life. It’s like Nicholas was studying how mortals have relationships, what they do in relationships.” She bit her lip again. “When we first met, he told me he admired how mortals devote themselves to one another. It seems like he was trying to, I don’t know, learn more about mortals, maybe understand that side of me.”

“He was rather fascinated by the Valentine’s Day dance,” Roz recalled. “And by Dr. Cerberus.”

“He likes to know things,” she said with a shake of her head. “He studies, all the time, for fun. Really though, he was probably trying to figure out how to manipulate me to make sure I stayed on the Path of Night.”

“You’re doing it again,” Roz said.

“Doing what?”

“Whenever someone brings up Nick, you go off on a tangent. You love him, you don’t trust him, you don’t know how you feel, he did this but then he did that… It’s pretty clear, however, that you do, in fact, care about him.”
“Well, of course I care about him,” Sabrina said. “I care about a lot of people…”

“You love Nick, Sabrina.” Roz was tired of the back and forth. “He screwed up. Big time. But he really did fall in love with you. And I’ll dare to say he’s doing everything he can to earn your trust back. All you have to do is give him the chance.”

Sabrina sighed. Roz had, of course, nailed the situation.

“I’ll talk to him when he gets back,” she decided. “Figure things out.”

“Give him a chance,” Roz encouraged again. “I don’t think you will regret it.”

“I thought you were on my side?” Sabrina asked with a raised eyebrow.

“I am,” Roz confirmed, leaning back into Sabrina’s pillows. “I want you to be happy, and as much as you may want to deny it right now, Nick can make you happy.”

“Remember when life wasn’t complicated?” Sabrina asked, letting her head lull against Roz’s shoulder.

“I do,” Roz confirmed. “I also remember when your hair didn’t look like it has mice living in it and you wore clean pajamas.”

Sabrina made a face.

“Fine,” she said. “I’ll shower.” She stood. “Roz…”

“I’ll tell you the moment I see something,” Roz promised. “He’s going to come home safe, Sabrina,” she assured her. “They all are.”

“Maybe this time,” Sabrina said, thinking of the vision of Nick fighting among stonework. “But there’s always next time to worry about.”

Chapter End Notes

So, Nick has his own unique powers. There are files. A potential book on Sabrina somewhere out there. And Nick has taken off to join the Blackwood hunt. Never mind the fact that there are all sorts of feelings and emotions involved. Oh, and can't forget Roz as the voice of reason.

Will it get even more complicated? Stay tuned...

Please let me know your thoughts!
“Nice of you to join us, Nicky.”

“Prudence,” Nick greeted as he stepped through the door. “Ambrose.”

“Scratch,” Ambrose replied in a diplomatic tone. Nick got the message. Ambrose wasn’t happy he was there.

“Hilda sent food.” He dropped the knapsack on the wobbly wooden table of the damp one room cabin. It was more of a shack, really, exponentially more crowded with his arrival. “She caught me moments before I left the Academy.”

“She’s a saint,” Ambrose said, going for the knapsack. Prudence showed no interest, eyes on Nick.

“How are things at home? What’s going on? Tell us everything.”

“Shouldn’t you be filling me in on Blackwood and his demons?” Nick countered.

“We will,” Prudence nodded once. “But first – my sisters?”

Nick understood. For all Prudence’s brash behavior, she loved her sisters deeply. She wasn’t all stone and ice the way she wanted people to believe. They were alike in that way. He was learning he wasn’t really the person he tried to show others either.

“Dorcas and Agatha are fine,” he assured her. “They have recovered well from the poisoning and are helping Zelda keep tabs on coven morale, in a matter of speaking. They have been rather selfless in helping what’s left of the coven get back on their feet.”

It had genuinely surprised him to see those two step up and care for others. But he supposed when the odds were stacked against a person, things were different.

“My aunts?” Ambrose asked, breaking a muffin in half.

“Hilda is in her element, taking care of everyone. She’s also helping the remaining teachers get the Academy back to a habitable condition. Zelda, too, has stepped into her milieu if I’m being honest. The role of High Priestess suits her.”

“And my cousin?”

It was a challenge. Nick rose to it.

“Sabrina is on the upside of Witch’s Flu. She wanted to come with me, but Zelda and I wouldn’t let her. She’s still weak, for one, but I didn’t want her in danger.”

He was almost thankful for the Witch’s Flu excuse. Had she been well, she would have put up more
of a fight, and probably tagged along whether he told her she could or not, Zelda’s threat to bind her
to the spot be damned. It was a rare moment of submission from her.

“You suddenly care about her safety, do you?” Ambrose asked in a conversational tone. “Although I
suppose with your precious Dark Lord otherwise indisposed, you don’t have much of a choice but to
put your support behind the Spellman Manifesto. Kill or be killed, so to speak.”

“I messed up,” Nick said without hesitation. He had expected Ambrose to be unhappy with him. He
and Sabrina had a relationship more akin to brother and sister than cousins. Of course he was mad at
him for betraying her. “I never wanted to hurt her, Ambrose.”

“A likely story.”

“Sabrina and Nick’s ebbing romance isn’t of consequence right now,” Prudence interjected, working
to diffuse the situation. She had spent a lot of time alone with Ambrose. His dislike of Nicholas
Scratch ran deep. But she knew Nick better than Ambrose did. She was the one who had requested
his help. “We have to destroy Blackwood.”

“Agreed,” Nick nodded. “What are we dealing with?”

“Demons,” Ambrose said. “Blackwood. His minions. The usual.” Nick looked to Prudence for an
answer.

“Despite his delivery, Ambrose is right. Blackwood is being protected by his guard, who are in turn
being protected by demons. Six of them, from what we can tell. Unfortunately, we haven’t been able
to get close enough to find out more.”

“Zelda said they were in a desecrated church?” Nick pushed.

“Not far from here,” Prudence confirmed. “We’re well-hidden, but at the expense of not gathering
the intel we would like.”

“So we’re going in blind?” Nick clarified.

“Not entirely,” Ambrose said. “We know what Blackwood’s capable of, and thanks to my work at
the Academy, we know what his guard is capable of which, aside from hand-to-hand combat, isn’t
much.”

“And my job is to expel the demons?” Nick asked.

“We’ll help,” Prudence nodded. “It’s going to take all of us.”

“Prudence gets Blackwood’s head.” Ambrose stated. “She deserves that.”

“She does,” Nick nodded. “When do we move in?”

“In a few days,” Prudence said. “We need to plan, as best we can. We’ll start tonight.”

“I need to check in with Sabrina first,” Nick said. “I promised I would let her know when I got here.
She can pass along word to Zelda.”

“Why bother keeping promises now?” Ambrose asked. “It’s not like your word carries much weight
with her.”

“Enough, Ambrose,” Prudence snapped. She looked at Nick. “Contact Sabrina, let her know you’re
here. We’ll get to work when you’re done.”
Nick excused himself and stepped outside the cabin. The atmosphere instantly lightened when he was free of Ambrose’s dislike. He took his witch’s mirror from his pocket and requested Sabrina.

“Nick!”

“I don’t have long,” he said in greeting, taking in her damp hair and the fluffy robe wrapped around her, “but I’m here. I’m with Ambrose and Prudence. They’re well.”

“You’re somewhere safe?” she asked. “All of you?”

“We seem to be,” Nick nodded. “Ambrose sends his love.” Ambrose hadn’t mentioned it, but it felt like something Sabrina needed to hear. “Everything is okay there? How are you feeling?”

“You haven’t been gone long enough for something to go wrong,” she retorted. “Give me some credit, Scratch.”

“There’s credit and then there’s you, Spellman. I’ve seen you turn the world on its ear in the time it takes you to walk up a staircase.” She made a face at him. He wasn’t wrong. “How are you feeling?” he asked again.

“Better,” she nodded. “A bath helped.” He watched as she settled against her pillows. He missed her fiercely in that moment. “I called Roz after you left. She said this isn’t the vision she’s been seeing – and that all of you will come home safe.”

“That’s reassuring,” Nick said. “But I already told you, Sabrina – I’ve got plenty of reasons to come home.” He kept saying “reasons” plural, but the only true reason he had filled the mirror in his hand. “I should get back inside, start planning. Get some rest, okay?”

“I’m going to bed,” Sabrina nodded. Her body was craving sleep. She had fully intended on napping in his bed until he found files Blackwood’s files, and then Zelda summoned him. As much as she wanted to start going through the files, she would be useless if she didn’t rest soon. “Check in when you can?”

“If I can,” he promised. He took one long look at her, just in case. “Sleep well, Sabrina.”

He put the mirror away, regretting not telling her he loved her. Just in case.

He went inside and found Ambrose and Prudence at a makeshift table, picking at the basket Hilda had sent, papers and maps spread around them.

“Well?” he asked. They both looked at him. “What’s the plan?”

Blackwood’s files were fascinating.

She knew far too much about her classmates now. Every indiscretion. Every punishment. Every sign that they may not be as dense as Blackwood seemed to believe them all to be.

She put Prudence’s file aside and blew out a breath. Blackwood had spared no mercy on his daughter, had intended for her to flee with him as a mother to her siblings. His horrible plans for the twins and Prudence made her stomach knot. She and Prudence had never been the best of friends, but she had a healthy respect for the witch, and had learned she could count on her when it was really necessary. She was grateful Prudence found her backbone before Blackwood succeeded.

Finally, she picked up Nick’s file. She had intentionally saved it for last, watched it taunt her over the
last week as she slowly waded through the others between classes at Baxter High, homework, helping her aunts, and talking up her father’s manifesto among their coven. She was almost nervous about what she was about to read. She flipped open the folder.

Right away, Nick’s file was different. The others, including hers, which she had read first and found nothing new from the first time she read it, had each contained no more than a few short paragraphs describing how they had came to the Academy, what their talents were, and any special notations about them on the first page. It was really no more than a better-written version of the notes in the ledger Nick found. The rest of the folder would contain grades, reports from teachers, things one would expect to have in a file on a student. Nick’s file, however, had a bulleted account of his life, beginning with the death of his parents.

- I learned today of the deaths of Elizabeth and Nicholas Scratch. Such a shame, to lose such a fine witch and warlock. I’m told their young son, also known as Nicholas, is missing.

Sabrina frowned. Missing?

- I’ve sent brothers to search for Nicholas. He’s young, four, I’m told, and should be with his own kind. We went straight to his grandmother – Agatha Harkness – and she believes him kidnapped and likely dead.

“Kidnapped?” Sabrina wondered out loud.

- There has been no sign of Nicholas. The Scratch family compound in the Unholy Land has been thoroughly searched, as have their estates in the Loire Valley, the Scottish Highlands, and Hamburg. The brothers have suggested he may, in fact, be dead, but I don’t believe that. He is likely being hidden. Not by the grandmother – she’s been questioned with truth serum and knows nothing – but by someone else close to the Scratch family.

“What the Heaven, Scratch?” Sabrina muttered.

- We have a lead on Nicholas. A mortal local near the Loire Valley estate spied a young boy wandering in the woods and reported it to the police. He matches Nicholas’ description, however dated it may be. He’s been missing for four years at this point, so I suppose it is highly unlikely, but we must follow up.
- Praise Satan! Nicholas has been located. He was being cared for by his wolf familiar. She was injured in the extraction, but Nicholas is now in our care. He was found filthy. Hair long, clothes a bit too small, worn and tattered. He is a bit undersized for his age, but not malnourished. The school healer is tending to him. She will ensure he is bathed and dressed in clean wears, feed him and give him a haircut. We will evaluate him in the morning to see how far behind his magical development is.

Sabrina’s heart shattered. She could conjure an image of a young Nicholas, his dark hair hanging around his shoulders, dirt on his cheeks, his shirt torn. She had never considered how he had lived while Amalia raised him. She wondered for a moment if he would be upset that she was learning so many intimidate details about his life, but he had told her to read the files, including his. He wanted her to know.

- Nicholas is far behind his peers. The lack of proper guardianship has caused him to be significantly delayed in learning even the most basic magic, not to mention reading, writing, and arithmetic. Even his vocabulary is limited. He will work with tutors to get him caught up to a point in which we can transition him into formal classes.

Nicholas Scratch, delayed in learning and speech. It was such a ridiculous thought that Sabrina could
hardly believe it to be true. The Nick she knew was always buried in a book, always had an answer or at the very least, a clever quip. Still, she knew it was the truth. At some point in his life, Nick hadn’t been the top student, the one the others envied.

- Nicholas is making incredible strides in his studies. His tutors report that he quickly mastered basic letters and words and has moved on to simple sentences in both reading and writing. He’s progressing with arithmetic as well. His vocabulary expands by the day. It is their recommendation that he begin elementary Latin in conjunction with the English language and I have agreed. It will serve him well to learn it now, while he is still young./
- Nicholas has joined formal classes. Teachers report that he is a bit quiet, but has scored high marks thus far. I will continue to monitor his progress. He is a Scratch. He cannot be ordinary.

“Cannot be ordinary,” Sabrina repeated. “What’s your deal, Scratch?”

- Nicholas has ascended to the top of his classes. He seems to have an unlimited capacity for knowledge. He consumes books at an impressive rate. He asks curious questions, questions that catch his teachers off guard. He is perhaps not as social as his peers, however, likely a result of his young life spent in isolation. I shall encourage him to bond with the others.
- It appears Nicholas is not capable of close relationships. He has quite a collection of admirers, to be sure. He has proven to be a natural leader. His peers gather around him with a sort of reverence. But there does not appear to be a friend among them. He would rather be in the library than out playing warlock ball. The young witches are starting to take notice of his good looks, however. It will be interesting to watch how he reacts to female attention.

“Not capable of close relationships,” Sabrina muttered. Slowly, parts of Nick she thought he purposefully kept hidden from not just her but everyone were coloring themselves in in various shades of gray.

She continued to read. The next several bullet points were updates on his study habits, his progression through his classes, notes on mischief he had managed. Once the foundation was there, Nick had progressed quickly, testing out of subjects, stumping teachers with questions on theory and logic in their own areas of expertise.

- I gave Nicholas Edward Spellman’s acheron configuration with the challenge to solve the damned thing. He has expressed his interest in it several times now and I finally gave in. If he can solve the damned thing, I’ll give him my title myself.

Sabrina saw the irritation in Blackwood. She would bet something had happened that day to annoy him, to get under his skin. He had given Nick the acheron for a reason, to solve it, perhaps, but likely to occupy him or else save himself.

- Nicholas is rather promiscuous it appears. No matter. It’s good for a young warlock to experiment, to taste the various pleasures of the flesh. I dare say I encourage it, so long as he is smart.

Sabrina cringed. She knew Nick had a past, but it didn’t feel good to read about it.

- Nicholas has banished his familiar. She was dangerous, stalking around the school, attempting to attack other students that got close to Nick. I don’t know that I have ever seen a familiar express this extent of jealousy before. It is unnatural. He made the right choice to get rid of her.
- Nicholas has expressed concern about signing the Book of the Beast. Sabrina nearly dropped the file. I allowed him access to the sanctum and he has taken an interest in Edward
Spellman’s work, tells me he is searching for a solution to the acheron. I believe I have convinced him to sign his name, but once again, he asked questions not typical of a warlock his age or even one much older and experienced. He truly is exceptional in many ways. I just have to ensure that his path stays aligned with the one of Night.

So Nick, too, had questioned signing the Book of the Beast. She knew now that he was following the Dark Lord’s devotion when she finally signed her name. She assumed that was why he had never told her of his doubts. She felt an irrational wave of anger towards him with this new information.

- **Nicholas has signed his name in the Book of the Beast. He did so without further question, and even with a bit of a flourish. He then appeared in my office and made a power play, requesting access to his family’s assets. I resisted at first – his trust is untouched, but the assets are substantial and he is young – but he was aware of what is rightfully his. Mr. Scratch continues to impress me with his mind and his ability to get what he wants. He has informed me he will be spending the holidays at his family home in the Unholy Land. I told him to do what he would like, so long as he returned to school after the Winter Solstice. I don’t think I need to worry that he will not. The Academy has become his home – he has few attachments in life, but this school appears to be one.**

- **Nicholas appears captivated with the Spellman girl. I’m unclear as to whether his interest is casual or something more. Their pairing is an intriguing thought. On one hand, they could be a powerful couple. On the other, still powerful, but dangerous to our way of life. Their progressing relationship bears watching.**

- **The Dark Lord has asked Nicholas to get close to Sabrina Spellman. He sees it, too, the way Nicholas looks at the girl. Others of our kind have shown interest in other ways of life, but have always chosen the right path, our path. Nicholas has certainly exhibited more interest in Edward Spellman’s work than I would like. Add a beautiful girl to the equation, and I do believe he could be swayed to follow her.**

As of now, the girl is still wrapped up in her mortal boyfriend, her mortal life. She will sign the Book of the Beast, one way or another, and everything will change for her. That is when she will see what the rest of us already know – her mortal life cannot continue to exist in its current state. I do believe Nicholas will follow his devotion – he has a tendency to want to please his superiors, and who is more superior than the Dark Lord himself? – and perhaps in doing so, he will remember who he is, what his own path should be.

Fresh anger pulled at Sabrina. Blackwood had treated them like marionettes long before they ever realized it.

- **The Dark Lord is pleased with Nicholas. Sabrina signed her name in his book, and while Nicholas was not a part of it, our Lord sees how the boy influences her, supports her. While the Dark Lord is pleased, I am concerned. He does not understand emotions such as love, and I believe the boy is in love with Sabrina. Lust is there, to be sure, but should Nicholas get the chance to sweep in and steal her away from the mortal, I have no doubt he will.**

She couldn’t quite identify the feelings that ran through her. The Dark Lord pleased. Blackwood doubtful of where Nick’s loyalties lie. His perspective certainly lined up with Nick’s story of his devotion only ever being to her.

- **Nicholas and Sabrina gave quite the performance as Lilith and the Dark Lord tonight. If there were any doubts about their connection, there is not now. Even I was momentarily swept away by them. Now, I’m merely concerned. Together, they will either be the way forward or the destruction of our church.**
Nicholas manipulated the Lupercalia matching tonight to ensure he was paired with Sabrina. Again I don’t believe his motives were purely those of the Dark Lord. I overheard some of the boys asking him about his intentions towards the girl, no doubt expecting him to wax poetic about his plans to take her virginity during a night of carnality. He certainly would have done so in the past, but with her, I don’t think he would so much as hold her hand if she did not want him to. His threat to remove the boys’ tongues if they continued their ribbing certainly was no threat.

Her heart stuttered. The picture Blackwood was painting through his observations was so different than what she wanted to believe about Nicholas. There was only one more paragraph, and she approached it with trepidation.

I no longer have doubts about Nicholas and where his devotions lie. They are not to this church or his Lord, but to the girl. He has fallen in love – a true love, a love he doesn’t understand, but feels all the same. He has been reading everything he can find about mortals and love, sneaking in magazines and books from that diner the mortals go to, trying to decipher how he feels, how to act on it. There are a number of reasons I’m concerned, not in the least because the Dark Lord is displeased. The bond he has with Sabrina isn’t of this world and I am unsure of how to break it. I will find a way, however. The Spellman girl is out of control and Nicholas is holding her hand through it all. They cannot be allowed to ascend to power as a couple. They will, as sure as the Dark Lord will soon walk the earth, destroy our way of life if they are not stopped.

“Unholy shit,” Sabrina said, sitting back against her headboard and letting the file fall to her lap. “Blackwood knew everything.” Salem meowed. Sabrina shook her head. “I don’t know how. Spies, I guess. And an apparent direct line to the Dark Lord.” She picked up the file again. “I guess I should read the rest of this.”

She spent nearly four hours reading and re-reading the content of Nick’s file. It contained detailed progress reports from his tutors, evaluations from his teachers. They marveled at how quickly he absorbed information, wondered at how he went from “shockingly delayed” to “staggeringly intelligent.” There were letters from teachers saying they had nothing else to teach Nicholas, notations of questions he had asked that they had no answers for. His conjuring and binding teachers in particular gave substantial feedback, all delighted in his ability to perform advanced feats of magic. He was also deemed gifted in demonology, especially adept at ruins. He was removed from history and theology classes within two years because he simply knew too much.

Potions wasn’t his best subject, but he was still a top student. Spiritualism, divinity, telepathy – he again scored high marks, but according to his teachers, he hadn’t shown as much interest in those areas. Their belief was that Nicholas Scratch excelled wherever he wanted to and he simply only wanted to know enough in the subjects he wasn’t top of the class in to utilize them in the real world. By the time the school fell to Blackwood, Nicholas was barely attending formal classes and instead spent his days in the library studying independently.

There was still a large part of the story missing. What did Blackwood believe Nick was capable of? They now knew he could destroy demons, but there seemed to be more. A bigger piece of the puzzle. Why was Blackwood so afraid of their relationship? What had happened to Nick between the ages of four and eight? What had happened to his parents? Why had his grandmother been so quick to believe Nick was dead or at the very least, kidnapped? Where was his grandmother now?

She ultimately had more questions than answers.
With a sigh, she gathered the papers from Nick’s file and picked up the folder to return them. She stopped. There, in the upper corner of the inside of the folder, was an inked crucifix.

“What…?”

Curious, she picked up the nearest file. It was Agatha’s. She opened it. Inside, in the same location, was another crucifix.

With rushed hands, she grabbed for another file. Dorcas. Melvin. Elsbeth. Prudence, even. All of them had a crucifix. She grabbed for hers and flipped it open. She wasn’t surprised to see the same crucifix inked into the corner.

The pieces clicked into place. It was an insane thought. Surely not possible. But, if she had learned anything in recent weeks, everything was at least a little bit possible.

“I need Nicholas,” she declared.

She put the files aside and raced out of her bedroom.

“I don’t like this.” Nick sat back in his chair. “There are too many unknowns.”

“We have limited information, Scratch,” Ambrose reminded him. “Like it or not, this is all we’ve got to go off of.”

“I agree,” Prudence said. Ambrose and Nick both looked at her. “With both of you,” she clarified. “Nick is right in the fact that there are too many unknowns. Ambrose is right in the fact that this is all we have to work with.”

“We’re taking a lot of risks,” Nick said. “I would be less concerned if there weren’t two children involved.”

“We will get them out of there safely,” Ambrose said. “I will get them out of there safely. That’s my job.”

“We’re all responsible…”

“Your only job is to neutralize the demons,” Ambrose reminded him. “Prudence and I will handle the rest.”

“We have to work together,” Nick pushed back. “There are three of us and a Heaven of a lot more of them. I don’t know what sort of demons we’re facing. If you would just let me get closer…”

“No,” Ambrose said firmly. “We will not sacrifice our cover so you can get a better look at a few demons.”

“A few demons?” Nick asked. “Ambrose, there are six of them – at least. I would imagine they aren’t bottom tier demons, either.”

“You’re not in charge here,” Ambrose informed him. “I know you’re used to wielding a certain amount of power, using your incredibly enlarged brain to sway others, including my cousin, but this time, you are merely here because you have a skill you can offer.” He fixed Nick with a glare. “You don’t have your books or your Dark Lord backing you up this time.”

“Let’s get back to the task at hand,” Prudence suggested, trying to neutralize the tension. It had been like this for a week now, the pair of them verbally sparring at every turn. Ambrose always started it.
Nick always tried to remain calm – until he couldn’t. If they failed in their mission, she was certain it would be because they did each other in. At the moment, she was almost willing to let them and take care of Blackwood her damned self. “I say we make our move tomorrow night. It’s a new moon, so it will be as dark as we can hope for…”

Nick wasn’t listening.

“Ambrose, I get it,” he said, finally losing his patience. “You don’t like me. That’s fair. I hurt someone you care about. Trust me, I am being punished thoroughly for my actions. There is nothing worse than being with Sabrina, but not being with Sabrina…”

“File that under things you should have thought about when the Dark Lord asked you for your devotion,” Ambrose interjected. “Or even after, really. You had plenty of opportunities to change your mind. To come clean…”

“If I had told him no, he would have done something in retaliation,” Nick said. “He asked a big thing of me. His punishment would have been substantial if I had refused. He likely would have hurt Sabrina as retribution.”

“No if you would have told her the truth,” Ambrose fired back. “We would have protected her.”

“I’m trying to make amends,” Nick said, letting his frustration show. “I understand that it will be a long time – if ever – before Sabrina sees me as someone she can trust. But, I’m trying. It may not count for much with you, and that’s fine. You’re not the one I care about trusting me. But we’re about to ambush a powerful warlock, guarded by demons and a band of what amounts to a bunch of merry idiots. We’re not in a position to let your issues with me affect the task in front of us.”

He stood then.

“Where are you going?” Prudence asked. “Sit down, Nick…”

“I need some air,” he said. “I’ll be back.”

He left the cabin and walked a few hundred yards away, mindful of his surroundings, just in case they weren’t as well hidden as they believed themselves to be. He sat down on a stump and rubbed his face.

He thought he did an okay job most days of hiding how much he was struggling with his actions, with trying to find a way, any way, to make things right. It was torture to spend time with Sabrina, be in the same room with her and yet feel like they were miles and miles apart. There was no magic to fix his mistakes. He couldn’t snap his fingers or cast a spell. All he could do was stay the course and hope someday, Sabrina might give him another chance. It was exhausting, and the guilt gnawed at him constantly, always working, always there to remind him of the monumental mistake he made.

It was as though she knew he was thinking about her.

He grabbed for the witch’s mirror he had tucked in the inside of his jacket when he heard her voice. He had taken to carrying it around with him during the time he had been in Romania should anyone in Greendale – her – need something.

“Sabrina?” She filled his mirror. She was in her bedroom and seemingly safe. Relief washed over him. “Is everything okay?”

“Everything is fine,” she said. “Or, well, fine for now. I think. I’m not really sure…”
“Thanks for clearing that up,” he retorted. “What’s going on, Spellman? I can see it in your eyes that you’re up to something.”

“First, are you okay?” she asked, ignoring the little voice that pointed out how well he knew her. “Ambrose? Prudence?”

“We’re all fine,” he said. “We’re running a little short on patience, but we’re okay.”

“When are you going…”

“Soon,” he cut her off, just in case someone was listening. “I’ll be home soon.” She nodded to show her understanding. They would move in on Blackwood soon – but he was being careful in case someone was eavesdropping. “Your turn. What prompted you to call me?”

“I was reading your file…” He nodded, aware of what she would have learned about him. He had purposefully left his file behind for that reason. He had a hell of a lot of questions himself, but the answers to those would have to wait until he was back in Greendale. “I noticed something in the upper corner of the inside of the file.”

She picked it up and showed him. He leaned closer to the mirror, trying to make out the black spot she was pointing to.

“What is that?” he asked. “I can’t tell through the mirror, but it looks a bit like a crucifix.”

“It is,” Sabrina confirmed. “There is one in the same place on every file, including mine.”

“What does it mean?” Nick wondered, already thinking about it’s symbolism.

“You’re going to think I’m crazy…”

“Try me,” Nick said wryly. He had learned with Sabrina, the crazier something sounded, the more likely it was to be true.

“I think you – and everyone else there is a file on – was baptized into the Catholic Church.”

It was dark on Nick’s side of the mirror, and she could barely make out his features, but she could still tell he was surprised by her theory.

“Baptized into the Catholic church?” he repeated. “I don’t know, Sabrina. That doesn’t seem likely…”

“But why the crucifixes?” she asked. “And why, in every file, does Blackwood consistently reference the importance of the Path of Night and keeping us on it? For that matter, why did Blackwood have so many orphans under his care?”

Nick didn’t have answers.

“I don’t know, Sabrina,” he admitted. “Blackwood obviously had been plotting his Church of Judas for years. We have no way of knowing how we all fit into his personal game of chess. Besides, if the others were baptized, they would have been able to resist the witch hunters, wouldn’t they?”

“Those were no ordinary witch hunters,” Sabrina reminded him. “They were angels. They assumed everyone was a bonafide name signed in the Book of the Beast witch. The coven assumed they were all bonafide name signed in the Book of the Beast witches. No one would have thought ‘oh, hey, maybe this Prudence girl was baptized.’ Everyone simply made assumptions. They assumed they
knew who they were – a witch or an angel – and thought they knew what they were dealing with.”

“Fine,” Nick agreed. “I can follow that logic, if only in theory. But I still think it’s farfetched that so many of us would have been baptized…”

“How would I find out?” she asked. “If someone was baptized?”

“The easiest way would be to see if they could enter a church…” He regretted the words as soon as they were out of his mouth. He had to learn to think before he spoke, especially when it was Sabrina he was answering, but he was just so used to knowing the answers, at least when it came to magic, that he couldn’t help himself. It was everything else he had questions about. “Sabrina, don’t…”

“Who could I get?” she wondered. “Dorcas, probably. She’s a bit dense. I can convince her… Or Melvin. Honestly, I think he has a bit of a crush on me…”

“Sabrina, don’t try it,” he warned. “There is no one there to back you up…”

“How hard could it be?” she asked. “We try to walk across the threshold. I can definitely enter. If Dorcas or Melvin or whoever I get to come with me can, great. If they can’t, we go back home…”

“If a witch tries to enter the church, they will burn,” Nick said. “It will be painful…”

“I’m sure there’s a counter spell or if we move as soon as the burning starts…”

“Sabrina, there are other ways,” he said. “When I’m home, we will figure out what the crucifixes mean. But until then, wait…”

“I can’t just sit around and wait,” Sabrina sprouted. “Who knows when you will be home?”

“Soon,” he said. “I’ll be home soon. Listen to me for a minute, okay? You’re talking about playing with theologies and magics beyond ourselves. Without Ambrose or I there, you’re going at it solo. Your aunts are too busy, and I doubt they would be too happy with you for dragging one of the few coven members left on a potential death mission, just to see if a sketch in an evil warlock’s files is an indicator that we’re all half Catholic or whatever the Heaven it means.”

“I don’t especially appreciate your attitude right now, Nicholas,” she informed him, annoyed he wasn’t more excited about her discovery. “This could mean something. Something huge…”

“I don’t especially appreciate you putting your life on the line for something that is no more than a theory right now,” he fired back. “Please, Sabrina, think about this…”

“You know what? I’m done with this conversation,” she declared, her patience expired. “Good luck with your mission.”

She was gone.

Nick sighed, slipped the mirror back into his pocket, and dropped his head to his hands in frustration. He had no doubt that Sabrina was already putting her plan together, preparing to go headlong into something she had no real understanding of. He loved and hated that about her – that she would just take a chance and hope for the best. She would ignore his warnings, likely recruit her mortal friends, and try to prove herself right, if only to show him he was wrong for cautioning her. And because she was Sabrina, she would likely make a mess of it in the process. With him and Ambrose out of the picture, he hoped to Lilith her aunts would be there to help her should she need it.

“Are you going to sit out here feeling sorry for yourself for the rest of the night or are you going to
come back inside and help us finalize our plans so we can get the Heaven out of here?"

Prudence stood before him, looking formidable in her sleek black outfit. Nick sighed and sat upright.

“I assume you’ve told Ambrose off and now it’s my turn?” he asked.

“I’ve informed Ambrose he needs to check himself,” she confirmed. “You do a bit of a better job of maintaining your composure until he brings up Sabrina and then all bets are off.”

“She’s a sensitive subject,” Nick said, not offering more. Prudence studied him.

“You really love her, don’t you?” she asked, reading his anxious energy.

“More than my own life,” he confirmed. “I was willing – and I remain willing – to give up everything for her.”

Prudence surprised him by sitting down next to him.

“Do you ever wish things were the way they used to be?” she asked. “When we were stupid young witches and warlocks, traipsing about the Academy, having a little too much fun, completely oblivious to the true evil all around us?”

“No,” Nick said after a moment. “Going back to that time would mean going back to a time in which Sabrina wasn’t in my life. It hasn’t been easy, but I don’t regret any of this. Even if she never trusts me again, I don’t regret the chance to love her, even if I lost her. Even if I may never get another chance with her.”

“You really are lovesick,” Prudence stated. “If I’m being honest, I’m a little jealous.” Nick raised an eyebrow.

“Prudence Blackwood…”


“Prudence Night, jealous of me for being in love. There’s something I never thought I’d see. Jealous because I was sleeping with someone else? Absolutely. But not jealous because I felt something for someone.”

Prudence was quiet for a while. When she spoke, her words were poignant.

“You’re not the only one who wants love, Nicky. Love. Acceptance. Trust. Friendship, even. Perhaps it’s ridiculous, me, wanting to feel something, wanting to feel not only what you feel when you look at Sabrina, but wanting to know what it’s like to have a family, to have what the Spellmans have, as dysfunctional as it is. As odd as the mortals are, there are some things they may actually have right.”

“It’s not ridiculous, to want those things,” Nick said with a shake of his head. “Sabrina taught me that.”

A heaviness settled around them as they each considered their own wants, their own desires. It was Nick who broke the silence many minutes later.

“Let’s go back inside,” he proposed. “Finish planning how we’re going to take down Blackwood, then go make it happen.” He stood. “We both need to get back to Greendale and he’s the only thing standing in our way.”
So we know a bit more about Nick. Can you imagine him, living in the woods with Amalia, not being taught things kids learn from their parents, not having access to simple things like clean clothes? Really breaks your heart...

That convo with Prudence and Nick though. <3

And there's that minor baptism thing...

Please let me know your thoughts - I've read so many thoughtful comments from you all and they make my day!
Sabrina peeked around the kitchen doorframe. Dorcas was there, picking at a bowl of grapes on the counter instead of washing the dishes like Hilda had asked her. She peered over her shoulder, making sure she was alone. She took a deep breath.

“Hi, Dorcas,” she greeted in a bright tone. Dorcas quickly shoved several grapes in her mouth and looked at Sabrina with big, innocent eyes.

“Sabrina! Hi!”

“Need some help?” she asked. “With the dishes or the grapes?” She winked at Dorcas in a conspiratory sort of way. Dorcas narrowed her eyes.

“You want something.”

“I’m just trying to do my share,” Sabrina shrugged. “With so many of us in the house, it feels like the right thing to do, offering to help…”

“You were on dish duty at breakfast,” Dorcas continued. “You complained about it the entire time – until Sister Hilda told you to zip it.”

“Fine,” Sabrina said. “Do the dishes yourself. I’ll just get a glass of water and be on my way.”

She hummed to herself as she removed a glass from the cupboard and filled it with water, watching Dorcas out of the corner of her eye. It only took a couple of bars before her eyes slid crossways. Sabrina couldn’t quite stop the satisfactory smile that graced her lips.

“Dorcas, go upstairs and get your coat,” she said. “It’s cold outside, and you and I are going out.” Dorcas nodded once and started to leave the kitchen. “Oh, Dorcas?” Dorcas turned and looked at Sabrina with blank eyes. “Try not to run into anyone. If you do, act normal and tell them you’re joining me on an errand, okay?”

“Okay,” Dorcas agreed.

“Hurry back. There’s no time to waste.” She made sure Dorcas was on her way upstairs, then rushed to the phone.

“Hello?”

“Roz, it’s me,” she said into the receiver. “Meet me at the church. It’s important. Call Harvey and Theo, ask them if they can come as well.”
She hung up without further explanation.

She managed to get herself and Dorcas out of the mortuary without incident. She thought of Nick briefly as she approached the church. He wouldn’t be happy about this, but she needed to know if she were right. If she could pull this off, she could tell Nick ‘I told you so’ when he got back. She exhaled, trying to tamp down the guilt she felt as she walked up to Harvey, Theo, and Roz. She had no reason to feel guilty. And, she reasoned, she wasn’t lying. She had never told Nick she wouldn’t try to figure this out for herself. He had certainly lied to her, so it’s not like he would have a leg to stand on anyway.

“What’s going on?” Roz greeted. “You sounded urgent on the phone…”

“Know how I signed the Book of the Beast?” she asked. Her friends nodded, a little more used to Sabrina’s other life now. “Well, I was also baptized in the Catholic Church as an infant.”

“What does that mean?” Harvey asked. “I don’t quite follow.”

“The most simple way I can explain it is that just like I’m half mortal, half witch, I’m also half Catholic, half Path of Night or whatever we are now. Until recently, we had reason to believe I was the only witch in existence baptized into the church. But Nicholas found some files Blackwood kept on a select group of students at the Academy. Each file had a crucifix marked on the inside cover. I think it means more of us were baptized.”

“And we’re going to use her,” Theo pointed at Dorcas, a step ahead of his friends, “to figure that out?”

“Witches shouldn’t be able to enter a church,” Sabrina explained. “If Dorcas was baptized – and I think she was – she should be able to walk through the door with no problem. If she wasn’t baptized, she will, well, burn.”

“That sounds… risky,” Theo said. Dorcas stood by them, dazed and confused.

“What do you want us to do?” Roz asked suspiciously.

“I’m going to enter the church,” Sabrina explained. “Then I’ll tell Dorcas to come in. I’ve placed a puppet charm on her so she will obey my voice. If she walks through the door – like I think she will – it will be a nonevent. If I’m wrong and she starts to burn, I’m relying on the three of you to pull her out of the church to safety. I’ll help, but I can’t be sure that there won’t be other consequences I may need to handle.”

Harvey narrowed his eyes in suspicion.

“Are you sure about this?” he asked. “It seems incredibly risky.”

“Of course I’m sure,” Sabrina said, feigning confidence.

“What if something goes wrong?” Harvey continued. “Ambrose and Nick are gone. Who do we go to for help?”

Sabrina was the suspicious one now.

“Have you talked to Nicholas recently?” she asked.

“I haven’t talked to Nick since the whole Dark Lord in a rubrics cube thing,” Harvey shrugged. “But isn’t it usually him or Ambrose that comes to your aid?”
Sabrina blew out an annoyed breath.

“I’m perfectly capable of taking care of myself,” she informed them. “This is simple. Either Dorcas will be able to enter the church or she won’t.”

“Harvey has a point,” Theo pointed out. “If you did need some help, who would we go to? Your aunts?”

“Agatha,” Sabrina said begrudgingly. She had already thought about this, had even considered asking Agatha for help before deciding against it. “She’s a gifted spiritualist. If – and that’s a big if – I need backup, get Agatha. If she’s not around, then Hilda. Make Zelda the absolute last option. She will find out about this eventually, but I would rather it be when I have successfully proven my theory.”

“Okay,” Roz said. “So, we’re doing this?”

“We’re doing this,” Sabrina nodded. She turned to the church. “Here goes nothing.”

She pulled open the doors and with only a moment’s hesitation, stepped inside. She had never actually tried to enter a church herself, outside of the witch hunters sanctified stronghold, and the tiniest part of her was worried about what would happen.

Nothing.

She was fine.

She turned to her friends. Theo had followed her in. Roz and Harvey stood just outside, with Dorcas. She nodded once, resolute.

“Dorcas? Why don’t you come inside?”

She held her breath as she watched the redhead step forward. In a few short steps, Dorcas was in the church. She stopped when she reached Sabrina and looked to her for further instruction. Sabrina stared.

“Oh my Lilith,” she whispered. “I was right.”

“She was baptized,” Roz stated. “What does that mean?”

Sabrina shook her head, looking at Dorcas with something akin to wonder.

“I have no idea.”

She absentmindedly doodled in the corner of her notebook with no idea as to what her biology teacher was droning on about. Cells or something, she thought. She was too busy thinking through the meaning of her fellow witches being baptized and wondering just how many of them were. It had been three days since she took Docras into the church and she was no closer to answers.

Her thoughts wandered to Nick. There hadn’t been any word from him, Ambrose, or Prudence. Zelda and Hilda spent a lot of time reassuring one another and Sabrina in quiet moments that no news was good news, that they were okay. The more time that went by with silence however, the more she worried that the last thing she would ever get to say to him was a snippy “I’m done with this conversation.”

“Sabrina!” Billy Marlin hissed.
“What?” she hissed back, coming out of her reverie. Billy nodded towards the classroom’s door. Roz was there, her face visible through the thin window. She was waving frantically, trying to get Sabrina’s attention. Sabrina frowned. Roz motioned for her to come out.

She quickly gathered her things.

“Ms. Spellman?” her teacher asked as she rushed towards the door. “Is everything okay?”

“I’m not feeling well,” she lied easily. “I’ll get the notes from someone tomorrow.” She didn’t wait for an answer. “Roz!” She rushed to her friend. “What’s going on?”

“They’re on their way home.” She was practically bouncing. “Nick, Ambrose, Prudence. They have the twins, too.”

“Are you sure?” Sabrina asked. “Now?”

“I had a vision while I was in the library. I saw them in the yard of the mortuary. I assume they’re on their way now.”

“We have to go,” Sabrina said. “I have to be there when they arrive.”

“I’ll tell Harvey and Theo,” Roz said. Sabrina frowned.

“You aren’t coming?”

“I have a Spanish test.” She gave Sabrina wistful sort of look. “It’s not my place. Not today. Your family is coming home – but I promise I will let you know immediately if I see anything else.”

Sabrina took Roz’s hand and gave it a squeeze.

“You know you’re my family, too, right?” she asked. Roz nodded with a soft smile.

“I do, ‘Brina,” she said honestly. “Go home. Be there when they get home. Give Ambrose a hug, say hello to Prudence, talk to Nick. Figure things out.”

“I will,” Sabrina promised. Her heart raced at the idea of seeing Nick soon. “I’ll call you tonight, let you know how things went.”

Sabrina ran all the way home, eyes peeled for any sign of Nick, Ambrose, and Prudence. She burst through the mortuary front doors and stopped short in the entry, gasping for breath.

“Sabrina!” Zelda cried from the staircase. “What on earth?”

“Is everything okay?” Hila asked, bustling in from the parlor.

“They’re on their way home,” she said. “Nicholas, Ambrose, Prudence. They’re on their way. They have the babies.”

“What?” Hilda exclaimed. “Did one of them call?”

“How do you know?” Zelda asked at the same time. “Did you hear from them?”

“Roz had a vision,” Sabrina told them. “She said she saw them in our yard, with the twins. She believes they’re on their way now.”

“A vision,” Zelda said skeptically. “That’s what we’re basing this off of?”
“Roz’s visions have been incredibly accurate,” Hilda reminded Zelda. “If they’re on their way…”

“They are,” Sabrina insisted. She took a breath. “They have to be.”

There was nothing to do but wait. Sabrina went to her bedroom and took up residence in her window, waiting, watching. She tried to read, the Bible this time, in an effort to understand what their baptisms could mean. Trying and failing to digest the story of Moses, she glanced out the window again. The small group was still in the distance, but she would recognize Nick’s silhouette anywhere. There were four people, however, plus what looked to be a pram.

“They’re here!” she called out, tossing the Bible aside. “They’re back!” She raced out of her bedroom and down the stairs. “Nicholas, Ambrose, Prudence – they’re back!”

She threw open the front door and rushed outside, Hilda and Zelda on her heels, the rest of the coven following. She stopped short, surprised at the scene that met her eyes.

“Blackwood?” she asked.

Faustus Blackwood, worse for the wear, stood between Ambrose and Nick, bound by magic and mute, but still glaring at his captors. Nick only had eyes for Sabrina. He opened his mouth to explain, but Zelda’s words came faster.

“What is the meaning of this?” she demanded. “I said I wanted his head, and nothing else!” She raised her hands. “No matter. I’ll take care of him.”

“No,” Nick spoke, his eyes now on Zelda. “He will die, but before he does, we need to question him.”

“You had your chance to question him,” Zelda challenged. “He won’t take another breath…”

“We tried,” Nick interjected. “That’s what took us so long. He wouldn’t talk, in spite of our – methods.” A chill ran through Sabrina. She knew Nick wasn’t afraid of some of the darker magic available to them. He had used it make the witch hunter talk. Still, it made her uneasy to think of him – and Ambrose and Prudence – in that situation. “We didn’t have truth serum, but once we do, once he’s given us the answers we deserve, he dies.” Nick looked at Prudence. “Prudence gets the honor.”

“Nicholas is right,” Sabrina said. She and Nick were the only two that knew about the detailed records Blackwood kept. She – and her friends – was the only ones that knew about the baptisms. “We need to question him before we kill him.”

Nick gave Sabrina a grateful nod.

“I, too, suggest he stays alive,” Ambrose spoke up. “Scratch is right – we have questions and this bastard,” he kicked Blackwood in the ankle, hard, “is the only one who has answers.”

“I’m in agreement,” Prudence said. “Trust me when I say that if these two are agreeing on something, it’s important.”

“Fine,” Zelda relented. “You can have three days. What isn’t answered by then will go to his grave. But where, pray tell, do you suggest keeping him?”

“Not the witch’s cell at the Academy,” Hilda said. “He will surely know a way out.” Blackwood could only glare at them.

“The morgue,” Nick said with finality. He had already thought this through. Sabrina knew it by the
tone he used. He would tolerate little arguing if Zelda pushed back. “Ambrose can put him into a deep sleep, and we’ll store him in one of the body drawers. We’ll use binding spells to ensure there’s no way in Heaven he gets out.”

“Very well,” Zelda nodded. “See to it, then.” She descended the stairs, brushing past Sabrina. “You have the twins?”

“They’re here, yes,” Prudence confirmed. “They are likely a bit hungry – we all are – and in need of a bath, but they seem well otherwise.”

Zelda peered into the pram. Her eyes watered as she took in the two cherub faces looking up at her. She blinked the tears away, reminding herself to appear strong in front of the coven gathered on the porch.

“Let’s get them inside,” she said. “Take them to my study. Hilda and I will be in to tend to them momentarily.” She turned to Ambrose and Nick. “You two – take Blackwood to the morgue. Sabrina, go with them, help them. Everyone else, back inside and back to what you were doing. I will share an update at dinner.”

Everyone moved at once. Nick and Ambrose frog marched Blackwood up the porch stairs, the others parting to allow them through. Sabrina went ahead of them, opening doors and leading the way to the morgue.

“Does it matter which drawer?” Sabrina asked. “They are all empty at the moment anyway. We’ve been a bit too busy to accept bodies.”


“Fine,” Ambrose agreed in a clipped tone. “Sabrina, a drawer, please.” Sabrina pulled out the closest one. Blackwood stared down Ambrose. Ambrose rolled his eyes and fired off his spell. Nick was ready, casting his own spell to levitate Blackwood’s body, now deadweight, onto the metal surface. “I’ll bind him…”

“I’ll do it,” Nick countered. “My bindings are stronger.”

“Is that so?” Ambrose challenged.

“You’re the spell caster,” Nick said. “I’m the binder and conjurer.” They stared one another down. Sabrina rolled her eyes.

“I’ll do it.” Before they could react, she had cast her own spell, thick ropes wrapping around Blackwood to hold him to the surface. “There.”

“Okay then,” Ambrose said. “Shut the drawer. I’ll cast some wards.”

“Hold on.” Nick held his hands over Blackwood’s bound body. The incantation that came from him was complex, so advanced that even Ambrose was begrudgingly impressed. “Now we can close it.”

“What did you do?” Sabrina asked, once the drawer was shut.

“He bound himself to Blackwood,” Ambrose supplied. “Bit much, if you ask me.”

“You did what?” Sabrina cried in horror, rounding on Nick. “Nicholas!”

“Not like that,” he said, knowing what she was thinking. “All I did was connect him to me in a way
that should he be disturbed without us doing the disturbing, I’ll know.”

“Are you sure that’s it?” she asked skeptically.

“Positive,” he confirmed.

“Looks like you can tell the truth, Scratch,” Ambrose quipped between spells. Nick blew out a long breath to maintain his temper in front of Sabrina. “But since you’re here, why don’t you take a page out of Blackwood’s book and…”

“Conjure a demon to guard him?” Nick asked. “I’ve already thought of that. When you’re done…”

“I’ll need another minute.”

They traded dagger-filled stares.

“I’ll wait outside,” Nick said. He exited the morgue.

“I bet Prudence had fun with you two,” Sabrina said when Nick was gone. “All this testosterone and ‘my magic is better than your magic…”

“Scratch proved useful with the demons,” Ambrose begrudgingly said. “But bringing Blackwood home was entirely his idea, and I’m going to make sure Zelda knows it.”

“He was right to bring him home,” Sabrina stated. “We’ve got a lot to catch you up on. And a lot of questions for Blackwood.”

“You’re taking his side?” Ambrose asked incredulously. “I thought, surely, given that he lied to you for months…”

“It’s complicated,” Sabrina shook her head. “My feelings are… mixed. But never mind that. Finish up what you’re doing, let Hilda feed you, then maybe consider taking a shower. You smell terrible. We’ll talk about what’s been going on around here later.”

She left him and found Nick waiting in the hallway, leaning against a wall, his hands in his jacket pockets.

“Good to see you and Ambrose getting along so well,” she said.

“You have a staunch supporter in your corner, Spellman,” Nick replied.

“I’m glad he’s home.” She looked at Nick and couldn’t not say what she felt. “I’m glad you’re home.”

“I told you I’d be home soon,” he reminded her. “And here I am.”

A heavy moment passed between them, their eyes on one another. Nick fought against his desire to pull her into his arms. Sabrina wrestled with her head that said stay put and her heart that said wrap her arms around his neck and don’t let go.

“All set,” Ambrose declared, interrupting the moment. “Conjure your demon, Scratch. Make it a good one.” Nick shot him a dirty look.

“Stand back,” he told Sabrina. “You, too, Ambrose.” Another dirty look passed between them before Ambrose moved to Sabrina’s side. Nick took a deep breath.
The complicated words tumbled out of Nick’s mouth with ease, his hands crossed at the wrist in front of him, his eyes focused. The power that emitted from him was palpable. Both Sabrina and Ambrose could feel it, so much so they both took several steps back. His voice rose as he spoke, bellowed the final words. There was a loud crack and three horrific looking female demons appeared before him. Ambrose pulled Sabrina back several more steps.

“Your task is to guard Faustus Blackwood,” Nick commanded. “You do not kill, you do not maim, but you do not allow anyone past this point without my consent.” He started to circle them, another spell working through his hands, this incantation in still another ancient language. “And there you’ll stay.”

Nick lowered his hands, surveyed his work. He blew out a breath when he was satisfied.

“You’ve bound them here?” Ambrose asked. “The last thing we need is those three roaming the house.”

“They’re bound to a sacred circle, ten feet in diameter,” Nick confirmed. “They will burn instantly if they step outside of it. They’ve been ordered to guard, but not kill or maim. We should secure the door at the top of the stairs, too, just in case.”

“I’ll take care of it,” Ambrose stated. Nick nodded once.

“Who are they?” Sabrina asked, taking in the demons that wandered seemingly aimlessly within their prison.

“The Erinyes,” Nick explained. “Also known as the Furies. They are goddesses of vengeance and retribution. They punish men for crimes against the natural order – homicide, unfilial conduct, offenses against the gods, perjury. They have no leniency for people like Blackwood.”

“Interesting choice,” Ambrose quipped. Nick heard the implication.

“They are here to guard Blackwood,” he said. “Not to punish me.”

Sabrina said nothing. She agreed with Ambrose. Nick had an interesting choice in demons, given his own mistakes.

“I suppose our work here is done for now,” Ambrose said. “Let’s leave the Furies to their job.”

He led the way up the stairs. Sabrina and Nick left him to secure the door to the morgue.

“Are you hungry?” Sabrina asked. “Hilda is likely somewhere between helping Zelda with the twins and cooking a feast to welcome you all back, but I’m sure we can find something in the kitchen…”

“I’m a little hungry,” Nick confessed. “Traveling back with Blackwood was more troublesome than we thought it would be. We couldn’t teleport with so many people at stake, and it took all of us to subdue him and keep him that way. Add in two infants, and we were a bit of a traveling circus, what with the whole trying not to draw suspicion from the mortals thing.”

She opened her mouth to tell him to follow her to the kitchen, but he moved his arms in a way that made his jacket open a little further, revealing the unmistakable stain of blood on his chest.

“You’re hurt!” She went to him, all thoughts of maintaining her distance paused.

“I’m fine…” he tried, but Sabrina didn’t listen. With gentle hands, she pushed his jacket off his shoulder. His once white t-shirt, dingy from travel, covered whatever wound he hid beneath it, but
there was no hiding the blood.

“Let me see,” she ordered. She didn’t wait for him to move the shirt, pushing it up herself. She missed him close his eyes for a moment, affected by her touch, no matter how unromantic it was. She gasped. “Nicholas!”

There was a gash several inches long across his chest. It was caked with dirt and dried blood, the skin around it bright red.

“A demon got me with his blade,” Nick confessed. “I was quick enough to clean out the curse before it could do damage, but I haven’t had time or the supplies to clean the wound it left properly.”

“Come on.” She took his hand and tugged him along behind her. “We’re going to Hilda’s botanical room. That’s where she keeps her medical supplies.”

“It’s not a big deal,” he assured her. “I just need a shower…”

“You do,” Sabrina agreed. Like Ambrose, he wasn’t the most pleasant smelling person in the mortuary at the moment. “But we’re cleaning this wound properly first.” She dropped his hand when they reached the botanical room. “Have a seat,” she directed, going for Hilda’s well-organized shelf. “I’m not quite as adept as Hilda at healing, but I can do the basics, and we’ll have her look at it later.”

“It doesn’t feel as bad as it looks,” Nick offered.

“You’re sure you got the curse out?” Sabrina filled her arms with supplies, not entirely sure what she actually needed, but grabbing whatever she knew would work all the same. She had healed Ambrose with her new powers, but she didn’t fully understand them and didn’t want to do something to make things worse. The more traditional methods would have to do.

“There’s no need,” she confirmed. “I had Prudence check as well.”

“Take your shirt off,” she directed.

“Not quite the setting in which I hoped to hear those words,” Nick said because he couldn’t help himself. Sabrina glared at him. “Sorry.” He wasn’t. Sabrina came to him and stood close. He could smell her lemon and honey lotion and missed her fiercely, even though she was standing right there.

“What’s your assessment, Spellman?”

“We need to clean away the dried blood and dirt first,” she determined. She wet a cloth at Hilda’s workbench sink and returned to Nick. “This might not feel great,” she warned before she went to work, applying pressure to scrub away the grime.

“So who did you trick into trying to enter a church with you?” he asked, grimacing at the friction she had to use to clean away three days of blood and dirt.

“Dorcas,” Sabrina confessed. “I put her under a puppet charm and she came peacefully.”

“I saw her on the porch, so she clearly survived.”

“She could enter the church, Nicholas.” He looked at her, clearly surprised. “I had Roz, Theo, and Harvey there, just in case, but there was no need. She walked in, nothing happened, we went back to the mortuary, I lifted the charm, and she was none the wiser.”

“She entered the church,” Nick repeated, thinking through would it could mean. He hissed when
Sabrina hit an especially sensitive area.

“Sorry,” she apologized. “This looks to be where the cut is the deepest.”

“It’s fine,” he shook his head. “Any ideas what it means?”

“That Dorcas could go into the church? No. I’ve been trying to research when I can, but I don’t know what I’m looking for. I started reading the Book of the False God, but I can’t get past the story of Mose.”


“I’m almost done,” Sabrina assured him.

“Have you tested anyone else?” he asked.

“Not yet.”

“I’ll go next,” he decided. “We’ll have to find an alternative for testing the others.” He looked at Sabrina. “Can I ask what exactly the mortals were going to do if Dorcas had burst into flames?”

“I told them to get her out of here,” Sabrina said. “I would have handled any consequences.”

“You should have waited for me. Had Dorcas not been baptized, the consequences would have far surpassed what you’re capable of dealing with on your own – what any witch is capable of on their own. The mortals would have died and Dorcas too.”

“You should have told the Dark Lord no, or at the very least told me the truth from the start,” Sabrina countered, not especially appreciating his superiority, no matter how right she knew he was. “But you didn’t. At least in my case, no one got hurt.”

Nick sighed.

“Sabrina…” He didn’t know what to say. “Please…”

“I’m going to disinfect this now,” she said, ignoring him. “Then bandage it to keep it clean.”

Nick let his head fall back in frustration when she turned away. She was hot and cold, one step forward, three steps back. He couldn’t say the right thing, do the right thing. He understood she was hurting. He was hurting, too. He knew it would take time for her to trust him again, if she ever did. But none of that made their current situation any more bearable. He lifted his head when she returned.

“Sabrina…”

“This will wash away any dirt or infection in the cut.” She poured a clear, strong smelling liquid on him.

“Unholy shit!” he cried out, jerking away from Sabrina. It felt like fire was slicing through his chest. “What the Heaven, Sabrina?”

“It might burn,” she said innocently. Nick glared at her.

“You knew it would.”
“Mortal remedy,” she shrugged a shoulder. “Don’t underestimate it.”

