



HARLEIGH BECK

SINS OF THE FALLEN

Touched by Darkness

TOUCHED BY DARKNESS

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HARLEIGH BECK

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For my readers who, like me, skip the blurb and jump straight to the trigger warnings. It's okay to enjoy the depraved. You're not alone.

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CONTENTS

[Trigger warnings](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Chapter 28](#)

[Also by Harleigh Beck](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[About the Author](#)

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TRIGGER WARNINGS

Touched by Darkness is a dark paranormal romance. The alpha males in this book are no heroes, and you won't find a Prince Charming within these pages. These characters are selfish, manipulative, destructive, and volatile.

If that's not your thing, I advise against reading any further.

This book is very dark and contains disturbing scenes that may be triggering for some readers. This includes dub/non-con throughout, degradation, breath play, blood play, murder, dubious cheating, and graphic violence.

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PROLOGUE

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AURELIA

The cobblestone is damp and cold beneath my bare feet. My blood has long since dried between the cracks. Darkness surrounds me, as thick and heavy as the silence. Turning in a circle, I gaze around the town square. The fountain is absent of water, and the cherub follows me with its eyes. I rub my hands over my arms to stave off the cold.

"You can't help yourself, can you, Angel?" Amenadiel steps out from the shadows, his intense eyes burning with hatred. "The darkness calls you."

My head snaps his way. Danger clings to him like a fog, swirling in front of his body and crawling along the cobblestone.

Swallowing down my fear, I watch it inch closer to my feet. My hair sticks to the cold sweat on my cheek despite the cold air. "How am I back in Eden?"

He hums, tipping his head back, his eyes roaming over the mended crack in the veil. "You're asking the wrong questions."

The sky is dark, filled with twinkling stars. Rubbing at the pang in my chest, I focus my attention back on Amenadiel. "Not only am I back in Eden, but I'm back in time. It's as if I never left."

"Time," he repeats, tasting it on his tongue. "What is time?"

"Stop with the philosophical bullshit!"

He tsks, stepping closer.

Inching back, I release a strangled cry when the congealed blood beneath my feet turns liquid.

"It's too late, Angel. Paradise took you back, but the darkness already has a hold on you. Slowly tainting your soul and seeping through the cracks of your heart, it feeds on your light."

"Why won't the gates open for me?"

Closing the distance between us, he smirks. "So eager to whore yourself out to those boys."

I grit my teeth. "Just tell me."

"What makes you think I have the answer?"

"Do you not?" I counter when he begins circling me.

"Unlike you, Angel, I didn't return to Eden."

My shoulders slump. I had hoped he would hold the answers to my questions. But it was wishful thinking.

His heat presses up against my back. Reaching up and sliding my hair from my shoulder, he whispers, "Looks like we're both stuck."

I squeeze my eyes shut and swallow down the emotions clogging my throat.

"You'll never see those boys again."

I shake my head. "You're lying."

"Heaven's own angel is in love," he taunts, chuckling.

Turning around, I start to speak, but his hand shoots out and grabs my chin. "It's only fair that you get to spend eternity pining for something you can't have after you took everything from me. You see, it's about more than love. Once you taste the sweetness of sin, you never forget. It will haunt you, call you to it like a siren at sea, and drown you in your own self-pity."

I sit upright in bed, breathing heavily, my hair sticking to the sheen of sweat on my skin. Freya is snoring softly on the cot next to mine. Sunshine pours in through gaps in the straw roof, and birds sing in the trees outside. It's moments like these that make me miss the nighttime outside the gates. I had no problem sleeping in the sunlight before I left, but now my nightmares always wake me.

Placing my feet on the ground, I peer over at Freya. She'll stay asleep for another couple of hours. Nothing short of the end times would wake her now.

I pad outside and gaze around at the small dwellings, each housing two angels. Flowerbeds fragrance the air, butterflies fly from one rose bush to another, and the warm breeze moves my hair across my body, the strands tingling my bare nipples.

As I draw in a trembling breath, my eyes seek out the wall towering over the trees. My feet follow, carrying me across the soft grass. Before long, I'm running, my blonde hair flying behind me. My heart pounds, throbbing in my ears, and my lungs burn with every shaky inhale. *Please, let me out.* I fall to my knees outside the gates, startling the deer to my right that's forever munching on the soft grass. Even the hare darts away.

"Please," I sob, head bent. My long hair shields me from the world, protecting me behind its blonde curtain of wavy strands. "I don't belong

here anymore.”

Swiping at my wet cheeks, I sniff pitifully. I never thought I would feel this way. I’m a foreigner kneeling on the grass, which once softened the shriek of my baby cry and carried my toddler feet.

Anger surges within me, a feeling I didn’t know before I slipped through the gates the first time. “Fuck you!” I scream, glaring up at the golden gates. “Fuck you for keeping me prisoner here!” Banging my hands against the shimmering surface, I release a wracking sob. Everything is hopeless. I miss Daemon, Alaric, and Ronan. Even Dariana. Are they coming for me yet? Are they searching for me? Going out of their minds with worry?

Rising to my feet, I hurry over to the tall tree closest to the wall and begin to climb it, using my arm strength to heave myself higher. I can’t risk anyone seeing me fly, so this is the safest way to peer over the wall, hidden behind the green leaves.

When I finally reach the top, I’m sweaty and my heart is pounding against my ribcage. I swipe my hair out of my eyes and lean back against the trunk, gazing out over the wall. Storm clouds light up the darkness in the distance, rolling over the treetops like a sped-up recording. The silence is complete, despite the flash in the sky.

Aurelia... The forest rustles my name, rolling the soft vowels off its spindly branches.

Shifting onto my hands, I slowly crawl forward, careful not to slip. The soft bark peels away beneath my fingers, and the leaves rustle in the warm breeze. Somewhere out there beats the heart of three kings. The *only* royals in my kingdom. They claimed me, stole my innocence, and shackled it in the darkest corner of their castle. My soul calls out to them on the wind, carrying its song across the distance. Pleading for black-winged angels to scale these walls and rescue me from my torment—to steal me away from perfect love. I don’t want redemption. This Little Red Riding Hood pines for the wolves in the woods, their lethal bites, and fierce snarls. And the evil witch who leads the pack.

CHAPTER
ONE

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AURELIA

Everyone around me is so serene, oozing light and happiness. It pours off their translucent skin in waves. I used to feel that way, too. But not anymore. Not since I got a taste of devilish sin.

The urge to scale the walls consumes my every waking hour. It's all I can think about. Late at night, I sneak out when the other angels are asleep. The gates don't open for me anymore. I've pleaded and begged, but they remain shut, silencing the call of the woods. I still hear it in the breeze and in the faint rustle of leaves overhead.

Aurelia...

Freya nudges me with her elbow, and I drop to my knees beside her. Up ahead on the podium, the elders chant the morning prayer. Three times a day, we walk to the village square to worship the light. In between prayers, we have classes on the field. Life here is predictable, for lack of a better word. It never used to bother me to this extent before. I was always curious about what lay on the other side of the gates, but I didn't suffer like I do now. I'm restless.

"You're not chanting," Freya whispers next to me, tearing me from my thoughts.

All around us, the murmur of prayer fills the air. If I don't join in, I could get into trouble. The elders always remind us how important prayer is.

When it's over, we rise to our feet. As the crowd disperses, we make our way to the field, where the elders wait for us. The sun warms my skin, bringing out the freckles on my shoulders and nose. I miss the cold and the nip in the air. I miss my breath visible in front of me. But more than that, I miss the night sky.

"Paradise to Aurelia." Freya clicks her fingers in my face. "What is up with you these days?"

Lowering myself to the grass, I sweep my long hair over my shoulder. "Nothing."

"You've acted weird for weeks."

My eyes trail down to her naked breasts and then back up again. I avert my gaze and swallow the lump in my throat. How did I not notice our

nakedness before I left Eden? Now it's all I can see everywhere I look.

Oliver has the biggest cock of all the angels, and I can't say I'm surprised since he also has the most impressive wings. "Don't you ever want... more?"

Shifting next to me, Freya frowns. "I'm not sure what you mean by more. We have everything."

"Do we?" I ask her.

Oliver and two other male angels walk up to us. "You didn't chant again," he says to me. His blue eyes sparkle and his blonde curls move in the gentle breeze. Freya preens beside me, combing her fingers through her hair. She's always starry-eyed around Oliver.

How she doesn't notice his big cock is beyond me. It's all I can stare at. It's impossible not to when it's in my face. It's not erect, so it dangles there. My cheeks heat, and I move back.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" he asks me.

"I'm not looking at you."

Peering down at his own body, he says, "Do I have leaves stuck to me or something?"

It's impossible not to snort a laugh—well, it is for me. Freya looks at me like I have lost the plot. I'm starting to think she's on to something.

Leaning in close, she whispers, "Can you please act normal for once?"

Oliver is a popular angel. She doesn't want us to be ostracized.

"So," Oliver starts, joining me on the grass, "why didn't you say the prayer?"

"No reason. I was distracted."

"Distracted?" he asks, like it's an impossible concept.

It sparks my curiosity. Rearranging my hair to cover my breasts, I face him fully. "Have you ever wondered about the world outside the walls?"

He sits with his legs drawn up and his elbows on his knees. "Why would I ever wonder about what's outside Eden? Besides," he says, messing his hair, "we know what's out there. Fallen angels, death, pain, and suffering."

"But what if there's more?"

His friends shift uncomfortably beside him. We don't talk about the outside world. Our only knowledge is the stories handed down to us by the elders. "What if there's goodness inside all that darkness? What if we need pain to truly appreciate bliss?"

“Aurelia,” Freya whispers, a look of embarrassment crossing her features.

“Think about it.” I’m on a roll. “How can you love without pain?”

“In pain, there is no fear,” Oliver counters, and I roll my eyes. It’s like describing red to a colorblind person.

“Life is not a Bible, Oliver. You’re not a robot without emotions.” Even as I say it, I know it’s not entirely true. There are lots of feelings we’re not subjected to here in our world. Negative emotions, like the annoyance inside me now, exist only on the outside. It’s how I know what happened to me was not a dream. I escaped the garden once, and the feelings I gained are still with me. I can never forget how my heart sped up at the taste of a kiss. Thinking about it now hardens my nipples, and I blush before I can stop myself.

Reaching out, Oliver brushes his finger over my burning cheek. “You’re red.”

Of course, he doesn’t know what blushing is or why it happens. I also can’t use the sun as an excuse because it’s never too hot here. Everything is just so... perfect. It’s making me antsy. I peer behind me at the walls in the distance. The top of them is visible through the trees. I’m a fish in a bowl. A Santa in a snow globe. I’m trapped.

“Hey...” Oliver brings my attention back to him with a finger below my chin. “Where are these thoughts coming from?”

Oliver has never touched me before. I don’t admire his big wingspan or the blinding shimmer of his skin, so he never pays me much attention. Virtuous as he may be, he likes to be praised. It soothes something inside me to know that even here in Paradise, flaws exist.

Gazing into his eyes, I search for something but return blank. His sparkling blue irises have no hints of flames or devilishness. They’re as still and pure as a clear lagoon. I look away. “It’s nothing, Oliver. I’m being silly.”

His gaze lingers on me for a moment longer before he rises to his feet when the elders cross the grass.

“What was that?” Freya whispers while we bow. The elders sweep their eyes over the class, smiling softly. They radiate beauty, kindness, and compassion. With their blonde hair and shimmering skin, they take your breath away.

“Talk to me,” Freya urges when the class is finished and we’re on our way to our house. Why won’t she drop it?

“There’s nothing to say,” I reply, keeping my gaze forward.

She pulls me to a stop outside our door. “You’re lying. Why won’t you trust me?”

“It’s not that I don’t trust you,” I tell her, looking around for listening ears. “But you wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

Frowning, she watches me open the door. “Maybe you should try me.”

I sigh, walking in. She follows me and shuts the door before leaning back against it with her arms crossed.

“Well?”

“Fine.” I plop down onto the wooden chair at the small, circular table by the window. It’s open, so I lean forward and pull it shut. You can never be too careful.

Pushing off the door, Freya drags out a chair across from me.

I don’t know how to say it, so I blurt, “I escaped Eden, but then I got kidnapped by three fallen angels and taken to Hell. I fled and tried to get back in, but the gates wouldn’t open. Then I found a way in through my mind.”

She simply blinks, staring at me. Her mouth opens and closes, but no sound comes out.

I cringe. “Say something.”

“You escaped Eden and got kidnapped by fallen angels.”

“Yes.”

“And then you found a way back through your ‘mind?’”

“Yes, there was a tear in the veil.”

“A tear in the veil?” She blinks again.

Shifting in my chair, I pull a face. “I know how it sounds.”

She laughs. Lightly at first, but then it bubbles out of her. She can’t stop. I knew this would happen, so I didn’t want to tell her.

“Okay, okay.” She tries to control herself, but fails miserably. “I want to believe you, I really do. But you haven’t been gone. You’ve been here every day, Aurelia.”

“I can’t explain it...”

She wipes tears from her eyes. “I’ll humor you. What are you going to do?”

If only I had an answer to that. How do you get yourself kicked out of Eden? And do I want to leave?

Yes, I do.

I can't live out my existence in here knowing what I do.

"I don't know." I shrug. "What can I do?"

She regards me for a moment before leaning forward and taking my hand. "So, maybe I find this all crazy and hard to believe, but I'm here for you, Aurelia. You're my best friend. You know that, right? Whenever you need to talk, I'm here. I promise to listen and not judge. Even when I struggle to understand. Deal?"

My lips twitch. "Deal."

Satisfied, she nods, relaxing back into her seat. "So, kidnapped by fallen angels, huh? What were they like?"

When I smirk, her eyes widen. Whether she believes me or not, she's drawn in. Even I'm questioning the legitimacy of my claims as I think back to Daemon, Alaric, and Ronan. It seems so far away. So distant, like a foggy memory. But no... memories press on my mind. I've witnessed things and experienced emotions I never knew existed. I have tasted desire, jealousy, and heartbreak. It can't all be my imagination.

Nudging my knee with hers, she says, "Go on, don't hold out on me."

A blush creeps up my neck before I can stop it, and my cheeks flame.

"Oh, girl," she says, her eyes wide. "You have it bad!"

Chewing on my lip, I regard her. I want to tell her the truth, but where do I start? How can I explain what happened to me? Some parts I don't want to tell her. Freya is happy here in Eden. This is her home. If I told her about desire and death, I could put her at risk. "The stories were true. The fallen angels have hair as dark as night, smoky eyes with flames flickering in their depths, and majestic black wings."

"You're swooning."

A laugh rips free from my mouth. "Maybe I am." Growing serious, I reach for her hand. "There is so much I want to tell you, but I can't. Eden is your home. I don't want to do anything to jeopardize your safety here."

She looks skeptical, but lets it go. "What can you tell me that's within safe boundaries?"

My smile breaks free again. "They can conjure hellfire with a click of their fingers."

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CHAPTER
TWO

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AURELIA

Aurelia...

Each call is getting louder. Some days it screams so loud that I'm forced to press my hands over my ears. I'm going crazy. To prove my point, I'm pacing outside the gates while chewing on my thumbnail. My skin is itching. I need to escape. I need to scale those damn walls somehow.

The sun is blinding. Either that or I'm growing sensitive to it.

It's early morning again, and I snuck out before Freya awakened. I struggle to sleep these days. The sun is too bright. I'm restless, yearning for the night.

I pause as my eyes catch on the apple tree down the length of the wall. The thick trunk gives way to crooked, long branches dotted with red, juicy apples hidden behind a sea of green leaves. There is something about the tree that draws me closer, some echo of a memory, perhaps. It's different from the other trees with its weathered bark, out of place in a landscape untouched by bad weather. I trace my fingers over the ridged patterns, sensing the ancient wisdom it exudes.

Reaching for an apple, I pull it off, and the branch snaps back into place. The fruit rests in my palm, shiny and unblemished. Deep red, like a pearl of blood.

I bring it up to my lips. But before I can sink my teeth into its flesh, movement makes me pause. Brown and black scales slither closer on the crooked branch. Beady black eyes and a forked tongue.

My breath catches.

"Zzzsin," the snake hisses, coiling around my wrist when I hold it out to the branch.

I stand frozen, mesmerized, as it whispers my name. It wants me to take a bite out of the apple, like in the stories of Adam and Eve.

I look up, scanning my eyes over the green leaves. The sun streams through, warming my skin.

"The tree of knowledge," I whisper, gazing back at the snake. It's now wrapped tight around my wrist, and its face is so close to mine that its forked tongue brushes over my lips. Hellfire flickers in the black eyes

swaying before me, luring my lips closer to the apple in my hand. The promise of freedom dangles like a worm on a hook.

One bite—that's all it takes.

"Aurelia?"

I startle and look up. Freya watches me from the path, her concerned blue eyes sweeping over me.

Confused, I gaze around. The snake is gone.

"What are you doing?"

I stare at the apple in my hand until I'm forced to blink. "I-err. I don't know."

"There's fruit back at the field if you want some."

I drop the apple to the ground, and it falls with a heavy thud. As I watch, it shrivels, turning brown and rotting before my eyes.

With a thick swallow, I slowly look up at Freya. Something is happening to me. Amenadiel was right. The darkness is calling me home and feeding on my light. Either that, or I'm going crazy.

We set off walking in silence down the path until Freya clears her throat. "I'm worried about you."

I gaze down at the crushed wildflowers on the trodden path. "You don't have to worry about me."

"You're not yourself. How many times have I found you by the gate lately? You're there nearly every morning."

Coming to a stop, I throw my hands out. "Something is happening to me, okay? I don't know what, but I can feel it. I know you don't believe I escaped the garden, but I did. I can't pretend everything is fine. Don't you get it? There's no going back once you've been touched by sin."

Freya stares at me for a long moment. "Why would Heaven take you back if you're tainted?"

That's the million-dollar question. I don't get it myself. "The Bible teaches redemption and the forgiveness of sins. Maybe that's why I'm back here as if nothing ever happened. Maybe Heaven can erase sins, but not memories? We're taught about free will. If our memories were erased, we wouldn't have the free will to choose the light."

"Is that what you did?" Freya asks. "Choose the light?"

Did I? "I don't know. I don't think you can choose that which you are. Does that make sense?"

"No," she laughs. "You need to explain."

Chewing on my lip, I weigh my words. “It’s hard to explain. We”—I gesture between us—“are of the light. Better yet, we *are* the light. If I turn away from the light, I’ll find myself out there, lost in the darkness.” I gesture in the general direction of the gates. “But if I turn toward the light, I’ll find myself back here. I didn’t *choose* the light. I turned toward it.”

She looks confused. I don’t blame her. I don’t understand it myself. “I don’t mean an actual light.” Pressing my hand over her chest, I continue, “I mean this. Your *light*. Maybe Heaven and Hell are physical manifestations of our inner states. Maybe none of this shit is real. How else can what happened to me just be erased? How am I even back here as if I was never gone? The truth is, I don’t know why Heaven took me back. It makes no sense.”

“It does to me.”

“Yeah?” I ask, and she nods.

“I’m not going to pretend I understood your ramblings about manifestations and whatnot. But you’re inherently good. No matter what you may have done out there or what you have witnessed, you’re good and pure at heart. It’s not about your actions, but what’s at your core. Even perfection has flaws. Even good souls make mistakes. How can the Light forgive sin unless sin is committed?”

“You’re sounding like me,” I reply with a laugh, and she joins in as we start walking again.

“You said it yourself. We’ve known each other our whole lives. I may not understand most of it, but I do listen to you.”

“I don’t know what I would do without you,” I reply honestly.

“Where are you going?” a masculine voice asks behind me, making me jump out of my skin.

Oliver takes me in, running his eyes down my body before scanning the trees and the trodden path. I was on my way to the gates. No surprise there.

“I’m going for a walk.”

“Where to?” he asks, stepping closer, suspicion written all over him. He’s tall and broad with a blinding smile, which is nowhere in sight now. His blue eyes narrow when I hesitate to reply.

“I like it out here.”

“We all know where this road leads. You shouldn’t be here.”

Freya sounds awkward as she interrupts our stare down. “I’m going to head back before the elders come looking for us.”

Neither of us reply, locked in a battle of wills.

"I'll see you guys later." She walks off, the sound of her soft steps growing fainter.

Grinding my jaw, I steer off the path, refusing to justify myself to him. It soothes me to know I can still experience anger and annoyance in this shiny place. It reminds me that the part of me that aches for Daemon, Alaric, and Ronan is real. Not a fragment of my imagination.

Oliver chases after me and cages me against a tall tree. "Where are you going?"

I study him, running my eyes over his defined cheekbones and straight nose. When my gaze flicks down to his lips, a familiar throb awakens in my clit. More proof I'm not going insane. I had never felt sexual desire before I left Eden. I didn't know about sex. Now I do. Now I'm painfully aware of his nearness and masculine smell. The muscles in his arms, where he traps me against the tree. The rise and fall of his broad chest.

"Nothing good can come from stealing an angel."

"Besides the pleasure of defiling her."

My eyes dance across his skin.

"Want us to corrupt you beyond repair?"

"I was going for a walk," I repeat, my eyes catching on a splash of red on the branch behind him.

An apple.

My breath catches. I can practically hear the hissing in my ear as my eyes collide with Oliver's.

I reach up, dragging my fingers through his day-old stubble. The look on his face would be humorous if the insides of my thighs weren't sticky with arousal.

I drop to my knees before I can think it through.

"When we're done with you, your white wings will drip with ink."

"Aurelia, what are you doing?" Oliver asks, confused. His words soon die on his tongue when I palm his soft length while sinking my teeth into my bottom lip. Oliver has never been touched before. The same innocence that once burned bright in my eyes stares back at me through his ocean-blue irises. I want to taint him. The satisfaction I get when he hardens in my hand makes me feel alive for the first time since I re-entered this fucking place.

“We shouldn’t do thi...” he blurts, but drifts off when I take him in my mouth.

Hell, he’s big. I can barely fit him between my lips.

I moan around his length and reach down to rub my aching clit. I need release.

His hands tangle in my hair, but he doesn’t pull me off. Oliver is warring with himself, gazing down at me through darkening, lustful eyes. Daemon was right. Defiling innocent virgins does cure boredom.

I smile against his veiny length, then drag my tongue from his root to tip. His thick cock throbs as I swallow him down until I choke. I wish he would be rough with me. I wish he would fist my hair until my scalp prickles with pain and fuck my throat like he means it. His hands remain soft, pulling gently on my blonde strands. It’s okay. His choked grunts are all the music I need.

Rubbing my clit faster, I bob on him while the hiss of a snake whispers in my ear and thunder rumbles overhead. Oliver is too lost in my darkening eyes to notice the storm on the horizon.

“You like that, big boy?” I taunt him, wrapping my lips around his bulbous head. My eyes fall closed. This is why I need to escape this place. I can never go back to who I was.

Oliver tenses and makes a choked sound, then groans deep in his chest when my mouth fills with his salty cum. Seeing him fall apart is such a turn-on. At the sight, I explode around my fingers. It’s the first release I’ve had since I found myself back here, and it steals my breath.

After swallowing down every delicious drop, I rise on shaky legs and wipe his cum off my chin. “That was fun.”

The look on his face is priceless as he stares down at his still-hard dick. It’s impressive, swaying and touching his belly button.

“What in the heavens?” he breathes, and I roll my eyes, correcting him.

“What the fuck?”

His head snaps up. “What the fuck did you do?! We’ll get banished.”

Pushing off the tree, I start back the way we came. “Don’t pretend I didn’t blow your mind, Oliver.”

He curses before chasing after me. “What the hell was that? How did you even know—”

“You ask a lot of questions.”

Oliver is in panic mode, rubbing his face and looking down to make sure his cock is slackening.

It is.

“Finally aware of your nakedness, huh?”

Swallowing thickly, he tries hard not to check out my breasts. He fails.

“You’ll have to be careful from now on or you’ll sprout a hard-on all the time.”

“Seriously, what the fuck was that?” He pulls me to a stop.

My eyebrows shoot up. “I’m impressed by your cursing.”

“What if we get banished from Eden?”

I shrug and start walking again. “Then we get banished from Eden.”

“The elders will know.”

“That I sucked your dick behind a tree? I seriously doubt it.”

“The Light—”

“The omnipotent light knows everything, right? Then why are we still here?” I reply, whirling on him. “You’re not going to find yourself banished from the Garden of Eden because you had your fucking dick in my mouth. That’s something the elders want you to believe. Sin this and sin that. You have a cock, Oliver. Why the fuck would the Light create one if it’s such a sin for me to suck it? Why taunt me with it if I can’t touch it?”

“But it’s a sin.”

I blink. “I’m sure there are worse things than pleasure.”

“Where are you going now?” he calls out when I set off walking.

“I’m bored with you. We have class soon.”

He follows behind like a lost puppy; that’s what I get for defiling Oliver. I shouldn’t have touched him. If Daemon found out, there would be hell to pay. Oliver has never been in a fight. He wouldn’t stand a chance against Daemon’s unleashed fury.

The thought makes me tingle. Angry Daemon turns me on far more than he should. What I wouldn’t do to rile him up again.

CHAPTER
THREE

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AURELIA

The foggy mist, clinging to my bare shoulders and beading on my skin, curls the ends of my blonde hair. The chill in the air raises the hairs on my arms.

Shuddering, I rub them while looking around the town square. “Amenadiel?”

A change in the air precedes his low, sinister chuckle as he steps out from the shadows. If it was cold before, it’s freezing now. My breath is visible in the air—a white cloud of smoke that slips from my lips when he cocks his head and drags his eyes down my body. I’m naked again, and the urge to cover myself overwhelms me. His eyes linger on my peaked nipples before skimming over my collarbones. His gaze finally returns to mine, brown on blue. “I forgot about the perks in Eden.”

Why am I back here, night after night? I can’t escape Amenadiel. He haunts my every nightmare.

He hasn’t tried to attack me since I escaped through the door, and it makes me uneasy, as if he’s planning something. I would rather take his anger than this calm version with a curved smirk standing before me.

He tsks. “You’ve been a very naughty girl.”

With my brows pulled low, I go to speak, but he laughs loudly before I can get a word out.

“You brought sin into Heaven.” Leaning in close, he whispers, “You dragged that boy into Hell with you the moment you touched him.”

I rear back, but he’s not done.

“There are some things Heaven can’t erase. Time maybe, but sexual desires? No. Not once you’ve had a taste of sin.”

Setting my jaw, I look away. His touch on my chin forces me to bare my shame to his curious eyes. “Did it scratch the itch?”

I stay silent.

His smile grows. “No, it didn’t. He was a poor substitute for true darkness. Let me guess”—he leans in, brushing his lips over my ear—“his touch wasn’t rough enough and his dirty talk didn’t carry the same sting. Kissing a true angel didn’t have the same appeal as letting the heir to Hell’s throne dirty you up, did it?” His hand slides up my arm, over my shoulder,

and grips my neck. I should push him away, but I don't. Not when his words crack like a whip over a bare back. "Fucking a true angel will never satisfy the darkness in you." He tips my chin up with his fingers. "Luckily for you, Aurelia, you have darkness at your fingertips."

Trailing the backs of his fingers down my throat, his gaze follows. His touch burns my skin as it travels lower, over the soft curve of a breast and a rosy, hardened nipple. He pinches it, making me gasp. "You don't need to defile angel boys to get your fill of Hell."

I shove him away, breathing hard. "Don't touch me!"

Eyes sparkling with amusement, he circles me. "We have nothing but time, Angel. Time to get to know each other better."

"What game are you playing?"

In a blur, he's behind me, trapping my wrists against my lower back. Chills run down my spine when his lips spread in a smile against the crook of my neck, and my tits jiggle while I continue struggling in his grip.

Breathing me in, he taunts, "What game am I playing? That's for you to find out, Angel."

My breaths come quicker when his sharp fangs graze my sensitive skin.

"I hunger," he whispers while placing his free hand on my hip and pulling me flush against him, "for blood."

A pause.

"For sex."

His hand cups my pussy, and I stop breathing as he nuzzles my neck. Dipping his thumb between my pussy lips, he presses down on my clit. "You can't escape me, Angel."

"How did you leave Eden?"

"She barter." Clicking his tongue, his lips drag over my neck, closer to my ear. "Feed my hunger, and I'll help you escape Eden."

Whirling in his arms, I spread my wings threateningly. They flutter behind me when he smirks. "We both know you won't help me unless there is something in it for you."

His chuckle grates on my nerves.

"Don't tell me you want to fuck me and drink my blood. I don't buy your lies. You're too powerful and ancient to give me what I want in return for sex."

Amenadiel tuts. "Your angel is showing again. I'm from Hell, darling. Fuck and eat is what I do. I don't have morals."

“No, but you do have a greater plan,” I counter.

Playing with tendrils of my hair, he admits, “Maybe I do, but that’s not for you to worry about.”

I try again. “How do I escape Eden?”

His hand falls away, and he retreats toward the shadows between the buildings. “The angel boy can’t give you what you need. You’ll soon seek me out whether you want to or not, but not before you’ve drained his light.”

“Answer the fucking question!” I shout after him when he disappears into the darkness, but he’s already gone.

“You look awful,” Freya points out during class. Up ahead, the elder is telling us of the importance of patience. I’m bored and half listening.

“I’m not sleeping well.”

Freya’s blonde locks move in the warm breeze, hiding her naked body and highlighting it at the same time. “You were gone again this morning.”

A simple shrug. “I couldn’t sleep.”

The wall is visible through a gap in the trees behind the elder. I can’t stop staring at it. Freya notices, nudging me with her elbow. “Stop it!”

Dragging my eyes away, I scan the students in a sea of white wings, shimmering skin, and blonde hair. I’m sick of it. I want the night, the stars, the moon.

My eyes land on Oliver, and a familiar tingle starts up between my legs. Amenadiel was correct; desire is a part of my life now. I want to fuck, and I want to do it all the damn time. But more than that, I want to see Daemon again.

I catch Freya watching him too, but not with desire. The way she watches him reminds me of a girl with a puppy. She swoons while I imagine him fucking me from behind.

Urgh! I don’t even want to fuck Oliver. I just want to fuck full-stop, but that’s not true either. I don’t *want* to fuck. I *need* to fuck. It’s an instinct as strong as breathing. Daemon opened my eyes to that hunger and now I can’t close them.

It makes me feel guilty, too. I miss Daemon, Alaric, and Ronan. I don’t want Oliver, but he’s the only one here who can satiate this hunger. No

other angel in Eden measures up to his wingspan. It makes me curious about him, and his place here.

His eyes collide with mine, and Amenadiel's words come back to me: *You'll soon seek me out whether you want to or not, but not before you've drained his light.*

Is that what I'm doing? Feeding on his light? Why and to what end?

"What's this?" Freya asks, pulling a feather from my wings.

I wince at the sting. "The hell?"

My breath stalls when she holds it up, her blue eyes searching mine warily. A black feather rests on her palm, threatening to blow away as a light breeze dances across my skin.

Unable to look away, I gulp.

"Aurelia?" she asks softly. "What's happening?"

"Fallen angels have black wings," I whisper in response.

"But you're not..."

My eyes skate up to hers. "Maybe I am?"

She shakes her head, and I snatch up the feather.

"What do you call this, Freya? You can't deny what's right in front of you."

"You haven't been gone."

"I have!"

She maneuvers me around until I'm in front of her. Fingers sliding through my wings with frantic, rushed movements, her breath catches. I don't need her to confirm the truth; I can sense it in her touch and hear it in the shaking lilt of her voice when she whispers, "Oh, my..."

"I'm sorry." I don't know what else to say. This is the beginning of the end. I'm slowly turning into a fallen angel, and where I'm going, she can't go. The thought of losing Freya splinters my heart. She's my best friend and my family.

I don't belong here anymore, though. My own light is draining. I can feel it slowly slip away as the darkness gains a stronghold over my senses.

When I turn to look at Freya, her eyes swim with tears. I know mine do, too.

"It'll be okay," I whisper.

Her head shakes, and she quickly wipes her cheeks. "No, it won't."

The students around us rise to their feet, and I'm worried in case they notice my black feathers. It's only a matter of time.

“I need to go.” I hurriedly make my escape, feeling lost and confused. My wings are changing color, but the gates remain shut. Why? Eden won’t let me stay here with black wings, right?

Veering off the path, I venture into the forest. Birdsong guides my way closer to the gates. I find a large tree with thick branches and begin to climb, higher and higher, until I’m at the highest one, gazing out over the wall at the world beyond. There’s a longing inside me—an urge to disappear into the dark woods.

A grunt below has me almost falling off my branch, my heart galloping in my chest.

Oliver pops his head up and smiles at me. “You had to pick the tallest tree, didn’t you?”

With my mouth hanging open, I watch him heave himself up and settle on the nearest branch. “What are you doing here?”

He shrugs one shoulder, resting his elbow on his knee, and gazes out over the dark storm clouds and the rolling mist. “I followed you.”

Staring at his profile, I splutter, “But why?”

“I don’t know.” His ocean eyes meet mine. “You intrigue me.”

When I say nothing, he continues, “I keep thinking about you.”

“I blow you one time and now you follow me around because you keep thinking about me?”

“Something like that.” He gestures with his hand to the woods on the other side of the gate. “That’s Hell?”

Dragging my eyes away from the muscles in his arm, I follow his line of sight. “It is.”

“What do you know of Hell?”

My throat bobs. I don’t take my eyes away from the lightning display as I whisper, “It’s a place of suffering. It’s also a place where you feel alive in a sense we don’t do here.”

“In what sense?”

“Out there, you get to experience the entire spectrum of colors. Here, in Heaven, we only know red.” Nudging my chin toward Hell, I stare directly at Oliver. “Out there, they know green, blue, orange, and purple.”

“We know all those colors, too.”

“It was a metaphor.”

His lips twitch with a smile before he lets it loose to dance across his mouth.

“What?” I ask, feeling self-conscious.

“Nothing.”

This side of Oliver is one I haven’t seen before. He’s charming and playful.

His eyes settle on me once more, and we share a soft, rueful smile.

“Why did you run away?”

Hesitating, I decide my best option is just to be honest. Oliver deserves as much now that I’ve dragged him down with me. “Freya found a black feather.”

His eyes widen.

“In fact, she found several.”

Oliver is lost for words. I would show him, but I can’t on this branch.

“You’re turning,” he whispers.

“It would seem that way.” I don’t mention that he will, too, soon. Judging by the morbid curiosity in his eyes, I think he already knows.

His throat jumps as he looks back out at the forest beyond the wall. I wonder what’s going through his head.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper. “I shouldn’t have touched you.” My apology is inadequate, but it’s all I’ve got.

“Why don’t you turn away from the darkness? Deny it.” His blue eyes are back on me.

“Don’t you think I’ve tried? Of course I have.”

“But?”

I sigh, avoiding his searching gaze. “I’m not sure I want to.”

There it is. My truth. I don’t want to deny myself the pain and pleasure I felt outside the gates. I don’t think it’s possible to deny that newfound part of me. Not anymore. Once you’ve tasted sin, there’s no turning back, even if the choice is there.

“You don’t want to?”

I look back at him, his lips. My head shakes softly. “No...”

Swallowing thickly, he leans in, ever so slowly, to taste the desire on my tongue. Our lips brush and our breaths dance in the crackling space between us. He erases it, his hand cupping the back of my head and pulling me into him. A soft whimper escapes me as he sucks my bottom lip into his mouth.

I let him explore my mouth with slow, deep kisses that set my heart aflutter. When we break apart, Oliver’s blue eyes, heavy with lust, sweep

over my face before settling back on my kiss-swollen mouth. “I don’t think I want to either.”

His words wash over me like a bucket of ice water. Frowning, my eyes fly up to his. “What?”

He explains. “I don’t want to go back to how I felt before... you know? Before we—”

“Oliver,” I interrupt him, “yes, you do! This is your home.”

Now it’s his turn to frown. “Don’t you mean it *was* my home? You touched me, remember? Do you think I can go back to how things were?”

I climb down, and he follows, undeterred and hot on my heels. As soon as his feet sink into the soft grass, he seizes my arm when I try to walk away.

“Where are you going, Aurelia? This place isn’t exactly big.”

His fingers dig into my skin as I try to pull myself free. It’s useless.

“I’m not good for you, Oliver.”

“I know you’re not. In fact, kissing you will see me banished from Eden, but I’m starting to think maybe that’s not such a bad idea.”

My back connects with the tree, and he traps me with his hands on either side of me. Ocean blue eyes, so like mine, pin me in place. “Convince me why I shouldn’t kiss you again.”

“Oliver,” I breathe out, “I’m trying to protect you. Don’t you see? You don’t know what’s on the other side.”

“Somehow, you do.” His hand lands on my hip, pulling me closer. “And I can see in your eyes that the sacrifice is worth it.”

There’s no convincing him otherwise. I can see it now. His light is slowly fading like mine. “I need to escape Eden,” I whisper.

His trembling breath coasts across my bottom lip as he shifts closer. Stroking my hair behind my ear, he places a soft kiss on the corner of my mouth. “How are we going to do that?”

We...

“I’m not in love with you, Oliver.”

His deep chuckle vibrates his chest as he nuzzles the sensitive spot below my ear. “Now that we have that established, let’s make a plan.”

Shoving him away, I ignore his amused laughter when he stumbles back. “There’s no ‘we.’ This is your home, Oliver. You’re happy here.”

Undeterred, he falls to his knees and runs his hands up my thighs as my gaze snags on a bright red apple hanging from the branch.

“Oh, my God,” I whisper, my eyes widening.

Oliver’s warm hands grip my hips and yank me closer. Before he can put his mouth on me, I pull sharply on his hair.

“Look.”

Following my line of sight, he frowns. “It’s an apple. What about it?”

Batting his hands off me, I round him and walk up to the red fruit. “I get it now.”

“You get what?” He shifts closer behind me.

“Adam and Eve.” My voice is barely audible as I continue staring at the apple. “They ate of the forbidden fruit.”

Oliver looks confused as he comes to stand beside me. “It’s just an apple.”

My head shakes, and I turn to face him. “Do you see any other apples here?”

Looking up, he scans the branches overhead. His questioning eyes return to mine.

I don’t wait for him to ask the question. “The apple shows up when I fight temptation.”

Now he looks even more confused. “What are you talking about?”

Blowing out a breath, I rub my face. My thoughts are swirling at a million miles an hour, too fast for me to pick apart and analyze. “Adam and Eve were banished from Paradise when they ate the forbidden fruit.”

“You think we’ll be banished from Eden if we take a bite out of the apple?”

Chewing on my lip, I consider this. Could it be that simple?

Before I can finish that thought, Oliver pulls off the apple and sinks his teeth into the flesh.

“No, Oliver!” I cry out, but it’s too late.

Droplets of apple juice decorate his bottom lip as he takes another bite, flashing me a smile. He holds the apple out. “Want some?”

“Nothing is happening,” I point out, reaching for the apple.

“What did you expect? Thunderclaps? The gates to open with a dramatic slam?”

“Ha ha,” I drawl, piercing the crunchy apple with my teeth. It tastes delicious.

Oliver looks far too amused. It should rub me the wrong way, but I find myself giggling instead. I’m so damn stupid sometimes, thinking an apple is

what'll get me thrown out of Heaven.

"Admit that it was funny," he says with a wink, and I chuck the apple at him.

"You're a dork."

Our heads snap to the side when Freya's voice calls out, "What are you both still doing here?"

The smile Oliver and I share is secretive.

Nudging my shoulder with his, he sets off down the path, slinging his arm around Freya.

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CHAPTER
FOUR

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AURELIA

“She returns,” Amenadiel says with a gravelly chuckle as he slinks out from the shadows. The cold night air licks at my pale skin and hardens my nipples hidden beneath the wavy strands of my blonde hair. I fight the instinct to rub my arms to ward off the cold. I know better than to show weakness in front of Amenadiel. He’d tear into me like a predator with its prey. Right now, he’s circling me, his eyes sliding down my body.

I pretend it doesn’t bother me. “What will it take?”

His face gives nothing away as he rounds me. “I need you to be more specific than that, Angel?”

“Don’t play games with me. You’re the one stuck here”—I dig my finger into my temple—“inside my mind, so I suggest you play by my rules and tell me how to escape Eden.”

“I don’t take well to threats.”

“What will it take?” I bite out.

A slow smile spreads across his lips, and he starts his slow steps around me again. “What makes you think I have the solution to your problem?”

“I know you do.”

“Let me guess, the visions have started?”

“Visions?”

“The apple,” he breathes in my ear, “the snake...” His whispered words slither down my back like the hiss of a coiled serpent’s tongue.

“What of them?”

He continues walking around my still form, his eyes darkening even more as shadows dance in their cold, soulless depths. “Hell is calling you to step into the night. Become one with the shadows.”

“How do I do that?” I ask carefully as his steps slow even more.

“Are you sure you want to lose yourself? Give up your light? Your soul?”

Am I sure? I can already feel my light fading, trickling out through the cracks in me. What happens when the last of it is gone? “I’m sure.”

Amenadiel sees right through me, smirking knowingly. With a shrug, he stops in front of me, his hands in his pockets, and looks at me through those

dark eyes that see too much. "What will you offer me in return for helping you?"

"You already know what you want, so why don't you tell me?"

"Isn't it obvious what I want?"

"Nothing is ever obvious with you."

"You have entrapped me here. I want to be freed."

I snort. "Never happening."

"Then I can't help you."

"You want to drink my blood and fuck me? I'll let you."

Now it's his turn to snort. He turns on his heels and walks deeper into the shadows.

"Please," I beg. "I've tried everything. Why did Heaven let me out the first time, but not this time? Why won't the gates open for me? My wings are changing color. I crave sex."

He turns just as the shadows are about to swallow him whole. "The gates won't open for you because you haven't relinquished your light."

"That doesn't explain why the gates let me out the first time."

Amenadiel surges forward and bares his sharp incisors. "I don't know why the gates let you out the first time, but I know what will ensure your banishment forever, so if you want my help, I suggest you help free me from your prison."

I gaze down at the thick layer of fog that crawls along the ground and swirls around my ankles when I shift. Sheer desperation claws at my heart as I look back up and swallow my pride. "I'll help you on one condition."

"I'm listening."

"You must promise not to hurt Daemon."

He tuts and shakes his head. "Have you learned nothing, Angel? Morals don't exist in Hell. What makes you think I'll keep my promise?"

"Because if you intended to lie, you would jump at the opportunity to promise me anything, but you're not. You're a cruel, soulless man, but you were born of the light, like me. There's goodness deep inside you."

In all honesty, I don't know if I believe the nonsense slipping from my lips, but right now, I want to trust that Amenadiel is good somewhere deep inside. That a small essence of the light, even if it's just a faint flicker, resides in the dark depths of his core.

"And you're a naive, young girl."

“Promise me you won’t hurt Daemon and I’ll consider releasing you from your prison.”

He steps out from the shadows, his footsteps disturbing the fog that climbs up my bare ankles. “Any other promises you want me to make, Angel?”

“The deal with Lucifer is off. You will not buy me. And you will not pursue the throne.”

Amenadiel regards me for such a long moment, my lungs start to burn as I wait with bated breath.

“I tried to kill you. And now you trust me to keep a promise?”

I can’t decide if he’s surprised or angry with me.

I whisper the words I never thought would leave my lips. “I trust you.”

He steps close and palms the back of my neck roughly. I’m not even surprised. He belongs to Hell, and its touch is never gentle. Its words are never kind. “Don’t.”

“I trust you,” I repeat, and his grip tightens. A whimper escapes me as he leans down to whisper in my ear. “Remember when you saw the door after you locked me in here? I told you then that you wouldn’t find what you were looking for behind it. And you won’t find what you’re looking for now either. Are you sure you want to make a deal with the Devil?”

“You’re not Lucifer.”

“Trust me, I’m worse than my brother.”

Inhaling a shaky breath, I meet his cold eyes. “Do we have a deal?”

His lips spread into a cruel smile. “We have a deal.”

“What do I need to do?”

Freya is asleep on her front amongst a sea of pillows, her blonde hair moving off her lips with every soft exhale. She looks so innocent in her sleep, the way I imagine I looked when I first snuck out of Eden. No wonder Daemon, Alaric, and Ronan couldn’t pass up the opportunity to corrupt me. In a land of evil, innocence is catnip to a blackened heart.

Because I can’t help myself, I reach out and gently brush the strands of hair from her cheek. I’ll miss her when I’m gone. She’ll be my anchor when the darkness takes hold and sinks its talons into me.

“I love you,” I whisper as she stirs. “And I’m sorry.”

Leaning down, I place a soft kiss on her forehead, then straighten back up and walk out before I can change my mind. Or worse yet, take her with me.

The morning sun warms my bare shoulders as I set off down the path that leads to the gate. I try not to think about what I’m about to do and the sacrifices I’ll have to make. After today, I’ll never be allowed back inside the gates, and I’ll never again feel the sun on my face. I’ll belong to the night.

I drink up the sight of the colorful flowers, the bees that fly from petal to petal, and the green leaves that rustle in the morning breeze. These are all things I’ll never witness again.

I even stop to eat a berry, and its sweet yet tart flavor explodes in my mouth.

“You sure took your time,” Oliver says when I join him at the gates.

His bright blue eyes sparkle in the sunrise, and his lips spread in a smirk as I slow to a halt and tuck my hair behind my ear. “I had to say goodbye to Freya.”

Oliver looks surprised. “You told her you’re leaving?”

My head shakes. “She was asleep. Besides, if I told her, she would try to stop me.”

Reaching for my hand, Oliver pulls me closer. “Are you sure this is what you want?”

“I’m not sure of anything, but I know I need to do this. I can’t stay. Not now. My wings are turning black and I’m growing sensitive to the light. I even seduced you.”

I’ll always regret dragging Oliver down with me.

He cups my cheek and offers me a soft smile. “I’m not upset about it. You shouldn’t be, either.”

I peer up at him while he turns his head to study the gates, the white roses that spread like vines over the shimmery, gold surface, and the thorns, which I have pricked myself on before. “How do we get them to open?”

Before I can second-guess myself, I tighten my grip on the handle behind me. “You’re not coming with me, Oliver.”

He looks back at me, and his eyes widen when I drive the blade into his chest. It sinks deep, and blood pours from the wound in a steady stream as I pull it back out, then stab him again and again and again. I don’t stop

wreaking destruction on his light until it flickers out completely. I keep driving the blade through flesh and muscle, every inch of me drenched with coppery blood. I don't stop to let myself see the sorrow in his blue eyes. But I know it will forever haunt me, like the whisper of Amenadiel's voice in my head.

"What do I need to do?"

He digs his fingers into the back of my neck, then leans down and breathes me in. His lips drag over my throat until I feel the whisper of his breath in my ear. "Kill the boy."

I rear back, or I try to, but his grip prevents me. This can't be real. Why would he ask me to kill another angel... in Eden? That's the ultimate sin.

The unforgivable sin.

Swallowing thickly, I try to breathe through my growing panic. "Why are you doing this? There must be some other way."

"Is there? How do you think Lucifer got banished? How do you think any of us got banished?"

A sob breaks free, and I push on his hard, unmoving chest. I can't do this.