“You made your point,” he conceded. She placed a cool cloth over his wound to draw out the last of the burning. She had made her point, but he was going to make his, too. “I was worried about you, Sabrina. I know you. You’re fearless. There was no doubt in my mind that you were going to try to prove your theory. I was on another continent, too far away to get to you in time if something happened. I’d never forgive myself if something happened to you because I wasn’t there, especially when I gave you the idea in the first place. You may hate me right now, but that doesn’t change the way I feel about you.”

Sabrina met Nick’s eyes. There was absolute sincerity there. She softened a bit.

“I don’t hate you, Nicholas,” she admitted. “I… It’s the opposite of hate.” Hope flared in his chest. “But I need some time. You hurt me. More than a little bit of rubbing alcohol hurt you just now. I can’t just get over that.”

Still, her fingers trailed along the outline of the gash.

“Take all the time you need.” He caught her hand and brushed his lips across the back of it. “I’ll be here.”

Sabrina could only nod, the lump in her throat not allowing her to speak. With soft fingers, she applied a paste of herbs that soothed away the last of any pain.

“I can’t do much about the scarring, but Hilda can probably help with that,” she said. “I’m going to bandage it, then we’ll get you some food.”

“Did you learn anything else in your research?” he asked, watching as she delicate placed gauze along his wound.

“Tread everyone’s files.” She glanced at him. “Including yours.”

“I did leave it for you,” he said. “It was – eye opening.”

“What are you going to do?” she asked.

“Ask Blackwood for the truth. About all of it.”

“You may not like what he has to say,” she warned.

“No,” he agreed. “But I’m committed to no more lies. That means no more hiding the truth.” He locked eyes with her again. “Or hiding from the truth.”

“As the mortals say, honesty is the best policy.”

“Lessons learned,” he replied. They both felt the pull between them. They both worked to ignore it.

“All done,” she said, placing the last piece of tape in place. Her work was neat and tidy. “But have Hilda look at it later, okay?”

“I will,” he promised. “Thank you.” She nodded once. He reached for his dirty shirt.

“Wait.” He stopped. She closed her eyes and visualized what she wanted. A moment later, one of Nick’s soft henley shirts, this one an olive green he hardly every wore but that she liked on him, appeared in her hands. “I don’t quite trust my new powers to treat a relatively minor wound yet, but I do trust them to bring you a clean shirt.”
“Another thanks,” he said with a smile. He pulled it over his head. “Anything else to keep me out of the kitchen?”

Sabrina smiled.

“You’re that hungry?”

“Starving,” he confirmed.

“You’re dismissed to the kitchen,” she agreed. Still, she stopped at the door of the botanical room. “Nicholas?” He turned to her with a raised eyebrow. “I really am glad you’re home.”

He understood.

“Me too,” he said with a soft smile.

He led them out of the room, feeling lighter than he had in days.

She didn’t hate him.

He could work with that.

Chapter End Notes

He's home! And so is Blackwood... Now what?

I love all of your comments and questions and theories - please keep them coming!
Chapter Eight

Chapter Notes

How about a little levity?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“What about Sebastian?”

“No.” Prudence popped a cube of cheese into her mouth. “Maximus?”

“Ew, no,” Sabrina made a face. “Cadman?”

“Do you hate him?” Prudence asked.

The pair sat at the kitchen counter, watching the twins play with the food on their highchair trays.

“It’s better than Helmar,” Sabrina said.

“Helmar means ‘wrath of the warrior.’ I think it’s perfect.”

“It’s heinous,” Sabrina argued. “How about Berwin?”

“That’s even worse than Cadman.”

“Fine. Aaron.”

“Too plain. Boris.”

“Now who hates him?” Sabrina asked. “Oswald.”

“Thor.”

“Phoenix.”

“Edric.”

“Kenzo.”

“Quinlan.”

“Ulric.”

“What’s going on in here?” Nick appeared in the kitchen. “It sounds like a roll call of terrible names.”

“Aunt Zelda wants to rename Judas,” Sabrina answered. “She put Prudence and I in charge of naming him.”

“Should you have children with Sabrina, I highly recommend taking care of the naming yourself,” Prudence told Nick. “She suggested Berwin.”
“It’s still better than Boris,” Sabrina fired back.

Nick helped himself to a croissant from a basket on the counter.

“Boris is a perfectly good name. It’s certainly got more personality than ‘Aaron.’ That’s my warlock half brother, not a mortal with tooth decay.”

“You wanted to name the kid Helmar,” Sabrina argued. “And why are we talking about what Nicholas and I might name children decades from now? That’s not even relevant…”

Nick had the good sense not to interject, but he couldn’t quite stamp down the hopes of a future that, while so far away, was everything he had ever wanted. He wandered towards the babies. Leticia – Letty – threw a piece of cheese on the floor. Judas looked up at him with hopeful eyes, his food all gone. He broke off a piece of his croissant and gave it to the kid.

“I quite like Thor,” Prudence said. “It’s strong…”

“So is Phoenix, and you nixed that.”


“Alastair,” Sabrina repeated, watching the little boy as he drooled, eyes on Nick’s croissant. “It does suit him…”


“It’s perfect,” Sabrina agreed. “Well done, Nicholas.”

Her praise made him smile.

“You realize its weird that you know stuff like that, right?” Prudence asked. “The meaning of names and their origin?”

“It’s not weird,” Nick shrugged. He broke up the rest of his croissant and split it between Letty and the newly dubbed Alastair. “I read it somewhere, that’s all.”

“Still weird,” Prudence said in a sing-song voice.

“What are you doing here, anyway?” Sabrina asked, ignoring Prudence. “Dinner isn’t for a few more hours.”

“I wanted to check on the Erinyes and Blackwood.” He helped himself to another croissant. “Blackwood is still in the drawer, the demons are still guarding him. And I figured, since I was here, I may as well stop by the kitchen, see what sort of leftovers Hilda had…”

“A likely story,” Prudence stated. The only reason Nicholas Scratch was at the Spellman Mortuary was because Sabrina was. “Tell me, Nicky, when are we going to question Blackwood? I’m getting antsy to wield my sword.”

“Hilda says the truth serum should be ready tonight,” he answered. “We should be able to question Blackwood tomorrow.”

“See that we do.” Prudence slid from her stool. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to go visit with my sisters.”
“You’re supposed to be helping me watch them,” Sabrina objected, jerking her thumb toward the babies. “You can’t leave me. There are two of them!”

“You’re not alone.” Prudence gestured at Nick. “Nicky is here.” She smirked at Sabrina’s glare. “Have fun!” She disappeared from the kitchen.

“You should have left her in Romania,” Sabrina informed Nick.

“She’s the only reason Ambrose and I didn’t kill each other,” Nick answered. He was standing between the twins. “Want some help with these?”

“I’m in charge of them until dinner,” Sabrina said wryly. “Prudence was supposed to help me.” She eyed him. “What do you know about babies?”

“About as much as you do,” he said. “Absolutely nothing.”

“No book for that?” Sabrina teased, her lips playing at a smile. Nick chuckled.

“I just haven’t read it yet,” he retorted. “Seriously, I’ll help you. I don’t know much, but I think between the two of us, we can manage to keep them alive for a few hours.”

“If you, Ambrose, and Prudence can get them and Blackwood from Romania to Greendale, surely we can play with them for a little while.”

“That was mostly Prudence,” Nick admitted. “What do you say, Spellman? Shall we tag team the babies?”

“One-on-one defense sounds like a better option than playing zone,” Sabrina said. Nick frowned.

“What are you talking about?”

“It’s a basketball reference,” she shrugged. “I think. I’m not entirely sure I used it right, but Theo and Harvey say stuff like that when they talk about their team.”

“So, interpreting, two of us against two of them is better than one against two?”

“I think that’s how it works,” Sabrina said. She surveyed the twins. “They look cute enough, but as much as Letty cried last night, I think that might be a lie.”

“In my experience, cute does tend to provide an excellent front for a mischief minded witch.” His eyes were on her, his lips fighting back a smirk. Her own eyes narrowed.

“You think you’re so funny, Scratch.”

“Tell me I’m wrong,” he challenged. Sabrina glared at him.

“Grab a baby,” she declared. “You’re on babysitting duty, Scratch”.

Nick considered Alastair. The little boy looked right back at him, but was covered in food and slobber. Letty was in a similar state next to him.

“So I guess we clean them up first?” he asked.

“That seems like the logical thing to do,” Sabrina agreed. There were squeals of protests from the twins as they used wet cloths to wipe away the food scraps. Sabrina used magic to clean up the floor and chairs. They each picked up a twin. “Now what?” she wondered, swatting away Letty’s hand as
“It grabbed for her earring.”

“It’s pretty nice out,” Nick said. “Maybe we take them outside?”

“I don’t have a better plan.”

It took nearly a half hour, some of which Sabrina spent bargaining with Hilda to change the twins’ diapers, before all four of them were situated on a blanket under a tree in the mortuary yard.

“They really are kind of cute,” Sabrina said, shaking a set of toy keys for Alastair who grabbed for them and immediately stuck them in his mouth.

“They take after their mother then,” Nick quipped, making Sabrina smile. “I’m guessing Zelda intends to raise them?”

“I think that’s the plan,” Sabrina confirmed. “With Lady Blackwood dead and Father Blackwood soon to follow, they join the ranks of orphans within our coven. Prudence is their next of kin, but she has already said she would rather be their sister, not their mother.”

“That’s probably for the best,” Nick agreed. “Zelda and Hilda will take good care of them, raise them well. They’ll be happy.” He glanced at Sabrina. “They did a good job with you, after all.”

“Maybe these two won’t give her as much trouble as I have,” Sabrina said. Nick chuckled.

“They’re probably in Zelda’s study offering a sacrifice to Lilith to ensure these two get into less trouble than you have.”

Sabrina smiled at him. It was these moments with him, when they were just them, just together, that she found it hard not to simply dismiss everything he had done and give him the chance she knew he wanted.

“I did some research into the whole baptizing thing when I got back to the Academy last night,” he continued.

“You did? It was late when you left here…”

Nick had stayed well past dinner, giving his account to Zelda on how they got to Blackwood and then extracted the babies. Sabrina had heard little of it, thanks to Hilda’s insistence that she help with the twins.

“I couldn’t sleep,” Nick admitted. “My mind was too busy.” He snagged a leaf from Letty as she moved to put it in her mouth. “I think I thought about every subject I could possibly think about.”

“I had a hard time sleeping too,” Sabrina shared. “And not just because these two were wailing. I could have used a silencing charm and soundproofed my room. I guess it was the fact that Blackwood and a trio of demons are in my basement.”

“It won’t be much longer,” Nick promised. “We’ll question him tomorrow, Prudence will kill him, and I’ll banish the Furies back to where they came from.”

“Why did you summon them?” Sabrina asked curiously. She picked up Alastair who was making a break for the grass beyond their blanket. “The Erinyes in particular, I mean?”

“They are the demons best suited for guarding Blackwood,” Nick explained. “He’s a man who has done terrible things and has no remorse. It’s highly unlikely that he will escape the binds and
enchantments he’s under, but if he does, the Erinyes won’t allow him to exit the morgue.”

“But… Say the Erinyes somehow broke loose. If you were in the house, given – everything – wouldn’t you be a prime target for them?”

“I would be by the sheer fact that I’m a male,” he explained. “But I’m also a man seeking redemption.” He was suddenly nervous, afraid of saying too much. “They would sense that, know that I want to right my wrongs.” He avoided looking directly at Sabrina by shaking a rattle for Letty. “They would offer me grace.”

Sabrina felt another brick fall away from the wall she had built between them.

“You’re taking a risk,” she realized. “Bringing the Erinyes into this house, believing they wouldn’t attack you if they managed to escape your control.”

“It’s not a risk,” Nick shook his head. “I’m as confident in my safety as I am that I’ve bound them to their circle.”

He was confident in his position, his desire.

“They will be gone tomorrow,” she said, giving them a way out of the conversation that was growing too intense for the moment.

“Tomorrow,” Nick echoed. He helped Letty stand, holding onto her hands. He had never really been around kids before, but there was something about the way she twisted her little hands around his fingers and held tight that was endearing. He looked at Sabrina who was doing the same with Alastair. “You know, if you have trouble sleeping tonight, there’s plenty of room at the Academy.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Sabrina replied, not giving away anything. She turned her attention to Alastair. “Now, Alastair, tell me, what do you think of your new name?”

He cooed in response and bounced in place, trusting Sabrina not to let him fall. She laughed. Nick smiled.

“I think he likes it,” he guessed, sitting Letty back down on the blanket.

“You did good, Scratch,” she said. “For a warlock.”

“Are you sure about this?” Sabrina asked. “Maybe we should get Ambrose…”

“You march Dorcas in here with only the mortals for support, but for me you want Ambrose as backup?” Nick asked. “Save it, Spellman. We’re doing this.”

“But…”

“But nothing,” he cut her off. “We have to know if more of us are baptized. This is the quickest way to figure that out.” Sabrina blew out an annoyed breath. Nick raised an eyebrow. He thought, just maybe, he knew why she was hesitating on the church’s sidewalk. “Is my life more valuable than Dorcas’s?”

“No… It’s just…” She stopped. He wasn’t wrong. Her hesitation came from the fact that it was Nick who was about to try to enter the church. It wasn’t that Dorcas was expendable, exactly, but she didn’t have the same connection to the witch as she did to the warlock standing in front of her, looking at her expectantly. “Let’s just get this over with. We’ll have to be back at the mortuary for
Blackwood’s questioning soon.”

“Now we’re talking,” Nick said. He gestured to the church. “Ladies first, Spellman.”

“If anything goes wrong…”

“We’ll handle it when it does.” Nick acted far more confident than he felt. He caught Sabrina’s eyes and held them with their own. “I trust you, Sabrina.”

His words hit her the way he meant them to. She took a big breath and nodded.

“Okay,” she exhaled. “Let’s go.”

She led the way up the stairs and pulled open the church doors. She looked back at Nick and he gave her one resolute nod. Like with Dorcas, she entered the church and took several steps inside before turning to Nick. Again, he held her eyes.

“Here goes nothing,” he said.

He bravely stepped across the threshold, expecting fire and brimstone.

Nothing happened.

He took several more steps, until he was standing by Sabrina.

“Unholy shit,” he breathed. “Sabrina…”

“I know,” she nodded. “You’re baptized, Nick. Like me. Like Dorcas. And I’d guess like Agatha, Prudence, Elsbeth, Melvin…”

Nick shook his head in disbelief and looked around, taking in the church’s high ceilings, its stained glass windows, the pipe organ in the back.

“I’ve always wanted to see the inside of a church,” he confessed, walking further down the aisle.

“I’ve seen plenty of photos, but I always thought that’s all I would see – photos of places like the Sistine Chapel, Notre Dame, Westminster Abbey. To think I can walk into them…”

Sabrina watched him with a bit of awe. For the moment, why he could enter a church, despite being a warlock with his name signed in the Book of the Beast, wasn’t his immediate concern. The fact that he could was top of mind. His thirst for knowledge was as evident as it had ever been.

“It is beautiful, isn’t it?” she asked, following him up the aisle, seeing the church through his eyes.

“I’ve always wanted to see the Sistine Chapel,” he replied, only half listening to her. “Michelangelo was the epitome of a Renaissance man, his brilliance rivaled only by da Vinci in that time period. He was controversial in some aspects, but his work was believed to be divinely inspired. I’ve seen his David, but I’ve always thought I’d have to settle for photos of the Sistine Chapel ceiling and alter, of the Pieta in St. Peter’s.”

“You’ve seen David?” Sabrina asked curiously.

“A few years ago,” he nodded. “I went to Florence during Winter Solstice, took in as much art and culture as I could.” He looked at Sabrina, taking her in, standing in the middle of the aisle of a church in a purple skirt and black top, her hair in its usual curled bob, headband on. He had already cheated the Gods that day by entering the church and figured he may as well continue to risk it all. “I’ll take you there. Rome, too, and the Vatican, now that we know we can enter.”
She could only smile at him and dare her heart to hope that maybe, one day, she would be in a place where she trusted Nick enough to let him hold her hand again.

“But why?” he wondered, looping back to the issue at hand. “Why were we baptized? What does it mean?”

“That’s a question for Blackwood,” Sabrina told him.

“But Blackwood didn’t baptize us,” Nick shook his head. “He may have known we were baptized – which doesn’t explain his reaction to learning you were baptized – but he’s not the one who did it. Your mom and Hilda baptized you, right?”

“Yes…”

“So it serves to reason that my parents baptized me. And now they’re dead.” He leaned against a pew, arms crossed over his chest, mind racing. “Dorcas – parents, dead. We know Agatha and Prudence are also orphans and likely baptized. What about Melvin and Elsbeth? What about their parents?”

“Elsbeth has mentioned parents,” Sabrina said. “I know Melvin’s father is alive, but I think his mother is dead. They were basically written off by Blackwood, though.”

“Orphans, baptized…” Nick shook his head. “We’re missing something.”

“We’re missing a lot,” Sabrina countered. “Including, but not limited to, the fact that both of us have powers others don’t have, or at least don’t have to the ability in which we have them.”

“We get rid of Satan and we’re still left with a mess,” Nick muttered to himself. “I feel like we’re pawns. Chess pieces in some game between Blackwood and someone else – your father, maybe, or the Dark Lord…”

“Welcome to my life,” Sabrina quipped. Nick couldn’t argue. She was right – she had been the pawn in a game bigger than all of them. It was that line of thought that caused the light bulb in his head to go off.

“Maybe that’s why we can love,” he said, more to himself than to Sabrina.

“What do you mean?” Sabrina asked. “Everyone can love…”

“Not in our world,” he shook his head. “Maybe it’s been trained out of us, I don’t know, but I talked to Prudence about this same thing. The night you called me about the idea that we’re baptized, Ambrose and I had exchanged words. I walked out to cool off and she came out to find me right after you hung up on me. She said she was jealous of how I feel about you – not because I feel these things for you, but because I feel them at all.”

Sabrina took a seat in a pew, content to listen.

“She said she wants love – family, friends, acceptance. I want those things, too.” He almost added “with you” but checked himself. He could only risk so much today. “Think about it, Sabrina. We were raised – you excluded – to believe in lust, but not love, to think we couldn’t have love because the Dark Lord was a jealous lord and only wanted us to love him. But as we got older – and frankly, as you came into our lives – we started to realize, at least Prudence and I did, that there are other options, other ways.” He sighed heavily, as though he carried the weight of the world on his shoulders. “The world thinks we’re evil, just because we’re witches and warlocks. And maybe until recently, we thought we were, too. But we’re not, are we?” He looked to Sabrina for an answer.
“No,” she said, shaking her head. “We’re not. We’re whatever we want to be.” She made sure to look Nick in the eye. “We get to make our own choices.”

Silence stretched between them as they thought through the implications of what they knew, wondered about what they didn’t.

“I guess we should address the issue at hand,” Nick said eventually. “How are we going to find out who else is baptized?”

“The puppeteering charm worked pretty well on Dorcas,” Sabrina suggested. “Between the two of us, we can get everyone here. One of us does the puppeteering, the other is there in case they’re not baptized.”

“That could work,” Nick mused. Sabrina saw the moment another idea occurred to him, however. His eyes grew wider, lit up with recognition. “Holy water.” He started towards the pulpit. Sabrina followed him. “Shouldn’t there be a font somewhere?”

“It’s in the baptistery,” Sabrina said. “Follow me.” She led him to a small room that held it’s own alter. “What are you going to do with it?”

“We sprinkle it on the others,” Nick explained. “It’s safer than leading them into the church, for one thing. If they aren’t baptized, their skin will burn where the water hits them, but there shouldn’t be any major adverse reactions. If they are baptized, it will be just that – a sprinkle of water.”

“Okay. So, we just get some holy water and take it back to the mortuary.”

“I don’t think the hardest part will be finding out who is baptized,” Nick hypothesized. “It will be convincing them they are baptized.”

“I hadn’t thought about that,” Sabrina admitted. “They won’t believe us.”


He didn’t explain any further. She didn’t ask either.

“We need something to put it in.” She made to look in her bag to see if there was anything they could use, but Nick stopped her. He held his palms upright and said an incantation. A gold plated tube appeared in his hands. “As smooth as ever, Scratch,” she quipped. He winked at her and dipped the tube into the water.

“Ah!” he dropped the tube in the water and backed up several steps, shaking his hand wildly. “It burned me!”

“What?” Sabrina asked, confused. “But… We’re baptized.”

“It was like fire burning at my fingertips,” he said, still shaking out the sing from his hand. Sabrina looked at him for a moment, then reached for tube floating in the holy water.

“Ow!” she cried out, snatching her hand to her chest as her own fingertips burned.

“Did you not see me get burned by it ten seconds before your stuck your own hand in it?” Nick asked, a little annoyed at her recklessness. “Really, Sabrina…”

“We need that vial,” she stated. “What do we do now?”
“We need a ladle or something,” Nick said, running through his rolodex-like memory of spells in hopes of coming across something that would help them.

“I’ve got it.” Sabrina closed her eyes and held her palms upward, just as Nick had.

“Sabrina?” Nick questioned. “What are you doing?” She didn’t answer. “Spellman?”

The vial rose from basin. Nick watched it curiously, glancing between it and Sabrina and back again. The water in the basin started to swirl. It rose in a narrow column, then arched, filling the vile. When it was full, the water splashed back into the basin. Nick acted on instinct, catching the vile before it hit the basin. Some of the holy water splashed over his hand, but it didn’t burn this time. He was looking at Sabrina when she opened her eyes.

“Did it work?” she asked.

“I’m holding a vile of holy water,” Nick confirmed. “What did you do?”

“You conjured the vile by magic,” she said. “I thought, maybe, that made it a product of darkness, in the church’s eyes. It wasn’t you or I being burned by the holy water. It was the vile, which in turn burned us.”

“If this vile was a human, it would be burned to shreds,” Nick realized. He looked at Sabrina again. “Those powers of yours are something else, Spellman.”

He was reminded of Zelda’s ask that he research Sabrina, her powers. He was still steadfast in his position that he wouldn’t do it without her permission, but he would ask her soon how she felt about it.

“Should we head back to the mortuary for Blackwood’s questioning?” she asked.

“We should,” Nick agreed. He held the vile out to her. “Keep this safe?” She took it from him and carefully placed it in her bag. Together, they exited the church, Nick taking in every detail he could until they were outside. “It’s just so bizarre,” he said again. “We’re baptized.”

“Maybe soon we’ll know why.” She considered him as they ambled towards the mortuary. “Are you going to be okay asking Blackwood questions about what’s in your file? Some of that is pretty personal…”

“I have to do what I have to do.” He was resolute. “We need answers.” He scuffed at the sidewalk as they walked. “I need answers.”

She squeezed his bicep. He found comfort in the small gesture of comfort. The mortuary appeared in the distance.

“Here goes nothing,” Sabrina said.

“Or everything,” Nick corrected. He looked at Sabrina. “Let’s do this, Spellman.”

Chapter End Notes

Um, Nick with babies? Sign me up. And what an adorable nerd, getting so excited about being in a church.
Chapter Nine

Chapter Notes

Ready for an action-packed update? I think this has it all...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Brother Scratch, it was your insistence that we hold this inquisition,” Zelda stated. “Therefore, you shall receive the honors of calling off your demons and reviving Blackwood.”

“Of course,” Nick nodded.

He stepped forward. The morgue was cramped, even with most of the Coven upstairs. Ambrose was there, next to Prudence. Dorcas and Agatha hung behind her in silent support. Zelda and Hilda stood shoulder to shoulder, Sabrina next to them, her eyes on Nick.

His magic was as intricate and complex as ever. When his fisted hand hit the palm of his opposite hand, the Erinyes disappeared. Sabrina wondered if they returned to their depths intact or as a pile of ash. Systematically, Nick reversed each spell he, and Ambrose had cast.

Blackwood already looked like a corpse when Nick pulled out his drawer. He lifted the bindings, then took the truth serum from Hilda.

“I’ll wake him, then force feed him this while he’s still disoriented,” he said. “Everyone ready?”

“We’re here if you fail,” Ambrose nodded. Sabrina glared at him.

“Ambrose, enough,” Zelda warned.

If Nick was affected, he didn’t let on. He was quick in his movements, had Blackwood awake and the truth serum in him within the minute. He stepped back and cast one more spell, this one to hold Blackwood in place. Blackwood looked around the room, taking in each face.

“You all think you are a clever lot, don’t you?” he asked with a glare.

“You’re the one with a timer on your life,” Nick retorted. “Your daughter,” he nodded at Prudence, “will draw her sword soon enough. But first, we have a few questions.”

“I’ve sharpened my sword to the sharpest of edges,” Prudence promised with malice.

“You are a child,” Blackwood spat at her. “And I am your father.”

“I haven’t been a child for a long time,” she shot back. “And you have never been my father. Still, patricide sounds nicer than murder, doesn’t it?”

“How long have you been plotting the Church of Judas?” Nick asked, getting right to business.

“Three decades.” Blackwood nearly choked on the words. He didn’t want to tell them the truth, but he had no choice. “I would have succeeded if I had found a woman capable of giving me a son sooner. Instead, I got her,” he jerked his head towards Prudence, “and Constance Blackwood who
was incapable of carrying a child to term.”

“Edward Spellman was in your way, wasn’t he?” Nick continued.

“Edward Spellman was a fool,” Blackwood stated. “Believing that mortals were equal to us, that we could live in a peaceful co-existence. That was bad enough, but then he married a mortal, had her.” He pointed at Sabrina.

“You had my brother killed.” It wasn’t a question from Zelda. It was a statement, one that had been on their minds for months, but that no one had ever fully brought to the surface for discussion.

“He had to be stopped!” Blackwood roared. “He was going to ruin everything the Church of Night had built!”

“Which was what?” Nick asked. “A superiority complex and a belief that we are better than mortals because we live longer and can do a bit of magic?”

“We are superior,” Blackwood said, glaring at him. “We are greater than mortals in every aspect and yet we are the ones suppressed! The fact that Edward thought anything other than that shows how much of a fool he was!”

“Who killed him?” Sabrina asked with a hard edge. “Who actually carried out the orders? I know you didn’t get your hands dirty.”

“I bewitched the pilot to crash the plane over the ocean,” Blackwood said. “Pity the rest of the passengers had to die with him.” There was no regret in his voice. “They were just mortals, after all.” He eyed Sabrina. “Your mother included.”

Sabrina took a step forward, as though to do something – anything – to avenge her parents. Zelda stopped her with a hand to her forearm.

“Why did you poison the coven?” Nick asked. He moved a step closer to Sabrina, not fully aware he was doing it. It was his instinct to be near her – just in case. “What was to gain from mass murder?”

“The Church of Night was no more,” Blackwood said. “Their loyalty was wavering, thanks to her.” He pointed at Sabrina. “And you.” He turned his finger to Nick. “You two, evangelizing Edward Spellman’s manifesto, leading them to believe there was another way, a better way, than what was before them, than my own Church of Judas, rendered them useless. Their deaths are on your hands, child, not mine.”

“We didn’t kill our coven members,” Sabrina said. “You did, Blackwood. We will not allow you to manipulate us into believing their deaths are our fault.”

“You most certainly will not,” Hilda agreed. “Those two children are more brave and decent than you ever had the chance to be.”

A sort of warmth washed over Nick at Hilda’s words, in spite of their circumstances. No one had ever been there to offer him support, encourage him. It was a foreign feeling, but he thought he liked it.

“How were you going to build a church with no members?” Zelda asked. “You had your group of thugs and a disgusting plan to marry your own children to one another, but no one, witch or not, would follow you in your quest to create a church in which women are footstools and your guiding principles are incest and supreme evil.”
“I was willing to play the long game,” Blackwood said. “Convert others where I could, but rely on my children and their offspring to populate the future with pure witches.” He fixed his eyes on Sabrina. “With no mortal half breeds.”

“You’re a disgusting person,” Sabrina spat.

“And you are sorry excuse for a witch,” Blackwood fired back. “More trouble than you’re worth, with your ideas and your self-righteousness. You alone can take credit for destroying one of the most powerful warlocks this church has ever seen.” Blackwood turned his gaze to Nick. “Nicholas, you had so much potential. You were my chosen one. With your intelligence and powers, you were going to be my successor, the high priest of the Church of Judas. You let that girl derail you, convince you of lies, make you buy into half truths…”

“She did nothing of the sort,” Nick said firmly. “If anything, she saved me.” Sabrina faltered for a moment, caught off guard by Nick’s words. He paid her no mind, his eyes on Blackwood. “Even without Sabrina, I would have never been high priest of a church with the doctrine you put in place.”

“You could have been great, Nicholas,” Blackwood continued. “Now…” He smirked. “Now, you don’t even have the girl, do you?”

Nick said nothing, but Sabrina saw how his jaw tightened, how his Adam’s apple bobbed as he swallowed hard.

“You pray on people’s vulnerabilities,” Zelda spoke up. “Sabrina, who wanted nothing more than to know her parents. Nicholas, who longed for connection. Prudence and Ambrose, both of whom longed for a father. Even myself, a witch willing to marry for power instead of love.”

“People are easily manipulated,” Blackwood told her. “You simply have to find their weak point.”

“These children are not weak for believing in love. Connection. Family.” Zelda’s rage made her radiate. “They are stronger, better people for it.”

“Fools,” Blackwood spat. “All of you.”

“You killed my parents,” Sabrina interjected. She took a step forward, having turned over a thought in her mind that she dared now ask. “What about Nicholas’ parents? Did you have them killed as well?”

“I did.”

There was a collective gasp.

“Oh my,” Hilda breathed.

Sabrina didn’t dare look at Nick.

“What about Prudence’s mother?” she continued. “She didn’t drown in a river, did she?”

“She drowned in a river,” Blackwood said. “But not by her own hand. Not by mine either, of course. As you’ve already pointed out – I don’t like to get my hands dirty. Although I was willing to make an exception for you.” Nick took another instinctive protective step towards Sabrina.

“What about Agatha’s parents?”

She knew the answer before he said it.
“I ordered their deaths,” Blackwood confirmed. Agatha cried out in anguish.

“Dorcas?”

“Her mother died in childbirth, but I had her father killed, too.”

“No!” Dorcas exclaimed.

“What about Melvin’s mother?” Sabrina pressed, undeterred.

“I would have killed his father, too, if the ignorant warlock hadn’t taken a wrong turn on the way home.”

“And why are Elsbeth’s parents still alive?” Blackwood narrowed his eyes even more, baffled that the teenage witch in front of him had seemingly figured him out.

“Her parents weren’t the problem,” he said. “Her grandparents were. They’re dead, too.”

There was stunned silence around the room.

“Did you know the sons and daughters of the witches and warlocks you had murdered were baptized in the Catholic Church?” Sabrina asked.

“What are you talking about?” Zelda looked at her. “You’re the only one…”

“She’s not,” Nick spoke up. “We’ve confirmed I am. Dorcas, too.”

“Wait… What?” Dorcas asked. Tears ran down her cheeks as she digested what she had learned about her father. “What are you talking about? I’m not baptized…”

“Answer the question, Blackwood,” Nick ordered, ignoring Dorcas. “Did you know we were baptized?”

“Yes.” He nearly choked on the word. “It was my mission to keep you from ever finding out. Of course she,” he pointed at Sabrina, “used it as a way to get out of her own Dark Baptism.”

“Why?” Sabrina asked. “Why were we baptized?”

“I don’t know.”

Silence hung heavy. Because of the truth serum, they knew Blackwood was being honest. He, too, had no idea why they were baptized.

“What else do you know about the baptisms?” Nick asked. “You may not know why, but you knew enough to decide we were a threat to you because of it.”

“Your parents baptized you, or at least I believe they did,” he told them. “At Edward Spellman’s suggestion. By that time, he had deciphered that he and I had different visions for the future of the Church of Night and my mentee no longer confided his obscure reasonings in me.”

“We will figure it out,” Sabrina promised him. “You can take that to your grave.”

“You knew Sabrina was baptized,” Nick said. “So why did you put her on trial for Breach of Promise?”

“I had to do something,” Blackwood said. “I needed her to sign the Book of the Beast. I didn’t know
“that fool of a woman,” he pointed at Hilda, “was at the baptism. I thought it as a way to force her hand.”

“I’m no fool,” Hilda told him. “But you certainly are.”

“Are you nearly finished, Nicholas, Sabrina?” Zelda asked, eyes on Blackwood. “I’m quite disgusted by having him standing here before us.”

“Here, here,” Ambrose said, speaking up for the first time. “I’ve personally had my fill of Faustus Blackwood.”

“My sword isn’t going to wait much longer,” Prudence added.

“A few more minutes,” Nick said. “Sabrina and I aren’t done yet.”

“Why do I get the feeling the pair of you know more than the rest of us in this room?” Hilda asked.

“Because we do,” Sabrina answered. “We will fill you in later.”

“Of course you two know more than you should,” Zelda muttered.

“See why they are such a problem together?” Blackwood asked. “More power than they know how to use, her with a knack for seeking out the truth, him with the ability to uncover even the most minute bit of information to further their agenda. Throw in her self-righteousness and his newfound belief that witches can love and you have a dangerous combination.”

“There is nothing dangerous about Nicholas and I,” Sabrina said. “You tried to make him dangerous though, didn’t you? You tried to manipulate him into something he’s not. You failed.”

“Your precious Nicholas is weak,” Blackwood informed her. Sabrina drew her shoulder back, ready to go another round with Blackwood. “To fall in love with a girl… A half-breed girl at that…”

“Don’t call her that,” Nick hissed.

“See?” Blackwood pointed out. “Still defending her. You betrayed her, Nicholas. You did the Dark Lord’s bidding.”

“You knew about his devotion,” Nick accused.

“It was my idea,” Blackwood informed him. Surprise was evident on Nick’s features. “I was trying to save you, Nicholas. Bring you back to the Path of Night, remind you of who you are supposed to be. I summoned the Dark Lord, who I knew had a certain interest in our fair Sabrina, although I didn’t know to what extent. I knew before you did that that girl would destroy you.” Blackwood smirked. “I guess she did.”

Sabrina watched Nick falter beside her. Blackwood was attacking him with everything he had, and for all of his bravado, Nick was beginning to crumble. She was his weakness, she realized, and Blackwood knew it. The way to hurt Nick was through her. Enough was enough.

“Kill him,” she declared, deciding the questions they still had weren’t important enough to allow Blackwood to continue his verbal attack. “We’re done.”

“For someone so self-righteous, you’re certainly quick to condemn me,” Blackwood taunted.

“You condemned yourself ages ago,” Zelda said. “Prudence? If you will.”
“Gladly.” She drew her sword. Nick abruptly left the room.

“Nicholas?” Sabrina made to go after him. Zelda stopped her.

“Give him a few minutes. He’s heard a lot.”

“No!” Sabrina pulled away from Zelda. “The last thing he needs is to be alone right now.” She knew him too well. Self-destruction was ahead of him if she didn’t stop him first.

He moved fast. She didn’t catch up to him until they were outside.

“Nicholas!” He slowed but he didn’t stop. Sabrina rushed down the porch stairs. “Nicholas, stop!” He kept moving, headed towards the gate. “Nick!”

His shortened name made him stop. He faced her.

“Sabrina, please,” he sighed. “I don’t want… Just let me leave…”

“Where are you going?” Her tone was demanding and she made no apologies for it.

“Sabrina…”

“To Dorian’s.” The way his face shifted told her she was right. “While I’m sure he would be thrilled to see you given that Blackwood killed off most of his clientele, I don’t think it’s wise for you to drown yourself in a bottle of your preferred bourbon.”

“Why not?” Nick challenged. “Blackwood might be an bastard, but he had me pegged, didn’t he? Weak. Desperate for connection. Willing to do whatever it took to be close to you, even if it meant working with Satan himself. That’s who I am, Sabrina. A weak warlock not capable of saying no even when I know I should. I wasn’t even capable of killing Amalia, in spite of the threat she was to you.”

“Your ability to love does not make you weak, Nick.” There was his shortened name again. “I’ve told you before, it’s a virtue. Maybe you don’t understand it. You spent years being groomed to believe otherwise. But loving someone – even a vengeful familiar – is the bravest thing any of us can do.”

“Sabrina, I don’t…” He shook his head, not sure of what he was trying to say, his mind spinning so fast he couldn’t decipher his thoughts. Sabrina took a few steps towards him.

“You have a chance, right now, to make another choice, Nick,” she continued. “You can go to Dorian’s. You can drink all the bourbon he has and wallow in self-pity. It might work tonight, but I doubt you will feel better in the morning. Or, you can stay here, with me, the girl you claim to love…”

“I do love you,” Nick interjected. His thoughts were a jumble, but that was one thing he was absolutely certain of. “I love you, Sabrina. I have since you opened your mouth to sing in that choir room.”

“Then stay here,” she said again, nearly pleading. “Maybe you’ve made some wrong choices in the past, but you can make a different choice now.” His eyes watered. Her own eyes burned as she realized she, too, was making a choice. “You can choose not to let Blackwood win or past mistakes or beliefs define you.”

She held out her hand. There was a moment of hesitation before Nick took it. Sabrina felt limp with
She pulled him to her and wrapped her arms around his neck. When his arms encircled her, she knew she had made the right choice.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered, tears escaping his eyes. “I’m so sorry, Sabrina. I never wanted to hurt you. I just wanted to be close to you and then I lost my way.”

She held him tighter, her own tears escaped down her cheeks. His embrace tightened as well.

“I forgive you, Nick,” she told him. “And I love you, too.”

He couldn’t hide the shutter that went through him. He held her still tighter with no intentions of letting her go.

“I love you, Sabrina,” he said into her hair, because it was the only thing he could say in the moment. “I won’t hurt you again. I promise.”

She pulled away, just enough so she could see him.

“No more lies,” she told him. “It’s the truth from here on out, even when the truth is hard.”

“I promise.” He had never met something more. “Thank you, Sabrina.” Her brow furrowed.

“For what?”

“Another chance.” His eyes drifted downward almost bashfully. “Loving me.”

“Oh, Nick.” She pulled him to her again. She vowed he would never know what it was like to not be loved again. “You deserve to be loved. We all do.”

He hugged her tight and promised himself she would never cry because of him again. He would make her happy.

They stayed like that for several minutes, finding comfort in one another.

“I’m sorry to interrupt.” They pulled away at Zelda’s voice. Nick wiped at his eyes and allowed Sabrina to step forward while he took a moment to compose himself. Zelda stood at the foot of the mortuary porch stairs. She looked exhausted. “I thought you would like to know it’s done.”

“He’s dead?” Sabrina clarified.

“He’s dead,” Zelda nodded. “Prudence proved efficient with her sword.”

“Do you need help with the body?” Nick asked. It was the last thing he wanted to do. He wanted to stay with Sabrina, make sure this was real, that they were back together and he hadn’t dreamed it. Because he had certainly dreamed it before.

“No, Brother Scratch. Ambrose is cremating it as we speak.” A shiver went through Sabrina. Nick came to stand beside her. “You two have some explaining to do, however.”

“We will tell you what we know,” Nick nodded. “Which honestly isn’t all that much.”

Zelda surveyed them for a long moment. They had both been through a lot, and she could tell they had just had a moment of their own they needed time to digest.

“Tomorrow,” she decided. “We can discuss baptisms and dead parents tomorrow. You have endured enough today. We all have.”

“Nothing a strong martini and a cigarette won’t help,” she waved her hand. “Nicholas, you will stay here tonight, understood? In light of today’s event’s, I would feel better if the whole coven is under one roof.”

“Yes, Sister Spellman,” he nodded.

“Very well. As you were.”

She disappeared back inside.

“I was going to suggest you stay,” Sabrina turned to him. “With everything today…”

“Can we take a walk?” he asked. “I’m not sure I’m ready to go back inside.”

Sabrina nodded in understanding and took his hand.

“Isn’t there a diner where all the mortal kids go?” she asked, a spark, small but there, in her eyes.

“Dr. Cerberus,” Nick replied, a smile tugging at his lips as he remembered a very similar conversation, their roles reversed as he pitched the idea of Sabrina taking him to Cee’s.

“Want to take me there?” She raised her eyebrow. Nick opened his mouth to say yes, but had another thought.

“Another time.” He tugged her hand, indicating she should follow him. “There’s somewhere else I want to take you.”

She followed him without question. He led her through the woods in companionable silence, never letting go of her hand. It was like a lifeline, them against the world, an unexpected bright spot in an overall hard day – a hard several weeks.

“This way,” Nick said, breaking the silence. He turned off the path, down a less worn path that he seemed to know well. Sabrina was curious, but still didn’t question him. The path was barely visible and they had to slow down a bit to avoid tripping over roots and being snagged by branches, but she continued to follow Nick blindly. “We’re here.”

The path opened up to a small mossy clearing next to the river. It was beautiful and peaceful. Several big, moss-covered rocks peppered the space. Nick led her to one near the edge of the river. He climbed up first, then helped her join him.

“Where are we?” she asked as she settled next to him.

“We’re not all that far from the Academy.” He pointed towards another barely visible path. “If you follow that path, you will end up there.” He took her hand again, because he could. “I found it a while back. I was struggling with knowing I was lying to you and trying to find a way to tell you without losing you. I would go for walks to clear my head and I kept ending up here. I’ve spent a lot of time here since we trapped the Dark Lord.”

“It’s beautiful,” Sabrina offered. She wanted to ask so much more, but she had a feeling Nick would tell her without her prodding. There was no denying that he was in a melancholy mood, a little lost, too, in spite of having her at his side again.

“I’ve been doing a lot of reading here,” he shared. “A lot of thinking. It’s been a bit of a refuge, a
place I don’t think anyone knows about, where no one will bother me.”

“And yet you brought me?” she gently coaxed him along.

“You’re not anyone.” He left it at that. “My whole life has been a lie, Sabrina. Or at least, it feels that way. It’s a lot to digest.”

“I understand that,” she reminded him. “More than anyone.”

“I know you do.” He squeezed her hand. “He killed our parents.” He shook his head. “We didn’t get to ask why.”

“He killed them because they were a threat to his agenda,” Sabrina said. “He took their children to ‘save’ them. I doubt he would have killed witches at that point without cause as our numbers have always been lower than ideal. He must have viewed them as a substantial threat.”

“He didn’t save any of us,” Nick said with a shake of his head. “He destroyed us.”

“No he didn’t.” Nick looked at Sabrina as though she had lost her mind. From where he sat, Blackwood had taken everything from him, including her. “Blackwood did horrible things. He kept knocking you down, kept manipulating you. But here you are, willing to love, willing to do the right thing. Blackwood didn’t destroy you, Nick. He tried, but he didn’t win.”

He looked into her eyes. They were full of sincerity, and dare he think it, love.

“Can I kiss you?” he asked tentatively. He wasn’t sure where they stood. Together, yes, but was it too soon for him to swoop in and place his lips on hers? He hoped not as kissing her was the only thing he could think to do right then.

“Of course,” Sabrina softly.

He cupped her cheek and brushed a thumb across her cheekbone, his eyes on hers. He leaned in. She leaned towards him. He shuttered when their lips met. Sabrina felt any tension she had left in her body disappear. Any doubts she had about Nick left with it. There was something between them that wasn’t just young love like it had been with her and Harvey. It was something more. Something bigger.

He kept the kiss PG, not willing to push things too far. But when he pulled away, he pulled her into him. She rested her head on his shoulder. He took her hand again.

“How did your parents die, Nick?” she asked softly. “You never told me.”

“Witch hunters.” He picked at the moss with his free hand. “Knowing what I know now, I think they must have expected something. They seemed to have a contingency plan in place. My mother hid me while my father tried to fend them off. She put me in a closet with Amalia and covered us both with blankets. Then she put protective charms on us. I couldn’t move, couldn’t speak, or hear, even though I tried.”

“Oh, Nick…” Sabrina held his hand tighter.

“It was a long time – hours – before the charms war off. Amalia told me to stay put and went out to investigate. When she came back, she told me we had to leave. She tried to shield me from seeing their bodies, but I saw them anyway.”

“I’m so sorry, Nick…”

“Because you have powers others don’t,” Sabrina reminded him. “There is a reason Blackwood wanted you – wanted all of us.”

Nick wasn’t listening.

“I was so embarrassed when I got to the Academy. Everyone else was in their clean, crisp clothing, doing magic, laughing, playing games, reading books.” Sabrina’s heart crumbled as she once again envisioned a young Nick, rescued from the woods, his long hair, dirty face, poorly fit clothes. “I had only known the wild – relying on Amalia to keep me safe, fed, clothed. She took care of me, kept me alive, but only just. She couldn’t teach me the things my parents would have taught me. She couldn’t love me like a human would.”

“I’m grateful to her,” Sabrina chanced. “In spite of everything, she kept you alive, Nick. You’re here because of her.”

“I’m grateful for that, too,” he agreed. “I vividly remember my first days at the Academy. The first night, the healer gave me a full physical. I fought her. I hadn’t had a human touch in four years. I didn’t know she was trying to help me.” Sabrina’s hand tightened around his even more. “It took me a while to settle in, to realize I was safe. When they started tutoring me, I was good at learning. At first, I just wanted to catch up. I wanted to be like my classmates. But I just – understood. It all came easy to me.

“I wanted to prove myself,” he confessed. “I wanted to show I belonged there. I didn’t have a family, didn’t really have friends, but I could know more than the rest of them, be better at magic than the rest of them. Maybe that was by design.”

“You’re talented, Nick,” Sabrina said carefully. “Blackwood was afraid of you, remember? He was afraid of us, together.” She had been thinking on this very fact in quiet moments. “You and I, together, were a threat to him. I don’t think it is – was – our powers that scared him. I think it was the fact that we know what love is. What connection is. Call me crazy, but I think that the ability to love is the most powerful thing about us.”

Nick considered her, fell more in love with her as she looked right back at him, sure in her belief. He remembered something then.

“The Book of the False God says that,” he told her. “First Corinthians, chapter three, verse thirteen, I think it is.” Sabrina raised an eyebrow, because of course he knew the chapter and verse. “It goes something like ‘And now we have these three: faith and hope and love, but the greatest is love.’ In fact, ‘love’ is a constant theme throughout the Bible, particularly in the New Testament.” He frowned, the way he did when he was flipping through the depths of his vast memory, trying to recall a fact or a piece of literature. “Prudence can love. I’d argue that Dorcas and Agatha can, too. They’ve certainly shown something akin to love for each other. I said it earlier, but what if our ability to love is because we were baptized?”

“That doesn’t sound out of the realm of possibility,” Sabrina agreed. “It still doesn’t answer why though, does it? Why baptism? Why couldn’t our parents just teach us what love is? Besides, my aunts can love. Even Ambrose. I don’t think any of them were baptized.”

“Maybe our parents knew their time was limited,” Nick suggested. “It’s dark to think about, but maybe they knew their lives were marked, so they did something to make sure we held on to the part of us that Blackwood and others in our coven seem to have tamped down to ruins.”
“Is it wrong to want to bring Blackwood back to life just to kill him again?” Sabrina wondered.

“I don’t know that even you could bring him back from charred ashes.” Nick bumped her lightly, making her smile a bit. He had to tell her the truth about Zelda’s request. “Sabrina, I need to tell you something, because we agreed to be honest with one another.”

“What?” Sabrina asked with trepidation.

“The day your Aunt Zelda asked me to research your father’s doctrine, she made another request of me.”

“When she asked you to stay back,” Sabrina remembered. Nick nodded.

“She asked me to research you, your powers, and anything we may have missed with the prophecy. I told her not without your permission. I wanted you to know.”

“Research me…” Sabrina repeated. “It’s like I’m a science experiment.”

“You have powers the rest of us don’t have,” Nick reminded her.

“So do you, apparently,” Sabrina replied. “I would be willing to bet the rest of the baptized have something others don’t, too. Agatha and her spiritualism, for instance.”

“Her ask came before we knew any of that,” Nick pointed out. “I do think it is all tied together, and that we need to find out everything we can. Not only about you, but about me, the Weird Sisters, Melvin and Elsbeth, even.”

“Do you think there is more to the prophecy?” The slight tremble in her voice betrayed her fear that there was.

“Perhaps,” he nodded. “If not more to the prophecy itself, then more to its aftereffects, especially as we thwarted it.”

“And Roz’s vision of you…” She dropped her head to her hands, letting Nick see a moment of weakness she tried to hide from the others. “When will all this end? You asked a few weeks ago if I thought we would ever get to just be. That’s all I want now – to just wake up in the morning without the threat of the world ending or something happening to the people I love.”

“We will figure all of this out,” Nick promised. He pulled her to him again, grateful he could hold her once more. Reminding himself not to comfort her or pull her into his embrace had been exhausting. “Think of it like this. Our lifetimes are centuries long. You and I haven’t even hit the quarter mark of our first century, yet. That means we will figure this out and have hundreds of years of relative peace ahead of us.”

“You’re quite the optimist, Scratch.”

“One of us has to be,” he said. “It’s usually you, so I’m picking up the slack.”

They stayed like that for a long time, breathing in the fresh air, thinking, enjoying just being together. The sun started to set. A hint of an overnight chill settled in.

“Should we go back to the mortuary, see how the others are doing before dinner?” Sabrina asked.

“I suppose,” Nick agreed. He stood and jumped down from the rock. He held his hand out to Sabrina and helped her down. He kept her hand in his to lead them back down the path. “Think I
could take you to Dr. Cerberus tomorrow?” he asked. “And maybe a movie?”

“Are you asking me on a date, Nicholas Scratch?” she asked with a teasing smile.

“I am,” he confirmed. “A milkshake and a classic movie will have to do until I can take you to
Florence.” Her smile grew. She had no idea when they would be able to disappear on this trip he
was so insistent on taking her on, but she was looking forward to it. She had never left the country,
and Nick would be the perfect tour guide. “What do you say, Spellman? Go on a date with me?”

“Pick me up at seven?” she asked.

“I’ll be there,” he promised. He kissed her hand.

Without warning, both of them lurched forward and hit the ground.

“What…”

“You never learn, do you?”

Sabrina made to stand, but Nick vaguely recognized the voice. He rolled over and shouted a spell.
An invisible shield appeared in front of them just in time to deflect another spell. He held it in place
as he stood.

“You okay?” he asked Sabrina, eyeing the three warlocks clad in black that stood before them, each
grinning wickedly.

“I’m fine,” she replied. “Blackwood’s guard?”

“Looks like we missed a few,” Nick confirmed.

“Drop the shield and play,” one of them taunted. “We won’t hurt you. We won’t leave you alive
long enough to hurt you.”

“We won’t be the ones dying today,” Nick promised. “Sabrina?”

She considered the three guards in front of her. She only had moments before Nick’s shield would
dissolve. She chose her spell and nodded her head once, counting on Nick to read the subtle cue. He
dropped his shield just as she cast her spell. The guards let out cries of pain as small balls of fire
pelted them. One of them had the presence of mind to cast the counter spell while the others cried out
in pain.

“That the best you got?” he taunted. His own spell sounded. A swarm of bees appeared around
them. Nick felt them stinging his skin, but it was Sabrina’s cry of pain that kept him grounded.

His own spell reverberated through the woods, banishing the bees. He wasted no time, advancing on
the nearest one, his arm extended as he muttered fast, complicated Latin. He clamped his hand and
twisted his fist. The guard only had a moment to grab his chest before he fell to the ground, dead.

“You’ll pay for that!”

Nick suddenly couldn’t breathe. His hands went to his neck, trying to pry apart the invisible hands
chucking the life out of him. He gasped for air as his vision started to blur.

“Nick!” Sabrina, covered in whelps from the bees and swelling more by the second pushed through
her own discomfort and zeroed in on the guard choking Nick. He was laughing manically. Fueled by
anger and a desire to save Nick, she sliced a hand diagonally through the air. Blood bloomed across
the guard’s chest and he, too, fell dead to the ground. Nick dropped to his knees and gasped for air. She cast a shield of her own to protect them as she dropped beside him.

“Sabrina!”

“You okay?” Her words were slurred, her face swelling from the bees.

“You’re not,” he realized as air filled his cavities again. His whelps from the bees had already started to disappear, but she was having an allergic reaction. He made a split second decision. He grabbed her hand as her shield broke and in a snap, they were in the mortuary yard.

“Nick!” she gasped for air.

“I’ve got you.” He scooped her into his arms. He felt weak from his own attack, but she was fading fast. “Hilda!” he called as he hurried up the stair. “Hilda!”

“What in the Heaven…” Ambrose opened the front door and spied Nick carrying a swollen Sabrina. “What happened to her, Scratch?” he demanded.

“We were attacked,” Nick said. “She was stung several times. Get Hilda.”

“Hilda!” Ambrose bellowed, leading the way into the house. “Hilda, quick!”

Hilda bustled out of the kitchen, covered in flour. Her eyes bulged when she spied Sabrina in Nick’s arms.

“Oh my Lilith!” she cried. “Get her to the botanical room! Now!” Nick didn’t break gait as he rushed her to Hilda’s makeshift clinic. “What happened?”

“We were attacked,” Nick said again. “Three of Blackwood’s guard members were in the woods. We killed two, but Sabrina was fading fast. I teleported us here. The third got away.”

“I’m on it.” Ambrose disappeared without another word. Sabrina took a raged breath.

“Help her,” Nick begged as Hilda sifted through various herbs and concoctions on her various shelves.

“I just need…” she muttered to herself.

“Ni…ck…” Sabrina tried.

“I’m here,” he soothed. He still cradled her. “We’re going to help you, okay? Just hang on for me.” He pressed a kiss to her forehead, worry growing with each passing second. He had just gotten her back. He couldn’t lose her now. “Hilda, please!”

“How!” she cried out in victory, plucking a dusty jar of a deep green liquid from a shelf. “This should do the trick.” She shook it vigorously. “Lay her down, Nicholas, then elevate her upper body so we can get this in her.” Nick did as instructed. “Drink now,” Hilda encouraged, holding the potion to Sabrina’s lips. “That’s it…”

Sabrina sputtered at the bitter taste, but kept drinking until Hilda removed the jar from her lips. She was no longer gasping for air, but she was still swollen, still covered in whelps.

“What now?” Nick asked.

“That potion is reversing the reaction,” Hilda said. “Now to these stings. I need to get the stingers
out. The longer they stay in, the more venom they will release.”

“Can I help?” Nick asked. “What can I do?”

His sense of urgency and the clear worry in his voice captured Hilda. So did the way he cradled Sabrina, kept whispering soothing words to her.

“You can help me remove the stingers,” she suggested. “They have to be scraped out. It won’t be too pleasant for her, but she’s disoriented enough that I don’t think she will feel it as much.”

“If it will help her,” Nick nodded.

“Watch me, then.” Nick watched Hilda use her fingernail to gently scrape at a whelp on Sabrina’s arm. The stinger, small as it was, emerged and she simply brushed it away and moved on. “Like that, dear, okay?”

“Oh,” Nick nodded. He gently scrapped at a whelp on her cheek, watched the stinger work loose. Sabrina whimpered. “I’m sorry,” he whispered. “It will be over soon.”

Hilda glanced at him as she worked. He was gentle and focused, soothed Sabrina each time she whimpered.

“You really love her,” she commented.

“More than my own life,” Nick confirmed. “I know the Spellmans aren’t my biggest fans right now. I know I hurt her. But I love her, Hilda, and now that she’s given me another chance, I won’t mess up again. I can’t lose her again.”

“You have certainly shown your love for her,” Hilda agreed. “Taking care of her when she had Witch’s Flu, rushing her here today. I trust you have learned from your mistakes?”

“More than,” Nick nodded. “I just wanted to be close to her, Hilda. I didn’t want to hurt her.” He was gentle as he pushed a lock of her hair away from her eyes. “I fell for her the first time I saw her.” If it were Zelda in front of him, he would never confess things like this. But Hilda was different. She was more motherly, had always treated him kindly, even in the wake of his betrayal. “I wanted what she and the mortal had. I went about it the wrong way, but at some point, it was no longer a devotion. It was just me, falling for her more and more with each passing day.”

“Love is a beautiful thing, isn’t it?” Hilda asked sensing the feelings were still foreign to Nick, in spite of their intensity. He nodded his agreement. “It’s intense, scary. But it’s also worth it.” She gave Nick a kind smile. “She loves you, too, Nicholas. You’ll do well not to forget that.”

“I know she does.” It was surreal, that someone loved him. He was still having a hard time accepting it. He chanced opening up a little more to Hilda, placing his trust in the idea that it was okay to let people in, let them see him vulnerable. “I’ve never really had someone to love me,” he shared. “My parents loved me, but they died. I guess my familiar did, too, but she wasn’t human. I don’t always know how to receive love.”

In that moment, Hilda saw Nick for the child he still was, in spite of the wisdom and talent far beyond his years. It was easy to forget he was still a teenager, same with Sabrina, Prudence, even. But strip away their powers and experience facing the darkest of the darkness, and they were all still young, still figuring out who they were. She found herself wishing Zelda didn’t have to ask so much of them, that they could be free to live like they had just months ago, without worries or cares. It was unfair, really.
“Love takes practice,” she advised. “Patience, too.” She smiled at Nick again. “You happened to fall in love with a girl who is stubborn, independent, sometimes to a fault, but who loves hard and fiercely. You will fight, have disagreements, but as long as you hold her hand, are honest with her, and love her even when she’s being a bit difficult – because you know she will be difficult sometimes – she will love you forever.”

“That’s my plan,” Nick admitted. He recognized that they were young, that anything could happen, that they had centuries to go, but he had a deep knowing that Sabrina was meant for him, forever.

“All done,” Hilda announced, scraping away the last of the stingers. “Why don’t you carry her up to her room and tuck her in? I’ll be up in a tick with a potion that will ease any pain she may be feeling and help with reducing the swelling. She’s never been stung before. Witches tend to not be allergic to bees, but I suppose that’s her mortal side.”

“That was my thought as well,” Nick agreed. He scooped Sabrina into his arms. She snuggled against him with a soft sigh. “I’ll get her settled in.”

“I’ll be up soon,” Hilda repeated.

Nick was grateful he didn’t see any of the others as he climbed the stairs to Sabrina’s room. He gently placed her on her bed.

“Nick,” she groaned.

“I’m here,” he assured her. “You’re going to be fine. Are you in any pain?”

“Some,” she admitted.

“Hilda is on her way with a potion that will help.” He smoothed her hair back, kissed her forehead. “I’m going to stay with you. If you need anything, I’ll be right here.”

He perched beside her, content to watch her sleep. This was the first time he had been past the door of her bedroom since the night of the coronation. He still felt uncertain about his place, in spite of the events that had transpired.

Hilda bustled in, gave Sabrina the potion, and promised to be back later to check on her, and please, call her if either of them needed anything.

“Nick?” a groggy Sabrina asked.

“I’m here.” It was becoming his battle cry, his promise.

“Lay with me.”

“Are you sure?” he asked, cognizant of any lines he didn’t know about but still didn’t want to cross.

“Please?”

He couldn’t deny her. He toed off his boots and stretched out beside her, her under the covers, him on top of them. She snuggled close, her head finding his chest. He wrapped her in his arms. Tears stung at his eyes. He loved her, more than he could put into words. He was something far beyond grateful to have her in his arms again.

It had been a long day. A visit to the church, the realization that he, too, was baptized. The questioning and death of Blackwood and all that it revealed. Sabrina stopping him from making
another mistake and giving him another chance. Their talk by the river. The confrontation with the guards. Him, nearly choking, her, having an allergic reaction. How had all of that happened just since breakfast?

He wasn’t aware of falling asleep, but he did, Sabrina tucked safely at his side, his heart more full than his mind for the first time in a long time. Hilda smiled when she stepped into the room to check on them. Things were how they were supposed to be, at least for those two. She knew, too, that their connection was beyond puppy love. She believed they would always find one another, somehow, no matter their circumstances.

Remembering Nick’s confession of not knowing how to receive love, she found an extra throw in Sabrina’s closet and draped it over him. Zelda would have a fit if she knew they were sleeping in the same bed, her rules around separate sleeping quarters for males and females strict. But this was Sabrina’s home, and Hilda knew, Sabrina was Nick’s. The rules could be bent for them, at least for a night.

“Sleep well, sweethearts,” she whispered into the dark. “We’ll see you in the morning.”

Chapter End Notes


And a pretty clear look at what inspired this stories name...

For those of you who like the angst, there will be more - don't worry. But we're into the action of it all now, and Sabrina and Nick make quite the pair.
Chapter Ten

Chapter Notes

Now... A lighter moment as we transition into the next phase of the story. :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sabrina blinked her eyes open slowly. She was warm, comfortable. She smiled softly when she realized Nick was asleep next to her, on his stomach, his arm draped over her.

So the day before hadn’t been a dream.

He looked peaceful. A curl fell over his forehead, his lips loose, relaxed. She wished he could have that much peace in his waking life, that they both could. She looked over her shoulder to check the time on the wind up alarm clock by her bed. It was just after six in the morning.

She decided to let him sleep.

Carefully, quietly, she slipped out of bed. He stirred, but didn’t wake. She smiled and just looked at him for a moment, grateful she had given him another chance. She tiptoed to the bathroom where she went through an abbreviated version of her morning routine. She thought she looked a little puffy, and a few of the stings on her face were still a bit red, but it wasn’t as bad as she had expected. She changed into clean pajamas – and out of her clothes from the day before – and wrapped her robe around herself. She checked on Nick again before slipping out of her bedroom.

She found Hilda in the kitchen, already at work preparing breakfast. She seemed to be the only other person awake. With so many people in the house, it was nice to have a moment of just them.

“Good morning,” Sabrina greeted.

“Good morning, love!” Hilda replied, surprised to see her. “How are you feeling?”

“Well-rested.” Sabrina slid onto a stool. “And hungry.”

“I suppose you are,” Hilda nodded. “Both you and Nicholas slept through dinner.”

“Nick has been asleep that long, too?”

“He fell asleep not long after we got you settled in,” Hilda shared. “I imagine the day caught up with him, not to mention all the traveling and hunting down of Blackwood. He can’t be sleeping all that well at the Academy, either, alone like that.”

“I’m a terrible girlfriend,” Sabrina declared, dropping her head to her hand. “It never occurred to me that he might be exhausted.”

“Dear, I think Nicholas would give up far more than sleep for you,” Hilda said pointedly. Sabrina sighed and lifted her head.

“You have no idea how right you are,” she said, thinking of Nick’s letter, how he had been willing to trap the Dark Lord within him if the acheron had failed.
“You’re feeling okay, though?” Hilda asked. “No residual symptoms?”

“Just a little puffy and I’d prefer for these whelps to be nonexistent, but I suppose it could be worse.”

“It could have been much worse,” Hilda nodded.

“Nick is okay?” Sabrina continued. “He seems to be, but he’s asleep…”

“He seems fine,” Hilda confirmed. “Other than being tired, of course.”

“I was almost too late,” Sabrina confessed. “I was swelling and getting lightheaded, but he was choking…”

“Wait,” Hilda interrupted, “Nicholas was choking?”

“One of the guards cast a spell that strangled him,” Sabrina confirmed. “He collapsed and was trying to pry something away from his throat, but there was nothing there for him to pull away.”

“He didn’t mention that,” Hilda shook her head. “He teleported here with you and we had to act fast to reverse the reaction you were having. I would have checked him over if he had said something.”

“Did he have you look at the wound on his chest?” she asked.

“What wound?” Hilda wondered.

“He was struck in the chest by a cursed blade when battling the demons to get to Blackwood,” she explained. “He cleaned out the curse and had Prudence check his work, but they didn’t have the supplies to clean it properly until he was back here. I happened to see it bleeding through his shirt once Blackwood was secured. I cleaned it for him, but told him to have you look at it. That was three days ago.”

“I’ll corner him myself,” Hilda promised as she stirred batter for blueberry pancakes. “His only concern yesterday was for you.”

“We only took care of two of the guards,” Sabrina remembered. “Nick killed one, and I killed one. Unless he killed the third before he brought me here?”

“He made the decision to let the third go and teleported you here, which was the right decision,” Hilda told her. “Ambrose and Prudence scoured the woods for the last one, searched the Academy and surrounding areas, but they came up empty handed. He likely teleported away himself. They did find the bodies of the other two and have since burned them.”

“So he’s still out there,” Sabrina said, mostly to herself. “I wonder how many more there are?”

“There can’t be many more,” Hilda shook her head. “Nicholas, Ambrose, and Prudence took care of the entire guard that was with Blackwood, which were quite a few.”

“There’s always something,” Sabrina sighed, feeling weary all over again.

“We will have peace one day,” Hilda promised. “Hopefully sooner rather than later.”

“I hope you’re right,” Sabrina said. “It’s exhausting, worrying about the people I love, fighting off evil…”

“But you’re so good at it,” Hilda quipped, making Sabrina giggle just a bit. She ladled pancakes onto a hot griddle. Bacon flipped itself in a pan on the stove. “Now, am I correct that you and Nicholas
are back together?”

“We are,” Sabrina confirmed. “We both made choices yesterday. He chose to stay here, not run away. I chose to forgive him.” She picked at her nails. “Honestly, Aunt Hilda? It was just too hard to keep loving him but not be with him.”

Hilda studied her niece and grew serious after a moment.

“Sabrina, darling, Nicholas loves you. Do you understand that?”

“Of course I do…”

“No, Sabrina, listen to me,” Hilda said again. “Nicholas loves you. He was very clear about that yesterday evening, but he didn’t have to be – it was painfully obvious, both while he was helping me scrap stingers from your skin and while he was feeding you potion and fretting over your temperature while you had Witch’s Flu.”

“I know Nick loves me,” Sabrina said. “I don’t know that I ever really doubted that. It was whether I could trust him…”

“I maybe shouldn’t tell you this, but Nicholas opened up to me last night about how hard it is for him to receive love,” Hilda confessed. “He loves you, Sabrina, and I think he knows you love him, but he doesn’t necessarily know how to allow that love. Does that make sense?”

“I know love is hard for him to understand,” Sabrina nodded. Hilda sighed. Sabrina didn’t see her point.

“Sabrina, I love you, more than anything. In fact, I think the only person who loves you more than me is Nicholas. You are one of the most selfless people I know, and that’s one of your best qualities. But dear, you can also be a bit selfish in some ways. Nicholas has done everything you have ever asked of him without batting an eye. And you’ve been there for him, too, in a lot of ways. But a relationship is a two way street. Sometimes, you’re going to have to let him lead, let his needs take priority.”

Sabrina understood then.

Hilda was right. Nick had been at her beck and call practically since the moment she met him, Dark Lord or not. He had been prepared to sacrifice his life for her, would likely still do it if it came down to it. She had been there for him, but not in the ways she should have been. She shouldn’t have had to ask him just the day before how his parents died. She should have already known that. She should have known how he grew up with Amalia, the struggles he had gone through when he first came to the Academy. She should have made the effort to be a girlfriend, even if she was trying to save the world.

She vowed to do better.

Hilda was right – they had to be equals if things were going to work between them.

“Can I take him breakfast?” she asked in a hopeful voice. “I know Aunt Zelda likes us to eat at the table, together, but…”

“I think we can make an exception today,” Hilda nodded. “You’ve already broken her rules about sharing a bed, what’s breakfast?” Sabrina smiled guiltily. “Go on and pour yourselves some juice or coffee or whatever you would like. I’ll put some pancakes on a plate for you, and the bacon is nearly done.”
“Thank you,” Sabrina said sincerely. “For everything, Aunt Hilda. Taking care of me, taking care of all of us, our talk this morning…”

“There is never a need to thank me,” Hilda shook her head. “I do this from love. But it is nice to hear, all the same. Pour me a cup of coffee while you’re at it?”

A few minutes later, Sabrina picked up a tray heavy with pancakes, bacon, syrup, coffee, and juice.

“Thank you,” she said again. “If Zelda asks…”

“I’ll take care of Zelda,” Hilda promised. “Just bring your dishes down when you’re finished. And make sure Nicholas sees me before he leaves this house for the day.”

“Oh I will,” Sabrina promised. “That warlock won’t make it to the porch without getting checked over.”

She left Hilda chuckling in her wake, heard the distant sound of a shower turning on, one of the twins, Alastair, she thought, crying to let the world know he was awake for the day. She ignored the house waking up around her and went straight for her bedroom. Salem opened the bedroom door for her. She winked her thanks at the familiar. Nick was still sound asleep. She almost hated to wake him.

Almost.

She put the tray down and climbed onto the bed.

“Nick.” She ran a hand through his hair. “Nicholas.” Her hand trailed down his back. “Come on, Scratch. Time to wake up.”

Nick groaned as he came into consciousness.

“Sabrina?” he asked sleepily.

“Good morning,” she answered. “Sleep well?”

“I actually did.” He turned over to his back and rubbed sleep away from his eyes. He blinked a few times and a smiling Sabrina came into focus. “So yesterday really wasn’t a dream.”

“It really wasn’t,” she confirmed. She moved an unruly curl from his forehead. She could get used to this, waking up beside a sleepy Nick, his hair a mess, his eyes still heavy with the night’s sleep.

“How are you feeling?” he asked, assessing her for any sign that she wasn’t fully recovered from the previous day.

“I’m okay,” she assured him. “A little bit puffy, but otherwise okay.” She smiled at him. “Thanks to you.”

“Hilda did the hard work.” He pushed himself upright in bed and leaned against the headboard. “I just got you to her.”

“I brought you breakfast.” Nick raised an eyebrow.

“You did?” Sabrina tilted her head towards the nearby tray. His smile was enough to tell her she made the right decision. “What did I do to deserve breakfast in bed?”

“Well, let’s see,” Sabrina pretended to think. “You saved me from the guard and got me to Hilda so
she could reverse my reaction. Took care of me when I had Witch’s Flu. Helped find and bring down Blackwood. You’re researching my father’s manifesto and all of this baptism and special powers business. Not to mention you fixed the acheron to trap the Dark Lord. And that’s just my top five. I haven’t even touched the whole diving into the bathtub to find said manifesto, saving me from Adam, researching the prophecy…"

Nick was solemn as he took her hand.

“I will do anything for you, Sabrina.” His fingers laced through hers. “Anything.”

She returned his gaze.

“I know,” she said softly. “I want you to know that I will do anything for you, too, Nick. This isn’t a one way street.”

“Where is this coming from?” Nick asked. Sabrina moved so she was sitting next to Nick, his hand still in hers. “Is everything okay?”

“Everything is fine,” she assured him. “I love you, Nick.” He smiled a bit, hoped he would never get used to hearing those words. “I have been pretty consumed with prophecies and Dark Lords and evil high priests, but that doesn’t mean I don’t love you, that you can’t talk to me, rely on me to be there.” She knew the right words to say then. “To catch you when you fall.”

The words landed as she intended them to. Nick’s eyes grew glassy. He quickly blinked away the moisture.

“This is new to me,” he confessed. “I don’t know how to be in a relationship. And I feel like I have so much to make up for…” Sabrina shook her head.

“You don’t,” she assured him. “I forgave you yesterday, Nick. I made the choice to trust you entirely, with my life and with my heart. I want you to trust me in the same way.”


“No more me against the world or you against the world,” she told him. “It’s us against it – the good and the bad.”

“Us against the word,” Nick repeated. He chanced a small smile. “I think we could be one hell of a match for it.”

“That’s the intention,” Sabrina said, making him chuckle. A faint bruise on his neck caught her eye. “You have bruises from yesterday.” She ran a finger along the bruise. “Hilda is going to check you over after breakfast.”

“I’m fine…” Nick started.

“You didn’t see her about your chest wound.” She tugged at his shirt with her free hand. “Let’s have a look, Nicholas.”

“It’s fine…”

“Nick.”

“I’m starting to think you’ll do anything to get my shirt off me,” he quipped, letting go of her hand to lift up his shirt. He saw her eye roll and smiled. “See? It’s fine.”
Sabrina surveyed the wound. He had removed the bandage, but the wound itself was still a bit too red for her liking. It had scabbed over, and at this point she was certain even Hilda wouldn’t be able to stop the scarring.

“Hilda is still checking you over,” she informed him. “Between this and yesterday, you need a good looking at.”

“Fine,” Nick agreed. “But only because I’m sure you won’t let me out of this house until she does.”

“Precisely,” she confirmed.

“Can I at least have breakfast first?” he asked. “We slept through dinner…”

“Hungry?” Sabrina asked with a smile.

“Starving,” Nick admitted.

“We can eat,” she said. “But, there is a price…”

“Let’s hear it.”

“The cost of breakfast will be one good morning kiss,” she informed him.

“That’s a high price,” Nick said seriously. “But I do subscribe to the belief that one pays for quality.” Sabrina giggled as he leaned in to kiss her. He cupped her cheek, made sure to kiss her soundly. She went from giggling to breathless as he pulled away, satisfied with himself. “Good morning.”

“Morning,” she breathed.

“Did that cover my tab?” he asked, brushing his fingers across her cheeks.

“I think you left a generous tip, too,” she replied. He chuckled. She nearly kissed him again, but if she did, she wasn’t sure she would stop. “Breakfast,” she declared. “We need to eat. Before it gets cold.”

She scrambled from the bed. Nick smirked, pleased with himself, but more grateful than anything that he could kiss her again. She returned to the bed with the tray. She sat facing him and offered him a set of utensils.

“Hilda really goes all out, doesn’t she?” Nick asked, taking in the spread before him.

“She’s having the time of her life,” Sabrina confirmed. “In spite of it all.”

“Any news from Ambrose on what happened to the third guard?” Nick asked as he poured syrup on the stack of pancakes.

“He got away,” Sabrina shared. “Ambrose and Prudence combed the woods and surrounding areas, but they think he teleported.”

“There can’t be many left,” Nick mused as Sabrina added cream to her coffee. She added just a splash to his, the way he liked it. “Ambrose, Prudence, and I took out at least a dozen, maybe more.”

“We have to stay on our guard,” Sabrina said. “Encourage the coven to travel in pairs, maybe tell the younger ones not to go out after dark.”

“We need to map out a plan,” Nick said, pausing long enough to chew a bite of bacon. “Where
should we start? Your father’s manifesto? Our baptisms? Our powers? Our families? The prophecy? It all feels tied together. We have to find where it begins.”

“I have a proposition,” Sabrina ventured. Nick raised an eyebrow to show he was listening. “Today, let’s do nothing.” He frowned.

“Nothing?”

“Nothing,” she confirmed. “We owe Zelda an explanation about the whole baptism thing, but after that, let’s give ourselves one day to do nothing. It might be a little irresponsible, but we’ve spent days – weeks – chasing down prophecies and high priests. Can we just give ourselves one day to do nothing? Go to that movie you mentioned yesterday, get milkshakes at Cee’s. I wouldn’t mind sitting in the parlor and doing a puzzle, even. I just…” She looked at Nick. “I just want one day to feel like a normal witch again.”

Nick smiled just a bit.

“’Normal witch’ is a bit of an oxymoron, isn’t it? For any of us, but especially you.”

“You know what I mean,” Sabrina retorted.

“I do,” he agreed. “I suppose I can’t make any promises, but I wouldn’t hate having a day to just – do nothing. As long as that nothing is with you.” He grew serious. “I know I said this yesterday, but thank you, Sabrina, for letting me have another chance. I won’t hurt you again.”

Sabrina considered him.

“Nick, you know we’re going to fight sometimes, right? You’re going to do something to annoy me or I’m going to do something to annoy you and we’re going to argue. It’s inevitable, and it’s normal. We’re going to hurt each other’s feelings from time to time. It’s part of being in a relationship.”

“I know…” He pushed a piece of pancake round with his fork. “I told you yesterday though that I feel like I have a lot to make up for. I really hurt you, Sabrina. But I hurt myself, too, and I have a fear of doing something else to ruin everything all over again.”

Things made sense to Sabrina then.

“You’re afraid of happiness,” she realized.

Nick opened his mouth to deny it, but he couldn’t. She was Sabrina. If he couldn’t talk to her, he couldn’t talk to anyone.

“Everything good in my life has been taken away,” he said carefully. “My parents, my childhood, the Academy, you, even if that was my own doing. I can’t help but hold on to the fear that I’m always going to lose the things that matter.”

He continued to push around the piece of pancake, avoiding her eyes. Sabrina put her own fork down and reached for Nick’s. She took it from him, stabbed the piece of pancake he was playing with, and held it out to him. He went to take the fork, but she pushed his hand away and popped the piece into his mouth. He chewed slowly, watching her.

“You’re afraid that if you mess up, you’ll lose me,” she said. “Or something else that matters to you.”

“Maybe it’s not rational…”
“No, I think it is,” Sabrina interrupted. “You’ve been through a lot, Nick. More than I knew. More than I think you knew, even. But you have to trust that things are going to work out. Mostly, you have to trust yourself.”

“And they think I’m the intelligent one in this relationship,” he said after a moment.

“You are the intelligent one,” Sabrina said. “But maybe I’m the wise one.”

He threaded his fingers through hers and tugged her towards him. She moved around the tray and joined him against her headboard.

“Be patient with me?” he asked. “I’m learning about love and relationships as I go. Turns out, there’s not really a book on this stuff. At least, not an accurate one. Trust me, I’ve tried to find it.”

“You even read magazines,” Sabrina ventured, deciding she may as well tell him the truth about snooping through his things. Twice.

“You about to confess to going through my things?” Nick asked. Sabrina scrunched her nose.

“You knew?”

“I’ve told you, don’t try stealth without magic. It’s not your strong suite.”

“I’m sorry,” Sabrina sighed. “The letter you gave me talked about a box with your family crest on it in the trunk at the foot of your bed and I was curious….”

“It’s fine,” Nick dismissed. “Fair is fair, I suppose.” He offered her a strip of bacon. She took it.

“Find anything of interest?”

He picked up piece of bacon for himself.

“Aside from your mortal books and magazines?” she teased.

“I was trying to figure you out,” Nick admitted. “When you were with the mortal and I was trying to win you over.”

“Did you find anything useful in those beauty magazines, Scratch?” She had to work to keep from laughing outright. Nick glared at her.

“You wear lipstick and curl you hair,” he stated. “I’m not a mortal or a girl. I don’t know. I made what I thought was an obvious connection.” Sabrina laughed outright. “Shut up, Spellman.” He squeezed her knee to let her know he, too, was joking.

“I did find the picture of you with your parents,” she said after she calmed. “You were a beautiful baby, Nick. And you look like your dad.”

“I should take that photo out of the trunk,” Nick mused. “Put it up in my room somewhere. Blackwood was strict about personal effects, but he is no longer a concern.”

“You should definitely take it out of the trunk,” Sabrina encouraged. “What about your grandmother? Do you know what happened to her?”

“I’ve always assumed she was dead,” Nick said slowly. “But… I don’t know now…”

“She could still be alive,” Sabrina said carefully. “If you want to look for her, I’ll help you.” It took a moment, but Nick shook his head.
“She’s dead,” he said with finality. “I’m choosing to believe that.”

“Okay,” Sabrina agreed. “We won’t look for her.”

“I mean it,” Nick said, giving her a stern look. “Don’t go looking for her, Sabrina.”

“I won’t,” Sabrina promised. Even still, she wasn’t sure she entirely meant it. If Nick had family alive somewhere, she thought he should know them. “What about the box with your crest? I tried to open it…”

“You can’t open it,” Nick told her. “Only a Scratch can. The only way you can open that box is if the last of the Scratch line – in this case, me – is no longer of this world.”

A chill ran through Sabrina.

“I don’t like that,” she stated. “It’s morbid.”

“It’s ancient magic,” Nick countered. “Think of it like this – while I was gone and you were trying to open it, it meant that I was alive.”

“Way to swing it, Scratch,” Sabrina said. “What’s in it?”

“Family heirlooms,” Nick said. “I’ve never opened it.” That wasn’t entirely the truth. He had opened it, and he knew exactly what was in it, but that wasn’t for Sabrina to know – at least not right now. “Let’s finish breakfast and talk to Zelda, that way we can spend the rest of the day doing nothing, as you put it.”

Sabrina smiled at him.

“But first…” She put her hand on his cheek and leaned in to kiss him. “I love you, Nick.” She hoped he always smiled like that when she said those words.

“I love you too, Sabrina.” He kissed her one more time. “I will forever.”

Chapter End Notes

I like to think of Nick as not having a reference point for love and relationships and for him to struggle with knowing how to accept love. Given how intelligent he is, I imagine him trying to learn how to give love, but be totally lost at giving it. If that makes sense. :)

Please let me know what you thought of this one! And get ready for more action...
“Are you sure about this?”

Agatha looked at Sabrina with trepidation. Sabrina understood the witch’s hesitation. She had killed her once, after all.

“Positive,” she nodded. “Watch.” She used a dropper to splash the back of her opposite hand with holy water. “See? I’m fine.”

“But we know you’re baptized…”

Sabrina sighed. This would be easier if Nick was there and could use his charm to sway her, but he was at the Academy with Zelda, Ambrose, and the rest of the teachers, helping them put the final touches on the school to allow the students to return. She was charged with proving their baptism theory.

“Dorcas, hold out your hand,” she directed. Dorcas stared at her. “Dorcas, come on…”

“I don’t know if I trust you, Sabrina Morningstar…”

“Spellman,” she corrected. “My last name is Spellman. I have already paraded you into a church. A drop of water isn’t going to hurt you. I swear it. Now hold out your hand.”

“If this burns…”

“It won’t,” Sabrina said, exasperated. “Come on, Dorcas!”

Dorcas extended a trembling hand. Sabrina wasted no time in dropping a couple of beads of water onto the back of it.

Nothing happened.

Dorcas looked at it in wonder.

“What does it mean?” she asked. “Being baptized?”

“We don’t know yet,” Sabrina admitted. “Right now, I need to figure out who is and isn’t baptized. Nick and I will go from there. Now, Agatha? Your hand, if you will.”

“Fine.” She extended her hand, still glaring at Sabrina. Sabrina dropped the holy water onto it. Again, nothing happened.

“Wow,” Agatha breathed. “You’re sure that’s holy water? Not tap water?”
“Positive,” Sabrina nodded. “You have both been baptized, by your parents before they died as Blackwood told us.” She frowned. “How did your parents die, anyway?”

“Witch hunters,” they replied together. Sabrina worked to control her expression. They died in the same manner as Nick’s parents.

“My parents and Dorcas’ father were friends,” Agatha explained. “We were all together, at my family’s home in Singapore. Dorcas and I were upstairs in my bedroom, playing with… dolls.”

“Voodoo dolls,” Sabrina corrected knowingly. “Even then.”

“Agatha remembers more than I do,” Dorcas supplied. “I just remember that we couldn’t get out of Agatha’s room.”

“It was like something sealed off my room,” Agatha confirmed. “We couldn’t go past the doorway. We yelled and yelled for help, but no one came until much later.”

“Two witches came for us,” Dorcas said. “They were kind. They told us our parents were gone, but that they would take care of us. They took us to the Academy and we have been there ever since.”

“You don’t know why we’re baptized?” Agatha asked. “What it means?”

“No,” Sabrina said honestly. “We’re trying to figure out why.”

“Why what?”

Prudence floated into the room with her usual superior demeanor.

“Why we’re baptized,” Dorcas answered. “Sabrina just tested Agatha. She’s baptized, too. We both are.”

“This baptism rhetoric is absurd,” Prudence declared, rounding on Sabrina. “We’re witches, not saints. Witches aren’t baptized.” She looked down her nose at Sabrina. “Except for you, and you’re a half breed.”

Sabrina returned her glare. Without warning, she flicked her fingers in Prudence’s face. Prudence gasped as water sprinkled across her features.

“What did you just do?” she demanded, wiping away the drops. “Did you use those powers of yours…”

“I sprinkled you with holy water,” Sabrina said, holding up her vial. “Congratulations, Prudence, you, too, have been baptized.”

“That’s not… It’s… Tap water…” Prudence stammered her objections.

“Holy water,” Sabrina repeated in a self-satisfied manner. “You’re baptized, Prudence. I don’t know why, but you are. So are your sisters.”

“That just can’t be…”

“What can’t be?” Ambrose strode into the room, a half-eaten sandwich in his hand.

“Sabrina is sprinkling tap water on all of us and calling us baptized,” Prudence said, still glaring at Sabrina. “She’s absolutely ridiculous.”
With an exasperated sigh, Sabrina wet her fingertips and flicked them at Ambrose. He howled in pain.

“Sabrina!” he roared. He dropped his sandwich as he tried to shake away the burning sensation on his hand. “What in the Heaven did you just do?”

“See?” she asked Prudence, ignoring Ambrose. “Holy water.”

Prudence looked stunned.

“Oh my Lilith,” she breathed. “We are baptized…”

“And Ambrose isn’t,” Sabrina said. “Again, I don’t know why.”

“You couldn’t find a better way to prove your point?” Ambrose asked, still shaking his hand out. “Ruined my lunch, too. Been looking forward that sandwich since I left the Academy…”

“I could have marched you into the church like I did Dorcas and let you burst into flames,” Sabrina retorted. “I need to find out who else is baptized. I have my theories, but keep this to yourselves for now, okay? It’s important.”

“It’s dangerous,” Prudence stated. “We’re baptized, Sabrina.” She rubbed her arms as though trying to wipe her christening away. “Witches have been burned for less.”

“Then I trust you will listen and keep it all quiet,” Sabrina challenged.

She didn’t wait for their response. She left the room, checking the time on the grandfather clock in the hall as she passed. It was just past two in the afternoon, hours before dinner, hours before Nick would turn up and she could pass along her update. She found herself in the kitchen where Hilda was humming to herself as she chopped vegetables.

“Hello, dear,” Hilda greeted. “Skipping your mortal classes today?”

“It was a half day,” Sabrina answered, taking her usual spot on a stool at the counter. She found herself sitting in the kitchen with Hilda more and more often as of late. Hilda and Nick seemed to be the only two people she could talk to without censoring herself or leaving out details she couldn’t share. “Teacher work day or something.”

“You’re doing okay in your mortal classes?” Hilda continued. “Grades are good?”

“Grades are fine,” Sabrina nodded. “What are you doing?”

“Canning,” Hilda answered. “We have got an awful lot of vegetables from the garden still and they’ll go bad if I don’t do something with them.” She glanced at Sabrina. “And what have you been doing?”

“I sprinkled holy water on Agatha and Prudence. Ambrose, too, but that was to prove a point. Agatha and Prudence are baptized as well.”

“Just as you and Nicholas suspected.”

“We are still no closer to knowing why,” Sabrina said. “Or how, now that I think of it. I suppose it makes some sense with me. My mother was mortal. But how did their parents baptize them? They couldn’t just walk into a church.”

“You don’t necessarily need a church to be baptized,” Hilda pointed out. “You weren’t. We had a
priest come to you.”

“There are just so many questions,” Sabrina sighed. “Do you think my dad knew I was baptized?”

“I’m certain he did,” Hilda answered as she chopped away. “Edward and Diana were a team.” A small, wistful smile played at her lips. “You and Nicholas remind me of them, the way you work together, seem to just know what the other is thinking.” A warm sensation filled Sabrina at the idea that she and Nick could be like her parents. “Diana wouldn’t have done anything without Edward’s knowledge. Approval? Well, you didn’t get your rebellious nature from your father, in spite of what it may look like. Your mother married a warlock, after all. A rebel if there ever was one.”

“What was her family like?” Sabrina asked. “Did she have any brothers or sisters?”

“She had a sister,” Hilda nodded. “A brother, too.” She looked at her niece suspiciously. “Why the questions?”

“I don’t know anything about my mother’s side,” Sabrina told her, playing on Hilda’s sentimental nature to get her to talk. “I’ve been raised a Spellman, which I’m proud of, but I want to know more about her side now that I’m older.”

“Your mother’s family was – interesting,” Hilda ventured. Zelda would kill her, surely, for sharing with Sabrina, but she thought it was high time her niece knew the truth. “Zelda and I had to fight them for custody after Edward and Diana died. They planned to raise you as a mortal, stamp the ‘evil’ out of you.”

“Stamp the evil out of me?” Sabrina repeated. “They thought I was evil? I was an infant!”

“A half witch infant,” Hilda reminded her. “You have been showing signs of magic since the day you were born, Sabrina. I know you – all of us now – have a dream of living in harmony with the mortals, but the fact is, our magic scares some more than others. Edward and Diana were very clear they wanted you to be a witch. Diana’s family didn’t want that for you.”

“So there was a custody battle?” Sabrina pressed.

“Not in the traditional sense,” Hilda hedged.

“Meaning you used magic,” Sabrina deciphered.

“We helped the situation along,” Hilda admitted. “Your grandparents were extremely religious. We knew you wouldn’t grow up happy there.”

“Are they still alive?” Sabrina asked.

“Your grandmother is,” Hilda confirmed, her certainty that Zelda would kill her growing with each piece of information she shared. “Your grandfather died six years ago. Heart attack at work. He was a banker, if you’re wondering.”

“And my aunt and uncle?”

“I don’t remember their names,” Hilda said truthfully. “They, too, were very devout Catholics. They disowned your mother early into her relationship with Edward.”

“And she was okay with that?”

“She was hurt by it,” Hilda said, “but she loved your father, Sabrina. She was willing to risk
“everything for him.” She smiled wistfully. “A bit like you and Nicholas, truly.”

“So she disowned her family.”

“She loved her family,” Hilda corrected. “But she loved you and your father more. I don’t think you know how much your mother was willing to sacrifice for love.”

Sabrina sat with that information for a few minutes. Her mother loved her and her father enough to give up everything. It was the kind of love that people dreamed of, that authors wrote stories about, that movies were made about. And her mother and father had had it.

“What about Nick’s parents?” she asked eventually. “He mentioned that Zelda said she knew them. Did you know them?”

“I did,” Hilda nodded. “We had dinner with them a couple of months before you were born. I had forgotten about that. Nicholas was a toddler, no more than two or so. Oh, his mother was so proud of him!”

“You knew Nick as a baby?” Sabrina pressed. “And never told me?”

“Like I said, dear, I had forgotten until just now. We had a lot of dinners back then, helping your father with his work. I didn’t go to nearly as many as Zelda – politics is more her area of expertise – but we did meet with the Scratches.”

“What were they like?”

“It’s been such a while, but I do remember that it was your mother’s last dinner until you were born. It wasn’t safe for her to travel long distances in the final months of pregnancy, so she and I stayed here while Edward and Zelda continued their work. Nick’s mother was an excellent hostess. We were at their home in the Highlands. Such a stunning place. Have Nicholas take you there sometime… But yes, she was delightful. Smitten with her young son. He was well-mannered, even then. He sat at the table with us like a miniature adult. I remember both of them excused themselves to put him to bed. That stood out – there was no handing off of the child to a nanny or the father deferring to the mother while he stayed to drink liquor and smoke cigars with the men.”

“Nick’s dad liked cigars,” Sabrina said. “He told me that recently.”

“He returned with cigars,” Hilda confirmed. “I liked him as well. He was jovial, welcoming, interested in what your father had to say. I like to think they would have worked together had they all survived.” She smiled. “They probably would have been delighted to have the pair of you together. My meeting with them was brief, but Nicholas reminds me a lot of his father. In appearance, certainly, but in his mannerism, too. I wouldn’t be too surprised if he smoked cigars in the future.”

“I could see that,” Sabrina said. She could see it, in the future, Nick, older in years, but not much in appearance, seated with a book, a smoking cigar nestled between his fingers, an occasional indulgence, not a habit. It suited him. “What about Nick’s grandmother? Did you know her? I think her name was Agatha…”

“I knew of her,” Hilda nodded. “She was his mother’s mother, a wise old witch, from what I heard. I’m afraid I don’t know much else about her.” Hilda dropped several tomatoes into a large pot.

“Really, why all the questions about your and Nicholas’ families?”

“Curious,” Sabrina shrugged. Hilda raised a suspicious eyebrow but said nothing. “Do you think Nick’s grandmother is still alive?”
“She could be, I suppose,” Hilda answered. “We tend to hear about deaths in the witch community eventually, and I haven’t heard of her passing. But if she’s still alive, that begs the question of why didn’t she take in her grandson after his parents died?”

“I asked Nick if he wanted to look for her,” Sabrina confessed. “He said he doesn’t.”

“A decision you have to respect,” Hilda warned her.

“I know,” Sabrina sighed. “But Hilda, if he has family out there, shouldn’t he know? Shouldn’t he at least have the option to know them?”

“He has the option to not want to look for them,” Hilda pointed out. “It seems he’s chosen that option.”

“But he doesn’t have family…”

“Nicholas has family,” Hilda cut her off. “You are his family, dear. And while others may not feel the same way right now, I consider him a part of our family as well. If he doesn’t want to look for his grandmother, you have to respect that.”

“Fine,” Sabrina huffed. Hilda was right. She needed to respect Nick’s wishes, even if she didn’t want to. “Can I help with anything?”

“I’m a bit behind with the twins’ baby food,” Hilda said. “Think you can weld a food processor?”

“How hard could it be?” Sabrina shrugged.

Hard, she learned a half hour later. Hilda’s baby food concoctions were complex, involved a lot of peeling and chopping. They turned out all sorts of pallid colors and what little she dared taste was disgusting. She was still at it when Nick strolled into the kitchen.

“Are you – cooking?” he asked by way of greeting. Sabrina did a lot of things, but she certainly didn’t cook.

“Come taste this,” Sabrina replied. She dipped a spoon into the orange puree she had just finished and held it out to Nick. Hilda pursed her lips to suppress her smile as she looked on, transferring her newly canned jars of tomatoes to a tray to carry down to the cellar later.

“What is it?” Nick asked as he approached warily.

“Try it,” Sabrina coaxed. “I worked hard on it.” Nick’s lips closed around the spoon in an effort to make Sabrina happy. There was no stopping the look of disgust, even as he tried to temper it for her benefit. “Well?” she asked. “What do you think?”

He wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his jacket, willing the bitter taste away.

“Well,” he started, “I’m not supposed to lie to you…”

Sabrina burst out laughing. Hilda chuckled across the room at the innocent exchange. They didn’t get to be sixteen and eighteen often. It was good to see those moments still occur.

“It’s food for the twins,” she told him. “Apple, carrot, squash, and kale.”

“You feed them that?” Nick asked Hilda. He picked up a slice of apple and popped it into his mouth to get rid of the taste. “No wonder Alastair always tries to take my food.”
“Cheeky today, are we, Nicholas?” Hilda asked, although her eyes danced in amusement to let him know he wasn’t in trouble.

“Alastair tries to take your food because you give it to him,” Sabrina said. “It’s a good thing you weren’t here last night. Zelda wanted your head for letting him have a few bites of your brownie. Apparently he was riding a sugar high into the early hours.”

Nick raised an eyebrow, but didn’t say a word. He most certainly was there last night, had slept next to Sabrina – again on top of the covers – and teleported out of her bedroom at sunrise. He had shown up for breakfast an hour later, something he thought would be a little more common for him now that he and Sabrina were back together.

“I don’t know how the boy didn’t keep you awake, Nicholas,” Hilda said. “Surely you heard him all the way at the Academy, as loud as he was screaming.” She gave them a pointed look to say she was well aware of the previous night’s sleeping arrangements. “Nice to see you for breakfast, as well. What have you been eating when you’re not here, anyhow? I’ve been meaning to ask.”

“The mortals don’t do a bad job of pre-packaging food.” Hilda looked appalled at his answer. “The kitchen at the Academy is in working order, so I just – heat stuff up when I’m hungry.”

“Such as?” Hilda pressed.

“I feel like I’m in trouble,” Nick countered.

“You are,” Sabrina supplied as she poured the concoction she had made Nick taste into small containers.

“Let me guess,” Hilda said. “Those frozen waffles the mortals like? Eggos, I think they call them?”

“I’ve had them,” Nick confessed. “They’re not awful.”

“Muffins? In a store-bought piece of plastic?” Nick nodded. “Cans of pasta?”

“I like the ravioli…”

“No more,” Hilda declared, waving around a dish towel. “I understood your reasoning while you and Sabrina were on the outs, but if you’re going to be sneaking into this house and sleeping in Sabrina’s room, you’re going to be taking your meals here, too. Is that understood?”

“I’m afraid to disagree,” Nick replied.

“You should be,” Sabrina added, doing nothing to help him out of his predicament.

“Are we clear, Nicholas?” Hilda declared.

“We’re clear,” Nick promised. “Although the Academy should be habitable by week’s end, so I imagine most of us will be taking our meals there.”

“I’ll still be cooking them,” Hilda informed him.

“You’re not going to tell Zelda about…” Sabrina asked.

“No,” Hilda shook her head. “I think the pair of you are old enough to make your own decisions in that area, and I also believe Zelda will be a bit looser on the rules once the rest of the students are back at the Academy, but if Nicholas keeps eating frozen waffles, I might change my mind.”
“Anything else I can help with?” Sabrina asked in an effort to get herself dismissed from the kitchen and take Nick with her now that Hilda was riled up.

“You’re free to go,” Hilda said. “You’ve been a huge help. But I do need a favor from Nicholas.”

“What can I do?” he asked.

“Can you use those broad shoulders of yours to take these jars down to the cellar?”

“Sure thing.” He used a quick bit of unspoken magic to lighten the load as Hilda stacked three trays of canned vegetables in his arms. He could barely see over them.

“Come on,” Sabrina said. “I’ll show you where they go.” She led him through the house and down to the basement. The house was a labyrinth, really, full of corridors and rooms tucked away. They passed the morgue and entered a cool, dark room lined with everything from canned vegetables to smoked meats.

“I used to think Zelda was the scarier of your aunts, but I might be changing my mind,” Nick said as he and Sabrina placed the jars on a shelf.

“Hilda takes her role as caretaker very seriously,” Sabrina said. “But Nick, she’s right in the fact that you shouldn’t be eating frozen food when she’s cooking for an army three times a day.”

“I didn’t want to make you uncomfortable,” Nick confessed. “The coven might be staying here right now, but this is your home. When we were apart, I didn’t want you to feel weird with me being here any more than I needed to be.”

“We’re together now.” Sabrina put her hand on his arm and turned him to face her. “You should be here.”

“Now,” he agreed. “But not before. You said as much that first night, when you came to the Academy to try to get me to come back here. I said ‘you don’t want me there’ and you said ‘I don’t.’ I wasn’t going to push my luck.”

“All of that is behind us,” she said. “We’re moving on. Together.”

“Together,” Nick echoed. He leaned in to kiss her, but it was her who slipped her hand into the hair at the nape of his neck and held him to her to deepen the kiss.

His instincts took over. He walked her backwards until she was pressed between him and a wall, and she certainly wasn’t complaining. She held him close, fisted her hand in his shirt to keep him near. One of his arms was fully wrapped around her waist, holding her to him, not that there was any space left between them. His other hand inched up body. Her content sigh told him he was doing something right.

“I love you,” he breathed when he broke for air.

“I love you,” she replied. “Kiss me, Nick.”

He obliged.

The makeout session lasted several more minutes before he decided to do the right thing. He wanted her, but he wasn’t sure they were there yet. Regardless, he certainly wasn’t going to make love to her in a cellar for the first time. Not that he would rule it out in the future.
“We should go back upstairs.” He kissed her neck. “We’ve been down here way too long already.”

“We should,” she agreed. She kissed his jaw. “I don’t want to, but we should.”

“We’ll pick this back up later,” he promised. He pushed her hair back from her face, wondered where her trusty headband was. “I know we’re moving forward, but I think its safe to say I’ve got a lot of kissing to make up for, and I’m going to insist that I pay that debt.”

“That’s one case where I won’t argue with you,” she quipped with a smile. She kissed him one more time. “Let’s go to my room. I’ve got a lot to fill you in on.”

“Been busy?” he asked, her hand in his as she led the way upstairs.

“I proved the Weird Sisters are all baptized. And that Ambrose is not.”

“Anyone else?”

“I didn’t get a chance to try Melvin and Elsbeth. I think we should try to sprinkle everyone though. Maybe someone is baptized and Blackwood didn’t know.”

“I agree with that,” Nick said. Sabrina opened the door to her bedroom. Salem meowed in greeting. “How mad would Zelda be if she found out I slept here the last two nights?”

“Depends on the day,” Sabrina mused. She sat on her bed and crossed her legs under her. Nick joined her, leaning against her pillows. “But Hilda’s right. She will be a lot more relaxed when the coven is back at the Academy.”

“Ambrose still hates me, so by my count, I’m two and two with the Spellmans right now. I thought I was dangerously close to one and three for a minute earlier though.”

“Two and two?” Sabrina asked.

“You like me. Hilda likes me. Zelda tolerates me because I have skills that are of service to the coven, but I don’t think she actually likes me. And we’ve established how Ambrose feels about me.”

“I love you,” Sabrina corrected him. “Hilda likes you more than she likes most of the coven members, and she really likes them.” She ran a hand through Nick’s hair. It was odd, how she couldn’t stop touching him now. “Zelda does like you, but she’s not very good at showing her emotions. As for Ambrose, you’re not wrong, but we’ll change that. It just might take some time.”

“There you are, back to being the optimist,” Nick quipped. Sabrina laughed and moved so she could lounge beside him. “What else did you do today?”

“I asked Hilda about my mom’s side of the family.”

“And?”

“She said my mom’s parents wanted custody of me after my parents died. Her and Zelda had to fight them for it. She said my grandparents were very devout Catholics and wanted to stamp the ‘evil’ out of me.”

“But you’re not evil,” Nick shook his head. “You’re so far from evil, Sabrina.”

“They thought I was,” Sabrina shrugged, touched by his words all the same. “My grandmother is still alive, and I have an aunt and an uncle. They disowned my mom when she married my father.”
“How do you feel about that?” Nick asked. “Knowing you have a whole other side of your family out there somewhere?”

“I don’t know,” Sabrina answered honestly. “I haven’t really thought about it yet.”

“If you decide to see them, I’ll go with you,” Nick decided. “In fact, I insist. I don’t think you should go alone, not if they think you’re evil.”

“I’m a witch and they are mortals,” Sabrina reminded them. “What could they do?”

“You would be surprised,” Nick said. “Mortals can be resourceful, especially when afraid. Look at your friends. They took on Hell with paper, colored pencils, and a shotgun.”

“I can’t tell if you’re impressed or being sarcastic,” Sabrina replied.

“Me either,” Nick quipped, making her laugh lightly.

“Hilda told me a little about your parents, too,” she ventured.

“Did this have anything to do with the possibility that my grandmother is alive?” Nick asked suspiciously.

“Maybe a little,” she confessed. Nick sighed.

“Sabrina…”

“If you don’t want to look for her, I understand,” Sabrina cut him off. “And I support you.” He looked skeptical. “I promise, Nick. I’m with you, whatever you want.”

She kissed him to seal the promise.

“What did Hilda say about my parents?” he asked, unable to avoid his curiosity even though he didn’t quite buy that Sabrina would drop the question of his grandmother.

“Hilda, Zelda, and my parents had dinner with your parents a few months before I was born. It was my mom’s last dinner before I came along. Hilda said they went to your parents’ home in the Scottish Highlands.”

“It’s beautiful there,” Nick said with a hint of wistfulness. “It sits above Loch Awe, was a hotel at one point. It was in disrepair when my parents bought it, but they renovated it. You can see the ruins of a castle from the front windows. It’s a little decadent – 10 bedrooms, if I remember correctly – but it was my mom’s favorite of their homes.” He shook his head a bit. “I can’t believe I remember that. She loved the home in the Highlands. My dad loved their compound in the Unholy Land.”

“Which one do you like best?” Sabrina asked. “Assuming you’ve visited them since you gained control of them from Blackwood?”

“The Unholy Land compound is my least favorite,” he said. “It’s where they died. I don’t have good memories there.” She took his hand and squeezed. “The home in the Loire Valley is beautiful. I think you would like it. It’s the most modest of their homes, if you can call a manor in the Loire Valley modest, but it’s gardens are stunning in the spring. The Hamburg home is on the harbor. It’s the smallest, but more lavish than the one in the Loire Valley. I don’t think they used it much. The home in the Highlands is my favorite, too. It feels peaceful there. Like I can breathe.”

“Do you go there often?” She knew he had gone to the Unholy Land during Winter Solstice, but he
had never mentioned anywhere else.

“I stopped there on the way back from the Unholy Land after Winter Solstice. I only stayed overnight.” He pursed his lips for a moment. “Maybe we can spend some time there this Winter Solstice…”

“I’d like that,” Sabrina said with a soft smile. There was a sense of relief in the smile he returned. “You’ve got some international ambitions with me by your side, Scratch. Scotland, Florence, Rome, the Vatican…”

“There’s no one else I want to see the world with,” he assured her. They traded another smile.

“You know, Hilda said you were at the dinner as well,” Sabrina told him. 

“Really?” Nick asked.

“You were around two and already quite the charmer, it seems. Hilda said you sat through dinner like a little gentleman, then both of your parents took you upstairs for bed. Your dad came back with cigars.”

“Of course he did,” Nick said more to himself than Sabrina with a certain fondness.

“Hilda thinks our parents would have been friends and maybe even worked together to further my father’s manifesto if they had all survived.” She tightened her grip around Nick’s hand. “She thinks they would love that we’re together, too.”

“I don’t think Edward would have let me live if he had been alive and I hurt you like I did,” Nick mused.

“If my father was still alive, I don’t think any of this would have happened, at least not with Lucifer.” She laced their fingers together. “You and I might have found one another sooner, though.”

“One more thing to blame Blackwood for,” Nick said. “But speaking of your father’s death, I had a thought while at the Academy today. Remember how I asked you about the ‘SS1’ notation in Edward’s journals?” She nodded. “What if he had it with him when the plane went down?”

“You’re suggesting we search the plane wreckage again,” Sabrina understood.

“I had a sole goal of finding the manifesto last time, but there was a lot of wreckage. Maybe he had another journal or something with him, one that is the ‘SS1’ he talks about in his last journal.”

“I’ll go this time,” Sabrina decided.

“No,” Nick shook his head. “I’m going.”

“But Nick…”

“How long can you hold your breath?” he asked pointedly. Sabrina knew he was right. “Besides, I have an idea of the layout of the wreckage. I can be more efficient.”

“Fine,” Sabrina agreed. “When do we do this?”

“Tomorrow,” Nick decided. “At that depth, daylight won’t matter all that much, but it will help, some. We’ll use the Academy, though. There are too many people here, too many opportunities for someone to interrupt.”

“It’s the best next step we’ve got,” Nick said. “Granted, we don’t know for sure that this ‘SS1’ exists, but I don’t think you father would have referenced something that didn’t. We have to find it, see what’s in it. We have to figure out how all of this is tied together.”

“You think there is more to the prophecy, don’t you?” Sabrina asked. She was afraid of the answer, even if she already knew it.

“I do,” Nick admitted. “I have nothing, so far, to support it, but I feel like we missed something. It couldn’t have been that easy, Sabrina. Because in hindsight, it was easy. We trapped Satan in an acheron and the world was safe once more. That can’t be all there was to it.”

“Nick…”

Words failed her. Still, he knew what she was trying to say.

“We’re not going to let him win,” Nick promised. “Neither of us has gotten this far, gone through what we’ve gone through, to let the Dark Lord win. Besides, we don’t even know for sure there is more to it. Maybe it really was that simple…”

“Don’t try to backpedal,” Sabrina warned. “You know you’re right. It’s an annoying habit you have.”

“Of always being right?” Nick clarified with a grin.

“About this kind of stuff,” Sabrina stated. “I will not be the Herald of Hell.”

“You won’t,” Nick agreed. “There’s no need to panic right now, Sabrina. We will search the wreckage tomorrow, see if we can find this ‘SS1’ of your father’s. If we find it, we read it, see what it says. If we don’t find it, we move on to the next plan.”

“Which is?”

“I don’t know,” Nick shrugged. “We will figure it out though.” He gave her a small smile. “You said it yourself, Spellman. You and I against the world.”

Sabrina had to smile back.

“We’re one hell of a match for it,” she confirmed. She took a big breath. “Okay. There’s nothing we can do tonight. So tonight, we don’t worry. We let it go and just – have dinner.”

She was trying to grab the rare pockets of time she could to just simply be with Nick, with her friends. She deserved that. They all did.

“We’ve still got some time before dinner,” Nick ventured.

“Oh?” she quirked her eyebrow. “What did you have in mind, Scratch?”

“I did say we were going to pick up that scene from the cellar later…”

“You still think you’re so smooth, don’t you?” Sabrina teased.

“What do you think?” Nick countered, knowing he had used that line before.

She put her hand on his jaw and leaned in.
“I think you should have never told me how long you can hold you breath.”

Chapter End Notes

What are these two going to get into now? And who might make an appearance? Also, fun fact: in the comic books, Nicholas Scratch is the son of Agatha Harkness. So, it stands to reason, that as Nick is named after his father... Agatha Harkness is his grandmother in this fic. Just in case you were confused about the two Agatha's. But will we see her again?

And I do love Sabrina and Hilda's talks. And how Hilda tells her just a little more than she should...
Chapter Twelve

Chapter Notes

It was 96 degrees in North Carolina yesterday. So, that makes it a good time to go for a swim, don't you think? :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“How did you all do on the history test?” Harvey asked.


“Of course,” Harvey replied with a certain fondness.


“Same,” Harvey agreed. “I got a B, too. Those essay questions were terrible.”

“I got a ‘C,’” Sabrina confessed. “I missed a few classes, trying to save the world.”

“You don’t really care about all of this – mortal – stuff, do you?” Harvey asked curiously. “You like your witch classes better.”

“We don’t have an Academy to go to classes at right now,” Sabrina reminded him. “I like my mortal classes just fine, but it’s been hard to keep up with them between trying to keep the Gates of Hell closed, stop Satan, nurse what’s left of the coven back to health, start a new church…”

She trailed off. It wasn’t the first time she felt separate from her mortal friends, but it was the first time she realized just how different her life really was. She had powers they didn’t, responsibilities they didn’t understand. It didn’t feel like a burden now, though. It felt – right. Like things were the way they were supposed to be, her as a witch, her friends, aware, still there, still a part of her life, but also moving on with their own lives in a way so different than her own path. The idea of them growing into their own worlds didn’t scare her the way it used to.

“And you’re back together with Nick,” Roz said knowingly.

“A vision?” Sabrina guessed.

“In a cellar…” Sabrina’s cheeks colored at Roz’s admission. Roz grinned. “It was brief, but you looked happy.”

“We’re back together,” she confirmed. “It’s been a week, and so far, things are good.”

“Where is he, anyway?” Harvey asked. “He hasn’t been around.”

“He has his own responsibilities,” Sabrina explained. “He’s got a research project of sorts from Zelda that takes up a lot of his time, and he’s helping secure the Academy. I’ll see him later.”

She checked the time. She had to meet him in a half hour to search the wreckage before dinner.

“What do witches do for work?” Theo asked curiously. “Do you go to college like mortals?”
“Well… We sort of have jobs…”

“You aunts are morticians,” Harvey said. “Your cousin, too, right?”

“My aunts are midwives as well. Hilda is a healer. Zelda is the self-appointed High Priestess of the newly formed Church of Lilith. My father was the High Priest of the Church of Night. But some of those jobs are just – things to do. Being morticians or midwives or whatever keeps us from getting bored. Being a High Priest or Priestess obviously comes with a lot more responsibility.”

“So no college?” Roz asked, fascinated by her friend’s life.

“We can pretend to be mortals and go to college if we want to, I suppose,” she shrugged. “I’ll probably do that. It wouldn’t surprise me if Nick did as well. He loves learning a lot more than I do, although he could probably teach some of the classes.”

“Is he, like, a genius?” Harvey continued his questions. He still struggled to wrap his mind around what his ex-girlfriend was, what her aunts, cousin, and Nick were. He had so many questions about her life, how it worked.

“He would deny it, but yes,” Sabrina nodded. “Nick isn’t just intelligent. He just… understands things. His mind works differently than most.”

“What sort of job would you get?” Theo wondered.

“I haven’t really thought about it,” Sabrina admitted. “I like what I’m doing now, furthering my father’s manifesto. I could see myself doing that for a long time, maybe teach or even be High Priestess when Zelda is ready to step down, but that’s forever away. She likes power. She won’t give it up easily.”

“You have to make money though,” Harvey pondered. “To live, buy groceries, pay electrical bills, stuff like that…”

Sabrina debated on fudging the truth, but there had been enough lies over the last year or so. It wasn’t just with Nick that honesty needed to be a priority. She had spent a lot of time not telling her friends the full truth too.

“My aunts are over five hundred years old,” she reminded them. “The Spellman lineage goes back centuries. My ancestors have passed their assets down. The mortuary isn’t my aunts’ only property. They have homes around the world. We can’t stay in the same place forever, because we don’t age as rapidly as mortals. Nick and I will still look like we’re in our twenties twenty years from now. When you guys are eighty, Nick and I might look like we’re in our twenties…”

“Lucky,” Roz muttered.

“I know how it sounds, but we don’t have to work, because we have inheritance from our ancestors. We do work, because we would go insane without something to do. How else would my aunts have filled five plus centuries of time?”