"Did you think sucking his dick would be your meal ticket out of Eden? Oh, Angel, wishful thinking on your part. Those are lies. Your own curiosity is what will ultimately be your destruction. You don't swim uphill with the other fish; you stay and explore the sea. It's what got you lost in the first place. And now you can never find your way back. If you want to reunite with Daemon and his friends, you'll need to commit the ultimate sin. The one sin that will stay with you forever. You have to extinguish the light inside you."

"I'm sorry, Oliver," I breathe out when he slumps to the ground, his vacant eyes staring up at the darkening sky.

Dropping the bloody knife and stepping over his body, I place my hand on the gate as a thunderclap cracks across the sky. It creaks open, much to my surprise, and I slip through before I can change my mind.

Not that I have a choice. No sooner have I exited Eden, the door slams shut behind me with such force that I jump.

"I have to say I'm proud of you, Angel. I didn't think you had it in you."

My head whips in Amenadiel's direction.

He's leaning against the wall with a smirk on his lips. The kind of smirk that makes my skin crawl and my heart thud violently in my chest.

"I didn't think you'd come."

With a shrug, he uncrosses his feet and pushes off the wall. "I think I'm growing soft in my old age. I can't go breaking promises now, can I?"

I snort as I set off walking. "Drop the saint act. You could have gone straight back and killed Daemon the moment I freed you, but you didn't."

He follows behind. "Could I?"

Frowning, I side-eye him.

"You're forgetting one very important detail. I can't touch him, remember? There's a watertight contract, forged in the laws of the Universe, which ties my hands."

I come to a halt as we near the forest. "You'll lose your title and right to the throne."

He keeps walking, and I hurry after him, my blood-soaked hair sticking to my naked skin. "So why don't you kill me now? Like you tried to do before I escaped through the door."

"I made a promise."

I come to a halt again, and a sudden burst of incredulous laughter bubbles up from my chest. "You're full of shit, Amenadiel. This is Hell, and there are no morals here, remember?"

He keeps walking.

I take chase, and he holds a branch out of the way.

"Nice tits. I like them covered in angel blood."

"Fuck off!" I step past him into the forest. And just like last time, I feel as if I've entered a new world. The temperature drops drastically, and the silence presses in from all sides. There's a haunting eeriness that caresses the sheen of cold sweat on my skin.

My breath is visible in the air when I spin around to face Amenadiel. "Uphold your part of the bargain."

"Don't worry," he chuckles, amused by the distrust in my eyes. "I'll fly us back. We can't let you get lost in these dangerous woods."

The way he says "dangerous" sends shivers down my spine, and I suppress a shudder as I follow him deeper into the night.

"How did you know I would create a new tear in the veil by killing Oliver?"

His big steps disturb the white mist around his ankles. "Every time an angel disrupts the tapestry, it creates a tear. It hasn't happened a lot, as you might have guessed." He winks at me over his shoulder.

"Are you saying I disrupted the tapestry by walking out of Eden the first time?"

"Yes, but I'm yet to figure out why the gates opened for you the first time."

"You're powerful. Can't you create a tear in the veil yourself? Since you're powerful enough to enter through it."

Amenadiel ignores my question. "What's your plan when we return? Run straight back into Daemon's arms?"

My heart smarts. "Is Dariana alive?"

"I killed her in your dream. While your dream state affected you directly in this reality, I couldn't manipulate the rest of the world through it. If it were that simple, I'd manipulate your mind and make *you* kill Daemon."

The moon filters through the canopy of leaves overhead, and its silvery glow lights up the small, bubbling stream of water that leads uphill. It's icy cold on my feet. "That's... reassuring." My voice drips with sarcasm. "I haven't let myself think that far ahead yet. How do I even explain all of this? More importantly, how do I explain saving you?"

"Ouch, don't mince your words."

"You're the one who should be worried. Daemon will be on the warpath."

His masculine chuckle rings out in the silent night. "I can handle that pup."

We reach a clearing, and Amenadiel waits for me to catch up. "The first thing we need to do is get you a clean dress. Don't get me wrong, I love your tits, but you can't return to the Academy looking like something straight out of a slasher movie."

"We're in Hell. I should fit right in."

The only response I get is a slight twitch of his eyebrow.

"I'm taking you back to mine for a change of clothes."

"I can just go straight back to Daemon's place and change there."

"You could, but there's something you need to see first."

I start to reply, but Amenadiel unfolds his wings and shoots up into the sky.

My eyes scan the clearing as a strange sensation washes over me. Amenadiel's words come back to me: *Remember when you saw the door after you locked me in here? I told you then that you wouldn't find what you were looking for behind it. And you won't find what you're looking for now either.*

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CHAPTER
FIVE

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AURELIA

I blink up at the tall, gothic-looking building in front of me with pointed tower roofs and stained windows. Two gargoyles stare back down at me with grotesque faces and long teeth. A shudder runs through me as Amenadiel steps past to unlock the front door. “Does everyone here live in houses that resemble haunted castles?”

I swear the fucking door creaks when he walks inside.

“What did you expect, Angel? A colonial-style house with a white picket fence and a sedan—renowned on the sales market for its safety features—parked in the driveway?”

I enter behind him and hug my arms around myself to ward off the cold. If I thought it was cold outside, it’s even worse in here.

With a click of his fingers, the sconces on the walls light up and flood the large entryway. I expected cobwebs, silhouettes darting for the shadowed corners, and maybe a skeleton or two, but that’s not what greets me. While the building looks dark and gloomy from the outside, its interior is warm and comforting behind closed doors. Damask wallpaper lines the walls, and the black marble flooring has been freshly polished by the looks of it. It shines, reflecting the flickering candlelight as Amenadiel guides the way toward the double staircase. Expensive oil paintings decorate the space in every direction I glance. Self-portraits of rich and powerful men. I spot one of Lucifer and another of Amenadiel and his son, Dmitriy.

I quickly avert my gaze as we reach the top and continue down a carpeted hallway.

“Through here.” Amenadiel opens a bedroom door to his left, but I draw to a halt, looking between him and the door.

“I’m not fucking you.”

“Did I say I want to fuck you? Enter the room.”

I take a hesitant step forward. “If I remember correctly, you told me you hungered for sex and blood.”

He walks in ahead, his voice ringing out. “I was bored, and it was fun to rile you up. If I wanted to fuck you, I would have done so already. Believe it or not, corrupting Eden’s angels lost its shine a long time ago. Maybe because I used to be one myself.”

The room is dark, a sliver of moonlight seeping through the crack in the drawn curtain.

Amenadiel rounds the bed and pulls them open before proceeding to light a fire in the fireplace and the sconces on the walls with a simple click of his fingers. He's at one with his magic, using it so effortlessly that it steals my breath.

He turns around and motions behind me. "Now that the room is lit up, take a look in the mirror."

When I turn around, my mouth falls open. I can't believe what I see.

Amenadiel walks up to me and his cold, dark eyes lock on mine in the full-length mirror as he sweeps my raven hair away from my shoulder, his fingers grazing my olive skin.

"I'm a fallen angel," I breathe out.

"You are," he confirms as he shifts behind me and trails his touch over my black feathers.

I'm too stunned to push him away. I can barely breathe, unable to take it all in.

I lean in to get a closer look and blink my lashes. "My eyes are brown."

"And your wings are black."

My gaze meets his in the mirror again, and I slowly straighten back up, then turn. "What does this mean, exactly?"

"It means you can now blend in with the crowds." He walks to the minibar over by the window and proceeds to pour himself a tumbler of amber liquid.

Slowly turning back around, I study myself in the mirror. My once pale skin is now tanned, and the freckles on my nose are no longer visible. My blonde hair is the darkest shade of black and reminds me of smoke and midnight. It shines, silky smooth, beneath the flickering flames on the walls. I can hardly recognize myself.

"Looks like you have some explaining to do when you see your friends." Amenadiel doesn't attempt to hide the amusement in his voice.

"How did this happen?" I whisper.

"How? By committing the ultimate sin and relinquishing the last of your light. You were already tarnished by sin, but your act of violence inside the gates of Eden drained you of your remaining light. I think a more eloquent way of putting it is to say that you sold your soul to the Devil. Now"—he gestures in my general direction—"get dressed."

“In what? I have no clothes.”

Amenadiel takes a sip of his alcoholic drink before making his way over to the walk-in closet. He re-emerges a few seconds later with a black dress and a pair of heels. “Here. The shower is through there.” He points to an adjoining bathroom. “I’ll be downstairs if you need me.”

The door clicks shut behind him and I stare after him for a long moment, wondering why he’s being so kind to me when he tried to murder me not long ago. Worrying my lip, I look down at the strappy dress in my hands. It’s made of silk and has a cowl neck. It’s more revealing than what I would normally wear, but considering I’m currently naked, this is plenty of fabric.

At least, I think so, until I step out of the bathroom after my shower. If I bend over, I’ll flash my ass to strangers.

“Fucking typical,” I mutter.

Amenadiel nearly chokes on his drink when I enter the spacious living room. And not because he thinks I’m a sexy vision he wants to tear into with his teeth, but due to the unimpressed look on my face.

“Are you making fun of me? Is this supposed to be a joke? This dress makes Dariana look modestly dressed.”

“That dress will ensure Daemon sees no one but you,” he replies when he stops coughing.

My eyes narrow. “What are you doing?”

“Ensuring you turn heads at the academy. Why?”

I watch him turn away from the large window and take a seat on the couch in front of the blazing fire. It’s an impressive mantelpiece with intricate, carved detailing. I’m drawn closer to the heat from the flickering flames. “Why? You’re a cold-hearted monster, for one. I don’t trust you as far as I can throw you. But don’t you worry, Amenadiel, I’ll figure you out.”

He bites down on ice, a lazy smirk on his lips. “Is that so?”

My eyes dance across the room. Thick, heavy curtains frame the tall windows, the chandelier on the roof is void of candles, and there’s a stack of firewood next to the fire. I back away when I spot the dead bear on the floor. Its jaw is wide open, and the teeth look fierce in the dim light. “Interesting rug.”

Amenadiel follows my line of sight. “Yeah, watch where you step so you don’t trip over its head. Been there, done that.” He tips his glass back

and drinks the last of his amber whisky.

“So... It’s still early. If I leave now, I’ll make it to the academy just before lunch. Are you sure you won’t go on a murder spree the moment I walk out?”

Placing his tumbler down on the coffee table, he stretches his arm out over the back of the couch. His eyes sparkle with humor and something far darker that makes me want to shrink back. My survival instincts are always on high alert around Amenadiel. I’m not stupid; my brain, body, and mind know he’s ancient—one of the originals. With that comes power and control.

“If I wanted to go after Daemon and his friends, don’t you think I would’ve done it already? Why would I spend this long listening to your annoying, constant stream of verbalized thoughts?”

“Maybe because you were adamant you wanted to buy me to piss off your nephew. It wasn’t that long ago, and I don’t believe for a second that your stint inside my mind reformed you in any kind of way.”

“Well, sweetheart...” He rises to his feet and walks up to me. “I guess you have no choice but to trust me, hmm?”

My breath catches in my throat, and my eyes fall shut when he cups my chin. The urge to drive my fist into his knowing smirk is almost too tempting to ignore. But I hold on to the last bit of patience I have.

“I always have a plan, Angel, and I’ll kill anyone that gets in my way. Now run along, little angel. Find your boyfriends. No need to worry yourself about the ins and outs of my hedonistic and destructive mind.”

“Stay away from my friends,” I bite out, “or I will make your life hell.”

“When I first spotted you, I thought you were weak—*mediocre*—but now I see why Daemon would shift Heaven and Earth to keep you. The fire in your eyes turns into a raging inferno every time I threaten your friends. You’re a storm, Angel. The most beautifully dangerous chaos to capture his heart.”

I snort, sliding past him. “I’ll keep my eyes on you. Mark my words. Don’t make me regret saving you.”

“You’ll be back here before you know it.” He sits back down on his couch and kicks his feet up on the coffee table, then winks. “Mark my words.”

I never thought I would be this nervous. But then again, I also didn't think I would return with wings as black and mysterious as the night.

The other students don't even notice me when I walk through the large doors. For the first time since my arrival, I blend in.

I feel invisible as I make my way down the crowded hallway in pursuit of the three boys who make my heart beat in a staccato rhythm. How do I even explain what has happened to me? And how do I stop them from going after Amenadiel?

Coming to a halt, the student behind me bumps into my back. I ignore his muttered grumbles as he sidesteps me. Thoughts swirl in my mind. It makes sense now why Amenadiel changed his tune. He wants Daemon to go after him. And he will. As soon as he sees me back here, he'll go straight for his uncle. It doesn't matter that I returned unharmed. Daemon won't stop until Amenadiel is defeated, and that's exactly what Amenadiel wants. He doesn't need to lift a finger. I played right into his hands.

I'm torn from my thoughts at the sound of Dariana's distinct laughter up ahead, like a mild summer breeze. My heart stops, then starts to gallop in my chest. Amenadiel told me she would be alive despite my dream, but the relief is still immediate.

She's walking down the hallway with her friends, wearing a black dress with a tulle skirt. Her raven hair is tied up in a high ponytail that sways with her every delicate step. Dariana has a way about her, as if she's floating on air.

I open my mouth to call her name, when she looks at me, and the world stops. Not because she's sweeping me up in her arms while gushing over how happy she is to see me and how worried she's been. That's not what happens at all. Instead, her eyes sweep past me as if she never even noticed me.

As if I'm a wallflower.

My pulse rushes in my ears as she steps past with her friends, then turns the corner.

I stand frozen, an immovable fortress, while shoulders bump into me and grumbling students curse my existence. I don't know when I finally move, but I eventually feel my back meet a set of lockers.

"What's happening?" I whisper shakily, swallowing down the thick lump clogging my throat.

Did she not recognize me because of my new complexion, black hair, brown eyes, and raven feathers? I look different, sure, but I still look like myself.

I set off running, bumping shoulders and forcing myself through the thick crowd until I reach the bathroom up ahead. Pushing my shoulder against the door, I emerge into the empty room. It's the same bathroom where Daemon, Alaric, and Ronan fingered me on one of the sinks. It still reeks of cheap citrus air freshener and a mixture of girls' perfumes.

I walk up to the nearest sink, grip the sides, and stare unblinkingly at my reflection. It's definitely me. I'm not that unrecognizable that you would simply walk past me. It's more a case of, "*Whoa, what happened to you?*"

I lean closer.

My eyes look different, void of the sparkling light from before. Now there's something else beneath the swirling darkness dancing in their depths. I can't pinpoint it, but it stares back at me with nefarious intent. Even my lips spread in a slow smirk before I tear myself away and press a palm over my mouth.

I startle when the door opens and a group of girls enter. They don't spare me a single glance, as if I'm not even here.

I always dreamed of blending in.

Of being one of them.

Now I don't know how to feel.

I'm stuck in a nightmare far worse than what Amenadiel put me through.

Maybe it was a mistake? Maybe she was too distracted with her friends to notice me? But then...

Why did she look so happy?

Shouldn't she worry about me? Amenadiel attacked me in my sleep and made me bleed. I don't even know how long I've been missing. How long was I back home with Freya? A week? A month?

Unable to shake the bad feeling inside me, I leave the bathroom.

I'm back, I remind myself. The first hurdle is over. Let's take it one step at a time and not overthink it too much. So she didn't recognize me? Big deal. Maybe I wouldn't recognize her if she turned into a true angel overnight with white feathers, blue eyes, and sparkly, translucent skin.

My heart feels lighter already as I make my way to the cafeteria. This is the one place I used to avoid like the plague, and while it still leaves a foul

taste in my mouth, exhilaration quickens my blood. If I hungered before, it had nothing on the ache in my incisors now at the sight of the humans tied to wooden poles.

I ignore that ache and scan my eyes across the cafeteria. My shoulders slump with disappointment when it becomes abundantly clear that Daemon and his friends aren't here.

Dmitriy is.

I spotted him in the corner with an angel on his lap as soon as I entered the room. I take a moment to study him, noting all the ways he's similar to his dad. And Daemon. The family resemblance is striking. So much so that my breath catches when he looks up, as if sensing me watching him. I quickly avert my gaze and walk back out.

Something is wrong, and the unease inside me is not letting up.

That's when I spot *him*.

Daemon has a girl cornered against a set of lockers up ahead. I stare with my heart trapped in my throat while he whispers in her ear.

Ronan and Alaric hover nearby, looking bored out of their minds, as if nothing in the world entertains them anymore. I remember that look on Daemon's face in the woods the first time I met them.

But they're not the ones who've gotten my attention. It's Daemon and the predatory way he handles that girl.

I could be dead for all they know. They've already moved on? As if they didn't steal my heart and wreak such havoc on my soul that I never stood a chance against them...

My heart splinters in my chest while I stand there watching like some creeper.

He's kissing her now with deep sweeps of his tongue and wandering fingers.

Fingers I've felt on my body.

I used to come alive at his touch, but now I feel like a broken, used, and discarded toy.

My feet move before I can stop them.

I need to get out. I can't stand here for a second longer, subjecting myself to this humiliation. Unfortunately, the only way to make it to the front doors is to walk past *them*.

I'm just about to pass Alaric and Ronan when the door to my right opens, and a teacher steps out in front of me, causing me to bump into

Alaric.

“Careful,” he growls, steadying me with his hand.

I jump back, my heart pounding so hard against my chest, I swear they can hear it smash its fists against my ribcage. But the look in his eyes...

It’s empty.

Cold.

Detached.

Not a hint of recognition.

“I’m sorry,” I blurt, then set off running.

This was a mistake, and I should never have returned. I should have never been so foolish as to think they cared.

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CHAPTER
SIX

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AURELIA

When I return to Amenadiel's mansion, it's drizzling outside, and my hair is now a frizzy mess. Not that it matters. I'm not leaving Amenadiel's mansion for the foreseeable future. I might just as well move in.

Wait...

Do I live here now?

"You're back early," Amenadiel points out, flashing me a smile that says he knew this would happen.

He's where I left him, seated on the couch with a tumbler in hand and his feet crossed on the coffee table.

"You knew."

He takes a sip, then winks at me. "Didn't I say you'd be back?"

"But how is this part of your plan?" I throw my hands out and then let them fall helplessly by my sides. "I don't get it, Amenadiel."

"Why don't you take a seat?"

I reluctantly walk up to the nearest armchair and slowly lower myself down.

"What did you think was part of my elaborate plan?"

My mouth opens and closes before I admit, "For Daemon to see me and be angry."

"Ah, you thought he'd march over here and tear me to pieces, and that would somehow solve my situation. I like how you think, but alas, nothing is ever that straightforward. Especially not when you travel through doorways."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

He's just about to answer when the door opens, and his son, Dmitriy, calls out, "Dad?"

Amenadiel's smile broadens even more, if that's even possible, and I narrow my eyes. "In the living room." Then he leans in conspiratorially, and whispers, "You'll love this."

Footsteps draw closer, and then Dmitriy walks in, dripping rainwater on the wooden floor. He looks at me and frowns. "Who are you?"

“Don’t be rude, son.” The amusement in Amenadiel’s voice is impossible to miss as he rises to his feet and gestures to me. “This is the daughter of a close friend of mine. She’ll be staying with us for a while.” To me, he says, “Aurelia, meet my son, Dmitriy.”

“It’s nice to meet you.” The words flow from my lips seamlessly, but I don’t hear them. It’s all white noise now.

What does this mean? Dmitriy doesn’t recognize me. It’s clear as day when he looks at me with no small amount of suspicion, as if he believes I’m after his family fortune.

“What friend?” he asks.

His father waves him away, making his way to the minibar. “An old friend from before your time. Why are you home early?”

Dmitriy walks deeper into the room, keeping his eyes glued to me the entire time. “Boredom, Dad.”

“Right... I’m enrolling Aurelia in classes tomorrow. I expect you to ensure she settles in okay.”

“My pleasure.” The tone in his voice tells me he thinks it’s anything but. I narrow my eyes, and he narrows his back.

We’ve fucked. How is it that he doesn’t recognize me?

While we’re locked in the stare-down of a century, Amenadiel looks like he’s more amused than he has been in years. His eyes sparkle with humor when he refills his whisky glass. “I sense the tension.”

Dmitriy finally looks away, and I inhale a deep breath I didn’t know I was holding. “Forgive me for being skeptical of newcomers, Dad.” Then he looks back at me. “Didn’t I see you at the academy today?”

His father replies for me, “I sent her to have a look around and familiarize herself with the building before she starts classes tomorrow.”

My smile is saccharine, causing Dmitriy to narrow his eyes again. What I really want to do is to shake some fucking sense into him. *Can you really not recognize me?*

With one last warning glare in my direction, he says to his dad, “I have to be somewhere. I’ll be back in a few hours.”

He leaves, and as soon as the front door slams shut, I whirl on Amenadiel. “Explain!”

He chokes on his whisky. I never thought I would see a man like Amenadiel, evil incarnate, laugh like he is now. It’s a carefree sound I

haven't heard anywhere outside of Eden, and it allows me to see a flash of who he was before the fall.

"I think I would quite like to hear your theory first."

"I don't fucking know. Maybe everyone has lost their goddamn minds? Maybe you're all playing a prank on me?"

"A prank..." He chuckles before tipping back the last of his drink and slamming the glass back down on the windowsill behind him. Then he walks up to me and taps my temple. "I've been stuck in here, remember?"

The sound of rain pattering on the windows mixes with the sparks in the fireplace as I try to think of a logical reason. "When I found myself back in Eden, I..." My eyes widen.

"She finally gets it," Amenadiel teases.

"But it's impossible. Besides, I thought time worked differently inside Eden. I didn't *actually* think I traveled back in time."

"Well, you did, and you took me back with you."

"You knew..." I glare at him. "You knew and you still let me go to the academy and make a fucking fool out of myself."

A simple shrug, accompanied by the quirking of his lips. "It was too funny not to."

"You asshat!"

He shrugs again. "I've been called worse."

I start to pace. "So this means what? They haven't met me *yet*?"

"Don't worry. Your true angel self won't come tumbling through the doors. You erased that reality."

I draw to a halt and blink, my lips pursed. "Erased?"

"Reset time... whatever. Don't worry yourself with the ins and outs. It doesn't matter. What's done is done."

"Okay," I reply, as if it makes sense.

It doesn't.

Not even a little.

"So they don't know who I am?"

"Nope," he confirms, popping the *P*.

"They've never met me?"

"Also true."

"Fuck..."

He tries so fucking hard not to laugh. Even his face is blotchy and red from his attempt to school his features.

“Am I a virgin again?”

Now it's his turn to blink, then he laughs. “What?”

“You said I erased the past.”

“The past timeline, yes. You didn't magically grow back your hymen.”

“I can't exactly go up to Daemon and say, ‘Hey, you've never met me, but you took my virginity a while back.’”

“This is why I always say not to mess with timelines,” he teases, walking past me.

“So what do I do?” I call out, and he stops in the doorway.

“You made him fall in love with you once. You can do it again.”

“I didn't make him fall in love with me. He kidnapped me, remember?”

“Yeah, that's not going to work now that you're an ordinary fallen angel like everyone else.”

“Exactly. So what do I do?”

“Not my problem, Angel. You'll think of something. Your room is the one I showed you earlier. Help yourself to the clothes in the walk-in closet. If you get hungry, let me know, and I'll arrange to have a human sent to your room.” Then he disappears and I stand there, confused as fuck by the day's events.

I sit back down in the armchair and bury my face in my hands. What the hell am I going to do? I can't even fathom what this all means, never mind try to think of a plan moving forward. I'm stuck here now. Oliver is dead, I'm a fallen angel, and Daemon and the others don't know who I am. As if that's not bad enough, I'm living with Amenadiel and his son.

I let out a frustrated screech, then rub my eyes vigorously.

Everything is a fucking mess.

I wake with a startled, muffled scream when a warm hand presses over my mouth. Dmitriy's hard eyes glare down at me, and he snarls, “I don't buy my dad's story. Why are you really here?”

I try to speak, but it's muffled beneath his palm.

“I'll remove my hand if you promise not to scream and alert my father.”

I quickly nod my head, and he carefully lifts his hand but keeps it hovering, as if he doesn't trust me not to scream. His dark eyes burn with

such distrust that I wouldn't be surprised if he kills me on the spot.

"Hear me out, okay?" I scoot back on the bed and pull the blanket with me. "You've met me before."

"Don't you think I would remember you?" His deep voice rumbles like thunder.

"I'm gonna try to explain, and you won't believe me, but I'll tell you anyway."

"Then what the fuck are you waiting for?" He grabs me by my throat, and I yelp.

"Okay, okay... I'll talk. Listen"—I bat his hand away—"I'm from Eden."

Dmitriy frowns and starts to withdraw, so I rush out, "I snuck out of Eden and was kidnapped by Daemon and his friends. They took me to Hell. One thing led to another. Your father tried to kill me, and I locked him in my mind and escaped back into Eden. Then I committed the ultimate sin to be let back out and it created another tear in the fabric that allowed your father to escape, but his reality is now linked to mine. And so—well, we're back in time to before they kidnapped me."

His mouth opens and closes, but no words come out. He simply stares at me. Then he shakes his head as if to clear it and gets out of bed, but stops short when he comes face-to-face with his father in the doorway.

"It's true," Amenadiel says, and there's such dominance in his voice that the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. "Every single word."

Dmitriy rears back. "She's crazy, Dad."

"Is she?"

"Yes," Dmitriy breathes in frustration. "She's manipulating you."

"To what end?"

"I don't know. Maybe she wants to get close to the throne."

Amenadiel pushes off the doorway. "Enough!"

Every muscle in Dmitriy's body stiffens, and he snaps his mouth shut.

"What our little angel told you is correct. Every single word. You're going to treat her with respect. I won't have you sneak into her bedroom and wake her up like this again. Am I making myself clear?"

When Dmitriy stays quiet, his father roars, "Am I clear?"

"Yes."

I swallow thickly, hiding behind a curtain of hair. Amenadiel is scary when he shows his darker nature like this and the sheer violence in his

voice clashes against every bone in my body.

“Good. I expect you to treat her well at school and help her settle in.”

“Why are you helping her, Dad?”

It’s an excellent question. And not one I expect to get an honest answer to anytime soon. Amenadiel has his own agenda, I’m sure of it.

“I made a promise.” He walks out, and we both stare after him, equally dumbfounded.

“That was weird,” Dmitriy mutters before gesturing in my general direction. “Get dressed. We’re setting off in five.”

Slipping out of bed, I rummage through the drawers for clean clothes as he disappears through the door. I put on a dress, longer than the one Amenadiel picked out for me yesterday, and a pair of heels. I miss walking barefoot, but I’m not in Eden anymore, so I’ll have to get used to it.

Dmitriy waits for me outside, looking bored and busy at the same time. It’s a specialty amongst the men here. His dark eyes scan over me with disinterest, unlike how he watched me the first time I ran into him. I was a weapon to be used back then to piss off Daemon. Now that he doesn’t know who I am, I’m of no use to Dmitriy. He can’t use me to get beneath Daemon’s skin.

That knowledge hurts. I’m no one to Daemon, Alaric, and Ronan. I’m just another fallen angel in a sea of other girls.

Not even an innocent one he can ruin.

I blink back tears as Dmitriy unfolds his wings.

“Ready to fly, new girl?”

My wings erupt in response, and Dmitriy’s eyes widen with surprise.

“They’re big,” he chokes out.

I shoot up into the sky, fed up with him and his shocked expression and piqued interest. If it were up to me, I would go back to bed and not move for the next ten years. Now I have to start over again.

We circle the academy once before landing on the soft, freshly cut grass outside the front steps. Lanterns line the path, and the trees are decorated with fairy lights. It’s effortlessly pretty. I love that about the night. It has an ethereal, haunting beauty that can’t be felt in the daytime. Not to mention the fresh scent of late night.

I inhale it deep into my lungs, and when I finally open my eyes, I feel more centered.

More like myself.

“So, what’s your plan?” Dmitriy asks as we enter the building. The hallway is crowded with students on their way to class, but since Dmitriy is Lucifer’s nephew, the crowd parts for him like he’s royalty. I guess he is.

It feels weird to walk to reception with Dmitriy close on my heels. He’s the enemy in this fairytale. Not my friend.

It feels even weirder to enroll for a second time. The lady behind the reception doesn’t recognize me either. She simply staples my paperwork together, slams it on the counter, and says, “You’ll find your class schedule and locker number in there. Any other relevant information is in there, too.” Then she shoos me away as though I’m an annoying mosquito.

I blink at her once, twice, and then Dmitriy guides me forward with his hand on my lower back.

“Walk, new girl. At least try to blend in and not look so weird.”

“I don’t feel like I blend in,” I counter.

“You do. As long as you keep your wings shut, you’ll be fine. Did I mention they’re huge?”

“Once or twice.”

We turn a corner, and Dmitriy slaps his hand on a locker. “This one is yours.”

I’m not even surprised it’s not right next to Daemon’s again. Why would it be? I’m a stranger now. It still makes my chest throb with an unrelenting ache. I peer to my left. At least I can see their lockers from here. It could be worse.

“Why are you looking so doom and gloom?”

After inputting my combination code, I yank the locker open with too much force. It’s empty of books and devoid of my past. I shut it again and lean back against it. “You don’t believe me anyway.”

“Of course I don’t. But try me anyway.”

I look away from his dark eyes that remind me so much of Daemon’s, but also not. “I don’t know what I’m doing here. I came back for Daemon, Alaric, and Ronan... even Dariana.”

“Dariana?” Now he sounds even more intrigued. Perhaps a little amused, too.

“It doesn’t matter,” I whisper regretfully, “since none of them know me anymore.”

“Surely you can juggle their memory or something?”

“I don’t seem to be able to juggle yours, and we f—” I slap a hand over my mouth. Shit, I don’t want to tell him that part. Let’s leave the past behind.

He looks confused. “We what?”

“Nothing.” I straighten up, craning my neck. Daemon and Alaric are over by the lockers across the hall. They’re impossible to miss with their intimidating builds and booming voices. Ronan joins them too, and grabs Alaric in a headlock.

I watch them tussle, with my heart in my throat. The sheer longing I feel hurts. Before I can stop myself or think it through, I push off the locker and walk up to them.

Ronan lets go of Alaric when he spots me, then nudges Daemon with his elbow, who looks at him questioningly before following his line of sight.

He dismisses me just as fast.

And to think that, for one brief second, I thought he might just recognize me.

I stop in front of them and nervously clear my throat. Now that I’m here, I don’t know what to say.

“Are you lost, new girl?” Ronan asks with a flirty smile. But it’s the kind of smile that tells me he would fuck me in the bathroom and then never talk to me again.

I refuse to be invisible to these guys. I’m not a fucking booty call.

“Daemon?” My voice shakes, and he slowly turns, then frowns. Without another word, he shoulders past me, causing me to stumble back.

Alaric smirks, and then he’s gone, too. Ronan lingers for a beat, watching me. “My advice, new girl. Do yourself a favor and look for someone in your own league.”

I rear back, but before I can reply, he’s gone.

Someone in my own league? What the fuck does that mean? I’m not stupid; I know Daemon is royalty in these woods. But to call me out of his league...

My blood boils.

“Not gonna lie. That was painful to watch,” Dmitriy says, shattering my thoughts.

My teeth grind until I’m convinced they’re about to pulverize.

“Let’s entertain the idea that you spoke the truth earlier. How did you capture his interest the first time around?”

“I didn’t. He kidnapped me.”

“Be that so...” He steps closer—so close that I can feel his burning heat at my back. “But you still held his interest somehow. White wings get old real fast. What did you do to keep him interested?”

“I was a virgin.”

“I see the appeal—an innocent angel ripe for the picking. I bet he had fun corrupting you, but that still doesn’t warrant his continued interest. So I’ll ask again.” His lips brush my ear as he shifts even closer. “What did you do?”

Shivers run down my spine, like a thousand tiny little spiders spreading out. “I fought him every step of the way.”

I feel him smile before he whispers, “So fight him.”

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CHAPTER
SEVEN

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AURELIA

“**A**menadiel!” I shout, barging through the house like a woman on a mission.

Scrap that. I *am* a woman on a mission. It’s been three days since Daemon dismissed me like dirt beneath his shoe.

Three days of watching him parade girls in the hallways and emerge out of janitor’s closets with his hair in disarray and lipstick marks on his neck.

I was blessed the first time around when I met Daemon. I never had to witness this side of him. The others told me stories of what Daemon was like before I stepped on the scene, but it’s painful to witness it myself. I want to shake him. Scream at him.

Anything to get him to see me. And only me. Not all the other girls throwing themselves at him.

I guess it’s a relief to know no one else sticks. Daemon fucks them once and then ignores them. He doesn’t chase them and torment them like he did me.

The only girl who can rightfully stake a claim on him in these hallways is Dariana. It’s evident they’re friends, and I already know they fuck from my first stint on this playground.

I call it a playground because, otherwise, it would truly be hell.

I never thought I would find myself pining and longing for someone—make that plural—who doesn’t even remember me and what we had.

Even Ronan is oblivious. He sat behind me today in class, completely unaware.

It hurt. More than I should have allowed it to.

“Amenadiel,” I roar, surprised the windows don’t rattle as I walk past.

“What is the ruckus about?” he asks, emerging from his office a couple of doors down.

I make a beeline for him, and he steps back inside, then gestures for me to take a seat.

“What can I help you with today, Angel?”

I plop down, then place my hands flat on his desk. “I’ll get right to it. I’m a fallen angel now. I want to learn how to manipulate fire, and you’re gonna teach me.” Leaning forward, I let my biggest, most nefarious smile

emerge. “I don’t just want to learn to manipulate fire. I want to be able to throw fireballs at Daemon’s ass from afar.”

Amenadiel chokes on his spit. “You want me to teach you how to throw fireballs at the heir to the throne?”

“Well, something to that effect. Fireballs, fire blasts, fire bolts, whatever.”

“Forgive me for feeling a bit confused. I thought you didn’t want me to hurt Daemon.”

Resting back against the chair, I wave my hand dismissively in the air. “I don’t, but I’m fed up with being ignored.” I lean forward again and bite out, “I am not a girl you ignore.”

“I gather that.”

“I don’t care for your sarcasm, Amenadiel. Teach me how to manipulate magic so I can singe his ass.”

Amenadiel starts to chuckle, then lifts his hand and throws a fireball at me.

I only just manage to duck out of the way.

“Like that?”

“What the hell?” I blurt, staring behind me at the curtains that are currently burning up.

With a click of his fingers, the fire extinguishes.

“You want to singe his ass?”

Dragging my eyes away from his ruined curtains, I swallow thickly. “I want to do something that’ll capture his attention.”

“Just strip naked. Why complicate matters?”

My eyes roll, and he chuckles again.

I can’t help but smile.

“You know what your nephew is like. If I let him have his wicked way with me without pissing him off first, he’ll lose interest afterward. I have a feeling you don’t want that to happen, hmm?”

Amenadiel ignores my jibe. “I’ll teach you how to channel fire magic, but I need you to know that it’s not just a case of conjuring a flame with your mind. You have to welcome the darkness and become one with it. You have to feed on and draw energy from the chaos you create. Are you sure you’re ready for that? Once you start welcoming the darkness inside you, it’ll catch ahold of you. It’ll seep into your veins and fill your heart like ink

dripping from a pen, until you bleed evil. Whatever little good you have left inside of you will fizzle out like a candle in the dark.”

“I thought you said my light is gone.”

“It is,” he confirms. “But you have a long way to go until you’re one with Hell.”

“What do I need to do?”

His smile takes on a cruel edge. “We need to pay a visit to the human world.” The chair creaks as he stands up and gestures to the door. “After you, Angel.”

I reluctantly walk out and proceed down the hallway toward the front of the house. The cool night air seeps in through an open window to our left. It’s not raining tonight, and the stars are out in their full glory, twinkling brightly overhead.

Amenadiel lets his wings erupt as we step outside, causing a shift in the air so powerful that my hair lifts off my shoulders.

For a moment, I struggle to breathe, in awe at the sheer beauty of his wingspan. I should be used to it by now since I’ve seen Daemon’s wings plenty of times, but it still makes me pause.

He sees the look on my face and gestures for me to descend the front steps. “Don’t look at me like that, little angel, unless you want me to hurt you.”

“I’m not looking at you. Just your wings.”

“Semantics,” he drawls, his long coat moving in the wind. “Are you ready for this?”

“Probably not,” I admit.

“Definitely not.” He shoots up into the sky before I can gasp with outrage.

Insufferable prick.

I need him to teach me how to work fire magic, I remind myself. I can’t do it on my own, and I need to learn fast unless I want to look like a weakling in front of Daemon and the others.

I take flight, reveling in the cool breeze on my heated skin. My wings shift the air with ease as we soar off into the night with Amenadiel in the lead.

How the fuck did my life come to this? I’m now living and flying with Amenadiel, of all people. The man who caused me to break my wrist and

who wanted to kill me to piss off his nephew. It doesn't matter how many times the thought enters my head; I still can't wrap my head around it.

I never will.

Amenadiel glances back at me, his powerful wings gliding through the air. "We're about to cross the border to the human lands. Are you ready?"

"You tell me," I quip, and he chuckles, then dives, shouting, "Definitely not."

I dive after him, plummeting toward the ground at such speed that my stomach jumps to my throat, along with my heart.

Amenadiel lands with perfect grace, whereas I stumble and fall on my face.

Spitting out grass, I roll over on my back and grin up at the sky. "That was crazy."

Amenadiel's face blocks out the stars. "I thought you were aiming for the Earth's core."

"Very funny."

He helps me up, and I brush grass and mud off my knees before looking around.

"Where are we?"

"You behaved like such a little fledgling. I figured it would be safest to land somewhere soft."

"And?"

"This, my little angel, is a soccer field."

I blink at him, then set off walking.

"That's the wrong direction, unless you want to get eaten by wolves."

I make a U-turn, walking past him.

He catches up to me. "I was joking about the wolves."

"What happened to the mean and vicious Amenadiel who makes babies cry and grown men shake in their boots?"

"He's still around, but I'm too busy with my *elaborate* schemes to let him out to play, remember?"

With a snort, I shake my head.

"See the lights up ahead? That's a nice little suburban street, full of colonial-style houses with picket fences. Perfect for hunting."

I trip over my feet but manage to right myself at the last second. "Hunting?"

“You haven’t fed since you arrived in Hell. If you want to stand any chance at singeing the royal ass, you need to keep your strength up. And not only that...” He winks at me. “You’ll need to create a little bit of chaos.”

“I don’t like how excited you sound.”

“Should I sound demure?”

As if my incisors can sense the humans, they begin to throb and elongate. I don’t have control of them yet, like Amenadiel, much to his amusement.

He pokes one with his thumb. “Fierce.”

And much to my embarrassment, I snarl, stopping short of snapping my teeth like a dog with rabies.

We reach the sidewalk, and Amenadiel whistles a haunting tune that reminds me of something out of a horror show.

When I look at him strangely, he does a double take.

“What?”

“What the fuck was that?”

“It’s my routine.”

“Routine?”

“You know, a ritual to get you in the mood?”

“Are you some weird stalker killer?”

Now he laughs. “I’m an ancient fallen angel, sugar. Of course, I have developed a routine after hundreds of years of hunting humans.”

“First, don’t ever call me ‘sugar’ again.”

“And secondly?”

“I don’t know. Stop being weird. You’re supposed to be scary. Don’t go hurting my first impressions of you. Remember the monster who stalked my nightmares for weeks on end? Where’s that guy?”

“Oh, you’ll see him come out to play soon,” he replies with a dark smile as we stop outside one of the houses. There is indeed a white picket fence and perfectly trimmed rose bushes.

“What are we doing here?”

Amenadiel flashes a hint of fang as he points to the house. “I present to you an American middle-class family who live on a boringly safe street, drive a predictably safe family car, save food stamps like they’re going out of fashion, and who cook their every meal according to a meal planner, which they prepare a week in advance, if not two. Their lives are the epitome of predictable.”

“So?”

“So,” he starts, grinning down at me. “We’re going to create a little bit of mayhem and chaos.”

“We’re not going to hurt them, are we?”

His voice is smoke and ashes as he starts walking up the driveway. “That’s exactly what we’re going to do.”

I run after him and try to pull him to a stop, but he’s too big and too strong to budge. “Stop, Amenadiel. We’re not going to hurt an innocent family.”

Shaking me off like an annoying child clinging to his leg, he turns to me on the first step on the porch. “Do you want to learn how to shoot firebolts or not?”

“Well, yeah, but—”

“No, but. There is no easy way to let the darkness in. You just have to open yourself up to it and let go.”

“By killing people?”

His cheeks puff up, and he blows out a tired breath before rubbing his eyes. “It’s like dealing with a toddler. Look, *precious little angel*, I was from heaven once too, alright? I know firsthand how cruel this seems. And how unfair it is to spill the blood of the innocent, yadda, yadda. But this is what it means to be a fallen angel. We’re not good or kind. Everything in nature has a balance, and both good and evil play vital roles in the tapestry. Good cannot exist without evil and vice versa. God cannot exist without the Devil.”

“Is your little impassioned speech supposed to sway me into killing innocent people in cold blood?”

“Who would you rather kill? You have to feed, Angel. It’s in your nature now. Would it sit better with you if we broke into a prison and fed on murderers and rapists?”

“Hmm, good question. Let me think about it for a while.” I pretend to mull it over for all of two seconds before flashing him my most charming smile. “Yes, Amenadiel. It sounds like a much more preferable plan.”

“Alright then. Murderers and child molesters, it is.” He walks past me down the driveway. “Good luck trying to impress Daemon with a matchstick flame that flickers out in the slightest breeze.”

Growling, I stomp my foot like a two-year-old. “Fine!”

The triumphant smile on Amenadiel's face rubs me the wrong way as he strides back to the porch.

"Please explain to me why this situation will be more useful than inmates?"

With his hand on the handle, he smirks at me over his shoulder. "You'll soon find out for yourself." Then he turns the handle and opens the door. "Did I mention they're predictable? Don't even lock their front door."

I reluctantly follow him inside, my eyes closing briefly when I hear feminine laughter up ahead. I can't believe we're doing this. I've killed before. Been caught up in my own darkness. But this is different. This is tangible evil. I can feel it seeping in through my pores and blackening my heart. My vision slowly turns red, and my incisors throb painfully as we step into the living room.

The woman screams when she spots us, and her husband shoots up from the couch. Their kids are nowhere around. Probably asleep upstairs.

"Good evening," Amenadiel says in such a friendly tone that I'm thrown for a second. But then it lowers, turning cruel and cold. "Did we interrupt your movie?"

"Wh-who are you?" the man stutters as he takes a protective stance in front of his wife.

Amenadiel flutters his wings with anticipation.

There's that haunting whistle again. On and on it goes, like a chilling lullaby on repeat.

My ears twitch when I hear a faint gasp at the top of the stairs. Amenadiel hears it too, if the slow smile on his lips is anything to go by.

"Did you know that when an angel from Heaven first arrives in Hell, they seek morality where there is none? Even after the last of their light has flickered out—that *smidgeon* of goodness that made them one with God. They still cling to some sort of compass that will lead them out of the darkness. It's ultimately what holds them back from power. It makes them *weak*." He spits the last word. "It makes their hearts bleed when they see injustices and emotional suffering. It results in actions that hold them back from their full potential. It's only when they let go and welcome their true nature that they get a taste of true power. The kind of power that God withholds."

I'm trembling with fear. My palms are sweaty, and my heart rate has shot through the roof. But in the midst of that fear lies a seed of something

truly monstrous. And when a shadow darts past me, instinct takes over. I have no impulse control.

Not when the wife makes a run for the phone on the console table. Her sudden movement startles the monster inside me, and now it's game over. Did no one teach her not to make any sudden movements in the presence of a predator?

Her loud scream is soon cut off when I collide with her from behind. My wings are out, hiding her from Amenadiel's view.

It's another instinct. Protect my meal.

His dark chuckle tells me he understands exactly why I'm snarling at him over my shoulder while flaring my wings.

"Don't mind her," he says to the man. "She's a baby and still has a lot to learn. Think of her as a primitive animal that acts on base instinct. As soon as she's fed, she'll come to her senses and probably cry herself to sleep. But for now, let's enjoy the show."

The woman whimpers when I stroke her brown hair away from her face and drag my fingers through the salty tears on her cheeks. The boys told me they seduce their victims because it makes them taste better. I highly disagree. The more scared she gets, the more alluring her scent becomes, and so I take my time with her until she's pleading for her life.

Amenadiel has drained her husband and is walking back downstairs when he spots me still hunched over the woman.

"Little angel, we don't have all night."

Another loud snarl rips from my lungs, and he chuckles as he plops down onto the couch.

The TV soon starts to blare.

"Please," the human begs, barely able to take a full breath while she's crying uncontrollably.

"Sshh." Her skin is so smooth, and it's so easy to make it bleed. It's everywhere, soaking through the fabric of my dress. I suck it off my finger, then press the tip over her trembling lips. I tap once, twice, feeling the seed of evil inside me blossom.

"Your family is dead." My voice is a dark, smoky whisper. Like the hellfire singing my fingertips.

I inhale her scream. I inhale it deep into my lungs.

So deep that I come alive.

Then I strike. My teeth sink into her slender neck, tearing through her jugular.

Flesh and tendons get stuck between my teeth as my hands slip and slide over her bloody skin. It's a beautiful massacre of horror and destruction.

And from a single seed, a garden grows.

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CHAPTER
EIGHT

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AURELIA

I'm lying on the lounge in front of the pool in Amenadiel's backyard, staring up at the countless stars overhead. I missed this when I was back in Eden—the endless night. Now I miss the sun on my cheeks. I guess we're never fully happy, after all.

My thoughts drift to Freya and the horrible act I committed last night. I've killed before, but this felt like crossing a boundary, even more so than when I killed Oliver.

What came out to play was something truly vicious, dark, and untamed.

"Look at you playing with fire."

The small flames on my fingertips flicker out, and I look up at Dmitriy as he lowers himself down beside me on the lounge next to mine. "Why do you have a pool? Isn't it always too cold?"

His shoulders lift and fall in a careless shrug. "It's a heated pool."

Oh... I guess I should have figured it out earlier when I sat gazing at the steam that floats on the surface. But my brain is occupied with replaying last night's events on repeat. As if I haven't tortured myself enough.

"So, the fire?" He lifts his chin, and I rub my finger and thumb together as if I can still feel the flame.

"What you saw is what you get. I can't do anything else yet."

"It'll come. The more you let the darkness in, the easier you'll manipulate hellfire."

"What's your secret?" I ask him.

He sucks his lips between his teeth in thought as he regards me. Dressed in black jeans and a black button-down, Dmitriy looks like the night brought to life. "Hellfire is a destructive energy at its core. You need to find a way to channel it, either through anger, fear, or grief. Whatever darkness is inside you, lean into it and let it guide you. One thing is for sure, you can't manipulate hellfire with light. It belongs to the night."

"You're different than I thought."

With his elbows on his knees, he rubs his palms together. "Why is that?"

"I don't know," I reply. "You were cruel when I first met you."

"I'm still cruel where Daemon is concerned."

“Can I ask a question?”

Dmitriy’s eyebrows rise, then he nods. “Sure.”

“Have you ever done something so bad that you felt like you were drowning in your own darkness?”

His eyes scan over the pool before returning to me. “I think you need to ask my father. According to the stories, the original angels struggled with the darkness at first. Some got lost to it.”

“What do you mean by ‘lost?’”

He shrugs again, then looks back out over the pool. “I don’t know. It consumed them to the point of self-destruction, I would assume. You should ask my dad. He’ll be able to tell you.”

“I think he’s been here too long. What I experienced last night...” I drift off, and Dmitriy looks back at me.

“He told me.”

I nod my head slowly. “I don’t know what came over me. I killed that woman in cold blood.” My eyes meet his. “I tortured her for hours. I even taunted her with her dead family because the scent of her fear awoke something so dark inside me that couldn’t be leashed. It scared me, Dmitriy. I’m scared.”

He drags a hand over his face and blows out a breath. “To answer your question, in a fashion, I was born of the darkness. It has always been a part of me. I have never known light the way you have. The way my father has. The same moral compass that guides you north, guides me south. It’s in my very nature to inflict pain and instill fear.”

I consider his words in silence while he looks up at the stars.

I’m just about to open my mouth to speak, when he says, “Show me the flame.”

Holding my hand up in front of me, I calm my mind and focus on centering my breath. A small flame flickers to life in the middle of my palm and my lips spread into a smile. When I look back up at Dmitriy, his eyes sparkle with something unfamiliar.

An emotion I can’t place.

“You’re doing it wrong.”

“What do you mean?”

“Instead of calming your thoughts, let your mind wander back to last night. What was the one thing that brought you the most depraved pleasure? What fed the monster inside you? Was it the look in her eyes? The sound of

her crying children? The blood? Her screams? What was it? Bring it to the forefront and focus on it.”

“Your family is dead.”

I gasp when the flame in my hand shoots up, then sizzles out just as fast.

Dmitriy stands up and clasps my shoulder. “You’ll get there. Keep focusing your mind on the darkness, and you’ll be able to make that flame burn taller and brighter.” Leaning down, he whispers in my ear, “Let the darkness in.”

Then he walks away, and I stare at my palm, a smile playing on my lips. I blow out a breath and start again, conjuring a small flame. It flickers and dances in the moonlight while I strain my mind to hold it. That’s the hardest part. If I lose focus, it flickers out.

Closing my eyes, I inhale deeply and let my mind run free. It sweeps through the dark forest, hunting for that one thing.

That one thing to latch onto.

“My advice, new girl. Do yourself a favor and look for someone in your own league.”

“Can we help you, new girl?”

“Watch it, new girl.”

My eyes slowly drift open, and my lips part as I stare at the tall flame in my hand. My gaze soon strays to my fingertips, and the flame follows, dancing across my skin like a soft caress.

I snuff it out, listening to it hiss inside my closed fist.

It’s time I take back what is mine.

They kidnapped me the first time and gave me no choice but to offer them my innocence. They feasted on it like a pack of hyenas. Tore into it with sharp teeth and animalistic grunts.

They are the reason behind the darkness swirling in my gaze.

They created the monster residing in me.

She is their creation.

And I am done keeping her leashed.

Now the question is, how do you piss off someone like Daemon enough to catch his interest? Because he’s my starting point. He’s the leader of the

pack. If I want to catch all their attention, I have to first gain Daemon's. It won't work if I try to seduce Ronan and Alaric, or even Dariana first.

I'm overthinking this. No one challenges Daemon. I learned that last time. It's not a behavior he's used to.

Now, the girls giggling and throwing flirty glances at him as they walk past are a different ballgame. He's the heir to the throne and Hell's own version of a royal. People worship at his feet.

And he uses and discards others like they're objects for his entertainment. I was right, the night he kidnapped me, when I thought he was bored. Daemon thirsts for a challenge, and I provided him with one.

"You look deep in thought," Dmitriy whispers under his breath as he opens his locker.

I drag my eyes away from Daemon and his friends. "Huh?"

"My point exactly," he quips, removing the books he needs for the lesson.

I open my locker too, and flash him a smile.

"What's that?"

I take out the object in question. "You must know what this is?"

Dmitriy shuts his locker, then straightens up. "Forgive me for not being fluent in human."

"It's an American football."

"And?"

"Your father gifted it to me. He said, and I quote, 'This will do until you learn to throw fireballs at his ass.'"

Dmitriy chokes on his saliva. "What?"

"Never mind. Do you know what surprised me the most when I left Heaven?"

With an eye roll, he shoulders his bag. "Tell me."

"My strength." I send the ball flying at Daemon and it hits him on the back of the head with a hard thwack I swear I can hear from here.

I can't stop the laughter that bubbles up from my chest.

"The fuck?!" Dmitriy looks pale.

"Do you think it'll work? Is he sufficiently pissed off?"

"Oh, it'll work. And that's my cue to get the fuck out of here."

He bolts, and I press a hand over my mouth to stop more crazed laughter from bubbling out of me like a stream.

When I look back, I meet a wall of muscle and two furious pits of hell that glare at me with such force I almost shrink back.

Almost...

"Admit it, Daemon, it was a good shot."

His hand flies out, and he grabs me by my throat, then shoves me back against the lockers. I yelp, latching onto his wrist with my fingers. Holy fuck, I've missed this. I've missed his burning attention and the way he excavates me with his eyes as if he wants to see inside me.

But the emotion at the forefront, the one emotion that shouts the loudest, is relief.

Relief at being back in his orbit.

To be seen by him again.

His fingers dig into my throat, and his masculine, woodsy scent surrounds me as he leans in close. "You want to play, sweetheart?"

We've been here before. I remember another time when Daemon said those exact same words.

But I'm not the same innocent girl anymore.

"Let go of me," I growl. *Please don't.*

Daemon likes a fight, so I'll fight.

He lifts me slightly, then slams me back against the locker. "Shoot another ball at me and I'll make you regret ever setting foot at this academy again."

My wings unfold to their full glory, and I revel in the surprise in his eyes as I shove him off with enough strength to cause him to stumble back. "Threaten me again, crown boy, and you'll have a war on your hands." I stride away with my head held high and a seductive sway to my hips.

Try to unsee me now, fucker.

As soon as I turn the corner, I slink into the nearest empty classroom and press my forehead against the closed door. My heart is thundering so loudly, I can barely hear the hum of students in the hallway. I'm alive, truly alive, for the first time since my return. I have his attention again, and it feels good.

It was hell to walk these hallways and feel invisible.

A wallflower no one noticed.

Truth is, I didn't know if I would ever catch his attention again. Without the shine of innocence, white wings, and a promise of corruption, how could I make him see me again?

Just then, the handle rattles, and I jump back with my heart in my throat. Dmitriy enters and quickly shuts the door behind him with a soft click. His dark eyes find mine and his lips unfurl in a slow smile. “He’s definitely sufficiently pissed off.”

“Yeah?”

He nods, leaning back against the door.

Suddenly unsure, I wrap my arms around myself and let my gaze skate over the room. Dmitriy was so willing to destroy Daemon, and now he’s helping me?

I know I can’t trust anyone here at the academy, but my heart still wants to see the good in people.

“What’s your plan now? Continue throwing balls at him?”

I smile despite myself. “It was a good shot.”

“It was an epic shot.”

“I don’t know what my plan is. Daemon always had a thing for my wings, and he has seen them now. I flared them at him. It should be—”

“Wait a minute... You flared your wings at Daemon?”

“Uh, yes?”

Dmitriy bursts out laughing, and it goes on and on.

“What?”

“Let’s just say, you’ve definitely got his attention now. Flaring your wings is the equivalent of challenging someone for their position. Like a lesser wolf challenging the alpha. Wingspan equals power. Yours are huge, as you know. It’s sexy as hell.”

I grimace. “Please, don’t say that again.”

“Do you want me to lie? Daemon will be rubbing one out tonight in your honor while imagining a million ways to force you to submit, willingly or unwillingly.”

A shiver runs through me.

A delicious fucking shiver.

The kind of shiver that makes me squeeze my thighs together.

“Come on,” Dmitriy says, opening the door. “Let’s get to class.”

“I don’t think it’s a good idea if Daemon sees me with you.”

“On the contrary,” he says when we walk out. “This time around, it’ll work to your advantage.”

“I’ll hold you personally responsible if you’re wrong.”

“Come on,” he says with an easy smile. “You should have learned by now that he is competitive by nature. Even more so where his dearest cousin is concerned.”

The hallways are almost empty now except for a few stragglers, including us.

We turn the corner. “You’re as bad as each other.” I look at him, slowing to a halt. “Do you really not remember me?”

His head shakes, and I blow out a breath. “It’s just so hard to get my head around. I have all these memories of you and your cousin. Lots of history, you know? It feels strange to start over again.”

He pulls me to a stop. “I’m not gonna pretend to be a good person, but you can always talk to me.”

With a snort and a soft laugh, I walk off. “Even though you tried to use me to piss off Daemon, and your father tried to kill me? I don’t think so. It’ll take a lot more for me to trust you.”

“That’s fair. So try me. Give me something.”

“Give you something?”

“You know...” We come to a stop outside the classroom. “Trust me with something simple. Let me show you I’m not this horrible version you remember me as.”

Chewing on my lip, I regard him. The side he showed of himself last time was as true as the side I’m seeing of him now. That’s one thing I’m learning about Hell. Everything exists in a prism of colors here, and nothing is black and white. Daemon once said morals don’t exist in Eden, but I think they do. Maybe they express themselves differently, and maybe they’re sometimes questionable, but they exist in their own shade of gray.

“Okay...” I draw in a deep breath. “It hurts to have to fight for their affection. I’m no one to them now.” With a sigh, I whisper, “I’m repeating myself.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Dmitriy says, lowering his voice to match mine. “Get it off your chest.”

“It’s just... It hurts to lose their love. All those memories... It’s all gone, and now I have to make them fall in love with me again. And I don’t even know if I’ll succeed. What if I don’t? That thought scares me more than I want to admit.”

Dmitriy watches me for a moment with a sympathetic look in his eyes—the kind of look that makes my skin crawl. Why? Because I hate feeling

weak, and I have no control over my situation right now.

“It’s okay to be scared. You should use it. What was it you said? You need to piss Daemon off. Whatever you did last time, keep doing it.”

I nod slowly, staring past him at the closed door. “It’ll all work out. I can’t give up yet.”

Nudging my shoulder, he smiles. “Besides, you nailed him in the head. How can he not fall for you now?”

I snort a laugh, as I open the door and enter the classroom. “He’s more likely to kill me.”

“To him, that’s the equivalent of love.”

My head shakes as I pull out a chair and take a seat. “That just shows that you don’t know him.”

“I know he’s a pain in the fucking ass, and I’d gladly see him dethroned.”

The teacher turns around, and her lips spread in a smile that’s too big for her face. It’s the kind of smile that makes me shrink back in my seat because I know what’s happening.

“Students, we have a new pupil in the class.” As one, they all turn to look at me, except for Daemon, who’s too busy scrolling on his phone. “Would you like to come up here and tell us a little about yourself?”

No, absolutely not. Scooting my chair back, I reluctantly walk up to the front, inhaling a breath before turning around and flashing my brightest smile. It’s so fake that I should win an award.

“Say hello to our new student, everyone.” The teacher smiles at me gently.

Daemon finally looks up from his phone, watching me closely with those dark, stormy eyes of his that remind me of thunderstorms and lightning flashes.

Ronan, on the other hand, has an easy smile on his face. The kind of smile that makes girls swoon and drop to their knees.

Meanwhile, Alaric is watching me through narrowed eyes, as if he’s trying to figure me out.

I barely acknowledge them. In order to catch their attention, I have to do the opposite of the other girls here and play hard to get, which isn’t easy to do when I want to throw myself at their feet and beg for their love.

“Tell us a little something about yourself.”

Great, now I must invent a story. Making up lies on the spot isn't exactly my forte, so I try to stick as close to the truth as I can. "I was recently kicked out of Eden, and now here I am, rocking the black wings."

Dmitriy hides his chuckle behind his closed fist.

The teacher blinks. "Y-you were kicked out of Eden?"

"In a nutshell, yes."

"No one has been kicked out of Eden since..." Her eyes flit over to Daemon.

"The fall? Yes, I know, which is why Dmitriy's uncle has so kindly taken me in."

I can practically feel Daemon's eyes narrow.

"Okay then," she says, dragging the words out as if she thinks I'm full of shit. "Why don't you take a seat?"

With a shrug of my shoulders, I prance back to my seat, more than happy to blend back into the shadows.

"Do you always make situations awkward?" Dmitriy asks as he leans in, his eyes sparkling with amusement.

"It's a specialty. Stop sidetracking me with your dry humor. You're still the villain in this story."

"Hmm," he muses, opening his book. "I think your story is about to crown a new villain."

My eyes follow his, and I watch as Daemon shares a dark look with Ronan and Alaric before smirking and stretching his arm out over the back of Dariana's chair.

Excitement courses through my veins at the thought of taming my own Captain Hook.

Peter Pan, who? Screw the good guy. I want the darkness and the violent destruction in Daemon's eyes.

I want him to unleash his storm.

CHAPTER
NINE

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DAEMON

“Why do women always take so long in the bathroom?” Ronan whines while we wait by the lockers across from the bathroom door.

“Beats me,” Alaric replies, watching a girl walk past in a short skirt that sways around her smooth thighs.

Dragging my eyes away from the door, I spare the girl a brief glance but look away just as quickly. Ever since the new girl unfolded her wings, it’s all I’ve been thinking about. I’ve never seen such big wings on a female angel, and it’s fucking impossible to ignore the urge inside me that wants to dominate her.

That’s why I’m here now, when we should be in the cafeteria.

My curiosity is a restless beast.

“Why would my uncle take her in?”

Ronan stops whining and looks at me. “Who?”

“The new girl.” My eyes are back on the door. The moment it opens, I’ll be on her.

“Your uncle doesn’t have a kind bone in his body,” Alaric points out.

It’s true. He’s ruthless in his pursuit of the throne, and this sudden act of kindness reeks of something I can’t put my finger on.

“Maybe his plan is to use her against you?” Alaric says, confirming my suspicion.

I rub my bottom lip with my thumb before uncrossing my feet and straightening up. “It would be too obvious, don’t you think? She lives with him, for fuck’s sake. He must know that raises suspicion.”

“Sometimes the best thing is to hide in plain sight. It’s a genius plan *because* it’s so obvious.”

I’m only listening with half an ear, when the door opens and she walks out, unaware of the wolves lying in wait.

My feet move before my brain has had a chance to catch up.

“What are you doing?” the new girl protests as I drag her into the nearest empty classroom and shove her inside. Alaric and Ronan follow

behind, the latter shutting the door softly behind us and flipping the lock. The sound is ominous in the quiet room.

Like a sudden gunshot.

It makes her flinch, and the hungry, restless beast inside me likes the sight a little too much.

She backs away, colliding with a desk, as I near.

I like her uncomfortable and uncertain.

No, that's not right... I like her scared. The slight hitch in her breath when I shove a desk out of the way instead of walking around it in my pursuit of getting to her.

"What is my uncle planning?" My voice is a low, threatening rumble.

Her wide eyes flit to Alaric and Ronan behind me. If she thinks they'll come to her rescue, she's wrong. If anything, they'll feed on her corpse once I'm done with her.

"There's nowhere left to run," I whisper darkly as I corner her against a desk near the window.

Her wide, anxious eyes peer up at me, and her breath stutters when I trace my finger over her fluttering pulse point.

"What is my uncle planning?"

"Wh-what?"

"Don't play shy now, sweetheart. We both know he's planning something, and you're helping him. Let me guess"—I grip her by the side of the neck—"he wants you to seduce me. Make me territorial, so I'll break the treaty."

Her brows pull down low, as if she's confused. I'll give it to my uncle; she's a good actress. "You think I'm helping Amenadiel?"

I like the sound of her feminine voice. It's stronger now and less breathy than before. She was scared and now she's taken aback.

"Is that it? You think he's using me to manipulate you?"

Her pulse thunders beneath my fingertips, and my eyes snag on her slender neck before I meet her fiery, chocolate-brown eyes. "It won't work."

She flinches again, and that's how I know I've got her sussed out. My uncle thought he was so clever. The old man thought he could get to me through pussy. Surely, he must know how many girls throw themselves at me every day. His power-hungry mind has gotten over his head if he thinks this pussy will be different from all the rest.

“You’re just a girl,” I whisper slowly. “You’re nothing special.”

A muscle tics in her cheek before she looks away, her eyes pooling with tears.

At first, I think they’re sad tears, but I realize they’re tears of anger when she meets my gaze again.

Fury sparkles in her brown depths as she shoves me back a step. “And you think you’re special? You’re no one, Daemon.” Then her smile takes on a cruel edge, and she steps closer. “You’re nothing more than a spoiled little rich boy who thinks he’s all that because of his powerful daddy. Newsflash, you’re a brat, and your uncle is twice the man you are. If anything, he’s smarter. I don’t want anything to do with you, and nothing can convince me to try to seduce *you*. Don’t flatter yourself.”

She tries to sidestep me, but I seize her arm and shove her back. “I’m not fucking done with you.”

Now she snorts and folds her arms over her chest. Her eyes peer past me, as if I’m not worthy of her attention, and it pisses me the fuck off. The urge to shake her makes my fingertips tingle, but I fist my hands and count to ten. “You will not leave until I tell you that you can leave. Is that understood?”

Alaric and Ronan shift behind me, hungry for blood and chaos. They, too, can sense the tension crackling in the air.

The girl is still not looking at me, so I pinch her chin between my thumb and finger and force her eyes to mine. “Is that understood?”

“Fuck you!” she snarls, baring her sharp teeth with a snarl.

In all my years, no one has ever dared to bare their incisors at me. It’s fucking intriguing. My reflex is to grab her face and dig my fingers into her cheeks. And the satisfaction I feel when her eyes widen has my cock hardening in my jeans. It certainly likes her defiance. It’s refreshing, if not a little annoying. “I’m gonna turn your invitation down, little whore. I don’t fuck *brats*,” I say, repeating her word choice from earlier.

This time when she snarls, I smirk.

Behind me, Alaric and Ronan chuckle.

This girl has fire in her eyes, attitude at her fingertips, and defiance on her lips.

“Fuck off,” she growls, fighting me, or trying to. It takes me no effort at all to subdue her pathetic attempts at freeing herself.

I like the feel of her in my arms—her fragility, like a petal I could crush beneath my boots. It's tempting too, to break her for the sake of it. Just to cement to her that she stands no chance against me.

My chest vibrates with a deep chuckle as I taunt, "So angry."

"Let me go!"

"I don't think so, little whore. Not until you get one thing straight."

"Yeah, what's that?" she spits, wriggling in my arms.

"Maybe it's true that Heaven kicked you out, but this is my kingdom, and that makes you mine by default."

The face she pulls is nothing short of repulsed, and my ego smartens at the look of disgust in her big eyes. "Get one thing through your thick skull, crown boy. I. Am. Not. Yours." Then she shoves me off with surprising strength, as if she was pretending to be weak earlier. Like a soldier who hides their tactics on the battlefield until the right moment to strike.

Walking out, she slams the door shut behind her.

"Well," Ronan starts, but he soon shuts up when he spots my glare.

"Not a fucking word," I growl, storming past him.

Alaric, however, doesn't even attempt to stifle his laughter. And when I glower at him too, he laughs harder. "Just admit that it was amusing, Daemon. Come on, when was the last time a girl gave you a run for your money?"

My response is an arched eyebrow.

"She's a firecracker."

"More like a pain in my ass." I shoulder past him and exit the room.

"Where the fuck have you been?" Dariana asks, her hand on her hip as she joins us.

"Lover boy here thought he would teach the new girl a lesson but ended up crashing and burning instead. You should have seen it."

"I didn't crash and burn," I growl, stalking toward the cafeteria. I need to tear into some flesh to calm this raging storm inside me. Who cares if I kill the lunch menu? I'm restless, and it's annoying.

"The new girl?" Dariana asks, flicking her raven hair. "Do you really think she was kicked out of Eden?"

"Only one way to find out. We'll pay my uncle a little visit."

"Do you think that's a good idea?" she asks uncertainly.

I side-eye her before opening the door to the cafeteria. "I need to find out everything I can before my father gets wind of this."

“You should befriend her,” Alaric suggests, and Dariana pulls an offended look.

“Why the fuck would I do that?” she asks.

“Get her on our good side.” He winks, stepping through the door. “Keep your friends close and your enemies closer. Ever heard of that saying?”

“Of course. It’s second nature to me. Everyone except for you three is my enemy.”

Alaric slaps a hand to his chest while Ronan slings his arm around her shoulder. “I’m touched.”

We come to a halt as one, and Alaric lets out a breathy chuckle. “Would you look at that?”

My teeth gnash when the new girl leans in close to Dmitriy and laughs at something he says. What’s so fucking funny about my cousin? He’s an asshole with an inferiority problem who likes to ride my trail dust.

As if the little angel can sense my dark thoughts, she stiffens before looking in my direction, her brown eyes widening.

With a sneer, Dariana walks up to one of the poles, and Alaric calls out behind her, “I asked you to befriend her, not frighten her off.”

“Something tells me it’ll take a lot more to frighten her off,” chuckles Ronan as he steps past me to find his own meal.

Meanwhile, I stay locked in a battle of wills with the new girl. She refuses to look away first, and fuck if it’s not alluring. Other girls blush on the rare occasion I look at them with the full force of my gaze. Not only does the new girl not blush, but she also meets it head-on with a quirk of her perfectly arched brow. Why is she constantly challenging me? Does she not know what’s good for her? Antagonizing me won’t end well for anyone.

Just then, a slender hand lands on my stomach and travels up my chest. It’s followed by the stench of flowery perfume and desperation.

“Hello, Daemon.”

It’s Anya, a girl I have fucked once or twice who still keeps trying her luck. If I remember correctly, she’s bad at oral but has a nice and tight fuckable ass.

I break eye contact with the annoying brat to look down at Anya and finger a strand of her raven hair. It’s smooth and slightly wavy, even more so when I twirl it around my finger and pull. “You gonna let me fuck that sweet ass?”

Of course, she nods, stopping short of panting like an eager dog. “Anything you want, Daemon.”

I’m already bored, and that’s the problem. Nothing is a challenge anymore. Anya will let me drag her into the nearest bathroom, and then she’ll flip her skirt up before pulling her ass cheeks apart and offering me her asshole on a silver platter. It’s as exciting as algebra.

But because I can feel a certain someone burning a hole in the side of my face—and because I like it a little too much—I wrap my arm around Anya’s waist. I lead her back outside while reveling in the lick of fire that travels down my back.

No sooner has the door shut than Anya starts talking. Now I remember why I give her a wide berth.

“So my friends are, like, totally jealous right now. You rarely go back for seconds unless it’s Dariana, so I must be special. Oh, my God.” She giggles when I grip the back of her neck. “You’re so bad and so kinky.”

“Shut up,” I growl, shoving her into the janitor’s closet and shutting her inside. “I need you to stay in there for the next half an hour. That’s an order. Leave early and I’ll have no choice but to hurt you, understood?”

I walk off before she can respond. She won’t leave. In fact, she’ll stay an extra ten minutes so as not to piss me off.

I’d rather fuck my own hand than her.

Not only is she immensely boring, but she’s also predictable. Where’s the challenge when, with a click of my fingers, she’ll drop to her knees anywhere? I know, because I once made a girl blow me during class while the flustered teacher loosened his tie. I’m Lucifer’s son, so it’s not like anyone can stop me. And that free pass is what makes life so endlessly monotonous.

“Boys,” Amenadiel beams when we enter his office, “what a pleasure to see you.”

Ronan shuts the door, and Alaric takes a seat on the armchair across from the desk. I remain standing with my feet planted and my arms crossed. “Cut the crap.”

“What?” Amenadiel’s smile is too wide and too smug. “Can an uncle not be pleased to see his nephew?”

“Not in this case,” Alaric drawls, and Amenadiel cuts him a dark look.

“Who is she?” I ask, straight to the point.

My uncle rises to his feet and straightens up a pile of papers. “I knew you’d come to me sooner or later, but this sure is sooner than I thought.”

I remain silent, not in the mood to play his mind games.

“What information would you like, nephew?”

“She claims to have been kicked out of Eden.”

The sparkle in my uncle’s eye is one I’m too familiar with. He’s two steps ahead of me, planning his next strategic move, while I’m still trying to figure out what board we’re on. Is it chess or scrabble? “Yes, she was.”

My eyes narrow. “Why did you take her in?”

“I can’t leave a lost angel without a roof over her head, now can I?”

The air reeks of deceit, lies, and manipulation. “If you’re planning on using her against me, it won’t work.”

“You have such little faith in me. Why would I use an innocent angel against my own nephew?”

Behind me, Ronan snorts.

Alaric kicks his muddy shoes up on my uncle’s desk. “We see right through you, old man.”

“You’ve always coveted my father’s crown,” I point out, and my uncle’s disapproving eyes look up from Alaric’s feet.

“The battles between your father and me don’t involve young girls.”

“Okay, let me ask you this...” I plant my feet and peer out through the window at the silvery moon in the sky. Then I look back at my uncle and see the crow’s feet lining his dark eyes. “No one has left Eden since you, my dad, and five other angels rebelled. Why this girl? And why now?”

“Maybe you should ask her these questions.” He rounds the table and walks up to me. “I’m sure she can answer them herself.”

“Whatever you’re planning, drop it. I’m warning you now, you don’t want to mess with me.”

Reaching out, he pats my shoulder once, twice, then grips it. “Relax, nephew. I mean you or your dad no harm.”

“Bullshit,” coughs Ronan.

The grandfather clock in the hallway chimes loudly while we remain locked in a war of wills. We only break apart when the front door opens and

the new girl's feminine voice calls out, "Amenadiel, are you home? You won't believe the day I've ha..." she drifts off when she walks into the office, her eyes growing wide.

Turning fully and raising my brows, I shove my hands into my pockets. My stance is relaxed, but my shoulders are tense, and my lips remain in a thin line. "Little angel."

She looks at Amenadiel before narrowing her eyes at me. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm visiting my uncle." I watch her closely, waiting for her to show a flicker of surprise.

She doesn't.

"Interesting," I muse, stepping closer, and she backs away out of instinct.

"What is?"

Alaric rises from his chair and steps up behind her, but her gaze remains locked on me until she collides with his hard chest.

Her small gasp is audible in the quiet room.

"You didn't react when I mentioned I was visiting my uncle. As if you knew..."

Her head starts to shake, but I hold my finger up, and she stops.

"You knew the man you're living with is my uncle, and that's why you threw the football at my head. It was an attempt on your part to get my attention. You're working with him." Leaning in close, I growl, "A scheming little witch."

She snaps her head to the side, refusing to look at me. Her jaw is tense, and her eyes burn with defiance.

The kind of defiance I itch to spank out of her. Because I will spank her ass for trying to entrap me in her games with my uncle. She wanted my attention, and now she has it. Let's see how long it takes until she regrets it.

"I'll see you at school, *little witch*."

Alaric steps around her, and we walk back out.

Before I leave the room, I point my finger at my uncle. "Drop it, Amenadiel. I'm serious."

CHAPTER
TEN

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AURELIA

“Fire magic. Fire magic. Fire magic,” I whisper, turning page after page in the book before placing it back on the bookshelf. I reach for the next book in line and start the tedious process of meticulously looking through it for information about fallen angels and fire magic. Anything I can find that could potentially be helpful.

The library is quiet at this time of the day, and most students have left for home. I guess that’s why I’m here now and not during the day when it’s filled with the hum of whispering students.

I love the supreme silence that reigns among the paper and hardbacks. It’s only disturbed by my silent whisper and the rustle of the pages.

When I don’t find anything of relevance, I place the book back down and reach for the next.

I pause as my eyes land on the title of a hardcover on the top shelf.

Intrigued, I pull it out.

It’s so high up that I have to stand on my tiptoes to reach it.

Smoothing my hand over the carved leather exterior, I flip it open. The pages are filled with cursive, handwritten notes and smudged drawings, some more chaotic than others.

It describes life in Eden before the fall, and the more I read, the more I want to continue reading.

Then it goes on to outline the nature of evil and how it weaves into the fabric of Hell.

I turn another page, pleased to find an entire chapter dedicated to the mastery of fire magic.

This is what I need. Something to outline and explain the process. Fire magic is such a natural elemental power to these angels that I’m left feeling like a lost fish in the ocean. Especially now that I look like a fallen angel but feel like an impostor.

I’m sliding my backpack off my shoulder when the room turns dark, except for an emergency light up ahead that flickers like something straight out of a horror movie. It’s too faint to reach where I’m standing.

I quickly place the book in my bag, zip it back up, and then shoulder it again.

Maybe it's later than I thought, and the teachers are heading home.

"Hello?" I call out, but instead of stepping out from the shadows, I slink back. Something feels off.

Even the air seems to have dropped in temperature.

The sound of heavy footsteps draws nearer, slow and calculating, boots clapping on the marble flooring. Whoever this person is, they're not trying to hide their presence.

I carefully push the books apart to peer through a gap. The aisle is empty, and I wait with bated breath to catch a glimpse of the person.

I wait and wait.

The footsteps slow to a stop, and silence descends on the library once again. My heart beats so loudly, rushing in my ears, that I'm sure it can be heard over the screaming silence.

Just then, books get shoved to the floor behind me, causing me to nearly jump out of my skin. I press a hand over my mouth. How I don't scream out loud is a miracle.

Suppressing a whimper, I breathe through my nose. Deep, steady inhales to calm my racing, panicky heart.

I slowly turn and look through a gap in the books. At first, I see nothing except the dark, flickering aisle lined by geography books. But then a shadowy figure, a person dressed in a black robe with their hood pulled low over their face, comes into view. Large, black wings drag over the floor as he walks past, and I hold my breath, scared to make a noise.

I back away when I see the carved hunting knife in his hand, with its sharp blade that glints beneath the flashing emergency light.

As if he can hear me hiding behind the bookshelf, he pauses and cocks his head in my direction.

A beat passes when I can barely breathe, let alone think.

Then I sprint.

Instinct takes over, and I run for the exit, my feet pounding on the marble flooring and my heart thrashing inside my chest.

I can hear him take chase, knocking over books as he comes flying around the corner, but I don't look back.

The door is in sight.

A few more steps.

I launch myself at the handle and tumble into the brightly lit hallway. The momentum causes me to lose balance and fall onto my hands and

knees, but I'm too high on adrenaline to notice the pain as I spin around.

The mouth of the dark, open doorway gapes at me, and I wait for the robed man to step through, convinced he'll kill me.

Nothing happens.

An eerie silence settles, pressing in from every corner.

Silence can be gentle and welcoming.

Not this silence.

This silence mocks me.

It laughs and jeers.

It wants me to rise to my feet and step back into the library to face my nightmares.

Are you not brave enough? Who's a scaredy-cat?

I am. I am that scaredy-cat.

I squeeze my eyes shut in an attempt to wrangle my panic into submission. When that doesn't work, I inhale a deep breath.

"Are you okay?"

My eyes fly open, and I jump to my feet.

Dariana stands in front of me with an uncertain look on her face, as if she thinks I'm strange.

My back meets the cold stone wall. "I'm fine."

Where did she come from?

I flick my eyes over her shoulder to the gaping doorway. "Were you in the library just now?"

"No..." she drifts off, following my line of sight before looking back at me with her brows pulled low. "I, uh, I stayed to work on a project."

"A project?" I ask skeptically.

"Yes." She takes a hesitant step closer. "Are you sure you're okay?"

I look at the door again, then at her. "I'm fine."

"Wait!" she calls out when I walk off, and I slow to a halt. Her heels click on the marble as she runs to catch up.

I'm enveloped in a cloud of her flowery perfume, fruity shampoo, and strawberry lip balm. Struck with a sense of nostalgia, I breathe her in as discreetly as I can.

"Where are you heading now?"

"Back to my place."

I'm still shaken by what happened in the library and need to be alone. Someone tried to attack me.

Not only that, they knew I was in there and hunted me like prey. What would have happened if I hadn't made it out in time?

The thought sends chills down my spine as we turn the corner.

"You've grown pale," Dariana points out. "Maybe you need to sit down for a bit."

"I'm fine."

She pulls me to a stop. "You're not fine."

I look back at the way we came, unable to shake the feeling of being watched. The sconces on the walls burn brightly, their flames dancing over the stone, shadows crawling and elongating.

"Come with me."

Before I can protest, she hauls me along, gripping my arm tightly in her hand.

I let her lead me outside into the fresh night air, where we take a seat on the stone steps to the academy.

Nudging my knee with hers, she says, "Why don't you tell me what happened to spook you?"

At the mention of the robed man with the knife, I shudder, wrapping my arms around myself to ward off the cold. "Someone tried to attack me in the library."

Dariana stiffens. "Are you sure?"

"Unless it's normal to carry knives and walk around in black robes, yes." I meet her steady gaze. "He chased me when I ran."

"You need to tell the headmistress."

I'd rather peel off my own nails, one by one, than subject myself to that woman. She's scary as hell.

"I don't want her involved. It was probably someone playing a prank."

At least, that's what I'm choosing to believe. It's easier than facing the truth.

Dariana looks unconvinced but lets it go, probably sensing my hesitancy to talk about it. "Is it true that you escaped Eden?" she asks instead.

It hurts that she doesn't remember me.

Because she doesn't. She's not looking at me the way she used to.

There's no fondness in her eyes; I could be anyone.

"Yes," I breathe, looking back out at the forest. It's less painful to stare at the shadows lurking beyond the thick trunks than to see the truth in her gaze.

Imaginary eyes peer back at me.

“Why did you leave Eden?”

“It didn’t feel like home anymore,” I whisper.

I stiffen when she shifts and smooths her hand over my wing. “They used to be white?”

“Yes.” My voice is weaker this time, barely audible over the evening breeze that rustles the leaves in the trees. I like the feel of her fingers gliding through my feathers.

I suppress a delicious shiver, then look at her. “Your stories about angels are true. They have white feathers, blonde hair, sparkling blue eyes, and a shimmering hue to their skin.”

“But yours are black as night. And big.”

“They are.”

“What happened?”

I hold her gaze, trapped in her night sky. The urge to lean in and kiss her overwhelms me as I dig my nails into the stone to stop myself from acting on the impulse. “I fell from grace.”

I fell for you.

The last thought is a whisper on the breeze that tingles, unspoken, on my lips before floating away into the night.

“Do you like it here in Hell?”

“Why are you here?” I ask instead of answering her question. Dariana isn’t someone who is nice to strangers because she wants to be nice. When we first met, she sneered at me.

This side of her unnerves me.

“Do I need a motive to talk to you?”

Yes, *you do*. My shoulders rise and fall. “You tell me.”

We’re still staring at each other, both curious and a little wary.

I like the way the breeze lifts her hair from her shoulders and how her long lashes brush her cheeks every time she blinks.

I especially like her smile when she breaks eye contact to scan the tree line.

“I like it here in Hell.”

Her wide and curious night-sky eyes return to me, and I duck my head, then shrug. “I can be myself for the first time... I felt lost in Eden.”

“Why did you feel lost?”

I don't care if she has ulterior motives for talking to me. I just want to hear her voice.

To sit beside her like this and catch notes of her flowery perfume on the breeze.

"It's complicated."

"You live with Dmitriy now?"

"Yes." I watch her closely for a reaction, but she remains guarded.

"He's bad news."

"You don't like him?" See, I can play the role of a clueless newcomer.

Her head shakes, and she turns her body to face me. "You should stay away from him."

"Why?"

"He has a rivalry with Daemon."

Don't I know it?

"And he'll do anything to get at him. He'll even go as far as using others."

"How do you know I'm not in on his plans?"

Her eyes flick between mine, causing my cheeks to heat. "Call it a hunch."

"A hunch?" I'm amused now.

The Dariana I knew would not allow herself to be guided by a hunch. She's definitely up to something.

"Yes, a hunch."

"Maybe I'm the villain."

I expect her to smile or laugh, but she does neither. She simply stares at me with those big eyes that reflect the silver moonlight. "Are you?"

"Define villain."

Now she smiles, as if my reply surprised her in a good way. "A villain is someone who's against Daemon. Tell me, new girl, are you an enemy?"

"That's for me to know and you to find out."

Okay, that was a cheesy comment. The urge to face-palm strikes me like a thunderclap cracking through a valley.

Me and my mouth.

She watches me for a moment longer, then gets to her feet. "Will you be okay now?"

My response is a nod. I don't want her to leave, but I have no choice but to let her go. "I'll be fine."

I'm on my front with my feet crossed in the air. The fireplace warms the side of my face as I turn another page and skim my eyes over the text.

I don't know what I'm looking for, but I'm entranced regardless, reading about Hell's history. The information in here is so different from anything the elders told us. Their stories were so cutthroat.

"Fallen angels are bad."

"Stay away."

No wonder I was always curious.

Amenadiel once told me my curiosity would get me into trouble, and I think it's safe to say that trouble didn't just find me; it completely owned me.

I turn another page, then pause. The picture on the page depicts the fall: seven angels walking out of Hell, covered head to toe in blood.

Chills run down my spine. I slowly sit up, pulling the book onto my lap.

Amenadiel walks beside Lucifer, and even though it's a drawing, the likeness is undeniable. Five other angels trail behind, but my eyes stay glued to the brothers in the lead.

The darkening sky surrounds their group like a vengeful God, and their white, crimson-stained wings sprout black feathers.

I turn another page, my eyes scanning the drawings. Their wings are now fully black, and their once-blue eyes are dark pits of nothingness.

The picture on the next page depicts fangs and horns.

As I reach up to my hair, my fingers glide through the silky strands to poke the small, protruding horns.

Daemon didn't like it the first time I touched his, but he let me explore them, as if he fed on the stunned curiosity in my gaze.

The paper crinkles in the silence, which is only interrupted by the sparks in the fireplace. I turn more pages, skimming the text, until I come upon a picture of an angel engulfed in flames.

I'm mesmerized by the dark, wolfish smile on his lips. There are no screams of agony, no signs of fear, and no hesitancy. His power is an extension of him, and he wields it like a deadly, destructive weapon.

Looking down at my own hand, I bring a flame to life, watching it flicker wildly.

It dances across my palm, a graceful performer on a lit-up stage, before growing still, like the glassy surface of a quiet pond.

I stretch my arm out, and it spreads along the surface in a symphony of flames.

A lit match to a trail of gasoline.

“You’re growing stronger.”

I startle, and the flames go out as if doused with a bucket of water.

Amenadiel pushes off the doorframe and enters my room. With his hands in his pockets, he takes in the strewn clothes on the floor, then the open book on my lap.

Intrigued, he walks up to me, shuts the book, and reads the title. “Are you curious about Hell, little angel?”

I open my mouth to speak, but I’m cut off when his eyes flick up from the book.

“Or are you curious about me?”

“I’m not curious about you,” I bite out.

His lips spread into a smile, and I wonder if he’s aware of his close proximity or the fact that his fingers are still on the book.

“Ask me questions and I’ll answer.”

I slide the book out from beneath his touch and hug it close to my chest. “How long did it take you to master your powers?”

“A long time.”

“That’s not an answer.”

His heavy feet sound on the hardwood floor as he walks up to the fire and leans with his hands on the fireplace. “If you want to embrace your powers, you need to give in to the darkness.”

“I’m trying.”

“Not hard enough.”

When he turns, a bitter smile—the kind of smile that turns blood to ice—graces his lips like an intruder in the night. “Luckily for you, I come prepared.”

I watch him disappear out the door before returning with a bound and gagged naked human man.

He tosses him onto the bed like he weighs nothing. “The night is young, and so is this man. I trust you’ll have fun, angel.”

My incisors throb at the sound of the human’s fearful whimpers and the scent of his blood from a cut above his eyebrow. “Did you retrieve him

from the human world?”

“Of course. Only the best for my protégé.” Then he turns for the door, but before he leaves, he swings back around. “Oh, and one last thing. You’re not allowed to kill him.”

I look back down at the terrified human when the door shuts with a soft click. The thrum of his pulse beats erratically beneath his pale skin, and his bottom lip, wet with tears, trembles.

It’s not lost on me that Amenadiel brought me a gift. This is the equivalent of a father gifting his daughter a doll for her birthday.

But Amenadiel is not my father, and it’s not my birthday. And this man is not a doll.

Although he could just as well be.

My eyes cloud over with a red mist at the sound of his pathetic pleas when I stroke my fingers over his stubbly cheek. He shouldn’t show his fear so openly; it only makes me want to hurt him more.

To claw him open with my nails.

Explore his insides.

My sharp incisors elongate, glinting in the dim glow of the fireplace. “I’ll look after you, I promise.”

CHAPTER
ELEVEN

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DARIANA

I throw open the door to the living room and enter with a dramatic flair. “I deserve a reward for my performance.”

Daemon lifts his head off the couch, then looks at me from beneath his dark lashes. That cold, detached look in his eyes could scare off a grown man, but I’ve known Daemon my whole life. He’s all bark and no bite. At least where I’m concerned.

When it comes to others, he’s as ruthless as his father.

“What are you talking about?” Ronan chimes in from the opposite couch, where he sits with a girl on his lap.

Alaric, sprawled on the floor with his arm slung over his eyes, pays us no attention.

“I befriended her like you asked.”

Daemon straightens, but before he can say a word, Ronan laughs. “How did you pull that off? You don’t have a kind bone in your body. I’ve only ever seen you sneer at other girls.”

“I can be nice when I need to, dickhead.”

“And?” Daemon drawls, his legs spread obnoxiously wide. “What did you find out?”

My wings flex behind me as I walk up to Daemon’s armchair and sit down on the armrest. “She thinks she was almost attacked in the library. Apparently, a robed man with a knife chased her.”

Daemon stares at my face for an unnervingly long time. It’s nothing new. He rarely talks without first dissecting you to pieces. “A robed man chased her with a knife?”

“That’s what she claimed.”

“Probably someone playing a prank on the new girl,” Alaric says, his arm still slung over his eyes.

“No one messes with newbies without my permission.” Daemon’s voice is deep and drawn out. He likes to be in control, and the academy is his kingdom. Crossing him results in serious consequences.

“She also wouldn’t give me a straight answer when I asked her if she’s your enemy.”

“Gutsy,” chuckles Ronan.

“So, when are you braiding each other’s hair?” Alaric taunts, and I flip him off.

Not that he can see when his arm covers his eyes.

“The thought makes me hard.” Ronan’s smile is too wide. I’d love nothing more than to punch it off his face.

Instead, I slide my fingers through Daemon’s silky hair. “I don’t trust her.”

“You don’t trust anyone,” he points out in that smoky voice of his before pulling me onto his lap and spreading me open, his fingers digging into my hips.

“She lives with your uncle.”

“I can handle the old man.”

“She’s probably fucking Dmitriy.”

“I have a bigger cock. She won’t be thinking of that loser when I tear into her cunt and stuff it with my cum.”

Ronan’s amused laughter drifts over to us. “I didn’t realize you were so familiar with your cousin’s anatomy.”

“We shared a girl once.”

“Nothing beats a bit of family bonding,” Ronan quips.

Daemon’s shoulders rise and fall in a lazy shrug. “It was Uncle’s birthday. You know my father still insists we celebrate together despite their millennia-long rift. Blood runs thicker than water.”

Alaric snorts. “I’ll believe it when I see it.”

“Invite her into the fold,” Daemon says to me, and I rear back.

“Why the fuck would I do that? Charity isn’t my forte.”

“Because I’m gonna destroy her, and I need her to feel like she has someone on her side. Otherwise, she’ll cry on Dmitriy’s shoulder.”

“Your plan is riddled with more holes than the Titanic.”

“It’s lucky we don’t live in the human world then.”

Alaric sits up, grabs a joint from the coffee table, and lights up, then looks at me. “You don’t think you can get her to trust you?”

Folding my arms over my chest while looking at him over my shoulder, I give him an unimpressed look. “I know I can get her to trust me. Are you questioning my abilities?”

“Maybe.”

Daemon’s chest vibrates with amused chuckles. Of course, he knows I can’t help but rise to the challenge.

“Trust me, Alaric. I’ll have her spill all her secrets to me in no time.”

Daemon trails his fingers down my arm. “Meanwhile, she’ll be sucking on my dick.”

I whirl around and glare at him. “You think I’m doing this for you, so you can amuse yourself with another plaything until you’re bored?”

“I think you talk too much,” he drawls, a tinge of laughter lingering at the edges of his voice. “Why don’t you put that pretty mouth to better use?”

With a slap on my ass, he orders me to kneel between his legs, and I go willingly because this is Daemon, the next heir to the throne. He’s not a man you deny.

I know that.

Everyone in this kingdom knows that.

The sound of his belt buckle being undone rings out in the room while I wait, not-so patiently. I’ve always liked Daemon’s dick. It’s thick, long, and decorated with purple veins that beg for a flattened tongue.

What I don’t like is how bored Daemon looks.

Bored with me. Life. Himself.

Every-fucking-thing.

His fingers tangle in my long hair as I take him as deep as I can, servicing his needs like the true royal he is.

And maybe, just maybe, I’m a little bit bored, too.

With him. Life. Myself.

Everything.

Maybe I’m strangely intrigued by the new girl, after all, and the challenge I saw in her eyes when she said, “That’s for me to know and for you to find out.”

I’m not of royal blood like Daemon, but I’ve always existed in his orbit. I’ve witnessed firsthand how others want a piece of him purely to satisfy their need for fame, status, and financial security.

I’m no better, sucking him off because he clicked his fingers, but this is us.

We use each other to fill the void that no amount of blood, revenge, or chaos can fill.

With a deep grunt, his seed fills my mouth, and I swallow it all until he shoves me away.

“My turn,” Alaric jests, holding out his joint for me.

I flip him off, then snatch the joint. “Not fucking happening. The day I suck your dick is a cold day in hell.”

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AURELIA

“What did I specifically say last night before I left?” Amenadiel asks when he opens the door to my room the following morning.

I’m curled up naked next to the deceased body of the human man, covered in dried blood, pieces of flesh, and innards. He has long since grown cold and stiff. His eyes are gone. So are his heart and most of his organs.

I slowly sit up, gazing at Amenadiel through a haze of foggy memories. My mouth tastes of copper and regret.

The man in question shuts my door, steps deeper into the room, and scans his eyes over the blood splatter on the walls.

He even kicks a severed foot out of the way.

Then he cups my cheek and brings my eyes up to his. “You have been a very bad girl, Angel.”

I bare my bloodied teeth and hiss at him, but he digs his fingers into my jaw until I fall silent.

“I do not tolerate disobedience in my house.” He flares his wings in a display of dominance before softening his voice. “But I’m proud of you for indulging in darkness.

Leaning down, he whispers in my ear, “Did he beg for his life when you fucked him?”

A snarl rips from my throat, and Amenadiel pats my cheek, pleased that I’m more animal than angel in this moment. “Good angel.”

This time, when I bare my teeth and stare at him through a red mist, he simply chuckles. Then he uses his sheer power to flip me over on my front and grind his hard cock into my ass. “When the darkness has its hold on you, all morals disappear until you learn to wrangle it into submission. Right now, you’re a savage creature of the night. And I can do anything I want with you, and you’ll love every second of it.”

There’s a note of longing in his voice, as if he enjoys my fierce snarls and red eyes.