She waited, afraid of how her friends would perceive her. They never talked about money, but she was aware that her friends weren’t well off. Roz’s father was a preacher, Theo’s a farmer, and Harvey’s father ran the mines. They made ends meet, but it wasn’t always easy. She was odd enough, being a witch, but she didn’t want them to see her as separate financially too. Money had never been a priority for her, or her aunts. But then again, they had never had to worry about it.

“That’s – weird,” Harvey finally said. “In a good way, I guess, but – weird. I can’t wrap my head
around the idea that your aunts are in their 500s, let alone that you have homes around the world.”

“Where are the homes?” Theo asked. “Anywhere good?” His eyes danced with playful mischief.

“Well, there is one in San Francisco, another in Vancouver,” she said, trying to remember. “There is a manor outside of London, another in Mykonos. Oh, and when Zelda was, as she puts it, ‘going through something,’ she bought a property on a beach in New Zealand.”

“All of that and they choose to live in Greendale?” Harvey wondered.

“This is home,” Sabrina shrugged. “It always will be. This is where my ancestors originated.”

“So all witches just happen to have real estate portfolio?” Roz asked.

“Not all of us,” Sabrina shook her head. “I’m sure there are witches who haven’t been as smart as my family with their assets, but most of us do have a nest egg of sorts. But it’s really just places to move and start over when we can no longer stay in one place. It’s a little sad if you think about it like that.”

“Any idea where you’ll go next?” Harvey asked. “Or when?”

“When is still a while away,” Sabrina said with confidence. She had lived in Greendale her whole life, so far. She could pull off another several years before people started to wonder why the ‘Spellman girl’ wasn’t aging. “I’ve never really thought about where I would go next. I guess it all depends on where my aunts go – they could even stay at the Academy, depending on how that goes, given that it’s protected from mortals – and I guess, if I’m still with Nick…”

It was odd to think of herself with Nick years and years down the road, making decisions about where they would live, and yet, she couldn’t see herself without him. Even, she realized, hundreds of years down the road. Their connection was simply too strong for them to exist without the other now.

“Does Nick have several homes around the world?” Theo asked curiously. “I mean, I know his parents are gone…”

“Nick inherited his parents’ assets.” She confirmed as she stirred her melting milkshake. “He wants to take me to their home in Scotland for Winter Solstice. Not the whole time – my aunts wouldn’t be thrilled if we didn’t celebrate with them after everything that’s happened this year – but it’s a special place for him, and I’d like to see it.”

“Casually going to your boyfriend’s Scottish home for the holidays,” Roz teased. “What a weird life, Sabrina. I say that with love.”

“It is weird,” Sabrina agreed. “I’m just glad I can share it with you all now. I feel like I have done nothing but lie for years…”

“Technically, you have,” Harvey said. “But we forgive you.”

It wasn’t all that different from her and Nick, she thought. Nick’s betrayal had been bigger in some ways, but at the very heart of it, they had both betrayed people they cared about. She had lied to protect her family. He had been vulnerable, made choices before he understood feelings foreign to him, that he still struggled to understand. But the air was clear now, and they could keep it that way by being honest.

“I need to get going,” Roz said, checking the time. “I’ve got a ton of chemistry homework and a
Spanish test tomorrow. Theo, want me to drop you off at home?"

“Please,” Theo agreed.

“I need to get going too,” Sabrina said. “Nick is waiting for me at the Academy.”

“I’ll walk with you until the split,” Harvey said, referring to the fork in the road that led Sabrina towards home and the Academy, Harvey towards his family’s small cabin. It was a perfect metaphor, really, that they had parted at that very fork in the road so many times while dating, her to her witch world, him to his mortal one. “So, you and Nick, huh?” he asked as they walked along after leaving Theo and Roz.

“He deserves another chance, Harvey,” she said, anticipating that Harvey was going to lecture her on taking Nick back. “What he did hurt, but the Dark Lord preyed on him in weak moments…”

“You don’t have to defend him,” Harvey shook his head. “He seems like an okay guy, all things considered. Even if he can’t call me by my right name.”

“I’ll talk to him…”

“It’s okay,” Harvey said with a small smile. “I guess the new boyfriend and the ex-boyfriend aren’t really supposed to get along, are they?”

“Most ex-boyfriends don’t help their witch ex-girlfriend and her witch family and warlock boyfriend save the world from the Dark Lord,” Sabrina reminded him.

“True,” Harvey agreed. “I get that Nick screwed up. I won’t pretend to know a lot about what happened, but I do know he’s loved you for a long time, Sabrina.”

Sabrina looked at Harvey.

“What do you mean?”

“Remember when the witches were attacking Greendale or whatever it was that happened that night?”

“All too well,” Sabrina said. “I signed my name in the Book of the Beast that night.”

Harvey didn’t bother to comment on that particular piece of information. It was another part of her world he didn’t understand.

“When it was over, I asked him why he came,” he told her. “He said because you asked him to, but I knew there was more. I asked him again, asked if you two were dating. He looked at me and said ‘She loves you, mortal. She would die for you,’ and encouraged me to forgive you. I don’t think he knew then that he was in love with you, but he was. It didn’t take a genius to figure that out.”

Sabrina said nothing. Nick had insisted he fell for her in that choir classroom. She now knew he had made his devotion to the Dark Lord by the time the Greendale 13 were a threat, but he could have left Harvey unprotected. He could have stayed back, safe at the Academy, instead of risking his own life – the first and only son of his parents – to protect her mortal ex-boyfriend. He could have prioritized his own safety, something most warlocks would have done, devotion or not. But he had done what she asked without question – to make her happy.

“Nick would do anything for me;” she finally said, more to herself than to Harvey. “I’m only just starting to realize that.”
“He’s better for you than I was,” Harvey told her. “He’s the right choice.”

“He’s not better, exactly…” Sabrina tried, working to not hurt Harvey’s feelings. Harvey shook his head in disagreement, but smiled.

“Nick is the right guy for you, Sabrina,” he said with a certain confidence. “I loved you – I still love you as a friend – but Nick makes you better. Not just because he’s a warlock or smart or whatever, but because he gets you in a way I never did, a way I don’t think I would have, if we had stayed together. And I’m not talking about the whole mortal and witch thing. He just – understands you.”

“Where is all of this coming from?” Sabrina asked curiously.

“We didn’t end on a great note,” Harvey admitted. “And I’m with Roz now, which I know you said you’re cool with, but I don’t feel like we ever had a chance to have closure.”

“I guess we didn’t,” Sabrina agreed. “You’re happy with Roz?”

“I am,” Harvey admitted. “Very.” He chanced a half smile. “I don’t mean this the way it might sound, but she’s – easier – than you were.”

Sabrina snorted back a bit of a laugh.

“I know what you mean,” she assured him. “She’s got her own abilities, but she’s not running around Greendale calling down hellfire and hexing people that stand in her way.”

“Basically,” Harvey confirmed, making Sabrina laugh a bit. “I’ll always love you, ‘Brina,” he promised. “But you and I have had our time. Nick is the better guy, for you at least.”

“I’ll always love you too, Harvey,” she echoed. “And I think Roz is the better girl for you.” She eyed him. “I will curse you if you hurt her, however.”

Harvey laughed this time.

“Deal,” he agreed as they reached the split. “I guess I’ll see you at school tomorrow?”

“Unless I’m busy saving the world,” Sabrina quipped.

“Only you,” Harvey said. “Have a good night, Sabrina.”

They parted ways. Sabrina quickened her steps as she took the path to the Academy. She saw Nick before he saw her. He was perched on the Academy’s crumbling stairs, reading a book. He looked up as she emerged from the woods. The smile that lit up his face when she appeared made her smile in return, her stomach do a weird sort of flip.

“How was mortal school, Spellman?” he greeted as he stood.

“I got a ‘C’ on my history test,” she replied. “I mixed up the Holy Land with the Unholy Land and it was a whole thing.” She jerked her chin at his book as she approached. “What are you reading now, Scratch?”

“Spiritualism in the Sixteenth Century,” he answered. “I found it in the library, thought it sounded interesting.”

“You’re reading that for fun?” Sabrina clarified as he put the book down on the railing and she climbed the few steps to greet him. “You’re weird, Scratch.” She reached for him. “But I love that about you.”
She kissed him, poured all of her emotions into it. He responded in kind, didn’t pull away until they both needed to catch their breath.

“That’s one Heaven of a hello,” he breathed. “What did I do to deserve that? So I can make sure do it again…”

“You have loved me for a while now, haven’t you?”

“I thought we established that,” he teased. “I have known you for nearly a year now, Spellman. And I have loved you for most of it, even when you were with the mortal.”

She brushed her fingertips along his cheekbone.

“You protected Harvey the night the Greendale 13 attacked, even though you didn’t have to. Even though your own life was at risk.”

“You asked me to…” She beamed at him. “Really, Sabrina, where is this coming from?”

“Harvey told me what you did, that you told him he should forgive me, that I loved him.” Her hand trailed down his chest. “He said he was pretty certain you loved me even then.”

“I didn’t actually know that was what I felt,” Nick clarified. “I just wanted you to be happy, even if that meant you were with the mortal.”

“Things worked out for you, Scratch.”

“I almost ruined them.” He pulled her to him, confused by the sudden influx of emotions he felt, certain he needed her close. “Lilith, I love you,” he muttered into her hair. “It’s scary, how much I love you, but it’s worth it.”

“It is so worth it,” Sabrina agreed. “And I love you, too, Scratch.”

They shared one more kiss before Nick begrudgingly pulled away, making a mental note to thank the mortal the next time he saw him – and maybe call him by his right name.

“We should get this swim out of the way,” he said. “See what we find.”

“Are you sure you’re up to it?” Sabrina asked.

“I’m a good swimmer,” Nick reminded her. He smirked. “And you know how long I can hold my breath.”

Sabrina rolled her eyes, making him laugh, but she smiled. Nick was starting to come around, a little more sure of himself, a little more certain in their relationship, a little less concerned about saying or doing the wrong thing. It gave her a sense of relief to have some normalcy between them.

They had decided to use the elaborate bathroom in Blackwood’s former private quarters. The room made her feel uneasy, however, even if Blackwood was long gone from their world.

“It feels like he’s watching us,” she commented. She turned to face Nick, just as he pulled off his shirt. She diverted her eyes, struck by his abs and the sudden thought of what she wanted to do with him. “You’re sure this place is secure?”

“Positive.” He held back his smirk as he unbuttoned his dark jeans, aware that his stripping down was having an affect on Sabrina. He wasn’t going to push anything – he would let her set the pace – but that didn’t mean he couldn’t fan the flames a little. “This place is safe, Sabrina. I wouldn’t bring
you here if it wasn’t. I’ve gone through it. So has Zelda. Ambrose. Prudence. Blackwood is long
gone, and there isn’t anything other than the memory of him to worry about.”

Sabrina nodded, but the uneasy feeling didn’t leave. She turned on the tap, adjusted the water to a
comfortable temperature, and plugged the drain.

“Four minutes,” she said to Nick. “Try to make it less, okay? For my sake?”

“I’ll be quick,” he promised. He made to step into the tub. She stopped him. He looked at her
questioningly. “Is everything okay?”

“Everything is fine,” she nodded. “Just… Before you do this…” She put her hands on his shoulders,
closed her eyes, and bowed her head. She didn’t utter a word, but he felt the protection spell wash
over him like a soft breeze. There was something familiar about it, almost like a distant memory he
couldn’t quite pull from the recesses of his mind. He felt loved in that moment, and the idea made
him swallow back a sea of emotions. She opened her eyes and lifted them to his. “Okay,” she
breathed. “Four minutes, Scratch.”

“Less than,” he promised. He stepped into the water and looked at Sabrina. “I’ll be right back.”

With a deep breath, he was gone.

Sabrina exhaled a breath of her own and noted the time on the clock above the door. She wrapped
her arms around her and tapped her foot nervously. She didn’t even have Salem to keep her
company this time, just her own thoughts, her own worries about Nick’s safety.

A minute passed.

She started to pace.

Another minute.

“Come on, Nick,” she muttered.

A gurgling sound came from the bathtub. She rushed to it, expecting to see Nick emerging from the
water. Instead, the drain had been unplugged and water was rushing down the pipe.

“No!”

She plunged her hand into the water, grabbed for the stopper to re-seal it and quickly turned the tap
back on, not sure if there was enough water left in the tub to allow Nick a safe return. She breathed a
sigh of relief and fell to her knees beside the tub, determined not to take her eyes off of it until Nick
was back with her.

A third minute passed.

“Less than, Scratch,” she said to no one. “Less than…”

The drain stopper went flying across the room.

She screamed, momentarily surprised, before coming to her senses and rushing to clog the drain once
more. Laughter filled the room. She stuck her hand into the water and used her palm to cover the
drain as much as she could. She looked over her shoulder, searching for the source of the laughter.

The ghost of Father Blackwood hovered near the door.
“Foolish half-mortal,” he taunted. “You’re messing with magics beyond your understanding.”

Her free hand flew out in front of her, a finger pointed at Blackwood. Her unvoiced spell hit his ghost hard. She saw him gasp before he disappeared with a crack. Her eyes went to the clock. Nick had thirty seconds. She pressed her hand into the drain harder, spun the knobs to encourage more water to pour from the faucet.

“Nick,” she pleaded, “hurry up!”

The water in the tub started to swirl. She watched it, daring to hope. With an eruption of water and a gasp for air, Nick appeared, his arms laden with books.

“Fifteen seconds to spare,” he announced breathlessly. “Faster than last time.”

“Nick!”

She didn’t care about the books. She threw her arms around him, her own clothes soaking through from his wet body. The force of her body colliding with his caused him to drop the books.

“Sabrina?” he asked, sensing something was wrong as he wrapped his arms around her out of instinct.

“Are you okay?” she asked, pulling away enough to look up at him.

“I’m fine,” he assured her. “No squids this time.”

She took a moment to look over him. She was so relieved he was standing before her that she couldn’t fully appreciate the sight of the handsome warlock in nothing but a pair of black box briefs, water droplets trailing down his face, over his sculpted shoulders, and down his toned chest.

“Blackwood’s ghost showed up,” she told him. “He pulled the plug out of the drain. Twice. The second time he managed to toss it across the room.”

“His ghost?” Nick asked. “He can’t do but so much in ghost form, but we’ll have to put in some added protections…”

“Nick, he tried to keep you from getting back!” Sabrina cried, not entirely happy with Nick’s less than concerned reaction to her news about Blackwood. “You would have drowned!”

“No, I wouldn’t have,” he shook his head. He put his fingers under her chin and tilted her head up so he could look into her eyes. “You were here, Sabrina. I know you wouldn’t let that happen.”

She blinked away her tears.

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Positive,” he assured her. “I think I found what we were looking for, too.” He kissed her forehead, then stepped out of the tub, water ponding around him. “I found several books and journals near where your father’s manifesto was…”

“In a minute,” Sabrina said, considering him. “Let’s get you dry first.” She closed her eyes and thought about what she wanted. A moment later, a soft robe appeared in her arms. She held it out to Nick. He smiled at her.

“Thank you,” he wrapped the robe around him. She was wet, too, from both plugging the drain and hugging him when he returned. “You need to dry off, too.” He held up both hands. The words that
tumbled from his lips were Welch this time. Steam came from his hands and warmed Sabrina, her clothes drying quickly.

“Thank you,” she said with her own smile. It was a sweet moment, intimate. He leaned in to kiss her. “Let’s not do this spell again for a while,” she proposed when he pulled away. He chuckled.

“I’d be okay with that,” he agreed. He picked up the stack of books. “It’s getting close to dinnertime. I need to put on dry clothes, then we’ll go to the mortuary. I’ll bring the books with us.”

“Okay,” Sabrina agreed. “But we could skip dinner… Read what you found…”

“We could,” Nick agreed. “But I don’t think we should. Zelda wasn’t entirely thrilled with us about all the digging we did into the files we found in Blackwood’s office. She’s not sold on the baptism thing, either. I know you want to know what’s in these books. I do, too, but we should at least play by some of her rules.”

Sabrina begrudgingly admitted he was right. She refrained from opening any of the books while she waited for Nick to change, sure she would get sucked in if she did. It felt like a lifetime before she and Nick were able to disappear to her bedroom after a dinner of roast.

“Okay, Scratch, what did you find?” she asked, legs crossed under her on the bed. He settled next to her.

“Let’s find out.” He picked up the first book in the stack. “This one is a history of the Vatican. Might be worth reading, giving what we know about baptisms and the fact that your father was planning to meet with religious leaders before his plane was brought down.” The next book. “The Bible.” He flipped it open to a random page. He recognized the handwriting that filled the narrow margins. “Looks like your father made notes in it.”

“Let me see.”

She took the Bible.

Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.

Next to the verse, her father’s scratchy penmanship had made a notation.

Dare to hope – even when all else seems lost.

“Sabrina?” She raised her eyes to Nick’s. He held up a thin black book. Her name was embossed in peeling gold. Below it, in small letters, ‘volume one.’ “This is it. The ‘SS1.’”

“What does it say?” she asked, closing the Bible.

“I haven’t opened it yet.” He held it out to her. “You should…” She took it from him, but didn’t open it.

“You’ll read it with me?” she asked.

“If you want me to,” he said. “But this is about you…”

“I read your file,” she reminded him. “You read mine.”

“Okay,” Nick agreed. “If you’re sure.”
Sabrina’s answer was to open the book to the first page. It didn’t register that the penmanship was different from her father’s, but Nick noticed. He frowned as he read the first sentences along with Sabrina.

*I have prayed and prayed for this child I carry. I prayed to my Lord and to Edward’s. I don’t pretend to understand the ritual Edward performed or the promises he made to the Dark Lord. All I know is my prayers have been answered and my darling girl will be here soon.*

“Nick,” she breathed, understanding dawning on her.

“Your father didn’t write this,” he confirmed. “Your mother did.”

She sat back in surprise.

“My mom wrote this…”

She couldn’t believe it. There, in her hands, were words written by her mother. Words written about her. This was a connection to her mother she had always dreamed of, but never thought of as a reality.

“You should read this alone,” Nick decided. “Then decide if you want to share it with me – or anyone else.”

“No…”

“Sabrina,” he cut her off gently. He knew she often felt her mother’s lost profusely. She needed this, whether she knew it or not. “These are your mother’s words. About you. You should read them alone.” He stood.

“Where are you going…”

“Back to the Academy. I’ll take your father’s Bible with me, if you don’t mind. He references scripture in his works. I want to compare what he wrote in his journals to his personal Bible, see if he made notations there that might tell us something. I’ll check in with you later.”

“But, Blackwood’s ghost…”

“I’ve never been afraid of Blackwood,” he shook his head. “I’m certainly not afraid of his ghost. But I will burn some sage while I work, make sure I put protections around my room.”

“Nick…”

“I’ll be fine,” he assured her. He kissed her softly. “I love you, Sabrina.”

“I love you, too,” she replied.

He kissed her one more time, and then he was gone. She breathed out a sigh and opened the book once more.

Chapter End Notes

I thought Harvey and Sabrina deserved a little bit of an official ending - closure, as they
put it. And I could totally see the Fright Squad sitting around a table at Cee's, peppering Sabrina with questions about her world. Theo, curious. Harvey, skeptical. Roz, wise.

Really, this is part 1 of a much longer update. But it was SO long that I broke it into two. Blackwood - not quite gone. And Edward, not the only Spellman who kept a journal. What will Sabrina learn?

Let me know your thoughts and theories! The web is going to slowly start to untangle...

And I'll say this. There is a big clue in this piece as to how later components of the story will unfold...
Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Notes

And now we get to Part 2 of Friday's update - Diana's journals. And maybe more Blackwood?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Page after page, her mother wrote about how much she wanted her, how excited she was to be a mother. There were pages dedicated to how Diana felt Sabrina moving, how she decorated the nursery, the same room Sabrina had lived in her entire life. Diana occasionally referenced Edward’s work, but the pages were largely devoted to her becoming a mother. Sabrina lapped up her words like they were water in the desert.

Tonight was likely my last trip with Edward until after the baby is born. We went to Scotland for a dinner with the Scratch family. Sabrina’s breath hitched. Elizabeth Scratch is a beautiful woman, a perfect hostess. Her husband, Nicholas, is handsome and intelligent. Their home in the Highlands was breathtaking. Elizabeth told me it used to be a hotel. She and Nicholas renovated it to its current grander.

The Scratches have the most adorable son. Sabrina smiled at the mention of Nick. He will turn two not long after my own daughter is born. He was dressed smart, in a miniature suit. Sabrina laughed a bit. He joined us for dinner and was an absolute gentleman.

What struck me was how both Elizabeth and Nicholas put him to bed. In spite of having company, their little boy was the most important thing to them. They prioritized their family, and I told Edward that’s what I want for us – for our daughter to be our priority, no matter what else we have going on. He agreed.

Sabrina wiped away a tear and continued to read.

She will be here any day now. We have decided to call her Sabrina. Edward was a little uncertain at first. The name is from a Celtic myth about the illegitimate daughter of a king. His wife ordered her drowned and they named the river after the girl, although the river is now called Severn.

But isn’t she illegitimate? She is certainly conceived in love, but that love exists between a warlock and a mortal. We had to ask the Dark Lord for his favor and I had my doubts, but in the end, I’m getting my daughter, and I don’t care that she will be half-mortal, half-human, that my dear husband called upon the very dark magic he works against to bring her into our lives. She is my daughter, and I love her already.

It does hurt my heart to know that I will only get decades with her, at most. I knew when I married Edward that I would age and he would not. It is both a blessing and a curse to know he will have so much longer with Sabrina. She will have her father, and I am thankful for that, even if she won’t have her mother.

Sabrina’s tears fell hard as she read her mother’s words. In the end, she didn’t even get a year with her daughter. Neither of them did.
My girl is here. Oh Satan, she is beautiful. Beautiful. I cannot describe how beautiful she is. How much I love her. I spend my days staring at her. I can hardly believe she is real, that she is here, that she is ours.

It breaks my heart that she won’t know my family. They despise the Spellmans and what they are, believe my sweet girl is the Devil himself. Sabrina squirmed uncomfortably. But if they cannot accept her, if they cannot accept my love for Edward, I do not want them in our lives. Edward’s sisters already love her as though she is their own. His cousin, Ambrose adores her, too. Even without my family, she will be raised with love, all that we want for her.

“Love,” Sabrina whispered.

Hilda and I baptized Sabrina today. She held the book closer, eager to read her mother’s reasoning. Edward has signed her name in the Book of the Beast. She can walk between worlds now. We want her to be a full witch. It is her destiny. But she has also been blessed by the Church. This will allow her to hold on to her humanity.

“Hold onto her humanity,” Sabrina read aloud.

Edward has convinced some of his followers to do the same with their young children. The Scratches baptized their boy just yesterday, according to the message they sent. Sabrina gasped. There is a small set of children now baptized in the Catholic Church, their names also signed in the Book of the Beast. They will sign the book themselves when they’re sixteen, but they are protected now. They will hold onto their humanity in this sometimes dark world.

It is more important than ever for our children to be protected. Faustus Blackwood has turned on Edward. He has his own supporters, his own vision for the Church of Night. Even thinking about it makes my stomach turn. I’ve asked Edward if he thinks our lives are in danger. He assured me we are safe, but I don’t quite believe him. Blackwood will stop at nothing to get revenge on Edward for ‘stealing’ the High Priest position from him. Edward did not steal. He earned. And he only wants what’s best for this coven.

Sabrina had to sit back and breathe. Her father had known all along that that she had been baptized. Her mother had known about her name being in the Book of the Beast. It was all part of their plan, whatever their plan was. She resumed reading.

Edward and I are traveling to Italy later today. We are going to meet with the council, present his manifesto to the Anti-Pope. This meeting could literally change the world we live in. What an amazing place this could be!

I am excited to further our mission, but I will be leaving Sabrina here, in Greendale, with her aunts. I didn’t want to. I had every intention of taking her with us. But she is so small and this trip is so important. Edward and I agree that it is best if we leave her. It’s only a few days, but oh my Satan, I will miss her.

Edward and I have taken the step to ask Hilda and Zelda to care for Sabrina in the event that something were to happen to us. We recognize that there is a target on our back from those that don’t believe in our manifesto. Should something happen to us, Hilda and Zelda will raise her as their own, and help her become the witch I know she is meant to be. Edward believes she will be powerful and I do too – because she is ours. She was formed from love and she will be love in this sometimes dark world.

Satan, protect my baby while I’m away.
That was the last entry, written the day Diana and Edward had died at the hands of Faustus Blackwood. She sat back and held the book to her chest, let her tears fall. She tried to process it all, but all she wanted was her mom.

She couldn’t have her mother, though.

Blackwood had seen to that.

She stood and closed her eyes.

“She’s Sabrina!” Nick jumped, startled by her sudden appearance in the library. Tears poured down her cheeks. He was on his feet and she was in his arms within moments. “What happened?”

Sabrina cried into his chest. He held her to him, whispered soothing words.

“My mom’s journal,” she breathed. “Nick, she loved me so much…”

“Of course she did,” Nick told her. “You are impossible not to love.”

“Hilda and Zelda have been telling me the truth. My parents wanted them to raise me. They wanted me to be a witch.”

“You are a witch,” Nick said, still holding her close. “You have mortal blood, but you are a witch.” He pressed his lips to her hair. “You are the very best of both worlds.”

He led her to the small couch in the library. He held her hand and waited for her to share more. He wouldn’t press her, but he would support her, love her, show her he was there for her.

“She wrote about their dinner with your parents,” she said, her head resting on Nick’s shoulder. “She said you were adorable.” He smiled because she smiled. “She also said you wore a suit, were a perfect small gentleman at the dinner table. She talked about how your parents both put you to bed, how she wanted the same for me from her and my dad.”

“Of course I wore a suit,” he said in an attempt to lighten her mood. Her giggle told him it worked. She wiggled a little closer to him.

“We had parents who really loved us, Nick.”

“We did,” he agreed. He squeezed her hand. “We may not have had them long, but we were still lucky all the same.”

“Your parents baptized you not long after I was born,” she told him. “She wrote about it. She didn’t mention the others by name, but she said there were several children who were baptized. She said they did it so we could keep our humanity.” It hit her with clarity then. She sat upright. “Oh my Lilith. Nick, you were right.”

“About what?” he asked with a confused frown.

“In the church, when you said maybe we were baptized so we could love. You were right. My mom wrote that we were baptized to hold onto our humanity. You, me, Prudence, Agatha, Dorcas… We have all shown a tendency to love. Just like you said.”

“But you had a fair point that we all have the ability to love,” Nick said. “Look at your aunts. They love you. Ambrose loves you. They weren’t baptized. Neither were our parents. I expect your mother was, but your dad wasn’t and neither were mine.”
“We held on to our ability to love, though,” Sabrina argued. “Think about some of the other warlocks you know. How many of them chased a girl, did everything they could to get her attention, because they wanted her to love them?”

“I can’t think of any,” Nick admitted after a moment. The warlocks he knew had chased both witch and warlock, but only for a night.

“Exactly!” Sabrina exclaimed. “Even though you had Blackwood grooming you and the Dark Lord whispering in your ear, you still fell in love with me. You felt remorse after everything. You were hurting, and even now that we’re back together, you still hold on to some of that guilt.”

“I hurt you,” Nick said without hesitation. “Of course I’m still holding on to guilt.”

“See?” Sabrina asked. “You even said it at the church – that maybe our parents knew their time was limited, so they baptized us to protect us. What if they were trying to ensure that we would be able to love, even after they were gone? That Blackwood and his twisted views wouldn’t be able to take that away from us?”

She watched the wheels in Nick’s mind begin to turn.

“Let me check something…”

He stood and returned to his workspace. He flipped through Edward’s Bible with quick, sure fingers. Sabrina trailed after him, watching. She allowed herself to be taken by the way he pursed his lips in concentration, squinted a bit as he searched for what he wanted.

“This.” He picked up the book. “Listen: ‘Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.’ That’s from first Peter. And look – next to it, your father wrote: For this is the purpose of love. To save us from ourselves, to give us purpose, to guide our choices and help us make the right ones, for ourselves and those we love.”

“I don’t understand,” Sabrina admitted. “Not fully.”

“I don’t either,” Nick confessed. “I understand the principle of the text. Love saves us from our sins.” He looked at her. “It certainly saved me from mine.” She blushed a bit. He drummed his fingers on the desk, thinking. “According to the Bible, Jesus died to save his followers from their sins. Christians consider it the ultimate act of love.” More drumming of his fingers. “We were baptized as babies, toddlers. Why do parents baptize their children?”

“To give them to the False God for protection,” Sabrina offered. “To plant the seed of religion in them in hopes that their children will one day come to know their religion on their own.”

Nick smiled brightly.

“Exactly,” he said, something making sense to him that hadn’t yet clicked for Sabrina. “We were baptized to protect us – but we were also baptized in hopes that we would follow the path of our parents – one where we are witches and warlocks, but believe in co-existence, in equality, in love. They wanted us to have a better world.”

“A world built on love,” Sabrina said, understanding now. “We can be witches, but still be good people.” She leaned on the table. “Wow.”

“It’s pretty incredible,” Nick said. “Our parents had an amazing vision for our world.” His eyes met hers. “One we can make a reality.”
She didn’t have words. She went to him and wrapped her arms around him. He held her, sensing that was what she needed. He kissed her hair, held her still tighter. He loved her more than he could put into words, and he was just starting to believe that, maybe, she felt the same.

A thought occurred to Sabrina.

“Nick.” She pulled away enough to look up at him. “Your parents died when you were four, right?” He nodded his agreement. “You were baptized right around the time I was born. So you would have been around two…”

“I’m not following,” he shook his head.

“You parents must have been, I don’t know, furthering my parents’ manifesto or something along those lines. If they had simply fallen back into line after their death, so to speak, wouldn’t Blackwood have left them alone?”

“You’re right,” Nick nodded slowly. “They lived almost three more years past your parents. I turned five a couple of months after their death. They had to have been doing – something.”

“We figure out one mystery and unearth another one,” Sabrina said.

“Isn’t that the way it goes with you?” Nick asked.

“Shut up,” she playfully smacked his shoulder, making him laugh. She picked up her mother’s journal. “I want you to read this. Not just to find out more about – everything – but to share some of myself with you.” She cupped his cheek in her hand. “To show you I trust you.”

A storm of emotions crossed Nick’s face. He was the one who pulled her in this time when words failed. All he wanted was her trust, and he wouldn’t break it again.

“Sometime soon, we’re going to have peace,” he promised her. “Days and days to do nothing or to travel to Italy, Scotland. All of this will be behind us, and we’re going to get to live on our own terms. No more evil high priests or satanic lords controlling our lives. Just us.”

“That sounds like Heaven,” Sabrina said. “Or at least as much as I know of it.”

“As long as I’m with you,” he replied. He kissed first her forehead and then her lips to both seal his promise and to comfort her.

“Have you found anything in my father’s Bible that helps understand his texts better?” she asked, begrudgingly pulling away from him. If they were going to have peace, they were going to have to fight for it.

“Not yet,” Nick said. “I haven’t gotten very far. I’ve been trying to organize my research into something that makes sense. We keep getting sidetracked with new information, new problems, that it’s all started to tangle together. Here, look.”

He led her to his workstation where his detailed notes were spread across the surface. Sabrina didn’t realize just how much work he had done in the last few weeks.

“Where does all of this begin?” she asked, trying to make sense of it.

“This is a log of seemingly relevant passages from your father’s journal,” Nick said, pointing to a ledger. “It also references my more detailed notes here.” He shuffled through papers as he explained them. “I’ve broken things down by subject matter, too. Baptism, Blackwood, the Dark Lord, the
manifesto, our parents, a timeline of how it might all fit together…” He trailed off, noticing Sabrina’s growing smile. “What?”

“You’re genuinely enjoying this, aren’t you? Researching all of this, all day, every day?”

“It’s not all I do,” Nick shrugged. “I spent most of today helping armor the Academy…”

Sabrina’s smile continued to grow.

“It’s okay to admit that you like this.” She took his hand and turned him towards her. “I’m rather partial to the nerd look, anyway.”

“You’re causing quite the distraction, Spellman,” he said, even as he pulled her to him. He was aware of the growing physical tension between them. He felt it a little stronger every time they were together. “I’ll never get anything done.”

He kissed her, leaving her somehow both peppered with goose bumps and flushed with fire. It was on the tip of her tongue to suggest they go to his dormitory when a loud ‘thunk’ rang out through the library.

“What was that?” Sabrina asked, pulling away.

“It came from over here,” Nick gestured towards a row of shelves. “Stay close.” He led them towards the sound, both braced to react to any attack that might await them. Nick peered around a shelf. All was clear. He proceeded down the row. A book lay in the middle of the next aisle. He pointed to it. “There.”

“How did a book falling off the shelf make that much noise?” Sabrina asked.

“That book didn’t fall,” Nick said knowingly. He went to it. It lay open, but he recognized the text all the same. “A Mostly Complete Anthology of Demons. I read this years ago, not long after I started demonology classes. It’s incredibly basic and not nearly as complete as the author thinks it is.”

“A great summary,” Sabrina quipped. “But what do you mean, it didn’t fall?”

“It came from over there.” Nick pointed to a place high on the shelves down the row from where the book at landed. “It was thrown off that shelf – somehow.”

“Blackwood?” she guessed.

“Maybe. Some sort of magic caused it to fly off the shelf.” He picked up the book and read the page it had opened to. “Asmodeus. A prince of demons, one of the seven demons of hell. He represents lust. He makes men feel wantonness, a sin in the eyes of the church outside of marriage.” He snorted. “Appropriate page for it to open to, giving what we were doing when it fell.”

Sabrina bit her lip, her thoughts shifting to what she had been the verge of asking Nick when the book fell.

“It seems like someone was trying to send us a message.”

“Can’t be from the hierarchy of Hell,” Nick stated. “They tend to approve of lust.” It was Sabrina who snorted back a laugh this time. “I don’t know,” he said, glancing around. “Could be nothing, could be something. There’s no way to know.”

“So we just – let it go?”
“We let it go,” Nick confirmed. He closed the book and tucked it under his arm. “I’ll put it back in its right place tomorrow. Let’s go back to my research, see if we can make any progress.”

Together, they started back down the row.

Without warning, books began to fly off the shelves, pelting the both of them.

“Nick!” Sabrina exclaimed, trying to shield herself. “What’s going on?”

“Come on!” He grabbed for her hand, using his other arm to shield himself as best he could. Together, they ran through the maze of shelves, books following them as they ran. “Under here!”

He pushed her under a heavy desk and slid under behind her.

“It’s Blackwood!” Sabrina had no evidence to base her decision on, but she was still certain it was the ghost of the high priest. “Where is he?”

“I need you to cast a shield,” Nick told her. “I can stop this, but I need to be able to perform the spell and the books are going to interfere if they’re hitting me.”

“Be careful,” Sabrina replied.

“Ready?” She nodded. “Go.”

Nick ducked out from under the table and Sabrina cast her spell. The invisible shield, the same one they had used against the guard, appeared before Nick. He held his hands palms out in front of him and chanted still another complex Latin spell. The books stopped flying at them as quickly as they started. Blackwood’s ghost materialized before them.

“Aren’t you clever, Mr. Scratch?” he asked. “Try as you may to stop me, I will haunt the both of you, the rest of the Spellmans, and my children for as long as you all shall live.”

“We aren’t afraid of you, Blackwood,” Nick said calmly. “This is the worst you can do. We both know that. Go on and walk into the flames. There’s nothing more for you here.”

“I won’t allow the peace you so desperately crave,” he declared. “Not within the walls of this Academy.”

“You leave me no choice then.”

Nick swept his hands through the air. Blackwood’s ghost became a ball of fog. He moved his arm across his body once more and the ball flew into a nearby vase. It trembled, but the fog was gone.

“You trapped him,” Sabrina said, coming out from under the table.

“It’s a temporary solution,” Nick said. “He’s not a ghost. He’s somehow managed to come back as a poltergeist – fitting, really, given that he loved to cause havoc while he was alive. The good news is, poltergeist hauntings are generally short-lived.”

“What’s the bad news?” Sabrina asked skeptically.

“They’re a Heaven of a lot harder to get rid of than a ghost.”

“Of course,” Sabrina sighed.

“I’ll talk to Zelda tomorrow, determine our options. Mortals would call in a priest, hang crosses,
maybe get rid of objects the spirit was attached to in its living life. We may be baptized, but a priest won’t be allowed to walk through the doors of this place. Hanging crosses could deter him, but he’s attached to this school, and we can’t exactly burn it down.”

“What other options do we have?” Sabrina asked.

“Geomancy,” Nick answered. “It’s a method of divination that interprets markings found on the ground or the patterns formed by tossing handfuls of soil, rocks, sand. It’s been used as a form of fortunetelling, but it can also be used to restore harmony. It’s not an area I’m especially skilled in, but I would guess Agatha is, given her aptitude for spiritualism. I’ll suggest we bring her here, get her to do a reading, see if we can’t send Blackwood’s poltergeist away for good.”

“What do we do tonight?” Sabrina asked.

“We get back to work,” Nick shrugged. “He’s bound in that vase for the next few days. We’re safe from him.”

“Are you sure?” Sabrina asked skeptically.

“Positive.” He was so confident that Sabrina couldn’t help but believe him. “Come on – back to work, Spellman.”

They settled at the workspace. Sabrina picked up her father’s Bible while Nick began reading her mother’s journal. They read in silence for a while, but Sabrina’s thoughts wandered to the moment Blackwood interrupted. She finally decided to say something when she couldn’t re-focus on the book in front of her.

“Nick?”

“Hmm?” He was engrossed in her mother’s words.

“Can we talk about something?”

“Anything.” He sat back in his chair and gave her his full attention. His stomach did a nervous flip when he took in her expression. “You look serious, Spellman.”

“It’s just, earlier, before Blackwood interrupted…” She trailed off. He raised an expectant eyebrow that encouraged her to go on. “I think you should know that I was on the verge of asking you to take me upstairs.”

The words tumbled out of her, betraying how nervous she was, although she wasn’t sure why. It was Nick and he had proven he wouldn’t push her into something she wasn’t ready for. Except, now, she thought she might be ready.

“Okay,” he said slowly. “If that had been the case, then you should know that I would have, in fact, taken you upstairs.”

“And then what?” she hedged. Nick shrugged.

“Then, whatever you wanted.”

“So if I wanted to just – go to bed – you would have been fine with that?”

“Yes.”

“Okay. So, what if I wanted to – make out?”
“We would have made out,” Nick answered.

“And if I wanted to do – other stuff? Stuff we haven’t done before?”

“Then we would have done whatever you wanted to do.”

Sabrina sighed and turned to him.

“Stop being so agreeable, Nicholas.”

“I’m Nicholas again?” he asked.

“No, you’re still Nick,” she shook her head, noting that he was sensitive to being called by his formal name, at least by her. She guessed it was a reminder of when they were apart. “It’s just – you’re being so agreeable.”

“And you want me to be – disagreeable? Forgive me, Sabrina, but I’m not following where this conversation is going.”

“No, I don’t want you to be disagreeable, I want you to tell me how you feel,” she said. “I just told you I was going to ask you to go upstairs earlier, and you’re all – agreeable. ‘Whatever you want, Sabrina. That’s what we would have done...’”

“Because that’s what we would have done,” Nick replied. “I’m not going to push you to do something you’re not ready for. Had we gone upstairs and you changed your mind, that would have been fine. We would have come back down here or I would have walked you home or whatever other solution you came up with. Had you decided you were ready, then I...” he trailed off for a moment. “Well, in the name of honesty, I wouldn’t have told you no.”

“How long has it been for you?” she asked curiously. “It’s just that I know you weren’t exactly living like a monk before...”

“The night you caught us in your attic,” Nick confessed. “You ruined that for me, by the way.”

“Did I?” Sabrina asked with a tone boarding on indignation. “I am so sorry...”

“You looked so appalled that you killed the mood,” he informed her. “Or at least my mood. All I could think about was you standing there in your pink pajamas, being all judgmental.”

“There was a tangle of half naked bodies – one of which belonged to my cousin – in my attic,” Sabrina reminded him. “And you, Nicholas,” she used his formal name on purpose, “were all ‘we can go to your room...’ I was caught off guard. To say the least.”

“Regardless, that was the last time,” he said. “I was already pretty hung up on you, and you seemed to pop to the forefront of my mind anytime I tried to charm someone – witch or warlock.” A bit of a self-satisfied smirk played at Sabrina’s lips. He decided to take advantage of it. “You ruined me for anyone else, Spellman. While wearing flannel pajamas.”

She punched him in the arm. He laughed and rubbed where her weak punch landed.

“Those were perfectly good pajamas,” she informed him.

“They did the trick,” he said seriously. “You made sure I only ever thought of you.” Sabrina rolled her eyes, making him laugh again. He took her hand. “You could wear a burlap sack and I would still want you, Sabrina Spellman.”
“I think I’m ready, Nick,” she told him. “I know I am. I want you to know that.”

“Okay,” he said simply.

“Okay?” she asked. She had expected – more.

“I don’t want to rush it,” he told her. “I want it to happen organically, like it may have happened earlier tonight. I want to be making out with you one minute, between the sheets with you the next.” Sabrina thought it was suddenly warmer in the room. “I don’t want to sweep you upstairs right now just because you told me you’re ready. I don’t even want us to plan some big evening around it like the mortals do, with their prom night or whatever. I want it to just – happen. When it’s right, when we’re both in a place where the only thing that will satisfy us is to be as close as a witch and a warlock can be.”

“Did you learn about prom night from your mortal magazines?” she asked, a smile playing at her lips.

“Their terrible movies, actually,” he admitted. “I’m not ruling out us – doing stuff – on prom night, to be clear, I just don’t want it planned.”

“You think you’re going to take me to my prom?” she asked, her smile growing.

“Mortal boyfriends do,” Nick shrugged. “So I would assume that means you’ll let your warlock boyfriend be your escort when prom rolls around.”

“You’ve got a while before prom,” she assured him. “It’s not until spring. But you’re the one for the job, Scratch.”

“Come here, Spellman.” He tugged her to him then, causing her to come out of her chair and into his lap. She wrapped her arms around his neck. In that moment, she couldn’t remember why she had ever not trusted him, not when he was looking at her like she hung the moon. “You know, in some ways, this will be my first time, too.”

“First time with a half mortal,” Sabrina recalled.

“First time with a half mortal,” he agreed. “First time with a virgin.” She raised a surprised eyebrow but didn’t comment. “But mostly, the first time with someone I love.” She kissed him. “My first time with someone who loves me.”

Her heart did that thing where it both soared and squeezed. She kissed him again, but knew tonight wouldn’t be the night, not after Blackwood had ruined their moment earlier.

“I love you, Scratch,” she informed him.

“I love you, too, Spellman,” he replied. He brushed his thumb across her cheek. “It’s late. I really should walk you home…”

“I don’t want you staying here,” she told him. “Blackwood…”

“Is trapped in a vase and I’m not afraid of a poltergeist,” he reminded her.

“A few more minutes?” she asked. “I’m not quite ready to go home yet.”

“I’m never ready to send you home.” He kissed her one more time before allowing her to return to her seat next to him. She skipped it, however, and went to the couch with her father’s Bible. Nick
stayed at his workstation, returning it to order after Blackwood’s attack, thinking through how he would take care of returning the library back to order the next day. He knew it better than the teachers, most likely. He may as well be the one to fix it.

Nearly an hour passed before he realized Sabrina had fallen suspiciously quiet. He stood and went to her. He smiled. She was sound asleep, her legs curled under her, head resting on the sofa’s arm.

“Come on, Spellman.” He scooped her into his arms.

“Nick?” she sighed, arms wrapping around his neck.

“Time to go home,” he said. He teleported them to her room and placed her on her bed. She moved around and let out a content sigh but didn’t wake up. He kissed her forehead. “Sweet dreams.”

“Brother Scratch.”

He turned to find Zelda standing in Sabrina’s doorway.

“She fell asleep at the Academy,” he offered. “I brought her home.”

“Oh like I don’t know you’ve slept in her bed more nights than not this last week,” she dismissed. “Come, Nicholas.”

She left, leaving him no option but to follow. He sighed and made his way to her study, sure she was about to drop another bomb on him.

“What now?” he asked without precedence, shutting the door behind him.

“Have a seat.” Nick did as instructed. “I would like a progress report on your research.”

“I’ve read through all of Edward’s journals again,” he said. “I recently found a few more texts that might be useful, but I haven’t had time to go through them yet. I think they will likely hold at least some insight into his doctrine, however.”

“While all of that is fine and well, I was inquiring about your research into Sabrina and the prophecy.”

“We’re baptized,” Nick reminded her. “That’s what I know so far – that Sabrina, the Weird Sisters, and myself are baptized. We suspect at least Elsbeth and Melvin are as well, and we need to find out, soon. We would also like to test the rest of the coven.”

“This baptism nonsense…”

“It’s not nonsense,” Nick interrupted. “I’m certain it’s tied to the prophecy, and that Edward and Diana had a reason for baptizing Sabrina, for encouraging our parents to baptize us.”

Zelda’s eyes narrowed in suspicion.

“Brother Scratch, what are you leaving out?” she asked. “My brother didn’t have Sabrina baptized. Her mortal mother did that with my fool of a sister.”

“Edward knew,” Nick said with confidence. “And he encouraged his supporters to do the same with their children. Like I said, I have some new texts that I think will provide insight, but I only just got my hands on them.”

“Where did they come from?” Zelda asked, suspicion growing.
“Sabrina and I found them...”

“Where?” she asked again with less patience.

“I searched the plane wreckage,” Nick confessed because there was no use in trying to lie to Zelda. “Before dinner tonight. We used the bathroom in Blackwood’s former private quarters.”

“You two will be the death of me,” Zelda declared. “What a foolish...”

“I found Edward’s Bible,” Nick continued, ignoring her reprimand. He found he was no longer as afraid of Zelda Spellman as he once was. “He’s made copious notes in its margins that seem to be tied to principles found within his doctrine. I also recovered a journal Diana kept while pregnant with Sabrina. She wrote in it until the very day she died. Sabrina has read it. She brought it to me at the Academy to read as well.”

“You’ll bring me the journal,” Zelda decided.


“You were a lot more tolerable when you were agreeable,” she informed him. He had always been able to stand on his own, but he seemed to have grown stronger in his will to stand firm in his beliefs since reuniting with Sabrina.

“I’m protecting her,” Nick said. “That book is about her. I imagine she will agree to share it, but I gave her the choice to decide.”

“I knew it was a matter of time before the pair of you got back together, but now that you have reunited, you’ve become this odd sort of packaged deal,” she said, a bit exasperated. “I can’t get to one of you without getting the other and it seems you two are one absurd idea theory or notion after another.”

“I don’t foresee that changing,” Nick informed her. “The package deal part, at least. She gave me another chance. I’m not going to wreck this one.”

“I assume that means you’re still not willing to research her and her powers without her consent?”

“You would be correct. She knows you asked. She didn’t protest, exactly, but she’s concerned about the idea that there is more to the prophecy.” Nick allowed a bit of his own worry to show. “I think she’s afraid that there may be more to it – that she may still be called to be the Herald of Hell. I haven’t told her my theories on the baptism being tied to the prophecy, and I don’t want to until I know for sure. No need to worry her unnecessarily.”

“She does tend to jump to conclusions and act without thinking,” Zelda agreed.

“I don’t want to lie to her,” Nick said. “But I also don’t want her to, as you accurately put it, jump to conclusions and act without thinking.” It scared him, that Sabrina tended to do that. He loved how brave she was, how she was so fearless. And yet it scared him to his core that she would act on something that could harm her and he wouldn’t be there to help her, save her, if she got in over her head.

“What do you think, Brother Scratch?” Zelda asked. “Is our Sabrina the Herald of Hell?”

“Only if she wants to be,” Nick said with confidence. “And she doesn’t want to be.”

“Very well,” Zelda sighed. “It’s late and I’ve had a long day. You’re dismissed, Brother Scratch.”
“Before I go, you should know that Blackwood has manifested as a poltergeist,” he told her. “Sabrina and I have had a couple of run ins with him today. I’ve trapped him in a vase for the moment, but it won’t hold more than a day or two. I want Agatha to come to the Academy tomorrow, try geomancy to banish him.”

“It’s unsurprising that he has returned as a malevolent spirit,” she stated. “Very well. I’ll send her after breakfast tomorrow.”

Nick stood to leave the study. The day had caught up with him and all he wanted to do now was climb into bed for the night.

“Brother Scratch.” He blew out a breath of annoyance and turned back to Zelda. The faintest of smiles played at her lips as she took in how tired he was. She knew Hilda thought she asked too much of the young warlock, of Sabrina. She privately agreed, but also recognized she had no choice – and knew neither of them would sit quietly on the sidelines anyway. “Where are you going?”

“To the Academy…”

“Upstairs,” she corrected. “Quietly. You’ve been sleeping next to Sabrina the last few nights, why stop now? Just don’t let the others see you slip in or out.”

“Thank you,” he nodded, surprised by her gesture.

“I’ll see you when you walk through the front door for breakfast in the morning and pretend you and Sabrina are just seeing one another for the first time that day,” she said. “And Nicholas?” He raised an eyebrow. “You’re doing well.”

He smiled just a bit, her vote of confidence meaning more than he could explain.

“Goodnight, Sister Spellman.”

He slipped upstairs quietly and let himself into Sabrina’s room. He tried not to wake her as he toed off his boots. He shrugged off his jacket, left it hanging over the back of her desk chair, and made his way to her side. She stirred when he stretched out beside her.

“Nick?”

“It’s me,” he confirmed. “Turns out, we’re not as stealthy as we thought. Zelda has been onto us the whole time.” She rolled over to face him, her hands tucked under her cheek. “She told me to sleep here – just as long as we keep up our breakfast charade in the morning.”

Sabrina’s sleepy smile made him smile himself.

“Zelda knows everything that goes on in this house,” she said. “I think that damned dog of hers tattles.”

“Isn’t that a familiar’s job?” Nick asked. Salem meowed his agreement from his perch on her dresser.

“I’m going to change,” Sabrina decided. “You should get more comfortable too, Nick.”

She got out of bed and disappeared into her bathroom. Nick stood and removed his shirt. He hesitated for just a moment before he stepped out of his pants. When Sabrina returned, he was sitting against her headboard in his boxers. Sabrina, however, had chosen another route.

“Seriously, Spellman?”
She smirked.

“You did say you like these pajamas.” Nick rolled his eyes, making her laugh. She slid under the covers. “You joining me, Scratch?”

“I’m in bed, aren’t I?” he asked.

“You can sleep under the blankets, you know,” she told him. “I don’t know what you’ve been trying to prove, sleeping on top of them.”

“I’ve been trying to be respectful,” he told her.

“I think we have progressed past you sleeping on top of the blankets,” she informed him.

He didn’t bother to argue. He got out of bed, pulled the covers back, and joined Sabrina. She slid close, resting her head on his chest. He wrapped an arm around her.

“Zelda wanted to know if I had researched you, your powers, and the prophecy any further,” he shared. “I had to confess that we searched the plane wreckage.”

“How did she take it?”

“She said we will be the death of her. And called us a ‘package deal.’”

“She’s right on that front,” Sabrina agreed. She lifted her head to look at Nick. “Have you researched me and my powers?”

“Only in the sense that I’ve been reading your parents’ writings,” he said. “I swear, Sabrina.” He decided to tell her. “I do think the baptisms are tied to the prophecy, perhaps a way to thwart it. Your unique powers, my abilities, the Weird Sister’s powers… maybe it all works together.”

“What about Melvin and Elsbeth?” she asked. “Neither of them has displayed an aptitude for any special powers that we know of.”

“Elsbeth is a healer,” Nick said. “Melvin, I don’t know about, but we still need to find out if either of them are baptized.”

“We’ll do that tomorrow,” Sabrina decided.

“Sprinkling witches with holy water, evicting poltergeist… shame we don’t have anything better to do tomorrow,” Nick commented.

“We lead boring live, Scratch,” Sabrina quipped. She snapped her fingers and the lamps around her room turned off. “May as well get used to it.”

“That’s one thing I know for sure about being with you,” he said. “Life will never be boring.”

“Are you saying I cause chaos?” she asked, her tone teasing.

“You keep me on my toes, Spellman,” he confirmed. He kissed her forehead. “I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Chapter End Notes
So, they have some answers. But do they have ALL the answers? Or... the right answers? It's so fun to write Sabrina and Nick as these powerful magical couple who are certainly charged with being older than they are and step up to the plate, but also a teenage couple figuring out things like sex.

Let me know what you thought!
Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Notes

I'm no genius at geomancy - I learned all of this from the University of Google. :)

Also, things get marginally steamy ahead.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Ah, my favorite cousin,” Ambrose greeted. “Are we still pretending not to know your warlock has slept in your bed the last three nights running?”

“Zelda gave him permission,” Sabrina informed Ambrose. “So long as we continue the breakfast charade.” She sat down on the armchair across from him. The smell of sausage frying made its way to their noses from the kitchen. “Want some coffee?”

“Let’s have it,” Ambrose agreed. He watched Sabrina close her eyes. Within moments, a tray appeared between them with a carafe of coffee, cream, sugar, and two coffee mugs. “Handy, those powers of yours.”

“They have their perks,” Sabrina agreed. “And let’s not pretend that Prudence isn’t sleeping in your bed more often than not.”

“Prudence and I risked our lives to find Blackwood. We’ve earned a pass.”

“Nick helped,” she reminded him.

“Nicholas showed up after the hard part was done,” Ambrose countered. “He wasn’t a part of the tracking, the sleeping on the ground, the scrounging for food. He joined us for a few days, was moderately useful in getting rid of the demons, and insisted that we bring Blackwood back with us.”

“He was more than moderately useful with the demons and you agreed that Blackwood needed to come back with you,” Sabrina reminded him. “You just don’t want to give up your grudge against him.”

“You were certainly quick to forgive,” Ambrose said. “He betrayed your trust and yet here you are, back together and sharing a bed like nothing ever happened.”

“It’s complicated and entirely between Nick and I,” she replied. “He loves me, I love him, and I trust him entirely. That should be enough for you.”

“It’s not,” Ambrose said easily. “He hurt you, Sabrina. He lied to you for months.”

“He has apologized over and over,” Sabrina countered. “He has proven himself. Earned my trust. He has certainly proven that he loves me.”

“Love is fickle,” Ambrose said. “It can fool you, blind you.”

“You’re jaded,” she accused. “You know how to love. You love me, our aunts. You loved Lucas. You may even love Prudence, which is a whole other can of worms I’m not going to open right
now. I love Nick. He loves me. I don’t have any doubts about that, and I would appreciate if you
would work towards forgiving him. Or at least being a bit nicer to him.”

“I know I’m not going to convince you that you’re being reckless,” Ambrose said. “But don’t come
crying to me when he breaks your heart again.”

“She won’t have to come crying to you.”

Sabrina jumped in surprise, her coffee sloshing dangerously in her cup. Ambrose had the good sense
to look abashed. Nick stood in the doorway, his expression not giving away how much Sabrina
knew overhearing Ambrose hurt him.

“Scratch,” Ambrose said evenly. “You’re early this morning.”

“I wanted to see Sabrina,” he said, stepping into the room.

“He knows you slept here last night,” Sabrina supplied.

“Doesn’t make my statement any less true.” Nick came to Sabrina’s side, but his eyes were on
Ambrose. “Sabrina, would you mind giving Ambrose and I a few minutes?”

Sabrina looked between Nick and Ambrose. They were glaring at one another, the tension thick. She
didn’t want to leave them alone together.

“I don’t…”

“We’ll be fine,” Nick assured her. “But Ambrose and I need to talk.”


“I always do,” Ambrose retorted. Sabrina shot him another look, kissed Nick’s cheek to make a
point, and exited the room, her coffee in hand. At the door, she looked back and snapped her fingers.
The coffee tray, as well as the mug in Ambrose’s hand, disappeared. “That was unnecessary,” he
called after her. She shut the parlor door. Ambrose gave Nick his full attention. “What do you want,
Scratch?”

“Let me have it,” Nick stated. “Say whatever you have been dying to say to me. We both love
Sabrina. We both want her to be happy. I recognize that your loyalty is to her. Mine is too…”

“Is it?” Ambrose interjected. “Since when?”

“It always has been,” Nick said. “I know what it looks like. But my loyalty – my devotion – has only
ever been to her. You know how it used to be. The Dark Lord appeared and you did what he asked.
I made a lot of mistakes, and I regret every single one of them.”