“I’m gonna fuck you, Angel. Stretch this tight cunt before Daemon falls for you again.”

He grips my hair, crusty with dried blood, and pulls it sharply until my head is bent at a weird angle. "Remember when I told you I craved blood and sex? I'm fucking starved. But not for humans, or even angels, but for a true monster." His voice drops even lower, dripping with dangerous intent. "Like you are now."

Amenadiel breathes into my ear as he unzips his pants and shoves down the front. He strokes his cock and lines it up with my dripping cunt.

"Such a good little whore," he breathes out, forcing my cheek down on the mattress, his big palm splaying over most of my face. "Look at the destruction you caused last night as you tortured that man for hours on end. I bet you loved every second of his anguished screams."

I snarl, growl, and snap my teeth, sounding like a vicious animal. But Amenadiel subdues me with ease, using his sheer strength to pin me to the bed with my ass in the air.

He's just about to drive into me when one of his guards knocks on the door, followed by the very distinct feminine voice of Dariana.

"You will let me in this instant, or Lucifer will see that you're fired."

Amenadiel shoves off me with a loud curse, then hurriedly tucks himself away just as the door opens.

"What the fuck?" Dariana says, taking in the scene with wide eyes.

Daemon shoulders past the guard before he too comes to an abrupt halt.

Ronan and Alaric look equally alarmed.

"What are you doing here, nephew? That's twice in two days I've been graced by your presence. However, I'm a little busy, as you can see."

"What the hell have you done to her?" Dariana blurts, then hurries up to me and drops to her knees.

Soft fingers brush my hair away from my bloodied face and cup my chin. "Her eyes are red."

"I've heard of this," Alaric whispers, cogs turning in his brain. "After the fall, some of the angels were unable to handle the darkness. They lost themselves to it, and it eventually consumed them." His eyes dance over the torso on the bed, the half-severed head, and the scattered body parts on the floor. He pins his gaze on Amenadiel. "What exactly are you trying to achieve here?"

I'm scooped up, naked and shivering, and cradled against a hard chest. "Just wait until my father hears about this."

“You kids are blowing this way out of proportion. She fed last night and now she was horny and begged me to fuck her. You know how it is after a satisfying feed.”

“A feed?” Dariana sounds horrified. “Look around, grandad. This is a fucking massacre!”

We’re on the move. Daemon carries me down the hallway and through another room, before exiting an open patio door.

Stars twinkle up ahead through the red haze that clings to my vision. I snuggle closer, inhaling the familiar scent, unable to make sense of the situation, but feeling safer than I have in a long time.

“What the fuck was that? What’s wrong with her?” Daemon growls, not slowing his stride.

Alaric’s voice rings out behind us. “I could go into details, but I’ll keep it simple for you. She’s not used to the darkness. She was born of the light, then became a fallen angel. After the original fall, the angels had to slowly acquaint themselves with the dark. Those that didn’t got devoured by it.”

“I don’t fucking get it,” Daemon growls.

“Okay, let’s simplify it more. Your uncle knows that too much darkness too soon could consume her and create a monster. Why do you think he locked her in a room with a bleeding human?”

“It’s probably not the first time he’s put her in dangerous situations. But why?”

There’s a sudden shift in the air.

We’re flying.

I’m floating.

Cocooned.

“He was about to fuck her when we entered the room.”

“She’s completely out of it.”

“Not completely,” Alaric points out. “She has basic instincts. An animal in its truest sense.”

“So, he wanted to do what? Create a monster?”

“A weapon,” Dariana speaks up.

“Subject a true angel to too much darkness too soon, and she loses all emotional capabilities. We like to think we don’t have morals, but I have heard stories about the angels that didn’t make it. It’s something straight out of a nightmare.”

“Where are they now?”

“Locked up in the dark where they belong,” Daemon says in a cold, detached voice. “They can’t ever be let loose on the world.”

We fly in silence, and I drift in and out of a dreamless sleep until we land outside their property. I haven’t been back here since my return, and the sight of the sprawling mansion is enough to make me lift my head and gaze around. The red mist is fading, slowly but surely.

We’re on the move again.

“I don’t trust her, Daemon. We need to keep a close eye on her.”

Dariana’s voice.

“And we will. Whatever my uncle has planned, we’ll figure it out.”

“Maybe he’s just a horny old fucker who likes helpless girls who snap their teeth and snarl at him.”

“Maybe she refused to fuck him in her normal state, and he jumped at the opportunity to get his dick wet when she didn’t know what she was doing.”

Yes...

“Or maybe we should stop discussing theories and just kill him.”

Daemon places me on a soft bed, and I snuggle deeper into the pillow.

“She needs a bath and some clothes.”

“Yes,” Daemon replies, pulling the sheet up to my neck. “But first, she needs rest.”

“You’re not leaving her unsupervised in here, are you?” Dariana sounds incredulous.

The sound of a chair scraping on the floor fills the room. “No, I’ll stay right here. You guys should go.”

“What if she attacks you?”

Daemon’s deep drawl licks my skin. “I can handle her.”

“She doesn’t have control over her darkness yet,” Alaric tells him, sounding unsure.

“Good.”

“Good?” Dariana almost shrieks as Ronan wrestles her out of the room. “Until she learns to master the darkness without the light inside her, she’ll be unpredictable.”

Daemon says nothing, but I can sense him. Even with my eyes closed.

His attention burns into me and plows through every wall I’ve erected. He’s a man on a mission, with piqued interest and a restless mind. His dark

eyes assess and cut me open, a skilled surgeon hunting for weaknesses to remove.

“I know you can hear me, new girl.”

Tossing off the quilt, I sit up in bed and try to shake my head to clear the last of the red mist, but it’s stubborn, clinging to me with sharp talons.

“Look at me.” His voice is a deep, commanding drawl.

My eyes flick up and lock with his.

He sits with his elbow bent on the armrest, his ankle on his knee, and his full attention on me.

I like it, but I also don’t want him to see me like this, naked and covered in guts and blood, with glowing red eyes.

I’m a monster.

An abomination.

“How long did he keep you locked in that room with the human?”

My voice is hoarse. “All night.”

“Did he give you any instructions?”

“Not to kill him.”

“But you did.”

My lips seal shut, and I lower my head in shame.

“Did I say you could look away?”

I grit my teeth as annoyance flares up inside me. I know from experience that Daemon likes to tell me what to do and assert his power over me, but that doesn’t mean I have learned my lesson yet.

“Look. At. Me.”

I do.

Of course, I do.

I’m weak, and he cradles my heart in the palm of his hand without even realizing it. He could so easily crush it.

“Did you beg him to fuck you?”

My head shakes.

“You have a voice. Use your words.”

“No, I didn’t,” I bite out.

“Then tell me what happened.”

Shifting forward, I reach for the blanket that lies pooled around my waist, but his deep, gravelly voice cracks the air like thunder. “Leave it.”

My nipples are hard, achy peaks, but not because it’s cold.

No, I like the alpha in his voice.

“What happened?” he asks again.

I worry my lip while debating how much to divulge. “He admonished me for not following instructions, and then he praised me for indulging in the darkness.”

“Go on.”

“He used his strength to flip me onto my stomach, pinned me down, and told me that I had no morals left because I was lost to the darkness. And that he could do anything to me, and I would enjoy it because I was a monster at that moment and not an angel.”

“And could he?”

I wince, feeling truly fucking awful. My whispered ‘yes’ is as pathetic as the sob that follows it.

“Did you want to fuck him?”

After wiping beneath my nose with the back of my hand, I reply, “I didn’t want to fuck *him*. I wanted to fuck. It was a primal need. I didn’t have the cognitive function to make sense of who he was. I wanted to kill, and I wanted to fuck. And not in any particular order.”

“Do you still want to fuck?”

I bare my teeth with a hiss, telling him without words to back off.

It gets his back up, because he sits forward, and his wings erupt behind him in a display of power and dominance. “Bare your teeth at me again, and I’ll make you regret it, understood?”

I do exactly that.

The hiss morphs into an animalistic snarl that intensifies when he shoots to his feet. I sound more like a vicious dog with rabies than a fallen angel.

Daemon has a wish for violence by approaching me right now. His cold, night-sky eyes pin me in place as he takes calculative steps closer.

I shift onto my hands and knees in preparation to fight. Every muscle in my body pulls taut, my grip on reality slipping away.

“What did I just say?”

My fangs ache, throbbing painfully.

“I told you not to bare your teeth at me, and yet you’re threatening the heir to the throne on all fours, naked and covered in another man’s blood. Human or not, that’s a little disrespectful, wouldn’t you agree?”

My eyes flash red, the mist intensifying.

“What do you want more, little witch? To kill me, or have me fill you up with my dick?”

He's so close, and I'm holding on by a thin thread. If I can't wrangle this darkness, I'll lose all sense of self and attack hi—

Before I can finish that thought, he pounces.

The ensuing commotion causes Alaric and Ronan to burst into the room, wide-eyed, and with their teeth bared.

"Grab some rope," Daemon demands, using his body weight to pin me down on the mattress and force my hands behind my back.

Alaric runs back out, then returns with rope. They secure my wrists and ankles to each bedpost, and then Daemon uses another length of rope to tie my wings together so I can't flare them.

When I continue snarling, he rummages through his chest of drawers, grabs a white T-shirt, and shoves it in my mouth.

They step back as a trio to peruse me on the bed with their heads angled to the side and matching satisfied smirks.

"Looks like we caught an animal."

"A very horny and vicious little animal."

CHAPTER
TWELVE

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DAEMON

I take a step closer, admiring her bound and gagged on the bed. Covered in dried blood, she looks monstrous with her red eyes and ripping snarls from deep in her chest.

I have never been more intrigued than I am now.

“Why are her wings so big?” Ronan asks, echoing my thoughts.

The first time she unfurled them, I couldn’t believe my eyes, and since then, she’s been on my mind constantly.

To see her tied to my bed feels like winning the lottery. Maybe that makes me as cruel as my uncle, but that’s the last thought on my mind now as I walk up to the bed and smooth my hand down her bound wings while she snarls like an animal that wants to slaughter me.

I tut. “So angry, baby.”

More snarls.

Behind me, Alaric and Ronan chuckle. “What are you gonna do with her?”

That’s an excellent question. I’d release her back to my uncle if she weren’t curing my endless boredom. She’s like a sparkly toy I want to play with until I break her.

I climb onto the bed, settle between her legs, and run the pads of my fingers over her soaking cunt. It makes sense to me now why I caught my uncle zipping his dick away. My cock is stirring too, when her animalistic snarls mingle with whimpers of pleasure. She wants me to touch her, but she also wants to feast on my heart. It’s a thrilling combination.

When I slip a finger inside her, I’m met with no resistance. She’s so fucking wet and tight, and her pussy clamps down around me as the growl in her chest intensifies. “Feels good, does it?” I taunt, adding another finger.

“I’d totally fuck her mouth now if she didn’t look like she’d bite my dick off,” Ronan says with a chuckle.

“Scared off by a woman?” Alaric jests, but he stays a safe distance away too, while I finger her tight cunt.

“She’s tied up and harmless,” I point out, then slap her ass hard.

Her fierce snarl makes my dick throb in its denim confines. I don’t remember the last time I was turned on like I am now. I want to tame this

fire-breathing dragon with my bare hands. Force her to submit.

“How long until she returns to normal?” Ronan asks.

“It depends,” Alaric replies, watching intently while I smack her ass again before grabbing hold of her wing.

“On?”

Alaric focuses his attention on Ronan. “On how long he kept her locked in there with the human and how many times before he’s thrown her head-first into a pool of darkness and let her swim with the sharks. By the looks of it, she’d been in there for a long time when we took her away.”

“She’d been in there with him all night,” I reply, thrusting a third finger inside her. To the new girl, I say, “Such a good girl, squeeze my fingers like that. You want more?”

“What the hell is going on here?” Dariana asks as she steps into the room.

Alaric chuckles, then wets his lips. “She went feral, as you can see. We had to tie her down.”

Dariana’s eyes bug out. “And why is Daemon fingering her?”

“Because it’s fun,” I drawl, reaching forward to pull her hair. The angel rewards me with fierce snarls and growls.

Ronan hides his laughter behind his closed fist.

“Don’t you think it’s mean to touch her when she’s this out of it?” Dariana asks, and Alaric turns his body to face her with a frown. “What happened to Dariana, and what did you do to her body?”

“I’m just saying... will she even remember this tomorrow?”

“Doubtful,” Alaric mumbles, turning back to the scene.

Sliding my fingers out, I suck them clean, then shove them back inside her and finger her with renewed zest. I hunger for this little monster’s orgasm as much as she does, and I don’t care if she remembers this tomorrow or not. Because I sure will. “Grab a wing, let’s piss her off some more,” I tell the guys.

“Oh, come on,” Dariana pleads when they step forward, equally eager to have some fucking fun. “This is just cruel.”

“How is it cruel when she enjoys it?” Ronan asks, untying the ropes around her wings.

When they spring open, Ronan and Alaric jump back with wide eyes. “Shit, I knew they were big, but what the hell?”

“Restrain them,” I order, slowing my strokes inside her soaking cunt. “I want her really fucking pissed off.”

The air slices with every powerful sweep of her wings. It takes Ronan and Alaric a few attempts to wrangle each one, but their grins are wide and their eyes sparkle from the challenge.

Ronan grunts from the effort. “Jesus fuck, where did she come from?”

“Heaven, apparently,” Alaric replies.

“Doubtful.”

I lie down between her thighs, then grab them, sliding my tongue through her soaking folds. The sounds that rip from her chest are so fucking arousing. It’s like she’s begging for more while also threatening to kill me. I know she wants to. The bloodlust oozes from her every pore.

My fingers dig into her thighs as I lick her tight little cunt. The closer she comes to falling apart on my tongue, the harder my dick gets. I want to ram it inside her and stuff her full of my cum. I want to unleash my inner beast on her prone body.

I want to do bad fucking things to her.

“Enjoying yourself?” chuckles Alaric, who struggles to restrain her wings now that she’s properly pissed off.

“You jealous?” I taunt, sliding my hands up to her ass and spreading her cheeks apart.

“What a stupid fucking question.”

Her tight exit looks so damn tempting.

Leaning in, I sink my teeth into her ass cheek, then chuckle when she renews her struggle to break free. Blood pours freely from the cuts on her wrists where the rope digs in, but she’s oblivious, focused instead on her fierce anger.

“Easy now, beautiful,” I soothe, dragging my wet thumb over her puckered hole. “You’re hurting yourself.”

My thumb pops inside, and she stiffens.

“That’s a good girl,” I praise. “Nice and easy now.”

She has stopped snarling and is now panting harshly through her nose while I begin to fuck her ass with my thumb. When I lean back down and bury my tongue inside her dripping cunt, she makes a sound that’s almost like an angel and less like a snarling animal.

“Yes, baby, that’s it,” Ronan praises her. “You like that, huh?”

Her body undulates, welcoming me as the fight leaves her and the need to kill recedes.

I tongue fuck her in time with my thrusts into her ass until she's a panting, sweaty mess.

Until I have her right where I want her.

Call me a dragon slayer.

"Are you gonna be a good girl and come for us?" Alaric asks, stroking her sweaty, bloody hair away from her face. "You gonna come on my brother's tongue like a good little slut?"

"I can't fucking believe this," Dariana mutters over by the door.

"Stop being a bore. She's enjoying it."

"Isn't that the fucking truth?" laughs Alaric, with her hair fisted tightly in one of his hands while he slides his fingers through her raven feathers. "Just fucking look at her, she's practically begging for cock."

My lips curve with a smile against her glistening slit, and I suck her throbbing clit between my lips.

It's game over for our new plaything.

Pleasure bursts behind the red mist in her eyes, and she lets out a scream while rocking against my mouth.

I reward her with a hard slap to her ass, watching it jiggle like delicious jelly.

So fucking satisfying, and I'm still hard as a fucking rock.

By the looks of it, so are my brothers.

When I climb off the bed, Ronan comes to stand beside me.

"Look at that wet pussy." His voice sounds as tortured as I feel, and I only just finished drinking her honey like it was my very own elixir.

Alaric is pacing behind me, his cock tenting his black sweatpants.

"We're masochists," Ronan grumbles.

"What's stopping you from taking what you want?" Dariana asks, inspecting her nails. Then she wiggles them in our direction. "You just did, so what's stopping you now?"

"That wasn't about us," I reply, my voice deadpan. "Like you said, she won't remember it tomorrow. I won't fuck that pink pussy, no matter how much she begs, until she's in a state where she can remember me fucking her raw."

"Well, you'll be waiting for a while. Her eyes are still burning red."

Squeezing the hard outline of my cock, I reply, “It’s a good thing I’m patient.”

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AURELIA

The first thing I notice when I blink my eyes open is that my mouth is dry—so dry that I struggle to swallow. The second thing I notice is that I can't move my arms because they're tied to the bedposts.

My eyes widen, and I lift my head to look around.

What the fuck? Where am I?

I gasp. This is Daemon's room.

"Did you sleep well, princess?" his deep voice drawls behind me, and I strain my neck to see him.

Of course, I can't. Not while he's seated on his chair directly behind me by the desk.

"You've been flat out for hours." The desk chair creaks, and then he walks up beside me, fists my hair, and yanks my head back. His dark eyes roam over my face, drinking me up. "Your eyes are brown again," he notes.

I try to free my wrists, but the sting has me wincing. "Why am I tied up naked in your bed?"

"You don't remember?" He releases my hair and sets to work untying the rope.

When I'm free, I scoot up in bed. "No, I don't remember."

Everything is a haze. The last thing I can recall is when Amenadiel shut the human inside my room and locked the door. I liked his crying and pleading. The fear in his eyes and the blood from a cut above his eyebrow...

"Why am I sore between my legs? Did we...?"

"Probably from fucking the human you slaughtered so brutally, or it could be because I fingered you afterward."

My eyes bug out. "What?"

Daemon is completely unapologetic, as always.

Walking over to his chest of drawers, he takes out a towel and tosses it at me. "The shower is through there."

I follow where he's pointing, even though I already know where the bathroom is.

"Don't you want to wash the human's blood off you?"

My eyes fall down my body. Blood coats my arms, chest, and stomach. It's beneath my fingernails and in my hair. It's everywhere.

I swallow thickly, then slide out of bed and make my way to the bathroom. The moment the door shuts, I lean against it and try to calm the anxiety clouding my senses. I'm at Daemon's place. And in Daemon's bedroom. I have no fucking clue how I got here, but it's good news.

I push off the door, place the towel on the towel rail, and switch on the shower. It's too hot at first, so I wait for it to cool down before stepping beneath the spray of water.

The moment it hits my skin, I let the tears fall while the water at my feet turns pink. It scares me to think about what I did to that poor human, and it scares me even more that I don't remember.

But I feel strangely charged up, and power thrums beneath my skin like a current of electricity. Is this what Daemon feels after a feed? Why didn't I experience this before when I was here as a true angel with white wings?

As I step out of the shower, I nearly jump out of my skin when I spot Daemon leaning against the opposite wall. "Jesus Christ, do you always lurk around?"

"With others? No. With you? Yes."

I watch him walk out of the bathroom, confused about his comment, as I reach for the towel. Drying my hair quickly, I wrap the towel around my body before joining him in the bedroom.

He sits on the edge of his bed with his elbows on his thighs and his phone in his hands. Without looking up, he says, "I placed some clothes at the foot of the bed for you to wear."

My lips spread into a smile at the sight of Dariana's tulle dress. This reminds me of the first time I came here.

Letting the towel drop to the floor, I slip the dress on and adjust the straps. It reaches mid-thigh and shows more cleavage than is appropriate, but I like how Daemon's eyes darken when he looks up. The hunger that swims in his gaze is all too familiar.

He stands up, curls his fingers around my arm, and leads me out of the room like a condemned prisoner. I can barely keep up with his big steps.

"Where are you taking me?"

"It's time to answer some questions."

"What questions?"

We walk down the carpeted hallway and then down the stairs before he leads me into the living room, where the others sit spread out on the couches.

As I enter the room, Dariana looks up and sneers.

Alaric shoots her a hard look. "Friends, remember?"

Her sweet smile could entice puppies to step into a meat grinder. "I'm sorry." Then she looks at me and treats me to the same disingenuous smile. "Welcome to the party, sleeping beauty."

If she had offered me that smile when I first met her, I would have been intimidated.

But not anymore.

I used to lick her cunt and watch her fall apart in my arms. Dariana just doesn't know about it. So she can throw me all the poisonous glares and fake smiles she wants, but nothing she does can intimidate me anymore.

"Thanks, pussycat." I offer her a wide smile of my own. It's totally worth it when her eyes narrow on me, like I am indeed the villain in her story.

Daemon walks past me and takes a seat in his favorite armchair. I remain standing, looking between them all.

"We'll make this simple," Daemon says, drumming his fingers on the armrest. "You either answer our questions willingly, or we'll have no choice but to hurt you."

"Wow. That's the first time I've been threatened with violence."

"You won't like it." His cold, dark eyes miss nothing, exploring my face like a rare painting.

"I'll take your word for it."

He gives nothing away. His face remains a blank mask, and that's what I have always found so unsettling and intriguing about Daemon: his ability to remain so outwardly unaffected when I know he is anything but on the inside.

I need to remember that I am no one to him now. Nothing more than a curiosity he wants to learn more about.

The feelings he used to have for me don't exist here, and that's what makes me fidget on the spot.

"How do you know my uncle?"

Ronan leans forward and grabs the joint from the table, then lights it while I look between them nervously.

“Come on,” Daemon commands. “Spill the truth. Don’t think too hard.”

“I’m not thinking hard.”

He wets his lips, and my eyes are drawn to the action like a missile. “You’re thinking right now.”

“I’m thinking because the answer is complicated, and you wouldn’t understand.”

Dariana snorts, and the dismissive sound annoys me enough to shoot her a glare.

“What wouldn’t I understand?”

Dragging my eyes away from Dariana, I look back at Daemon. “Amenadiel helped me out of Heaven.”

That’s a reasonable answer. It’s not a lie and divulges enough information without making me out to be crazy.

“Why would he help you out of Heaven?”

Now *that* is a complicated question.

When I don’t immediately reply, Daemon barks, “Answer.”

His sudden abruptness causes me to flinch. “You wouldn’t understand.”

“Try me.”

This is like the time I explained to Freya about the kidnapping. Only something tells me these angels won’t be half as understanding.

“Are you here to seduce Daemon? Is this some deliberate plan of Amenadiel’s? Because if it is, I will hurt you. Badly.”

With a frown, I look back at Dariana. “What? No! I’m not here to hurt Daemon. I would never do that.”

Dariana looks unconvinced as she crosses her arms. “Then why are you living with Amenadiel?”

“I told you, he was helping me.”

“And what does he want in return? Information?”

“No!”

She jumps to her feet, and then, in a flash, she’s in front of me with her teeth bared. “I don’t buy your lies.”

“I’m not asking you to.” I bare my teeth as well, refusing to back down.

“This is kinda hot,” Ronan says, slouched on the couch with the joint dangling from his lips.

I ignore him. “I am not here to hurt anyone.”

“You haven’t answered my question,” Daemon drawls, picking imaginary lint from his jeans. “Why would he help you out of Eden? And

not only that, how did he get into contact with you inside of Heaven in order to even help you out? We can't communicate with angels. Eden is bordered shut to outsiders."

Fuck him and his intelligent brain.

"You want the truth?"

His dark eyes hold mine, unraveling me layer by layer, then he smirks.

"I want the truth."

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CHAPTER
THIRTEEN

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AURELIA

We stay locked in a stare-down until I release a defeated sigh and step back. What options do I have but to tell them the truth? But even if I tell him the truth, he won't believe me.

None of them will.

The truth is too far-fetched, too crazy, and too out there.

"I can't tell you the truth," I whisper quietly.

"You can't, or you won't."

"I can't." There's a bite to my tone now. "I can't explain it to you because it doesn't even make sense to me."

Dariana snorts with disgust, and Alaric narrows his eyes on me, as if he's hunting for more than the truth.

"You have no choice but to try, little witch."

My attention returns to Daemon, who watches me from beneath his dark lashes. His gaze lacks the affection it once held, and it hurts so much to be the subject of his cold indifference that I avert my gaze and stare at my reflection in the window behind him. The wind whips through the trees, causing a branch to slam against the glass rhythmically. I choose to focus on it instead of the tense silence in the room.

"I don't think you understand, little witch. Either you tell us the truth, or we hurt you. Now, I suggest you sing like a lark."

My teeth grind together as I meet his unrelenting, detached gaze. "The simple fact that you're willing to hurt me is why I'll keep the truth to myself."

The old Daemon would have never hurt me. Even as I think it, I know I'm lying to myself. The old Daemon hurt me time and time again to get beneath my skin so he could peer inside me.

But not like this. He wanted me in his own twisted way.

Daemon rises from his seat and kills the distance between us in three steps. That's all it takes before he's in front of me, engulfing me with his dark presence that whispers to mine. His punishing fingers dig into my chin, commanding my attention. Fighting is futile, so I don't even try as I meet his dark gaze and allow him to pull me further into his darkness.

“I’ll tell you a story, Daemon. There once was an angel with blonde hair, sparkling blue eyes, and wings as white as God’s eternal light. The little angel wandered Eden aimlessly, restless and curious about the world outside the shimmering golden gates. For years, she fought the desire to let her inquisitive mind lead her into trouble until, one day, she found herself in front of the gates. As if they had waited for her, they creaked open, and the angel snuck out.

She hesitated at the tree line, staring up at the tall, spindly trees that resembled demons with fangs and talons. Inside her, a little voice urged her to go back, to stay clear of the darkness calling out her name and urging her closer. But against her better judgment, she entered the forest, and it swallowed her whole.” I wrench free from his grip and pin him with my steady gaze. “Three male angels, with wings black as night, found the angel wandering through the trees and decided to take her back to Hell.

Once there, they corrupted her soul beyond repair, toyed with her, and stole her heart. They dipped her wings in ink and tattooed themselves on the tapestry that made up her very essence. Her very soul. More importantly, they stole her from God. But an enemy had them in his sight. A terrifying, dangerous, and vengeful enemy, who entered the angel’s mind, threatening her life.

She defeated the enemy and found herself back inside Eden, but the sun’s warming rays and the scent and colors of the wildflowers no longer held the same appeal. The angel found herself longing for the twinkling stars in the night sky, the owl that hooted in the distance, and raven feathers, as dark and smoky as the ones sprouting beneath the downy white feathers of her own wings. The enemy still lived inside her mind, entrapped until her dying breath.” I dig my finger into my temple. “Haunting her every nightmare, taunting her with the darkness that was growing inside her like a festering disease until she could no longer deny the call of the woods that traveled on the warm breeze to tease her hair. So she struck a deal with the enemy. A deal to set her free.” I lower my hand and step back, my throat clogged with emotion. “When she returned to Hell, now a fully fledged fallen angel, she found herself in a different timeline. One in which her tormentors had never met her. Never touched her. Never *loved* her. One in which she was a stranger.

And the truth she saw in their eyes slayed her. While she stared at them with longing and love, they looked back at her with cold detachment...

indifference... And somewhere, in some distant timeline, those same three boys still love her. She knows it deep down, despite her enemy telling her that the timeline no longer exists, that it was somehow erased by her mind. But love, once it touches you, never dies. The universe—*God*—couldn't be so cruel as to erase her from their minds so completely, yet keep them engraved on hers like the markings of a tombstone." My eyes prick with tears, but I walk away before they can fall, refusing to subject myself anymore to this pain. If they want to hurt me, then so be it.

Much to my relief, they don't follow me outside into the silent night. I let my tears fall freely while I walk down the gravel path that leads through the tall trees. The wind whistles through the crooked branches, and the rustle of leaves in the canopy overhead soothes my aching soul.

I have so many unanswered questions.

When Lucifer walked out of Eden, he wasn't alone.

I am.

And I feel so lost.

The loss of light inside me echoes loudly, and I don't yet know how to control the darkness slowly filling up the empty void that used to house the blinding rays.

Hell darkens my soul like an eclipse.

Leaving behind a trail of destruction in its wake.

Maddening hunger.

Blood lust.

Aching fangs and a red mist that crawls along the forest floor like tendrils of smoke.

My thoughts scatter when I look up and spot the hooded figure in front of me. The same hooded figure that chased me in the library.

I step back, and he steps forward.

"What do you want?" My voice trembles as my gaze slides down to the knife in his hand. The curved blade reflects the moonlight when he cocks his head and lifts his finger to his shadowed lips.

Fear sinks its talons into me and steals my breath, my voice, my ability to think rationally. One minute, I'm staring at the hooded figure, and the next, my feet move, and I bolt through the trees.

Branches catch in my hair, tearing it out at the roots, and grab for my arms, cutting through flesh like curved, sharp nails. I don't stop running. My heart thunders in my chest, my thighs burn, and my heavy feet pound

the soft moss. A whimper escapes me when I feel hands reach for me from behind.

I dart to the left, stumbling over a fallen branch, but manage to right myself at the last minute. As I whirl around, my breaths gust out of me in the cool night air. There's no sign of my pursuer.

The night is silent, eerily so.

I suck in a breath and hold it, then yelp when a stick snaps nearby. My gaze darts around almost frantically. I can't pinpoint the sound of footsteps. They seem to come from my left, my right, behind me, and everywhere all at once.

"What do you want?" I scream, then spin around when a branch snaps back into place to my right.

Silence descends once more, pressing in from all angles and stealing the last bit of my breath. I don't dare move.

I'm hunted like a rabbit by a snarling wolf—no, *a fox*. Where a wolf is vicious, a fox is cunning. Always three steps ahead.

A hand clamps over my mouth from behind and pulls me into their hooded body, making me yelp, but the frightened sound dies in my chest when the sharp blade digs into my throat. The stinging pain has me panting through my nose as blood seeps to the surface and slides down between my breasts.

Quick, shallow breaths waft over my ear, and for a moment in time—a brief moment filled with fear, panic, and regrets—I let my eyes fall shut. I don't want to die. Not here, and not like this.

Flames flicker at my fingertips, tingling my skin, but before I can wrangle my fear enough to let the flames grow, the person behind me is gone as if they were never there.

I whirl around, my hair sticking to the tears on my cheeks and the trail of blood on my chest. The silent night stares back at me, intruded upon by the hooting owl in the distance.

ALARIC

Daemon joins me at the bar, where I lean with my elbows on the sticky surface while eyeing up the human behind the counter.

“Her?” He sounds incredulous. “Why not some easier prey?”

“Who said I want easy?”

Daemon snorts, then gestures for her to pour him a beer. We don’t consume human food and drinks for sustenance, but we can still enjoy alcohol like the pathetic humans crowding this bar.

Ronan joins us, his hair disheveled and his shirt creased.

I eye the lipstick mark on his collar. “We’ve been here less than ten minutes and you’ve already fucked a human?”

He slaps the bar to catch the barmaid’s attention, then says to me, “Ten minutes? Are you on drugs? I take a lot fucking longer to finish than ten minutes.”

“I don’t understand why you fuck humans if you’re not gonna feed on them,” Daemon drawls, raising the pint of beer to his lips. “They’re mediocre in bed, at best.”

“But it’s so much fun to make them bounce on my cock and watch the sheer fucking surprise on their faces. Human men don’t have half the stamina of angels.”

“They can’t be all that fucking bad since our female angels still fuck them as part of the hunt.” There’s an edge to Daemon’s voice that makes me look over at him with an intrigued frown.

He meets my gaze, lowers the glass from his mouth, and wipes the froth off his lips. “What?”

“What was that?”

“What was what?”

“That comment?”

“What comment?” Daemon downs the last of his beer before gesturing for a refill.

“The one about female angels fucking human men as part of the hunt?”

Daemon accepts the glass of beer, ignoring me as he gulps it like it’s soda.

“I bet he smarts because the little witch fucked the human man before killing him in cold blood and tearing into him like a wrapped Christmas present.”

My eyes fly to Ronan, and then it dawns on me. Daemon is jealous.

I laugh before I can stop myself. “Seriously, Daemon? That’s what you’re thinking about right now? The little witch fucking a human?”

His dark eyes slowly slide to me, so slowly it’s a miracle a century hasn’t passed before the full weight of his dark gaze lands on my face. “And your point is?”

My shoulders rise and fall in a careless shrug. “Just that I have never seen you jealous before.”

“I’m not fucking jealous.”

Another pint of beer is placed in front of him, as if the lady behind the bar can sense the tension that radiates off him like heat waves in summer.

He barely spares her a glance.

Ronan speaks up. “I bet the human she killed loved it when she sucked his dick. I don’t care how scared he was; I bet she sucked him down like he was her favorite meal, and he probably choked to death on his own saliva.”

The glass in Daemon’s hand shatters, and I jump back when the cold beer pours everywhere.

“Not jealous, huh?” Ronan looks far too fucking amused.

“I can’t believe you’re jealous because of a dead human man.” I flap my wet T-shirt.

“He’s fucking lucky he’s dead, or what she did to him would look like child’s play in comparison.”

Ronan and I stare after Daemon as he walks over to the dance floor in search of an easy meal.

“Well,” I start, “I didn’t see that curveball coming.”

“Are you kidding me?” chuckles Ronan. “I saw it coming a mile away when she first gave him attitude.”

I consider his words while leaning back against the counter with my arms crossed over my chest.

Two girls wearing minuscule dresses, with fake tits and pouty lips, throw us flirty glances. Ronan entertains their advances by buying them a round of drinks.

Me? I’m watching Daemon finger a girl in plain sight on the dance floor as if he carries a personal vendetta against the human. It wouldn’t surprise

me if he drains her blood for everyone here to see, too.

I should probably intervene before I have to clean up another mess, but more pressing thoughts steal my attention. “What do you think of the little witch’s story?”

Ronan, who has planted himself between the girls, looks up, his eyes bright and amused. “I think we should take these girls somewhere and fuck their tits.”

I frown, dragging my eyes away from Daemon and the human girl. “What?”

The horndog has his hand down each girl’s dress, fondling their breasts.

“Can you focus for a moment?”

He pulls a face that makes the girls laugh, then he reluctantly looks over at me.

“Do you think the little witch was talking about herself? That she has somehow... I don’t know...”

“The timeline shit?”

“Yeah.” I pick up my glass of beer and let the sparkling bubbles cool my insides.

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard anything so ridiculous in my life.”

“She seemed sincere.”

“She just wants to fuck us.” He’s back to playing with the girls’ tits.

With a frown, I tip the glass back and drink the last remnants of beer before slamming the glass down and wiping my mouth with the back of my hand. “If she wanted to fuck us, she would just ask us to fuck her.”

“Well, if it’s not sex she wants, then she’s planning something with Amenadiel.”

Now that sounds more likely, but I still can’t stop mulling her story over in my head. If she was, in fact, telling the truth, then that means she’s met us before. She mentioned falling in love with us.

My brain loves a good puzzle, and this is the ultimate challenge for me to piece together. But there are pieces missing to complete it.

“We’re going about this all wrong,” I muse. “We should befriend her and get her to trust us.”

I can’t see any other way to dig the truth out of her, and it’s quickly becoming abundantly clear that I crave more information.

“Dariana is on it.”

My head shakes as I slide the empty glass away. "That's not enough. We need her to trust us, too."

"Can't you just fucking relax for a minute? I'm starving, and these fine young ladies want us to do bad things to them in the dark alleyway outside." He cups their chins. "Isn't that right, ladies?"

We came here to hunt, and the willing prey is gazing up at us with stars in their eyes, but blood is the last thing on my mind. For once, my brain is talking my dick off the ledge. Even so, I know we need to feed. It's been a while since we visited the human world and I need this as much as my brothers.

I follow them across the dance floor, weaving through bodies, past Daemon, who is still fingering the human with punishing thrusts, and outside into the cold and dark night.

Ronan is straight in there, fucking one girl hard against the brick wall while the other strokes my slack cock through my jeans.

"What the fuck are you waiting for?" Ronan asks me, the girl bouncing off his dick with loud shrieks. He slaps her bobbing tits, then kneads them. "Or do I need to prep them both? Not that I complain. More pussy for me."

My hand flies up and tangles in the girl's long, curly hair. I wrench her away and toss her aside, in no fucking mood to let her touch me. Ronan's laughter rings out in the night as Daemon walks out through the door, shoving his human in front of him while looking as if he wants to strangle her.

What the hell is happening? I've never hesitated to fuck a woman before as part of the hunt. And Daemon? He fingered her on the dance floor, but he didn't take it further.

Pigs fly.

"What?" he growls when I continue staring at him, and my gaze slides to the whimpering woman by his side. The only thing preventing her from running away is his iron-tight grip on her arm.

"Nothing," I reply with a shrug. It's not like I have a leg to stand on when I haven't made a move to touch my own meal.

Daemon casts a glance at Ronan, who is now fucking the girl on all fours on the cold and gritty ground. He sniffs, and then his eyes slide to mine. It's so brief that I almost miss it.

Daemon strikes, sinking his teeth into the human's neck. I take that as my cue to let my beast out to play.

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CHAPTER
FOURTEEN

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AURELIA

Mist crawls along the cold hallway floor, disturbed by my silent steps, and my white dress drags behind me, the hem dirtied and torn as it slides on the filthy floor that hasn't seen a mop in months. The sconces on the walls flicker wildly, casting terrifying shadows. They stretch and elongate, as if they're chasing me.

"Hello?" My voice trembles, and I whirl around when a figure darts into the room behind me. "Who's there?"

Despite the voice inside me that shouts at me to run, I walk back the way I came, then pause outside the gaping door. It's dark inside, illuminated only by the moonlight filtering through the sheer curtains.

A shiver splashes down my spine, and I hug my arms around myself to ward off the cold as the sconces flicker out one by one.

When the last torch burns out, and the penetrating darkness settles, I draw in a shaky gasp. It's so dark, I can barely see my hand in front of me.

The beam of moonlight on the floor disappears as a tall man steps in front of the window and looks at me through eyes that I swear glow in the dark.

My feet retreat, but before I can run, his familiar voice rings out. "Where do you think you're going, *Aurelia*?"

I pause, barely daring to breathe. "Amenadiel?"

His long legs eat up the distance between us, and then he's in front of me, cupping my chin. "Why are you wandering the hallways this late by yourself? You should be in bed."

"I, uh, I..."

Truth is, I can't remember why I left my room.

His smoky scent surrounds me as he releases my chin and begins to circle me slowly while devouring me with his hungry gaze. "You have questions for me."

"What are you doing, Amenadiel?" I ask cautiously.

"I'm giving you this one opportunity to ask me questions."

"I can barely see you."

"The cover of darkness entices some to open up because they foolishly feel safer. Ask me a question."

“Why did you lock me up with that man? You knew I would kill him.”

“You want to become more powerful and master hellfire? You need to wrangle the darkness first.”

He’s behind me now, taking slow, measured steps designed to make me feel uneasy.

“What if I lose myself to the darkness?”

“Does that scare you?” His voice is colder now, and all traces of amusement have washed away.

“Of course it scares me.”

My breath hitches when he circles his hand around my throat from behind and steps up close, his chest warming my back.

“Do you doubt yourself? Your own strength?”

“What does that mean?”

His grip on my throat tightens, and he leans down to whisper in my ear, “Do you doubt your ability to master the darkness inside you?”

“What are you doing?” I whisper, my voice shaking on the last few vowels.

“I’m feeding on your darkness, Angel.” His hand splays on my stomach, and his lips curve in a smile against my ear before he drags his nose down the column of my neck. “A little whore like you deserves to be fucked properly.”

At his crude words, I whirl around and shove him back, but he crowds me against the wall, wrapping his fingers around my throat.

“You lost him, Angel.”

Daemon... he means *Daemon*.

“No,” I whisper, my voice barely audible in the silence that seems to stretch on forever.

“What are you doing to get him back?”

His hand slides higher, over my chin, and steals my response when it clamps over my mouth. I whimper as his other hand snakes beneath the fabric of my skirt.

Amenadiel cups my pussy, brushing his thumb over my clit. “Instead of focusing so much on Lucifer’s son—a lost mission—you should welcome the darkness inside you. It calls to me, keeping me up at night.” He pushes his hand inside my panties, whispering, “We can explore it together.”

I fly up in bed, breathing harshly as I brush my hair away from my sweaty forehead. One look at the clock on the bedside table confirms that I have overslept. I struggled to fall asleep last night after the incident in the woods with the stalker.

That's what he is, right? A stalker? The first time, I could brush it off as a prank, but that's twice now that he has stalked and chased me.

And the dream? What the fuck was that? They stopped after I defeated Amenadiel, so why is my mind conjuring him now? Is it because he locked me in a room with a human man?

I've wondered about his reasons behind that, mulling it over but coming up blank. The darkness is directly linked to my powers, or rather, my ability to wield them to their fullest potential, so maybe he's trying to help me?

I snort as I slide my legs out from beneath the quilt. The thought is absurd and shouldn't be entertained. Amenadiel serves only himself. No one else. If he wants to teach me how to master hellfire, then it's for a reason that has very little to do with my well-being.

After taking a quick shower, I pull on a dress and then dry my hair before applying a thin layer of mascara and inspecting the results in the mirror attached to the door.

My raven feathers reflect the light overhead as I turn in a slow circle, marveling over how pretty they are. How different they look compared to white wings.

I look so different, yet the same.

But the biggest difference is in my eyes.

And not the eye color.

The innocence that once shone bright is now dull, replaced by corruption, nefarious intent, and mischief. My eyes sparkle like the stars in the night sky—alluring and dangerous.

All it takes is one look to ensnare prey.

One look to lure them to certain death.

And one look to feast on their light.

With one final spin in front of the mirror, I leave the room and walk down the long hallway toward the dining room.

The air smells of freshly brewed coffee. When I enter the room, I find Amenadiel seated at the head of the table.

A table that's set up with countless plates of fruits. No humans in sight.

Dmitriy is here too, eyeing the fruit like it's poisonous.

As I take hesitant steps closer, Amenadiel lowers his newspaper, folds it, then puts it down softly on the table, as if every movement is carefully planned out. “Did you sleep well?”

I draw to a halt. “What’s this?”

His dark eyes glint with amusement. “I once lived in Heaven, remember? I know you miss fruit.”

Dmitriy pulls a face, less than impressed by what’s on offer at the table.

“Take a seat.”

After making my way over, I slide a chair out and plop down, eyeing the ripe strawberries and slices of melon. My stomach rumbles on cue, which is strange since I don’t hunger like that.

“You eat this stuff in Heaven?” Dmitriy asks, sounding skeptical.

“Dariana used to eat the strawberries in her gin. Are you trying to tell me you’ve never tasted fruit before?”

The look Dmitriy levels me with makes me suppress a laugh. “Do I look like I drink gin?”

“Maybe not.”

Amenadiel sips his coffee while I reach for the plate of strawberries, spending the next few suffocating moments piling my plate full.

“Did you visit me in my dream last night?” I ask, straight to the point.

Amenadiel chokes on his coffee.

It wasn’t the reaction I expected. And when he stops coughing and levels me with a confused look, the tips of my ears heat.

“What are you talking about?”

“Nothing,” I rush out. “I just thought... since the veil is still open. How do I close it?”

“What makes you think the veil is open?”

I bite into a strawberry while avoiding Dmitriy’s curious eyes. “You once told me the veil tears when an angel walks out of Eden—that it creates a big enough shift. There’s also the fact that you walked through the veil and into this reality, remember?”

Placing his cup down on the table, he wipes his mouth with a tissue. “I haven’t forgotten, but to ease your mind, the veil is closed.”

“Is it? How?”

“Wait a minute. This shit makes no sense,” Dmitriy says, rubbing the space between his eyebrows. “If you walked out through the veil and into

this reality, then where is the other version of you? I don't see two of my fathers walking around."

Amenadiel simply snorts. "I disposed of him."

Silence falls on the room, dragging on as the minutes tick by.

"You killed yourself?" I ask.

"I didn't kill myself," he corrects. "I killed the other version of me."

Dmitriy and I blink at him, unable to grasp this new information.

"You killed my dad?"

"I am your dad."

"But you also killed my dad?"

"Semantics."

They bicker back and forth while I study Lucifer's brother in a new light.

The light of a monster who'll stop at nothing to ensure his own success. He'll even stare himself in the eye as he tears his own heart out. If he can't emotionally connect to another version of himself, then he can't connect to anyone. Not even his own son.

My throat jumps, and as if he can sense my fear, his eyes slide to me.

"The veil is fixed. I handled it."

Slowly rising to my feet, I scoot my chair back and swallow thickly before asking Dmitriy if he's ready to go.

Neither of us speaks until we're halfway to school. We could fly there, but we chose to walk instead.

"It's like I don't know him anymore."

Dmitriy is tall and broad, like Daemon, and he moves with the same lethal power.

But that's where the similarities end.

Where the old Dmitriy was cruel and cold, this version of him is somehow softer.

Or maybe I want to see things.

Maybe I still have residual light inside me, and maybe that's why I sympathize with his situation.

"Could you do that?" I ask.

"Do what?"

I worry my chapped lip. "Faced with a different version of yourself—a clone—could you do it? Kill yourself?"

He drags a hand down his face, then blows out a tired breath. “I don’t think so...”

“The other version of you, whom I know, is much more like your father. Cold, calculating, and cruel.”

Dmitriy stops walking and stares down at me while I crane my neck to look up at him.

The leaves rustle in the trees overhead as we continue studying each other. Searching for hidden secrets and untold mysteries. I don’t understand the conundrum in front of me—how he’s so different from the Dmitriy who fucked me in the classroom, then dumped me like a soiled rag.

Dmitriy looks away first, his jaw clenching. His dark eyes return to me, and when he says nothing, I set off walking. I’ve never felt more lost than I do at this moment. Lost and tired.

Why am I here in Hell?

“What I don’t get is why you escaped Eden in the first place?” he says, catching up to me.

My answering sigh is quiet in the ensuing beat of silence while he waits for my reply. I mull over what information to indulge him with.

“Why would you willingly leave a place of perfect peace?”

“Do you even know the meaning of the word ‘peace?’” I counter. “Perfect love, unity, and all the nonsense they spout.”

His body turns halfway, all two-hundred-and-fifty pounds of him. “Probably not.”

“Knowledge, or rather, your *experience*, is relative. It relates directly to the things you’ve been subjected to. Did I know ‘perfect love’ before I escaped Eden? I was told I existed in a permanent state of pure, untainted love, but I had no concept of love. Why? Because I had never experienced the *opposite* of love. The word love held no meaning because I had nothing to compare it to. If you live in constant fear, it will soon lose its potency until it becomes your natural state, and you’re no longer aware of it. It loses its meaning. A kiss curls your toes the most when you believe it’s your last.”

“Did you just say ‘curls your toes?’”

I playfully nudge him with my shoulder. “My point is that duality doesn’t exist in Heaven, and for that reason, I didn’t understand love, peace, or any of those concepts.”

“But you do now?”

“I finally know the difference between sadness and happiness. Now, when I feel happy, I can pinpoint the emotion. And once I found myself back in Eden, I knew I couldn’t return to that state of oneness. I craved the rainbow of emotions. The gray outside of the black and white.”

Dmitriy stays silent while we walk the rest of the way.

As soon as the tall, gothic, castle-looking academy comes into view, I draw to a halt.

Dariana waits for me outside.

She narrows her eyes on Dmitriy when we walk up the path, and with a flick of her hair, she dismisses him as if he’s beneath her and not worthy of her attention. It soothes me that she’s as fierce as I remember. This is the girl I fell in love with. The unapologetic girl who goes after what she wants without hesitation.

“Disappear,” she growls at Dmitriy, who bares his incisors at her on his way past.

His show of defiance also soothes something inside me. To see the evidence of the vicious Dmitriy I have come to know resurface, however briefly.

Dariana regards me for a moment before softening the harsh look in her eyes. “I wanted to apologize about last night.”

“Apologize?”

“Yeah,” she starts, lowering her voice and stepping closer when a group of students walks past us. “The story you told. It’s the truth, isn’t it?”

Her raven hair moves in the breeze, and a few strands get stuck in her lip gloss. The urge to brush them away hits me out of nowhere, so I set off walking to stop myself from acting on my impulse.

Dariana stays hot on my heels, surrounding me with her scent of midnight and exotic flowers. “Can we go somewhere and talk for a moment?”

“We have classes.”

We enter the bustling hallway. I make a beeline for my locker around the corner, but she grabs my arm, steers me down a different hallway, and shoves me into an open, empty classroom.

I stumble back, watching her close and lock the door.

When she turns around and pins me with that dark, intense look in her brown eyes, which sparkle with the stars that shine in the sky visible through the window, I backstep, only to collide with a desk.

“Do I make you nervous?” she asks, her tone as sultry as the look in her eyes and the calculated steps she takes in my direction.

The desk scrapes on the floor when I push off and attempt to round it to escape the intensity in her gaze, but she keeps coming.

“I don’t like it when outside sources threaten the people I care about the most, and you, little witch, are a threat.”

I collide with another desk, then dart to my right, but she’s faster.

The sound of her wings erupting behind me has me spinning around, my hair moving off my lips with my harsh intake of breaths. I’m met with empty air, and then I feel it, a soft tap on my shoulder.

With my heart in my throat, I slowly turn around.

Brown eyes—dark enough to lose myself in—and long, wispy lashes and pouty red lips greet me. “Caught you.”

My hands seek the desk behind me. I lean back, away from her orbit, but she follows, trapping me in with her arms on either side of me.

“Why are you scared?”

My heart thunders in my chest, beating a staccato rhythm I swear she can hear in the tense, crackling silence that settles in the inches of space between our lips.

“Do I scare you?” Her delicate fingers brush my cheek with a whisper-soft touch, then trail over my cupid’s bow.

My breaths cease, and I collapse onto my elbows. Her body follows, draping over mine as her sweet scent envelops me.

“I do scare you,” she observes, the tip of her finger trailing down the curve of my chin and down my neck.

“Please,” I whisper, and she pauses as her eyes fly up to mine.

“Please, what?”

I swallow thickly and inhale a breath, then two... three... in an attempt to steady my racing heart and loss of control. “I can’t do this.”

“You can’t do what?” Her eyes glide down to my chest as her finger continues its journey between the soft swells of my breasts that are heaving from my labored breaths. “What can you not do, little witch?”

I shove her away and scramble back, desperately brushing my disarrayed hair out of my eyes. “Whatever your plan is, please stop.”

Like a predator on the hunt, she cocks her head while her gaze dances down my body before slowly, ever so slowly, returning to my face. “Who says I have a plan?”

“I told you my story last night. I *know* you, remember? You never act blindly. This sudden interest in me, this hunt, is part of a bigger plan.”

My words cause her to draw to a halt, and I daren’t breathe in the silence that follows, settling over us like a thick blanket. I can’t let her touch me. Not like this. Not when the power is all hers. I’m already in love with her, and my heart is already hers, yet her own is nowhere in sight for me to steal. Dariana guards it safely behind the thick walls hiding her from me.

“Please,” I beg again, “not like this.”

Don’t kiss me unless your heart is in it, too.

“Don’t break me further unless you’re willing to pick up the pieces.” I didn’t mean to say it out loud, but my words hover in the air, whispering unspoken truths my heart is not yet ready to admit.

I fully expect her to ignore my trembly plea, but she steps back as my eyes prick with unshed tears. Her ragged breaths match mine, and she opens her mouth to speak but slams her lips shut. Turning on her heel, she walks out.

In the ensuing silence after the soft click of the door, I break. Crumpled in a heap on the floor, I release a soundless cry as my heart splinters.

When duality hits, it hits hard, and when it hurts, it doesn’t just hurt; it shatters the soul into a million fragmented pieces that float away, lost on the breeze coming from the open window.

This is the price we pay for love’s exquisite touch.

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CHAPTER
FIFTEEN

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DAEMON

Dariana exits the classroom, looking spooked enough that I straighten up and push off the locker. She's so spooked, in fact, that she doesn't notice me as she hurries past.

Intrigued, I look back at the closed door.

I followed them here, but not once did I expect the little witch to get beneath Dari's skin. That's almost an impossible task in itself. Dariana has a hard shell.

As I make the decision to investigate, my phone rings inside my jeans pocket.

Fucking typical.

Dragging my eyes away from the door, I slide my cell out and tap into the screen.

It's my father.

"Son," his deep voice says in my ear as soon as the call connects.

"Father." My voice is as curt as his. It's no secret we have a strained relationship.

"I'll be away for a few more days."

No surprise there. My father is rarely home.

I stay silent, staring intently at the door.

Why is she still in there?

"Any news on the home front?"

"There's a new girl at school who claims she escaped Eden."

My father stays silent for a beat, and I revel in the knowledge that I took him by surprise. Very few things catch Lucifer off guard. He has eyes everywhere.

"She escaped Eden?"

"That's what she claims." I wait for a beat, then add, "But that's not all, Father. Guess who she lives with? Who supposedly helped her escape Eden?"

"Who?"

"Uncle."

The thick silence that follows is only broken by rowdy laughter down the next hallway.

“It’s a safe assumption that your uncle is up to something. We need to play him at his own game.”

I wet my lips. “What do you want me to do?”

“Neutralize the threat.”

My lips pull back into a dark smile, and I push off the locker, then stalk toward the closed door. “Already on it.”

“Seduce the girl and dig out her secrets by any means possible. I trust you with this.”

The line goes dead.

“Pleasure to talk to you too, Dad,” I quip, typing out a quick text to Ronan and Alaric, then shove the phone back into my jeans pocket.

He’s always a joy on the phone, barking orders and treating me as if I’m another one of his minions instead of the heir to his kingdom. But for once, I am more than willing to play the role of the perfect son and make my father proud.

He wants me to fuck this girl, gain her trust, and leave her broken. I can think of worse things.

I push down on the handle, open the door, and step inside.

As soon as it clicks shut behind me, I hear her soft snuffles.

The little witch is crying in a heap on the floor, looking wretched and delicious.

I don’t normally care much for crying girls and their theatrics, but I love the tears on her cheeks. I love it even more when she flies to her feet and flares her wings, as if my mere presence threatens her.

I tsk. “You shouldn’t spread your wings in a plain act of defiance in front of a male who’s more powerful than you. It triggers his instinct to possess, dominate, and conquer.”

She tracks my every move.

Smart girl.

“Unless you want him to chase you like an animal and fuck your every hole while you scream and cry.”

“Fuck you, Daemon,” she bites out, sweet talking my cock.

It stirs in my jeans, straining against the denim.

The door opens behind me, and Ronan and Alaric step through with matching smirks and hellfire in their mischievous eyes. They stalk closer, their heavy footsteps slapping against the floor as their muscles shift, bulge, and strain inside their T-shirts.

“Don’t you just love her tears?” I ask them, leaning back against a desk and lighting a cigarette. “Dariana primed her for us.”

They take in her quivering breaths, flared wings, and the red mist slowly clouding her vision.

Blowing out a cloud of smoke, I shake my head. “Fight the darkness, little witch. Don’t let it consume you.”

It recedes slightly but then returns when I push off the desk. I walk over with slow steps and tower over her while smoking my cigarette, as if I have all the time in the world. I take my time studying her while the smoke curls in the air between us.

She’s breathing hard, provoked and uncertain, and her hands fist rhythmically at her sides.

Crushing the cigarette beneath my boot, I cup her chin and bring her brown eyes to mine. “We’ll give you a head start this time, but know this: we will catch you.” I lean in and brush my lips against her ear as I whisper, “Run.”

She doesn’t hesitate.

She doesn’t stop to gauge if I’m playing tricks on her or not.

She bolts, running for the door.

Taunting the slumbering monster inside me with her raven hair as it flies behind her.

“You let her get away,” Ronan says, turning back to me with a question in his eyes.

My head shakes no, and I dig my packet of cigarettes back out of my pocket, then bang it on my palm. I light one up, squinting at the others through the curling smoke. “I’m offering her the illusion that she can escape us.”

Ronan’s lips spread into a Cheshire Cat grin, and Alaric chuckles deeply, amused by the promise of a hunt in my eyes.

“How far do we take it when we catch her?” Alaric asks, snatching my cigarette off me and placing it between his lips.

I frown, annoyed with him for having the balls to steal it in the first place. If it were anyone else, I’d slaughter them for disrespecting me like that. “As far as it takes to split her open and spill her secrets.”

“What do we do about Dariana?” Ronan asks, checking his phone.

“She’ll dust herself off and come back stronger.”

I grow antsy, my knee jiggling with the urge to chase her.

Alaric is barely down to the filter when I blow out a breath and set off, unable to contain the restless energy.

“Let’s catch us a little rabbit.”

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RONAN

I fucking love it when Daemon gets in this mood. It rarely happens that he gives in to his lesser nature and lets a girl toy with him like this. Because, let's be realistic, while Daemon believes he's toying with *her* by chasing her down like an animal, it's the other way around. He's allowing himself to lose control around her, something Daemon rarely does. In fact, I don't think she's aware that he's entrusting her with his monster.

We leave the classroom, and Daemon stops for a brief second to scan the corridor, his mind turning over. Did she take a right or a left? Like a greyhound, he sniffs the air, then turns left, moving with determined but silent, lithe steps.

He's a big guy, but tracking has always been his specialty.

We emerge into the large open lobby, and Daemon makes a beeline for the stairs.

"Don't you think she escaped outside?"

"She's hiding upstairs," is his response.

I exchange a look with Alaric, who simply shrugs and follows him up the grand staircase. I follow behind too, but unlike them, I'm distracted by a group of girls descending the steps. They giggle as they pass us, and I offer them a wink.

"Hurry the fuck up!" Alaric growls, smacking the back of my head.

Daemon is already at the top, a man on a mission to divide and conquer—or maybe just conquer, in this case.

His attention is zeroed in on the new girl, and his hunger won't be satiated until he has caught his prize. All the other beautiful girls here fade in comparison to the defiant angel with large-as-sin wings and a bratty attitude.

She's the cure for his boredom and the festering disease inside him that's slowly sucking the joy out of Daemon's existence.

I can't remember the last time I saw him so engaged.

That's the sole reason I follow him upstairs instead of letting the girls in their tiny dresses entice me to cause a little mayhem.

Now I'm indulging in a different kind of mayhem.

The kind that starts with a ‘T,’ ends with an ‘E,’ and spells out ‘Trouble.’

Because that’s what the new girl is. Big fucking trouble that will see us strung up by our balls if we’re not careful.

We take a right at the top of the stairs, and I frown as we pass the large sculptures that line the hallway.

“There’s a reason I rarely visit the art wing,” I tell them while eyeing up a grotesque statue of an angel with a deer’s head. Soulless empty eyes follow me as an icy shiver runs down my back.

“Scared the statues will come alive and feed on your soul?” Alaric teases.

I do a double take at the next statue of a fallen angel with stumps for wings. “Not at all. I just don’t see how any of this”—I gesture around the empty hallway—“is considered art?”

“The artsy girls are unhinged,” Alaric agrees, “but they’re also damn good in bed.”

Daemon throws us a stern look over his shoulder, a silent command to shut up.

I hold my hands up placatingly.

We stop outside a shut door, and a slow smirk lifts Daemon’s lips as he pushes down on the handle, careful not to make it creak as it opens to a large open space. This used to be one of the dance studios before they moved that part of the section to the left wing. Now it’s used for carving sculptures. And like a scene out of my worst nightmare, the room is littered with them.

Countless stone sculptures with empty eye sockets and pulled-down smiles, sharp saber teeth and crooked claws, twisted limbs and silenced screams.

Daemon walks softly, avoiding the pieces of gritty rock on the floor. His footsteps can barely be heard over the breeze whipping through the sheer, black curtains.

The room is dark except for the beams of silvery moonlight on the floor. It’s barely enough light to see by, but that doesn’t stop Daemon as he stops and sniffs the air again.

His eyes zero in on one of the dark corners, where a bunch of crates are stacked hazardously. The smile that unfurls on his lips is villainous and

sadistic and carries the promise of pain. “Found you, little witch,” he whispers darkly as he sets off toward her hiding place.

Alaric walks back to block off the only escape route—the door.

She’s trapped now, locked in this dark room with three tormentors hellbent on destroying her.

I sidestep another sculpture, baring my teeth at its face that resembles one of the gargoyles on the roof of this building. Who the fuck creates this shit?

“If you come out, I promise I won’t hurt you, little witch.” Daemon’s voice drips with insincerity and claps against the walls like a thunder strike. “I’ll take it easy on you.”

Amused, I press my lips together to stop myself from laughing. He’s taunting her for sport.

“I can hear your heartbeat, little witch. It races like that of a frightened rabbit in the presence of a fox.”

One more silent step closer. “But you weren’t lucky enough to attract the fox, sweetheart. No, you caught the attention of a pack of wolves instead. *Hungry wolves.*”

To frighten her and lure her out of her hiding spot, he kicks a nearby crate out of the way, and it collides with a sculpture. Broken pieces of wood lie scattered on the floor in its wake, but there’s no sign of the little witch.

Daemon stiffens as his eyes narrow.

And for one brief second, he stares at the darkness. It stares back with bated breath, waiting for the fragile silence to splinter.

Shooting his hand out, the crates erupt in an inferno of flames. Still, there’s no sign of the little witch. I look away from the burning destruction, and my gaze lands on the open windows. The dancing curtains.

Daemon’s eyes follow my line of vision, and his body turns measuredly, like an apex predator zeroing in on his prey.

This is the moment it dawns on me that Daemon will never stop. He’ll hunt her to the ends of the earth until he’s balls deep in her cunt and savagely claiming her.

She has caught the attention of his monster, and it’s now stretching its hind legs and shaking out its fur.

What I’m witnessing now is the birth of an obsession.

Walking over to the window, Daemon throws it open all the way and jumps up on the window ledge. He escapes into the night, briefly disturbing

the beam of moonlight on the floor as his wings erupt.

Our little witch better run.

“Come on,” Alaric drawls near the entrance when I use my powers to put out the fire. The air is thick with smoke as I finally weave my way through the creepy sculptures that should be thrown off a cliff.

“Don’t you want to follow him?” I ask.

Don’t you want to be part of the hunt?

Alaric walks out with his hands in his pocket, his shoulders relaxed. “The hunt is more down Daemon’s alley. He loves that shit, and while I don’t mind it, my hunt looks different from his.”

I don’t even have to guess where we’re going. Alaric is an intellectual man who likes to try to understand things. He’ll leave the chasing to Daemon while he drags me along to the library to dig through every single aisle for any information he can find to shed light on the situation. Because, ultimately, I have more patience than Daemon and the two of them combined.

“Where are you two heading?” Dariana’s tall heels click on the marble flooring as she chases after us.

“Where did you come from?” I ask her, descending the grand staircase.

Pointing a finger in the direction of the left wing, she says, “Dance lesson, but it was canceled.”

“You dance?”

The look she gives me is anything but impressed.

“Since when?” Alaric asks, echoing my thoughts.

“I love that you pay so much attention to me. This friendship is so one-sided.”

“I don’t care for the animosity in your voice,” I drawl as we walk down the last few steps and set off in the direction of the library.

She ignores me, choosing instead to focus her attention on Alaric. “Where are we going? I sense a mission in the air.”

“We’re going to dig up some information on angels.”

“And timelines,” I add.

Dariana comes to a sudden stop, and Alaric’s frown matches mine as we turn to look at her.

“I think she’s telling the truth.”

I blink uncomprehendingly. “What?”

“I think she told us the truth yesterday.”

My eyebrows fly up.

It's not like Dari to trust blindly, and the look in her eyes leaves no room for questions; she believes the angel's story.

"What makes you say that?" Alaric asks carefully.

Dariana looks between us, seeming uncertain, but then she sets her jaw, her mind made up. "I could see it in her eyes."

"You could see what in her eyes?"

Dari readjusts the bag on her shoulder. "The truth. She wasn't lying."

"So you're saying she knew us in a different timeline?" Alaric sounds as skeptical as I feel, but unlike me, he's considering the possibility of such a statement.

Me? I can't wrap my mind around it.

"I don't know what I believe," Dariana concedes, "but she was scared of me."

I snort. "Everyone is scared of you."

"You don't get it." She follows after me when I set off walking. "She wasn't scared of me like that. It was almost as if..."

I pull to a stop outside the library doors and blow out a tired sigh while Alaric studies her intently. "As if what?"

Dari hesitates. "As if she's in love with me."

This time I laugh, throwing open the library doors. "She can't be in love with you; she doesn't know you."

"That's exactly it. The way she looked at me... it was as if she knew me."

"Let's just see what we can find first," Alaric breathes out, entering the library, and we follow behind.

"This notion of yours is crazy," I tell Dari, keeping my voice low.

"Is it? Is it really? We all know Amenadiel is crazy. Would it really surprise you if he went to these far-reaching lengths to topple Lucifer?"

Alaric disappears down one of the aisles as I turn and rub a hand down my face. "Amenadiel is crazy. I'll admit that, but he's not crazy enough to chase the crown in more timelines than one."

"That's not what the little witch said, though." Alaric's voice drifts over to us.

After exchanging a look, we follow after him.

"What did she say then?" Dari inquires while Alaric pulls out a book.

Dissatisfied, he puts it back and continues perusing the spines. “She never actually said she found herself in a different timeline. She simply said she wants to believe it’s a different timeline, so the experience she had—the connection with each of us—is still out there, somewhere. What she did, in fact, say is that we don’t remember her anymore.”

“So?”

“So, what we’re looking at is time travel.”

“Time travel?” I huff a disbelieving laugh as I stare at his neck. “Do you hear yourself?”

Alaric straightens and turns around, leaning back against the shelf. “It’s no weirder than separate timelines. Instead of calling it time travel, since that would suggest the white-winged version of her is about to stroll down the hallways any day now, let’s think of it... Let’s say we go back ten minutes in time, right? Like a videotape that you rewind. You with me?”

“Not really,” I say at the same time Dari says, “Sure.”

“It’s like that. She rewound time, which in turn erased the events that occurred.”

“I’m so confused,” I admit.

“Why? If someone came along with a remote control and rewound time until we’re all back upstairs, setting fire to crates, did this conversation right now happen?”

“Duh. Yes.”

“No. Not to us, it wouldn’t have.”

“You need to get laid. Use that enormous brain of yours for better purposes than the vile act of thinking.” I throw my hands up. “Let’s just find the information we need and leave.”

Dariana pats my shoulder as she walks past me to help Alaric hunt. “It’s okay, sweetie. It’ll all make sense to you soon enough.”

CHAPTER
SIXTEEN

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AURELIA

Kinsale, Ireland. A small town with a population of 5,300. Out of all the places in the human world, this is where I'm hiding.

It was a last-minute decision to step out from behind the crates and escape through the window. If I want to escape Daemon, I have to run, and I have to run far away.

But now that I am here, huddled in the corner of a small yet cozy country pub, with a frothy beer in front of me, it dawns on me that I have no plan.

I'm a rogue runaway.

Hunted by the Devil's son.

Unless he's given up by now.

It's been two days since I arrived here. Two days of very little sleep, expecting him to barge into my bedroom upstairs.

It was my first time coercing a human with my powers to let me rent a room, and it was surprisingly easy.

Almost too easy.

The scent of cologne, sweat, and washing powder permeates the air as a man wearing a checkered shirt and dark jeans slides in beside me on the bench. "You look lonely, sweetheart."

My grip on the pint glass tightens as I slowly let my gaze slide in his direction. He's in his late twenties and attractive in that rugged kind of way.

My lack of a reply doesn't bother him. "You want another beer?" He gestures for the barmaid, then settles his attention back on me. "You're new in town."

"You're observant."

"It's a small town."

My eyes trail down to the pulse point in his neck, and my incisors begin to ache. His collar is unbuttoned, revealing tanned skin. My blood lust is insatiable, and I'm reminded of it now when he stretches his arm out on the back of the bench, unaware of how his hand brushes my feathers.

"What brought you here?"

His heartbeat is loud, and each individual thud is as tempting as the organ playing such a beautiful, haunted tune. The urge to rip it out of his

chest and sink my teeth into the bloody chambers makes me dizzy.

“Difficult to find on a map.”

He frowns, but then he smiles at the waitress when she places our drinks on the table. I watch him lift the glass to his mouth, his throat jumping with every swallow before he puts the glass back down and wipes the froth off his lips.

“Want to go somewhere?” I ask, forcing myself to drown out the delicious sound of his heartbeat.

My question takes him by surprise, if the widening of his eyes is anything to go by.

“Sure.” He sounds almost uncertain, but then he slides out from the bench, pays for the drinks, and nods his head for me to follow.

We step outside into the cool fall air, and I set off down the side of the pub. The human follows like I knew he would—a lamb led to slaughter.

When we turn the corner, I spin around and lean back against the brick wall. It’s dark here, except for the starry night sky that casts his face in shadow, and without the pollution of nearby towns, the sky is lit up in all its glory.

He opens his mouth to speak, but I pull his lips down to mine, careful not to cut him with my elongating, throbbing incisors. I don’t want him to try to escape just yet. Not until I’ve had some fun.

The darkness slides out from the nearby shadows that lurk, hidden inside a cluster of trees. It travels along the ground, kissing each individual blade of grass. A thickening mist with tentacles that crawl, drag, and push forward. It comes for him like the reaper while he’s lost in my kiss.

His hands grip my hips, and he hoists me up against the cold brick, our gusting breaths visible in the cold air. My eyelids fall shut, and I lose myself in the sensation of his scratchy stubble as his lips descend on my neck, kissing, nibbling, biting.

When I blink my eyes open again, a red mist falls over my vision like the curtain during the final act on stage.

But that’s not what makes me gasp.

It’s the man towering behind him, with flared raven wings, glinting fangs, and eyes that burn with hellfire.

In a swift move, Daemon grabs my companion’s head and rips it clean off. Warm blood sprays from the stump, splattering my face, and for a brief moment, I remain like that, held against the wall by a dead, decapitated

man, before his body slumps. Then I'm grabbed and hauled into a hard chest as Daemon tosses the head to the side. The motion is so sudden and violent that I yelp, my hands flying up to Daemon's chest.

His cruel, ruthless violence clashes with my raw need as he spins me around, shoves me against the cold brick, and yanks my dress up around my waist. He has no care in the world about the dead corpse at my feet or how my high heels bump into it when he slaps my ass.

"You thought I wouldn't find you, little witch? That you could hide away in the human world? Newsflash"—his hand comes down again, and my shriek rings out in the quiet night—"I'll always find you. There's nowhere you can hide from me."

Three quick slaps in succession, then a fourth, as if he can't help himself.

My ass is on fire, but the pain has nothing on the achy, unsatiated need between my legs. My pussy is craving him and his unleashed darkness that's about to wreak havoc on my heart.

With my hair fisted tightly in his hand, he kicks my ankles apart, then slides his hand inside my panties, over my drenched pussy, as he whispers in my ear, "More importantly, did you think I would let you fuck another man? Human or not?"

"It's part of the hunt," I breathe out, my voice breathy and shaky.

He shoves two fingers deep inside me. "Wrong, little witch, this pussy is mine."

As if to prove his point, he pumps me hard and fast, my face pressing against the abrasive brick.

I take his punishment without complaint, partly because he's too strong and I can't fight him off, but also because I love his brutality.

"No one gets to have this but me."

My hands press against the brick to offer me some level of reprieve. I don't get any. His fingers work me into a frenzy until my arousal trails a path down my thighs, and the wet sounds my cunt makes blend with my heavy breathing and soft moans.

"Tell me I get to play with *my* pussy whenever I want."

"You can play with it anytime you want," I choke out before moaning.

"That's fucking right," he growls, shoving a third finger inside me. "It's mine. Everything about you is fucking mine. You're a whore for my fingers, my cock, and my tongue, isn't that right?"

“Yes.” I don’t recognize my own voice.

“I’ll kill any dicks that get near you. I won’t hesitate to end their lives, understood?”

“Please,” I beg, my pussy pulsating with the need to come.

“Under-fucking-stood?” he grits out.

“Yes, Daemon.”

“That’s my good girl.” His grip remains tight on my hair as he unbuttons his jeans and takes his dick out, then he bands his arm around my waist and impales me on his cock, forcing me up on my tiptoes.

Daemon proceeds to ravage me amongst the blood and gore, beneath the starry sky. He fucks me hard with savage thrusts and whispered filthy words that stoke this fire burning inside me.

Shoving down my dress, he palms my swollen tits. “You love nothing more than to be fucked like a greedy whore. Did you think the human could fuck you this well? Did you think he’d make you bounce off his cock like this?”

It’s as if he’s goading and firing himself up even more with his own destructive jealousy.

“Do you like it when I claim you on top of his rotting corpse, little witch?”

My pussy clamps down in response, and his cruel laughter brushes the curve of my neck.

“Is this why you lured him out here? Somewhere in the back of that mind of yours, you knew I’d find you, and you knew I’d slaughter him like a pig for touching what’s mine.”

I did know. Like the time he killed a human man in the bar because I straddled his lap to get back at Daemon.

Deep inside, I knew it was only a matter of time before Daemon found me. I knew he’d chase me down, fuck me to within an inch of my life, and crush my heart.

“Spread your wings,” he whispers in my ear, his cock stretching me to my limits, pumping, rocking, thrusting.

I slowly unfold them, growing wetter when he releases a masculine grunt.

“My little slut,” his deep voice taunts. “Think you can compete with my wingspan, hmm?”

“I know I can,” I hiss, then push off the wall and shove him off. I move back, careful not to step on the corpse.

His dark eyes slide down my body to where my hand is rubbing my clit almost viciously.

I sink a finger inside my heat as I lean back against the brick wall. “What’s the matter, Daemon? What are you waiting for?”

Stepping closer, his hand slides over his erect cock that glistens with my arousal. Unlike me, he has no qualms about stepping on the body. In fact, he makes a point of crushing the human’s chest beneath his boot.

And then he’s on me, circling the back of my knee with his hand and lifting my leg high before ramming his cock inside me again. His other hand grabs me by the throat and cuts off my airflow. Behind him, his enormous wings block out the moonlight.

“You gonna come on my cock, little witch? Strangle my dick with your cunt?”

I’ll never get used to the effect his dirty talk has on my body. The way his filthy words send bursts of pleasure trickling down my belly before settling in my clit.

“Answer me,” he growls, tightening his grip even further, and then he eases back to allow me small sips of air.

“Yes, Daemon, I’m about to come on your dick.”

He drives into me harder, his balls slapping my ass.

“Why are you here?” he asks when I cling to his sweaty neck, scared I’ll lose balance if I don’t.

“Wha...” I drift off as he lifts my other leg and wraps my thighs around his sculpted waist. His cock is driving into me deeper at this angle, and it’s making me see stars.

“Answer me!” He slaps my tits, first my right, then my left, before twisting my nipples to the point of pain. “What are you planning?”

“I’m not planning anything.”

“Lies!” Daemon bites down on my breast, and the pain is so sharp that I cry out. He fucks me like that, with his teeth piercing my skin and his cock ramming into me until all I can smell, feel, and think of is him.

“Daemon,” I moan, holding back the whispered words that dance on my tongue.

The words that will make it all stop.

I love you.

I swallow them down while losing myself in the slide of his big cock.

“Trust me,” he breathes out, licking up the blood on my breast before brushing his lips over mine, a clear threat in his eyes. “I’ll kill you with my own bare hands if you betray me.”

“And I’ll let you,” I reply, my tone deceptively calm despite the pleasure building and mounting as it tears through me like an incoming crash wave.

My loud moan cuts through the silent night as I fall apart, bouncing off his cock.

He fucks me like he can’t get enough of me.

He fucks me like he wants to burrow deep beneath my skin and embed himself in the valves that make up my heart.

As if he wants to rip it from my chest so he can keep it for himself.

With a fierce snarl, he stiffens before warmth floods my insides. We stay like that, breathing hard, his cock still buried inside me. I feel more content now, fucked raw on top of a decapitated body in some small, remote town in Ireland, than I have in a long time.

But I know this contentedness won’t last.

While he chased me down like an animal and undoubtedly enjoyed it, he still doesn’t share my emotions. And that knowledge hurts the most, which is why I lower my legs to create some distance between us.

I take in the surrounding destruction now that the adrenaline is wearing off. I’m covered in blood, as though I have showered in it. It’s on my skin, in my hair, and soaking my clothes. The man’s severed head lies to my right, his empty eyes gazing up at the stars, and the torso is in front of me on the ground.

“Still want to drink his blood?” Daemon asks, buttoning up his jeans.

“Very funny,” I drawl as I tug my skirt back down and carefully step around the head. “The grass has soaked it all up.”

DAEMON

The little witch is in the shower while I'm inspecting every nook and cranny of the room she's been staying in. Much to my disappointment, there's nothing here. No clues at all about what makes her tick. No secrets to dig up.

I don't know why I'm this obsessed with figuring her out, but I am. And I'll get beneath her skin if it's the last thing I do.

Why is she here? Why did she tell me that crazy story about how she apparently knew me before? Amenadiel has done a lot of shit in his time, but whatever scheme he has set up with the little witch beats them all.

And then there's the remaining problem: I can't get her out of my mind. Ever since she threw that fucking football at my head and flared her wings like a brat, my thoughts have strayed to her.

I've never paid attention to females outside of sex before.

Never felt the urge to possess a woman and claim her. Who am I kidding? It's a basic instinct to assert my dominance over someone who is beneath me in power and ranking when they challenge me. Especially if that someone is the owner of a nice, tight pussy. If it were a man, I'd just kill them and have it over and done with, but it's not a man. The little witch is a woman, and my cock is very aware of the fact.

Even now, just thinking about her makes me grow hard.

The shower turns off, and then she's there, clutching a towel around her naked, wet body.

Fuck me.

"I need clean clothes."

She tries to sidle past, but my arm encircles her waist.

I pull her into me, towering over her from behind like a vengeful god.

Before she can protest, my fingers curl around the thin towel. I pull it off, then clamp my hand over her mouth when she yelps with surprise. My lips brush her ears, and she shivers as I drag my fingers up her thigh, closer to her pussy. "Why didn't you bring clothes with you into the bathroom?" I nip her earlobe and glide my fingers over her slit. "You hoped to bewitch me, *little angel*?"

She stiffens, and her breaths cease as tears bead on her wispy lashes. I pause too, then slowly lower my hand.

“That nickname,” she whispers so silently that I almost miss it. She steps out from my arms, reaches down to pick up the towel, and clutches it to her chest. There’s something in her expression.

Something that makes me hold my breath as she continues looking at me with those big brown eyes that hold so much sadness.

“You’re right,” she says eventually when the silence stretches on. “I did hope to bewitch you. It’s all I’ve ever wanted...” She lowers herself onto the bed. The soft glow from the lit candle on the bedside table flickers, chasing away the shadows beneath her eyes. “For you to see me...” Then she looks up, and my heart pounds heavily. “...and look at me the way you used to.”

The expression on her face is resigned and defeated, as if the answer to her questions reflects in my eyes.

One minute, she was screaming my name, now she’s crying? I’m so out of my depths here.

But her pain calls to something buried deep within me.

Some recognition I can’t place.

My throat jumps as I step up to her and lift her chin with two gentle fingers. My thumb brushes over her trembling lips, back and forth, soothing not only the storm in her eyes but the beast in me.

“How did you find me?” she whispers, her eyes burning into mine.

Back and forth.

My eyes collide with hers and I push down the thick, clogging emotion in my chest. I force a smirk on my lips. “You’re probably the most vicious killer I’ve ever met. I followed the trail of body parts like they were breadcrumbs.”

The tips of her ears heat, and she attempts to look away, but I tighten my grip on her chin.

“Don’t hide.”

“Daemon?”

A novel, foreign urge strikes me then, and I follow its call as I lean down to taste her lips. It’s a hesitant kiss, uncertain on my part because I’ve never kissed someone and felt my heart thud against my ribcage in response. It’s fucking terrifying, but at the same time, I’m starving for the soft moans that slip from her lips onto mine.

My fingers tangle in her damp hair, and when I deepen the kiss and reach down to remove the towel, she melts into me.

The urge to guide her back onto the bed and cover her body with mine drives me forward. Her hands are everywhere, in my hair, beneath my shirt, clawing my back, and exploring the muscles in my arms.

We only break apart to gasp for air, and even that is sheer torture. Before she can fill her oxygen-starved lungs, I'm back to stealing her breaths for myself.

We're a clash of teeth, tangling tongues, and roaming hands.

I've never devoured someone so completely before. I have always frowned upon kissing—a chore—yet now I feel like I'll die if I can't taste her, touch her, inhale her breaths and whimpers. And my name when she whispers it with such adoration.

I mean, what the fuck is wrong with me? I haven't attempted to fuck her yet. For some reason, I'm content ravaging her tempting siren mouth. And to lose myself in her soft hair, even softer lips, and exploring hands on my back.

But like all miracles, they're fleeting wonders that don't last.

All good things come to an end sooner or later.

And this moment shatters like fragile glass when her eyes flutter open and widen with fear. She breaks away from my mouth and lets out a blood-curdling scream.

I scramble back on the bed, but pain explodes between my shoulder blades before I can look behind me. The last thing I see is a robed shadow that darts through the door.

CHAPTER
SEVENTEEN

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AURELIA

“Oh, my God, Daemon,” I cry out when he collapses forward on top of me, blood gushing from a stab wound on his back. “What do I do?” My tone is panicked, desperate.

Daemon grunts with pain as his broad, powerful shoulders shift. His skin has broken out in a cold sweat, and his dark eyes lock with mine.

“What do I do?” I blurt again, even more frantic now. Daemon lies on his front, and the blood that pours from the wound soaks the sheets. I need to stem the bleeding somehow while I get myself together. I’m freaking out, and that’s never helpful.

I wriggle out from underneath Daemon and snatch up the towel from the floor. I ball it up and use it to press down on the wound, but all it does is stain the towel red. The blood is everywhere—on my hands, beneath my nails, and streaked on my forehead after I swiped away strands of my hair.

“Please,” I beg, “Please...”

I spot Daemon’s cell peeking out through the pocket of his jeans, so I dig it out while keeping pressure on the wound. Blood coats the screen as I bring up the first number in his contact list.

Alaric answers on the third ring, “It’s about time, fucker. We were about to send out a search and rescue team—”

“Alaric.” I hold the phone in a fierce grip and try to steady my breath. “I need help. Daemon has been stabbed.”

I’m met with silence on the other end before he blurts, “Fuck... Where are you?”

I wince. “Kinsale.”

“Kinsale?”

“It’s a small town in Ireland.”

Daemon grunts and attempts to roll over, but I force him back down on his front.

“Ireland?!” Alaric all but growls. “You’re in fucking Ireland?”

“Yes, it’s a long story. I need help. He’s bleeding heavily, and it’s soaking through the towel.”

“Is that Daemon?” Ronan calls out in the background. “Tell him to get his ass—”

“He’s been stabbed.” Alaric is on the move. I can hear his heavy footsteps pounding on the floor and the distinct click of Dariana’s high heels as she asks, “What happened? Is Daemon okay?”

“He’s been stabbed. Get your stuff. We’re going to Ireland.”

“Ireland?”

A sob escapes me, and I toss the phone down onto the bed, using both hands to apply pressure on the wound and putting all of my weight behind it.

“Who was that man?” Daemon grunts.

“I don’t know. I didn’t see his face.”

“Shit, little angel, I’ve known you for two minutes, and you have already managed to get me stabbed.”

“Can we please not joke right now?”

“It’s quite comical if you think about it. Wait, is this part of your elaborate plan to have me killed? He should have gone for my throat.”

More sobs and pathetic tears. I keep applying pressure, but it doesn’t take long before the towel is soaked through. “You need more blood.” My eyes dart around the room and land on the door. After leaving Daemon on the bed and getting dressed, I exit the room and come to a stumbling halt in the dark hallway. What if my stalker is out here? Lurking in the shadows?

“Think, Aurelia, think,” I whisper to myself before darting across the hallway to bang on the door opposite.

No one opens.

I try the next door, my hand smashing against the wood.

Either the occupants are smart enough not to open the door when a crazed woman, covered head to toe in blood, bangs on it, or they’re out.

I try the next door in line. The TV is on, and I can make out the advertisements before the door opens to reveal a woman in her late thirties. Her eyes widen when she takes in the state of me.

“Please, my boyfriend has been stabbed.”

“You need to phone the police.” She goes to retrieve her phone, but I seize her arm and haul her into my room.

The old me who recoiled when faced with death is nowhere to be seen. I push her inside, lock the door, and let my wings sprout behind me.

She takes in Daemon on the bed. He’s on his side, his face twisted in pain. She looks back at me, at my wings and the red mist in my eyes.

“Baby,” I say to Daemon while the woman takes a single, careful step back, “you need to feed.”

The response I get is labored breathing and a pained hiss through his teeth. He’s lost too much blood, and it makes me worried in case the knife hit vital organs. He’ll be able to heal if he drinks the human’s blood, but I can’t make him drink it. He has to do it himself.

The woman tries to dart past me, terror oozing from her, but I’m faster. I block her way and tilt my head sideways, stimulated by the hunt.

“You really shouldn’t entice a predator like that,” I tut.

These humans never learn. If you run, you seal your fate. That makes me a hypocrite since I ran from Daemon.

I see the moment she decides to scream. In a blur of motion, I close the distance between us and throw her up against the wall. I slam a hand over her mouth as I bare my incisors. “Make another sound, and it’ll be the last thing you do.”

I’m losing control over my darkness. I can feel it slipping from my grip the more frightened she becomes. The redness intensifies until my vision begins to ebb away, and the snarl in my throat becomes more animal than angel. If I’m not careful, I’ll lose myself completely.

“Baby,” I say to Daemon again, not taking my eyes off the woman, “I caught the rabbit for you.”

I’m in a precarious situation. I need to put pressure on his wound to stop the bleeding, but unless he feeds, he won’t heal, and I can’t both put pressure on the wound and ensure he feeds. I’m not superwoman, no matter how much I wish that was the case right now.

Wait...

Coercion...

My eyes widen.

How have I been so stupid?

The only problem? I’ve never been taught how to use it effectively. Renting a room and saving someone’s life are not in the same ballpark. I was relaxed, curious even, when I put the lady at reception under a spell so she’d let me have this room, but now I’m panicked and two seconds away from losing myself to the darkness, unable to focus on anything besides ripping out her larynx.

“Please,” the woman begs as I follow the tears trailing down her cheeks. “Please, let me go. Let me phone an ambulance. We can get him help.”

My wings flare with agitation behind me. “You think human paramedics can help him?”

I inch closer and she turns her head, whimpering pathetically when I lean in close to breathe in her scent—blood, fear, terror.

Ah, heck. Why does she have to smell so good and tease me with her whimpers? She makes it impossible to keep the darkness leashed.

And then she does the last thing she should ever do.

The one thing that snaps my grip on reality.

She screams.

“You just can’t help yourself, can you?” Amenadiel whispers as he steps out from the shadows in the corner of the room. The moon sits high in the sky, and its silvery glow reflects off his teeth when he smiles coldly.

I scoot up in bed, careful not to wake Daemon, who snores softly beside me.

“I had to save him.”

He tuts, and a cruel, taunting smirk grazes his lips. “Don’t use that as an excuse. You enjoyed torturing the human and dragging out her fear until she was begging for death.”

“Please, stop,” I plead, shame coloring my cheeks.

“You enjoyed tearing her to bits, limb by limb. The monster inside of you is growing stronger every day.”

I press my hands to my ears as if I can shut out his taunts, but instead, it draws my attention to my trembling hands.

My very bloody, trembling hands.

Even in the moonlight, I can make out the congealed blood beneath my nails, between my fingers, and dried to the ends of my hair. The air reeks of copper and death.

Amenadiel crosses the floor while I inspect my hands. His fingers tangle in my hair, and his touch is almost soft, as if he’s trying to soothe me. “You don’t need to be ashamed of your darkness. Not around me. I welcome it.”

My throat jumps as I peer up at him from beneath my lashes. “Why?”

“Why, what?” He trails his touch down the curve of my jaw before cupping my chin and lifting it gently.

“Why do you welcome it?”

“Because no one else will. I once walked out of Eden too, remember? I know you struggle with the darkness. Especially now the light in you is gone. If anyone can sympathize, it’s me. Not Daemon, or any of your other friends.”

I draw in a shuddering breath as his thumb brushes over my bottom lip, back and forth, back and forth.

“Let the darkness in.” He leans down—slowly, so slowly—and I know I should stop him.

But I don’t.

I let him whisper against my lips, “Don’t fight it.”

And I don’t pull away when his lips press against mine.

With a gasp, I shoot up in bed, pressing a palm to my chest. My heart is hammering, and sweat coats my skin.

Sweat and blood.

So much blood.

It takes me a few seconds to remember where I am. The memories from last night are hazy.

Nerves swell inside me when I scan the room, taking in the body parts that lie scattered over the floor and the blood that has soaked through the thin carpet.

Sunlight pours in through the window, birds tweet in the trees outside, and a door shuts somewhere in the hallway. *I’m in the human world.* I try to breathe through the panic threatening to suffocate me.

Beside me, Daemon stirs, then his heavy arm drapes around my waist. He pops his head up and looks around before growing eerily still.

I hold my breath while he scoots up in bed. His shoulder is healed, but he still winces as if he’s in pain, or maybe it’s the sunlight that bothers him. They always hunt at night in the human world.

Shame clogs my throat as he takes in the blood and carnage. The severed hand in front of the chest of drawers, the heart on the bedside table, the girl with the empty eyes that stare at the ceiling. I can’t even look at her torso—or what’s left of it.

“Shit,” he whispers quietly.

So quiet, in fact, I almost miss it.

But I don’t. The shame and self-hatred threaten to drown me as I shield my face with my stringy, crimson hair.

Soft fingers find my chin and guide my eyes to his brown ones. “Hey, look at me.”

I can’t. I just can’t bring myself to let him see me like this.

“Little witch, look at me.”

My eyes slowly meet his.

“You saved my ass.” He ducks, capturing my gaze when it drifts down to my bloody fingers. “I’m alive because you thought to lure that woman in here.”

“I’m a monster.”

“We’re fallen angels.”

I shake my head softly, tiredly. “You’re a fallen angel, Daemon. I was born of the light...”

“But you’re a fallen angel now. The darkness is a part of you.”

“Yet you don’t lose yourself to it for hours while tearing your victims to pieces.”

His throat jumps as he stays quiet.

Daemon is disgusted by me, I know it. How can he not be when I’m a monster who kills for enjoyment? This part of me is terrifying. Where does it end?

Just when I think he’s going to push me away, he tucks my hair behind my ear. “It’ll be alright.”

I look at him then, my eyes flicking between his. “Will it, though? This darkness inside me is growing, and I have no control over it. What if I lose myself completely? Or what if I hurt someone I love?”

Like him.

“I think,” he starts, his eyes sliding down to my lips, “that you need to trust in yourself more.”

“Have you ever lost yourself to the darkness, Daemon?”

His dark wilderness clashes with mine. “No, not like that.”

My head slowly nods, and then I slide out from beneath the quilt and place my bare feet on the floor, careful not to step on any body parts. The congealed blood sticks to the soles of my feet as I pad to the bathroom.

“Little witch?”

I turn at the door.

“What’s your name?”

A breath escapes me as pain, unlike anything I’ve known, tears at my heart like that of countless hands, clawing, grabbing, piercing. Even now, Daemon doesn’t remember my name, and that realization hurts more than I can put into words.

Instead of replying, I offer him a gentle smile that I don’t feel on the inside. “I’m glad you’re healed, Daemon.”

Then I escape into the bathroom and shut myself inside. I can’t allow myself to fall apart. Not now. Not when Daemon is on the other side.

I press my forehead against the wood of the door and let my eyes fall closed. A few steadying breaths later, I turn to switch on the shower. While the water heats, I get undressed.

I take in my face in the mirror above the sink. There are streaks through the dried blood on my cheeks, and strands of my dark hair stick to my forehead and temples. I reach up and brush away the crusty strands. I don’t recognize this monstrous version of myself, this heinous, abominable creature that stares back at me.

Pushing off the sink, I step into the shower and tip my head back as the water pours over my face.

Maybe I should disappear before the darkness swallows me whole?

Before I hurt someone I care about.

A gasp leaves me when Daemon’s muscular arm slides around my bare waist and pulls me into his hard chest. His lips come down on my neck, kissing, biting, and punishing me until I can barely breathe. My nipples pucker as his scratchy beard marks my sensitive skin.

His dark voice rumbles in my ear, “You never told me your name, little witch.”

I slam my lips shut. For reasons unbeknownst to me, I want to keep that part of myself locked away.

Away from dangerous boys with sin at their fingertips and erotic promises in their dark gazes.

Boys with the power to destroy me if I’m not careful. Especially now when I’m already a victim of his love while also being a stranger to him. It’s a combination that’s hard to swallow. His touch is so familiar, so safe, and yet, his fingers explore my body as if for the first time.

As if he’s never lost himself in me.

As if he's never brought me to my own destruction before gluing me back together.

"Tell me your name." He shakes me.

"You once knew my name," I whisper shakily.

Daemon stiffens behind me, but then he slowly turns me around and backs me up against the tiled wall, his hands on either side of my head. The water cascades over his broad, tanned shoulders, and more drips from his lips as he stares at me from beneath his dark lashes.

My wings flutter behind me as he leans in to whisper in my ear. "You know I like the hunt."

Shivers splash down my spine.

"You want me to hunt you, little witch?"

I hold my breath when he leans back to look me in the eye. My heart smashes against my ribcage with closed fists that bang and slam and plead to be freed.

Daemon holds my gaze until my lungs burn and prick, and then he pushes off the tiled wall and cups my chin in a possessive grip. The kind of grip that lets me know he's nowhere near done with me.

"I don't know what kind of game you're playing, but know this: you won't win. Not against me. All you'll achieve is to catch my attention, and trust me when I say you don't want it. Scratch that, it's already too late. So if you're working with my uncle, I suggest you run to the ends of the Earth and don't let me catch you this time." He leaves, and the sound of the shower rushes back into my ears as I inhale deep, ragged breaths into my oxygen-starved lungs.

I both love and hate being back in Daemon's orbit. I love it because I need his attention directed at me like a spotlight on this empty stage, where I strut and dance like a broken ballerina. But I also hate it because I might lose for the first time in my life.