“She deserves better,” Ambrose stated, standing so Nick wouldn’t tower over him. On his feet, he
was a few inches taller than the warlock he had once liked enough to consider him a friend, a good
match for his cousin. “She deserves someone who will treat her with the respect she deserves.”

“She does,” Nick agreed. “She gave me another chance, Ambrose. I’m not going to screw this one
up.” He opted to let his cards show, just a bit. “I can’t lose her again.”

“I don’t approve of the two of you,” Ambrose told him. “She might have forgiven you, but I haven’t.
She might trust you, but I don’t. Sabrina digs in when she makes up her mind about something.
Somehow, you have convinced her to give you another chance. I’m not buying your reformed
"You’re free to believe what you want,” Nick replied. “But I love her, Ambrose. I won’t hurt her again. I’m not denying that I messed up, but even if she’s forgiven me, I haven’t forgiven myself. You can blame me all you want, but I assure you that it has nothing on how I blame myself.”

Hilda’s voice rang through the mortuary, calling the coven to breakfast.

“I’m watching you, Scratch,” Ambrose promised. “Mess up again…”

He walked away, leaving his warning hanging in the air. Sabrina was on the other side of the door when it opened. She glared at Ambrose who returned her glare with one of his own but said nothing.

“I assume you heard all of that?” Nick asked.

“I’m sorry,” she sighed. “I don’t know why he insists on holding onto a grudge…”

“Because he loves you,” Nick said simply. “I don’t like that he hates me, but I can’t fault him for wanting to protect you. It gives me peace of mind, honestly, that he’s there if you need him.”

“You said you still feel guilty…”

“I do,” Nick agreed. “It’s going to take me some time to get past it, Sabrina. It’s something I have to work through on my own. Reckon with my own demons, if you will.”

“I have forgiven you,” she told him seriously. “And I love you.”

“I love you, too,” he promised. He leaned in for a kiss. Hilda rang out another call to the breakfast table. “We should get to breakfast before our tardiness causes another Spellman to get upset with me this morning.”

“Things will get better,” Sabrina told him, her hand in his as they made their way towards the dining room. He smiled at her, although he couldn’t quite hide how much it bothered him that Ambrose opposed their relationship.

“They already are better.” He squeezed her hand. “I have you.”

“Are you ready?” Nick asked.

“All set,” Agatha said with a certain confidence. “I’ll begin once everyone is out of my way.” She gave him a pointed look. He joined Sabrina at the edge of the room.

“Are you sure about this?” Sabrina hissed.

“As sure as I am that you’re supposed to be in mortal school,” he hissed back. It was Sabrina who gave him a look this time. They had disagreed over whether she needed to be present for Agatha’s geomancy attempt to rid them of Blackwood once and for all. Nick wanted her nowhere near it. She wanted to watch out of curiosity – and to ensure Blackwood went away.

“Quiet, you two,” Zelda said from her position nearby. “Agatha requires silence.”

Sabrina raised an eyebrow but didn’t argue. She had briefly read up on geomancy after breakfast and there had been nothing about total silence. She leaned against the wall, content to take in the ritual. Nick, however, remained alert, ready to act in case anything went wrong. Ambrose and Prudence mirrored his stance from across the room.
Agatha closed her eyes and held her hands out to her sides, palms up. She slipped into a meditative state, called upon her ancestors to protect and guide her. Several minutes passed before she opened her eyes. She took a bag of sand from the pouch at her waist and began tossing it around the hall of the Academy, where statues of first Lucifer and then Blackwood stood. When she was satisfied, she began to draw intricate symbols with a stick.

“What’s she’s doing?” Sabrina whispered for Nick. Her voice was low, but he still heard it.

“She’s creating lines of points,” he whispered back. “She will have sixteen random numbers to interpret when she’s done.”

“Interpret?”

“Watch,” Nick encouraged. “It’s complicated, but Agatha is highly skilled.”

They fell silent at Zelda’s glare.

Agatha stepped back from her scribbling several minutes later. The room watched, waited. With a sudden and loud pop, Blackwood appeared.

“You just can’t leave well enough alone, can you?” he asked the group gathered.

“We’re not giving you time to taunt us,” Agatha informed him. “Your chart reveals the truth. You were never going to be allowed in Heaven, but Lilith doesn’t want you either. That’s how vial you are – even the Queen of Hell herself doesn’t want you.”

“She knows not what she does,” Blackwood retorted.

“You have no where to go, and so you’re hanging around here, the only home you’ve really known.” Nick shifted uncomfortably next to Sabrina. He had felt similar about the Academy until Sabrina came into his life. He didn’t want to be compared to the former high priest. “This is no longer your home, Blackwood. You are not welcomed here.”

Agatha didn’t give him a chance to respond. She began to chant, circling Blackwood’s figure. He tried to move, but she had him held to his spot. He could only struggle in midair against his invisible bindings. For perhaps the first time ever, he looked afraid. Agatha’s voice rose. Blackwood’s figure began to dissolve.

“What’s happening?” Sabrina asked.

No one answered her, all eyes on Blackwood.

“Damn you to Heaven!” Blackwood cried out as his torso began to dissolve. Agatha continued to circle and chant. “Damn you all!”

Without warning, what was left of him lunged for Sabrina. Nick, quick on his feet, rushed for her, pushed her out of the way. They fell to the floor, Nick twisting them to break her fall. He landed with a gruff, let out a “oomph” when Sabrina’s elbow caught him in the stomach. She looked at him, concerned, but his eyes were on Blackwood. She turned back just in time to see the last of Blackwood’s figure sucked into a vortex that had opened within Agatha’s chart.

He was gone.

Agatha’s body gave out. Dorcas and Prudence caught her, lowered her to the ground. Sabrina focused on Nick.
“Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” he sat up. “What about you? Are you okay?”

“I’m okay,” she assured him. “What just happened?”

“She dissolved his ghost,” Nick said as he stood and offered Sabrina his hand. “He’s gone. Where, I don’t know. Neither Heaven nor Hell will take him, but he’s gone from this plane.” He looked across the room to where Hilda was tending to Agatha. “Is she okay?” he asked Prudence.

“She will be,” Prudence nodded. “She used a lot of her energy, but she will be fine. We’re going to take her back to the mortuary to recover.”

“Blackwood is gone,” Zelda told them. “For good, this time.” She gave Agatha a rare smile. “Well done, Agatha.” She squared her shoulders. “I’m going to start decorating my office. Prudence, Dorcas, Hilda, get Agatha back to the mortuary so she can rest. Ambrose, Sabrina, Nick, back to whatever you were doing.” She looked to Sabrina. “Or weren’t doing.”

Sabrina glared at her aunt.

“You’re sure you okay?” Nick asked once he and Sabrina were alone. “You hit the floor pretty hard.”

“You broke my fall,” she countered. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

“I’m fine,” he swore. “I know you’re not going to school at this point in the day. Want to help me with some research?”

Sabrina considered him.

“In a few minutes.” She took his hand. “Let’s go to the library.”

He followed her curiously.

“You cleaned this place up quickly,” she observed when they entered. All the books from the night before had been returned to their shelves, the furniture righted.

“A little magic and knowing where everything goes made quick work of it.” He watched as Sabrina turned and slid onto a table. It was the same one she had been working at when she was attacked by a demon during the Head Boy competition. Nick quirked an eyebrow. “What are you doing, Spellman?”

“I think you’re right,” she replied. “I did hit the floor pretty hard.” She reached to draw him in. He was well aware of her intentions now. “I think I need to be checked over. Just in case.”

“I’ll start here,” he declared, just before he kissed her.

Her body seemed to rebel against her whenever she was with Nick. It left her control, became his to do what he wanted with. She didn’t mind. Her trust in him grew each day. So did her love for him.

“Nick,” she sighed as his lips trailed along her neck, his hand creeping up her thigh, his other arm wrapped around her to keep her close. He kissed her lips.

“Come on.” He pulled her off the table and into him. He kept kissing her, walking her backwards to the library couch. He lowered her to it, laid his body on top of her. “This is better.”
“Hmm,” Sabrina agreed just as his lips met hers again.

It was the most intense makeout session to date. She pressed her hips into his as his lips nipped and sucked along her throat, mindful not to leave marks her aunts wouldn’t approve of. His own hips bucked against hers, creating friction that made her sigh his name.

He moved from on top of her to beside her and slid an arm around her, cocooning her between him and the back of the sofa. He looked into her eyes.

“Can I try something?”

She nodded.

His free hand brushed against her jaw, then down her neck, along her body, over her breast and downward. He kept his eyes on hers, in case of any sign of discomfort. He was about to push against her boundaries, but if she said the word, he would stop.

“I love you,” she breathed as his hand brushed down her leg. At her knee, his fingertips turned a circle and started trailing back up. She tried not to squirm in anticipation.

“I love you,” he replied, resting his forehead against hers. “Say the word and I’ll stop.”

His hand slipped under her skirt, trailed up the inside of her thigh. She tangled a leg with his, giving him more access, her body responding on its own accord. It was like Roz had told her – her body just knew what to do.

“Nick,” she breathed when his hand cupped her in a place no one other than herself had ever touched her.

“Is this okay?” he asked.

“Yes,” she sighed. She kissed him sweetly. “Yes.”

He began to rub her, his hands staying over her tights. Today, he only wanted her to experience what could be.

“My witch.” He added pressure, quickened his rubs. Her breathing hitched. He pattern changed, from circles to up and down. “My mortal.”

An odd sort of intensity started to build. She recognized it. She had brought herself to orgasm before. But it had never felt like this. It had never been this intense. This damned good.

“Ah!”

Her body arched against Nick’s hand. Her eyes rolled back in pleasure. Her body released with a shudder. She felt like putty in Nick’s arms. He kissed her cheek, her jaw, her lips.

“Was that okay?” he asked, suddenly self-conscious even though he had done far filthier things with others. He hadn’t loved them, though.

“It was – amazing.” She smiled softly, a bit awkwardly. She turned in his arms. “But what about you?” She ran a hand down his chest. “Surely you want…”

“Don’t worry about me,” he said, catching her hand in his. His eyes were full of love. He gave her that half smile she loved so much. “I’ve gotten pretty good at taking care of myself these last several months.” He kissed her. “This is enough, Sabrina. No pressure.”
She smiled a bit, a thought occurring to her.

“What, Spellman?” he asked, his own half smile growing.

“I was just thinking about how we’re baptized and I’m pretty sure the church frowns upon any of this, let alone the premarital sex we’ve been talking about having.”

Nick chuckled.

“If you’re worried about a little skin on skin contact, loosely speaking, given that everything was strictly over clothing just now, we need to talk about your resume and how the church views sin.”

Sabrina laughed.

“I’ll sin with you forever,” she told him.

“Lilith bless you,” Nick replied. He kissed her again. Sabrina was in no hurry to move, enjoying being tangled in his limbs, tucked safely in his arms. She felt loved, wanted. She wanted him to know that.

“Nick?”

“Sabrina?”

“You know you will be my first, but I want you to know…” she felt a bit silly, given Nick’s experience in the area, “you’re also the first one that’s – touched me…”

“I wondered,” he admitted. He brushed her hair away from her face. “I know its selfish of me, given that I was more than a little promiscuous before we got together, but I hoped – again, selfishly – that maybe I would be the first one…”

He wanted to be the only one.

She was pretty sure he would be the only one.

Neither of them voiced those thoughts.

“We should do – something,” she reasoned after a while. “Instead of lie on this couch all afternoon.”

“Or we could lie on this couch all afternoon,” Nick countered. “I’ve had a confrontation with Ambrose, cleaned up this library, we’ve witnessed the banishment of Blackwood, and we’ve got to pull out the holy water before dinner. We’ve earned a respite.”

“Note how convincing you are,” Sabrina said, snuggling into his chest. He chuckled and held her close.

“I don’t think I had to work very hard to convince you.”

He dropped a kiss to her forehead. A month ago, he was walking on eggshells, doing everything he could to convince her to give him another chance. Now, she was his again. He felt immense gratitude wash through his body.

She was his now.

But he had always been hers.
Sabrina wasn’t generally the nervous type, but as she surveyed the coven members gathered around the living room, she couldn’t help but feel a little anxious. They were about to reveal what they knew about the baptism of some of their members, and as Prudence had adequately put it, witches had been burned for less. She was confident they could stop any uprising, but the fear of creating a divide in an already small coven was real. As though sensing her thoughts, Nick reached over and gave her hand a squeeze. She squeezed back, gave him a small smile.

“That’s everyone?” Zelda asked, walking into the room with the important sort of air she carried all to well.

“Everyone is accounted for,” Hilda confirmed. She stood near the door, Letty on her hip, Alastair playing at her feet.

“Sabrina? Nicholas?” Zelda raised her eyebrow at them.

“We’re prepared,” Nick replied.

“Very well,” Zelda nodded. She turned her attention to the coven members. “Thank you for gathering today. I have a number of important announcements for you. First, if all goes according to plan, we will be moving you to the Academy on Monday, three days from now.” There was a general murmur of excitement. “We are also planning to institute services at the Desecrated Church to worship Lilith and further our discussions of my brother’s doctrine. They will not be mandatory, but I do encourage attendance. The first one will be a week from today.”

“Is the Desecrated Church secure?” Elsbeth asked.

“It is.” Zelda offered nothing more. “Now, Sabrina and Nicholas? The floor is yours.”

Nick and Sabrina exchanged a glance. Nick gave her a single nod of encouragement. They had discussed how this would go. She was the group’s evangelist. She had gained their trust. She would be the one to bring forth the discussion of baptism.

“Many of you are aware that I was baptized into the Catholic Church as an infant.” Around the room, heads nodded. “As Nicholas has been researching my father’s doctrine, he has uncovered additional documents that gave us more insight into not only its formation, but what Blackwood knew.”

Nick stepped forward.

“I uncovered a number of personal files in Blackwood’s personal study on a handful of us. Further research and questioning of Blackwood before his death has led us to the knowledge that Sabrina isn’t the only member of our coven baptism.”

Muttering broke out once more.

“Nicholas is baptized,” Sabrina said, speaking over the group. “So are Prudence, Agatha, and Dorcas. We believe at least two more of you are.” She found them in the crowd, always together. “Melvin and Elsbeth.”

“What?” Melvin exclaimed. “No way…”

“I can’t be,” Elsbeth shook her head in disagreement.

“I said the same,” Prudence spoke up. “But I am. Sabrina proved it.”
“As am I,” Agatha agreed.

“I even entered a church,” Dorcas added. She narrowed her eyes at Sabrina. “Not that I remember it.” Sabrina ignored her.

“I was able to enter the church as well,” Nick told them. “Sabrina and I were able to fill a vial with holy water as a means of determining who else is baptized. It’s safer than trying to enter the church for those who are not baptized.”

“We’re asking each of you to allow us to sprinkle the back of your hand with water,” Sabrina said. “We need to determine who else is baptized.”

“If you are baptized, you will feel nothing,” Nick said. “If you aren’t, your hand will burn for a few moments, but there will be no other side effects.”

“How can you be sure?” Melvin asked skeptically.

“I’m not baptized,” Ambrose spoke up. “Sabrina sprinkled me. My hand burned for a minute or so and then it was fine.”

“Elsbeth?” Sabrina asked. “Melvin? We are almost certain you are baptized. Will you come to the front, please?”

They exchanged skeptical glances, but rose to their feet.

“Are you sure we won’t burn at the stake, so to speak?” Melvin asked.

“Positive,” Sabrina assured them. “Watch.” She held her hand out to Nick. He dropped a couple of droplets of holy water on her hand. “See?”

“Everyone knows you’re baptized though,” Elsbeth pointed out.

Nick passed Sabrina the vial. She mimicked him. Nothing happened when the water beaded on his hand.

“See?” he asked. “Baptized.”


“Elsbeth?” Nick asked. Her hand shook as she held it out to Sabrina. She, too, proved to be baptized. Nick looked at Sabrina. “We were right,” he said quietly.

“Everyone else now?” she asked. He nodded.

One after another, the witches and warlocks in the room held out their hands. Again and again, they hissed as their skin momentarily burned. Finally, the twins and Hilda and Zelda were the only ones left.

“There’s no need to try the twins,” Nick decided. “We know they aren’t baptized.”

“Aunt Hilda?” Sabrina asked. “Aunt Zelda?”

Hilda stepped forward, but Zelda remained where she was.

“I’m certain I’m not baptized,” she said, still wrestling with the concept. “There will be no need…”
“We need to test everyone,” Nick said.

“Everyone,” Sabrina echoed with a warning look.

“Fine,” she muttered.

“That’s the spirit, sister,” Hilda said. Still balancing Letty on her hip, she held out a hand to Sabrina. Sabrina dropped a couple of beads of water to the back of it, expecting Hilda’s hiss. Nothing happened. “Oh my…”

“You’re baptized,” Sabrina said, looking at her aunt in wonder. “Did you know?”

“I had no idea,” Hilda looked bewildered. “None at all. How… When…” She looked at Zelda. “Did you know, sister?”

“Do I look like someone who knew?” she retorted, her own surprise poorly hidden in her features. She stuck out her hand. “Go on. Sprinkle my hand.”

Sabrina did so.

Almost instantly, Zelda yelped.

“Lilith!” she cried out. “That burns!”

The room looked at the Spellman sisters with baffled expressions across their faces.

“I can’t… How…” Sabrina didn’t have words. Nick, however, had a theory, one he wouldn’t dare bring up now.

“I did not see that coming,” Ambrose said. He turned his attention on Nick. “What does it mean, Scratch? Some of us baptized, some of us not. Why?”

“We don’t know yet,” Nick admitted. “We have theories…”

“Theories aren’t good enough,” Ambrose challenged. “You can’t tell our coven that eight of us – a third of us – are baptized, but you don’t know why.”

“We’re choosing not to keep them in the dark,” Sabrina stated. “No one is in danger.”

“Because we’re not going to tell anyone.” Zelda’s tone was both a threat and a warning. “This is not to be mentioned outside of this room. Not until we know more. Is that understood?” There was a general murmur of agreement. No one would dare cross her. “Very well.” She drew back her shoulders. “Nicholas and Sabrina, I will see the pair of you in my study. The rest of you are dismissed.”

Nick and Sabrina exchanged a look, but followed Zelda to her office. Hilda and Ambrose joined them as well.

“Well?” she asked the moment the door closed behind them.

“You know everything we know,” Nick said. “We believe the baptisms were done by our parents at the bequest of Edward Spellman. The why is still a question mark.”

“I’m not talking about that. I’m talking about the fact that my sister is baptized and I am not.” Zelda rounded on Hilda. “Did you know? Did you have any idea that you’re baptized?”
“Do I appear to look like someone who has an idea that they were baptized?” Hilda countered. She still looked surprised. “I have no recollection of such a thing ever happening.”

“How could you not remember?” Zelda pushed. “Did the priest do it when Sabrina was baptized?”

“No,” Hilda shook her head. “I’m certain. I merely stood near enough to watch as a witness. Never even spoke to the priest.”

“What is the meaning of all of this?” Zelda asked again.

“We will get to the bottom of it.” Nick assured them. He felt a growing sense of urgency to find answers. He was sure Sabrina was intricately woven into whatever this was and he wouldn’t allow her to be manipulated or put at risk again.

“I suppose there’s nothing else we can do,” Ambrose said after a moment. “Aside from wait for him,” he waved a hand towards Nick, “to have some intellectual breakthrough.”

Nick took a breath to keep his temper in check, but next to him, Sabrina huffed. Moments later, Ambrose yelped in pain.

“What the Heaven, Sabrina?” he demanded, rubbing at a whelp on his forearm. It looked like someone had pinched him.

“I don’t care for your attitude today,” she informed him.

“Enough you two,” Zelda demanded. “Go do – something. All of you. I’ve had enough, between all of the conspiracies and poltergeists today. Dinner will be ready in an hour.”

None of them could get out of the room fast enough. Nick took Sabrina’s hand.

“Let’s go for a walk,” he said with a sense of urgency. Sabrina raised an eyebrow but didn’t question him. He led her outside and through the gate. It was chilly, so she closed her eyes as they walked, trusting Nick to guide her, and a moment later, she offered him his leather jacket. He quirked a smile.

“Spellman, again, I appreciate those powers.”

“I was already cold and I figured you were no good to me if you got sick from being in the cold without a coat.” She couldn’t help but give him a bit of a coy smile. “Although it could be fun to take care of you for a change.”

He laughed a bit and took her hand again after shrugging on his jacket. She, too, had put on a leather jacket. He figured that was him, rubbing off on her a bit.

“What’s the deal, Scratch?” she asked. “Why are you pulling me away from the mortuary? I have a feeling it’s not so we can make out.”

“Not this time,” he admitted. “I don’t want to be overheard. Let’s go to the river. We can only stay a few minutes if we’re going to make it back in time for dinner and we’re flirting with it getting dark on us, but it will give us some privacy.”

The curiosity gnawed at her as he led her at a bit of a swifter pace than they would normally move. When they reached the clearing, they perched on the same rock formation from the day he had brought her there after she forgave him.

“Start talking, Scratch,” she demanded once they were settled.
“Sabrina, is it fair to say your Aunt Hilda is more – loving – than your Aunt Zelda?”

“Aunt Zelda loves people in her own way,” Sabrina shrugged. “She would do anything for her family. Anything, Nick. I cannot emphasize that enough. She married Blackwood, for crying out loud.”

“Right, but when it comes to the more recognized way of expressing love, would you say that Hilda is the one that openly cares for others?”

“Well, yes,” Sabrina agreed. “That’s just who she is – she’s always been the caretaker.”

“Who was the oldest?” Nick pressed. “Your Dad? Zelda? Hilda?”

“My dad,” Sabrina answered. “Then Zelda, then Hilda. She’s the baby.” Her eyes widened. “You think my dad baptized her.”

“I do,” he confirmed. “Most Catholic churches keep records of things like baptisms, marriages. It’s not centralized. There’s no master record at the Vatican or anything like that. It’s a needle in a haystack, but where was Hilda born? Do you know?”

“England,” Sabrina answered. “In the countryside. Ambrose’s parents still live there, but I forget the name of the village. It’s rural enough that they don’t have to move frequently. People leave them be. They exist in relative peace.”

“Must be nice,” Nick quipped. “How long did she live there?”

“I think she was a teenager when they left.”

“And your dad and Zelda lived there as well?”

“I don’t know,” Sabrina admitted. “I think Zelda did. Her and Hilda have never really lived apart. But I don’t know about my dad. He traveled everywhere, lived everywhere.”

“He didn’t have to live there to baptize her,” Nick said, thinking fast. “Can you get me the name of the village? I’ll find the churches in the area, past and present, and check their log books, see if Hilda’s name is listed and more importantly, when.”

“I’m more interested in why,” Sabrina countered. “It can’t be as simple as ensuring we can love. Look at Zelda, Ambrose. They aren’t baptized, but they love.”

“True,” Nick agreed. “I still think our baptisms have something to do with how we love though.” He leaned back on his elbows. “Yet…” He trailed off.

“What?” Sabrina asked with trepidation.

“Me, Hilda, Zelda, Ambrose – what’s the one thing we have in common?”

“You’re witches,” Sabrina said, stating the obvious. Nick shook his head.

“Besides the obvious.”

“I don’t know,” she shrugged. “That you all live in Greendale? That Blackwood had it out for each of you at some point?”

“That we love you,” Nick said. “You were the Herald of Hell, Sabrina. But what if it’s more than that? What if you were never meant to bring about the end of the world?” He looked at her with a
sense of awe. He couldn’t believe a girl like her – beautiful, kind, powerful – loved him, a warlock with a string of bad choices to his name. “What if you were always meant to save it?”

Chapter End Notes

Blackwood is, for real, gone this time.

Hilda, baptized... Hmm... What a thought.

And swoon over Nick looking at Sabrina all in awe at the end. Goodness what a warlock.

Thank you for reading - please let me know your thoughts/theories!
I LOVE how into Hilda's baptism y'all are! I truly didn't see that coming. We're not far off from things starting to come together.

This is another sort of "part 1" of an update. It got quite long without breaking it up and, well, I do love where I left it. ;)

Who is ready for "mortal Nick?"

“So, to be clear, the objective is for them to put the ball in the basket?” Nick asked.

“That’s the general idea, yes,” Sabrina confirmed.

“That’s – it?” Nick sounded skeptical. “Just, toss a ball through a basket?” Sabrina narrowed her eyes at him.

“Have you ever played a sport, Nicholas Scratch?”

“Have you?” he countered, knowing she had never so much as touched a ball outside of the bare minimum required in gym class.

“Not my point,” she stated. He smirked a bit, his own point proven. “Have you or haven’t you?”

“I played my fair share of warlock ball in my early days at the Academy,” he said. “But I prefer more intellectual pursuits.” He bumped her shoulder as they walked along the sidewalk towards Baxter High. “I have other means of working up a sweat.”

Sabrina rolled her eyes but smiled. She looped her arm through Nick’s and took his hand. Her other hand wrapped around his bicep. He stood a little taller, proud she was with him, that she had chosen him when he was certain any guy, mortal or warlock, would want her.

“I’m glad you’re coming with me tonight,” she said. “It means a lot to me, Nick.”

“I want to know everything about you, Sabrina,” he said. “Your witch side, and your mortal side. You’re the best of both worlds.” He smiled at her almost self-consciously. “Not that your worlds matter. You are – you.”

She stopped. When he turned to her in question, she moved her hand from his bicep to his jaw and drew him towards her for a kiss.

“And you are you, Nicholas Scratch,” she informed him, wishing he understood just how much weight him being him carried for her. “I love you.”

He kissed her back.

“I love you too,” he replied. “So much so I’m about to walk into a mortal school and watch them put
Sabrina tried to stifle a laugh but the sound escaped anyway. Nick chuckled at her amusement. “Watching me pretend to be a mortal may just be more of a sporting event than this basketball game.”

Sabrina laughed in earnest.

They resumed walking, arms and hands still linked, her other hand once more wrapped around his bicep. She took a moment to find to account for how she was feeling and the answer was surprisingly pleasant.

She felt – happy.

In spite of everything, in spite of what she had been through and the unknown ahead of them, she was happy. Choosing to give Nick another chance had been the right choice. His love for her was deep and honest, and her love for him felt wild and vast. She had thought she couldn’t live without Harvey, but she was certain she couldn’t exist without Nick.

She felt a fierce protection over him as she glanced at him, caught him as he coyly took in the mortal sights and sounds, undoubtedly making mental notes about things he would ask her about later. She was no fool. She knew, in spite of Satan being held in an acheron in the pits of Hell, that their fight wasn’t over. There was more to come, more for them to face. She had faith that as long as they stood side by side, they would be okay.

“Nick?”

“Hmm?” He pulled his attention away from a piece of heavy machinery parked outside of Baxter High for construction. The mortals really did do things the hard way. One spell would take care of expanding the parking lot, but from the looks of the piles of dirt, it would take ages for the mortals to finish the project.

“Were you serious about visiting your family’s home in Scotland over Winter Solstice?”

“Of course I was,” he said. “I want to whisk you away, Spellman, show you my home.”

“Or one of them?” she asked with a teasing glint.

“We live an odd life,” he mused. “It would mean a lot to me to take you home with me, as much of a home as I have, anyway.” Sabrina picked up on his sadness. His parents had been on his mind a lot lately since learning Blackwood killed them. She understood his pain all too well. Her own parents were never far from her mind.

“That means a lot to you,” she observed, “having a home.”

“Greendale is the first place that has felt like home since I lost my parents,” he confided. “But I don’t think it’s the place.” He squeezed her hand. “It’s the people.”

It was her. She was what made him feel home. He didn’t think it mattered if they were in Greendale or on the other side of the world. As long as she was by his side, he would be home.

“You are home, Nick,” she told him, understanding. “That’s my promise.” She leaned in for one more kiss before they entered Baxter High. “Here we are, Scratch. Baxter High, once more.”

She untangled their arms, but kept his hand in hers as she led him through the halls. He did his best to look like he wasn’t completely fascinated by everything around him. Even the idea of lockers was intriguing. He had always just cast a spell to send his books back to his room after a class if he didn’t
want to carry them around. How inconvenient for mortals, to have to pause between classes and on their way home to deposit books and pick up others.

Sabrina stopped suddenly. Nick turned to her in question, but he didn’t need to ask.

“Is that… Lilith?”

“I… Don’t know…”

Sabrina dropped his hand and started towards the woman with a determined stride. He stopped her with a hand on her elbow.

“Together,” he said quietly. Sabrina understood. It was his reminder that they were in this – all of this – together. She took his hand once more in response and they approached the woman who, he noted, looked downright confused.

“Lilith?” Sabrina asked. There was no response. “Ms. Wardwell?” she tried instead. The woman turned to her.

“Sabrina!” She took her glasses off and rubbed them on her disheveled dress. “My goodness… I don’t know what happened… The last thing I remember is taking a nap… But now it seems to be months later… I can’t explain it…”

“A nap?” Sabrina repeated.

“A long one, it seems.” Ms. Wardwell rubbed her glasses again. “My goodness…”

“The mind is a powerful place,” Nick offered. “It sounds like you had a vivid lucid dream. That can happen sometimes, confusing lucid dreams with reality. As crazy as it sounds, a good night’s rest will help things make sense again.”

Ms. Wardwell – the real one, Sabrina was now sure – eyed Nick.

“I don’t know you. Are you a new student?”

“This is my boyfriend,” Sabrina offered. “Nicholas Scratch. He goes to another school.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Nick said, sliding right into his charming demeanor as he offered his hand. “Sabrina has told me a lot about you.”

“Boyfriend?” Ms. Wardwell repeated as she accepted Nick’s hand. “This young man?” She shook her head as though trying to clear away the cobwebs. “I’m sorry. It’s just, the last I remember, you were dating Harvey Kinkle.”

“No, I’ve been with Nick for a while,” Sabrina said. “But Harvey and I are still friends.”

“I suppose I can’t keep up with teenagers like I used to,” Ms. Wardwell said as she released Nick’s hand. “It’s nice to meet you Nicholas.” She put her glasses back on. “I think I will take your advice and go home, take a nap, see if that helps.”

She left them without another word. Sabrina watched her go, her brow crinkled in confusion. When Ms. Wardwell disappeared down a hallway, she turned to Nick.

“What just happened?” she asked. “Why is she back? How is she back?”

“Either Lilith decided to grant you the gift of your favorite teacher or she’s up to something,” Nick
reasoned. “You’re certain that’s the real Ms. Wardwell?”

“Positive,” Sabrina nodded. “But how are we going to explain the missed months? That Ms. Wardwell has no idea she’s the principal, let alone that her fiancé is dead.”

“We could fill in her memory,” Nick suggested. “Give her a story that will make things make sense, erase the fact that the last few months have been – erased.”

“I did that to Harvey once,” Sabrina confessed. “I told him I was a witch right before my sixteenth birthday. He didn’t believe me, so I changed his memories.” She sighed, feeling weary. “Let’s do it. Tonight.”


“We still need to figure out why she’s here. How she’s here.”

“Add it to the list,” Nick said. “At this point, that list is so long we might need to make an actual list to keep up with it all.” He took her hand again. “For now, let’s go watch this basketball game.”

“I’m less excited about it now,” Sabrina admitted. “But I did promise Theo and Harvey I would be here.”

“Are they okay with me tagging along?” Nick asked. He wasn’t sure where he fit in with her mortal friends. He thought Roz might be okay with him, but he didn’t know Theo all that well and he and Harvey hadn’t exactly started off on the right foot.

“Of course,” Sabrina confirmed. “I’ve told you – they’ve been asking where you’ve been.” He surprised her by swooping in for a kiss. She giggled a bit, appreciating that Nick could always lift her mood, even when it felt like the odds were stacked against them. “I’m pretty sure Baxter High frowns on public displays of affection in its hallways, Scratch.”

“Since when have you cared about the rules, Spellman?” he countered.

“Fair point.” She put her hand on his cheek and pulled him back to her. “You did say you like a rebel.”

“I love a rebel,” he stated, catching her hand in his, emphasizing the word ‘love.’ “The mortals really show up for this thing, don’t they?” He observed the stands full of spectators, some in red and gold, some in blue and gold. They sat on opposite sides, separated by school colors.

“It’s a rivalry game,” Sabrina explained. “Riverdale High versus Baxter High. It’s a big deal, if you care about such things.”

“Sabina, Nick!” Roz emerged from the crowd.

“Roz!” Sabrina exclaimed. Nick stood by as the pair exchanged a hug. He wondered what it was like, to have a friendship like Roz and Sabrina had. He had never really had a true friend, not until Sabrina, anyway. “It looks like the whole school came.”


“That was Ms. Wardwell,” Sabrina told her. “The real one.” Roz looked confused.

“But… How…”
“We don’t know,” Nick supplied. “She remembers falling asleep but woke up months later.”

“And you’re certain that’s the real Ms. Wardwell?”

“I’m certain,” Sabrina nodded. “Nick and I are going to go – fill in her gaps – tonight.” Roz raised an eyebrow.

“I’m going to break us in and Sabrina is going to give her memories,” Nick explained.

“That sounds… complicated.” Roz looked worried.

“It’s pretty actually straightforward,” Nick assured, trying not to sound like a know it all. He was self-conscious around her friends, didn’t want to say the wrong thing or make the wrong impression. He wanted them to like him, or at the very least, accept him with Sabrina. “I just mean the magic isn’t complicated. It’s less complex than it sounds.”

Sabrina saw right through him. She put a hand on his bicep to calm him.

“I’ve done it before,” she told Roz, leaving out the details. “Nick’s right. It sounds more complicated than it is.” She took in the bleachers filling around them. “Should we get seats?”


“No, but thank you, Nick,” she said with a smile. Sabrina leaned in to kiss his cheek.

“Relax,” she whispered as she brushed her lips across his cheek. “You’re doing fine.” He gave her a small guilty smile meant just for her. She left him and with Roz, headed for an open section of bleachers at the very top of the row on Greendale’s side of the gym.

“Nick seems nervous,” Roz commented.

“He is,” Sabrina confirmed. “He won’t admit it, but he wants to make a good impression on you guys.” They settled on a bleacher, Sabrina saving room for Nick. “He’s self-conscious about everything that’s happened. Him and Ambrose are still on the outs and while Zelda respects him, she doesn’t like him all that much still. He wants you all to like him – or at least accept him with me.”

“But we do accept him,” Roz said as thought it were obvious. “All of us do.”

“He still struggles with his devotion,” Sabrina shared. “He doesn’t talk about it much, but I know he does. It’s going to take him some time to forgive himself.”

“Have you two…?” Roz trailed off with a suggestive raise of her eyebrows.

“No,” Sabrina confided. “I’ve told him I’m ready, but he wants to let it happen naturally, which I appreciate.” She searched for Nick and found him easily as he traded money for two bags of popcorn. “We’ve started to do – other stuff.” She blushed just a bit. “I like it.”

“It’s – nice, isn’t it?” Roz asked knowingly.

“It is,” Sabrina agreed. “He’s sweet, gentle. He always asks if I’m okay. “ She smiled a bit more. “I really want him, Roz.”

“Well, here he comes,” Roz said, nodding towards where Nick was making his way up the bleachers. Even she could appreciate the attractiveness of the warlock. “That, Sabrina, is all yours.” Sabrina nearly blushed.
“He is all mine,” she agreed, watching Nick navigate the mortals around him. Her heart swelled with both love and lust.

“For you,” he said, passing Sabrina a bag of popcorn when he reached her. He settled on the bleacher beside her, taking in how the mortals could push the bleachers into the wall to make space in the gym when it wasn’t in use. Another place where a simple spell could expand the place, but the mortals had come up with a solution that, while perhaps a bit time consuming to execute, worked. Sabrina pulled him out of his observation with a searing kiss on the lips. “What was that for?” he breathed when she pulled away. “Not that I’m complaining.”

“For the popcorn,” she said, sitting back, aware of Roz smirking beside her.

“I’ll buy you popcorn every single day if I get that sort of reaction.”

“No need for that, Scratch,” she said, digging into her bag. “Just – keep holding my hand.

Sabrina stood back and watched as Nick wordlessly popped the lock on Ms. Wardwell’s front door. He looked at her with a raised eyebrow. She nodded to say she was ready. He held his finger to his lips to indicate they needed to be quiet. She rolled her eyes. She knew that. He smirked at her annoyance and jerked his head towards the open door.

He allowed Sabrina to go ahead of him, trusting the fact that she had spent more time in the cottage than he had and would better navigate it in the dark. He stayed close, ready to act if danger showed itself. They slipped into Ms. Wardwell’s bedroom as quiet as mice. The teacher slept soundly in her bed.

They took up their previously agreed upon positions on either side of the bed. Nick caught her eye. She nodded. He raised his hands and began the incantation to put Ms. Wardwell into an even deeper sleep.

“That should do it,” he said quietly. “She’ll sleep through until morning.”

It was Sabrina’s turn. Her incantation was a bit more intricate, but her words were sure. Her confidence in herself as a witch had only grown and Nick found himself incredibly attracted to her in the moment. Attraction would have to wait, however.

“It’s been a long few months for you,” Sabrina began, her lips close to Ms. Wardwell’s ear. “You were woken from a nap by a knock on the door. It was a police officer, bringing you the news that your fiancé, Adam, had been injured while helping people in a remote village in Rwanda. You left immediately to be with him. He fought long and hard, but the medical care wasn’t great and he was too weak to be transported elsewhere. He passed away and left you devastated. You have taken some time to heal, but found yourself back in Greendale. It’s hard, to be back here, among his memories, but you’re strong and you’re ready to go back to your role as principle of Baxter High, a role you took on just before Adam’s injury. You’re ready to be back to your students, to start living your life again, while holding the memories of Adam close to your heart.”

She straightened and looked at Nick for his approval. His answer was to tilt his head towards the door, indicating that it was time to leave. Neither of them spoke again until they were outside.

“You did well, Spellman.” He slipped an arm around her waist and pulled her in to kiss her temple. It had been her that remembered Lilith had killed Adam and they needed to include his loss in Ms. Wardwell’s new memories. “I know that wasn’t especially pleasant for you.”

“She’s an innocent victim in all of this,” Sabrina sighed. “So was Adam.”
“They were,” Nick agreed, sliding his hand from her waist to take her hand. He wanted her close. Something about the night didn’t feel quite right. “Why don’t we teleport back to your bedroom?”

“That sounds like…”

“I had a feeling the pair of you would turn up tonight.”

Sabrina gasped and spun around. Nick grabbed her, pulled her close.

“Oh relax,” Lilith huffed. “It’s me. Your queen.”

“I hope to Heaven you aren’t here to ask for a devotion,” Nick said. “You’re not getting one.”

“We do things a bit differently in the underworld these days.” Lilith stood before them in a decadent red and black gown, her crown glowing even in the dark, overcast night. “No devotions necessary. I came to surface a concern – quite literally, seeing as the concern came from my residents below.”

“What now?” Sabrina asked wearily.

“Not enjoying your latest mystery to unravel?” Lilith asked.

“Not especially,” Sabrina retorted. “Why are you here? And what is Ms. Wardwell – the real Ms. Wardwell – doing back?”

“I’ll start with the easier of those two questions,” Lilith said. “I opted to bring our dear Mary back from the undead for two reasons. One, I felt a bit bad, believe it or not. I did wreck her life and she did make an excellent host. Which is, of course, the second reason I brought her back – in case I need a host in this plane.”

“Why would you need a host?” Nick asked.

“One can never be completely sure of their position in life, can they?” she countered. “Now, to answer why I’m here. It seems my subjects like to talk in riddles. Particularly subjects named Spellman and Scratch.”

“Our parents?” Sabrina clarified.

“Your fathers,” Lilith corrected. “One Edward Spellman and one Nicholas Scratch, Senior.” She took in their stunned expressions. “You two know they were friends before Edward and Diana’s passing,” she reminded them. “You shouldn’t be surprised that they are still plotting in Hell, particularly now that they have me as their Queen. They are quite delighted that the pair of you found one another, by the way.”

“What are they plotting?” Nick asked. “What do you know?”

“It’s not so much plotting as it is them trying to get you a message,” Lilith said. “They have been lobbying for my time for weeks and I finally gave it to them. Edward says there are more writings, that you’re only halfway there. And Nicholas says to tell you, Nicholas the Second, that you will find answers hidden in the unholy chamber.”

“Unholy chamber? Sabrina looked at Nick. “What does that mean?”

“I have no idea,” he shook his head. “What else, Lilith?”

“I’m afraid that’s all I have for you,” she said. “Something is amiss and I don’t like it.” She drew herself up to her full height. “Figure it out, the pair of you. I quite like being queen.”
With that, she was gone.

“What the Heaven was that?” Sabrina demanded as Nick cursed. “What’s amiss? What writings is my father talking about? Where are they? What is your father talking about?”

Nick looked at her, his mind rapidly snapping together seemingly random nuggets of information into a crystal clear image. His heart raced. It didn’t seem likely, and yet it was the only thing that made sense.

“Sabrina, do you trust me?” he asked with a sense of urgency.

“I do,” she nodded. “Completely…”

“Give me your hands.” She did so. Confusion colored her features. “Hold on tight. Don’t let go.”

They were spinning then, their feet leaving the ground, the velocity pulling at them from all directions. Sabrina couldn’t see Nick, but she could feel him, feel his hands, gripping hers.

The spinning stopped almost as soon as it started. Sabrina stumbled, but Nick, sure and steady on his feet, caught her.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

“I… think…” She looked around. They were in an unfamiliar decadent entry hall, the ceilings high, the fixtures elaborate, the sweeping staircase marble, it’s railings gilded in gold. “Where are we?”

“My family’s compound,” Nick answered, “in the Unholy Land.”

Chapter End Notes

A cliffhanger. I know. But it’ll be worth it. Promise.

And LILITH!

What do you think they’re going to find in the Unholy Land? And is anyone surprised that it’s a decadent compound? Feels like the Scratch family would have a decadent compound.

Let me know all your thoughts!
Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Notes

"Mortal Nick" was a hit last update, it seems! Thank y'all so much for all the love and comments left! I'm grateful to all of you!

And sorry about that cliffhanger... Maybe this potentially sinful update will help?

( Remember, we're rated 'M' around here...)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You’re sure you’re okay?” Nick asked. “That’s the furthest you’ve teleported…”

“I think I’m fine,” Sabrina replied. “I am, however, confused about how I ended up half way around the world…”

“The unholy chamber,” Nick said. “My dad called his study here his chamber. Only here. It was his study at our other homes. Whatever he wants me to find is here. I know it.”

He took her hand and pulled her along. She tried to observe as much as she could about her surroundings, but Nick moved fast. She had too many questions to allow herself even a glimpse of the paintings that lined the wall.

“What are we looking for?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” Nick admitted. “But I think I’ll know it when I see it.”

“That’s vague.”

“I know,” he admitted. “But I’m certain there is something here.”

He paused outside a set of heavy wooden doors with intricate carvings. Nick took a big breath, hesitated for just a moment. Most of his childhood – at least while his parents had been alive – was spent in Scotland. He only had the vaguest of memories of time spent at the Unholy Land compound and his father’s chamber was understood as off limits. He had only been in the room a few times since he gained control of his family’s assets. He hadn’t spent much time exploring anything other than the shelves of books. He had always felt like an intruder in the space, half expected his father’s voice to boom out of the ether and demand him to get out.

“Nick?” Sabrina’s questioning voice brought him out of reverie.

“This room was off limits,” he told her. “I spent hours playing in his study in Scotland, but it was understood that I wasn’t allowed in here. I never gave it much thought, not until now. I’ve been in here since their deaths, but I’ve only ever browsed his books. I’ve never thought to look further, always felt like I shouldn’t be there.”

“The unholy chamber,” Sabrina repeated. “Did he really call it that?”

“No,” Nick shook his head. “It was just his chamber. But in the Unholy Land, where so much of the
Dark Lord’s history originated? It has to tie together. It has to be what his message through Lilith is referring to."

With that, he put his hands on the gilded handles. An odd sort of warmth washed through him. He pulled his hands away as further realization that the chamber was unique dawned on him.

“What is it?” Sabrina asked, believing he was overwhelmed by his surroundings.

“You trust me, yes?” he countered, eyes on hers.

“Enough to take your hands without question and allow you to bring me halfway across the world in an instant,” she reminded him.

“I’ve said it before and meant it and I will say it now and mean it more than ever. I will never do anything to intentionally hurt you."

Sabrina frowned.

“Nick, what’s going on?”

“I have a theory,” he said slowly. “I want you to try to open these doors. I don’t know what will happen when you do, but I need to test my theory. It feels important.”

“Explain,” she prompted.

“I think only a Scratch can access the chamber. I’ve never considered it until now, as I’ve always been alone when I’ve came here. I want to test that theory. I don’t know what might happen if you try, though.” He looked torn. “You know what? It’s not worth it. I can’t let you…"

She reached past him and grabbed the door handles.

“Ow!” she cried out, springing away. “It burned me!” She studied her hands. They still tingled and were a little red, but there didn’t seem to be any further harm.

“An inferno charm,” Nick recognized. “But with the ability to recognize blood. That’s different…” He shook his head. “I’ll ponder my dad’s blended magic later. Let’s see what’s in here.” He grabbed the handles and the same warmth from earlier washed through him. There was a soft click and the doors opened. “Stay close, until we’re sure we’re alone.”

Their steps into the room were slow, measured. Nick reached a hand out and flicked a switch. Dim light flooded the room. Sabrina realized that while the chamber was covered in a thick layer of dust, the rest of the house, from what she had seen as they rushed through the foyer, wasn’t.

“Does someone clean the rest of the house?” she asked.

“There’s a housekeeper that comes a couple of times a month,” Nick confirmed. “She doesn’t come in here. She couldn’t, we now know, as she’s not a Scratch, but I have explicit instructions for her not to. It was written in the will. I never thought to consider why. I was more concerned with flexing my muscles as the sole remaining Scratch when I was able to access it.”

Sabrina wondered at the fact that Nick was essentially in charge of a large portfolio of real estate and who knew what other investments. He was only a couple of years older than her, but he handled himself with a level of maturity that some adults she knew didn’t have. But, she reminded herself, he had grown up a lot faster than most.
The chamber was dark and rich. The centerpiece was a large imposing desk, it’s surface neat, the few trinkets on it meant as décor and heavy with dust. Two walls were covered in floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, crammed with volumes and volumes of texts. Sabrina wandered towards the nearest shelf, noted that there was some type of order to it all, with books on demons, rituals, ruins, herbology, anything a witch could want to research. It seemed Nick’s intelligence was a family trait.

A grand fireplace stood across the room, expensive armchairs arranged around it. There were papers on a coffee table. She crossed the room, aware of Nick rifling through a desk drawer, and picked up the papers.

“What’s that?” Nick asked.

“It looks to be an opinion piece on the Dark Lord,” she said, flipping through the pages. “It’s highlighting his less than stellar parts, hinting that there could be a better way. There’s no author though. It’s anonymous, seems almost like a piece of propaganda.”

“We’ll take it back with us.” Nick opened another drawer. “So far, I’ve found nothing of consequence. I’m missing something. Unholy chamber…” He sat down on the dusty desk chair. Sabrina went to him and leaned against the desk, watching as he worked through his thoughts in search of – something. “Blackwood had a hidden room within his private study. Perhaps…”

He stood suddenly and went to the center of the room. He turned on the spot, eyes sharp, searching for something Sabrina couldn’t see. His lips moved as he cast a spell she didn’t recognize. A loud scraping sound filled the room. They both turned to watch a section of a bookshelf slide out from the wall and then to the side, revealing a small cubby of a room. Sabrina started towards it. Nick grabbed her by the elbow.

“Careful. If my father had the door enchanted, who knows what he’s done to this.”

“How are you going to find out?” Sabrina asked.

“The same spell I just used to find it,” he said. “It’s a divulging spell – it will reveal any magic used in your surroundings.” He held out his hands and repeated the earlier incantation. The frame of the door glowed. Nick frowned. “I’m not sure what this is,” he admitted. He chanced walking towards the door.

“Nick…” Sabrina warned, concerned. She didn’t know where they were, what to do if something were to happen to him. She wasn’t entirely sure she could teleport back to Greendale without him, having only done it a few times, and usually with him.

He reached into his pocket and produced a coin. He tossed it at the door. It ricocheted back. He picked it up and did it again.

“There’s some sort of barrier,” he told Sabrina. “I don’t think it’s dangerous, exactly, but it’s not going to let anyone in.” He bit his lip. “I’m going to try…”

“No!” He looked at her. “Let me.”

“Not a chance,” he shook his head. “I don’t know what this is.”

“Neither do I,” she replied. “But I’m not confident in my ability to get help if something happened to you. I don’t know where we are and I’ve never teleported this far on my own. If something were to happen, you would be able to get help faster.”

“True.” He looked torn. “Okay. Just a hand, though, see if you can break the barrier.”
Sabrina held out her hand and approached the doorway, aware of Nick close behind her, ready to intervene if needed. When she reached the door, however, it was as though a wall were there.

“It feels solid,” she reported to Nick. “Nothing else out of the ordinary. It’s just – a wall.” His hand joined hers. Unlike her though, he cringed and pulled it away. She looked at him with concern. “Are you…”

“I’m fine,” he nodded. “I know what kind of magic this is now.” He held out his hand. A faint and fading burn could be seen along his palm. “It’s another ‘must be a Scratch’ deal. Except this one wants a blood sacrifice.”

Sabrina’s eyes widened again.

“No,” she shook her head. “Whatever is in that room isn’t worth…”

“Just a little blood should do,” Nick said, ignoring her. “I think I saw a letter opener…”

“A letter opener?” she repeated in disbelief.

“A thin cut to my hand should do the trick…” He found the letter opener and held it over his other hand, ready to slice it open.

“Wait!” Sabrina cried out. Nick looked at her.

“Sabrina, I have to…"

She took the letter opener from him and said an incantation over it. It glowed for a moment, then returned to its normal state. She handed it back to him.

“At least sanitize it first,” she stated. “That thing has years of dust and who knows what else on it.” He winked at her, then took a big breath and ran the letter opener over his hand, creating a thin, shallow cut. He winced a bit as blood bubbled to the surface.

“Let’s see if I’m right.” He went to the doorway again and pressed his bleeding hand to the barrier. It melted away. He stepped through the doorway and found himself in a barren room no bigger than a closet. A small desk was pushed against one wall with a stack of books on it. But more than that, it was utterly and completely silent. He turned to Sabrina. She was there, on the other side of the barrier, talking to him, motioning wildly with her hands, but he couldn’t hear a word she said. “I can’t hear you.”

She frowned.

“What?” her mouth moved.

Nick pointed to his ear and shook his head.

Her frown grew. She pointed at him, then made an “okay” sign with her hand. He nodded and signaled “okay” back, then turned his attention to the books. He flipped open the cover of the first book, a nondescript green journal.

“Unholy shit,” he breathed. It seemed Edward Spellman wasn’t the only one with journals.

Edward Spellman, his wife, and his sisters are coming for dinner. Edward wants to discuss his concerns about Faustus Blackwood as well as his more progressive ideas. Edward is a powerful warlock, but married a mortal. I can understand marrying for love as I did the same, but a mortal?
And she’s pregnant at that… What will become of the child? It’s a fascinating scenario. I look forward to his visit.

Nick sat it aside and picked up the next book, another green journal. He skimmed the pages. More of his father’s words. He picked up a third, gave it a quick skim, it proving to be the same thing. The next book was black. He had a feeling he knew who the author was.

Good and evil.

It always comes down to that in the end, doesn’t it?

Good versus evil.

But what about us? What about those of us who fall in the middle? We’re not disciples of the False God, but we’re not evil, either. Christians say ‘God is good’ and in my research, I cannot find where He is, in fact, not good. He seems to always show up for his followers, albeit in the very last of minutes or even when it’s too late, such as with the story of Lazarus. But the Dark Lord is evil. He owns his evil, seeks to destroy. Both seek submission from their subjects, but the False God allows free will. The Dark Lord does not. The Dark Lord demands total submission to his will.

What about us? What about those of us who fall in the in between? Those of us who do not believe the False God has the answers, who practice the magics and rituals frowned upon by the Path of Light, yet still recognize right from wrong, who long for free will to make their own choices?

What about us?

Nick flipped through the journal. Page after page, line after line, Edward Spellman had penned his reflections on the False God and Satan. There was another black book, two more green journals. He gathered them in his arms and tried to exit the odd little room. Relief flooded through him when he melted through the barrier and sound came roaring back.

“Nick!” Sabrina’s relief was palpable. “What the Heaven happened in there?”

“It was soundproof,” he explained. “Meant to hide these.” He held up the books. “Meant to hide their work, keep it safe.”

“Their work?” Sabrina asked, latching onto the phrase. “Your father?”

“And yours,” he nodded. “I’ve only skimmed a few pages, but Edward talks about the in between, the space between Heaven and Hell, the differences between the False God and the Dark Lord, what it all means for those of us who belong to the gray area between the Path of Light and the Path of Night. What I read of my dad’s journal discussed the fact that the Spellmans were coming to dinner and his curiosity about Edward’s pregnant wife.”

“Our answers are in those pages,” Sabrina said. “I’m sure of it.”

“They will at least get us closer,” Nick agreed. “Let’s get back to Greendale. I’ll be up all night reading, but if we can find answers…”

“Hang on,” Sabrina said in that slightly mischievous tone of hers. “What if we – stayed here?”

Nick looked at her like she had lost her mind.

“And how would we explain that to your aunts?” he asked. “I picked you up to take you to a basketball game and we ended up halfway around the world. The least we can do is come home…”
“What if there’s more here?” she pressed. “What if we read these pages and realize there is more information here, in your father’s chamber or elsewhere?”

“We would come back…”

He was wavering, enticed by the idea of staying overnight, of not only being close to his father’s chamber should they need to do further searching, but of being away from Greendale with Sabrina. She saw the moment he made the decision to stay. Without waiting for him to voice it or even change his mind, she cupped her hands and brought them to her lips.

“Aunties, Nick and I are in his home at the Unholy Land. We came across a lead that led us here. We’re okay and will be home tomorrow.” She blew into her hands and the message floated away with a soft swish.

“Zelda will kill us,” Nick declared. Sabrina shrugged.

“We have a Cain Pit.” She indicated the books. “Shall we?”

Nick considered their surroundings. The chamber was dusty and not well lit. The chairs weren’t the most comfortable for sitting in for long periods of time. He knew from the last time he had visited, when he had sat in his father’s chamber with a bottle of bourbon during winter solstice, alone, trying to find a way to sway Sabrina from the mortal, to abide by the Dark Lord’s wishes without hurting her, to get out of his devotion unscathed. He hadn’t found the answers, hadn’t been able to sit to ponder too long, his skin crawling with what he now believed to be if not his father’s spirit, the traces of his magic.

“Let’s go to the family room,” he decided. “We’ll be more comfortable there.”

He led them out of the chamber. Sabrina had more of a chance to take her in her surroundings now that some of Nick’s urgency had diminished. The paintings along the wall were of stunning landscapes and of figures she could guess were Scratch descendants. The décor was elaborate, rich in color and expense. While she knew Nick appreciated the finer things in life – the t-shirt he had on under his jacket cost more than what her mortal friends might pay for several shirts put together – the surroundings didn’t look like him.

“I’d sell this place if I could,” he said as they wound through the hall, as though reading Sabrina’s thoughts. “I don’t especially like it here. But it’s been in the Scratch family for generations and it holds much of our family history. I can’t just put it on the market. Especially now that I know there is at least one secret room hidden by magic.”

“I think it’s beautiful,” Sabrina offered.

“It’s gaudy,” Nick countered. He led them into the family room. It, too, was decadent, but also inviting. “There’s no TV or anything, but this is where we spent most of our time.” He dropped the books onto the coffee table. “I’m pretty sure there’s tea in the kitchen. Do you want a cup?”

“Please,” Sabrina nodded. She caught his hand as he turned, having picked up on his odd mood. “Are you okay?”

“This isn’t my favorite place to be,” he admitted. “I’ll be right back.”

Sabrina let him go, sensing he needed a moment alone. She took in her surroundings. This room felt more lived in, more like a family once called this monstrosity of a house home. There were photos along the fireplace mantle that called to her. She didn’t recognize anyone in the first several frame, but there was a photo of a baby that was clearly Nick. She ran a finger over it and smiled at his
expressive eyes, wild curls. There was another of his parents, and a third of the three of them, Nick a bit older. She would guess it was taken not long before his parents died. The rest of the photos were again of people she didn’t know.

She turned, intending to go to the couch, but a basket in the corner caught her eye. Her heart dropped. A teddy bear peaked out of it. She changed course and picked up the teddy bear. It was soft, careworn. She rubbed its ear, knew it belonged to a young Nick. The basket itself was full of toys, too. A set of wooden blocks, a toy truck, a once colorful abacas dulled by years of neglect. It represented childhood interrupted. She perched the teddy back on the basket, her heart a little heavier, and took a seat on the couch just as Nick returned.

“Assam tea,” he said. “I bought some from the market the last time I was here.”

“And that was Winter Solstice?” she asked.

“It was,” he confirmed. “I’ve come here the last few Winter Solstices.”

“Even though you don’t enjoy being here?”

“The Unholy Land provided what I was looking for at the time,” he said, not willing to detail the ways in which he came to the land of sin to get away from the pain of not having a family or place to call home during a time when even witches gathered with loved ones. “Taste that tea, let me know if it’s okay.”

“Don’t try to distract me, Scratch.” He busied himself with bobbing his teabag in his mug, both wishing she didn’t know him so well and grateful she did. “Nick?” She put her tea down and slid closer to him. “You can talk to me. You know that.”

Her hand rested on his thigh.

“We should read these journals,” he said, still trying to avoid the subject she wanted to address.

“There’s a lot to go through…”

Sabrina thought of Hilda’s reminder to be there for Nick, to support him. Her deepest gut instinct told her this was one of those times when he needed her to do that, even if he didn’t know it yet.

“These are important,” she said, reaching to tap the stack of books. She then cupped his check and gently turned him to face her. “But so are you.”

It felt like someone had wrapped him in a warm blanket. Sabrina was there, looking at him with so much patience, such a genuine desire to know what was bothering him. She knew he was trying to put on a brave face, could sense their surroundings were tough for him. This, he realized, was what love was. He was safe with Sabrina.

“My parents died here,” he told her in a low voice. “This is the last place we were all together.” He rubbed a hand down his face. “When we go upstairs later, you’ll see a closet on the left. That’s where my mom hid me with Amalia.”

She leaned back into the cushions and brought Nick with her. Her hand slipped into his.

“What’s your last happy memory here?” she asked. Nick thought for a few moments.

“We had lunch on the veranda,” he remembered. “I don’t remember what we ate, but when we were finished, Dad took me into the yard and tried to teach me warlock ball. I was a too young to understand the rules, but he still kicked the ball around with me, almost like the mortals play soccer.
Mom joined us and we just – played.”

“That’s a nice memory,” she offered.

“Yeah,” he agreed. “I don’t know the timeframe, but I think it was close to when they died.”

“They would be so proud of you,” Sabrina told him. “You’re smart, kind.” She rested her head on his shoulder. “You’re loyal, fearless…”

“I’m not fearless,” he interrupted. “I live in a constant state of fear of losing you.”

It was a vulnerable moment. He continued to learn it was okay to let her see him, all of him, and in this moment, in the house he lost his parents in, a place he didn’t like to be, he felt raw, exposed.

“You’re not going to lose me, Nick,” she promised him in a soft voice. “I’m here, and I’m with you.”

“It feels like there’s always someone trying to take you from me,” he admitted. “Sometimes that someone has been my own self.”

She kissed him, a soft kiss, meant to reassure him.

“Your parents would be so proud of you,” she said again. “Even when you’ve made mistakes, you’ve learned from them and came out better because of them.”

He kissed her this time, the new journals and writings momentarily forgotten.

“Once this is behind us, I can’t wait to wake up in the mornings and just see where the day takes us. No plans or worrying about what’s going to happen next. Just – taking each day as they come.”

“I hold onto that vision,” Sabrina told him. “It’s what gets me through all of this unknown – the promise that one day, it won’t be like this and we’ll have peace.”

It was insane, she thought, as Nick wrapped an arm around her and pulled her closer, that at almost seventeen, a small fraction of the way through her very long life, she had found the person she couldn’t imagine a life without. Her connection to Nick was something otherworldly, something she couldn’t define but could feel. She knew he felt it too.

With thoughts similar to hers, Nick leaned in to kiss her just as she moved to do the same. When their lips met, she knew.

Now was the moment.

“Nick,” she whispered between kisses, “make love to me.”

He pulled away enough to see her, his eyes soft, journals forgotten. He had felt it too but he still had to ask.

“Are you sure?”

“I’m so sure,” she promised. She ran a hand through his hair. “I’m ready.” She cupped his cheek and knew what he needed to hear. “I trust you.”

He kissed her again, this one deep and full of passion. She was content to lie back on the couch, let him lead the way, but he stood and brought her to her feet. He pulled her close, poured everything he had into kissing her. He cupped her cheek again and grazed his thumb back and forth over her flawless skin.
“I love you,” he said. “I want you. But if at any point you want to stop, say the word.” He brushed her hair back. “You’re everything to me, Sabrina. Everything.”

His lips were on hers before she could reply. He held her like she was precious, their tongues dancing together. Her arms wound around him, kept him close. He pulled away with a mischievous grin.

“Up you go, Spellman.” She squealed as her feet left the ground and Nick cradled her in his arms.

“What are you doing?” she asked with a big smile. He began walking. “Where are we going?”

“I’ve seen those mortal movies you love, how the guy sweeps the girl off her feet and carries her to the bedroom. We’re going upstairs, to the bedroom.”

“I can walk,” she said, with no intention of being put on her feet.

“You can,” Nick agreed. “But you don’t have to.” He started up the stairs as Sabrina’s lips found his neck. “I carried you up the stairs when you were sick. You were too out of it to remember, but I want you to remember everything about tonight.”

He had to remind himself to focus as her lips nibbled at his ear.

At the top of the stairs, he ignored the closet that always gave him pause and pushed through a door midway down the hallway. He placed Sabrina on her feet and kissed her once more.

“No one has slept in here since I was here last,” he said. “The housekeeper didn’t expect anyone. Let me…” He trailed off and lifted a hand. He snapped his fingers and in an instant, fresh sheets were on the bed.

“You’re so clever, Scratch,” Sabrina said with a fond shake of her head. She took in her surroundings. The bed was as grand as the rest of the furniture, four posters, a canopy, deep read bedding trimmed in gold, a gold pattern etched across the fabric. She didn’t pay attention to much else. She couldn’t. Nick had her in his arms again. “I love you,” she sighed as his lips traveled along her neck. “So much.”

He still wore his jacket. Her hands pushed it off his shoulders. It puddled on the floor. He did the same, her own leather jacket joining his. They both toed out of their shoes. Nick guided her backwards and when her legs met the bed, she sat down and pulled him to her.

“I adore you, Sabrina,” he said in a husky voice. “We’ll go slow.”

Sabrina nodded. She trusted him completely, could hardly believe she ever questioned him. She lay back on the bed and brought him with her. He settled over her. His bodyweight was soothing. Her legs parted of their own accord to make space for him. They had been here before though, fully clothed and brimming with passionate kisses. She wanted more.

Her hands found the hem of his shirt and slipped under it. He trembled at the feel of her hands sliding along his back, pulling his shirt up. He lifted up enough to let her pull it over his head. She ran her hands along his back, felt his muscles react to her touch. He slipped off of her to lay beside her and slid an arm under her to bring her close. His other hand began to explore. They had been here, too.

“Nick,” she sighed in contentment.

His fingers danced under her shirt. His fingertips on her skin made her shiver. Her entire body was in a heightened state as anticipation and perhaps a little bit of fear chorused through her.
“You okay?” he asked, aware of every little indicator that she may need him to stop.

“I’m okay,” she confirmed. His hand flattened over her stomach and moved upward.

Her shirt came off and he placed a kiss on her collarbone. He would worship every part of her tonight. They continued to explore each other with their lips and hands. Nick slipped her bra strap from her shoulder.

“Can I…?” He had gotten her down to her bra a couple of times now, but it had always stayed on. This was a new boundary.

“Please,” she nodded. Nick’s had slid under her back and unclasped the bra. He pulled it away from her skin and tossed it aside.

If sex felt as good as Nick’s lips and hands on her breasts, she was all in. She groaned in pleasure and he smiled as he made the decision to go lower. His lips stopped at the waistband of her jeans. He came back to her mouth. He could sense the change in her, the way she was growing in confidence as she got more comfortable in their setting. That was his plan, his only goal. To make her comfortable, show her how loved she was, make her first time special.

“You’re beautiful,” he whispered in his ear as he unbuttoned her jeans. “So beautiful.”

Her hand raked through his messy curls.

“I want you, Nick,” she said breathily.

“You’ll have me,” he promised as his hand slid into her jeans. They had been here, too. She loved his fingers on her, the way he made her feel everything all at once. “I want to make sure you’re ready for me first.”

In response, she lifted up her hips and pushed her jeans down. He helped her take them off and then just stared for a moment. Her alabaster skin was perfection against the deep red bedding, a pair of black panties the only thing keeping her from full exposure. She looked at him with so much love that his heart felt like it might explode out of his chest. He could only kiss her.

His hand found its way between her legs again. He rubbed her over her soaked panties. She clutched the sheets with one hand, Nick’s shoulder with the other. He smirked as he nibbled along her neck. He knew he was skilled in bed and he wanted to make sure she felt everything she could feel.

“Is it okay if I take these off?” He tugged at the band of her panties.

“Yes,” she nodded, “but only if you take these off.” She hooked her finger through the belt loop of his jeans and returned his tug.

“Help me out of them?” he countered. She smirked and easily unfastened the button. Her delicate fingers pulled down the zipper. He kissed her once, stood, and stepped out of the jeans so he was down to his boxer briefs. She had felt his bulge, but now there was little separating them and she found herself eager to feel him – all of him – in the most intimate way she could.

“Come back here, Scratch,” she ordered, reaching for him.

“Anything for you,” he said with a wicked grin.

He laid down next to her, intending to resume the removal of her panties, his own hormones eager to have her naked, but she had other ideas. She moved on top of him and lowered her lips to him. His
hands cupped her backside and his hips pumped into her of their own accord. She grinded her hips against him and he thought he might come undone right then. He had gone from some form of physical release at least a few times a week to nothing but his hand when he fell in love with Sabrina. The more primal part of him wanted to just take her, have his way with her. The part of him that loved her more than his own life would take things as slow as she needed them to go.

That part would always win out.

He had to work to hold onto his composure as her lips made their way down his chest. She took her time, exploring every curve of muscle, every dip of his abs. When she reached the ‘v’ of his torso that led lower, he had to make himself pull her away.

“My turn,” he said, pressing his bulge into her hip. “These come off now.”

He slid her panties down her legs and had to remember to breathe. She was perfect and naked and with him. His hand went to work, teasing her, his lips on hers. He slipped a finger inside of her and she tensed for a moment.

“How’s it going?” he questioned.

“It’s okay,” she breathed. “I was surprised.” She ran a hand down his cheek, along his neck, down his chest. “This is new.” He had touched her, but his fingers had always remained outside of her. The intrusion had taken her by surprise.

“I’ll stop…”

She squeezed her thighs together to keep him in place.

“I don’t want you to.”

“Are you…”

“I’m sure,” she finished.

She relaxed her thighs as she kissed him. He started moving his finger, letting her get used to the intrusion.

“I’m going to add another finger,” he whispered in her ear a few moments later, when she was fully relaxed once more. Her response was to kiss him again, pull him closer. His added finger didn’t catch her off guard this time. In fact, she realized, it felt good. “You’re beautiful, Spellman.”

Her kisses were sweet, but her hands left a trail of fire as they roamed his body. She had no idea how much he was working to hold himself back. There would be time for the kind of sex he was partial to – deep and rough and primal – but tonight was going to be slow and sweet and gentle.

He added his thumb to her clitoris as he moved his fingers in and out of her, crooking them forward to brush against a spot he hoped she would become very familiar with in his capable hands. Her breath shortened, her heart rate picked up. He took advantage to add a third finger, stretching her as much as he could before he entered her himself. He was proud of his endowment and there was no way around the fact that this time, her first time, would likely hurt.

“Nick!” she cried out, her back arching. He had brought her to orgasm before, but this was like nothing she had experienced. The pleasure rippling through her body took her to another place, made her crave more. She came with a tremble, then gasped for breath. “Sex can’t be better than that,” she declared, her thoughts scattered and messy as she came down from the high.
“You wait, Spellman.” He kissed her. “Tonight may not feel as good, but soon…” He nipped her ear. “Soon you’ll be calling my name like a prayer.”

“Sure of yourself, are you?” she teased, running a hand through his hair, looking at him with something akin to wonder. He was certain he was looking at her the same way.

“I know what I’m capable of.” He tweaked her nipple. “I think you’re capable of a lot, too.”

Their lips met. He found his way on top of her and both knew the moment was close. She pushed his boxer briefs down and he maneuvered the rest of the way out of them. They were both naked now. She reached for him, but he caught her hand.

“You touch me and I’ll be done,” he told her honestly. He kissed her again. “Want me to…?”

She knew what he meant.

“I’ll do it,” she said. “But thank you for being considerate.” She cast the contraceptive ward over them and met Nick’s eyes. It was time. “Be gentle?” she asked, a little worried about what came next.

“Promise.” He sealed that promise with another kiss. “If you want or need me to stop, say so, okay?” She nodded. “I love you, Sabrina.” He brushed his thumb along her cheek. “Thank you for trusting me.”

She blinked back tears, overcome with love for Nick.

“I wouldn’t want this to be with anyone else,” she assured him. She lifted her head to kiss him again. “Make love to me, Nick.”

It was like Roz had told her. Her body seemed to just know what to do. She instinctively bent her knees so he would have room and he positioned himself at her entrance. He took her hands in his and kissed her as he pushed into her.

“Ah!” she cried as stretched her in a way she had never been stretched before. He trusted his instincts and kept moving, slipping deeper and deeper into her. When he was sheathed, he stopped. “Nick!” Her breath was short and rapid. Her heart thundered in her ears. It hurt, more than she had expected it to. “Nick!”

“I can pull out,” he offered, taking in her expression. “Tell me what you need.”

“Stay.” She wrapped her arms around his shoulders. In spite of how much it hurt, she didn’t want to stop, not yet. She wanted to at least try. “Stay, Nick. Just – give me a minute.”

“Whatever you need,” he promised. He focused on kissing her for several minutes, long, slow deep kisses that served the purpose he hoped they would. Her body gradually relaxed under him and she started to test her hips, pumping them against him tentatively. “Ready?”

“I think so,” she nodded.

He pulled nearly all the way out and then pushed back into her, watched for her reaction. She seemed okay. He kept his pace slow at first, helping her adjust. She grew more comfortable, more okay with him inside of her with each thrust. He picked up his pace.

“You doing okay?” he breathed as he worked to keep himself from coming, to make this last as long as possible.
“Amazing.”

It was true. The first few minutes once he had started to move hadn’t felt great, but as her body relaxed and Nick created more friction, she was starting to understand why people raved about sex. She grew bolder, allowed her body to do what it wanted. She wrapped her legs around him, ensuring he would penetrate her deeper, in a place she thought she might like. It felt – good.

“You feel amazing,” he whispered in her ear. “You were made for me, Sabrina Spellman.”

“Show me,” she requested. “Show me how good this can be.”

It was the permission he needed to let his more primal instincts take over. He pumped into her, lost in how it felt to be so deep inside her, her walls tight around him. But it was the connection, the knowledge that they couldn’t get closer that meant the most.

“I love you,” he grunted as she started to pulse around him. “I love you.”

“I… Love… You…” she panted. She squeezed his hands and didn’t let go. “Nick!”

They came together. Nick swore as he emptied himself. She cried out his name. He collapsed on top of her and they stayed connected, neither eager to be separated. He rested his forehead on her collarbone.

Emotion overtook him. He loved her, so much, had hurt her, lost her. She had taught him what it was like to love, was teaching him what it was like to be loved in return. There was a time when he wasn’t sure she would ever speak to him again, let alone let him love her again, and tonight she had allowed him to be with her in a way no one else had. She had trusted him not only with her heart, but with her body. His only hope was that she would allow him to be the only one, forever. A few tears leaked from his eyes.

Unaware, Sabrina played with his hair, comforted by the weight of his body on her, the feel of him inside her. It had been everything she had wanted her first time to be – long and slow and gentle with someone she loved. She wanted to stay right here, forever. It felt safe, right, like the rest of the world couldn’t touch them. She had given him everything and she would do it again, over and over, forever, if he would have her. She hugged him tighter.

“Nick?” she asked softly several minutes later. He lifted his head and revealed his damp eyes. She gasped. “What’s wrong?”

He shook his head with a smile.


She returned his smile, felt a sort of warmth spread through her.

“I love you, too, Nick.” She lifted her head to kiss him. “That was perfect. It was everything I wanted it to be. More than.”

He kissed her back.

“Are you okay?” he asked. “I know it hurt at first…”

“I’m better than okay,” she assured him, her hand running through his curls again. “It did hurt, but then it felt – good.” She kissed him again. She couldn’t get enough of him. “Thank you, Nick. You were perfect.”
“Thank you,” he replied. “For trusting me. Loving me.” He kissed her one more time then pulled out of her and settled in beside her. She groaned and rolled to rest her head on his chest.

“I miss you,” she said.

“Miss me?” His hand was in her hair now. “I’m right here.”

“You feel so far away.” She snuggled close. He kissed the top of her head. He couldn’t get enough of her. “Now that I know what it’s like to be so close to you.”

She vaguely wondered when she had become this girl, this version of herself that was so madly in love with the warlock holding her so close she could feel his heart beating in his chest. She liked this version of herself, however. She liked knowing that she was powerful, capable, independent, yet loved and able to love, able to be vulnerable, give herself to someone so wholly. Loving Nick didn’t make her weak. It made her stronger.

“We’ll be doing that again,” he promised. “And again… and again… and again…”

She laughed and enjoyed how his chest rumbled when he did the same.

“I know this isn’t what we came here for,” she hedged. “But I’m glad this is how it turned out.”

“Me too,” Nick admitted. His hand moved up and down her back. “This still isn’t my favorite place to be, but I think I might like it a little more now that I have better memories.”

“Was this your bedroom?” she wondered.

“No. My bedroom is down the hall. It’s still set up for a four year old Nick, not a nearly adult Nick. I took to sleeping in here when I visited. It’s a guest room, but I outgrew my toddler bed a long time ago and I didn’t feel right sleeping in my parents’ room.”

“I like this room,” Sabrina decided. “The bed is comfortable.”

“I like the company in the bed.” He gave her a squeeze.

“We should probably go downstairs and start reading those journals,” she said. She didn’t want to get out of the bed, but she knew Nick would be anxious to read them.

“In the morning,” he decided. “Let’s stay right here for now.”

“I like that idea,” she agreed, snuggling still closer. “We can save the world tomorrow.”

“If it happens to end tonight, at least I’m with you.” He kissed the top of her head again, felt her lips graze his chest in return. “I’ll never leave you again, Spellman. I promise.”

Chapter End Notes

WHEW.

That’s all I’ve got after that.

WHEW.
What'd you think?!
Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Notes

WOW. I cannot believe the comments from last chapter. I'm so glad you all appreciated their first time as much as I enjoyed writing it. Thank you so much for all of your kind words!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sabrina slipped into the mortuary as quietly as she could. Nick had left her at the gate with a long searing kiss and she already felt his absence, even if she could still feel him in the slight twinge between her legs when she walked. She smiled to herself, remembering how it got there, the feeling of Nick surrounding her, the way they had woken up a few hours later, cocooned in the four poster bed, wrapped in one another’s arms, Nick slipping into her one more time before they dragged themselves out of bed, collected the journals, and returned to Greendale.

She vaguely thought of how she wanted to tell Roz it had finally happened and that it was even better the second time around as she attempted to sneak up the stairs unnoticed.

“Nice of you to return.”

“How mad were the aunties?” Sabrina countered, leaning over the railing to peer at Ambrose who stood in the entryway below, looking up at her with an amused smirk.

“If you don’t plan to tell them the truth about why you and Nicholas somehow went from a basketball game to a compound halfway across the world, I suggest you work on your lie and then attempt to sell it,” he said. “Zelda was especially unimpressed.”

“It was important,” Sabrina said, opting not to tell Ambrose about the journals yet. “Trust me.”

Ambrose peered at her. His smirk grew.

“You finally did the dirty deed.” Sabrina’s eyes widened. “Don’t deny it, cousin. It’s plainly written all over your features. And it’s always a bit more obvious when a witch is no longer, as the Catholics may say, pure. I suppose teleporting off to the Unholy Land is one way to ensure no one interrupts your romp.”

“That’s not why we…”

“Maybe it’s not why you went initially, but you returned with the knowledge of the pleasures of the flesh.”

“Shut up,” Sabrina huffed, making Ambrose laugh.

“I don’t like Nicholas, but I can’t deny that you picked a hell of a specimen for your first frolic between the sheets,” he said. “I’ll revel in my cousin’s accomplishment for now, but do be warned, I may plot his death once the fact that my cousin was deflowered by him catches up with me.”

He was joking, but she wasn’t amused.
“You’re going to have to get used to Nicholas being around,” she informed him. “He’s not going anywhere.”

“I still don’t trust him.”

“Why?” she pressed. “He’s done nothing since the Dark Lord was stopped to warrant not being trusted.”

“He was swayed once. He could be swayed again.”

“He’s learned from his mistakes.” Of that, Sabrina was confident. “Nick didn’t grow up like us, Ambrose. He didn’t have people to love him, guide him. He’s learning what it means to love and be loved and it’s not always easy for him.”

“Be that as it may, he could have made different choices.”

“I think we all have moments in our pasts, especially our recent pasts, in which we could have made different choices.” She gave him a pointed look. He couldn’t argue. “Besides, I have something to run by you. Come upstairs with me.”

“What are you up to now?” he asked wearily.

She didn’t answer until they were in her room with the door closed.

“I want you to come with me to my grandmother’s house.”

Ambrose looked at her like she had lost her mind.

“Your grandmother’s house?” he repeated. “As in your mother’s mother?”

“That would be her,” Sabrina nodded. “Rose Angelo. I want to meet her.”

“You’ve had some terrible ideas, but this one? This one may well be the worst one yet.” Ambrose looked at her sharply. “Does Nicholas know about this?”

“He knows that I’ve been looking into my mom’s side of the family and that they weren’t exactly the most supportive of my parents’ marriage. He also knows that I have intentions of visiting them.”

“Let me guess,” Ambrose said, crossing his arms. “He also thinks this is a terrible idea, so you’re going forth without him.”

“He actually didn’t say not to go,” she said. “He said I shouldn’t go alone.”

“Yet you’re asking me?” Ambrose pressed.

“Nick is busy,” she said. “And while I don’t doubt that he would drop everything and come with me, it’s important that he get back to his research.”

“What are you hoping to glean by going to visit a woman who has been full of nothing but hatred for our kind?” Ambrose asked.

“I’m not sure,” Sabrina admitted. “But she’s my family and who knows? Maybe time and age have softened her.”

“Doubtful,” Ambrose said. “When do you suggest we go on this little adventure?”
“Now?” Sabrina asked hopefully. Ambrose sighed.

“You’re really willing to push the limits with the aunties, aren’t you?”

“This feels important,” Sabrina said. “Please, Ambrose.”

“You’ll go alone if I don’t go with you,” he recognized. “Fine. Let’s go.” She grinned. “But wipe that satisfactory smirk off your face, first.” Her smile shifted to a glare. He laughed.

“Salem, if we’re not back in two hours, tell Nick where we went,” Sabrina ordered. Salem meowed. “Someone has to be the backup,” she argued when Salem protested that he never got to go on her adventures. “Okay, Ambrose. Let’s go.”

She took his hands and closed her eyes.

“Hang on.” Sabrina opened her eyes. Ambrose looked skeptical. “Do you know how to teleport? And I don’t mean from here to the Academy.”

“I have teleported to and from the Unholy Land in the last twelve hours,” she informed him.

“With Nicholas,” Ambrose pointed out. “I survived Blackwood. I’m not trying to die at the hands of a teenage witch who is only haphazard at teleportation.”

“You’re making me regret asking you to come along.”

“I regretted agreeing the moment I agreed and yet here we are,” Ambrose shrugged. “Where are we going, cousin? I’ll get us there.”


“As in Massachusetts?”

“Yes.”

“Oh this is grand.” He shook his head. “We’re going to meet your granny in the very town famous for burning our kind at the stake. Fantastic.” He took her hands again. “Into the belly of the beast we go.”

They disappeared and remerged at the edge of a forest. Sabrina had to begrudgingly give Ambrose credit. She would have teleported them right to the heart of a busy town square. Sabrina did a quick spell to point them in the right direction. A ten-minute walk led them to a perfectly manicured home on the edge of town. They stood on the sidewalk and stared up at it.

It was big and brick, the lawn green and trimmed, the landscaping meant to convey an aesthetic of style and prominence. Everything about the home suggested wealth and idealism, right down to the white picket fence that surrounded it. But it didn’t feel welcoming, Sabrina thought. It felt cold, as though it were hiding something.

“To think you could have grown up here,” Ambrose mused.

“Shut up,” Sabrina muttered, picking up on his sarcasm. “Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

“Of course we’re going to walk right up to the front door,” he commented, following Sabrina up the walk. “Why wouldn’t we? Seems like the perfectly logical thing to do…”

“I should bind you to this perfectly coifed lawn,” Sabrina stated.
“But then who would swoop in to save you when this inevitably goes wrong?” Ambrose countered. Sabrina glared as she climbed the porch stairs. She took a deep breath and pushed the doorbell. “And now we ring the doorbell like we’re casual visitors…”

Sabrina stomped his foot. He yelped, just as the door opened.

Rose Angelo was petite but formidable. In a pencil skirt and tucked in black blouse, she reminded Sabrina of a stuffy college professor. Her graying hair was pulled back into a tight bun. She peered over her glasses at Sabrina.

“Sabrina.”

There was no doubt as to whom the girl standing on her doorstep was.

“Mrs. Angelo,” Sabrina nodded politely.

“You look just like your mother.”

“So they tell me,” Sabrina replied with a smile. Rose’s eyes wandered to Ambrose.

“And this is?” she asked.

“This is my cousin, Ambrose.”

Rose’s features shifted.

“He’s one of them.”

“Them being a witch?” Ambrose asked. “Yes. Or, in my case, a warlock, but its really splitting hairs, isn’t it?”

Sabrina elbowed him.

“You’re going to Hell,” Rose informed Ambrose. “Straight to it!”

“I certainly hope so,” Ambrose shrugged as though they were casually discussing the weather. “All this time spent living this way… And now that Lilith is in charge of things… Well, it would be disappointing to bite the big one and not end up in toasty eternity.”

“Ambrose,” Sabrina warned. “I’m sorry about him. He doesn’t think he before he speaks.” She ignored Ambrose’s glare. She realized then that she hadn’t really thought this through. She didn’t know exactly what she wanted from her grandmother, but she had wanted to meet her, know her, and after unearthing more of her father’s work, she impulsively decided to do just that. “May we come in?” she asked. “For a few minutes?”

Rose eyed her suspiciously.

“Are you a witch?” she asked.

“I am,” Sabrina confirmed.

“You’re not setting foot in my home,” Rose stated. “I will not allow such evil to cross my threshold.” She made to shut the door.

Rose narrowed her eyes again.

“Baptized?”

“Yes,” Sabrina confirmed. “I’m a witch, but I can enter churches, too. My mother baptized me when I was just days old.”

“Diana did, did she?” Rose asked suspiciously. “I suppose she was having second thoughts about her choices.”

“She loved my father,” Sabrina said. “I’m sure they had their reasons for baptizing me as well as signing my name in the Book of the Beast.” Rose cringed. Sabrina pressed on. “I just want to know more about my mom. Will you tell me about her? Please?”

“Your mother was a good girl until she got involved with your father,” Rose said. “I don’t know what that man did, but he surely used his dark magic to enchant her.”

“He wouldn’t do that,” Sabrina shook her head.

“Wouldn’t he?” Rose countered. “He was a warlock. A powerful one, from what I understand. A high priest, they called him, but there was nothing holy about him.”

“My father was a good man,” Sabrina argued. “He was trying to make the world better for us – mortals and witches both. My mom was helping him…”

“Your mother was a victim,” Rose cut her off. “She died because of him.” She fixed Sabrina with her beady eyes. “You were born cursed because of him.”

“Cursed?” Ambrose asked, speaking up. “For being a witch?”

“She has the mark of the beast,” Rose nodded at Sabrina. “That is a curse.”

“Mark of the beast?” Sabrina countered. “I don’t even have a witch’s mark…”

“You do,” Ambrose said. “I don’t know where, but now that you’ve signed the Book of the Beast, your mark will be there.” He smirked. “Have Nicholas find it.” Sabrina glared at him again.

“Who is Nicholas?” Rose asked. “Another one of your kind?”

“He’s my boyfriend,” Sabrina said. “And a warlock.”

“A powerful one, as much as I hate to say it,” Ambrose added, because he knew it would infuriate the woman further and he didn’t especially like her. “He’s especially gifted in conjuring and binding, knows an awful lot about demons.” He smirked. “Just liked Edward, really. I guess the Angelo women have a type.”

“Ambrose,” Sabrina hissed. Still, he made a fair point. There were certainly similarities between Nick and her father. She would stew on that later. “Ignore him, please,” she said to her grandmother. “I’m not here to cause trouble. I just wanted to ask some questions about my mom…”

“Your mother is no daughter of mine,” Rose declared. “She had to make a choice: her family or him. She chose him. She will burn in Hell for all of eternity for her choices.”

“She’s not in Hell,” Sabrina revealed. “She’s in purgatory…”

“Even better,” Rose nodded. “Stuck in the in between. Neither Heaven nor Hell will welcome such a
traitor.”

Ambrose sensed Sabrina faltering next to him. Experience told him she would either crash hard or cause chaos in response. It was time to intervene.

“Coming here was a mistake,” he said. “Sabrina only wanted to know her mother’s family, but I can see she’s better off without you.” He took Sabrina by the elbow. “Come, cousin. Let’s go home.”

“I tried to save you,” Rose said to Sabrina, paying Ambrose no mind. “I went as far as showing up to that wretched house in Greendale to take you by force from those witches. They used their evil to chase me away and I remain sure they used their powers to sway the judge to let you live with them.”

“My aunts have treated me like their own daughter,” Sabrina said, feeling protective over her family. “They allowed and even encouraged a mortal life until I was sixteen. I still have a mortal part of me…”

“But you are a witch,” Rose said. “And for that, I condemn you.”

It was this that set her over the edge.

“My mother wrote about you in her journal,” she informed Rose. “You and the rest of her family. She said you didn’t approve, that she didn’t want you in my life – in her life – if you didn’t approve of my father, of me. Ambrose is right. Coming here was a mistake. This is not what she wanted.”

She turned to leave.

“Your mother was no daughter of mine,” Rose said again. “And you are no granddaughter of mine.”

Sabrina looked over her shoulder.

“And you are no grandmother of mine.”

“Let’s go home,” Ambrose said again. He took Sabrina by the elbow and within a moment, they were in her bedroom. He held Sabrina by both elbows. “Are you okay?” Sabrina could only nod, trying to appear strong even as her lip trembled. “You’re a Spellman,” he told her sternly. “Not an Angelo. And now you know why.”

“It just… Feels like a loss,” Sabrina confessed. “I don’t know what I expected… I thought she would tell me about my mom, maybe want to know her granddaughter… I thought, with so many years passed…”

“I’m sorry,” Ambrose said, pulling her in for a rare hug between the two. “You have us, though.” He dropped a friendly kiss to the top of her head. “We love you, Sabrina.”

“I love you too, Ambrose.” She hugged him, then pulled away. “I’m going to take a few minutes, try to digest this,” she decided. “Maybe don’t tell the aunts? At least not yet?”

“We need to tell them,” Ambrose said. “They should know. But I’ll give you some time to process it all.”

Sabrina waited until she was sure he was gone to collapse to her bed and let her tears fall. Ambrose, however, was outside her door with an ear pressed to it. He listened to her sob for a few moments before he sighed and teleported away. He let himself into the Academy and went for the library.
“Scratch.”

Nick looked up from a stack of books in surprise.

“Ambrose.”

“It’s Sabrina…”

“Where is she?” Nick asked, already on his feet at the mention of his girlfriend. “Is she okay?”

“Physically, she’s fine,” Ambrose assured him. “But emotionally, she’s a bit shook up.”

“What happened?” Nick demanded. “She was fine when I left her…”

“We went to see her grandmother.” Nick stared. “It didn’t go well.”

“Son of a bitch,” Nick cursed. He made to teleport. Nothing happen. “Dammit. I forgot they enchanted the place so you can’t teleport directly in or out of it.” He grabbed his coat and headed for the door, Ambrose on his heels. “You went with her?” he pressed. “She didn’t go alone, did she?”

“I went with her,” Ambrose confirmed. “Rose Angelo deserves nothing but the worst.”

“Thanks for coming to get me,” Nick said as they hurried through the entry hall.

“I have to begrudgingly admit that she loves you,” Ambrose said. “And that you seem to love her. I wouldn’t call this a peace treaty by any means, but I recognize who my cousin needs right now, and it’s not me.”

They stopped at the bottom of the Academy stairs.

“Thank you, Ambrose,” Nick said sincerely. “For coming to get me and for going with her.”

“Like I said, I can put my own feelings aside for my cousin in this case – for now.”

The warlocks teleported to the mortuary. Nick left Ambrose in the yard and hurried into the house and upstairs. He stopped outside of Sabrina’s door and knocked.

“Sabrina?” he called. “It’s me.” He took her silence as an invitation to come in. He pushed open her door and found her on her bed resting against her headboard, her knees pulled to her chest, tears rolling down her cheeks. He went to her. “I’ve got you,” he said, pulling her into his arms. “I’ve got you.”

He held her for a while, let her cry into his chest. He kissed the top of her head, whispered soothing words.

“How did you find out?” she asked eventually.

“Ambrose,” he told her. “He found me at the Academy.”

“I must be in pretty bad shape if he’s coming to you,” Sabrina commented.

“He loves you,” Nick said. “He was worried.” Sabrina curled into him, relishing in the way he held her, how safe she felt in his arms. “I’m glad he came to me.”

“Are you upset I went without you?” she asked.
“No,” he shook his head. “I’m relieved you didn’t go alone.” He kissed her hair. “Want to talk about it?”

“She was awful,” Sabrina told him. “She called me evil, said my mother was no daughter of hers. She wanted nothing to do with me.”

“Then that’s her loss,” Nick replied. “She’s the one missing out on knowing one of the most incredible people that has ever graced this earth.”

“Nick…”

“Don’t disagree,” he said. “I’ve told you before – you are the best of both worlds, mortal and witch. You are a light in a world that has spent a long time in darkness. I thank Lilith often that I’m lucky enough to know you, love you, be loved by you. The fact that your grandmother doesn’t want to know you is all I need to know the woman is vile.”

Fresh tears sprang to her eyes at Nick’s words.

“Everyone talks about my dad and how great he was,” she said. “But no one ever really talks about my mom. She gave up everything, Nick. She gave up her family, her religion… All so she could love my father, have me. It’s just so unfair that mortals like my grandmother get to live so long while people like my mother don’t get to live at all.”

“People say you’re like Edward,” Nick recognized. “I see him in you – or at least what I know of him from reading his work. But I think you’re more like your mom. You certainly look like her, but more than that, you’re brave like her. She gave up everything for the people she loved. You will do anything for those of us lucky enough to be loved by you.”

Sabrina smiled just a bit.

“Hilda said something similar,” she said. “I think I like that – the idea of being like my mom.”

“You come from a line of rebels, Spellman.” He gave her a squeeze. “I’ve told you that’s how I like my witches.”

“I think my mom was the first rebel in her family,” Sabrina mused. “But I suppose her legacy will live on in me.” She rested her head on his shoulder and looked up at him. “You love me really well.”

He frowned in confusion.

“What do you mean?”

“You love me well,” she repeated. “You know what I need, what to say. I love you, Nick.”

He kissed her sweetly.

“I love you, Sabrina. I don’t know that I always love you well, despite what you claim, but I do love you. You can trust in that.” Sabrina kissed him again, intent on hiding in her room with him for as long as she could get away with it.

“Did you learn anything from the journals we found?”

“I haven’t gotten very far,” Nick admitted. “But what I have read… My dad was skeptical of yours at first, but Edward got him to come around pretty quickly. It looks like they met at least a few times before your family met with mine in Scotland.”
“What did your dad do?” Sabrina asked curiously. “What was his role in the Church of Night?”

“My family wasn’t a part of the Church of Night coven,” he told her. “He was the high priest of our coven, the Church of the Diablerie. I became a member of the Church of Night coven when Blackwood found me.”

“My dad was trying to recruit other covens,” Sabrina realized.

“He was,” Nick confirmed. “There is strength in numbers. Edward had distanced himself from Blackwood before his death. I think of it the way doctor’s approach cancer. They try to cut out the disease. Edward tried to cut out the cancer, but the cancer – Blackwood – overwhelmed him.”

“I feel like we’re close,” Sabrina said. “Those journals have to be important. They wouldn’t have been protected like they were if they were just normal texts. Our parents wouldn’t be consorting in Hell, trying to get us messages, if they weren’t important.”

“My theory is that my father tried to continue your father’s work after his death.” He picked at Sabrina’s quilt. “It’s weird, reading his words. I knew he was important within our coven, but I was so young when he died and I never really thought about the power he held.”

“We’re the children of high priests,” Sabrina wondered. “You, anyway. I guess I’m illegitimate, given Lucifer is my father.”

“No,” Nick shook his head. “You are the daughter of Edward Spellman.” He crooked a thumb under her chin and tilted it upward so she had to look at him. “As far as I’m concerned, you were born of a miracle. And I’m damned glad of it.”

Fresh tears stung Sabrina’s eyes. She placed her lips on Nick’s, kissed his long and sweet. His love for her was palpable and she was more certain than ever that she wouldn’t know a day without him.

“I love you,” she told him again when they pulled apart. “I love you, Nick.”

“I love you, Sabrina Spellman.” He was intentional in using her last name. “Want me to go curse your grandmother? Nothing serious, because I know you wouldn’t like that, in spite of how she treated you, but maybe she comes out of her house in the morning to a lawn covered in frog spawn?”

“She’s not worth the trouble,” Sabrina decided, her head back on his shoulder. “What’s a Diablerie?”

“It’s an 18th century French borrowing that traces back to the Latin ‘diabolus’ which means ‘devil.’ But diabolus is a bit less sinister. It has its roots in the Greek word ‘diabolos’ which means ‘slander.’”

“You really do know everything,” Sabrina teased. Nick, however, had just realized something.

“Diablerie is sometimes used when there’s no devilry or magic involved,” he said. “It refers to mischievous conduct – like child’s play.”

“And?” Sabrina asked. “Mortals use ‘devil’ as slang all the time.”

“But our coven was based in the Unholy Land,” Nick said. “Not exactly the place where witches and warlocks refer to the devil as a playful entity.” He leaned back, Sabrina still in his arms, thinking. “My dad was the High Priest for years. Until last night, I didn’t know he had writings. I would have read them already.”

“You get to read them now,” Sabrina reminded him. She looked up at him. “Can I ask you
something?"

"Anything."

"Why haven’t you taken the time to learn more about your family? You know so much about mine…"

Nick took his time forming an answer. It was a complicated question with an intricate answer. He had asked himself this very thing often lately.

"I never knew them," he finally said. "Not really. I have a few vague memories, but in my mind, they were just – my parents. There was nothing special about them. My mother was my mother and my father was my father. He wasn’t a High Priest or anything like that. I never considered, not until recently, that he was a prominent figure. They were my parents and they died. Does that make sense?"

"It does," Sabrina nodded. "They were just – normal – to you."

"I didn’t have aunts or other family members to tell me about them," he reminded her. "Your aunts kept the memory of your parents alive for you. I didn’t have that."

Sabrina didn’t say anything. Nick didn’t need her to. She snuggled into him, felt his embrace tighten around her. It was harder for him, to talk about what he was feeling, to revisit his past. Physical touch comforted him more than her words could. They stayed like that for a long time before Sabrina broke the comfortable silence.

"Ambrose said I have a witch’s mark now that I’ve had my dark baptism."

"You do," Nick agreed.

"No, I don’t," she shook her head. "Harvey checked before my baptism." Nick made a face. Sabrina rolled her eyes. "And then I erased his memory because I told him I was a witch and he freaked out." Nick had the good sense to look guilty at his jealous thoughts. At least Harvey didn’t remember seeing his girlfriend next to naked. "Regardless of whether Harvey remembers, I don’t have a witch’s mark."

"But you do," Nick insisted. "It’s right here." He put his hand low on her back, just left of center. "It’s shaped, perhaps ironically, a bit like a heart."

Sabrina stood and went to the mirror. She took off her shirt, entirely comfortable with Nick seeing her skin, and turned her body. She looked over her shoulder, trying to see the mark Nick insisted was there.

"I don’t see it," she declared.

"It’s lower." Nick stood and came to her. "It’s here." He put a soft hand on her back and, feeling bold now that he had been with her in every way, popped the button of her jeans with his other hand. He pushed down the waistband to reveal more of her milky skin. "See?"

His fingers brushed over a dark spot about the size of a quarter she hadn’t noticed before. She didn’t know when it had appeared, but she supposed she didn’t spend much time looking at her backside in the mirror. Like he said, it resembled the shape of a heart.

"I had no idea," she said. "Is it normal? For a witch’s mark to appear after a Dark Baptism?"
“Well, no,” Nick admitted. His fingers made soft circles over the mark as he took in their reflection in the mirror. She was beautiful, and he was entirely hers. “But you are half mortal. I imagine that once you signed the Book of the Beast and became a full witch, the Dark Lord placed his mark on you.”

“But my dad signed my name in the Book of the Beast when I was an infant…”

“I wonder…” Nick trailed off, lost in thought. Sabrina raised an eyebrow, catching his eye in the mirror.

“Scratch?”

“I wonder if all of our parents signed our names in the Book of the Beast for us. We thought we had the free will to choose for ourselves…”

“Wait,” Sabrina interrupted. “Free will. When I was having doubts about signing the Book of the Beast, my aunts brought Blackwood here to counsel me. He told me that I had free will to make my own choices. I didn’t, though. My name had been signed for me. And he knew it.” She turned to Nick. “Is there a way to determine if your name – the others’ names – were signed in the Book of the Beast as infants? Before we made the choice ourselves?”

“We can’t exactly go pull the book off the shelf at the library,” Nick said. “Maybe there’s something in our fathers’ writings that will give us some insight.” He didn’t really think about what he was doing as his hands found themselves at home on her body, roaming freely. “If they baptized us, it’s not out of the realm of possibility that they also ensured our dark baptism.”

“Mortals do that,” Sabrina said. “Baptize their children as babies, but then hope the child grows up to find religion on their own and opt to be baptized themselves. Maybe our parents had a similar line of thought.”

“Maybe,” Nick agreed, because it wasn’t a bad theory. His hands settled on her waist. “How are you doing, Spellman? Feeling better?”

“You being here helped,” Sabrina nodded. “Thank you for coming, Nick.”

“You needed me,” he countered. “There’s nowhere else I’d choose to be.”

Sabrina could only lean in to kiss him.

“I guess we should face my aunts,” she said. “Tell them about the Unholy Land and that I went to see my grandmother.”

“This will be fun,” Nick sighed. Zelda’s patience with them was growing thin. He wasn’t especially looking forward to confessing their latest adventures. He smirked a bit. “You might want to put your shirt back on before we go downstairs.”

Sabrina swatted at him playfully, making him laugh.

“How did you know where my witch’s mark was?” she asked as she retrieved her shirt.

“I saw it last night,” Nick confessed. He studied her. “Speaking of. Are you – okay – from – all of that?”

His genuine concern warmed her from the inside.

“I’m fine, Nick,” she assured him. “Last night was perfect.” She took his hands in hers, once more
fully dressed. “You were perfect.”

They shared a sweet kiss, Nick’s hands cradling her face like she was something precious, her fingers through his belt loops, keeping him close.

“You aunts,” he said when he pulled away a bit breathless. “Let’s get this out of the way, so we can get back to the new journals.”

“Lead the way, Scratch,” Sabrina said. “You break the Unholy Land news to them. I’ll follow it up with my visit to Salem.”

“Salem?” Nick asked.

“Massachusetts,” Sabrina replied. “That’s where my grandmother lives.”

“Of course,” Nick said as they descended the stairs. “Where else would your mortal grandmother who despises witches live?”

“Ambrose said the same thing,” Sabrina said with a bit of a huff.

“Something we agree on, then,” Nick commented. “How about we confess, have dinner, then go back to the Academy, do some reading?”

“I like that plan,” Sabrina agreed. They paused outside the door of Zelda’s study. “If she kills us, come back and haunt them with me?”

“She won’t kill us,” Nick said with a grin. “But I’ll go anywhere you go, Spellman.”

Chapter End Notes

Sabrina’s grandmother is a piece of work. She’s not a big character here, but she did need to make an appearance. Those grandmothers though... Also, I really love Ambrose.

What did you think?! Let me know!

Journals back into the mix next update!
Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Notes

Sabrina's grandmother went over as well as I thought she would - ha! She won't be a major character, but I did think she needed to appear. Now - some journals.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

A bomb could have gone off next to Nick, but he wouldn't have noticed. He was entirely engrossed in his father's words. He was fascinated, intrigued, curious. He had spent so much time, even before Sabrina, studying Edward Spellman's work that it had never occurred to him that his own father may have had his own ideas about the future of their kind.

We had a lovely dinner with the Spellmans. Once Elizabeth and I put Nicholas to bed, Edward and I retired to my study while Elizabeth entertained the women. Her reports were as I suspected – Edward's wife and she talked at length about Nicholas and Diana's impending child, a girl. I'm told. Edward, too, spoke about his daughter, albeit briefly. They appear excited at the prospect of becoming parents. Elizabeth quite liked Diana. She found the elder of Edward's sisters, Zelda, a bit more abrasive than his other sister, Hilda. I noted that at dinner myself, but I know Zelda to be a powerful witch and skilled midwife.

Edward's suspicions of Faustus Blackwood are valid. I have never been fond of Blackwood. My dealings with him, however limited they have been to date, have always left me feeling ill at ease. Edward is concerned that Blackwood is staging a coup. Blackwood, it seems, has been vocal in his disagreement with Edward's philosophies. Blackwood mentored Edward, and I suppose I can understand why he may feel slighted now that Edward has surpassed him in both rank and power. There is no mistaking that Edward is the more powerful warlock on all fronts.

Edward believes Faustus has more sinister motives than simply overthrowing him. He shared his belief that Faustus is planning to overthrow the entire Church of Night in an effort to push his agenda, which Edward describes as misogynistic and cruel. I agree with Edward that this cannot happen.

Other points of discussion revolved around Edward's work. We have discussed the manifesto he has drafted before, but he left me with a copy to read. I am admittedly intrigued. My own church doesn't practice the more barbaric rituals of our kind. My father ended such practices as the Feast of Feasts when he was High Priest. I strive for our church to be more open to change, as change is not only inevitable, but will be necessary to ensure our survival. Perhaps Edward's vision of living alongside mortals is worth a deeper look.

Page after page, Nick became more and more engrossed in his father's writings. He had intended to read them after dinner the night before, but Zelda had hauled him and Sabrina back into her office for a fresh round of questioning. The inquisition had ended with Sabrina and Zelda trading words over Sabrina's visit to her grandmother, leaving Sabrina upset all over again. Always his priority, he had brought her back to the Academy with him and comforting her had turned into making love to her, his new favorite pastime.

Now, with Sabrina at mortal school and Zelda finally exhausted with asking questions they didn’t have answers to, he was free to read their Unholy Land finds. It seemed after the Spellmans came for
dinner, his father’s relationship with Edward grew rapidly. His parents had apparently sent Diana and Edward a gift after Sabrina’s birth, invited them to join them at their compound in the Unholy Land for Summer Solstice. Nick couldn’t allow himself to consider what could have been for their families, for him and Sabrina, had Blackwood never intervened.

*Edward and Diana Spellman are dead.*

*Dear Satan.*

*Even writing those words doesn’t make it feel real.*

Edward was worried something like this would happen. His fears increased after their child was born. I initially chalked it up to being a new father. I certainly lost hours of sleep merely watching Nicholas sleep to ensure he was breathing in the days after he was born and I a new father.

Nick blinked away a stray tear. He was learning his parents truly loved and cherished him. It somehow both broke his heart and made it expand with warmth at the same time.

But as the days passed, I became more convinced Edward was right – Blackwood was growing increasingly bold in his attempts to stop Edward, even as Edward gathered more supporters every day. Blackwood has struck supporters of Edward’s as well. There have been reports of witches and warlocks gone missing or else turning up cursed, unable to remember so much as their names. Edward’s meeting at the Vatican was supposed to be the turning point for his manifesto. Our coming out of sorts. Now, it sits at the bottom of the ocean.

Edward knew something was amiss. Diana wanted to bring their daughter with them, but Edward convinced her to leave the child with her aunts. He told me the last time we spoke that he wanted Diana to remain behind as well, but her own upbringing as a Catholic was imperative to their meeting. She was a key piece to the puzzle: a Catholic mortal that married a warlock and pledged herself to the Path of Night. Had they survived, I imagine Edward would have found a way to give her eternal life at his side.

Their child resides with her aunts. I’m told he and Diana were clear in their wishes for the child. It breaks my heart, to think of the infant, so unique to our kind, growing up without her parents. I hugged my own Nicholas a bit too long tonight, as did Elizabeth. Her heart hurts this evening as she and Diana had become fast friends. I will go to her soon, comfort her.

I have no doubt that Blackwood was somehow behind their deaths. A plane crash, so many mortals dead as well, no signs of trouble from the air craft, not so much as a hint at weather conditions that may have brought the plane down. He advised me to ensure my family’s safety. Elizabeth won’t like it, but I think it is time for us to consider returning to our compound in the Unholy Land. It is safer than our home here in the Highlands and I have resources there I may need to make use of soon.

Blackwood may believe Edward’s manifesto to be at the bottom of an ocean now. But surely he doesn’t believe it is the only copy?

Nick was utterly lost. Line after line, word after word, he learned more about his father. Edward was there, too, but for once, Edward Spellman wasn’t his focus. Nicholas Scratch, Sr., was the warlock that had his full attention.

He was so engrossed in the green journals that he didn’t hear the footsteps approaching.

“Nick?”

He turned the page, eager to know what the next page held, oblivious to the soft voice calling his
He put his finger to the page to help him keep his place, his eyes trying to read further ahead than his brain could comprehend, in spite of the rapid pace in which he was pouring knowledge into it.

A hand landed on his shoulder.

He startled and spun in his chair.

“Sabrina!”

“You didn’t show for dinner,” she said, perching on his workstation. “I was worried.”

“It’s dinnertime?” Nick sat back in his chair and rubbed at his eyes, aware now of how dry they were once he had been forced to look away from the journals. “I didn’t realize.”

“It’s past dinnertime,” Sabrina corrected. “Have you been here all day?”

“I have,” Nick admitted. “Hilda brought me lunch. I think she felt bad about all the interrogating Zelda put us through last night, and she wanted to make sure you were okay when you left for school this morning. But other than that, I haven’t really left, save for bathroom breaks.”

“Have you found anything of interest?” she asked.

“All of it,” Nick admitted. “Even the mundane entries. I’m getting to know my dad. I didn’t think that was something I would ever be able to do.”

Sabrina understood. She reached out and ran a hand through his curls.

“Even if there’s nothing in those journals to help us, I’m glad you have them. I’m glad you get to learn a bit more about your family. You deserve that.”

“Our fathers worked together,” he told her. “Edward won my father over on his manifesto. I was right, too, in my father’s church being less diabolical. My grandfather banned the more barbaric rituals and my father had recognized the need for change if we were to ensure our survival.” He marked his page in the journal in his hand and reached for another. “You will find this especially interesting.”

Elizabeth and I baptized Nicholas today. She was understandably concerned. I put forth a brave face, but I, too, had concerns. Our son is a warlock, pure of blood and strong of power. Bringing him to a priest, a believer in the false god, felt risky. But Edward is right. At some point, our children will need to walk between the dark and the light. This ensures that Nicholas will be protected if and when the time arises.

I had to share with Elizabeth that Nicholas wasn’t the first of our kind to be baptized. She assumed I meant the Spellman girl, pointed out her half mortal nature, but I confided that Edward’s sister Hilda is baptized.

Sabrina gasped. Nick continued to read.

Hilda is unaware. Edward took her as a baby and had her baptized by a local priest. He was honest with me in saying he was curious about what would happen. It seems he has been studying her for years, says she shows a certain ability to love deeply, to care for others in a more maternal way than
their sister Zelda. He suggests that we sign Nicholas’ name in the Book of the Beast as well. We will do so tomorrow, dedicate our child to the Dark Lord. It is Edward’s belief that in doing so, the Dark Lord will bless our children with powers beyond those of most, a sort of ‘thank you’ for their loyalty and devotion.

I will do anything to keep my son safe. He is but a toddler, yet stunningly intelligent, a bit mischievous, already confident in doing small magics to further his agenda, typically things like sneaking a cookie from the counter or getting a toy from the top shelf. I know in my gut he will grow into a powerful warlock. Our family history dictates that he is to be my successor. The Scratch men have held the position of High Priest of the Church of the Diablerie for five generations. Nicholas is to be the sixth, but I don’t know that I wish this position upon him. If he wants to it, I will gladly hand it over when the time comes. If he doesn’t, we shall suffer the consequences.

As for consequences in the present, my mother has been very clear that she wants no part in our mission. She believes we are foolish, has informed us that she loves us but does not want to be associated in our ‘games.’ She is free to make her choices, but I cannot allow her to sway us on this. We are doing what is right, what will ensure our future.

A future for her. For us. For our son.

A future for the Spellman’s daughter, the one they wanted for her.

Wow,” Sabrina breathed. “Nick…”

“I know,” he nodded. “I don’t think we should tell your aunts that Hilda was essentially an experiment. At least not right now.”

“No,” Sabrina agreed. “And you were baptized because of something my dad said.”

“My father definitely bought into your father’s work,” Nick said. “He was trying to further Edward’s work after his death. Apparently he has – or had, as we didn’t find it – a copy of your father’s manifesto.”

“What does he mean by walking between the light and the dark?” Sabrina wondered.

“I think I’ll find out if I keep reading,” he said. “The glance I took at your father’s journals we found mentioned a similar phrase.”

“You intend to keep reading tonight,” Sabrina realized.

“There’s so much here, Sabrina,” he said. “We might have some answers when I finish these.” He ran a hand through his hair, feeling a bit weary, yet determined all the same. “We can finally fill in some of the missing pieces and figure out what in the Heaven is going on.”

“Come have some dinner,” Sabrina proposed, taking in how puffy his eyes were from reading and sure he was starving. “Hilda saved you a plate. You can get back to work after you’ve had something to eat.”

“I’m going to stay here, keep working,” Nick said. “If I keep reading at the pace I’ve been going at, I’ll be finished in a few hours.”

“Nick…”

“Sabrina, this is important,” he cut her off gently. “I’m not going to suffer if I miss a meal. I’ll finish these up and come to the mortuary for the night. Deal?”
Sabrina checked the time.

“It’s just past eight,” she told him. “If you aren’t at the mortuary by eleven, I’m coming back and I will be dragging you out of here. Resist if you want to, but I’m willing to use my Hell-given powers if I have to.”

“I’ll be there by eleven,” Nick promised with a small smile. “Thanks for coming to check up on me, Spellman.”

“Apparently I’m rather attached to you,” she said with a playful roll of her eyes. “I’ll see you in a bit?”

“You’ll see me in a bit,” he confirmed. He closed the journal he had just read from and held it out to her. “Take this with you. It’s the first of my father’s journals, at least the first of the ones we have. Read it if you’d like.”

“I’d very much like to read it.” She took the journal and slipped from the table. She gave Nick a quick kiss. “Eleven o’clock, Scratch. And not a moment later.”

She left him in the library. He went back to work with a small smile on his face and the promise of a warm bed and his girlfriend curled against him to go home to.

“Home,” he said out loud, realizing for the first time since he was a small child he had a home. And that home wasn’t a place. It was a person.

It was Sabrina Spellman.

He decided to read faster.