While the darkness frightens me, Daemon is the true monster hiding in the shadows. Why? Because he holds my beating heart in the palm of his hand. He holds all the power.

I *will* get lost in this sea. Either in the clutches of the darkness or in Daemon's intense presence.

Little Red Riding Hood *will* step off the path, but the question remains: will she catch the eye of the wolf or the hunter? Sometimes the safest

option is the deadliest. Sometimes the one who saves us ends up being our destruction.

And Daemon?

He's the missile to my heart.

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CHAPTER
EIGHTEEN

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RONAN

“You’re a hard man to track down.”

Daemon looks over at us from his spot on the bed, where he sits with his eyes trained on the bathroom door like some crazy stalker. It doesn’t take a mastermind to figure out who’s in the bathroom.

Dariana rushes into the room, unbothered by the scene that greets us, and fawns over him. He merely tolerates it because he knows he has no other choice. Daemon has done a lot of stupid shit in his life, but this is the first time he has been stabbed.

“I told you we couldn’t trust her,” Dariana says tersely, inspecting his shoulder. The wound has healed.

Alaric steps in last, his eyes widening when he sees the carnage on the floor and walls. “What the fuck?”

Dariana looks up and stiffens, as though she were too focused on Daemon to see the state of the room.

“Seems we missed quite a party,” I quip, shutting the door after Alaric.

“The angel did this?” Dari asks.

Daemon nods, his elbows on his knees, his eyes still on the bathroom door.

Alaric steps over the torso and carefully begins to lower himself on the armchair, but then he changes his mind and chooses instead to stand up with arms crossed and feet planted. “Mind explaining to us what happened?”

A muscle tics in Daemon’s jaw as he drags his eyes away from the door when the shower switches off. “Someone broke into the room and stabbed me.”

Dariana snorts, Alaric looks skeptical, and I shift on my feet, not knowing what to believe.

“What do you mean, someone broke into the room?”

“She has a stalker.” Daemon looks at Dariana. “She told you once that someone chased her in the library.”

“Yeah, but I didn’t think it was serious.”

“Well, considering I nearly died from rapid blood loss last night, I think it’s safe to say it’s serious,” Daemon drawls, looking back at the door.

We all exchange a look.

Dariana breaks the silence. “Has it occurred to you that she might have been behind it and that it could have been part of an elaborate plan between her and Amenadiel?”

“Of course it has,” Daemon replies, cutting her a glare.

“I think we need to discuss *that*.” Alaric gestures at the scattered body parts around the room.

“That’s the least of our problems if the angel works with Amenadiel,” Dariana says.

Alaric looks over at her and shakes his head as if he thinks she’s naive. “She’s losing control over the darkness. See that body on the floor?” He points at it again. “It could have been Daemon.”

Now Daemon snorts amusedly. “You don’t think I could handle her?”

“Were you in any shape to handle her last night?” Alaric barks.

I have to admit, it’s a good point. Daemon was weakening rapidly and was in no shape to defend himself. It’s lucky the angel got him help in time, or it wouldn’t have ended well.

“So we need to treat it as a murder attempt on the heir,” I tell them, but Daemon shakes his head.

“I don’t think they were after me. Whoever it was, stalks the little witch, not me.”

“Yet you’re the one who was stabbed, and she’s not.”

The look he gives me is anything but impressed, but then his attention gets diverted, like a rubber band that snaps back into place, when the angel enters the bedroom.

I have to admit, I’m staring, too. It’s impossible not to when the wet strands of her hair soak the straps of her dress that stretch tight around her tits. Her widened brown eyes look between us uncertainly.

Dariana is up on her feet and crossing her arms as she leers at the little witch. “Just admit that you’re working with Amenadiel.”

“Dari.” There’s an edge to Daemon’s voice, and Dariana stiffens slightly—the only sign she heard him.

However, she doesn’t back down, and her glower intensifies as if she wants to drill holes through the angel. “I don’t buy this bullshit you’re trying to sell.”

“Dari!” Daemon barks, shooting to his feet as his wings erupt behind him in a display of power. His eyes darken, swirling with the threat of violence, and Dariana reluctantly backs down.

“We can’t trust her,” she bites out, then throws one last lingering glare at the angel, who stands in the doorway like a deer caught in headlights.

The weight of Daemon’s scowl could incinerate a man on the spot, but Dari stands her ground, used to his anger. “I’m asking you to be careful.”

Before he can reply, and before anyone of us can say a thing, the little witch speaks up. “I’m not working with Amenadiel.”

“Care to explain this?” Alaric gestures around the room again.

Her throat jumps. “I...uh...I lost control.”

“No shit, Sherlock,” Dari sneers, and this time when Daemon directs his scowl at her, she visibly shrinks back.

I pick up a piece of what looks to be a part of a leg and inspect it in the sunlight that streams through the window. “What can you remember from last night?”

By the sheer state of the room, my guess is *not a lot*, and she confirms as much when she tucks her damp hair behind her ear and wets her lips nervously.

“I don’t remember anything.”

“Nothing?”

A quick shake of her head. “I remember bringing the girl in here, and I remember Daemon on the bed...” She points at it. “He was bleeding profusely. I remember being scared.”

“What were you scared of?” Alaric asks, an intense look in his eyes, which is mirrored in Daemon’s as he tracks her movements.

“Myself, mainly... and Daemon dying.”

Seated on the bed, Dariana releases a soft, humorless laugh that tethers on a snort. It’s the kind of laugh that tells us she thinks the little witch is full of bullshit.

The angel ignores her. “I was scared I would hurt him.”

“Would you?” I ask, point blank, tossing the piece of the leg back down, and she meets my gaze.

Her eyes are uncertain and rimmed with tears, but then she grits her teeth and looks away. “You should take him home now that he’s healed.”

Daemon is up on his feet in an instant, faster than the eye can catch—a flurry of movement. “You’re coming with us.”

She slowly looks at him and crosses her arms to create a barrier between them as he steps over body parts to get to her. It could be poetic under

different circumstances if it weren't for the fact that Daemon looks as if he's ready to choke her to death.

"You think I'll leave you here when there's a stalker on the loose?"

"My stalker is not your problem."

No sooner have the words left her mouth, he grabs her by the throat. "Your stalker stabbed me, little witch. So yes, he is my problem, and now so are you."

She bares her teeth. "Let go of me, Daemon."

I watch their exchange closely, the way Daemon asserts himself over her. More importantly, his obsession with her. The stalker is an excuse. He wouldn't let her leave, regardless. Not now that he has his eyes set on her.

Across the room, Alaric raises his eyebrows, as if to say *do something*, and I smirk back.

Dariana throws her arms up, interrupting their stare-down. "Can we just leave already?"

The little witch shoves Daemon off and tries to shoulder past, determined to walk away, but he grabs her hair and pulls her back.

My lips kick up in a smile at her futile struggle. She should stop fighting unless it's her wish to catch his attention. If she were a pliant field mouse, Daemon would get bored within a day, so when she turns around and knees him in the balls, I can't help but laugh.

She's no field mouse.

She's something much fiercer.

And it's like crack cocaine to Daemon, who straightens up with thunder in his eyes and fisted hands at his sides. "You dare knee me in the fucking balls, *little angel*?"

She winces at the nickname, and I exchange another look with Alaric. She doesn't like to be called "little angel."

No, that's not true.

It hurts her to be called that.

Very interesting.

"What are we gonna do about the mess in here?" I ask.

Daemon doesn't look away from the defiant angel as he says, "Leave it. I'll have someone clean it up."

"Then let's go," Dariana barks, shouldering past me, her heels clicking on the creaky floorboards.

The angel glares at Daemon with her arms crossed over her chest for a brief second longer, then sets off walking. She's barely made it more than two steps when Daemon picks her up as though she weighs nothing and hauls her over his shoulder. His hand comes down on her ass, making her yelp. "Stop defying me."

As they walk out, Alaric sidles up next to me. "He's too blinded by pussy. We need to keep an eye on her."

"You on the same wavelength as Dari?"

"I don't know... But I won't allow us to be blindsided. Daemon nearly got himself killed."

His words hang in the air—sickly, dark, and ominous.

The truth is, we know nothing about this girl.

And Daemon?

He's thinking with his dick.

Alaric claps my shoulder, then walks out.

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DARIANA

Daemon took the girl back to his place. She's currently seated on the couch in the living room, right at the edge, as if she's preparing to flee any second. The boys are spread out, watching her like a juicy meal or a puzzle to figure out. Maybe the mystery is what makes her so alluring.

I'm not so easily fooled. She charmed me at the beginning, but then Daemon was stabbed, and now I don't trust her.

Though, I can't stop staring.

So this is what the enemy looks like? Masquerading with dark wavy hair that cascades down her back, big doe eyes that scan the room's occupants uncertainly, and the softest looking lips you've ever seen.

Soft, pillowy lips you can't help imagining biting into and a hot mouth you want to fill up with your fingers.

If only to make her gag and choke.

My tongue slides over my freshly applied lipstick while I imagine myself dirtying her up a bit.

The thing about this girl is that she has an aura of innocence about her, but it's a cruel, wicked deception. Especially after I've seen the evidence of the monster that resides behind those dark eyes. She's the most dangerous predator. A carnivorous plant you should stay away from.

It makes sense why Amenadiel would utilize a girl like this angel. She's deadly but embodies innocence and purity as though it's a part of her, some forgotten artifact hidden deep within the corners of her soul.

And you ache to step into her shadows and wander deeper and deeper to discover her secrets and dust off their corners. But it's a trap.

In order to dismantle it, we first need to figure out just how involved she is with Daemon's uncle and how far he has dug his claws into her smooth skin. And there's no better way to destroy an enemy than to entrap it.

With that thought in mind, I soften my glare, rise from my seat, and slowly walk up to her. She looks so innocent, so wary, and so fucking unsure that it calls to something inside me.

"Don't break me further unless you're willing to pick up the pieces."

That's exactly what I want to do. Break her into countless fragmented pieces and scatter them on the wind.

There will be no redemption.

“Dari...” There’s a warning in Daemon’s voice when I walk around the back of the couch and glide a single finger over her shoulders, from her left to her right.

I ignore him, far too entranced by the goosebumps erupting in the wake of my touch.

Grabbing a handful of her hair, I yank it and force her to expose the tanned column of her neck to the men in the room.

Unable to resist the pull to get lost in her, I lean down and breathe in the stench of deception and the far more dangerous scent of vanilla beans and morning mist.

She visibly shivers and attempts to turn her face in my direction, but I tighten my grip on her hair to keep her frozen while I drag my nose over the slender curve. “I can smell your secrets.”

“I don’t have any.”

I pull harder and sharper, forcing her to crane her neck at an awkward angle. “Bullshit!”

“I’m not lying.”

My chuckle is cruel, lacking warmth. “We’ll see about that.” I move around the couch and slow to a stop in front of her as my eyes slide down her body. “If you have nothing to hide, then take your clothes off.”

“Wha-at?”

“Strip.”

Her throat jumps, and she looks to the others for help, but her gaze soon returns to me when I snap my fingers.

“They won’t help you.”

Behind me, Daemon chuckles behind his closed fist, his elbow on the armrest. My own lips twitch in response.

“What’s it going to be? Do you admit to working with Amenadiel?”

“I’m not working with him. Besides, how will I prove anything by removing my clothes?”

When I stay silent with my arms crossed over my chest, her cheeks stain pink. She rips her dress off and tosses it on the floor.

The room holds its breath.

My eyes cut to Daemon for a brief second, then flick back to the angel as she lifts her hips off the couch to remove her panties.

Her defiant, fiery eyes hold mine the entire time, refusing to look away even for the briefest of seconds. Leaning forward, she holds her panties up in the air and treats me to a dark smile that's anything but innocent. "Happy now?"

The silk panties fall on top of her discarded dress on the floor.

A million thoughts swirl in my head, but none of them register when my eyes dance over her supple breasts.

How is it possible to be so ethereal? Everything about her is perfection, from the way her dusky nipples harden the longer I stare, to the soft curve of her neck. But what truly steals my breath are her chocolate-brown eyes, framed by wispy lashes that brush her cheeks every time she blinks, and her plump, soft lips with their defined cupid's bow.

"Do you like what you see?" she asks, sounding brave, but I don't miss the slight quiver in her voice.

"I don't know, do we?" I direct my question at the boys. "Do we like our little traitor naked and at our mercy?"

Daemon simply smirks, amused by the games I'm playing with the squirming little angel. He rises to his feet, stalks up to us, and collects her panties from the floor. I hold my breath as he puts them to his nose and breathes in her scent before tossing them back at her.

"Get dressed."

My mouth falls open, and so does the angel's.

"Daemon—" I start, but he cuts me off.

"As much as I want to eat her pretty little cunt until she screams my name, we have more important things to discuss." He throws her the dress too, then retakes his seat and puts his ankle over his knee, looking the epitome of unaffected.

Both Alaric and Ronan chuckle.

Me? I'm not impressed in the slightest. I enjoyed toying with her until Daemon put a sudden stop to it. I feel like a sulking child as I turn around to sit down on the armrest of Daemon's chair.

The angel dresses quickly, hiding that perfect body of hers.

"Why are you being stalked?" Daemon's voice rings out in a deep rumble I feel down to my toes.

"How would I know that?" she asks, pulling the dress over her head and covering up her swollen tits.

"You must have some theories? Enemies?"

“I don’t,” she grinds out, looking as if she’s on the cusp of losing her cool with Daemon. “If I did, I wouldn’t be in this situation, would I?”

“Cut the attitude.” His tone is final.

Grinding her teeth, she tears her gaze away and looks in the opposite direction.

“Do you have any enemies? People with a vendetta against you?”

Her jaw clenches as he stays silent. It pisses Daemon off. Though he hides it well, I notice the subtle changes in his demeanor, because I’m so used to his body language.

It’s never a good sign when the sound of Daemon’s breathing falls below an audible range. He’s hot-headed by nature and not someone who likes to leash his annoyance or anger. Especially not where bratty girls are concerned.

“Answer me.”

She stiffens.

“Answer me, or I’ll make you regret it.”

“I don’t have any enemies. What enemies could I possibly have? I’m new here.” She looks at us then, and the glassy sheen to her big eyes makes me want to see real tears trailing down her cheeks. “The only people I know are you guys, your uncle, and Dmitriy. My circle of friends isn’t exactly big.”

“Or maybe someone wants to hurt Daemon through you?” Alaric speaks up while Ronan lights a cigarette.

“If that’s the case, then why did this person chase me in the library? Or that time in the woods? Daemon was nowhere around then.”

Alaric narrows his eyes. “Why did the person run away and leave you unharmed after stabbing Daemon?”

“How would I know?” She throws her hands up. “Have you seen Daemon? He’s scary as fuck.”

Daemon’s lips kick up in a smile, but he says nothing, content to witness her flounder.

“Tell us about the darkness,” Alaric demands. “How do you lose control?”

“I don’t know what to tell you...”

“Just start from the beginning.”

So that’s what she does.

She tells us everything.

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CHAPTER
NINETEEN

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AURELIA

“What are you doing out here in the backyard?”

I jump at the sound of Daemon’s rumbling voice behind me, and the flame that dances on my palm flickers out. Overhead, the stars twinkle, while in the distance, a fox barks. The night is alive with sounds.

“I’m practicing my fire magic.”

Calculated steps carry him closer to me. “You’re not planning on running away, are you?”

“I didn’t realize I was your prisoner?”

A sense of déjà vu washes over me. This feels oddly familiar to when Daemon taught me how to fly.

“There’s a crazy stalker on the loose.”

“If he wanted to kill me, he would have done so before you joined me out here.”

His eyes assess me, unraveling every layer until I’m bared to the core with nowhere to hide. It’s hard not to fidget and even harder not to gravitate closer to him.

“There’s that smart mouth again.” He stops in front of me. “Show me your flame.”

Heat crawls up my neck. The way he looks at me is so intense that I step back, if only to allow myself breathing room away from his overwhelming presence.

He follows me step by step until my back meets a tree.

With nowhere left to run, I hold my breath. I can’t think when he’s this close, never mind try to escape him.

“Show me your fire.”

“Why?”

“Stop being stubborn and do as you’re told.”

That gets my back up, and I glare at him until he seizes my chin in a tight grip.

“Show me your fucking fire.”

“Or else?”

His grip tightens, and he digs his calloused fingers into my cheeks until I'm sure I'll bruise from his punishing touch.

Despite that, I want more.

I crave more.

His wings part the air as they erupt behind him. "Or else I'll have no choice but to teach you a lesson."

I snort, then push past him, but he grabs my arm and pulls me right back. It's not gentle in the slightest. The wind gets knocked out of me when my back connects with the tree. I'm reminded of how uncut Daemon is.

How unapologetic, rough, and unrefined he can be when he wants something.

"What will it take to lure your monster to the surface?" he whispers, brushing his thumb over my bottom lip.

His question takes me by surprise.

So much so that my lips part, and he dips his thumb inside.

"Come out to play."

His dark gaze intensifies, burning through every layer until my shaky exhale is his to command.

His to leash and tame.

To wrangle into submission.

I bite down, and his thumb retreats. "What are you doing, Daemon?"

"Is it triggered by the fear in others?"

Terrified sobs steal my attention as Alaric and Ronan drag a crying human across the grass.

"Daemon?" The tremble in my voice causes his lips to pull back into a cold smile.

"What can I say? I'm curious about you and what makes you tick."

My attention snaps back to him when he wraps his hand around my throat in a possessive grip. With his eyes on me, he says to Ronan, "Hurt the human."

"What? No!" I blurt, but he slams his other hand over my mouth and shushes me. I try to avert my gaze and look anywhere but at the scene in front of me, but Daemon's grip on my throat tightens until I whimper with pain.

"You'll watch."

Despite his instructions, my eyes slam closed as Ronan shoves the man to his knees, grips his arm, and snaps it.

The sound of the bone breaking and the man's pained cry tears at my splintering heart.

I pant through my nostrils while desperately trying to wrangle the darkness that crawls across the grass like a pale demon with twisted limbs and rotten flesh.

Closer and closer it crawls.

"Watch," Daemon whispers, his breath teasing my ear.

More broken bones.

More screams.

Cold, knobby fingers with muddy, cracked fingernails encircle my ankles and pull me down.

Down.

Down.

"There she is." Daemon's voice has taken on a new quality.

Admiration, adoration, and even fascination.

"Look at me, little angel."

Red. So much red. A savage snarl rumbles in my chest as he releases my mouth to tangle his fingers in my hair, as though he can't stop touching me.

"Is this such a good idea?" Alaric asks behind Daemon.

The human is barely conscious, slumped on the damp grass, arms and legs twisted at grotesque angles.

"You can leave if you want," Daemon tells Alaric without taking his eyes off me.

"I'm not leaving you alone with her like that."

"You need to relax," chuckles Ronan, and Alaric cuts him a glare.

"We're so out of our fucking depths here. Do I need to remind you that we don't have any experience with angels from Heaven? Especially not angels deprived of the light."

"Think of it as research," Daemon drawls, prodding my incisors with his thumb until I release a fierce snarl that's abruptly cut off when he pulls my hair. "Shut up!"

Do I shut up? No. The darkness inside me refuses to be reined in, leashed, or caged. It's a feral animal concerned only with its survival.

Daemon isn't bothered. If anything, my snarling makes his cruel smile grow until the tips of his fangs glint beneath the moonlight. "Are you hungry, little witch?"

“Daemon, be careful when you release her.”

“If my hunch is right,” he whispers, his hand snaking beneath my skirt, “she won’t hurt me. No... our girl is hungry.” He slides my panties aside and rams a thick finger inside me. “And horny.”

The red mist intensifies until Daemon is barely visible. My pussy grips him tight as I throw my head back against the tree, pleasure bursting behind my eyelids.

“You’re dripping, little witch.” His smile turns wolfish. “Your soaking pussy is making a mess of my hand.”

Daemon steps away, and I whimper from the loss, but then my attention zeroes in on the prone, broken body on the grass.

I cock my head, curious and intrigued by the fearful, pained sounds slipping from the human’s lips. They call me home like the whispers of the forest. My heart thumps heavily, my fingers itch, and my incisors throb with the hunger for destruction. The damp blades of grass tickle my feet as I stalk him.

Anticipation swirls through my veins, and when the tips of my toes connect with his broken arm, my skirt shifts in the vagrant breeze. I crouch down and brush his hair away from his sweaty forehead.

“Please,” he chokes out, then cowers, hiding his face in the grass. I don’t like that. I want his eyes on me when I feast on his beating heart. But before I get to that part, I want to consume all of him.

I want every part of him to belong to me.

His fear.

His pleasure.

His soul.

Climbing on top of him, I lean down to kiss him.

To taste the fear on his lips.

A moan crawls up my throat and slips from my lips onto his.

His fear is exquisite.

It’s life.

Death.

I wrench my skirt up around my waist and reach down to unbuckle his belt, but before my fingers can connect with the silver belt buckle, my arm is seized and I’m hauled off him.

“I don’t fucking think so, little angel.”

My wings explode from my back, erupting so fast that Alaric—who stood too close—stumbles back in surprise.

“Whoa!”

Ronan chuckles, chill as always, then digs in his pocket for a packet of cigarettes. “She’s feisty.”

“You think I’ll let you touch the human?” Daemon growls, with a manic look in his eyes, as his fingers encircle my throat and force me up on my tiptoes. “You think I’ll let him see you with that heavy lust in your eyes?” He shakes me. “It belongs to me.”

When Ronan clears his throat before bringing the cigarette to his lips, Daemon clarifies, “Us.”

“That’s better,” Ronan teases with a wink, then offers the cigarette to Alaric, who shakes his head.

Daemon doesn’t take his eyes off me. My thoughts have ceased to exist. I’m raw need.

Hunger.

Arousal.

I want to fuck and kill and kill and fuck.

I want to ruin and destroy.

I want to bathe in blood.

Daemon tosses me to the ground and begins to unbuckle his belt. He tips his chin at the human on the grass. “Drink him dry, then crawl back to me and suck my dick with your bloodied mouth.”

Behind me, Ronan chokes on the cigarette smoke before his laughter bounces off the house in the distance.

I snarl at them all, my lips peeled back and my eyes burning red.

Daemon clicks his fingers and points at the broken body on the ground. “Kill him. If you touch him sexually, I’ll fuck your ass in his blood until you cry. Do not test me. While you’re a monster now because the darkness has its claws in you, I’m always a beast. So don’t tempt me to step out from the shadows to play with your tears.”

I go to snarl at him again, but the human releases another weak whimper, and like a heat missile, my attention snaps back to the stark white where his bones peak from his torn flesh.

The blood.

The scent of copper in the air.

I crawl closer and closer, then let my nose drag over every inch of exposed skin while the boys watch my monster drug itself on the stench of fear, pain, and merciless destruction.

“I’ll look after you,” I whisper, nuzzling his neck, where his weak pulse flutters against his skin. “I’ll take such good care of you, and in turn, you’ll gift me with screams and pleas.”

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DAEMON

Watching her tear the human to pieces, I unzip my pants and release my throbbing, aching dick. I'm so fucking hard, it's painful.

Ronan and Alaric follow my lead, and we stroke our cocks beneath the moonlight while our little angel paints the grass crimson red. She rips and tears, bites and snarls. She feasts on his organs and flares her big wings aggressively, as though she wants to protect her kill from us.

Or perhaps it's a warning to stay away.

A raven feather floats through the air, and I snatch it up with my free hand, then bring it to my nose, scenting her delicious viciousness. My hand works my rock-hard length, stroking it expertly, but I won't let myself come yet.

No, I want to cover her bloodied face with my cum. Watch my seed trickle down her cheeks, painting a roadmap through the human's blood.

More than that, I want to tame such a feral creature.

She's not a fallen angel anymore.

What snarls on its knees, crouched over the remains of the human man, is a demon. It's an evil born of the darkest pit of Hell, devoid of all light. Lost completely to the hellfire that's burned away any trace of morality and empathy.

And I want to bring it to heel.

Own it...*her*... so completely, she crawls to my leash like a good little whore.

And this version of her—this monstrous perfection—is mine. It's the part of her I want to cage and hide from the world.

The sight of her on her knees, wings flared, hair and face soaked with blood, and fierce eyes that burn red.

I don't want anyone else to see her like this but us.

This is the side of her only we get the pleasure of admiring, and I'll rip any other man to pieces who gets to witness her like this—in the throes of passion and destruction.

"Little angel!" I call out, and she looks up, her teeth buried deep in a lung.

"Time to crawl to me."

She drops the piece of flesh in her mouth, then falls forward on her hands and knees.

My dick throbs in my hand as I take in her swaying ass and sharp fangs that drip with blood. She's a beautiful deception and a damn vision.

Alaric and Ronan step closer, crowding her from behind as she kneels in front of me.

I'm crazy for slapping my dick over her supple lips when she growls like an untamed, threatened animal. But I also get off on the power coursing through my veins.

I prod her mouth with the bulbous head and let my fingers get lost in her dark hair. "You hungry for cock, little slut?"

In answer to my question, she sticks out her tongue, and I rub my cock over it in slow strokes.

Up and down, up and down, I sink all the way inside her mouth until it hits the back of her growling throat.

She tries to move back, but I grip her hair tight and hold her frozen while thrusting my hips savagely. I'm so fucking close already.

I want to use her. Fuck her throat until she cries.

I want to fuck and fuck and fuck.

Shove her to the ground and take her tight, dripping cunt.

This need in me is as animalistic as the snarls in her chest.

Ronan and Alaric stroke her wings while dragging their hands over their dicks. Unlike me, they're in control of themselves.

I'm not.

I'm fucking obsessed with her hot mouth and her choking sounds.

I'm as feral as her.

"Fuck, such a good little angel whore," I growl, thrusting deep and holding her there.

My dick fucking throbs, and I nearly lose my shit as my balls draw tight. I stare down at her, at the tears on her lashes, the wet streaks through the blood on her tears. "Look at you on your knees with your mouth stuffed with my cock."

"She's damn fine," Ronan agrees as he fists a handful of her hair and pulls her head back.

My dick slides out from her warm mouth, and she cranes her head to the side and takes Ronan in her mouth without pause.

Unlike me, he fucks her mouth slow and deep, pausing every now and then to listen to her gag while he strokes his fingers over her stretched lips.

Ronan drags his pleasure out to the max, thrusting and grunting. He rams his cock down her throat and smirks like a psycho when she chokes.

This sharing business is fucking painful. I'm not a patient man, but I let them have their fun. I let Alaric pull her off Ronan and grip her head with both hands.

I let him treat her mouth like his own fuckable hole.

His hips pump and pump, and his hands pull on her hair until his knuckles turn white.

With his eyes shut and teeth bared, his thrusts turn jerky, uncontrolled, frantic. And then he spills his seed down her throat.

Before she's had time to recover or catch her breath, Ronan takes his place and offers her the same merciless treatment as he chases his own release.

There's something so poetic about unleashing three monsters on a lesser one and watching her get torn to pieces so effortlessly, like she slaughtered that man.

Girls usually moan and beg for more.

This creature growls, snarls, and claws.

She puts up a heck of a fight, even as she sticks her tongue out to eagerly capture Ronan's cum as it covers her cheeks.

Fisting her hair, he paints her face like she's his own panting, trembling, and vicious masterpiece.

He defiles her until she's ruined.

A glutton for destruction, I pull her hair from behind with enough force to cause her to fall back on the grass. Her skirt lies bunched around her waist, her silk panties are still pulled to the side from earlier, and her puffy, glistening pussy is on full display.

I straddle her waist, shove her dress down to reveal her full tits, then order her to squish them together as I pull on her dusky nipples.

They harden to peaks.

Peaks I want to bite and ravage.

I slap her tits, watching them bounce deliciously beneath the moonlight.

Her slender, blood-soaked hands push her generous tits together. I flatten my palm beside her head on the grass and grab my dick with my

other hand. A groan rumbles in my chest as my dick slides between her breasts, causing them to bob softly.

“These tits are mine,” I growl, fucking her breasts, my hips thrusting like a savage animal. The more they bounce, the harder I fuck them. I want to hurt her. I want to fucking consume her.

“Look at me,” I order, and her doe eyes lock onto mine as I wrap my fingers around her throat. “You like it when I fuck your tits, hmm?”

“Yes,” she breathes out, but it’s more monster than angel.

“You’re a good little whore, aren’t you?”

“Yes.” This time, her hips lift off the ground, her neglected pussy begging for cock, fingers, or tongue.

She won’t get any.

Not until the darkness in me has had its fill of hers.

“Fuck, these tits,” I growl, releasing her throat to palm and squeeze them while they swallow my throbbing dick. I fist her hair, wrenching her head up from the ground, and order her to open her mouth.

My cock bumps up against her lips with every thrust, so she opens her mouth wider until my cock slides home. The sight is so fucking beautiful that I abandon her tits to crawl farther up her body, my knees on either side of her shoulders.

And then I fuck her mouth. I fuck it until I see fucking stars, and her streaming tears have washed away the blood on her cheeks. Until I know her throat will be sore tomorrow.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck!” My hips jerk as my heart thunders. I’m going fucking insane. My knuckles turn white, and my nails stain with mud when I collapse forward, tearing out the damp grass with my tight grip. As my balls draw up, my abs clench, and I release down her throat with a loud roar. The climax goes on for-fucking-ever until I’m sure she’s stolen my soul for herself.

I collapse onto the grass and stare up at the countless stars twinkling innocently overhead.

Ronan blocks them as he peers down at me. “You alive there, buddy?”

I flip him off, then throw my arm over my eyes.

One thing is for certain; I won’t survive this girl.

I’ve met my match in her monster.

CHAPTER
TWENTY

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ALARIC

“Is this really necessary?” she asks when I escort her to her next class the following day.

The perk of being me is that the crowd of students parts when I come walking.

“Daemon’s orders. You’re not allowed to be left unsupervised while there’s a stalker on the loose.”

She huffs a breath, adjusting the book she cradles to her chest. I make no secret of studying her as we turn a corner, and she does a double take.

“What?”

“I’m trying to figure you out, is all. Unlike Daemon, I’m not convinced by your story or that you’re not a threat to him when the darkness has a hold on you. What’s stopping you from losing yourself completely one day and killing him?”

She stops abruptly and turns to look at me. “Is that what you think? That I’m plotting some grand scheme with Amenadiel? Or that I’ll kill Daemon?”

I simply shrug, my hands shoved deep into my jeans pockets.

Chewing on her lip, she stares up at me as if searching for something. There’s a vulnerability in her eyes that she tries to hide, and when she looks away, I find myself following her.

No, that’s not right... my body follows her as if she tugs on a lead attached to my heart.

It’s so jarring that I stumble back a step.

Her brown eyes land on me and she frowns. “Are you okay?”

“Never been fucking better.” I walk away, my skin itching with unease.

“What happened to ‘not leaving me unsupervised?’” she asks as she catches up.

I don’t look at her, choosing instead to keep my gaze locked on the doors up ahead. “You followed, didn’t you?”

She ignores the poison in my tone. “I’m not planning anything with Daemon’s uncle. What do you want me to do to prove it, Alaric? I’m at my wit’s end here. As for the darkness, I don’t have the answers.”

That last comment makes me draw to a sudden halt, and she keeps walking a few steps before realizing I've stopped.

She turns to me again, brows furrowed. "Alaric?"

"So you admit that you might hurt him?"

Visibly flinching, she looks away. "What do you want me to say?" Her brown eyes clash with mine, imploring me to listen. "I don't understand my own darkness, so I'm not gonna lie and pretend otherwise."

"Learn to control it."

"I'm trying."

"You're not trying hard enough."

Her mouth falls open, and I shoulder past her.

"Fuck you, Alaric!" she shouts. "You know nothing."

I whirl on the spot, then storm back to her and grab her hair. The silky strands pull taut between my fingers as I drag her over to the nearest janitor's closet and force her inside.

Her back connects with the shelf behind her, and she gasps, but before she can open her mouth to protest, I've shut the door, trapped her against the cleaning products, and grabbed her by the throat in an entirely possessive grip that stirs my cock. I'll be in a shitload of trouble with Daemon if he gets wind of this. He's the leader of our group, and we don't act without his orders.

But that doesn't stop me from diving down to sink my teeth into her neck. I drink from her in long pulls, and she grips my shoulders while making these breathy whimpers deep in her throat that drive me insane.

I drink and drink.

I drink to the point where I know I should stop, or I might drain her. Still, I continue drinking.

When I finally allow my throbbing incisors to retreat from her neck, her grip on my shoulders is weak. I like her like this, at my mercy, with heavy eyes and parted lips.

Palming the back of her neck, I pull her away from the shelf and slam my mouth to hers.

Our kiss is raw, delicious, and dirty.

I bite her lip until blood explodes, and she snarls.

The animal in her slowly wakes up, stretching its limbs and shaking out its fur.

The fire within her burns with mine.

I kiss her deeper and harder, tasting my own desire on her tongue. Fingers tangling in her hair, my hard cock digs into her stomach, and my groans drown out her soft, feminine moans. I should stop this and step back in line. I'm not the heir to the throne. I'm touching something that isn't mine. Something Daemon has staked a claim on.

Maybe that's what makes her taste so fucking mouthwatering.

I wrench away from her succubus lips, grab her chin, and drag my teeth over the curve of her jaw all the way to her ear, then whisper, "Is this part of your plan? To divide us? Tear us apart from the inside out?"

She turns to ice in my arms, and I don't like it at all, but the poison continues to spew from my lips. "It won't work. You're a cheap whore, and you mean nothing to us. Daemon might be fooled by your tight pussy and soft lips, but you don't fool me."

Her lips peel back, and she shoves me off with surprising strength, despite the blood loss, before slapping me hard.

"How fucking dare you, Alaric? You're nothing but a puppet. You can't even act without Daemon's permission. You're nothing. You're no one. You're always in second plac—"

I'm on her, cutting off her airflow with my fingers around her neck. I wrench up her skirt and snap her panties straight off before shoving them in my back pocket and cupping her cunt.

A wicked smile finds its way to my lips when I tease her slit with a single finger. "Like I said, a cheap whore."

Her tight pussy welcomes my fingers home like a lost sailor at sea. She's so wet that I meet no resistance at all.

"Look at how greedy your cunt is for my fingers." I demonstrate by curling them inside her slick heat, and a strangled, choked moan dances on her luscious lips.

I fight the urge to ravage them like a feral animal. I'm in control, and this is dominance play. I'm proving a point by fingering her pussy like it's my own personalized toy, tailored specifically for me.

"Feels good, hmm?"

Her eyes threaten to close, so I slide my fingers out, force them into her mouth, then growl when she bites me hard enough to make my cock jump in its denim confines.

I ram my fingers back inside her cunt and yank down her dress. Her full breasts spill free, bobbing in the dim glow from the gap in the door. It's

almost painful to look at her like this in the throes of pleasure.

Her breaths come in quick bursts that fan my collarbones, and her brown eyes peer up at me as if I'm her heavenly savior.

I am a lot of things.

A savior is not one of them.

I'm the reaper who's here to steal her soul and grab it from Daemon's clutches so I can play with her for a while before handing her back in pieces for him to feast on.

Her tight little pussy clamps down on my fingers, and I finally give in to the urge to suck her bottom lip between my teeth.

"Say it," I whisper. "Tell me you're a whore."

She pulls free from my grip on her throat and stares at the wall. The defiance in her gaze is catnip, designed to lure monsters out of the shadows. It's a beacon calling to something far darker than the Devil.

I slide my fingers out and slap her pussy. She still doesn't look at me, so I slap it again and again until her knees threaten to buckle. My hand disappears from beneath her skirt, and I crowd her against the shelf, then tuck her hair behind her ears. "I want to hear the words from your lips, little witch."

Her eyes flick to mine, sparkling with tears, and she bites out, "I'm a whore."

My smile spreads, flashing fangs. "Yeah, you are." Palming over her back, I pull her into me so that we're flush against each other. This way, I can feel her shaky breaths and the press of her luscious, naked tits.

I flip her hair away from her shoulder and let my fingers brush over her pulse point, where her heartbeat thunders in rhythm with mine. She's perfection.

The perfect weapon to destroy the people I love.

And that makes her dangerous.

And for reasons unbeknownst to me, my dick likes that a little bit too much.

"How does it feel?" she breathes. "To defy the heir to the throne. Your best friend."

I kiss her then. If for no other reason than to shut her up. That's what I tell myself when I grab her hips, lift her up against the shelf, and drag my fingers up the outside of her smooth thighs, over the curve of her ass, until

the skirt bunches around her slender waist. Her round ass molds perfectly in my hands as I grind my hard dick against her soaking cunt.

“You’re making a mess of my jeans,” I taunt, unbuttoning them one-handed and freeing my rock-hard length.

If I don’t take her now, I’ll die. I need to bury myself so deep inside her that I forget my own name.

“Alaric,” she moans as I grip the shelf behind her head. Her eyes lock with mine, and for one brief second, we breathe each other’s air. Then I impale her in one thrust, making her cry out, muffling the sound with my hand. The door isn’t locked, and the last thing we need is for someone to come in here.

I wouldn’t stop if they did.

I would fuck her and stake a claim in front of the intruder before chasing them down and cutting their throat for seeing her like this, with her eyes blown wide and her swollen tits bouncing wildly.

“Your soaking pussy is strangling my dick, little witch.”

Her intangible response vibrates against the palm of my hand, but I don’t let her speak. I don’t want her words. I want her pleasure. I want those big brown eyes to watch me fuck her like she’s my own fuck toy. And I want her to love every fucking second of it.

I lean back, grip her hip, and watch her pussy swallow my dick over and over before I pull out and slide the slick, veiny length over her swollen clit once... twice... Then I fill her up again and grit my teeth.

“You should see how greedy your cunt is, little witch. How much it loves my cock.” I bury myself to the hilt and groan deep in my chest.

She feels so fucking good.

I should stay away.

Not let her steal my sanity like this. I’m falling right into her trap, like a helpless fly awaiting the spider to devour it.

I push off the shelf, my cock leaving her tight heat. Guiding her down onto all fours, I drop to my knees and drag my fingers through her hair. “I wanna fuck that pretty mouth of yours while you stare up at me with that defiance.”

Palming my dick, I prod her lips. She tries to pull away, but I tighten my grip on her hair. My dick slides up her cheek before I try again, and this time, she reluctantly opens her mouth.

“Fuck, that’s it. Be a good girl now and choke on my cock.”

My knuckles turn white, buried in her hair as I thrust my hips, hitting that sweet spot at the back of her throat over and over. “Do you wish Ronan or Daemon was here to fuck that needy pussy while I take your mouth? Your holes are mine to play with. And once I’m done with your mouth, I’m gonna stuff your cunt full of my cum.”

My chest heaves as I fuck her mouth mercilessly, chasing whatever magic she possesses at the tip of her tongue. She’s a damn drug—the worst kind.

The kind that will see me crawling to her for more.

It doesn’t matter how much I degrade her; seeing her gag on my cock with her ass in the air only intensifies my need for her.

I don’t trust her. I even want to hate her.

But I can’t.

Three more punishing, deep thrusts before I pull out and maneuver her around as though she’s nothing more than a rag doll for me to play with.

I slap her right ass cheek and offer the same sweet treatment to her left. I’m not happy until they sport matching handprints.

Leaning down, I bite them too, branding her with my teeth marks. Then I trail a path of bites up her back before brushing her hair away from her shoulder and sinking my fangs into her neck.

Her blood seeps into my mouth, and I grip her hair fiercely as I slam my hips home.

“This. Damn. Pussy,” I grunt, releasing her neck.

Blood drips from my incisors while I whisper filth in her ear. I fuck her like an animal because that’s what she reduces me to.

I’m nothing more than a frenzied predator.

I fuck her until her panting breaths turn into pleading whimpers. My hand slides through the sweat on her bare back as I trace my fingers over each vertebra, then encircle the back of her neck. “Say my name.”

When she slams her lips shut, I dig my fingers in.

“Say my fucking name.”

“I’m nothing but a whore, so why would I say your name?” she grits out before another sharp moan rips from her supple lips.

“Don’t pretend you don’t love it.”

Her wings flutter but soon snap shut when I trace my thumb through her juices and circle the pad over her puckered hole.

She knows I’ll fuck her ass if she spreads them.

And now I want to claim that too.

“Say my name.” I inch my finger inside. “Moan it like a whore.”

She bites down on her lip but stays silent, so I shove my thumb all the way inside while wrenching her hair back.

I push farther up on my knees and ride her pussy as her ass grips my thumb. “Last chance. Say it, or I’ll make you regret it.”

“Fuck you!” she hisses, making my cock throb.

“Such a naughty girl,” I tut as I lean over her with my hand planted on the floor, my hips pumping savagely. “Guess what? I don’t let naughty brats come. You wanna come? Then you better moan my name like a seasoned whore.”

I grab her neck, forcing her face down on the cold floor, and proceed to pump her cunt full of my cum. The release goes on and on until I feel like she’s wrung me dry.

She stays on the floor in a ruined heap as I push up to my feet and tuck my dick away. I like seeing my cum drip from her pink pussy. I like it so much, in fact, it should worry me.

“I’ll leave you to finish yourself off.”

Rolling over onto her back, she makes no move to cover herself up. A sheen of sweat has her dark hair sticking to her forehead. Her tits are decorated with my marks, and the inside of her thighs are sticky with my seed. She looks like the most beautiful and tempting seductress, an apex predator who hunts angels.

Screw weak, mortal humans. The little witch feasts on angel hearts, and she’s holding mine in the palm of her hand. As I watch, she sinks her nails into it. “You’re only one of many boys here, Alaric. You’re nothing special. I don’t have to finish myself off when I can ask the first angel I see to help me out. Do you think they would, Alaric? Do you think they’d make me scream their name with their tongue and fingers?”

My lips spread into a humorless smile. I drop to my knees in front of her and spread her damp thighs. Her puffy slit glistens deliciously.

“Do you have a death wish, little witch?” I lean down and nuzzle her cunt, then suck her pussy lips between my teeth. “Or maybe just an insatiable blood thirst? Trust me”—I drag my tongue over her pussy, tasting myself on her—“I will slaughter anyone who sees you like this.”

“Even Daemon?”

I bite the inside of her thigh hard, eliciting a sharp shriek from her lips.
“I knew you wanted to come between us.”

Her back arches off the floor as I eat her out like it's my personal mission to bring her to her knees, like she brings me to mine.

“You've already made up your mind,” she breathes out, fisting my hair and bucking her hips. “I might just as well live up to your beliefs about me.”

I don't like her attitude, so I steal her breath with my hand around her throat and let my tongue do all the talking.

Who needs words when you can simply dominate a woman by bringing her to the brink of orgasm and then keep her suspended over the abyss until you're satisfied she's pliant and won't behave like a fucking brat?

I let her circle the bait until I know for a damn fact that she's a whore for the worm that dangles on the hook just out of reach.

Only then, when she's ready to sell her soul to the Devil, do I remove my hand from her throat and graze her clit with my teeth.

She falls.

Down.

Down.

And then she takes the bait.

“Alaric...”

CHAPTER
TWENTY-ONE

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AURELIA

A week has passed since Alaric fucked me in the janitor's closet, and the three of them still keep a close eye on me, following me everywhere. Even insisting I stay at their house.

They haven't tried to coax my darkness out to play again, but I sense the curiosity simmering beneath Daemon's skin.

Alaric, with his tousled hair and dark eyes, is watching me intently from across the table in the library, where we have chosen to study for the afternoon. They're working on some project relating to demonology while I'm studying fire magic.

I pretend I don't notice how he won't take his eyes off me as I turn another page. It's unnerving, to say the least.

Ever since he forced his name from my lips, it's as if he's obsessed, dragging me into closets after class to fuck my brains out when Daemon is otherwise occupied.

He still doesn't trust me, and he makes sure to remind me of that fact when I'm choking on his cock.

Ronan is still his usual clueless self. I catch him watching me with a tinge of curiosity in his gaze sometimes, but I think it's more related to Daemon's fascination with me than any real interest on his part.

I miss my connection with him.

I miss how he flirted so effortlessly in class and sat with me on the roof when I was homesick.

Dariana dislikes me. Even now, she's openly glaring, as if the fire in her eyes alone is enough to frighten me off. Does she not realize that if I tried to leave, Daemon would take it as an open invitation to chase me? He has decided he wants to keep me—just like last time—and there's nothing I can do to change it.

However, he hasn't fucked me again. He just keeps me like a trophy for him to play with when boredom strikes.

One he is unwilling to part with.

I close the book and scoot my chair back. "I'm gonna see if I can find something else on the topic."

Alaric narrows his eyes but says nothing. Daemon lifts his gaze and drawls, "Don't try to run. It's pointless."

With an eye roll, I collect the book and push the chair back in with my hip. "You've told me this countless times."

A muscle tics in his jaw. "And I will tell you countless more."

"I won't run."

"Good."

I hate how he makes my heart beat faster, even as I want to strangle him for being a possessive alphahole. But I say nothing, because the leash is longer now than it was a few days ago, when I wouldn't have been allowed to walk down the book aisles on my own.

Now that a week has passed without a stalker incident, we're all breathing a collective sigh. Well, they are. I'm still paranoid as hell, but I refuse to let it show.

I place the book back, then walk a few feet while perusing the spines. The library is one of my favorite places here in Hell. Eden didn't have them. We relied solely on the stories told by the elders. Not only do I love the information contained within their pages, but I also adore the smell of old books and the silence that reigns in here. It's a thick silence filled with wisdom and enchanted secrets I itch to unravel.

I start to pull out another book when my spine stiffens. Heat envelops my back, and a soft brush of fingers on my neck causes me to freeze.

"You seem to have abandoned me."

It's Amenadiel.

Breathing in a relieved sigh, I push the book back in before turning. "What are you doing here?"

He cages me in with his big body and pulls out an old book with a leather spine. His eyes scan the title as he replies in that casual tone of his. "I came to see my son."

"In the library?"

He looks at me while placing the book back in its place. "Maybe I also came to check up on you. The mansion has been quiet since you disappeared."

"I helped you out of my mind. I don't owe you anything else."

"You hurt my feelings." He brushes my hair off my forehead before tucking the strands behind my ear. "Who says you owe me anything? If I remember correctly, I made a promise and I intend to keep it."

“What are you doing, Amenadiel?” I ask when the pad of his thumb brushes over my lips.

Is it my imagination that the darkness in me responds to his touch? As he presses down on the swell of my lip, it stirs inside me.

“I’m simply saying hello. Haven’t you missed me at all? We shared some pleasant conversations.”

I start to speak—to say what, I don’t know—but the words die on my tongue when he cups my chin and leans down to press a kiss to the corner of my mouth.

“The monster in you is growing restless. I can sense it.”

I stiffen, and his grip tightens.

“You recently let someone feed on you.”

“It’s not your business,” I bite out, and he digs his fingers into my skin.

Strangely, I like it.

“It’s most certainly my business if you deprive the monster in you. It needs chaos... blood...”

“Let go of me!”

“Now, now,” he whispers as his wings unfold to shield us from prying eyes. “Let’s not be in a mood. Not when I finally have you to myself.”

Before I can tell him to fuck off, he drops to his knees and smooths his hands up my thighs. I’m so surprised by this turn of events that I’m frozen in place.