Sabrina had a biology test the next day, but she hadn’t so much as cracked her textbook. Instead, she sat cross-legged on her bed, reading Nick’s father’s journals. She thought she might start keeping her own journal. They had learned so much from their parents’ writings. It seemed only right to keep the tradition going, leave a paper trail for their future descendants.

There was a knock on the door.

“Nick?” she called, glancing at the alarm clock on her nightstand. It was just after ten. He was early. “It’s unlocked. Come in.”

“It’s actually me.” The door opened to reveal Roz. “Is it okay if I come in?”

“Of course,” Sabrina said in surprise. She put the journal aside and took in Roz’s appearance. She was disheveled, her eyes puffy and red, her entire demeanor sad. “Roz! What’s wrong? What happened?”

“Sabrina…” Roz shuttered. “I… I…”

“Come sit down,” Sabrina directed, afraid Roz’s shaky legs might give out. She went to her friend and led her to her bed. She used magic to shut the door. She locked it for good measure, sensing something major had happened. There was no other reason Roz would be there so late and in such a state. “Talk to me. What’s going on?”

“Sabrina…” Roz shuttered. “I think… I think I’m…” She paused to take a breath. The next words rushed out. “I think I’m pregnant.”
A long stretch of silence followed as Sabrina digested the information.

“Pregnant,” she repeated. “You think you’re pregnant?” She took a breath of her own. “Okay. You said ‘think.’ How sure are you?”

“Pretty sure,” Roz said. “I haven’t taken a test, but I’m late. I’ve felt sick for the last few days, I’m tired… I have so many symptoms.”

“How?” she asked. “I mean, I know you and Harvey…” She trailed off. It was more than she could wrap her head around right then, her best friend possibly pregnant with another best friend – her ex boyfriend – the father. Teen pregnancies happened. Roz wouldn’t even be the only pregnant student at Baxter High. All the same, this was not a part of Roz’s plan. And it was Roz. “I know you use protection…”

“We haven’t always,” Roz admitted. “There have been a few times when we didn’t have a condom or got too caught up in the moment. Harvey always pulled out, but that’s not always effective…”

“You need to take a test,” Sabrina decided. “Or go to a doctor…”

“I made a doctor’s appointment for tomorrow,” Roz revealed. “But at a clinic an hour away in Buchanan. I didn’t want to run into anyone I knew…” She looked at Sabrina with sad eyes. “I know it’s a lot to ask, but would you come with me? Please? I can’t tell anyone else, and I don’t want to go alone…”

“Of course, I’ll come,” Sabrina assured her, biology test be damned. “I wouldn’t dream of allowing you to go alone. I assume Harvey doesn’t know?”

“Not yet,” Roz confirmed. “I want to be sure before I tell him.”

“But you will tell him, right?” Sabrina asked, because she had to.

“Of course I will,” Roz nodded. “God, Sabrina, neither one of us is ready for this. We’re seventeen. We have plans… I can’t raise a child. My parents will freak out…”

“Let’s just focus on the doctor’s appointment tomorrow,” Sabrina suggested. “Find out for sure. Once you know, we can look at the next thing. And we’ll deal with that. Together.”

“Together,” Roz repeated. She reached for a hug. “Thank you, ‘Brina. I know this is weird, talking about me possibly being pregnant by your ex-boyfriend…”

“You’re my best friend,” she reminded Sabrina. “Harvey, too, is one of my best friends. I’m with Nick. We’re all where we are supposed to be, and with who we are supposed to be with. I’m here for you, Roz. Whatever you need.”

Roz hugged her tighter.

“You’re expecting Nick,” she said. “You thought I was him.”

“I doubt Nick will be here for another hour or so,” Sabrina told her. “He said he would be here by eleven, but punctuality isn’t Nick’s strong suit. I planned to give him a grace period before I went in search of him.”

“Does he sleep here?” Roz asked. “I know the rest of your coven just moved back to the Academy…”
“He’s been sleeping here more often than not,” Sabrina confessed. “I stayed at the Academy last night. With him.”

“Have you two…?” Sabrina raised an eyebrow. “I know,” Roz admitted. “Here I am, potentially a teen mother, asking you about your sex life. But I need to be distracted and I really want to know.”

“We have,” Sabrina confided. “The night before last.” She gave a brief recap of what happened with Lilith and how they ended up in the Unholy Land, leaving out a number of details such as the magic used to protect the place and Nick’s struggles with being in the home his parents died in.

“How was it?” Roz asked.

“It hurt at first,” Sabrina admitted. “More than I expected it to. But Nick was sweet. Gentle. He made me really comfortable and at some point it didn’t hurt anymore. It was incredible, being so connected to him. It was everything I wanted it to be.” She bit her lip, looked a bit coy. “It’s gotten better each time since.”

“You’ve already done it again?” Roz asked, almost scandalized.

“Twice,” Sabrina nodded. “Yesterday morning, before we left, and again last night.” She ran her hand over her quilt. “Nick was a lot more – active – before we started dating. I know he’s missed sex and he’s happy we’re having it now. But he never pressured me, never pushed me to do something I wasn’t ready for. Being with him like that… It’s the most incredible thing I’ve ever felt.”

“You’re being – safe?” Roz asked. “I don’t know how it works in the witch world, but given that I’m possibly pregnant…”

“We’re being safe,” Sabrina confirmed. “Witches use a ward. Now that we’re having sex, I might look into other means of preventing pregnancy.” She made a face. “That’ll be a fun conversation with my aunts.”

“I can’t believe I could be pregnant,” Roz said, her thoughts going back to the issue at hand. “I’ve always been so careful. My parents will kill me…” She dissolved then, her tears breeching their dam to run down her cheeks. “I’m going to ruin Harvey’s life…”

“Roz, no,” Sabrina shook her head. “It will be okay.” She wrapped her friend in her arms. “It’s going to be okay.” She hugged Roz tighter, her heart going out to her, even if she felt helpless in the moment. “I promise.”

Nick’s heart thundered in his ears.

He couldn’t have read that right.

There was no way.

He flipped back a few pages in Edward Spellman’s newly discovered journal and re-read the entry. It was all there, in black and faded white. Not all the answers. There were still pieces missing. But he knew enough now. Enough to piece together what they didn’t know.

Enough to know that they needed to prepare to act. Fast.

He gathered the journals and rushed from the library. He teleported as soon as he was outside and landed in Sabrina’s room moments later.
“Sabrina…”

“Nick!” She jumped off the bed to greet him. Roz was there, he realized, tears pouring down her face. For a moment, Nick forgot his urgency, surprised to find the mortal present. Sabrina took him by the arm before he could acknowledge her. “Follow me.”

In the hall, Nick remembered himself.

“Sabrina, the answers are here,” he said in a rushed breath, indicating the journals in hand. “We need…”

“Not now, Nick,” Sabrina interrupted him with a shake of her head. “Roz needs me.”

Nick frowned.

“This is important, Sabrina. Our baptisms, powers, the prophecy, all of it. It was in these journals. Most of it, anyway. We need…”

“Not now,” Sabrina said with more authority. “Whatever it is will have to wait until tomorrow.”

“It can’t,” Nick shook his head. “We have to…”

“Unless the world is ending within the next twelve hours, it has to wait,” Sabina pushed back. “Roz needs me, Nick. I have to be there for her.”

“What’s going on?” Nick asked, picking up that there was something at play that he wasn’t privy to. “What’s so important?”

“I can’t tell you…” Nick raised an eyebrow, reminding her of their honesty policy. “Nick, I can’t. Not right now. This is hers to tell. She’s going to stay here tonight. I’m sorry, but you’ll have to sleep at the Academy. Or if you want to crash in a guest room, they’re empty now that the Academy is back open.”

“We really need to talk, Sabrina,” he insisted. “These journals…”

“Nick, Roz needs me,” Sabrina repeated with a tone of finality. “I love you, but right now, my best friend needs me to be there for her. I need you to understand that.”

“I need you to listen to me…”

“And I will,” she cut him off. “Tomorrow. Go back to the Academy, Nick. Or to a guest room. Get some rest. We’ll talk tomorrow.” She kissed his cheek and was gone before he could respond.

He cursed in her wake.

Standing in the hall, he considered his options. He could only think of one thing to do that didn’t involve bursting into Sabrina’s room, Roz’s problems be damned, and telling her what he had learned. He sighed and walked down the hall. He had no other choice. He raised a fist and knocked. The door opened a moment later.

“Ambrose,” he greeted as Ambrose looked at him with a curious expression. He held up one of the journals still in his hands. “We need to talk.”

Chapter End Notes
I don't generally like the "teen pregnancy" storyline. But I often let the story unfold itself and it felt right that Roz find herself in this position. I feel like if anyone on the show went that route, it would be her, so it doesn't feel too left of center either. :)

But the bigger question: what on EARTH did Nick figure out?!

Guess away in the comments! Thank you so much for reading!
Nick walked into the Spellman kitchen, Ambrose at his heels, scanning the room for Sabrina. Hilda was there, at the stove, and Letty was in a highchair nearby, but there was no sign of Sabrina.

“Sabrina hasn’t come down yet?” Nick asked by way of greeting.

“Oh!” Hilda startled and spun around. “I didn’t hear you come in, love!” She raised an eyebrow at finding Nick and Ambrose together. She took their appearances. Both looked to have skipped sleep the night before. She was fairly certain Nick was in yesterday’s clothing. She was absolutely sure Ambrose was. “What’s going on?” she questioned. “Why are the two of you together, seemingly friendly and lacking sleep?”

“Friendly isn’t the term I’d use,” Ambrose mused. “Where is Sabrina? In her room?”

“She left a bit ago,” Hilda told them. “She and Roz had to be at school early.”


“What is she up to now?” Ambrose said at the same time in an exasperated tone.

“What’s going on?” Hilda asked again, this time with less patience. “What has Sabrina done now?”

Nick paid her no attention. He was too busy performing a spell. He cursed again when it didn’t work and tried again.

“Well?” Hilda demanded, hands on her hips.

“She’s cloaked them,” Nick informed Ambrose. “I tried locating her, then Roz. Nothing. They’re unplottable.”

“She knew we would try to find her,” Ambrose summarized. “She said nothing last night? Not so much as a hint?”

“You’ve asked me this three times already,” Nick reminded him. “I told you, Roz was crying and all Sabrina would say is that Roz needed her. I don’t know what they were doing. I certainly don’t know where they are now.” He started to pace, his nervous habit kicking in. “I love her, but I may well do a catching spell on her when I find her, keep her in one spot.” He would do no such thing, but he was annoyed with her for disappearing and admittedly for turning him away the night before when what he had to say was so important. “She can’t do stuff like this. She should know that by now.”

“For the last time, what in the name of Lilith is going on?” Hilda demanded, all patience lost. “What
has Sabrina done now? Why is she missing? And what does Roz have to do with it?"

Ambrose and Nick exchanged a look.

“Let’s get Zelda,” Ambrose decided. “Best to only have to tell this once.”

“Twice,” Nick corrected. “We’ll have to fill Sabrina in once we find her.”


“Is Sabrina in trouble?” Hilda asked.

There was no point in sugarcoating the truth. Nick exhaled as he took in the kind woman before him.

“We all are.”

“I’m pregnant.”

Roz sat in the driver’s seat of her beat up hand-me-down car, staring straight ahead. Sabrina sat beside her in the passenger’s seat, watching her friend with concern.

“You are,” Sabrina confirmed carefully. “How are you feeling?”


“I think all of that is valid,” Sabrina said. “Even the happy part.”

“I have to tell Harvey.”

“You do,” Sabrina nodded. “He’s a good guy, Roz. He’s not going to leave you to deal with this on your own.” She took Roz’s hand. “And regardless of Harvey, you have me.”

“I couldn’t have done this without you,” Roz shook her head. “I know you lied to your aunts, skipped school, missed a test…”

“I’ve lied about worse,” Sabrina assured Roz. “I’ve certainly done worse than skip school.”

“Still, I appreciate it more than you will ever know,” Roz sighed. “I’m not ready to go back to Greendale yet. I’m not exactly hungry, but maybe we can find a diner or something somewhere…” She could tell by the look on Sabrina’s face that her friend had other plans. “What?”

“I was actually hoping we could delay our return to Greendale as well,” she said. “But I have something other than a restaurant in mind…”

“Why do I feel like I’m about to get roped into another one of your schemes?” Roz asked.

“Because you kind of are,” Sabrina cringed. “I sort of did something I told Nick I wouldn’t do. But I do think it was the right thing to do…”

“Sabrina…” Roz sighed. Sabrina pulled a piece of paper from her jacket pocket.

“Can we go to this address? You don’t have to even get out of the car. I just… When I realized we
were coming here, to Buchanan, and in light of new information from Nick’s father and mine…”

Roz peered at the address for a moment.

“Fine,” she agreed. “I’ll participate. If for no other reason than it will distract me and give me time to figure out what to say to Harvey.”

She put the car in drive. Fifteen minutes later, they came to a stop in front of a modest clapboard home. She looked to Sabrina for next steps. Sabrina’s attention was on the house, her mind wrestling over the rights and wrongs in front of her.

“I’m doing the right thing, aren’t I, Roz?” she asked.

“I don’t know what you’re doing,” Roz reminded her. “I can’t give you advice until I know why we’re here.”

“Agatha Harkness lives here,” she said, turning to Roz. “Nick’s grandmother.”

“Nick’s grandmother?” Roz repeated. “I thought his family was dead…”

“Not his grandmother,” she shook her head. “Nick thinks she is – or at least decided to believe she is. I don’t know why. He just asked that we not look for her when the idea occurred to us that she could still be alive.”

“Sabrina,” Roz sighed. “If you promised Nick…”

“I did promise him. But he should know his family. Or at least try to know them.”

“What if it goes like meeting your grandmother did?” Roz asked. Sabrina had told Roz about the meeting the night before, laying in her bed in the early morning hours, talking about anything and everything to distract them both from the impending doctor’s appointment. “How will you feel then?”

“I’ll be there for Nick,” she said simply. “He was there for me. And if it goes well, he’ll have a grandmother. Family. Blood family, anyway. He has me, my family.” Still, she didn’t get out of the car. “This is the right thing,” she decided, convincing herself. “I’m going to go to the door, talk to her.”

“I’ll wait here,” Roz said. “I’ll call Nick if anything goes wrong.”

Sabrina took a big breath and got out of the car. Her footsteps up the sidewalk were measured. She considered turning back with every step. Still, she found herself knocking on the door. Only a few moments passed before the door opened.

Agatha Harkness had passed along her eyes to her grandson. She had the same olive complexion and dark hair as Nick and his father. Her hair was pulled back in a chignon, but Sabrina had a feeling it would fall in curls if she were to release it.

“May I help you?” Agatha asked with an eyebrow raised in expectancy.

“I’m Sabrina Spellman,” Sabrina began. “I…”

“You’re Edward Spellman’s daughter,” Agatha said, peering at her with interest now. “I’ve heard tales of you – that you have powers others of our kind don’t posses, that you consistently toe the line between Heaven and Hell.” She looked her up and down. “Satan, you look like your mother.”
“You knew my mother?” Sabrina asked, momentarily derailed from her mission.

“Everyone in our world knew your mother,” Agatha said. “It was quite the scandal, your father marrying a mortal. Their photo – a wedding photo – was everywhere in our papers when they passed.” Agatha raised an eyebrow again. “But judging by your surprise that I knew your mother, you aren’t here because of her.”

Nick’s intelligence was also a family trait it seemed.

“No, I’m not here for my mother,” Sabrina said, nervous now. “Your grandson is my boyfriend.” Agatha frowned.

“I don’t have a grandson. I did, but he died when he was young, along with his parents – my son and his wife.”

“Nicholas is very much alive.” Sabrina reached into her jacket pocket. This time, she removed a photo of Nick. “See? This is him.” She held the photo out. Agatha looked skeptical, but accepted it. She raised it to eye level. A soft gasp emitted from her.

“Nicholas,” she whispered. “But… How…” She looked at Sabrina. “This cannot be. My grandson is dead.”

“He’s not,” Sabrina said again. “He’s alive and well.” She smiled a bit. “He’s wonderful, Mrs. Harkness…”

“Agatha,” she corrected in a soft voice, her eyes back on the photo of Nick. “Call me Agatha, please.” Her thumb ran across the photo. “I find it hard to believe that this is my grandson, but he just looks so much like my son… He has to be.” She raised her eyes back to Sabrina. “How? How is he alive? His parents were murdered…”

“His mother hid him with his familiar when the witch hunters came,” Sabrina explained. “She covered them with wards. When the wards lifted, his familiar…”

“Amalia,” Agatha supplied.

“Amalia,” Sabrina confirmed. “She got him out of the house and raised him in the woods for the next four years.” Agatha shuttered. “He was found by the Church of Night and brought to the Academy of the Unseen Arts. He’s been there every since.”

“He’s in Greendale?” Agatha asked. “All this time and he’s been an hour away?”

“He’s in Greendale,” Sabrina nodded. Agatha was studying her again, this time with a different sort of interest.

“And you are his girlfriend?”

“I am.”

Agatha smiled just a bit.

“Just like a Scratch man to find himself a beautiful but powerful woman. His mother was strikingly beautiful, deceptively powerful. What’s he like? Nicky?”

“He’s wonderful,” Sabrina told her. “He is intelligent – beyond intelligent. He’s powerful, always seems to know the right spell or where to find the right text. He’s kind, just. He hasn’t had an easy
life, hasn’t always made the right choices, but he loves me.”

“He sounds like his father,” Agatha said a bit wistfully. Her eyes searched their surroundings. “He isn’t with you, is he?”

Sabrina knew by Agatha’s tone that she knew the answer.

“He’s not,” Sabrina shook her head anyway. “I came to Buchanan with a friend and decided to see if you were home.” She liked the woman, she decided. She took a breath to brace for hurting her. “We only realized recently that you may still be alive. Nick was steadfast in his desire not to look for you. I don’t know why, really, but he asked me to leave this alone. I couldn’t though. I tend to not be able to keep my nose out of things.”

“You’re like your father, then,” Agatha said, but her words weren’t unkind. They may have even been a compliment.

“Family is important to Nick,” Sabrina said. “He hasn’t had one for a long time – not until recently, anyway – and I think he should know his family.” She fixed Agatha with a stern sort of look. “But only if you want to be his family. He’s been hurt enough. I won’t allow him to be hurt again.”

Agatha looked at her for a long time.

“You love him,” she observed. “I’m grateful for that.” She sighed heavily. “I thought he was dead. My son was progressive enough until he met your father, and then he went well down the path of experimenting with crossing religions, inspired by your father’s work, which he tried to further after Edward died. I was concerned something would happen to them and then it did.” She closed her eyes and shook her head, the tragedy as raw today as it had been the day she had learned of their deaths. “I assumed Nicholas dead. Everyone did. I knew there were people looking for him – members of the Church of Night, I suppose they were – they even questioned me with truth serum – I thought him to be kidnapped and killed.”

“If you would like to come back with us – my friend Roz and I – you may,” Sabrina offered. “But only if you’re going to treat Nick well.” She drew herself up to her full height. “I’m not afraid to use my powers.”

“No need for threats,” Agatha shook her head. “I want to know my grandson. But you did say he may not want to see me?”

“Nick had a strong opinion on the matter,” Sabrina said diplomatically. “But I think this is what’s right.”

“Are you sure?” Agatha asked.

“I’m sure.”

She wasn’t. She was sure Nick was going to be unhappy with her. But she felt strongly that he should know his grandmother or at least have the opportunity to. Agatha seemed infinitely kinder than her own grandmother, at any rate. Agatha smoothed her thumb over the photo she still held. She blinked away tears.

“Very well, then. Let me gather my bag.” She held the photo out to Sabrina.

“You can keep it,” Sabrina said. She smiled a bit. “I have others.”

A few minutes later, she and Agatha got into the car with Roz.
“Agatha, this is my friend Roz,” Sabrina introduced. “Roz, this is Agatha, Nick’s grandmother.”

Roz politely greeted Agatha, but shot a questioning look at Sabrina who returned it with a guilty look of her own. Roz sighed and put the car in drive.

Agatha asked questions about Nick all the way to Greendale. She wanted to know what he was studying, what he liked to do in his free time. Sabrina was careful in her answers, protective over Nick, aware that he likely wouldn’t be too thrilled with her for showing up with his grandmother. She wouldn’t betray him further.

Nerves started to settle in for all of them as the mortuary came into view. For Roz, the mortuary meant they were back in Greendale and it was time to talk to Harvey and make some hard decisions. Sabrina prepared herself to reveal Agatha to Nick. Agatha tried to figure out what to say to her grandson after all these years.

Nick and Ambrose were sitting on the porch steps when Roz rolled to a stop. Sabrina frowned.

“That’s odd…”

“What’s odd?” Roz asked.


“Do you think everything is okay?” Roz wondered.

“I hope so,” Sabrina sighed. “Because I’m about to turn it all upside down.” The friends traded one long look loaded with meaning. “Call me later?”

“I will,” Roz nodded. “Thank you, Brina. I couldn’t have…”

“That’s what I’m here for,” Sabrina reminded her. “You’re not alone, Roz.”

She exited the car with one last reminder to Roz to call her later. Agatha was slower, taking her time to get out of the car. She followed Sabrina at a distance. Nick walked towards them with purpose. Sabrina prepared to confess.

“Where have you been?” he demanded.

“Excuse me?” Sabrina asked, taken back by his tone.

“Where have you been?” Nick repeated. He noted the woman behind her, but he was too annoyed at Sabrina for disappearing to fully register her. “You took off, no note, lied to your aunts, cloaked both yourself and Roz…”

“I don’t appreciate your tone,” Sabrina informed him.

“I don’t appreciate you disappearing,” Nick fired back. “But we’ll have to discuss that later. Come inside. We have so much to tell you.” He turned, expecting Sabrina to follow him. Hilda and Zelda had joined a now standing Ambrose on the stairs, all three of them watching the three in the yard curiously.

“Nicky.”

He stopped in his tracks. He didn’t recognize the voice, and yet it was still familiar. He studied the old woman now. She looked familiar, too, but he still couldn’t place her.
“Nick…” Sabrina faltered. She had betrayed Nick’s trust, gone against his wishes. In the moment, it felt like the right idea. Now, standing before Nick, Agatha behind her, regret settled in. “I did something…”

“Who is this?” Nick asked. His eyes were Agatha, but his words were directed at Sabrina.

“Nick, this is…”

“You look just like your father,” Agatha breathed, unable to stay quiet any longer. “It’s striking, how much you look like him. You did as a baby, but now, as a young man…”

“Sabrina…” Nick’s tone held a note of warning. “Who is this?”

She knew he knew.

“This is your grandmother,” she confessed anyway. “Agatha Harkness.”

Nick blew out a breath.

“Sabrina, I told you…”

“I know,” she said in a soothing voice, trying to diffuse the situation she felt brewing. “She thought you were dead, Nick. She wants to know you.”

“She’s right,” Agatha said. “I thought you were dead, Nicholas. I thought the witch hunters took you and likely killed you. If I had known…”

“You didn’t try to find out,” Nick said. “You’re wasting your time here. Go home. Forget where I am.”

“Nicholas…”

“Nick,” Sabrina tried. “At least give her a chance…”

“I don’t have time for this,” Nick declared. “We don’t have time for this. Agatha, you’ll have to find your own way to wherever home is. Sabrina, inside. We need to talk.”

He turned on his heel and walked away, expecting Sabrina to follow him. She turned back to Agatha, however. The older witch was staring after her grandson. Unshed tears filled her eyes. Sabrina’s loyalty was to Nick, but her heart went out to Agatha.

“Give him a few minutes,” she said. “I’ll talk to him.”

“If he doesn’t want me here…” Her bottom lip trembled.

“Come with me,” Sabrina said, offering her arm to the woman. Agatha hesitated, but put her hand at Sabrina’s elbow. Nick glared at them from the top of the stairs. When they started to climb the steps, Nick disappeared inside.

“Sabrina?” Zelda questioned with a raised eyebrow.

“This is Agatha Harkness.” A soft ‘oh!’ emitted from Hilda. “She’s Nick’s grandmother. Hilda, could you maybe make her some tea while I talk to Nick?”

“Of course,” Hilda said, taking in the woman’s upset demeanor. “Come along…” She ushered Agatha away.
“Where have you been?” Zelda demanded. “Surely you didn’t skip school – and convince Rosalind to go along with you – just to get that woman and bring her back here?”

“Agatha isn’t why Roz and I went to Buchanan,” Sabrina confirmed. “But why isn’t my story to tell. Roz needed me. I’m sure you’ll know why soon enough. I need to talk to Nick.”

Ambrose stopped her.

“Cousin, there is a lot that you need to know. We’ve already lost hours…” Sabrina frowned.

“What’s going on?” she asked, finally realizing there was something more at work than just Agatha’s appearance. “I’m missing something.”

“Nicholas discovered some concerning information in the books you two found at the Scratch compound,” Zelda supplied. “It seems our battles are, in fact, not over, and we have little time to prepare.” She narrowed her eyes at Sabrina. “Less now, given that we spent much of the day trying to find you.”

“I’d be impressed with your cloaking skills if I wasn’t so pissed off at you,” Ambrose said. Sabrina’s heartbeat throbbed in her ears.

“I need to go talk to Nick,” she determined. She hurried inside, used her instincts to find him. They led her to the parlor where she found him standing in the center of the room, hands on his hips, his back to her. She approached cautiously. “Nick?”

“Why did you bring her here, Sabrina?” He didn’t turn to her. “I asked you not to.”

“I know,” she admitted. “But Nick, she’s your grandmother. She’s your family. She’s alive. You should know her, know your family.”

“I don’t want to know her, Sabrina.” He turned to her, his eyes a storm of emotions. “I’ve lived without her for most of my life. I certainly don’t need her now.”

“She wants to know you,” Sabrina tried. “Give her a chance…”

“No!”

Sabrina stepped back, surprised by Nick’s anger. She had seen him upset with her, angry at her. The day he learned of her mandrake spell came to mind, and the day she had found him belly up to the bar after their expulsion. But he didn’t raise his voice at her. That wasn’t who he was.

“Don’t you get it, Sabrina?” he asked. “She didn’t look for me. She knew I wasn’t in that house. She knew Blackwood and his minions were looking for me. But she didn’t look for me. I lived in the woods with a damned familiar for four years before I was found by Blackwood and manipulated into life under his thumb at the Academy. She could have prevented all of that, if she had just looked for me.”

Sabrina understood then. Nick was angry at his grandmother for not giving him the family he still so desperately craved, no matter her reasons. Her heart shattered for him.

“Nick…”

“I can’t do this right now.” He pushed a rough hand through his hair. “Where did you and Roz go? I’ve been trying to find you all day.”
“Buchanan,” Sabrina answered. “But not to get Agatha. Roz – needed something there.” Nick narrowed his eyes, sure she was lying. “It happened to be the same town your grandmother lives in. I asked to stop by her house…”

“You’re lying to me.”

“I’m not…”

“Fine. You’re not telling the whole truth then.”

“I can’t,” Sabrina shook her head. “I will, but I can’t right now. Roz needed me to be her friend today, so that’s what I did. I’m sorry I lied and that you have been worried…”

“We’re supposed to tell each other the truth.” His tone was accusatory, but it also betrayed that he was hurt. “I get that Roz is your friend and that she asked you to keep her confidence. But you could have at least told me where you were going.”

“I should have,” Sabrina admitted. It had been foolish, really, to take off to Buchanan without telling anyone. She had certainly pushed Nick’s trust in her, regardless of whether she brought his grandmother back with her. “But I was so wrapped up in Roz that I didn’t think…”

“You know what? We’ll have to talk about this later,” Nick said, cutting her off. “We have bigger things to worry about.”

“What’s going on?” Sabrina asked, not entirely comfortable with jumping from one problem to the next with resolution. Nick wasn’t in the place to talk to her about his grandmother though and whatever this was seemed to have his full attention at the moment. “Ambrose said something about the journals…”

Nick fixed her with a serious expression.

“The Dark Lord isn’t done yet. Your father designed the archeron to hold him with the knowledge that it wouldn’t hold him forever, but long enough to buy him time.”

“He designed it to trap Batibat…”

“Batibat was another experiment,” Nick corrected. “He intended to banish her for good, but never got around to releasing her from the configuration. He used her to make sure the archeron was strong enough to hold the most powerful of demons.”

“How does the Dark Lord play into this?” Sabrina asked.

“Your father made a deal with the devil for you, Sabrina.” The way he said it caused a chill to run through her. “The Dark Lord put his unholy blessing upon your parents’ mortal-warlock marriage, but not without a catch – he did nothing without cause. He was owed their first born child.”

“Me,” Sabrina nodded.

“You know now that your parents struggled to get pregnant.” Sabrina nodded again. “Your mother wanted a child, more than anything. Your father loved her, more than anything. He went back to the Dark Lord to ask for his favor once more. He did it, knowing that Satan would claim you as his own from the moment of conception.”

Sabrina sucked in a breath. She had wondered if her father knew the Dark Lord was her real father. He had known it all along. Nick pushed forward, driven by the need to tell her what he had
“He had a plan, however. He had been experimenting with baptism.”

“Aunt Hilda,” Sabrina supplied.

“Hilda,” Nick confirmed. “Long before he met your mother, he wondered about the witches and warlocks like us. The ones that don’t believe in the darkest of magics, of the suppression of mortals, yet don’t follow the False God’s teachings either. If you think of the theologies of the Path of Night and the Path of Light, those of us left, those that claim the Church of Lilith, are truly the in between – the gray between Heaven and Hell. We believe in the darkness, but we also believe in some of the light – like love.”

“I don’t understand,” Sabrina shook her head.

“You were Satan’s ticket out of Hell,” Nick said plainly. “Your parents knew that. That’s why they baptized you, both light and dark. Your father’s signature on your behalf was essentially a binding contract – you were given to Satan, and he in turn blessed you with your powers, brought them out of their dormancy when angels threatened our kind. But, there was a caveat.”

“I was baptized first,” Sabrina realized. Nick smiled just a bit. Sabrina was sharp and it made him proud. “I have some sort of, I don’t know, protection.”

“Exactly,” Nick nodded. “If we were to look at the Book of the Beast and then our baptisms, I think we would each find we were baptized before our parents signed our toddlerhood over to the Dark Lord.”

“And he knew none of this?” Sabrina said.

“The Dark Lord is vain,” Nick said. “He would have been too busy beating his chest in pride to think to question the sudden influx of parents devoting their children to him.”

“Baptizing us helped us hold onto our humanity,” Sabrina recalled her mother’s writings. “It helped us better decipher right and wrong. But how does it protect us against Satan?”

“The False God doesn’t want Satan to walk to the earth any more than you or I. He’ll never allow us into Heaven, but we are a buffer between Satan and his followers. We can destroy Satan once and for all, because of our baptisms.”

“How?” Sabrina asked. There was no disguising the panic in her tone. “How do we stop a vengeful overlord?”

Nick took a big breath. Sabrina wasn’t going to like his answer.

“He intends to escape the archeron on your birthday.”

Sabrina frowned.

“But… My birthday is next week…”

“He has help in Hell. Not much of it, but enough of it to get him out of that archeron and allow him to make one last stand.”

“You learned all of this from those journals?” Sabrina asked. She had to be skeptical, even if she believed every word Nick said.
“It’s all there,” Nick nodded. “Your father wrote out his plans. He confided them in my father and I believe a few others. Agatha and Dorcas were both the daughters of high priests as well, Sabrina.” Sabrina’s eyes widened.

“It’s like he was forming an army…”

“He was, of sorts,” Nick nodded. “My father was already a bit progressive for his time and he latched onto your father’s work.” He looked at her. “It seems my family has their own history of pissing off the hierarchies of Hell.”

“What did they do?”

“Nothing as drastic as suggest a whole new doctrine, but my father believed mortals to be essential for survival of our kind. He saw the dwindling witch population and knew we would need mortals to survive. He was intrigued by your father, not only because of his doctrine, but because he had married a mortal.”

“Agatha and Dorcas – you said their fathers were High Priests?” Sabrina asked.

“Of different churches, yes,” Nick nodded. “Your father gained their support. With my father, and a few others, they were continuing his work after his death. That’s why Blackwood went after them – to stop them from succeeding before he could implement the Church of Judas.”

“But how does the Dark Lord play into this?” Sabrina pressed.

“Your father knew the Dark Lord would attempt to walk the earth after you turned sixteen,” Nick explained. “The acheron was meant as a back up plan to hold him until your father could defeat him on your seventeenth birthday. It was never intended to be a permanent solution – we just got lucky that you thought of the acheron.”

“Why my seventeenth birthday?” Sabrina wondered. “Why not my sixteen? Or my eighteenth, or my hundredth, for that matter?”

“The False God destroyed the earth by water,” Nick told her.

“Noah’s flood,” Sabrina recalled.

“The flood started on the seventeenth day. Listen.” Nick picked up Edward Spellman’s Bible from a side table where a few other books were stacked and flipped it open. “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the deep burst forth and the windows of the heavens were opened. – Genesis 7, verse 11. Your father highlighted the verse.” He flipped to the back of the book. “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. That’s from 2 Peter 3, verse 10.”

“The False God plans to end the world with fire,” Sabrina interpreted. “Does that mean he intends to allow the Dark Lord to walk the earth?”

“A few things,” Nick said, closing the Bible. “Edward believed your seventeenth birthday was more symbolic than anything. The Dark Lord would be amused to arise from depths of Hell to crown his queen and take over the world on a date that coincided with the False God destroying it. It’s not the most sound logic, but Satan isn’t the most sound demon.”

“The Dark Lord’s vanity seems to be a constant in all of this,” Sabrina commented.
“Vanity is a sin,” Nick reminded her. “As for fire, fire doesn’t just burn and destroy. Fire also purifies. Christians tend to believe God is going to scorch the earth, but the more likely interpretation is that he plans to use fire to purify it.”

“None of this makes sense,” Sabrina said. “Doesn’t the Bible outline how Satan is supposed to return to earth? The Book of Revelations, or whatever?”

“It does,” Nick confirmed. “In the Bible, Satan returns to earth knowing his days are short so he behaves with absolute wrath. He posses a human that becomes the Antichrist. People rally around this man and rebel against the False God. Jesus comes back to earth and destroys the Antichrist, then chains Satan up for a thousand years. There will be a period of peace on earth, and when Satan returns one final time, he is thrown into a fiery lake where he will be for the rest of eternity with no hope of escape.”

“Where is this lake?” Sabrina asked, jumping to the obvious solution. “How do we find it? How do we get Satan in it?”

“Ambrose and I have spent the day researching,” Nick answered. “When we weren’t looking for you.” Sabrina cringed at his subtle dig. “We need to strike first.”

“Strike first?” Sabrina repeated. “How? We have to wait…” Her eyes grew big. “You’re saying we need to bring Satan out of the acheron before he can emerge himself.”

“And attack the second he emerges,” Nick confirmed.

“Attack how?” Sabrina asked. “How do we destroy him, once and for all?”

Nick took a deep breath. This was where things were truly complex.

“Those of us who were baptized have special powers.” Sabrina nodded. “Prudence – telepathy and mind control. We need her to assist us in deterring anyone who tries to stop us – or else convince them to help us, if needed. Agatha and her spiritualism – you saw her geomancy at work. She will be the one to draw the pattern to help hold the Dark Lord in his place. She will need to work closely with Dorcas, who specializes in poppet puppetry. She won’t be able to control him for long, but with luck and magic, long enough for us to get into place.” Nick fixed his gaze on her.

“You, Sabrina, have the power to bring him out of the acheron.”

She took a breath.

“How?” she asked. “I barely know how these powers work.”

“I can’t answer that,” Nick shook his head. “You have to figure that out.” Panic threatened to overtake her. She pushed it down for the moment. There was still more to come.

“What about you?” she asked. “What is your role in all of this?”

She thought she knew, however.

“I banish him. Or rather, destroy him.”

The panic bubbled hotter.

“You don’t know how your powers work either,” she shook her head. “And I will absolutely not allow you to trap him within yourself, so don’t even consider that as a solution.”
“I’ll figure it out,” Nick said. “I don’t have much of a choice.”

“This is a terrible plan,” Sabrina stated. “I have some confidence in the Weird Sisters – they have at least been using their powers for evil and personal gain – but you and I? We don’t know what we’re doing....”

“Do you have a better plan?” Nick asked. Sabrina’s silence was his answer. “We have to figure it out. Your aunts and Ambrose will help us ward off anyone that may attack.”

“There’s a glaring hole in your plan, Scratch,” Sabrina observed.

“And that is?” Nick countered.

“The acheron is in Hell. How, exactly, are we going to get to it? Ask my friends to open the gates instead of keep them closed?”

“You’re the Queen of Hell, Sabrina,” Nick reminded her. “You can get us in.”

“I am not the Queen of Hell,” Sabrina shook her head. “I gave that title to Lilith.”

“Even still, the kingdom of Hell is rightfully yours, want it or not,” Nick pushed back. “Summon Lilith. Don’t ask for permission to enter. Tell her we’re coming. She can help us or she can stay out of our way. It’s her choice.”

Sabrina studied Nick. There was a grit to him, a steely determination. It took hold of her as well, began to root itself in her ever present need to protect the people she loved. Slowly, she nodded.

“I’ll summon Lilith,” she agreed, although she had no idea how. One more thing to figure out. “When do we do this?”

“Tomorrow night,” Nick answered. “It’s a new moon. Spiritual energies will be high, which can only fuel our powers.”

“Tomorrow night,” Sabrina repeated. Her panic level was at a rapid boil now. “Okay.” She took a breath, trying to absorb everything she had learned. “Okay.” She had another thought.

“What about Elsbeth and Melvin? And Hilda, for that matter? They are baptized. What about their powers?”

“Elsbeth and Melvin will stay here and wait for our return,” Nick said. “Elsbeth is a healer. Melvin is adept at herbology.” Sabrina heard what he wasn’t saying. They would be there for any injuries that occurred. There was no way that many of them were going into Hell without injuries – or worse - occurring. The panic started to press against the lid clamped over it, begging to get out, to overtake her. “Hilda, too, is a healer. She’s also a caregiver. Think about it, Sabrina. Zelda is a lot of things, but warm and inviting isn’t one of them. Your father too wasn’t known for someone who was wrapping people in hugs in spite of his love for you and your mother and his belief in caring for mortals. Hilda will be with us.”

To treat anyone that needed immediate attention, Sabrina understood.

“There just seems like so many things that could go wrong with this plan,” she said, letting some of her nervousness show.

“Isn’t that the general theme of our lives?” Nick asked. He pushed his hand through his hair. “Now that you’ve finally decided to show up, we should get to work.” He made to leave the room. She
caught his arm to stop him, aware there was a lot left unsaid between them.

“Nick…”

“I don’t want to talk about it right now, Sabrina,” he dismissed. “Send Agatha home, then summon Lilith.”

“I’m not sending her home until you talk to her…”

“I don’t want to talk to her!” Nick hissed. “Why can’t you understand that?”

“She’s your family…”

“Family doesn’t allow you to be raised by a wolf.”

They eyed one another, Sabrina willing him to let go of his anger, him willing her to drop the idea of his grandmother.

“Nick, I wanted to help,” she said softly. “I know what family means to you, and you have an honest to goodness blood relative…”

“Sabrina, I know that in your mind, the fact that my grandmother is alive and well should be all the reason in the world for me to accept her into my life, but that’s not how it works for me.”

“Nick…” She reached for him. He caught her hand before it could reach its intended place on his chest. He lowered it back to her side.

“Your actions have consequences, Sabrina.” He let go of her hand. “When are you going to understand that?”

He left the room then, leaving her to wipe at the tear that escaped down her cheek. She had hurt him, and his pain hurt her. With the weight of the world on their shoulders once more, him upset with her was the last thing she wanted. Still, she knew it would do her no good to follow him, not right now. He needed some time, and she had to give it to him. She wiped away one more tear, took a deep breath, and squared her shoulders.

She had to summon Lilith.

Chapter End Notes

I mean... I got nothing left (except for the rest of this story, of course).

Roz is pregnant - teen pregnancy happens and, well, it fit this story. (Trust me!). Agatha is nothing like Sabrina's grandmother, but Nick wants none of it. And Nick? He loves Sabrina, but you don't always like the people you love, do you?

Let me know what you thought of this one - see you (on the cusp of Hell) on Friday!
Chapter Twenty

Chapter Notes

We're not going to Hell... Yet...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sabrina stood in the clearing where she was born and exhaled a deep breath. She wasn’t entirely sure what she was doing – summoning demons, Lilith included, was Nick’s specialty – but she was determined to do this on her own. She pushed down thoughts of Nick, tamped down the feelings of worry about the status of their relationship. She knew this was just an argument and that they would get through it, but the guilt gnawed at her.

“Focus,” she whispered to herself. It was chilly out, the fall air growing crisper as the sun quickly sank into the horizon. She found a stick and began to draw the intricate symbols she found in a book an hour earlier and committed to memory. Satisfied, she stepped back, closed her eyes, and began to chant in Latin.

“You rang?”

She opened her eyes to find Lilith in another red and black ensemble, standing before her. She looked annoyed, as though Sabrina had interrupted her in the middle of dinner or some other important task.

“Lilith,” Sabrina greeted, relieved her spell worked. “Thank you for coming.”

“It seems I couldn’t ignore your request if I tried,” Lilith told her. “And believe me, I tried. One would think the Mother of Demons could relax a bit now that she is in her rightful place.”

“Sorry to interrupt your spa day,” Sabrina spat back. “Trust me, I’d rather have not had to summon Madame Satan myself.”

“I was playing backgammon with a troupe of incubi,” Lilith informed her. “I was winning, too.”

“As though you would allow any other outcome,” Sabrina said. “The faster you and I finish our business here, the sooner you can get back to your card game.”

“Backgammon is a board game,” Lilith stated. “But never mind your appalling knowledge of classic games. I suppose this summoning has something to do with Edward and the elder Nicholas?”

“We have to enter Hell,” Sabrina told her, getting right to her point. “Our fathers led us to more of their journals and those journals revealed that the Dark Lord intends to come back on my birthday.”

“The Dark Lord is trapped in Edward’s acheron configuration,” Lilith reminded her. “And he is well-guarded. He has no means of coming back to this plane.”

“The acheron was never meant to hold him,” Sabrina said. “I won’t get into the hows and whys of why he has chosen my 17th birthday to return to this earth, but know he believes himself to be making a symbolic gesture by ending the world with fire on a date that coincides with the False God ending it with water.”
“Noah’s flood,” Lilith said knowingly. “A terrible time. The reason I hate water.”

“There isn’t time to get into the specifics of it,” Sabrina pressed on. “We have a plan to stop him first. You will let us into Hell. Tomorrow night.”

“How do I know you’re telling the truth?” Lilith asked with narrowed eyes.

“Would I risk bringing the people I love – Nick, my aunts, Ambrose – into Hell if I were lying?” Sabrina countered. “Feel free to deny us, but we will get in anyway. My mortal friends know how to keep the gate closed. They do the opposite, the gate will open. I’d rather not bring them into my magical dilemma this time, however.”

“You’re a tenacious witch, Sabrina Spellman,” Lilith observed. “Far be it from me, the mere Queen of Hell, to try to stop you. “What is your plan?”

“It’s complex,” Sabrina said. “We all play a part. It ends with Nicholas banishing him.” Lilith raised an eyebrow.

“Your Nicholas is going to banish Satan himself?” she asked. “Just like that?” She snapped her fingers to make her point.

“Nick has powers others don’t,” Sabrina explained. “All of us who were baptized do.”

“Wait,” Lilith interjected. “More of you are baptized?”

“Yes,” Sabrina nodded. “Nick, the Weird Sisters, Melvin, Elsbeth, and my aunt Hilda. My father was behind encouraging their parents to do so, and he baptized Hilda himself, as a sort of experiment, when she was an infant.”

“Even Prudence is baptized?” Lilith asked. “Blackwood surely wouldn’t have allowed it.”

“We assume Prudence’s mother did it,” Sabrina said. “I’d like to think in defiance of Blackwood. Now, are you going to let us in to Hell or not?”

“You’re tenacious and demanding,” Lilith stated. “Are you certain about this? That the Dark Lord plans to reemerge? That he’s capable of reemerging in the first place?”

“My father wrote about all of it,” Sabrina said. She had gone upstairs after Nick left to find her father’s additional journals along with his own father’s on her desk, as well Nick’s notes. Whether he had been working there all day or had left them for her, she didn’t know, but the first thing she had done was look through them and confirm everything he had just told her. “The prophecy, all of it. He knew the Dark Lord’s plans for me and he was trying to stop him. Blackwood killed him before he could.”

“Your father tried to double cross the Dark Lord,” Lilith told her. “He made a deal with the Devil, and then tried to renege on it.”

“He was trying to do the right thing,” Sabrina argued. “He was trying to keep evil from winning. Had Blackwood not intervened, none of this would be happening in the first place.”

“I suppose there’s nothing to be done about all of that now, is it?” Lilith asked. “You plan to storm Hell tomorrow night?”

“At the witching hour,” Sabrina nodded. “It’s a new moon.”
“Spiritual energies will be high,” Lilith understood. She took some time to think over Sabrina’s proposition. Sabrina grew more frustrated as the seconds ticked by. She was on the verge of demanding an answer – an answer that was precursory anyway, as she would get them into Hell one way or another – when Lilith spoke again. “I can let you in and direct you to where the acheron is held. I cannot guarantee all of Hell’s inhabitants will allow you to pass without protest. Most are in support of me as queen. There is a faction that opposes me, however, and would welcome the return of the Dark Lord.”

“You will help us where you can,” Sabrina told her. Lilith raised an eyebrow.

“Really with the demands,” she scoffed. “If you were anyone else, I would remind you I am your queen.”

“I gave you the title,” Sabrina reminded her. “I can take it back.”

Lilith smirked, knowing Sabrina would do no such thing.

“I’ve always liked your spark, Ms. Spellman,” she said. “If it means keeping my crown, I will help you and your ban of misfits as much as I can.”


“I’ll see you at the gates,” Lilith confirmed. With that, she vanished.

Sabrina blew out another breath. It was much colder now, the sun all but gone from the sky. She turned on her heel and began to walk. She wanted to take the path to the Academy, but made herself continue on to the mortuary. Her already thin hopes that Nick would have returned were dashed as soon as she walked through the doors. She knew he wasn’t there. She didn’t need to walk through the house to search for him. She could feel it. She sighed and walked into the parlor where Ambrose was flipping through an ancient book, several more of which were spread around him.

“Lilith agreed to open the gates for us,” she announced. “Tomorrow at witching hour.”

“Do we classify that as good news?” Ambrose wondered.

“None of this is good news,” Sabrina sighed, sitting down on the sofa. “Have you talked to the Weird Sisters? Are they on board?”

“They are,” Ambrose confirmed. “Eager, even. Seems they have been itching for an adventure.”

“I have no idea how to use my powers,” she confessed. “I’m supposed to be the one to bring him forth from the acheron, but I don’t know how.”

“You will figure it out,” Ambrose said with confidence. “You always do, cousin.”

“Nick doesn’t know how his powers work either,” she continued. “How is he going to banish the Dark Lord when he’s not even sure how to access his powers?”

“It pains me to use such a mortal saying, and to give Nicholas any sort of credit, but where there is a will, there is a way,” Ambrose said. “He will master them before we go underground tomorrow.”

“I hope to Lilith you’re right,” she sighed. “I hope we’re all right. About all of it.”

“There’s an awful lot riding on this,” Ambrose acknowledged.

“This has to be the last of it,” Sabrina declared. “This has to be the last time we have to face down
the end of the world and our deaths. At least for a very, very long time.”

“We can hope,” Ambrose nodded. He took in her appearance. She was downcast, not quite the light she usually was. Circumstances like this normally lit a fire in her. Right now, she looked – tired. “Is everything okay, Sabrina?” Sabrina raised a pointed eyebrow. “Aside from the whole going to war with the Dark Lord bit,” he amended.

“Nick is upset with me,” she admitted. “He asked me not to look for his grandmother. I did it anyway, because I thought he should know his family. We promised to be honest with one another, and I betrayed him.”

“Not nearly as badly as he betrayed you,” Ambrose pointed out. “That should win you a few points.”

“It doesn’t,” Sabrina shook her head. “We wiped the slate clean when we got back together. Family is a touchy subject for him. It’s hurt him more than I think he knew, losing his parents so young and then being raised in the woods by Amalia. He’s had to face those feelings as of late.”

“For what it’s worth, Agatha is interesting,” Ambrose offered. “She and Hilda hit it off quite well. She’s sharp, seems like a decent person. She’s even offered to help us with the Dark Lord. Seems she’s quite the spell caster, and had some knowledge of your father and Nicholas’ father’s work. She thought they had lost their minds, mind you, but she wasn’t entirely naïve to what we’re facing when Hilda and Zelda filled her in over tea and biscuits earlier.”

“Nick won’t even talk to her,” Sabrina shook her head. “I can’t have Agatha tagging along if she’s going to be a distraction.”

“I’ll let the pair of you sort that out,” Ambrose reasoned.

Sabrina fidgeted with her fingers.

“Ambrose, promise me something?”

“Let’s hear it,” he replied with trepidation.

“Before, when we weren’t sure if the acheron would work, Nick had a back up plan. He was going to absorb the Dark Lord.”

“Makes sense,” Ambrose shrugged, wondering why he hadn’t thought of that himself. “There is no stronger binding than that of the human body.”

“Don’t let him do it this time, okay?” Sabrina nearly begged. “Even if it looks like we are out of options, even if I’m in danger, please, don’t let him absorb the Dark Lord. I can’t bear it and he shouldn’t have to.”

“Sabrina…” Ambrose sighed.

“Please, Ambrose,” she begged. “Promise me.”

“I’ll do what I can,” he relented. “I don’t know that I can stop either of you when you’re determined to do something stupid, but I’ll do what I can.”

“Thank you,” Sabrina said with a nod. She got to her feet. “I’m going upstairs. I need to figure out how to use my powers between now and tomorrow’s witching hour.”
“If I can help…”

“I’ll let you know,” Sabrina finished. As she climbed the stairs, a thought occurred to her. She turned and ran back down the stairs to the kitchen. She grabbed the phone from the wall and dialed Roz.

“Hello?”

“Roz, it’s me,” Sabrina greeted.

“I was going to call you later,” Roz replied. “I haven’t… Yet. I just – can’t.”

Sabrina felt a pang of guilt – a feeling becoming a little too familiar for the day – over the fact that she had momentarily forgotten about Roz’s current plight.

“Take some time for yourself to process everything,” Sabrina offered. “You will tell Harvey when you’re ready.” Roz only sighed heavily on her end of the phone. “Roz, I know now isn’t the best time… But, that vision you had of Nick. You haven’t had it again, have you?”

“No,” she answered. “I would have told you. Why? Is everything okay?”

“We have to face the Dark Lord again,” Sabrina confessed. “I’m – worried.”

“It’s been harder to tune in to my visions lately,” Roz shared. “I suppose it’s – my situation. When they do come, they’re usually too hazy to make sense out of them. But I’ll try.. When are you doing this? Can we help?”

“Tomorrow at the witching hour, and not this time,” she answered. “I’m sorry to ask right now, when everything is so confusing for you, but it’s… Nick…”

“I understand,” Roz said in a soothing voice. “You’re worried about him. How did he take Agatha?”

“Not well,” Sabrina said. “He’s pretty upset with me.”

“Oh, Sabrina,” Roz replied. She knew where her best friend’s head was. Nick was the love of Sabrina’s life – she had seen that in a vision ages ago – and they were about to face the Dark Lord. Sabrina would be upset that Nick was unhappy with her regardless, but she felt it more with their impending confrontation, was likely thinking through all of the worst case scenarios. “Nick loves you,” she offered. “Give him some time. You two will be okay.”

“I hope so,” she replied. “I should go. Call me if you need anything?”

“While you’re in the middle of trying to save the world again?” Roz asked with a teasing note. “Of course. And I’ll call if you if I see anything, too.”

Back in her bedroom, Sabrina sat cross-legged on her bed and opened the random spell book she had plucked from Zelda’s study earlier. She exhaled another long breath. She had to focus. She had to do everything she could to push away thoughts of Nick and her desire to go to him and beg for forgiveness. She had to trust things would work out.

In the meantime, she had to figure out how to save the world.

Again.

Nick heard the footsteps, but he didn’t look up from his text. The fact that it had taken Sabrina this long to show up at the Academy was a wonder in and of itself. He expected her to follow within the
hour of him leaving the mortuary, begging forgiveness and trying to explain her reasoning. It didn’t matter. He still wasn’t in a place to talk to her.

“Nicholas.”

He would have preferred Sabrina.

“You’re wasting your time,” he said without looking up. “I didn’t want to talk to you earlier, I don’t want to talk to you now.”

“That’s an advantage of being many centuries old,” Agatha replied. “The words and whims of grandsons not even a quarter of the way into their first century don’t faze you, nor deter you.”

“I’m surprised you know how old I am,” Nick said, eyes still on his text. “Seeing as you forgot I existed these last fifteen or so years.”

“I thought you to be dead these last fifteen years,” Agatha corrected. “Your father was involved in dangerous politics and magics. High priests and their families were dying all around the world. I begged him – pleaded with him – to walk away, to think of you and your mother. When I was told Nicholas and Elizabeth were dead and you missing, I had no doubts that you were dead, too.”

“My father wasn’t a coward,” Nick said with certainty. “He saw a better way and he fought for it.” He finally looked at his grandmother. “Even if it meant losing his life. Which is more than I can say for you.”

“It was a dark time,” Agatha told him. “And I wasn’t nearly as brave as your father – or your grandfather, for that matter.”

Nick knew his grandfather’s legacy. He was a well-loved and powerful high priest, killed in a duel with a witch hunter hundreds of years ago. His photo hung prominently in the Scratch compound. His very few memories of his parents included his father telling him stories of his grandfather.

“You’re wasting your time here,” Nick told Agatha. “I wouldn’t want to see you in the best of circumstances, but I have no time to deal with you. I’ve got to figure out how to banish the Dark Lord in the next twenty-four hours.”

“I know you don’t want to speak with me,” Agatha acknowledged. “I’m willing to wait you out. I missed fifteen years of knowing you, Nicholas. I won’t miss another one, not now that I know you’re alive.”

Nick snorted in disbelief.

“I’ve done well without you,” he said. “I don’t need you.”

“You don’t,” Agatha agreed. “You really are like your father, Nicholas. You always have been, in both looks and behavior.” She took a few steps closer to him, but didn’t sit down. “Did you know he never wanted to be High Priest?” Nick said nothing, but digested the information all the same. “His father – my husband, your grandfather – died suddenly and he was left with no choice. He was determined you wouldn’t succumb to the same fate. If you wanted to be High Priest, the title was yours. If you didn’t, he would find a suitable replacement, family legacy be damned.”

“Who became the high priest when he died?” Nick asked out of curiosity.

“A warlock named Sebastian Monterrey,” Agatha answered. “He studied under your father and was a good choice. He is still in power.”
"You left the coven," Nick recognized.

"I did," Agatha confirmed. "It was too hard to be a part of it without my family. I've been covenless for the last fifteen years."

Again, Nick said nothing.

"I didn't come here to try and win your forgiveness," Agatha continued. "The Scratch in you won't allow that to happen for some time, but again, old age means I have plenty of experience in waiting out the men in this family." He glared at her. She was undeterred. "Nicholas James," he startled a bit at hearing his middle name used as an admonishment and by his grandmother at that, "there is a young witch at the Spellman mortuary who has spent the entirety of her evening in her bedroom, refusing to come out for meals or even a cup of tea."

"Sabrina knew my feelings towards you," Nick stated, still unwilling to bend. "She knew I didn't want to look for you. She did it anyway. We've had our fair share of trust issues in the past. She crossed a line."

"She did it out of love for you," Agatha countered. "I have only just met the girl, but her love for you is very clear. She wouldn't allow me in the car with her and her mortal friend until she was sure I wasn't coming to Greendale to hurt you."

"She should have never been on your doorstep in the first place."

Agatha blew out a breath of frustration.

"It is a blessing, that you are so much like your father. But for the love of all things unholy, I do wish you hadn't inherited his stubborn nature." Nick tried to ignore her. She wasn't having it. His face turned to her against his wishes as she spelled him to look at her. "That girl loves you, Nicholas, and if I can tell that – if I, a witch that married not for love but for gain – can see it so plainly, it must be true. That same girl is sitting alone in her bedroom, trying to find a way to save the world from a vengeful Dark Lord."

Nick raised an eyebrow.