Amenadiel leans in and drags his nose over my skin, up and up, closer to my silk panties. His fingers grip the backs of my thighs as his teeth sink into my skirt. He pulls it up until his nose bumps up against my panties.

What the hell is happening?

More importantly, why am I letting it happen?

Why is my gaze misting over with red?

He breathes me in, tightening his hold on the backs of my thighs. “Exquisite.”

I make a choked sound that I can’t decipher when he reaches up and slides them aside to look at my pussy as if it’s the most beautiful artwork he’s ever seen.

The world is red.

My incisors throb.

“This little pussy deserves to be worshipped. Don’t you think, *Aurelia*?” His thumb drags over my slit, and my knees give way, but he

wraps his arm around the backs of my thighs as if he knew his touch would bring me to my knees. “Yes, it deserves to be fucked properly and thoroughly.” Turning his head, he bites the inside of my thigh.

I swear, I nearly come.

Whatever black magic this is, my body craves more. I’m unable to push him away and tell him to stop. I don’t even want to. Not when he looks up at me from between my legs and whispers, “I would love to feast on your pussy until you come all over my face, but time is running out. They’re suspicious.”

Amenadiel sets me to my feet, stands up, and grabs my chin. “You need to feed. Don’t neglect the monster in you, or you’ll regret what happens next.”

Then he’s gone.

My chest heaves as I blink.

What the hell just happened?

I pinch myself. It’s definitely not a dream. I’m awake, and the pain in my arm is a sharp sting.

Daemon, Ronan, Alaric, and Dariana step around the corner, looking murderous, as if they expected me to have fled the building.

When they spot me slumped against the shelves, they slow to a halt. Daemon is the first one to move again, approaching me with a suspicious glint in his eye.

He can tell something is up. He scents the air. “Why do I smell a male on you?”

My throat jumps, but Daemon is on me before I can deny it. He fists my hair and breathes into my neck. The long, drawn-out, and vicious growl reverberating in his chest as his wings erupt in an aggressive display of power is frightening.

He leans back, his sharp incisors digging into his bottom lip. “Who the fuck touched you?”

“No one touched me,” I blurt.

Daemon yanks my skirt up, slides his hand inside my panties, and rams a finger inside my soaking pussy.

“Is that why you’re drenched? Literature turns you on, does it?”

“Daemon?” I rise up onto my tiptoes as he finger-fucks me to within an inch of my life. I can’t catch my breath. He’s too intense.

Too much in all the ways that count and completely unapologetic. He doesn't care that his touch hurts. That's what he wants, in fact. And so do I.

"Don't lie to me, whore. You reek of another man. Did he touch your cunt?"

My head shakes, and he bares his teeth in a vicious snarl.

I can't see the others obscured by his big wings.

"I can smell him on your thighs and your fucking panties."

"I-I don't know what you're talking about."

He grabs my chin and shoves me back against the shelf while he continues his sweet, torturous assault on my body. Arousal soaks his hand and seeps down my thighs. "You bring out the monster in me, little witch. Do you like the power you wield?" He bares his teeth again. "I don't. I fucking hate it. I hate how you bring me to my fucking knees. The only one who should be on their knees is you, bowing to your future king. In fact"—he slides his hand out from beneath my skirt, puts it on my shoulder, and applies pressure—"you can worship my dick while you're down there."

I try to resist, but it's futile. Daemon is too strong, too angry, and hellbent on taking back power. My knees connect with the marble flooring. I glare up at him and fist my hands by my sides.

He's fucking wrong if he thinks I'll let him take his anger out on me like this. This is a dance we've done many times before. It's Daemon's aphrodisiac, if I remember correctly.

But I'm not playing a game for once. I want his love—all the ugly and beautiful shades of it—but not like this.

Not on my knees in the library with my wings tucked behind me like a good girl. If that's what he wants, then Daemon can pick any girl here that's not me.

He tries to reach for me, but I flare my wings and smack his hand away. All that gets me is a delicious slap to the cheek.

The kind of slap that tells me I get no say in the matter. He wants me to suck his dick, and therefore I *will* suck his dick, and my wishes don't equate in this situation.

I must be sick, because I love the relief I feel when he treats me like this. These desires, so dark and forbidden, are allowed to grow and flourish in his garden.

He slaps me again. This time, I hiss and try to crawl away, but he grabs my hair and drags me deeper down the aisle. My legs kick out on the

ground, and my skirt bunches around my waist.

Alaric, Ronan, and Dariana watch the scene unfold with matching smirks and flared wings to stop anyone who walks past this particular section of the library from seeing anything.

Daemon tosses me to the floor, plants his feet, and unbuckles his belt. “Cowering in the corner isn’t going to save you.”

He slides his zipper down and reaches inside his boxers to palm his hard length. “Come here.”

I shake my head and press farther into the corner when he stalks up to me and fists my hair. I’m pulled up on my knees, my neck arched at an awkward angle. He takes his veiny cock out and slaps the thick head over my mouth. “If you let other males have what’s mine, you leave me no choice but to punish you.”

My wings unfold and I shove him off, then take flight.

Gasps ring out in the library as I fly high above the bookshelves, my raven wings parting the air. “Don’t you fucking dare, Daemon.”

If anything, he looks thrilled by this turn of events. His enraptured eyes watch my big wings slice through the air with every sweep, but then he seems to catch himself, and darkness falls over his eyes. “Close your wings at fucking once!”

“Oh,” I laugh, “I remember, you don’t like other men seeing my wings unfolded. You think they’re sprouting hard-ons, Daemon? Imagining themselves fucking me from behind while I flare my wings for their twisted pleasure?”

“You shut your mouth!” His voice is a low growl, so low, in fact, that a shiver travels down my spine. Daemon is angry.

Very fucking angry.

Before he can hurl threats at me, I fly away, exiting the library. The hallways are too narrow for my wings, so I have no choice but to drop to the ground and take off running.

I run like the fucking wind.

But what’s more?

I’m laughing.

He’s on my tail, like an avenging angel. I can feel it, and the anticipation swirling in my belly is fucking delicious. I almost stop so that he can spank me for defying him.

I hope he spanks me so hard that I can’t sit for weeks.

I dart around the next corner and collide with the lockers. The pain in my shoulder barely registers.

“Aurelia?” Dmitriy calls out as I sprint past him.

I still don’t stop.

The chase is on, and this time, I’ll run until my legs give out.

I emerge through the academy’s front doors and take flight into the night. There’s no freedom like that of the wind in my wings. How I lived without it for so many years while locked away in Eden is a mystery. Now I never want to be deprived of it again.

When the academy is a safe distance away, I land on the soft moss in the forest. I’m safer here than I am in the sky, where they can easily spot me.

The trees whisper, and I let their softly spoken words soothe me for a moment before wading deeper into the night. I don’t have a destination in mind. I’m just happy to have enraged Daemon and beaten him at his own game.

The silent night is disturbed by the howl of a wolf in the distance. Several more follow it. It’s so hauntingly beautiful, I stop to listen.

A twig breaks behind me, and I whirl around, expecting to see Daemon. I’m met with brown eyes instead, framed with dark, wispy lashes, and long hair that shines beneath the streaks of moonlight.

Dariana’s heels sink into the soft moss as she stalks me. “You think Daemon is the only one who can hunt? All I had to do was follow the stench of betrayal, and it led me straight to you.”

I stand my ground, refusing to cower. “The stench of this and the stench of that. It’s getting old, Dari.”

She cocks her head, her eyes narrowing. “Only my friends call me ‘Dari.’”

“Well,” I breathe out, “in a different time, we were more than friends.”

“See, that’s where you’re wrong. I know you’re lying because I would never look twice at someone like you. You’re plain, little witch. Plain and boring.”

“Yeah?” I sneer, meeting her halfway. “Is that why Daemon is obsessed with me? Why Alaric fucks me between classes, playing my scent off as a random fuck?”

“You think Daemon doesn’t know? You and Alaric are both naive and clueless. Of course, he knows Alaric plays with you like a cat plays with a

mouse. He reeks of you.”

I’m taken aback, and she hones in on my reaction with a smug glint in her eye. “As soon as Alaric figured out that Daemon doesn’t care, he took full advantage and used you as his own toy.”

“Daemon does care.”

“Does he now?” she taunts, crowding me against a tree. The rough bark digs into my bare shoulders as she slides her fingers beneath the strap of my dress and snaps it.

“I know he does.”

Dariana hums, sliding the torn fabric down to reveal my naked breast. “Maybe you’re right, but I wouldn’t be so sure.” She tweaks my nipple before palming my breast while I stare at her face.

Tears bead on my lashes as I whisper, “You’re cruel.”

She pinches my nipple hard, then flicks her gaze up to me. “And you’re a threat.”

I don’t reply.

There’s no point in arguing when she has already come to a conclusion about me. They all have in their own unique ways.

“I have to admit,” she whispers, brushing her thumb over the hardened bud, “you have pretty tits.”

“Why are you doing this?”

“Maybe I’m curious.”

Deja vu hits me again.

“Curious?”

She slides down my other strap, her fingers dragging over my breast, before she palms the weight. “I don’t know why.” The tone in her voice is almost mystified as she kneads them. When I gasp, she stops and looks up. “Scrap that. I do know why. Despite your raven feathers, you have a refreshing innocence about you. It’s either genuine or well-crafted to fool the heir to the throne. I’m yet to figure out which.”

Movement behind her steals my attention, and I let out a shriek as my eyes lock on the hooded figure between the trees.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-TWO

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DARIANA

I spin around and catch sight of a robed figure escaping through the trees. “What the hell?”

My thoughts are soon distracted by the trembling angel behind me, with her ruined dress clutched to her chest. The fear on her face is undeniable, yet it could be another trick.

But no, she looks genuinely terrified. No one is that good of an actress, right?

I frown. “How did the stalker know you were here?”

Instead of answering, she shoulders past me.

“Hey.” I chase after her and pull her to a stop, if for no other reason than to stop her from walking alone in the woods. It’s not the brightest idea she’s had when there’s a crazy person on the loose with an unhealthy obsession with her. “He’s still out there.”

“I can’t do this anymore,” she replies in a defeated tone. She tries to walk past me again, but I step in front of her.

“I’m not letting you walk back alone.”

She looks at me then. Really looks at me. “Why are you doing this, Dari? Why are you here?”

“You have a fucking stalker.”

She snorts humorlessly and tries to step past me.

“Will you stop running away?”

“No,” she growls, turning back. “I am so fed up with this. I have tried everything to make you and the others notice me and look at me the same way again, but it’ll never happen. It hurts, okay? It hurts to love someone so much and be met by a closed door at every turn. A door that used to be wide open. I get that things will never be the same because this version of you met me under different circumstances. I get that... All the memories I have... all the... it never existed. And now this?” She gestures to the clearing in the trees where the stalker watched us. “I can’t let anyone get hurt because of me.”

“What are you saying?”

“I’m saying that I’ll step back. I’m done trying.”

Something inside me smarts. “You think Daemon will ever let you go?”

She throws her arms out. "He'll grow bored. I'm a novelty."

"What about Alaric? He has worn your scent like an expensive cologne all week."

"I'm a toy to him. Nothing else."

"If you think that"—I kill the distance between us—"then you're just as naive as I thought."

She slaps me, and strangely, it makes me smile.

"There's fire in you, after all."

When she remains glaring, I shrug. "Has it ever occurred to you that maybe you're too blinded by your memories of us to see the truth in front of you?"

"The truth?"

"You have this vision—this idea—of what love looks like. Or rather, what Daemon's love looks like. *Alaric's*. You said it yourself; we met under different circumstances. Why would the emotions express themselves the same? From what I see, you're quickly wrapping Daemon and Alaric around your little finger. Daemon is out there hunting you like a rabbit. The poor fucker is probably frothing at the mouth at the thought of what he'll do to you when he captures you."

"I need to go."

She starts to walk off again, so I throw my head back and blow out a frustrated breath. This bitch is so fucking stubborn.

"I'm still not letting you walk back alone."

"Why do you care?" she asks when I catch up.

I duck beneath a branch. "Maybe I don't. If you've known us before, you'll also know that Daemon won't hesitate to kill me if I let something happen to you out here."

She snorts a laugh. "He won't. He's hot-headed, abrupt, and impulsive, but he's loyal to his friends. If you're ever in danger, he'll protect you with his life."

I slow to a halt, and she stops, too. It's dark out here. The moon filters through the canopy of leaves overhead, allowing me enough light to see the shimmer of tears on her wispy lashes.

"How did we happen?"

She frowns, and I rush out, "In the other reality?"

As she tucks her hair behind her ear, a small smile lifts her lips. "I was an innocent angel with no previous sexual experience. Daemon had an

obsession with me, which made you curious to find out what it was about me that had caught his attention.”

“Did I find it?”

A soft nod. “I think so. If nothing else, you enjoyed asserting dominance over me. It was a game you and Daemon played.”

Now I’m smiling, too. “That sounds like me.”

She chews on her lip, seemingly uncertain. “We should go before the robed man returns.”

“Yeah,” I agree.

Neither of us moves.

But then her wings erupt, dwarfing mine in size and power, and she shoots up into the air.

I watch her circle the trees, silhouetted by the ethereal moonlight. There’s a grace about her, the way her wings part the air. Despite the raven feathers and the darkness bleeding from her soul, her existence is a conundrum. She’s void of the holy light, yet it’s there... somehow.

Blanketing the darkness and smoothing out its rough edges.

I take flight too, soaring through the branches and erupting into the night with the intensity of a resurrected phoenix.

The little witch is in front of me, close enough to touch if I reach out my hand. We study each other with equal wariness. Her, because she claims to be in love with me. And me, because it scares me how drawn I feel to her despite my own reservations.

Unlike what she claims, it has little to do with Daemon’s newfound obsession. I don’t think any one of us understands why we’re so affected. Why her? Why like this?

When she reaches out, I hold my breath. Anticipation swirls in my belly. I’ll soon feel the brush of soft fingers on my skin. My lips tingle and goosebumps erupt on my bare arms, but her touch never comes. Instead, it retreats, and she sets off in the direction of Daemon’s house.

It’s still dark when we arrive at the property. None of the others are back yet.

The little witch walks up the stone steps, but I move in front of her before she can open the door. I place my hand on the handle. “I should check if it’s safe first. Your stalker knows you’ve been staying here.”

Her lips twitch with a smile. “You think you can handle an armed stalker better than me?”

“I know so,” I tell her, opening the door.

As we walk inside, the sconces flicker to life, casting dancing shadows on the walls. The likelihood of her stalker being here is slim, but my heart still thuds heavily, and a chill crawls down my neck.

While I poke my head into the dark living room, she makes a beeline for the stairs.

“It’s clear down here.” I follow after her, eyeing up her butt and long legs in that short dress as she ascends the steps.

“The stalker isn’t here. It wouldn’t make any sense to fly straight here.”

“You sound so sure.”

“And you sound suspicious. Are you going to read into everything I say?”

“Probably,” I admit as we reach the top of the stairs.

She heads down the hallway to the spare bedroom and enters without looking back at me. I follow in after, scanning the room for danger.

“There’s no one in here,” she says when I kneel to look beneath the bed. “If there were a psycho killer hiding, he’d have stabbed your eye out by now.”

With a snort, I climb back to my feet. I make my way to the wardrobe and throw the doors open. A rail of black dresses greets me. I part them, sliding each one aside. “You underestimate me, little witch.”

As I turn around, I find her watching me with a quirked brow and twitching lips. I do a double take. “What?”

“Nothing.” She sits down on the bed with her back to me and her hands in her lap.

Silence falls on the room, and I hesitate for a moment. I’m not good with situations such as these. I’m suspicious of her, and yet... she seems so lost.

I slowly round the bed and come to stand in front of her. Tears bead on her lashes, but they don’t fall. She looks tired, defeated, and broken. “What are you thinking about?”

Her glassy brown eyes flick up, and she looks at me until each hard thud of my heart beats against my ribs with a ferocity that leaves me breathless and unable to look away.

“I’m thinking I would like to stop hurting for a moment.” Her words are accompanied by the brush of her fingers on the inside of my thigh. “I’d like to lose myself.”

“Lose yourself?”

Higher and higher, her soft touch travels.

“Yes.”

I grip her wrist just as she’s about to touch my lace panties, but she wrenches free and smooths her fingers over the fabric, teasing my most sensitive part. I inhale a breath, and my knees buckle as pleasure tightens my stomach.

Snaking her other hand around my waist, she pulls me down on her lap so I’m straddling her. She moves my panties aside and slides her fingers over my pussy, breathing out in my ear, “So smooth.”

Pleasure sparks between my legs—hot, tingling bursts.

“And you’re getting so wet,” she whispers, teasing my clit before gliding her fingers to my soaking entrance and easing them inside.

“Is this how it used to be between us?” I ask when she slides them back out—wet and slick—and shoves them back inside.

“No.” Her mouth finds mine, and she bites down on my lip. “You seduced me... but I can get used to this.” She takes me again and again, and it’s not long before I roll my hips to meet her savage thrusts.

“You’re not playing fair,” I pant, throwing my head back as she hits a magical spot inside me.

I’ll fall apart on her hand in record time if she keeps fucking me like this. I don’t even know why I’m this pent-up. It’s not the first time I’ve been with a girl.

“This is Hell. We don’t play fair here, remember? You once told me a very long time ago to put myself first for once. That’s what I’m doing now.” She enunciates it with a deep thrust. “I’m fucking my favorite pussy and making it drip all over my hand.”

My wings explode behind me as my teeth elongate. “Your *favorite* pussy?”

Her smile turns wolfish, and she slides her fingers out from beneath my skirt, sucks them clean, then rams them back inside me. “My favorite pussy.”

I’m overtaken by anger, possessiveness, and the urge to dominate. I wrestle her to the bed, but she doesn’t go down easily. We’re a snarling, snapping, and growling tangle of limbs and wings on the bed.

“The only pussy you want is mine.” I tear her dress off her body like a feral beast. Hell knows I am one right now.

She plants her foot on my stomach and kicks me off before launching herself at me and straddling my waist. “You haven’t wanted me since I arrived back, so don’t let that ego of yours blind you. There’s plenty of willing pussy at this academy. If you push me away, I won’t go thirsty.” She tears my dress down the middle, but before she can rip it all the way, I roll us over and sink my teeth into her breast.

And like a good little girl, she grows still immediately, knowing full well I could injure her if she fights while my teeth are buried in her delicate skin.

As her coppery blood explodes in my mouth, I snap her panties and cup her wet pussy. When I look up at her through a mist of lust and bared teeth that drip blood, she lifts her hips off the mattress to chase my touch. “If I find out you’ve let another female angel touch this cunt, I’ll hunt them down.”

Reaching out, she prods my sharp incisor with her thumb, causing the growl in my throat to intensify. “Down, girl.”

My wings flare behind me. I sink my teeth into the inside of her thigh while stretching her tight pussy with three fingers.

She’s so fucking warm and delicious, and it feels damn good to have the upper hand, to see her fall apart at my touch.

I don’t like to lose control, and she makes me do it so effortlessly. She breaks through my walls as if they were never there.

I retract my teeth from her thigh and turn my head to feast on her drenched pussy. A satisfied rumble ripples in the air, and I spread her thighs wider as I recognize my voice. I enjoy every second of confiscating her control as if it were my weapon. My shield to deflect her attempts at luring me closer to the point of no return.

Who am I trying to fool? I’m knuckle deep in her pussy, my face slick with her arousal while her moans bounce off the walls like my tailor-made song. One taste will never be enough.

It makes sense now why Alaric has behaved like a caveman for the last week and why Daemon is obsessed.

I flip her over onto her stomach, raise her hips in the air, and sit back on my haunches. Her pretty, pink pussy is on display, glistening with the need to be touched and fucked. “Do you know how sexy you look like this with your ass in the air?”

Instead of moaning in response, she replies in earnest by snarling. The sound is so savage that I can't help but lean in to steal a taste. I drag my tongue from her clit, over her weeping entrance, all the way to her anus.

The way she shivers and pushes back against me is addictive, like a coded message to decipher and analyze.

"So eager," I chuckle, then do it again.

She snatches up a pillow and bites into it to muffle her needy, fierce sounds.

My fingers dig into her olive skin as I spread her apart to see more of her delicious cunt. The way it drips with arousal, greedy for my tongue or fingers.

Movement to my left draws my attention away from her, and my lips kick up into a smile when I spot Daemon, wearing black jeans and a T-shirt, leaning against the doorframe. The little witch is too lost in her own pornographic world to notice his dark, looming presence. "It looks like I'm a better hunter than you."

The angel's head rears up at the same time Daemon smirks and pushes off the doorframe, stalking closer with the grace of a lithe predator. His hungry eyes feast on her naked skin, and a deep, masculine rumble vibrates in his chest.

"No, I knew where she was all along because, unlike you, I like it when my prey believes they can escape my clutches. It's more fun that way."

"Your sadistic side never ceases to amuse me." I test the waters by leaning in to swallow down more of the little angel's bewitching cunt. It seems Daemon is in the mood to share, after all, because he stays watching with his hands buried deep in his pockets while I tongue fuck the object of his newfound obsession.

"She ready?" he asks, stalking closer.

"She's soaking my face."

"Good, because I'm gonna fuck her cunt until she cries." He climbs onto the bed, forcing me back, and begins to unbuckle his belt one-handed while testing her readiness by sliding two fingers over her soaking folds. When he's satisfied that she's primed, he fills her up with his digits and shoves his other hand inside his jeans to stroke his hard length. The muscles in his arm move as his teeth sink into the swell of his bottom lip. "Want us both, little witch?"

She makes an indistinguishable sound and wiggles her ass, which can only mean one thing.

“Tell us your name,” Daemon orders, his fingers thrusting deep.

A shake of her head.

More ass wiggling.

Daemon slides his fingers out and slaps her cunt. “Tell. Us. Your. Name.”

If stubborn had a name, it would be tightly sealed behind her lips, because she stays silent. Daemon doesn’t like that, or maybe he likes it a little too much.

Maybe he hates that he likes it.

“Dari, position yourself in front of our angel. Now.”

“Bossy boots,” I mutter as I crawl up the bed.

“Turn around and grip the headboard.”

I do as instructed, not bothering to argue when Daemon is in this mood. He’s okay sharing as long as it’s on his terms. The need to dominate and be in control is a part of his nature as the heir to the throne.

The wood is cool to the touch beneath my hands as I look over my shoulder. Daemon grips the little witch by the hair and wrenches her back, then says to me, “Lift your skirt, Dari. Show her what she’s missing out on.”

I curl my fingers around the hem and slide my skirt to my waist. The cool air licks at my bare pussy while I wait with no small dose of anticipation.

“See that, little angel? You can lick it and touch it and fuck it if you give me what I want.”

I grip the headboard as if it’s the only thing holding me upright, when all I want is to growl at Daemon for playing power games while my pussy pulsates with need. We don’t all share his endless patience where sexual domination is concerned.

“If you don’t give me what I want, I’ll feast on her myself. I’ll eat that needy little pussy until my name slips from her parted lips in a stream of breathless prayers. She won’t even remember you’re here—imprisoned by your own fucking stubbornness. I’ll fill her up with my cock until she thinks she can’t handle it anymore, and then I’ll fuck her while you watch. Is that what you want, little angel? To watch someone else ruin that tight cunt?”

When she snarls this time, feral and vicious, shivers trickle down my spine.

“There she is,” Daemon whispers darkly. “Welcome to the party, my little monster. We’re only just getting started.”

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-THREE

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AURELIA

I shoot up, teeth bared, wings flared, and launch myself at him, determined to hurt him for threatening to touch my girl.

That's what she is—*my girl*—and the monster in me, the darkness seeping out from the shadows at the threat of violence, wants to destroy him for encroaching on my territory. It also craves to feast on him, or more accurately, his heart, because it recognizes Daemon is mine, too.

Even if he's a threat.

I'm not in control of my darkness. It has a will of its own and wants to seek and destroy.

Create as much carnage as possible.

I shove Daemon back with such force that he flies off the bed and collides with the wall, causing a framed picture to fall to the floor with a loud crash. His masculine laughter echoes in the ensuing silence. It's not fake, it's real, and the raw, gravelly sound draws my angel to the surface, but she's soon drowned out by the darkness when he spreads his wings and stalks toward me.

"You're surprisingly strong for such a petite little angel."

My wings brush up against the walls, dangerously close to the burning sconces, but that's the least of my concerns when he grabs me by my throat and shoves me down on the bed with such force that I gasp.

Dari shifts in my periphery as Daemon pushes down the front of his jeans.

"You like to fight me, don't you, little slut? But do you know what you like even more?"

My lips twitch as I snarl in response.

"You like it when I catch you and overpower you."

As if to prove a point, he slaps my pussy hard before ordering Dari to sit on my face.

"Show her what happens when she's a temperamental bitch who thinks she can fight me."

He releases my throat as Dari straddles my face and lowers herself down.

If they consider it a punishment to be smothered by Dari's wet pussy, then I'll gladly fight Daemon for sport. If anything, this feels like a reward for negative behavior.

Dariana rubs her clit over my lips, and I suck it into my mouth, gripping her slim hips.

"Look at me, Dari. Eyes on me while she eats you out."

My nails dig into her hips. I don't like her attention on someone else, but my possessive thoughts scatter on the wind when Daemon fingers my pussy. The way he stretches me and plays with me is so dominant that it leaves no room to question who is in charge. My body belongs to Daemon. A tool for him to use for his own erotic pleasure.

He slides his glistening fingers back out and drags them farther down until they press against my puckered hole. I stiffen in response, my breath catching in my lungs.

His touch disappears, and he pulls me closer on the bed and angles my ass up by spreading my thighs with his hands on the backs of my knees and bending me in half. To Dari, he says, "Keep her ankles on your shoulders."

Dariana shifts, and then her pussy is back over my mouth and my ankles are held firmly by her small hands.

"Have you ever seen such a pretty cunt, Dari?" Circling my soaking entrance, he swipes more of my arousal, then smears it over my ass, using it as lube before gathering more to use on his dick.

"And these tits?" Dariana pinches a nipple, causing her clit to slip from my lips as I moan.

Daemon palms the other one while pressing the big head of his cock into my tight exit. I stiffen when it starts to burn. He twists my nipple, then slaps my tit. "Don't push me out."

It's so intense. *They're* so intense.

After what feels like an eternity, the head pops inside, and Daemon rewards me by pinching my clit while Dari rolls her hips. "Such a good girl, aren't you, little angel."

A pained whimper escapes me when he presses forward, filling me up to the brim. I can't do this. I can't take it. He's too big and my ass is too small.

Too tight.

He doesn't care. With one hard thrust, he rams his cock inside me and grunts deep in his throat while grinding his hips against my ass cheeks.

“You can take me, little angel. Look how fucking well you’re doing, with your ass stuffed with my cock.”

While I whimper, he slowly inches back out until the thick head of his cock bumps up against my puckered hole, then he slides his fingers inside my pussy before shoving his cock back into me. “So fucking beautiful.”

I rock on the bed, and the friction draws a moan from Dariana’s parted lips. A drawn-out sound of pleasure, tinged with a raw need that speaks to the monster inside me. I soak it up, reveling in her desire and Daemon’s twisted power games.

“Your ass is so fucking tight,” he growls as he picks up his pace, his cock ramming into me again and again until the burning pain transforms into something mind-blowing.

His thick fingers inside my pussy curl to hit that magical spot that drives me fucking insane.

I lick and nibble on Dariana’s dripping cunt while my body rocks on the mattress with such force, the bed creaks, threatening to break.

A sharp pinch on my ankle has me pausing as Dariana sinks her teeth into the tender skin. Her teeth retract, and then she bites me again, littering me with marks.

Daemon’s big hand comes down on a breast in a hard slap, and the loud thwack bounces off the windows and sends tingles straight to my clit.

Loud chuckles ring out in the room, and I stiffen when Daemon says, “Where the fuck have you been? You’re late to the party. We’re defiling an angel for sport.”

“Looks like a good time,” Ronan drawls from somewhere nearby.

“I’m gonna fill her ass with my cum, and then you can fuck her pussy.”

A chair scrapes on the floor somewhere, followed by a second. I’m mortified to think they’re watching this like it’s a live show for their entertainment, but at the same time, it also arouses me.

If anything, it makes my pussy drip even more.

Dariana is close; I can tell by the way her hips jerk. I grip her tighter and renew my efforts to make her come on my face. She’s not the only one chasing her orgasm. I am, too. I want to taste it on my tongue and drink up every drop of her cum until she never looks at me the same.

I want to be her newfound obsession, like Daemon’s and Alaric’s.

“Oh, fuck,” she whimpers, and her grip on my ankles turns painful as she grinds down one last time.

Holding her to me, I feast on her pussy, her orgasm. I lick and lick and lick. I own her release, claiming my reward.

She's still seated on my face, shivering and trembling, when Daemon rams his cock inside my ass and fills me up with his cum. His deep groan twists around my heart and squeezes it. He slides out and finishes off on my cunt and belly, coating me in his seed.

Dariana climbs off, and Daemon's brown eyes, that shimmer with masculine satisfaction and something far darker, find mine before he climbs off. "She's all yours."

My eyes widen as the bed shifts, and then Alaric is between my legs, fully dressed, with his cock clasped in his fist. He runs the thick head over my clit and smears Daemon's cum all over my swollen, tender folds. "You ready for more, little angel?"

The bed shifts again, and Ronan smirks down at me while stroking his thick length. "Drop the innocent angel act and open that pretty little mouth like a good girl."

I gasp as Alaric grabs me by my throat and fills me with his thick girth. The stretch of his cock, and the sight of Ronan hovering over me, like an avenging angel who's here to dole out pain and pleasure in equal measure, has me wriggling on the bed like a willing whore.

Where these angels are concerned, I am one.

I open my mouth wide, then wince when he fists my hair and yanks my head off the mattress. It's difficult to suck him at this angle, but he gives me no time to overthink it as he slides his big cock in and out of my mouth at a maddening rhythm.

"Flatten your tongue." His cock hits the back of my throat again and again, causing tears to trail down my cheeks.

Alaric grunts, fucking me so hard into the mattress that my breasts bounce. The scent of cigarette smoke tells me Daemon is still in the room, watching them take me like I'm their gifted fuck toy. I shouldn't like that so much, but I do.

Then they switch positions. Ronan pulls out of my mouth, sits down, and spreads me over his lap.

While I sink down on his veiny length, Alaric kneels beside me and brushes my hair off my face. His slick cock, which tastes of me, pushes up against my lips. I stare at him as he slides it all the way to the back of my mouth, triggering my gag reflex.

Alaric slides his fingers into my hair, fists it in a tight grip, and thrusts his cock down my throat, keeping me frozen. “Relax for me, baby. That’s it. You’re doing so well, taking our cocks just how we like it.”

He loosens his grip on my hair as Ronan guides me over his dick with his hands on my hips. I’m not the most coordinated person in the world, so it takes me a little while to get into a good rhythm.

My hips roll, and I bounce, sucking on Alaric’s delicious cock like I can’t get enough.

The truth is, I can’t.

I finally have them all to myself in the same room, stealing parts of them right from under their noses.

Who’s the hunter now?

I’m collecting my price and reveling in my win.

“Your mouth feels so fucking good,” Alaric praises, thrusting wildly. “I fucking love your pretty lips wrapped around my cock.”

Ronan grunts affirmatively, sucking on my nipples and digging his fingers into my hips. I’ll bruise from his punishing touch.

I blink through my tears and gaze up at Alaric, with his lip trapped between his teeth, as I hover right on the edge of too much and not enough. Saliva trickles down my chin and smears my cheeks. I still want more.

More depravity.

More degradation.

As if they can hear my thoughts, Ronan shifts me off his lap and kneels beside Alaric. He palms the back of my head and slides his cock into my mouth. The tangy taste of my arousal explodes on my tongue, and I moan.

His cock disappears, and then Alaric slides his dick down my throat. They take turns to fuck my mouth, one thrust... two... switch. I’m soaking the sheets, so close to coming from sucking their dicks alone. How is that even possible?

“Such a good little whore. You like our cocks, little angel? You like servicing our needs?”

Before I can respond, Daemon appears beside the bed—wearing a towel, freshly showered—and fists my hair. He wrenches my head back and stares down at my tear and saliva-smeared face. Then he lets go and continues smoking his cigarette, as if satisfied.

I only look away when Alaric slaps his dick over my cheek and orders me to open my mouth.

I do, so very fucking willingly, while grinding my clit on the mattress and making a mess of the sheets.

On and on it goes until I'm starting to doubt they'll ever come.

But then they do, and it's everything I have ever desired. Strings of white cum shower over my face like rain in a hot desert. I tweak my aching nipples and rub my clit harder on the sheets while they continue painting me with their releases.

I come. I'm so pent up that my pussy gushes, soaking the sheets. It's the first time I've squirted, and under different circumstances, I would have been embarrassed, but that's the last thing on my mind when I open my eyes to look at the wardens of my imprisoned heart.

"You think you're done, little whore?"

My attention directs to the left, where Daemon drops the towel to reveal a very hard, veiny cock.

"You still haven't revealed your name, and we'll keep fucking you until you use that sweet voice of yours."

The bed shifts behind me, and then Dariana sweeps my hair off my shoulder and whispers in my ear, "Word of advice, just tell him, or they'll tear you to pieces until there's nothing left of you to put back together."

Daemon stalks closer, eyeing my ruined face with savage intensity and my naked body that bears their markings. "What's it gonna be, sweet thing? Are you ready to talk, or is your appetite for the depraved still not satisfied?"

My reply takes on the shape of penetrating silence. It twists his lips into a cruel smile that raises the hairs on my arms.

He fists his thick cock and lifts his chin in a silent command to crawl closer and worship him on my knees.

I chew on my lip for a brief moment, watching him pleasure himself. In the end, my fate is sealed by the veins in his big hands and arms. I crawl forward on my hands and knees, staring up at him while he slides my hair away from my brow in a deceptively gentle touch.

There's nothing gentle about him.

When he fists the hair at the back of my head in a tight enough grip to make me wince, my nipples pucker, and my pussy rejoices as it tingles with renewed need.

The red mist darkening my vision is met by his sinful smirk. "You coming out to play again, little monster?"

I snarl, and he grips me harder, tearing out strands of my hair.

“Don’t be a bitch.”

My lips peel back, revealing sharp fangs that glint in the firelight from the sconces.

“What did I just say?” The tone in his voice is malicious, promising pain if I don’t behave.

I still don’t back down. The monster inside me—the darkness that hungers for pain and chaos, won’t let me. It rises to the challenge in his eyes and reflects it back tenfold.

When he smiles this time, it’s with no small amount of satisfaction. “Dari, hold her down. It’s time to teach her a lesson.”

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DAEMON

Later that evening, after *Aurelia*—yes, we made her sing in the end—passes out in bed, we gather in the living room. I’m slouched on the couch with a beer bottle in my hand. It’s not often I’m this content. Victory tastes good on my tongue.

While the flames grow taller in the fireplace, Dari watches me closely. Despite fucking Aurelia—hell, I love her name—to within an inch of her life, Dari is still suspicious.

I’m too satiated to pay attention to her probing gaze. She wants me to look at her and give her the opening she needs to speak her mind. I don’t. I keep drinking my beer while listening to the faint crackle from the roaring flames.

Ronan is half asleep beside her on the couch, and the cigarette pinched between his finger is almost down to the filter.

Just when I think she’ll drop whatever ideas taking up unnecessary headspace, she speaks. “I know you’re too obsessed with her to question her motives, but we still need to be careful, Daemon. *You* need to be careful.”

“And you, Dari, need to relax,” Alaric says, face down on the floor, his face cushioned by his arms.

“I think she ruined us,” Ronan murmurs as he brings the cigarette to his lips, realizing it’s nearly singeing his fingers. He puts it out in the ashtray on the coffee table, then rubs a hand over his face. “I don’t think I’ll ever recover.”

“You and me both,” I chuckle.

“Hello!” Dariana drags the word out, looking between the three of us. “This could be part of her plan.”

“Just fucking relax,” Alaric growls. “You look at her like she hung the moon, too.”

“As if,” she says with a snort, then levels me with a look. “We should set a trap.”

I frown. “Why?”

“Well, why not use her as bait? If Amenadiel is, in fact, using her against us, we can use her in return. Not to mention her stalker. He was

there tonight.”

I grow still, then sit forward in my seat. “What did you say?”

“Her stalker... When I found her, he was there in the woods.”

“Why the fuck didn’t you say something earlier?”

She levels me with an unimpressed glare. “I was sidetracked, remember?”

I huff a breath, and she continues. “Let’s set a trap. We can kill two birds with one stone if we plan it right.”

“Not fucking happening.” The tone in my voice leaves no room to argue, but she does, nevertheless.

“I’m trying to protect you, Daemon. You’re a powerful man with a lot of enemies. Don’t you get it? You’re too blinded by this girl to take precautions. You think the sun shines out of her pussy.”

“Careful,” I growl, and she throws her hands up placatingly.

“Okay, sorry. All I’m asking is that you put your safety first.”

“I’m not fucking risking hers for whatever paranoid shit is going through your head. So stop.”

She sits back, crosses her arms, and glares off to the side, like a petulant child. Her attention returns to me, and she unfolds her arms and takes a few steadying breaths to calm her emotions, then stands up. “What if you get hurt, Daemon? Then what?” She rounds the coffee table. “You’re the heir to the throne. Do you think your father would let you risk your safety like this?”

“Is that a threat?” I ask darkly while Ronan and Alaric shift uncomfortably.

Her jaw clenches, and it’s the only response she gives me. When I rise to my feet and stalk toward her, she visibly shrinks back.

“You think I will put up with your threats? That I won’t punish you because you’re my friend?”

She hardens her gaze. “I’m only trying to keep you safe.”

“I don’t need your protection.”

We stare at each other for a beat longer before she shoulders past me and makes for the door.

“You think the sun shines out of her pussy too, so drop the high and mighty act,” I call after her.

She whirls around at the doorway. “At least I’m not so obsessed, I won’t see the knife coming before it’s embedded in my back.” Then she’s gone in

a flurry of flowery perfume and stinking attitude.

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-FOUR

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AURELIA

“D aemon?” I breathe out sleepily as his warm lips travel up the inside of my thigh. The quilt rustles, and then his mouth hovers over my pussy, his breath tickling my still-sensitive slit.

“Daemon...” My voice sounds sleepy even to my own ears. “Stop teasing me.”

His fingers dig into my thighs as he spreads me open for him before breathing me in as though I’m the finest aroma. A masculine grunt vibrates in his chest, and he slides his hands from my thighs to my hips. Gripping me tight, he pulls me closer to his mouth.

I cry out and my toes curl as my back arches off the bed. “Fuck...”

His tongue licks, his teeth graze and nibble, and his hot breath fans my folds as he eats me out with abandon until bursts of pleasure spark behind my closed eyelids. I wring the crumpled sheet, my heels sliding on the mattress.

“Oh, God,” I choke, jerking. “I can’t... fuck...”

The pleasure he evokes in my body is frightening in nature, like a deadly storm I have no control over. It tears through my sanity, leaving destruction in its wake—shattered, fragmented pieces that scatter when he blows on my clit before sucking it back between his lips. Then he flips me over with surprising strength, covers me with his body, and rams his hard cock inside of me. His hand slides up to wrap around my slender throat from behind as he fucks me into the mattress without a break to let me adjust to his thick girth. It burns so fucking deliciously, that I whimper into the pillows. His shadow looms over me in the dark room, his cock plowing through me with punishing lethality. He pounds and pounds, thrusting against my ass cheeks, his balls slapping my clit.

All I can do is take his brutality like a good girl.

Removing his hand from my throat, he slams his palm over my mouth to muffle my moans. The more I whimper, the harder he fucks me, spurred on by the wet sounds elicited from my pussy. I sound like a needy whore.

His needy whore.

Heat pools low in my belly, curling and tingling. I’m about to come. My spasming cunt clamps down on his cock as if it wants to imprison him and

never fucking let him go. Fuck, if he makes me feel like this all the time, I never want him to stop.

He pinches my nose, effectively cutting off my airflow, and then as he slides his hand beneath me to rub my clit, I come. The orgasm tears through me like a crash wave, my lungs burning with the need to inhale a breath.

Three more thrusts, then he stills, whispering in my ear while my cunt continues milking his cock. "Such a filthy little whore. I bet Daemon never fucked you this good."

I freeze.

Everything fucking stops.

Amenadiel's cock still pumps me full of cum, jerking inside me. I can feel every twitch even more acutely now that my nostrils fill with his spicy scent when he releases my nose.

This time when my muffled whimper sounds beneath his big palm on my mouth, it's one of fear and shame.

I let him fuck me, thinking it was Daemon.

Amenadiel makes no move to slide out from me, and I make no move to shift him off me. He's too heavy, holding me immobile with his weight.

"It's okay to admit that you enjoyed every second. Your pussy doesn't lie, and I don't judge." His cruel chuckle sends shivers down my back. "I've never felt a pussy squeeze me that hard."

Tears prick the backs of my eyes.

Shame clogs my throat and steals my voice unlike anything I've experienced. I wait, silent and barely breathing, until he shifts off me to tuck his softening dick away. Only then do I scramble back and clutch the quilt to my naked chest while his sticky cum seeps from my pussy.

I've never felt this dirty before.

Used...

Reaching forward, Amenadiel cups my chin and drags his thumb over my lips non-too gently. "Next time, I'll fuck this pretty mouth."

I wrench free, about to hurl abuse at him, when my eyes snag on the door behind him. It hovers midair, wide-open, oozing darkness, like pus from an infected wound. Unlike the last door I entered, what waits for me on the other side of this one is a black void. As deep and frightening as an uncharted oceanic trench.

Amenadiel's fingers dig into my chin, stealing my attention. "I'll shove my cock so far down your throat that you'll claw my thighs while choking

and crying.”

When I stay silent, he follows my gaze as it drifts back over his shoulder.

“What is with you and your fascination with doors?” His voice carries a tinge of amusement. Then he looks back at me and jostles my chin. “We both know you’re too scared to enter it a second time.”

He’s not wrong.

Whatever lurks behind that door is not good.

A shadowed hand, with crooked, arthritic fingers, emerges from the darkness. It reaches for me, elongating and twisting grotesquely, bones snapping, skin breaking open to reveal rotting flesh and maggots. As it crawls closer on the bed, I scramble back and a frightened gasp slips from my lips.

“What’s happening?” I choke out, cowering against the bed frame, with the sheet pooling around my waist. I’m too scared to care that Amenadiel’s hungry gaze roams over my naked breasts like he wants to feast on them.

“The darkness is claiming you.”

“What?” I shriek, kicking my foot when pale, ice-cold, and gnarly fingers wrap around my ankle.

“I can help you on one condition.”

“What condition?” I blurt out, kicking at the monstrous hand again when it tries to grab for me.

Sharp, torn nails cut my skin and dig into my ankle.

“It’s simple.” Amenadiel watches my struggle, his eyes twinkling in the darkness. “I want you to belong to me.”

My eyes fly up, but the hand encircles my ankle before I can reply. It pulls so roughly that I fly off the bed.

I fall to the floor with a hard thud, my breath knocked from my lungs. I scream, clawing the floor as I’m dragged to the gaping mouth of the door.

I scream, but no one hears me.

I scream, but no one comes to my rescue.

I wake with a start, frantically brushing my hair away from my face before scanning the room. I’m alone, and it’s early morning.

I look away from the clock on the nightstand and move the quilt down to inspect my stinging ankle.

Several long scratches that ooze blood decorate my skin. A surprised gasp leaves me and my hand flies up to my mouth. I breathe in a few deep breaths to wrangle my panic. It doesn't help. The fear mounts and mounts and builds in intensity, until I fly out of bed, too frantic to sit still and do nothing.

I pace the room with my hands buried in the long strands of my hair. I pull and tug, but despite my best efforts to make my scalp prickle, it does little to soothe me. I can't survive another round of tormenting doors and nightmares.

I turn to leave my room, but my eyes land on the crumpled note on my nightstand. It wasn't there last night, was it?

A sense of trepidation washes over me as I slowly make my way over. Something is wrong. Very fucking wrong.

I stop, staring down at the note.

Is that smeared drops of blood?

With a trembling hand, I reach out to pick it up, despite the voice in my head that tells me to leave it alone and make a run for it. My wings flutter with unease beside me as I read the scrawled handwriting.

You're not safe anywhere.

Dropping the note to the floor, a fearful whimper dances on my lips. The stalker was in my bedroom, watching me sleep.

He could have killed me as I lay defenseless.

"Are you okay?"

I whirl around. Daemon leans against the doorway, staring at me with a furrow between his dark brows.

"I'm fine," I blurt as his eyes glide to the note on the floor.

He pushes off the doorway, eats up the distance between us, then bends down to pick up the note. His eyes fly over the scrawled handwriting. He reads it over slowly again before looking up at me with a clenched jaw and murder burning in his gaze. "He was here? Watching you sleep."

The first line is said as a question, and the second part is a statement accentuated by the vibrating anger in his voice.

I don't know what to reply, so I stay silent, praying the trembling in my limbs settles down.

"Why is the air so tense in here?" Ronan half-jokes in the doorway as the others join us. Daemon hands him the note without taking his eyes off me.

Silence descends once again before Ronan breathes out, "Shit."

"What?" Dariana steals the note.

"We need to tighten security," Ronan tells Daemon with a pointed gaze.

"How the fuck did he get in?"

I sit down on the bed, tuning out their tense conversation. "I can't do this anymore," I whisper.

Their conversation falls silent. They turn to face me as I stand up. "I need to leave."

"The fuck you will." Daemon appears, like a broad-shouldered God in front of me. His dark gaze burns into me until he begins to blur, and when I try to move past him, he grabs my shoulders and shoves me down onto the bed. "You're staying right here."

"You don't get it." I kneel on the mattress, staring them all down. "He'll come back, and he won't stop."

Daemon's hand flies out. He grabs me by the throat in an entirely possessive grip that causes my wings to erupt from my back, knocking over items on the nightstand. "And we'll kill him. *I'll* kill him if he comes anywhere near you."

"He watched me sleep last night... Maybe he even touched himself," I choke out. "You couldn't stop him then."

His grip tightens, and he bares his vicious teeth. "You doubt my ability to protect you?"

My throat jumps beneath his tight grip as I swallow. "I don't think the biggest threat is the stalker."

"Then who?" He leans down, bringing us face to face, his dark gaze singeing my skin.

"I am."

Silence descends on the room, thick, oppressive, and filled with so much crackling tension that I hold my breath until his wafts over my lips in a chuckle.

"Are you threatening me?" Judging by the tone in his voice, it almost sounds like he wants me to say yes.

My head shakes. "Not me, but the darkness residing inside me."

"Interesting," Daemon muses, leaning down and sinking his teeth into my lip. He pulls it away from my teeth, and I wince when he bites down. His fingers dig into my throat. "I have a message for your darkness, little angel. If it rears its head, I'll feast on it while pumping your greedy cunt full

of my cum. I'll leash it and feed it dog treats like a good puppy before slaughtering it with my bare hands for even thinking it can steal you from me. We both know nothing can."

Straightening, he reaches for his fly and pops the button. Alaric and Ronan follow suit as Dariana climbs onto the bed and settles behind me. Her soft hands gather my hair, and she whispers in my ear, "I have a message for the darkness, too. You tell it that if it ever hurts Daemon, I'll tear you to pieces until you're nothing but strips of flesh." She yanks on my hair and slams her lips to mine in a searing kiss that has me moaning into her mouth.