"She told you?"

"Her aunts did," Agatha confirmed. "I knew a bit as it were, given your father's involvement with Edward Spellman, but Hilda and Zelda filled me in this afternoon. I have offered my services. Your grandfather didn't marry me because of my looks, after all. I am a witch in my own right."

"Fantastic," Nick muttered, not altogether pleased his grandmother was apparently tagging along to Hell. He tried to return his attention to his text. He couldn't, still held under his grandmother's stare. She fixed him with a stern glare.

"All of that aside, that girl has sequestered herself away all evening," she told him. "She is alone. Afraid. Worried. She thinks the boy she loves hates her. And tomorrow night, she has to face Hell with the knowledge that there is a very real possibility of things going badly. Be upset with me all you want. You can even be unhappy with her. But don't let her go into Hell thinking you may have stopped loving her because she tried to reunite you with your family."

Agatha left then. Back under his own power, his chin dropped to his chest as a sense of guilt sunk in. He thought he was right to be upset with Sabrina, but his grandmother had a point. They were risking their lives tomorrow night and he had no intention of doing so without Sabrina knowing he loved her. He knew her, knew how her mind worked. She had likely thought of every worse case
scenario for their relationship, was stewing in her own guilt, fighting against every instinct she had in an effort to give him the space he requested.

Still, he tried to fight against his own instincts to go to Sabrina and continued to read the book before him on advanced demon banishment.

He gave up just past midnight, unable to ignore the pull of Sabrina Spellman any longer. He marked the page in his latest text and left the library. He opted to walk to the mortuary, the cold night air helping clear his mind. He let himself in once he reached the mortuary, a common enough of a visitor now that he no longer bothered with knocking, and climbed the stairs to Sabrina’s room. No light shined from under the door. Cautiously, he tried the knob. It was unlocked.

She was in bed, her small frame curled to one side – her side. They rarely slept apart these days. She wasn’t asleep – he saw her head lift from her pillow when the light from the hallway momentarily spilled into the room – but she didn’t say anything. He didn’t either. He undressed, slipping out of his shirt and dropping his jeans. He lay down beside her, on his back. Neither of them said anything, but she moved just a bit, sliding closer to the edge of the bed, putting more distance between them as though she believed that’s what he wanted, curling into herself as though trying to make herself as small as she could.

Time passed, both of them lying there, Nick staring at the ceiling, Sabrina with her back to him, silent tears rolling down her cheeks as the day’s events and tomorrow’s mission caught up with her all at once. She tried to stop the tears, tried to be strong, be the person she thought they expected her to be. But the harder she fought, the more overwhelmed she became by it all. She tried and failed to hide the sob that worked out of her.

Nick couldn’t take it anymore.

Wordless, he rolled to his side and reached for her. His arm wrapped around her waist and pulled her to him. He kissed her shoulder. She cried harder.

“Nick…” she whispered after a while.

“We can talk in the morning,” he replied gently. “I’ve got you. Go to sleep.”

Sabrina turned his arms. Her beautiful eyes were swollen from her tears.

“I’m sorry…”

“Tomorrow.” He kissed her forehead. “We need to sleep now.”

She curled into his chest, seeking the comfort only he could give her. He held her, tried not to think about the danger that awaited them this time tomorrow night. Her tears dampened his bare chest. He could only bring her closer.

“I love you,” she whispered.

He kissed her hair.

“I love you, too.”

Chapter End Notes
But we're going to Hell next update... See you there?

I think my favorite scene in this update was Sabrina asking Ambrose to keep Nick from doing anything stupid...

We're nearing the end, folks. It's bittersweet, but true. But we've still got a handful of updates to go, and the next one? It's - lengthy.

Let me know what you thought - and if your feelings about Agatha have changed. Everyone is so suspicious of her...
This is easily the longest update I've ever posted. I very nearly cut it off at a rather critical moment. But I liked how it all flowed together and I've done that enough to you this go around - I decided to just let it all play out. So grab a coffee or a tea or hot chocolate and get cozy.

We've got a Dark Lord to destroy.

Time seemed to move faster when counting down to an event no one was looking forward to. The nervous pit in her stomach had only grown deeper and darker over the course of day, even as she became surer in her abilities and Nick reassured her his own understanding of his powers had grown as well.

She sat on the mortuary stairs, the only place she had found without access to a clock reminding her that in an hour’s time, she would be facing Hell. Several times over, she had considered going ahead of them, going alone, but she knew she couldn’t do it by herself, not something this big, this important. She needed Nick, her aunts, Ambrose, even the Weird Sisters and Agatha.

The door opened and closed. She knew it was Nick without turning around. He settled on the step next to her.

“Everything is as ready as it can be,” he told her. “Now – we wait.”

“There are so many unknowns, Nick…”

“We’re going to make it out of this,” he promised. He took her hand. “We’ll celebrate your birthday in a few days without the worry of the world ending around us, without the threat of the Dark Lord.”

“Promise?” she asked. He looked her in the eye.

“I promise.”

“You know what that means, don’t you?”

“That I expect you to tell me exactly what you want to do for your birthday when this is done,” he said. “Cake and ice ream? Chinese takeout? A trip back to the Unholy Land? Whatever you want.”

Sabrina shook her head.

“It means you can’t do anything stupid. Like trapping the Dark Lord inside of you.”

Nick sighed.

“Sabrina, I promise you, we’re going to get through this.” He tucked a strand of loose hair behind her ear. “But I also promise that if it does come down to it, I will do whatever it takes to make sure you’re here to celebrate your birthday. With or without me.”
She shook her head.

“No. With you. That’s the only way, Nick. I mean it.”

“That’s my intention,” he assured her. “I’ve already bought you a birthday gift, after all, and we have our Winter Solstice plans to visit my family home in the Highlands.”

“That’s my biggest fear in all of this,” Sabrina admitted. “That something will happen to you.” She felt selfish for it, for worrying more for him than for her aunts or Ambrose. Losing one of them would devastate her. Losing Nick – she didn’t see how she could go on.

“How do you think I feel?” he countered. He was resolved to the fact that his life would be the first to go if it meant saying Sabrina’s. He couldn’t tell her that. She was more shaky and nervous than he had ever seen her. “You’re the love of my life, Spellman. I’m terrified.”

She leaned against him, her head on his shoulder.

“I really am sorry, Nick.”

“We talked about it this morning,” he reminded her. “We’re okay.”

He had woken up to breakfast in bed again. This time, though, Sabrina had conjured it from the kitchen, aware that he wouldn’t want to face his grandmother. He had reiterated why he was upset with her over a stack of forgotten French toast, neither of them hungry. She had apologized and then apologized again. Things still weren’t completely okay between them, but they were both willing to put the incident aside and move forward, particularly with witching hour looming ahead of them.

“I just want to say it again,” she said. “That, and I love you.”

“I love you,” Nick replied. His hand had found her knee. He squeezed. “Everything is going to be okay in the end.”

She wished she could believe him.

“Should we start the journey to the mines?” she asked.

“I suppose,” Nick sighed. Her hand in his, he led her down the porch stairs. In the yard, he turned to her. “It’s your turn to promise me something.” She nodded, waiting. “You can’t do anything stupid, either. You can’t take matters into your own hands. We are in this together. Me and you, your family, the Weird Sisters…”

“Your grandmother,” Sabrina said gently. Agatha had insisted on being a part of their journey once she fully understood what they were up against. Sabrina had the distinct impression she wanted to avenge her son’s death – and perhaps win her grandson over. Nick sighed again.

“Her too,” he said begrudgingly. His grandmother was a whole other can of worms he wouldn’t open until all of them were back at the mortuary, safe and sound. Sabrina looked at Nick for a moment, then put her hands on his shoulders. She bowed her head and muttered a string of Latin. Nick felt the protection spell wash over him. As soon as she looked up, he cupped her cheeks in his hands and rested his forehead against hers. “Qui affecto protego, mixtisque iubas serpentibus et posteris meis stirpiquie.” He kissed her forehead as though to seal his protection around her.

The mortuary door opened and the Spellmans, Agatha, and the Weird Sisters spilled outside. Nick and Sabrina exchanged once last glance.
It was time.

Lilith was waiting outside the gates of Hell when they arrived.

“I had no doubts you would be on time,” she greeted the group.

“The sooner we get in, the sooner we get out,” Sabrina replied. “Open the gates.”

“Not so fast.” Lilith stood before them, looking every bit the queen she was. “There are rules.”

“Of course there are,” Hilda muttered.

“What are your rules, Lilith?” Nick asked without patience. She ignored him, eyes on Agatha.

“You have a new addition to your Hell-busting ways,” she observed. “Agatha Harkness, I believe.”

“One in the same,” Agatha nodded once. Her eyes had a certain steeliness to them. “I knew what the Spellmans told me, but seeing is believing.”

“I believe your son would break the binds holding him to his circle if he knew you were here,” Lilith taunted. “He’s not a fan of you, abandoning hope that your grandson was still alive within moments of learning of his and his wife’s deaths.”

Sabina reached over and squeezed Nick’s hand covertly. He squeezed back, his jaw set as he took in Lilith’s words.

“I live with regrets I cannot put into words,” Agatha said. “I intend to right my wrongs.”

“There is no time for this,” Nick interjected. “Lilith? Your rules. And do remember your audience.”

“There is a certain tendency among the group gathered before me to disregard the rules,” Lilith mused, eyes flickering to Sabrina. Sabrina glared at her. “I can only allow you two hours,” she informed them.

“Plenty of time,” Nick nodded.

“None of my subjects are to be harmed unless they attempt to come to the aide of the Dark Lord,” she continued.

“Or try to hurt one of us,” Zelda added. Her expression didn’t allow for argument.

“You are not to accept help from anyone within my domain,” Lilith said, ignoring Zelda. Nick and Sabrina exchanged glances. Neither of them had said it, but they were both fully aware that their parents were in Hell, somewhere. While it wasn’t their mission, both of them hoped, deep down, for at least a passing glance of them. “I will lead you to Lucifer, as far as I can, anyway. Stay on the path. Do not stray. Nothing good will come of it.”

With that, Lilith turned to the gates. She laid her hands on the doors and they groaned open at the recognition of their queen. Sabrina blew out a long breath and squared her shoulders as the first waves of heat washed over them. She glanced at Nick as he looked her way. She nodded once. Together, they led the group into Hell.

The heat was overwhelming. It took mere moments for beads of sweat to appear along her hairline. She tried to look everywhere at once, take in the scene, on heightened alert. Nick matched her step for step, his own eyes canvassing the space before them, expecting danger at any turn.
Lilith led them through a maze of twists and turns. Sabrina tried to memorize each one of them to help their escape. She trusted that Nick and his sharp memory already had. They stopped in a circular opening. Flames danced around them, rising up from the deep depths of darkness one would disappear into forever if they stepped off the path.

“Lucifer is kept in the dungeons of my castle,” she told them. “I deemed it safer to keep him there, under my watchful eye, as opposed to the icy lake in the epicenter of Hell. He is well-protected. I leave you here and expect my quarters to remain intact.”

“We make no promises,” Nick fired back. Sabrina glanced at him once more. There was something different about him. A determination she had never seen before. She had no idea it came entirely from keeping her, the woman he loved, safe.

“This is as far as you’re going?” Zelda repeated in disbelief. “Some help you are, our queen.”

“The bindings of Hell are sacred,” Lilith said. “As much as I want to be a part of this little mission, I cannot.” She peered down her nose at Sabrina. “One more reason I’m better suited to rule this domain. I understand the binds that holds Hell together.”

“I don’t want your crown,” Sabrina said again. “I want Lucifer gone and my family and friends safe. You can have this forsaken place.”

“Very well.” Lilith nodded. “You will find my castle if you take the left path and follow it without detour. Remember your rules and best of luck.”

She vanished.

“How much time do we have left?” Prudence asked, moving towards the front of the pack, aware that her part would likely come soon.

“That took about ten minutes,” Ambrose supplied.

“Nine,” Nick said with certainty. “Let’s move. We don’t know how far this castle of Lilith’s is or what we may encounter along the way.”

They walked for several minutes in silence, their clothes dampened by their sweat, the path so narrow at times they had to turn sideways to avoid the flames.

“I thought we would have seen – something – by now,” Sabrina said to Nick.

“It’s suspicious,” he agreed. “Don’t let your guard down. Stay close.”

“Right back at you, Scratch,” she replied. Nick refrained from reaching for her hand. He wanted to. He wanted to keep her as close to him as he could. But she wouldn’t allow it when her focus was on banishing Lucifer and it was best for both of them to have all their limbs and senses available.

They passed through another narrow chamber before a tunnel appeared. It was as black as night, no way of knowing what lie on the other side.

“I suppose we go through that,” Ambrose stated wearily.

“It’s either that or go back,” Nick challenged. “It’s an option any of you can take at any time, should you so choose.” Ambrose glared at him, but said nothing. Sabrina rolled her eyes at the show of male testosterone.
“If you two are finished…” she darted into the tunnel and disappeared.

“Sabrina!” Nick rushed in after her. He gasped as frigid air suddenly hit him, instantly causing his sweat to free on his skin. His lungs burned, but he pushed forward, propelled onward by his desire to get to Sabrina.

The light was sudden and brilliant, the heat intense once more.

“Nick!”

Sabrina was there, shaking a bit, but otherwise unharmed.

“Are you okay?” he asked, ignoring how his own body shook as it tried to adjust to another rapid swing in temperatures.

“I think so,” she nodded. “You?”

“I’m fine.”

“What was that?” she wondered.

“I’d guess some sort of protection spell to keep Lilith’s subjects from her castle. We’re alive, but I imagine that tunnel would freeze their souls in place.”

There was no time to say anything further. Ambrose appeared next, followed quickly by Prudence, then Zelda. One by one, their pack emerged, all shaking, stumbling a bit when the light and heat hit them once more before they righted themselves. Agatha was the last. Nick sized her up, but didn’t speak to her.

“Let’s keep going,” he said. He set out, trusting the rest to follow.

They didn’t have to wait long for the first glimpse of Lilith’s castle. It was imposing, made from black stones, trimmed in gold. Flames danced around it like a moat, protecting it from intruders.

“Where’s the entrance?” Sabrina questioned. “How do we cross the flames?”

“We have to walk through them,” Zelda said. “It’s the only way.”

“I know the charm,” Agatha spoke up. “I’ll cast it when needed.”

They continued their journey, the castle growing larger and larger as they closed in on their destination. They were a few hundred yards away when a large, burly man, with a matted beard, hair that matched, and an eye patch appeared before them.

“Halt!” he ordered. “No one passes my army.”

At the word “army,” a mass of men of all shapes and sizes appeared behind him, brandishing weapons and looking deadly.

“Lilith gave us permission to enter,” Sabrina tried.

“My queen did no such thing.” His good eye narrowed. “You are alive. How are you here?”

“Lilith let us in,” Sabrina answered. “We have a mission. Allow us to pass and no harm shall come to you…”
“Oh for crying out loud, enough with this asking nonsense.” Prudence pushed forward and stood toe-to-toe with the man. She made eye contact. “You will allow us to pass, as directed by Lilith,” she said, staring deep into his eyes. “You will not harm us and you will direct your army to do the same. Stand down.”

A moment passed before the man simply blinked and walked away.

“Well done,” Sabrina commented.

“Child’s play,” Prudence sneered at Sabrina. Sabrina glared right back, glad at least something was normal about their current situation. “Come on. We haven’t time to waste.”

They passed through the army with no more than steady gazes sent their way. Still, Sabrina’s skin crawled.

“Lilith’s guards,” Nick mused just loud enough for her to hear as they walked through the mass. “She’s likely made some sort of deal with them. She’s the mother of demons, but they aren’t demons. I’d guess they’ve done something particular atrocious on Earth and this assignment gets them out of a more severe punishment.”

“I don’t like how they’re looking at me,” Sabrina confided.

“Me either,” Nick admitted. “But you’re safe. They’re under the control of whomever Prudence charmed into her bidding.”

And they would have to get through him to get to her.

They stopped when they reached the ring of fire surrounding the castle.

“Link hands and form a circle,” Agatha instructed, coming to stand beside Nick.

Sabrina took Nick’s hand. Ambrose took her other, Hilda on his other side. The circle closed formed as hands linked, but Agatha didn’t cast the charm. She was looking at Nick expectantly. She had Dorcas by the hand, her other hand outstretched, waiting for Nick to take it.

“Nick,” Sabrina prompted. He blew out a breath and made it a point not to look at his grandmother as he took her hand.

Agatha began to chant. A different sort of warmth washed over them all.

“There,” she announced. “We’ll be able to walk through the flames now.” Sabrina didn’t wait. She turned with the intention of marching through the fire and one step closer to Satan. Nick stopped her by tugging on the hand he hadn’t go of yet.

“Wait.” His eyes were on his grandmother. “Agatha goes first.”

It was a challenge. He refused to believe his grandmother was on their side. He refused to trust her with their safety, even if the rest of them did.

“Nick…” Sabrina started.

“This way,” Agatha said before Sabrina finish. She disappeared into the flames. A moment later she appeared on the other side. “It’s safe. Come along, now. Prudence is right – we haven’t the time to waste.”

“I’ll go first,” Nick said to Sabrina. She held his hand tighter when he tried to let go.
“We’ll go together,” she informed him. It was her way of reminding him they were a team, but also that she trusted his grandmother.

“Okay,” he agreed. Together, they stepped into the flames. They felt like no more than pleasant heat, flickering around them. On the other side, they found themselves in the castle’s courtyard. “Look at that,” Nick said, eyes on the castle before them.

“Lilith does like to live grand,” Sabrina said, remember how Ms. Wardwell’s wardrobe and overall appearance had changed when Lilith took over her body. In hindsight, that should have been a clue that something was amiss.

The group climbed a set of stairs and stopped outside of a set of heavy iron doors. Nick turned to the group as they assembled on the steps around him.

“Everyone knows their role?” he asked.

“For the umpteenth time, yes,” Dorcas snapped. The poppet of Lucifer was clutched tightly in her left hand. “Can we get this show on the road? This heat is not good for my complexion.”

Sabrina rolled her eyes.

“Everyone stay on high alert,” she said. “We don’t know what will happen when I release Satan from the acheron.”

“Assuming we find the acheron and you know how to bring him out of it,” Agatha said, her geomancy equipment slung around her waist. “And that we are successful in our endeavors and all make it back alive within the leftover time.”

“All the better reason for us to get a move on,” Sabrina said. “Let’s go.” She grabbed one door handle, Nick the other. Together, they wrenched them open.

The entrance hall was cavernous, the ceiling so high they couldn’t quite be seen. Heavy iron chandeliers hung at even intervals, holding hundreds of burning red candles. Low lit torches lined the walls. The floor and walls were all made of the same black stones. There wasn’t time to explore, but the décor visible was grotesque and seemed largely compromised of human bones.

“We have to find the dungeon,” Nick said, reminding them of their task.

“Should we break into groups?” Hilda wondered.

“No,” Sabrina shook her head. “Absolutely not. We have to stay together.”

“Agreed,” Zelda said. “Shall I try a locator spell?” She didn’t wait for an answer. She waved her hands before her, mumbling under her breath. “Straight ahead,” she said after a moment. “We’ll find a staircase that will lead us into the heart of the dungeon.” Nick and Sabrina allowed her to lead for the moment, them close on her heels. They found the staircase she referenced quickly. The door was sealed shut. Zelda tried a simple spell. It didn’t work. “Great. Now we waste time figuring out how to unlock a door.”

“Let me try.” Sabrina stepped forward. She closed her eyes and envisioned a key. Something appeared in her hand after a moment. She opened her eyes to find a black iron skeleton key. She slid it into the lock, turned, and heard it unclick. “Well, that was easy.”

“Too easy,” Nick agreed. He reached around her and pulled the door open. A staircase dimly lit with torches was before them. Nick blew out another breath. “Down we go.”
“Time check?” Prudence asked.

“A half hour,” Ambrose said. “Give or take a minute or two.”

“Thirty-three minutes,” Nick said just loud enough for Sabrina to hear. He didn’t know how he knew, exactly, but it was like there was a voice whispering the time in his ear when he thought about it. He was confident that voice was accurate, even if he had no idea where it came from. “We’re close,” he said a bit louder. “I can feel the magic.”

They all could. It made the hair on their arms stand on its end, their blood rush a bit faster. They descended several minutes before the staircase evened out into a long hallway. There were empty cells along the walls, one here and there held skeletal remains. Sabrina didn’t have time to ponder on how there were remains if the souls in Hell were already dead, nor what they could have done to warrant them imprisonment in Lilith’s castle.

A lone wooden door stood at the end of the hallway.

“That’s it,” she said with certainty. “The acheron is behind that door.”

“Lilith said it was well-guarded,” Nick reminded her. “Stay here.” He took a few steps forward. Sabrina grabbed his arm. He turned to her. “I’m going to reveal the demons,” he told her. Everyone else listened in. “I know they are here.” He saw the signs even if the rest of them didn’t.

“Okay,” Sabrina relented. She took a step back to let Nick work. He conjured a stick like it was nothing, then started to draw. His closed his circle, then began to chant. It only took moments for four demons to appear, all bound to their circles.

“Naberious,” he said to one that appeared with the heads of three different dogs.

“Nicholas Scratch, the Second,” the demon replied in a raspy voice. “Your intelligence and talents precede you, of course.” He bowed slightly. “Tis an honor to be face to face with you again.”

Sabrina frowned. It was as though Nick were an old friend of the demon.

“Then you’ll understand I have to ask you to allow us to pass without incident,” Nick said. “You’re not evil, Naberious. I don’t want to destroy you.”

“You ask cordially and are blessed with powers others don’t posses,” he replied. “You have my respect, Sir Scratch. My legions and I will bow peacefully.” He sunk to his knee, bowed his head to Nick, then disappeared.

“What just happened?” Sabrina asked. “Demons don’t behave like that…”

“I’ll explain later.” Nick turned his attention to the next demon. “Balam.” This demon also had three heads, but one was that of a bull, the second of a man, the third of ram. He had flaming eyes, a serpent tail, and sat astride a menacing bear. “You and your legions will allow us to pass.”

“I see difficulty ahead,” the demon responded in a dreamy sort of manner. “Not all of you will survive. And yet – none of you will die.”

“What’s he talking about?” Sabrina asked. Nick ignored her.

“I’m giving you the option, Balam. Bow like Naberious did and allow us to pass, or I will destroy you. Not banish – destroy.”
“I see it,” Balam nodded. “I see myself, reduced to a pile of ashes. But I am capable of changing my fate. I shall bow and take my legions with me.” He, too, bowed before Nick, then disappeared.

Sabrina’s frown grew. It truly was like Nick was – friends – with these demons.

“Zepar.”

The third demon was man-like, dressed in red with the resemblance of a soldier. He looked at Nick expectantly.

“You will give us pass without protest and direct your legions of spirits to do the same. Or else I will destroy you – and we both know the world will be less bright without your existence.”

“You would be willing to risk that?” the demon called Zepar replied. “You would be willing to risk a world devoid of the very emotion you treasure by destroying me?”

“In the name of saving the people I care about and by proxy, the world?” Nick asked. “Yes. And you do not have the market cornered on your specific skill set – there will still be love in the world without you.”

“You are willing to risk it all,” Zepar observed.

“I am,” Nick nodded. “Now, what will it be?”

Zepar peered at Nick for a few long moments before he nodded once. He didn’t fall to a knee like the first two demons, but he lowered his chin and disappeared. Nick blew out a breath. The fourth and final demon was a surprising choice. He wouldn’t go quietly.

“Sabrina?” She stepped forward. “Can you use your powers to conjure a hazel wand?”

“A hazel wand?” she repeated.

“Please,” Nick confirmed. He watched her close her eyes and within moments, the wand materialized in front of him. He closed his hand around it. “Thank you. Step back for me, okay?”

Sabrina sensed a danger that wasn’t there before. Still, she didn’t protest. She stepped back to her place next to Zelda. Nick produced a silver ring from the inside of his jacket pocket and slipped it onto his left middle finger.

“Beleth.”

Music filled the chamber as the demon was allowed out of his bindings to face Nick. There was a collective gasp. Several of their group took a few steps backward. Sabrina remained firm, as did Zelda and Agatha Harkness. Nick, too, didn’t waver. The demon Beleth was fierce in appearance and rode a pale horse. His music grew louder, his appearance somehow more frightening.

Nick was fast. He raised his left hand to his cheek so Beleth could see it, then with quick, decisive strokes, used the hazel wand to draw a triangle. His Latin was sure and before any of them could fully register what was before them, Beleth was trapped within the triangle.

“Very courageous, Nicholas Scratch, the second,” Beleth spoke in a high-pitched voice that didn’t match his fierce nature. The same nature, Sabrina realized, that while still uninviting to look at, had quelled into something less frightening all the same. “It appears at least a few of your counterparts are as well.”
“I’m surprised to see you here, Beleth,” Nick replied. “A demon of your power, made a king within Hell by the former king himself.”

“My queen is just,” Beleth replied. “I am bound to protect her.”

“Then you will understand why you and your legions will need to stand down and allow us to pass. Our mission here will ensure Lilith remains in power for all of eternity.”

“I can allow you to pass,” Beleth said. “And the girl, too, as well as the two witches that still stand beside her. The rest of them? They are not courageous enough to pass my guard.”

“Not brave enough?” Sabrina interjected. “They entered Hell!”

“Sabrina,” Nick said, not taking his eyes off of Beleth. “Let me handle this.”

“But…”


“She’s fiery,” he observed. “Your Sabrina would have made a wonderful queen herself, should she have wanted the title.”

“She doesn’t want it,” Nick said. “But she is right in saying the rest of the group is courageous. They walked into Hell and will soon face Satan himself.”

“They fell back when I appeared,” Beleth pointed out. “That does not show bravery.”

“And yet scaring them was your intention,” Nick countered. “I’m giving you one more chance to make a decision. Allow us – all of us – to pass, or I shall destroy you. Note that I said destroy, not banish.”

“So you have learned of your unique powers,” Beleth mused. “I wondered if your particular talents would ever manifest themselves, but I suppose the situation at hand does call for it.” He drew himself up to his full height. “I shall do you a courtesy and allow your group to pass. I suppose you are not incorrect in saying they stepped into Hell with you.” He eyed the group huddled behind Sabrina. “I do hope they are aware they will face much worse than myself through this door.”

Beleth did not bow. He disappeared, the hallway silent once more.

“What the Heaven was that?” Sabrina demanded as soon as he was gone. “Nick, you – knew – those demons.”

“Not all demons are evil, Sabrina,” Nick said by way of explanation. “Just like not all witches and warlocks are evil. I’ll explain more later. Right now, we need to keep going. We’ve barely got an hour left.” He found Agatha and Dorcas. “The pair of you – are you prepared?”

“We are,” Agatha nodded. Her hand drifted to the pouch on her hip. Dorcas squeezed the poppet she still held.

“Let’s go, then,” Nick nodded. “You two, come to the front.” He looked to Sabrina. “You’re ready?”

“I am,” she said resolutely. “And you?”

“Let’s get this over with,” he nodded again.
Sabrina’s hand closed around the door handle. She tugged and to her surprise, it opened.

“I suppose there’s no need for it to be locked when it’s guarded by demons,” she mused.

“Don’t go too far in,” Nick directed. “There will be more obstacles guarding him – whether Lilith’s or his own, I don’t know.”

They filed into the room in a single file line and positioned themselves along the wall.

“Look,” Sabrina breathed. She pointed to the acheron, poised on a pedestal in the middle of the room. “It’s enchanted, isn’t it? The pedestal?”

“It is,” Zelda confirmed. “We haven’t time to unravel the enchantments though…”

“I’ll try…” Sabrina trailed off. She closed her eyes and envisioned the enchantments falling away, the acheron floating to her. The rest of the group watched, Nick unsurprised, the rest in varying states of wonder, as the acheron began to float towards her. A sudden and loud explosion like canon fire echoed through the chamber. The group gasped, some ducked. Nick grabbed for Sabrina, but she stayed focused, somehow expecting both the explosion and Nick’s quick reaction. The acheron landed in her hands without further incident. “There,” she said as she opened her eyes. “The enchantments are broken.”

“That was the explosion,” Nick recognized. He gave her his signature half smile. “Well done, Spellman.” She smiled back.

“Thanks, Scratch.”

“You can rip each other’s clothes off later,” Prudence supplied, accurately assessing the situation. “Can we vanquish the Dark Lord, please? I’d like to not be stuck here for eternity until it is my due time.”

“We do need to move quickly,” Nick agreed. “Sabrina?”

Sabrina took a deep breath and brought the acheron to the center of the room once more. She placed it on the ground and prayed to Lilith they could pull this off. Agatha, Dorcas, and Nick joined her, while the rest of the group spread around the room.

“Agatha?” Nick asked. “Are you ready?”

“I am.” Agatha was determined. “Shall I begin?” Nick looked to Sabrina to answer.

“Begin,” she said with a single nod.

Like with Blackwood, Agatha went into a sort of meditative state. They watched as she chanted and began to toss sand around her. The marks she drew this time were different, led by whatever guidance she was receiving. The acheron begin to glow, as though sensing their magic. Agatha stepped back.

“I’m done.”

Sabrina took another breath. It was her turn.

“Dorcas?” The red haired witch raised an eyebrow. “Be ready.”

With another flyaway prayer to Lilith, Sabrina squared herself to the acheron. She wanted to turn around, look at Nick, at her family, one more time, just in case. But she couldn’t. If she did, she
wasn’t sure she would be able to pull herself away.

Her hand rose before her. She closed her eyes and asked the words to come.

They did.

It was as though someone else took over her body. The words weren’t her own, even though they sounded like her, even though no one watching her realized the magic was coming from somewhere else besides Sabrina, some deep, ancient well that seemed to have its home in her. Her body knew what to do and she was but a vessel to do it.

The acheron began to glow. Even with her eyes closed, she sensed the growing tension around her. With a bang amplified by their stone surroundings, the acheron broke open. Sabrina opened her eyes just as the form of the Dark Lord began to emerge from the configuration.


Dorcas started her own chant, her hands working around the doll with a string. As Lucifer’s form became more solid, a rope began to wrap around him. It took him a moment to realize he was both out of the acheron and bound.

He started to laugh.

“My favorite daughter!” he greeted. “So good to see you again! And in Hell!”

“Take a good look around,” Sabrina informed him. “This will be your last stand.”

“Oh, you foolish girl,” Lucifer shook his head. Dorcas continued to chant. “I’ll admit to being surprised to be out of my so called prison a few days ahead of schedule, but I certainly won’t complain. Fresh air does one good. I do find it surprising that you believe you can stop me twice from bring about the apocalypse – and forcing you to rule at my side.”

“You’ll never…”

“Gentleman?” Lucifer called over Sabrina’s protest. “Join me, will you?”

A roar like thunder filled the stone chamber. Nick cursed.

“Dorcas, whatever you do, no matter what happens, do not stop manipulating that doll,” he ordered. “Don’t let Lucifer escape from his bindings.” Dorcas could only nod, her entire focus on her doll and Lucifer, even though her eyes were full of fear.

The thunder grew louder.

A crack of lightning so loud it shook the walls sounded and four figures appeared.

“Daughter, friends and family of daughter, meet my most loyal servants,” Lucifer boomed. “Loyal servants, my daughter, her friends, and her family. Do with them what you may. But make sure my daughter remains unharmed. I have plans for her.”

Nick and Zelda had the same thought. They each cast a shield spell. When the two spells collided, it was powerful enough to provide them with a few additional moments of protection.

“Who are they?” Sabrina asked, taking in the demons that had appeared at Lucifer’s command. “How do we stop them?”
“Lucifuge Rofocale,” Nick said, pointing to the one the furthest to the left. “He’s in charge of Hell’s government, or at least he was, as it was by Lucifer's order.”

“The Mother of Demons demoted me,” the demon spoke in a low, rumbling voice. “She shall pay once Lucifer is free.”

“Astaroth,” Nick continued, ignoring the demon and naming the next one in line. “He’s one of the evil trinity, along with Beelzebub and Lucifer himself. It’s unsurprising that Beelzebub isn’t here, given his banishment at the Academy.”

“Beelzebub may not be here in physical form, but my brother in evil lives on,” Astaroth assured them.

“Next to him is Agaliarept and beside him, Satanachia. Together, they are the demons directly under Lucifer. Agaliarept is a general with the power to uncover secrets and reveal mysteries. Satanachia is the commander-in-chief of Satan's army and has the power to subjugate women and to do with them whatever he wishes.”

“Good Lilith,” Hilda breathed.

“What’s the plan?” Prudence asked. “This shield won’t hold much longer.”

“Satanachia – he’s the one I’m the most worried about. I’ll take him.”

“Nick…”

He ignored Sabrina.

“Ambrose? Think you and Prudence can take Agaliarept?”

“With my eyes closed,” Ambrose confirmed. Dorcas continued chanting, her hand clutching her doll with all she had.

“Agatha, Hilda, Zelda, I’m afraid you’ll have to face down the other two.”

“Let me do my worst,” Hilda said with gritty determination.

“With my help,” Agatha Harkness spoke up. She eyed Nick, daring him to contradict her.

“Fine,” Nick agreed. He had honestly forgotten she was there. “Everyone ready?”

“What about me?” Sabrina piped up.

Nick sighed. He wanted to order her to do nothing, to stand back and let them take care of the demons. He wanted to keep her as far out of harm’s way as he could. But he knew she would never allow it.

“Promise not to do anything stupid?”

“We’ve had this discussion,” she replied. She meant it as a warning.

“You’ll be with me, then,” he said. “I meant what I said about Satanachia. He’s powerful, dangerous. He won’t kill you, but he won’t hesitate to attack you all the same. You’re a woman, and Lucifer wants you. Satanachia can bring you to him, if he gets an opportunity.”

“I’ll let you lead,” Sabrina said with a nod. They both recognized it for what it was – Sabrina
showing her trust in Nick, in his abilities, in his dedication to keep her safe. He gave her a single nod, then refocused his attention on the task at hand.

“Zelda? On the count of three, let’s drop the shield.”

“I’ll count,” she nodded. “Places, everyone.” She watched with a sharp eye as everyone took up their positions. “One… Two… Three…”

Together, she and Nick brought down their shields.

Fighting broke out immediately. There was no time for Nick and Sabrina to note what was happening with the others. Satanachia let out an evil laugh as he raised his hands and began to summon his armies.

“Stop him,” Nick hissed to Sabrina. “Stall him.” With the wand still in his hand, he began to draw an intricate shape in the dirt. “Whatever it takes.”

Sabrina went with the first thing that came to mind. Her voice filled the cavernous room, clear and bold and strong. Water erupted from her hands. She directed it at Satanachia. He howled as the water hit his hands and broke his spell. It was short-lived, however. He waved his hands as he roared and the fire dissipated.

“Clever girl, aren’t you?” he taunted. “Using water to wash out flame. The daughter of the Dark Lord. I would expect nothing else.”

“I am the daughter of Edward Spellman,” Sabrina corrected. “And the Dark Lord is no more.”

“Clever yet foolish,” Satanachia observed. “You know not who you’re facing. Come, child, allow me to introduce you.”

It felt like a cold blanket fell over her. She was aware of what she was doing, yet powerless to stop herself as she began to walk towards Satanachia. She tried to fight back, tried to turn herself away from the demon. Something pulled her forward all the same.

Nick quickened his work as much as he dared. He couldn’t stop in the middle of his spell, and while his stomach flipped with nerves as he watched Sabrina be pulled away from him, he had to keep going if he was going to stop Satanachia and save her.

He drew one final line in the dirt, connecting his intricate design, and stepped squarely into the middle of it. A loud bang sounded from somewhere around him, but he dared not look.

The spell that tumbled from him was not something he had tried before. It was a risk, a roll of the dice, but he had to try. A circle of flames erupted around Satanachia. He couldn’t see the demon, but he heard him cry out in what sounded like pain. He lifted his hands, directing the flames ever higher, hoping, praying, this would work, that the magic he was experimenting with for the first time held true to his theory. He saw Sabrina in the periphery of his vision, still in a trance, still walking towards Satanachia, growing ever closer to the flames. He raised them still higher. Satanachia’s cries grew louder. There was another loud cry from around him, but he had to stop the demon before Sabrina reached the flames.

He bellowed the last words of the spell and swept his arms.

It was a horrific sight.

Satanachia began to burn, disintegrate from his feet upward. The look of horror on his face told Nick
it was as painful as he expected it would be, but Satanachia wasn’t his concern. His eyes searched for Sabrina even as he continued to control the flames. She was watching the demon in shock, a bit dazed, but otherwise seemingly okay.

When Satanachia dissolved into a pile of ashes, Nick collapsed to his hands and knees and tried to catch his breath. Sabrina ran to him.

“Nick!” She fell to her own knees. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” he huffed with a nod. “First time I’ve done that.”

“What was that?” she asked, helping him to his feet.

“Add it to the list of things I’ll explain later,” he said. “Fire purifies, remember?” He turned to check on the others. The only demon left was Agaliarept and the demon was well on his way out. He looked for Dorcas. She was still working the doll, but Lucifer was growing stronger. “We have to get to Lucifer,” he told Sabrina. “Dorcas can’t hold him much longer.”

“Let’s do it,” Sabrina agreed. She stepped forward, but stopped suddenly with a gasp of surprise. “Nick!”

“What?” he asked, at her side, searching for something else they needed to be aware of.

“This is it,” she said. “This is Roz’s vision. This is where…”

“Don’t think about that,” he told her sternly. “We are going to be fine. We’re almost done. Just Lucifer to go.”

“Just Lucifer to go,” Sabrina repeated. “You say that like it’s easy.”

“It’s all in how you look at it,” he replied. “We have to hurry. We’re losing time.”

Sabrina peered at him. He was putting on a good show, driven by both adrenaline and the knowledge that he played a pivotal role in what was to come, but she could see it. The battle with Satanachia had taken a toll on him.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” she asked.

Agaliarept howled, his last stand not enough to overcome the combined powers of the Spellmans.

“Stop worrying about me,” he dismissed. “Let’s save the world so we can go home.”

“Home,” Sabrina repeated. She nodded once, resolute. “Let’s go home.”

She and Nick lined up by Dorcas. He took just a moment to reach out and squeeze her hand. She squeezed back before he let go.

“Dorcas?” Nick asked. “On the count of three, drop the doll. One… Two… Three!”

Dorcas dropped the doll and stumbled backwards. Agatha and Prudence caught her and dragged her to the safety of their group. The ropes binding the Dark Lord fell away. He spread his arms and let out a loud, long cry, a mix of rage and freedom. The cry turned into a laugh.

“You probably feel pretty sure of yourselves right now, don’t you?” he asked. “Destroying four powerful demons in your quest to stop me from walking the earth.”
“We stopped your demons,” Sabrina said. “And we’d like to go home, so we’re going to get this over with and end you as well.”

“As though any of you will ever see the earthly side of Hell again,” Lucifer taunted. “Let’s start with getting them out of the way.” His hand flew towards the group. A loud crack echoed with their screams as their bodies flew across the room and were pinned to the wall as though they were nothing more than stickers.

“No!” Sabrina moved to help them. Nick stopped her.

“They’re fine,” he said, never taking his eyes off Lucifer. “Let’s take care of Lucifer first.”

“Let’s take care of Lucifer first,” Lucifer taunted. “I’ll acknowledge that the pair of you are rather powerful, particularly together. I gave you your powers, after all. I know what you’re capable of.”

“That’s the thing,” Nick said. “I don’t think you do. There are things you don’t understand, because you choose not to. Or perhaps you’re incapable of understanding. All the same, you aren’t going to win this fight, Lucifer.”

“It’s cute, really, that two teenagers, one of which is my daughter, thinks they can put an end to Satan himself when even the False God couldn’t.”

“We’re speeding up the False God’s timeline for ending you,” Sabrina said. “And I’ll say it again. I am not your daughter. I am Sabrina Spellman, daughter of Edward and Diana Spellman, and I will win.”

“You do make your daddy proud with your stubborn streak,” Lucifer drawled. “But enough bantering.” He made a show of pushing up his sleeves. “I shall get rid of you boyfriend first. Daddy doesn’t approve, and he did just destroy one of my most loyal supporters.”

Nick and Sabrina ducked just as Lucifer tossed an unspoken spell at Nick.

“Lure him to the circle I drew for Satanachia,” Nick told Sabrina as quietly as he could without Lucifer overhearing. “Get him there and I can take care of the rest.”

“Okay,” Sabrina nodded. She got to her feet and squared herself to her father. He was vain, and she could use that to her advantage. “While I do intend to end you, I want you to tell me something. What would it be like, if I were your queen?”

“Ah, curious about what could be, are we?” Lucifer asked, taking the bait. “Imagine it, dear daughter. You, with the entire world at your command, the only person to answer to being me. I’d even be willing to give you Greendale, allow you to keep your precious mortals as pets. The boyfriend does have to go, of course, but if your aunts behave themselves, I will allow them to stick around – as our slaves, of course.”

“That’s no deal,” Sabrina shook her head, pacing a few steps to the side, Lucifer following her at a distance. “If I were to be your queen, my aunts would not be slaves. And you can’t harm Nick.” She was aware of Nick, could feel his presence, but she had no idea what he was doing. “He and I are a package deal.”

“Nicholas has gotten himself into too much trouble for me to allow him to go on,” Lucifer said. “Killing Satanachia, pledging his allegiance to Lilith instead of yours truly…”

“But didn’t he do a good job convincing me to follow the Path of Night?” Sabrina asked. A few more steps. Lucifer still followed her. She held his eyes with hers. She felt it. Something within her
was holding him captive. She had to keep eye contact. She had to use whatever power was within
her to draw him to her. “He assured me when I had doubts, held my hand when I was afraid.
Doesn’t he deserve some sort of grace?”

“Grace,” Lucifer repeated. “That’s a word the False God uses. Not our kind.”

“A second chance, then,” Sabrina tried, backtracking. “He’s talented, powerful. Besides, warlocks
are far less common than witches, right? Don’t you want to preserve one of the most powerful
warlocks our kind has seen in years?”

She nearly said “since my father,” but she knew it would anger him, distract him.

“You make an interesting argument.” He took a few more steps towards her. “Tell me, dear
daughter, would you be willing to submit to me if I allowed the boy to live?”

“I would,” she nodded. She realized she meant it. If it came down to it, if she had to choose between
being free and saving Nick by submitting to the Dark Lord’s bidding, she would choose the Dark
Lord. She wouldn’t allow him to harm Nick. “Truly.”

“You’re an interesting witch, dear Sabrina.” He took another couple of steps. “Willing to sacrifice
yourself in the name of a boy.”

“There are things you don’t understand,” she replied. “Love is one of them.”

“Love,” Lucifer scoffed. “Edward Spellman came to me with this nonsense of ‘love’ when he asked
permission to marry your mortal mother. I’ll tell you what I told him. Love is not real. Love is
something mortals make up to help them cope with their mundane lives. It’s precious, really, that you
think love is a real thing. You only need lust. And me.”

“We’ll have to agree to disagree on love,” Sabrina informed him. “I feel sorry for you, that you will
never understand it. You’ll never know what it means to be willing to sacrifice yourself for someone
else in the name of protecting them.”

Nick was close by. Her heart told her that. If she would have turned around, she would have seen
him cringe at her words. He had betrayed her once, but what he was about to do would be the worst
kind of betrayal. This would destroy her. He shook his head just slightly. He couldn’t think about
that. This was the only way.

“I protect my own in my own way,” he said. “Now, why are we chatting? You came here, so
determined to end me. What are you real plans?”

Still holding eye contact, Sabrina squared her shoulders.

“You’re not the only one who can betray others,” she informed him, going with the first thought that
filled her mind while she still held him captive. “I brought my family and friends to this forsaken
place to further my own agenda. I needed them to get here, but I’ve had a change of heart. I don’t
want to save the world. I want to rule it.” She nodded once, praying she could sell it, praying she
could make him believe she had truly had a change of heart in spite of their discussion of love, that
his vanity would be his fatal flaw. “I want to rule the world with you.”

Delight filled the Dark Lord’s features.

“I knew you would come around,” he said. “You’re too much like me, like it or not. You’re
ambitious, determined. You will make a strong queen.”
“I get Greendale,” she said. “My aunts, cousin, Nick, and my friends will be spared.”

“I’ll give you your pets,” Lucifer agreed. “Even the boy, but his leash will be kept short.”

Eyes never leaving his, Sabrina took one more step backwards. She extended her hand.

“Shake on it.”

“Such a mortal custom,” Lucifer mused. “But I’ll humor you.”

He took her hand.

She pulled.

Something akin to an electrical shock tore through her body as Lucifer stumbled into the circle Nick had drawn. As she collapsed to the ground, the ability to move seemingly sucked from her body, she realized Nick had expanded the pattern, added more symbols, more intricate designs. He was there now, dirty and soaked from sweat, his eyes blazing, reflecting both the fire around them and the fire within him. She tried to stand, intending to go to him, help him where she could. Her body simply wouldn’t respond to her commands, however. She could feel every limb, even the aches settling in from journey through Hell, but it was as though the connection from her brain to her arms and legs had been severed.

“Nick,” she tried, “I can’t move…”

He ignored her, but swept his hand in her direction. She was moved aside, out of his way, still nothing more than a limp pile of limbs. She recognized then it was on purpose. He had charmed her to keep her out of the way.

“Nick!”

There was no use. He had a plan and she wasn’t privy to it. She could only watch helplessly as he squared off with the Dark Lord. Across the room, still stuck to the wall, everyone else looked on, wearing a similar look of helplessness and fear.

“She’s right, you know,” Nick said to Lucifer. “You don’t understand love. I didn’t either, not until I met her. What I didn’t realize until recently is that I’ve been loved my entire life. My parents loved me. They did things most witches and warlocks wouldn’t do to ensure my protection. My familiar, too, loved me, as twisted as her love was. Your vanity, coupled with your delusion that love is but a mortal trait, will be what destroys you.”

“You seem to think you’re capable of destroying me,” Lucifer taunted. “Remember, boy, I gave you your powers. I know you’re capable of bindings and conjurings most of your kind are not. I’m aware, too, that you have an ability to destroy demons.” He looked at Nick curiously. “I didn’t give you that power, though.” He seemed to have just realized it. “I wouldn’t give you the ability to destroy my creations.”

“I’m baptized,” Nick said. “You are not responsible for all of my powers. Nor are you responsible for all of Sabrina’s, Agatha’s, Dorcas,’ Prudence, or Hilda’s. But powers or not, I’ll still win this battle.”

“Oh?” Lucifer asked, raising his eyebrow in curiosity. “And please, do tell me why that is? Why is it that a mere warlock, powerful than most, to be sure, but still not as powerful as me, will be able to destroy me, the Dark Lord?”
Nick stepped into the symbols he had drawn. Sabrina’s heart clutched in her chest. He wasn’t supposed to be in the bindings. She didn’t know how she knew that, but she was certain of it.

“Nick!” she called out. “No! You promised me!”

He didn’t look at her, but his heart thundered in his ears at her cry.

“I’m sorry, Sabrina.” He heard her gasp. “It has to be this way.”

The same fire he had he had called upon to destroy Satanachia erupted around them. But it was white this time, hotter than hot. It rose high around them, hiding Nick and Lucifer from view.

“Nick!” Sabrina screamed. “Nick!”

“A neat trick, Mr. Scratch,” came the Dark Lord’s voice. “But it will take more than holy fire to destroy me!”

“Love will destroy you,” Nick replied. “It’s a power greater than anything you can give us. And I’m not afraid to die for it.”

It happened all at once.

The fire roared so high it licked at the high stone ceiling, just as the Dark Lord’s voice bellowed a spell so loud, so powerful, the cavern once again shook. Nick’s own spell was mixed with it, the two magics intermingling, Sabrina’s cries echoing with them, blinded by the power of the fire keeping Nick from her sight, drowning out the cries from those along the wall.

Another explosion, this one so powerful pieces of ceiling fell around them, sounded off, shook them all to their core. The fire gathered itself into a column and with one last cry from the Dark Lord, it imploded.

Ash rained down around them, the remains of the Dark Lord falling like snow. His spell sticking the others to the wall broke, sending them falling to the ground. But Sabrina didn’t notice. The ability to move was restored to her and she ran, faster than she had ever ran, to Nick’s lifeless body in the center of his symbols.

“Nick!”

She fell to her knees at his side, cradled his face in her hands.

“Nick!” She wiped away some of the thick grime covering his features, trying to see him, assess the damage. “Nick! Wake up!” She shook him a bit. “Nick!”

Nothing.

Tears fell down her cheeks.

With shaking hands, her fingers slid to his throat.

There was no heartbeat.

“No!”

Her cry echoed through the room, full of pain and sorrow.

“No! Nick! No! Wake up!” She shook him harder, trying to pull him out of whatever state he was in.
She looked to Hilda who stood nearby, wearing a horrified look on her face as she took in the boy lying on the floor, his leg bent at an awkward angle, his body limp from lack of life. “Hilda! Help him!”

“Sweetheart, I don’t…”

“Help him!” she screamed. Tears poured down her cheeks, cutting through her own layer of grime. “Help him! Bring him back! I know you can!”

Hilda kneeled beside Nick. She, too, checked for a pulse, her fingers closing around his wrist.

“Sabrina, darling.” Her voice shook. Tears filled her eyes. Around them, the others stood with various looks of shock, horror, sadness. Agatha Harkness sobbed openly as she took in her dead grandson’s body. Ambrose had an arm around Prudence who had her hand over her mouth in shock. Even Zelda fought tears. “I’m afraid there’s nothing we can do…”

“No!” She refused to believe it. “I can save him. I know I can.” She put her hands on his chest, closed her eyes, and willed him to be alive, healed. Nothing happened. She tried again. “Nick!” She tried one more time. “You promised!”

She fell apart then, collapsing to Nick’s chest, her sobs uncontrollable and ragged.

“Oh, dear,” came Lilith’s soft voice. She had come to celebrate, aware from her subjects that the Dark Lord had been vanquished, unaware of the causality left in his wake. She didn’t have words. She had never thought one of them would die, not really. They were squirrelly, the Spellmans, Nicholas Scratch, the group that called themselves the Weird Sisters. Death eluded them. Ruler of Hell though she was, even she couldn’t right this very clear wrong. “I’m… so sorry…”

“Ambrose,” came Zelda’s voice, softer than usual. “Let’s… Get them home…”

Stoically, Ambrose nodded. He stepped forward, then crouched down. He placed a brotherly kiss on Sabrina’s hair.

“I’m so sorry, cousin,” he said. “I’m so sorry…”

“He… Promised…” Sabrina sobbed. She clutched Nick, refused to let go.

“I’m going to take you home,” Ambrose said gently. He looked to Lilith. “We’ll be able to teleport out?”

“I’ve arranged it,” she nodded. “It’s the very least I can do.”

“Nick…” Sabrina clutched him even tighter. “Nick…”

Ambrose reached his hands out to place one his cousin and one on the warlock he found himself in awe of. Sabrina didn’t see it right now, but Nick’s love for her – and her love for him – had saved them all, and the world to boot.

A ragged gasp filled the air.

Sabrina bolted upright, her own gasp of surprise emitting from her.

Air puffed from Nick’s lips. His eyes fluttered.

“Oh my Lilith,” Hilda breathed.
His brown eyes met Sabrina’s tear-filled ones.

“Sa… Brina…”

“Nick?” She said his name like a question.

“It…” he took a shaky breath. “Worked…”

“Lucifer is gone,” she nodded. “But… You…”

“It… Worked…”

He tried to sit up, but he collapsed back to the ground, weak, his body exhausted.

“I… Nick…”

Sabrina was shocked. Confused. Moments ago, he was dead and she was trying to think of any way, any way at all, consequences be damned, that would bring him back. And now, weak as he was, he was there, trying to talk to her, trying to confirm that they had been successful.

“I’ve never seen anything like this,” Lilith said. “He’s… Alive…”

“Back to the mortuary,” Hilda said again, taking charge. “He needs medical treatment. I suppose we all do.”

“And a stiff drink,” Zelda added, unable to process what had just happened. “Maybe two or three.”

“Let’s go,” Ambrose nodded. He put a firm hand on Sabrina and another on Nick. Hilda placed a hand on his shoulder. He uttered the incantation. A moment later, they were in Sabrina’s bedroom.

“The others will be along,” he said. “They’ll either have to teleport themselves or walk out of Hell. Lilith will help them.”

Sabrina had no cares for the others. Nick was dazed, but he was there, lying on her floor, blinking his eyes as he tried to comprehend what had just happened.

“Nick,” she said, her hand in his. “What hurts?”

“My leg,” he breathed. “My head.”

“Into bed,” Hilda determined. She used a spell to levitate him and guide him to Sabrina’s bed. “His leg is broken and I’m sure he’s got a nasty concussion.”

“I’ll be fine,” he said, even if he didn’t sound convincing. “Sabrina…”

“I’m here.” She refused to leave his side. She still had his hand. “Nick…”

“It worked,” he said again. “I’ll be fine.”

She was missing something, but right then, she didn’t care. Nick needed her.

“Let’s get you taken care of,” she said. “That’s what’s most important right now.”

“Ambrose, fetch Melvin for me. I’ll need him to mix up a few herbal remedies. Tell Elsbeth the others will be along and to treat them as needed, call me if there is something she can’t handle. Sabrina…”
“I’m not leaving him,” Sabrina interrupted. “Don’t dare ask me to.”

“I was going to ask you to summon my bag.” Hilda said patiently. “It will be quicker than if I have to go fetch it myself.”

“Of course,” Sabrina nodded. She closed her eyes and pictured Hilda’s bag. It appeared in her hands moments later. She passed it to Hilda, then focused her full attention on Nick. “I love you, Scratch,” she told him. Tears filled her eyes. She blinked them away. “You’re going to be okay.”

“I love you, Sabrina,” he breathed out. He winced in pain as Hilda went to work examining his leg. “I’ll… Explain it all…”

“Later,” Sabrina shook her head. “Whatever it is can wait.” She brushed his hair back. “Hilda? Can I do anything?”

“Just hold his hand,” Hilda directed. “Nicolas, dear, your leg is broken in two places. I can heal it, but it will be painful.”

“Do what you have to do,” Nick nodded.

Melvin entered the room.

“What… Happened?”

“Later,” Hilda said. “I need you to make a few things for me.”

Sabrina tuned out Hilda and Melvin as they worked, her full attention on Nick. He was filthy, like her, covered in ash, soot, dried sweat, and dirt. She closed her eyes again. A cool, wet cloth appeared in her lap.

With gentle hands, she went to work, wiping away the layers of grime. His skin beneath it was red, perhaps even burned, but Hilda would take care of that. She imagined they were all a bit red under their layers of filth.

“Ah!” he cried out when Hilda put her hands on his leg to begin healing it. “Lilith!”

“Shh,” Sabrina soothed. “I know it hurts, but Hilda will be quick.” Her hand found his again. He squeezed tight, skewered his eyes shut. “Hilda, can’t you give him something?”

“Here,” Melvin offered, holding out a glass of something a deep purple color. “It will dull the pain, but will probably knock him out for a while as well.”

“Thank you, Melvin.” Sabrina took the mixture.

“No,” Nick shook his head. “I don’t want…” He let out another hiss of pain.

“None of that,” Sabrina told him. “You’re taking this, Scratch.” She held the glass to his lips and he didn’t protest again. He sputtered a bit, the taste unpleasant, but he drank it down. “Is it helping?”

“Yes,” Nick nodded, eyes already heavy. “Sabrina…”

“I’ll be right here,” she assured him. “Rest, Nick.” She leaned down to kiss his forehead. “I love you.” She couldn’t say it enough before. Now, it was the only thing she ever wanted to say again.

“Love… You…”
He drifted off to sleep. She curled into a tight ball next to him, allowing for plenty of room for Hilda and Melvin to work.

She had no idea what had happened in that dungeon. Something bigger than them all had brought about Lucifer’s end and resurrected Nick from the dead. There would be time to ponder it. For now, she could only focus on his chest, rising and falling as he slept.

Quiet tears leaked down her cheeks as she counted each puff of air that came from him, assuring herself he was alive. She found his pulse in his wrist, wrapped her fingers around it so she could feel the reassuring steady beat.

“I’ll be right here,” she whispered, even though she was sure he couldn’t hear her. “Always.”

Chapter End Notes

Love conquers all, friends. Always.

And I hope no one ever needs to look at my Google History - they’d have questions.

Nick will explain it all. But for now, WHEW.

What did you think? I love your comments!

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