Big hands encircle my wrists and pull me closer. Dariana's tongue tangles with mine while I palm the two thick, silky cocks, stroking them in tandem. I grow wet between my legs, needy, and so fucking horny.

Breaking away from her hot mouth, I bring my attention to the looming men in front of me who ooze sex appeal and danger. Ronan strokes his cock in the background, with a sinful smirk on his lips, in no rush to join in.

I gaze up at Daemon and Alaric while jacking their throbbing dicks. I want them to do dirty, dirty things to me and whisper degrading filth in my ear that washes away the remnants of my nightmare. Because the stickiness between my legs that's been seeping out ever since I climbed out of bed is not Amenadiel's.

It was just a dream.

I refuse to believe anything else.

"So greedy for cock," Daemon drawls, stroking his fingers over my cheek. "So eager to be defiled and fucked like a slut." Then he adds as an afterthought, "*Our* slut."

Despite his cruel words, his touch is filled with adoration, as though he can't stop from worshipping me like a goddess who he wants to dirty up with bite marks and cum.

DAEMON

The way she stares up at me, unaware that her wings are still on full display, does funny things to my heart, and when she sinks her teeth into her plump bottom lip and begs me with her heavy eyes to be rough with her, I respond in earnest. I tackle her to the bed and flip her over on her front before thrusting my dick inside her tight cunt and wrenching her head off the mattress with my hand in her hair. The bed frame crashes against the wall repeatedly as I pound into her throbbing pussy. Her loud screams are music to my ears while I fuck her like a feral animal.

The others climb onto the bed too, stroking their cocks over her rocking body, waiting for their turn to ruin her perfection. I'm the alpha, I fuck her first.

They know it.

"This pussy drives me fucking insane," I hiss on a brutal thrust. I slam into her so hard, it's a miracle I don't tear her hair out or snap her neck at the awkward angle it's positioned in. "Where is your darkness now, hmm? Is it enjoying a good fucking as much as the whore in you?" My eyes stray to the side, taking in Dari on the bed, with her legs spread and fingers buried deep in her pink pussy. She fucks herself as she watches me impale Aurelia on my hard cock. And my brothers jack their veiny dicks like they no longer care if they get a taste of her sweet pussy, ass, or mouth.

No sooner has the thought entered my mind, Ronan positions himself in front of Aurelia. Biting down on his lip, he covers her face in cum.

She flinches as it coats her lashes, but she sticks her tongue out and moans. I slide out, using her arousal to coat her ass before pressing forward. She's too tight, strangling my dick. I feed on her pain like a demon feeds on fear. I want more of it, so instead of being gentle and easing into her slowly like a gentleman, I take her in one go. Buried to the hilt in her tight ass, I let my chin fall to my chest. The pleasure is too fucking much. I hiss through my teeth.

"Mind if I fuck Dari's cunt?" Alaric taunts our little angel.

She snaps her teeth as anger roars up inside her. It takes most of my fucking strength to restrain her when she tries to go for him.

“Easy now,” I growl, grinding my cock deep in her ass. “Be a good little girl for us. You don’t want to deprive Dari of dick, do you?” I lift my chin to Alaric, a silent demand to go ahead. I want to coax the monster inside her to come out to play. If it has the audacity to threaten me—the heir to the kingdom—I’ll teach it a lesson.

Alaric settles between Dari’s spread legs with a smirk, and she stares up at him, braced on her elbows as he slaps her swollen clit with the thick head of his cock before sinking inside her, causing a ripple of growls to slip from Aurelia’s peeled back lips.

Ronan shuffles through my bedside drawer, then returns with a gag. He forces the red ball into her mouth and secures the leather strap behind her head.

“Always one step ahead of me,” I chuckle.

“We don’t want her to rip someone’s jugular out with her teeth if she escapes.”

“She won’t escape,” I grunt, my cock twitching in her ass when she continues to struggle.

Dari watches Aurelia with intense fascination while Alaric pounds her pussy as if he wants to piss our angel off, too.

When Aurelia continues growling and wriggling on the bed, he grabs Dari’s chin and steals her attention. “Look at me when I fuck your pussy. Ignore the little brat. Daemon is looking after her.”

It angers the darkness in Aurelia so much that I have to double down on my efforts to keep her restrained with my weight while my hips piston against her ass. I’ve never been this fucking hard in my life.

“Keep fighting me, little witch,” I grunt. “Wriggle that little ass against my crotch. It turns me on so much.”

I’ve always had an appetite for violence. Always loved indulging in my darkness. And I fucking love wrangling hers into submission.

As if Ronan enjoys her red eyes too, and the feral sounds coming from her petite body, he sits down and bops her on the nose.

“Jesus, fuck,” I grunt, throwing my whole weight down on her. “Fuck, I can’t...”

“Is she too strong for you, brother?” Ronan taunts, far too fucking amused by my struggle.

“Dream on.” I ram my cock so far inside her that I see stars.

“Oh, fuck, I’m coming,” Dari moans, throwing her head back as her tits bounce inside her dress. Alaric pulls out and finishes on her pussy, coating it with his release.

The monster inside Aurelia goes ballistic.

She thrashes and growls, her eyes glowing bright red and her neglected pussy gushing with need.

Ah fuck, I can’t hold on much longer if she’s going to keep fighting me like this. But I refuse to come until I’ve brought her to heel.

“It’s time to come on my cock, *Aurelia*,” I whisper in her ear, and surprisingly, or maybe not so surprisingly, she grows still. “That’s my good girl, taking my cock so well. You like it tearing through your ass, hmm? Let me tell you a secret.” I bite down on her earlobe, then growl, “I fucking love it.”

She erupts with a cry that’s muffled behind the gag, her body shaking and shivering. I fuck her harder, thrusting my cock in her ass until I’m so deep that my balls slam against her gushing pussy, and she comes for me a second time, strangling my pulsing cock with her tight ass.

I grunt, emptying inside her.

It goes on for-fucking-ever, rolling through me in powerful, breath-stealing waves. I wonder for a brief second, as my dick twitches in her ass, if I’ll ever survive. Fucking her is dangerous business.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-FIVE

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AURELIA

I finish off my shower, then step out, water dripping from my skin as I reach for a towel. I'm sore everywhere, courtesy of Daemon and the others.

As I look at myself in the mirror above the sink, I do a double take, slowly moving closer. A necklace of bruises decorates my throat. I trace my fingers along the purple marks and a soft smile lifts my lips as I lower my hand. I'm finally getting somewhere with them. Their rough treatment today brought back memories from when I first arrived in Hell. Back when they stole my heart and dipped it in black ink.

I'll do anything to bring them back to me, even if I lose myself in the process, as long as Daemon's gravelly voice drags me back to the surface.

Wrapped in a towel, I step out of the bathroom and pause.

Lucifer stands near the window with his back to me. He turns around and scans his eyes down my body.

I clutch the towel to me, wishing I wore more clothing. The power dynamics between us couldn't be more glaringly obvious as he slowly walks up to me. He's immaculately dressed in a pressed suit, while I'm half-naked, with damp hair sticking to my skin. His scent, like that of hellfire, woodsmoke, and danger, invades my senses. He stops in front of me, undressing me with his intent gaze.

I swear Lucifer can see my hard nipples through the thin towel.

"Rumors spread fast in Hell." His deep voice oozes with erotic danger as it wraps around my throat, adding bruises to Daemon's necklace.

"Rumors?" I ask carefully.

"Don't play dumb," he says, reaching out to drag his thumb over my lips. His hand falls away, the back brushing against his leg. His fingers rub together, over and over. A twisted ritual, I can't help but notice.

"It all feels too convenient to me." He circles me slowly. "My son traveled to Ireland, and you stabbed him."

"I didn—"

"You blamed it on a stalker. Daemon was too injured and too out of it, and now his memories of that night are warped, because of the lies you spun."

“I didn’t lie—”

Lucifer won’t let me finish. “Maybe you didn’t mean to stab him. Maybe the darkness in you finally claimed you as its own, and when you came to, it was easier to make up a story, hmm?”

My lip trembles, but I stay silent, knowing he’ll twist my words if I try to defend myself.

“You forget one vital thing, *Aurelia*. I am Lucifer. The original.” He cups my chin and brings my glassy eyes brimming with tears to his. “I am the Devil. If anyone knows darkness, it’s me. I invented it, remember? Twisted and shaped it with my own bare hands while God turned his back in disgust.” His grip on my chin tightens in warning. “I know how the darkness eats you alive, threatening to obliterate the last remnants of your soul. No matter the colors of your wings, hair, or skin, you were born of the light, and of the light, you shall remain, whether the glass is half empty or echoing hollow. The only problem with a hollow glass is that it can be filled with other things. Less pleasant things.” His thumb is back to brushing rhythmically over my lips. “And now there’s no light left to overflow or counteract the potency of the darkness that pours in over the rim like a thick mist. Your soul is left to drown a slow death.”

My heart thuds painfully in my chest. I don’t dare look away from the promise of pain in his dark gaze.

“If you’re not careful, you’ll lose yourself completely. I’m sure you can understand why I can’t let that happen. My son has developed an unhealthy obsession with you, and while the easiest solution to my problem would be to kill you, it’s not the wisest. My son is a lot like me when I was his age—hot-tempered, fiercely loyal, and possessive. If I hurt you now, I’d cause a rift that I would rather avoid. So I’ll let him play.” He fingers a strand of my drying hair. “He’ll soon grow bored of your golden cunt, and when that day comes, you better run, little angel, because I will slaughter you before you can bewitch my son a second time. From now on, I’ll have eyes on you at all times. If you hurt my son, I’ll make you wish for death, understood?”

When I stay silent, Lucifer jostles my chin.

“Are we clear?”

“Crystal,” I bite out.

“Good.” He releases me and reaches out to grab hold of the flap of my towel. With a sharp pull, it falls away, baring my naked body to his cold,

cruel eyes. He takes in the faint bruises on my skin and the bite marks. Every imperfection caused by his son's savage passion.

Marks, which I usually wear with pride, but now wish I could cover. The way he looks at me squeezes my heart painfully, as though I'm the dirt beneath his shoe and an insect he needs to squash. I don't want to admit to myself how much I crave his acceptance. He's Daemon's father, and despite their strained relationship, a small part of Daemon still looks up to the man in front of me.

"Like I said," he drawls, reaching out to pinch my nipple, but I step out of reach, "my son will soon grow bored."

Lucifer then smiles the kind of smile that disarms me for a second because it's so deceptively warm. He's an expert at disguises, camouflaging himself behind the masks he wears to the outside world. But I see the evil lurking behind.

It whispers to me like the fanged trees in the woods.

"I'll see you again soon, *Aurelia*." He enunciates each syllable in my name like it's my body. The words on his tongue are his skilled touch that travels over the plane of my flesh in a bid to wring it dry of pleasure.

An involuntary shiver runs down my spine and spreads out in tingles that settle in places they shouldn't.

My thighs squeeze together as heat crawls up my neck.

Lucifer is the ultimate alpha in this place of depravity. We're not wolves, but my body still responds to the command in his gaze and the danger in his voice.

With a simple look, he could bring me to my knees. He chooses not to wield that power, but revels in it as he watches my skin flush.

And then he walks out with a final smirk, leaving me to catch my breath while his threats linger in the air, along with his masculine, primal scent.

I slam the front door shut, making no secret of my arrival. I couldn't if I tried, not when I'm this angry. "Amenadiel!"

He enters the dim hallway, dressed in slacks and a black button-down. His tie has been loosened and his sleeves folded up to reveal his tanned forearms.

With a click of his fingers, he lights the torches on the wall, then offers me a smile that fools no one. “What brings you here, Angel?”

“Don’t play stupid with me.” I march up to him and slap his cheek. “The veil is not mended.”

“Oh.” His smile widens. “What brought you to that conclusion?”

I gnash my teeth, fisting my hands at my sides as I glare at him. “You know exactly what.”

I can’t bring myself to say it out loud; how he fucked me in my dream until I came all over his cock. Just the thought has heat burning the tips of my ears.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” His smile is gone, and his gaze has turned hard. “I mended the veil when we first arrived back.”

“You fucking liar!” I tear after him when he walks down the hallway. “You visited me in my drea—”

Amenadiel whirls on me. “Has it ever fucking dawned on you that maybe you’re attracted to me, and it’s your twisted imagination?”

A bitter snort puffs from my lips. “Why won’t you just admit it?”

The truth is that I need him to, and until he does, a tiny sliver of doubt will linger at the fringes of my consciousness like an unwelcome guest who refuses to leave.

“You want me to admit creeping on you in your dreams? Tell me, little angel, what exactly do we *do* in your dreams? Huh? What’s the nature of your fantasies? Do I lick your sweet cunt? Do you kneel like a good girl, eager to suck my dick? Do I fuck you? What exactly happens when I cross the veil?”

My cheeks blaze with embarrassment, but I refuse to back down as I bite out, “I am not losing my mind.”

He hums, rocking back on his heels, the picture of calm. “If you say so.”

“I woke up with scratches on my ankles and... and...”

“And what?” He leans close, his voice dropping in octaves. “Say it.”

I stare at him, my hands growing clammy with sweat the longer I stay silent. When I finally talk, my voice is merely a whisper. “Cum trickled out of me.”

His smile is back, reflecting the firelight. “Cum, you say?”

“Yes...”

He tsks. “Naughty girl.”

I go to slap him again, but he sees it coming this time and grabs my wrist.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you. Not unless you want to make your nightmares a reality.”

Wrenching my hand away, I pant through my nose while we stare at each other. He, with no small amount of amusement, and me, with fiery anger burning in my gaze.

“How do you explain the scratches?”

“Maybe you had an itch in your sleep?”

“An itch?” I fold my hands over my chest. “Do you seriously believe that?”

“What’s the alternative?”

My glare intensifies. “There was an open door—another portal—and a hand reached out and grabbed me.”

“A hand reached out of the portal and grabbed you?”

“Yes!” I all but shriek. “A fucking hand.”

“So, let me get this straight. I fondled you in your sleep, a hand appeared through an open door, and then you woke up with scratches on your ankles and cum seeping out of you.”

“I don’t like the way you say it.”

“What way?” He steps into the living room, and I follow him, careful not to trip over the bear rug.

“Like I’m crazy. I’m not. And you’re lying to me. To what end, I don’t fucking know.”

Amenadiel pours himself a tumbler of amber liquid and peers at me over the rim as he sips it. I try not to shift beneath the scrutiny of his gaze. “How did you escape Daemon’s watchful eye? I doubt he let you come here.”

Sucking on my teeth, I look away. “I may or may not have escaped through the bedroom window.”

“Naughty girl.”

I snap my gaze back at him with narrowed eyes before pointing an accusing finger his way. “You can lie to me all you want, but I do not buy your act. Next time you decide to fuck me against my will in my sleep, I’ll trap you inside my mind again. How about that?”

“So I can continue molesting you in your sleep?”

My mouth slams shut, and he sets his tumbler down on a nearby console table on his way over to me. “Let me get one thing clear, Angel. You wouldn’t be here, looking so flustered, if I fucked you against your will. The only reason you’re here, accusing me of such...”—he taps his lip as he searches for the words—“deplorable acts, is because some depraved and neglected part of you craved it. The righteousness in you, the persistent little light that clings to your soul with the tenacious spirit of an infectious wart, won’t let go. It feeds you with lies and whispers of guilt and shame. But between you and me, I see it for what it is—the final death throes. So why don’t we”—he scissors his fingers—“cut it from the source?”

“What are you saying?”

“Instead of fighting the darkness... Why don’t you give in to it? Why fight it?”

“Why fight it?” I sound incredulous. “Believe it or not, I don’t want to hurt people.”

He tuts and shakes his head as he walks past me to stir the flames in the fireplace with a metal stick. “There’s that wart again.”

“You’re deflecting.”

Framed by the roaring flames, Amenadiel places the stick back down and turns to look at me. “Deflecting?”

“Yes, you’re trying to distract me, so you don’t have to admit to what you did.”

“Are we back to that now? You need to get over your obsession with me. I’m a powerful angel in my own right, so why would I sneak into a little girl’s dream and seduce her?”

“You tell me, Amenadiel.” Then as an afterthought, I add, “And I’m not obsessed with you.”

He stalks up to me, clasps the back of my neck, and leans down to breathe me in. His nose drags up the curve to my neck and he whispers against the shell of my ear, “If you don’t harbor a little girl’s crush, then how come you’re trembling?”

This condescending asshole. I try to wrench free, but he tightens his hold on me and keeps me immobile in his arms. His wings unfold behind him to cocoon us in a world of perverted desires and corruption.

The last sliver of light disappears, and his heated breath tickles my ear in the darkness as his lips brush up against it.

Shivers race down my spine and settle in a pool of heated liquid at the base of my dipping stomach.

“Whether your dreams are real or not”—his fingertips slide down the curve of my waist, and he grabs me, eliciting a gasp from my lips—“the monster in you—*the agitated beast*—circles mine. Your darkness whispers sweet nothings to mine while waiting, longing, and praying to be dragged into the dark night and ravaged.” He pulls me against his hard body so suddenly that my breath hitches.

“Let go of me.” My voice comes out in a breathy murmur, and I curse myself for sounding as if I’m affected by him.

I’m not.

Right?

My throat jumps as something hard digs into my stomach. I can’t let my mind go there.

Absolutely not.

“You want me to let you go? Or are you trying to force the starving beast back into the shadows? Nothing good comes from leaving it hungry for too long.”

“As the hand reached for me in my dream, you told me you could help me.”

“So not only am I the object of your wicked fantasies, but now I’m your savior, too?” He sounds so amused that I’m temporarily released from his trance.

“Get over yourself.” I try to push him off, but his arms trap me as I growl, “You know what’s behind the door in my dream.”

“Not only are you stubborn, but presumptuous, too.”

“And you’re a dick.” I blush as soon as the words leave my mouth, because now my attention zeros in on his thick length that’s pressing into my stomach. He’s big and hard.

So very fucking hard.

And it shouldn’t make it this difficult to inhale a full breath.

I shove him off and he lets me, much to my surprise. But then Dmitriy walks into the room, eyeing us both carefully.

“Look who decided to grace us with her presence.” It unnerves me how collected Amenadiel looks. His cock strains against his pressed suit pants, and I pray Dmitriy is none the wiser. But how could he possibly miss it

when it looks like a poisonous snake that wants to escape its confines and have me for lunch?

I shake away those thoughts even as I sneak another furtive glance.

What the fuck is wrong with me?

Amenadiel is right; something very dark and scary whispers inside me.

“Are you staying for dinner?” Amenadiel’s deep voice shatters my thoughts, and I tear my eyes away from the tenting bulge in his pants.

My cheeks burn bright red. “I-uh...” I try to swallow, peering over at Dmitriy, but before I can finish my sentence, the servants bring in a group of terrified humans.

I blink, and then I blink again.

When we had dinner at Lucifer’s, the chained girls were quiet and demure. A picture of sophistication. These humans, on the other hand, are screaming and crying.

And the blood...

My nostrils flare as a thick, black mist seeps beneath the gap in the doors. I step back, nearly tripping over the bear’s head. The mist trails over the floorboards, closer and closer. “Amenadiel?”

“Don’t fight it,” he says, casually walking over to where the humans cower in a corner. “Let it claim you.”

“What are you doing?” I ask as he grabs an injured human man by the arm, hauls him over—unbothered by the blood trail on the floor—and drops him by my feet.

While I inch away from the shadows crawling up my ankles, Dmitriy takes a seat on the couch and digs his phone out of his pocket.

This is so surreal.

I’m losing control in front of their eyes, and Dmitriy doesn’t even look up from the screen as though this is normal. It’s not. Every fiber in my being knows this is not how it’s done.

Amenadiel steps around me, grips my upper arms, and whispers in my ear, “Can you feel it? How your heart beats faster as *it* claims you? Let go, sweetheart. Don’t fight.”

The human man launches to his feet and tries to run, but with the cut in his leg, his gait is off, and he hobbles instead.

It’s the wrong thing to do.

My vision mists over, and my teeth elongate as darkness falls upon my soul.

“Never run from a hunter,” Amenadiel breathes in my ear before releasing my shoulders.

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-SIX

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DAEMON

The concern in Dariana's eyes as she watches me pace the room is starting to get on my nerves. She hasn't stopped looking at me since I threw the fucking coffee table at the wall.

They know better than to speak when I'm like this. Nothing they say can calm the raging beast inside me.

I won't calm down until she's found. And even then, it'll take me a long fucking time to rein in these emotions.

Emotions I shouldn't have in the first place.

Walking up to the mantelpiece, I pick up a candelabra and throw that too, because fuck it, I need to break shit when I'm this angry.

"Where the hell is she? It's been two days... she can't just fucking vanish."

More silence.

I stop mid-stride and glare at them all seated on the couch. "Where the fuck is she?"

"Like I said before," Dari starts, "I bet she's with your uncle."

Every time she says it, I get more and more agitated.

"If she wanted to go for a midnight stroll, she would have told you."

I ignore her as I start pacing again, burning a hole through the damask carpet. "I can't fucking believe she escaped through the fucking window. Why the fuck didn't I think to bar them up when she first moved in?"

"Well, that's sorted now, isn't it?" Alaric jerks his thumb over his shoulder at the barred windows. "This place resembles a maximum-security prison after you had your father's staff block every possible escape route."

Ronan snorts a laugh, his legs stretched out in front of him. "You know how to swoon the ladies. Lock them up in your mansion. She'll love sleeping in a room with barred windows."

"Look at my face," I command, pointing to it. "Do I look like I fucking care what she wants or how she'll feel about her new sleeping arrangements? If she doesn't want to sleep in a fucking prison, she shouldn't escape through the fucking windows."

Alaric stifles a laugh with his closed fist.

I ignore that too, because I might kill him if I don't. Now is not the time for rash decisions. "What if her stalker took her?"

I don't like how much dread that thought fills me with. The very idea of someone hurting my little witch when I'm not there to protect her...

My hands fist by my sides, and I blow out a harsh breath in a poor bid to calm myself down. "I can't fucking do this. I need to kill someone."

"What do we always say?" Ronan replies, tossing a ball of flame from hand to hand. "We shouldn't kill for fun."

I come to a skidding halt and give him an incredulous look as Dariana bursts out laughing beside him. "What kind of bullshit are you sprouting now?"

He looks up at me and then, quick as a flash, throws the fireball at me. I duck just in time. "Good to see you're not too enraged to lose your reflexes."

"The hell was that for?" I growl, leveling him with a glare to rival all glares.

Dariana's loud laughter grates on my nerves, but when I glower at her too, she laughs even harder.

Annoyed beyond belief, I throw hellfire at them both. Dariana launches herself to the floor with a squeal, which soon morphs into more laughter. How the fuck do you shut a girl up without choking her on your dick?

Just then, the front door opens, and we fall silent, exchanging glances. I storm into the hallway and come to a halt when I lay eyes on Aurelia, who's covered head to toe in blood and gore. She looks as if someone emptied a bucket of blood on her and decorated her with innards and pieces of flesh.

"The fuck?" Alaric breathes out behind me as the others join us. His comment is followed by Dariana's audible gasp.

Snapping out of it, I walk up to her and push her back against the closed door with enough force to knock the wind from her lungs. "Where the fuck have you been?"

"That's your first question?" Dari asks, "Not why she looks like she indulged in her bloodlust at a Taylor Swift concert?"

If there's one thing I hate when I'm angry, it's common sense.

Common fucking sense.

Even the word is annoying.

"Answer the fucking question," I growl, ignoring Dari. I stiffen and lean in close to breathe in the lingering scent behind the copper and human male.

Dari was right all along. She did escape to go back to my uncle. So why the fuck is she back? Is this part of their plan?

If so, it won't work.

I won't let her crawl beneath my skin more than she already has, and I won't let her sink her claws into the valves of my beating heart. I don't care how broken she looks. I don't care about the tears that cling to her wispy lashes like dew drops in spring.

"You went to see my uncle, and you didn't fucking think to let us know you were leaving?"

She stares up at me, defeated, broken, and exhausted. "Would you have let me?"

"No."

She tries to move past me, but I pull her back, trying and failing to keep a lid on my rage. "Why the fuck did you go to him?"

Her throat, covered in dried blood, bobs on a swallow. "I needed to ask him something."

"You needed to ask him something?"

"Yes." Her voice is weak, and I can't tell if it's because she's lying or because she looks like she wants to lock herself away and cry for a week.

"Did you fuck him?"

Her eyes fly back up to my face, and she blurts, "No."

"But you did fuck the human," I state, fingering a strand of her matted hair.

She stares at me while I bring it up to my nose and breathe in the scent of death, torture, and sex. "It's part of the hunt."

"If you truly believe that, I'll take you hunting right now. Let you watch me fuck a human girl until she screams my name."

How am I so calm? It won't surprise me if I snap her neck soon.

The others shift behind me as if they, too, sense the danger that lurks beneath my steady voice.

"Tell me, did you ride him while the others watched?"

Yes, I can smell more than one human on her.

"Did you fuck them all? Indulge in an orgie? Maybe it's a new kink of yours."

Aurelia slaps me, and my head snaps to the side. I take my sweet time sliding my gaze back to her stricken face. She's angry, hurt, and ashamed. The myriad of emotions that dance across her features does little to calm the

raging storm inside me. Outwardly, I'm cold and detached, but behind the mask...

Turning around, she tries to push down on the handle, but I wrap my big hand around her throat and pull her into me until her back is flush against my heaving chest. "We're not done here."

"Yes, we are," she bites out, trying to escape.

My grip on her throat tightens until I'm convinced I'll kill her if I don't let her go. Thoughts invade my mind. Thoughts that have no place here.

Thoughts of her with someone else.

"Daemon," Ronan warns, shifting behind me.

I ease up enough for her to inhale a ragged, choked breath. My fingers itch to kill her. Shoving her away, I call out over my shoulder as I stalk off. "Don't let her out of your sight. She's not to leave this fucking house."

I can't be near Aurelia right now or there's a serious chance I'll hurt her, and not in a good way. I don't trust myself around her when I'm this destructive. I don't trust that I won't squeeze the life out of her for even thinking she could escape me without consequences. She fucked a human as part of the hunt. Again. Looks like I'll have no choice but to keep her on a tight fucking leash if the darkness has this hold on her.

Ronan chases after me as I walk up the stairs. "You can't just walk away now. We need to ask some serious questions."

"You sound like Dari."

"The fuck I do."

Ronan follows me to my room and shuts the door behind him.

"You saw the state of her. We need to find out what happened."

"She escaped through the window to go see my uncle. That's what happened." I take a seat at the end of the bed.

"But why? And why is she back, looking like she swam in a pool of blood?"

"I need a minute, okay? I had to remove myself or I'd kill her."

Ronan nods slowly, his hands in his jeans pockets. "Something isn't right."

I open my mouth to speak, but then think better of it. I'm too angry to make sense of the situation.

Dari and Alaric will keep her in their sights until I'm ready to talk to her again. "Throw her in the shower. If I have to smell the human on her again, I'll kill her."

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DARIANA

The stairs creak as Ronan descends. “She needs a shower.”

I eye her for a moment longer, unsure how to feel. I want to trust her, but she makes it so damn difficult when she arrives back, covered from head to toe in blood and reeking of betrayal and deception.

Walking forward, I seize her bloodied arm and guide her down the hall toward the back of the house. Ronan and Alaric follow behind, their looming shadows chasing ours on the stone walls.

Aurelia stays silent with her head bent.

I side-eye her as we turn a corner. She looks like her soul barely survived whatever ordeal she’s been through, and it pulls on my heartstrings to see her so... empty, for lack of a better word.

We enter a spare bedroom on the bottom floor and walk through to the ensuite bathroom. Ronan leans against the sink with his feet planted and arms crossed as Alaric takes up position near the door like a bouncer.

The little witch looks down at her feet while I open a cupboard. I hand her a towel, then start the shower.

The silence in the room stretches on and on, taking on a shape of its own, until Aurelia finally whispers, “Is the water warm enough yet?”

She sounds like an injured bird.

On cue, Alaric’s and Ronan’s eyes darken.

Reaching my hand under the spray, I let the warm water steal my attention for a brief moment while Aurelia trembles like a leaf in the wind.

The wolves will have torn her to shreds by the end of this night. The atmosphere in the room is thick and crackles with a tension that threatens to zap me if I accidentally brush up against a surface. It’ll continue to thicken like a gathering storm on the horizon until I can wash the distinct scent of sex and death off her.

Aurelia slides down the straps of her dress, first the left and then the right, her shoulders shifting, her gaze downcast. The room holds its breath. Even the silence leans in.

The fabric falls to the floor, and I take in every inch of her flawless skin painted in blood. “What happened to you?”

Instead of answering, she steps into the shower and tips her head back with an audible sigh when the water wets her face. I exchange a look with Alaric and Ronan, who both start to strip down. Ronan tosses his shirt on the floor and then pops the button on his jeans while Alaric kicks his off.

“Whatever,” I mumble as I remove my dress.

If she doesn’t talk willingly, we’ll have to find other ways to get her to talk, and I’m not opposed to seducing her beneath the shower spray.

As I step into the shower, I tell myself I’m willing to do anything to protect Daemon, but this urge inside me has nothing to do with him. I want to protect *her*. This is all about the little angel who is quickly turning our dynamic upside down.

Aurelia gasps with surprise when Alaric enters the shower and tips her chin up with a finger. Ronan steps up behind her.

He splays his hand over her stomach and pulls her against his muscular chest. Sandwiched between them, she looks at me as I stop at her side.

I slide her wet hair from her shoulder, marveling at the smooth olive skin on show, now that the blood is washing down the drain, pink against our feet. “Tell us what happened.”

“I...” she starts, but clamps her mouth shut. The truth is there on the tip of her tongue. All it needs is some coaxing and a little push to jump from her lips onto mine.

Palming her soft cheek, I kiss the corner of her mouth before tasting the drops of water beading on the swell of her lips. Just like her, they taste of sin and debauchery.

My teeth sink into her lip, and she moans softly at the back of her throat. “Ours,” I whisper, overcome with possessiveness. I bite down harder, struck with the need to inflict pain.

While she whimpers into my mouth, Alaric sinks to his knees and smooths his big hands up her wet thighs. Ronan nips her neck, his fingers digging into her waist.

“We’ll make you feel so good,” I promise. “If you tell us the truth.”

“I can’t.” Her breathy voice is laced with anticipation.

“You can.”

Her head shakes slightly. She drags in a breath when Alaric places her thigh on his shoulder.

His movements are slow, infused with intention, and designed to elicit gasps and moans.

Ronan grinds his hips against her, gliding his dick along the curve of her lower back.

I grip her chin, forcing her heavy eyes on me, and reach out to palm a breast. Her smooth flesh molds in my hand, supple and plump. Everything about her is perfection.

Tweaking her nipple, I pinch it hard enough to be rewarded with a sharp inhale of breath. As it dances across her lips, I lean in to steal it as my own, breathing her in. "I want the truth."

I want you.

"I can't tell you the truth."

"Why not?"

Aurelia's balance falters as Alaric leans in to bury his tongue in her wet slit. But Ronan is there, holding her up with his arm around her waist. "Because I can't remember."

"What happened before you lost your memory?" Ronan reaches between them and adjusts his dick, so it's nestled between her legs.

I'm mesmerized by the shivers that dance across her damp skin as he grinds against her, his cock rocking between her ass cheeks while Alaric sucks on her throbbing clit.

It's such an erotic sight to see her like this, sandwiched between two powerful male angels who wring her body dry of pleasure for their own amusement.

"I went to talk to Amenadiel about something."

"About something?"

"Yes..."

Ronan digs his fingers into her jaw and pulls her back so that she's looking up at him. "Care to elaborate?"

Aurelia shakes her head, or tries to, as I continue tweaking her nipples. "I can't tell you."

"If you hold on to your secrets, we'll torture you slowly until you're begging for release," I warn.

Alaric slides his fingers inside her, and I smile as Aurelia starts to shake from the overstimulation.

"Let's move on," Ronan says, nibbling on her earlobe. "What happened after you arrived?"

"He..." she drifts off to pant a few shaky breaths. "I shouted at him, and he invited me to stay for dinner."

“Who invites someone for dinner after being shouted at?” I ask, slapping her breasts, then pinching a nipple.

“Please...” she whimpers, barely able to keep her eyes open. “Please, I need—”

“We’ll give you what you need *after* you tell us what we want to hear, but until then, we’ll keep toying with you.”

“Amenadiel... he had his servants bring in a group of injured, scared humans.”

I stop tweaking, looking up at Ronan, who leans back and frowns.

Alaric has moved back, too. “Daemon’s uncle deliberately coaxed your darkness out? Why?”

“Not only that,” I add. “He wanted her to get lost in it.”

“What the hell is he planning?” Ronan asks as a crease forms between his brows. Silence descends, filled with racing thoughts and Aurelia’s panting breaths.

Alaric resumes fingering her while I lean in to nibble on her hard nipples. I cup a breast and suck the bud between my teeth.

She’s too clean now that the blood has rinsed off. Too clean and perfect. Too unmarked.

I slap her breasts again, if only to see my handprint blossom on her smooth, wet skin, then sink my teeth into her flesh. The boys have the same idea as me, evidenced by the bite marks on her thighs and neck.

Daemon’s muscular arm breaks my connection with her breasts as he reaches into the shower and grabs her before hauling her out and tossing her to the floor. “You don’t get to be treated like a fucking queen when you defy me at every turn.”

“Daemon,” I warn, but the glare he throws me over his shoulder shuts me up. His attention returns to the quivering angel on the floor, who looks so breakable it’s bound to get her into a shitload of trouble.

“If you want to come, you beg. If you want to lick pussy or choke on cock, you beg. If you so much as want a fucking hug, you beg.”

Instead of cowering, she unfolds her wings and snarls low in her throat. The monster inside her is close to the surface and threatening to break out, if the swirling red mist in her eyes is anything to go by.

Alaric shifts uneasily beside me.

The torches on the walls flicker out briefly when Daemon’s wings explode from his back in a display of dominance and fury. He takes a

threatening step closer, and then, with a snap of his fingers, he imprisons Aurelia in a circle of flames.

I gasp at the display of power. Sometimes it's easy to forget that he's the heir to Lucifer's throne and that he's more powerful than we can begin to comprehend.

“Try to escape now, little witch, I dare you.”

He walks out, slamming the bathroom door shut behind him.

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-SEVEN

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DAEMON

I throw back my beer, pointing across the room where a human brunette, dressed in leather hot pants and a white crop top, shakes her ass to the heavy beat. “Her. I want her.”

Dariana rolls her eyes and jumps off the bar chair. “You dragged us to the human world to hunt, and we left Aurelia trapped in a circle of flames back at the mansion, while there’s a stalker on the loose.”

I snort, gesturing to the barman for a refill. “The stalker won’t get past the flames. Besides, I have my most trusted security stationed outside the bathroom. If anyone tries to get past, I’ll know about it.”

“Your father is really going to be impressed when he finds out how you utilize your security.”

“Keyword being ‘mine.’ Do you ever see me walking around with security at the academy?”

“Not the same thing. That place itself has better security than Eden, since it houses *the children of the rich and famous*.” Dariana makes quotation marks.

“The rich and famous?” laughs Alaric.

Dariana shoots him a glare. “You know far well what I mean. It’s a prestigious school.”

No one argues with that.

I down my drink in one go, then stand up. “I’m going in.”

“If you want to make the angel jealous, why not just fuck someone in front of her?” Ronan asks.

Without taking my eyes off the human girl, I reply, “It’s not the same thing. I’m teaching her a lesson.”

“Right...” replies Alaric, “and when was the last time you managed to fuck a human as part of the hunt?”

I frown, looking back at Alaric. “What’s your fucking point?”

Did he have to bring it up now? I’m here to soothe my ego, not fucking incinerate it. I don’t know what weird voodoo shit the angel is doing to me, but she’s all I can think about and apparently also all I can touch. And that pisses me off. No one gets to have that power over me.

“My point is that you can pretend all you want, but we all know you won’t be able to go through with it.”

I point my finger in his direction and narrow my eyes. “Watch and learn.”

They chuckle when I stride toward the woman with determined steps. I don’t care what it takes; I will get her scent on me so I can go back to the mansion and taunt the little brat with it. She says it’s part of the hunt, so I’ll give her a taste of her own medicine.

Part of the hunt...

My teeth gnash as my vision turns red. The human whose cock she bounced on is fucking lucky he’s in pieces, or I’d make her vicious treatment seem like a fucking trip to the spa.

The sickening scent of lilies, musk, and sweat fills my nostrils as I walk up to the woman. I’d normally like it, but not anymore. It doesn’t smell like my little angel.

My little witch...

Hunting humans is fairly easy, as they’re hard-wired to find us attractive and fall under our spell. I don’t have to do much work on my part other than to pull her into me, grip her waist, and guide her hips to sway in time with mine.

“You’re so big,” she shouts over the music, then blushes. “I mean, your shoulders and your height.”

“And you’re so small,” I reply. *And easy to break.*

Five minutes. That’s all it takes before I’m leading her outside. She tries to steer me into the bathroom, but I pull on her wrist, and she follows willingly. For some strange reason, I release her from my spell.

Call it curiosity.

As far as I can gather, Aurelia gets off on the fear. She feeds on it for hours while toying with her prey and inflicting as much pain on their damaged bodies as she possibly can.

She drags out death, like a lover seducing the reaper.

A frightened whimper escapes the girl’s throat when my friends step through the door and exchange confused glances. I know what they’re thinking. Why am I not trying to seduce the girl?

I should. I’m here to hunt, but it’s quickly dawning on me that I’m trying to understand Aurelia’s darkness.

How else can I own every last part of her?

But unlike Aurelia, I don't feed the monster inside me with my prey's fearful cries. If anything, my own darkness is restless, pacing its cage and demanding we go back to Aurelia so we can unleash our pent-up frustration on her instead.

"What are you doing?" Dariana asks, alarmed, when I band my arm around the human with the sole intention of dragging her back to Hell so that I can bring these games to my little witch.

"Playing with my prey," is my simple response before taking flight.

Dariana and the others soon catch up. "I think we all know the human isn't your prey."

We arrive at the mansion, and I toss the screaming human over my shoulder, slap her ass, then enter the house. Anticipation and excitement swirl in my gut. I can't fucking wait to torment my little angel while she's trapped behind the flames and unable to act on her desires.

The guards nod their heads and step aside.

"Look what I brought back from the human world," I say as I enter the bathroom, where she's pacing the circle like a trapped animal.

Her head shoots up and her nostrils flare as I slap the human's ass again just to piss Aurelia off.

And it works.

She bares her teeth, causing the frightened human on my shoulder to cry even harder.

The others file in behind me, too curious not to witness this little show. Ronan leans back against the wall, and Alaric and Dariana take a seat on the bathtub's edge.

"Now what?" Ronan asks.

"Now we play with her darkness."

"Not this again." Alaric shakes his head disapprovingly and crosses his arms. "Nothing good will come from it, Daemon. You know it's not wise to bring the darkness to the surface. What you should do instead is to help her adjust to a life without the light."

"Listen to yourself," I drawl, placing the human down on the floor and turning her to face Aurelia. "Could you be any more boring? Relax a little, Alaric. Who cares what's wise when our little angel from Heaven is growling like an aggravated lioness?"

"Daemon, listen to me, thi—"

“I don’t fucking care,” I cut him off. “The darkness is a part of her so much as it’s a part of us. She’s not in control of hers yet in the absence of light. I want to understand her darkness.” I look between them. “We can’t help Aurelia or know what we’re up against if we shy away from this part of her. And she can’t learn to tame her own darkness if she shies away from it. This is the only way forward if we don’t want enemies to use her as a weapon against us.”

Alaric looks away, his jaw clenching as he crosses his arms.

“Any other objections?” I ask. “Now is the time to speak up.”

Silence. No one speaks.

“Good.” With a slow curl of my lips, I bring my attention to the pacing angel in front of us. Ever since I first laid eyes on her, I’ve felt drawn to the heat in her gaze, the way she commands my attention. Other girls want me to notice them, but Aurelia demands more. She wants me to see her.

And see her, I do.

Circling my hand around the human’s slender arm, I pull her back against me and make a show of carefully and slowly moving the strands of her silky hair off her shoulder to bare the curve of her creamy neck. Her pulse flutters wildly against the translucent skin, inviting and tempting.

I dive down and breathe her in while keeping my eyes locked on Aurelia.

Pacing in her fire prison, she pauses. The tension in the air crackles as a shadow falls over her eyes.

My lips, moist from when I wet them, drag over the human’s neck in a slow tease toward her ear. If it were my little angel, she would shiver and push her bubble ass back against my groin. But it’s not my little witch. If I want to seduce this girl, I’ll need to put her under a spell. I’m not fucking a terrified, crying girl, even if it’ll make Aurelia’s monster salivate.

I shake those thoughts. I can’t fuck this girl anyway. Aurelia has made sure, with her doe eyes and snarls, that I can’t touch and enjoy other women.

I’m a fucking pet.

I palm the human’s breasts, more to get a reaction out of the angel than any real desire to feel this girl up. It hits the mark, and a smile lifts my lips when my little angel stalks closer to the fire before retreating with a growl.

Cupping the girl’s chin and bringing my lips to her ear, I whisper, “This will hurt.” Then I sink my teeth into her neck, ensuring blood flows down

her front. Blood always brings the evil inside Aurelia to the surface.

Pain.

Fearful pleas.

The loud snarl that mixes with the crackling fire, more monster than angel, has my smile growing.

“There she is,” I breathe into the girl’s ear as I slide my hand down her front to cup her pussy through her leather shorts. “Let’s play with her a bit.”

I lift my head and smirk at the monster in front of me. Because that’s what she is now. “It’s part of the hunt, right?”

I squeeze, drawing a gasp from the girl. Aurelia grows eerily silent. She stands unmoving. Her eyes are two dark pits of Hell as my thumb drags over the human’s clit through her leather shorts. She cocks her head, almost as if she’s listening to the hitch in the girl’s breath.

I know it’s coming, but what happens next is nothing short of miraculous. My fingers tease the edge of the shorts, threatening to slip underneath, when Aurelia’s body engulfs in flames that spread like a wildfire over her skin.

“Holy fuck.” Dariana’s spooked voice shatters my own stasis, and I stagger back, taking the human with me.

Aurelia reaches out, almost as if she’s curious about the circle of fire in front of her and wants to see if it burns. Her eyes find mine as she slides her fingers through the flames, back and forth, toying with my greatest weapon—my hellfire. And then, she holds her hand over the flame, closes her eyes, and draws the fire into her.

In my periphery, Alaric—seated on the edge of the bathtub—slowly stands up, his eyes wide.

The human in my arms is forgotten while we watch the little angel manipulate my fire as if it were hers to command at her will. Most angels our age can barely create a small fireball, yet she...

Aurelia opens her arms and throws her hand out with a feral shriek. I step back with a curse as the human erupts into flames.

Bone-chilling screams echo through the room, making us wince. Death by burning must be the worst way to go if the agonized cries and the smell of burning flesh are anything to go by.

The little angel holds my gaze the entire time, a small, wicked smile pulling on her lips, almost as if daring me to retaliate.

I’m so damn hard it’s painful at her display of power.

Who the fuck is she?

And where the fuck did she come from?

The screams soon die down, and Aurelia steps over the charred remains on her way over to me. Fiery red eyes hold me hostage, trapped in her spell.

When she speaks, the darkness that seeps from her vocal cords pulls at my heartstrings, tying me to her as though I'm her leashed dog.

"Don't play games with me, pretty boy," she whispers low enough so only I can hear. Then she cups my hard dick possessively, and I swear I nearly come on the spot. "There's a good boy. Now drop to your knees."

Strangely enough, or maybe not so strangely at all, my knees connect with the floor.

"Did you think you could trap me? Lock me up in your tower while you touch other girls?" She tuts, dipping her thumb into my mouth before slipping it back out and placing her thigh on my shoulder. "Now, apologize for treating me like anything less than a queen."

Sliding her skirt up to her waist, she moves her panties aside, revealing her very smooth, very wet cunt.

I recognize it for what it is. She's placing me under a spell, the way we do when we hunt humans.

Aurelia is hunting *me*.

I should put a stop to it, but I can't. For once, she's more powerful than me, wielding all the cards.

"Daemon?" Alaric asks from behind me as I drag my nose through her soaking slit.

I can hear him faintly, his concern threatening to disturb this moment of utter fucking bliss. Is this what the girls feel right before death takes them? Adrift in a sea of pleasure, breathing in the scent of wet pussy and desire.

My tongue darts out as I grip her hips and pull her closer to my hungry mouth.

Her clit... her sweet fucking clit pulsates beneath my teeth. I graze it before sucking it between my lips.

Fingers drag through my hair, then pull and twist, guiding my movements, speaking a language I'm so fucking fluent in.

I'm suddenly pulled off and thrown to the ground. Groggy and dazed, I push up on my elbows. My head spins, and the room blurs in and out. I blink, trying to take in the scene in front of me.

Alaric, Ronan, and Dari stand at the ready with their hands held out in front of them, flames dancing in their palms. “If you want him, you’ll need to go through us.”

The loud laughter in the room is mine. What the fuck are they talking about? I shake my head again. The fog is clearing somewhat. Enough for me to push up to standing. I sway on the spot, reaching out to the nearest wall for balance. “What the hell is happening?”

“She put you in a daze as part of the hunt,” Dari says tersely.

“That’s impossible,” I reply, rubbing my face and pushing off the wall. “Angels can’t use their magic on other angels to place them under a spell.”

“Yet she fucking did. On you.”

The rest of the sentence is left unspoken. But it’s there, hovering in the air.

One of the most powerful angels around.

I drag my hand down my face, only to realize my mouth and chin are wet and smell of pussy.

“Believe us now?” Ronan asks, a slight tilt to his lips. Unlike the other two, he’s amused by the situation.

It’s the first time a girl has ever gotten one over me.

It will be the last.

Shouldering through them, I grab her by the chin, force her up against the wall behind her, and growl, “You hunted me as though I’m a fucking *human*?”

“Think of it as an honor. I don’t bother placing humans under spells; I just kill them.”

My molars grind together. “Is that a threat?”

“Do you take it as one?” Her hips push out, seeking the thick bulge in my pants.

“Should I take it as one?”

“Maybe.”

Locked in her red misty eyes, I make quick work of my belt and free my rock-hard dick. I need to be inside her, and I need to be inside her *now*.

Claim her tight cunt as mine.

I lift her leg beneath the knee and drive into her in one swift move. Her lips part and the red mist recedes enough for me to catch a glimpse of the angel beneath. She’s in there, fighting to resurface.

I pull out to the crown, then thrust forward until I'm seated to the hilt, buried so far inside her wet heat that I'm going fucking cross-eyed.

The others watch me fuck her as though they expect her to kill me at any moment. I'm too lost to worry about that shit when her tight cunt strangles my dick, and my mind has one goal and one goal only.

Own this girl.

Possess every damn part of her.

Make her scream my name.

I grip her by the throat. "I know you're in there, baby, but right now, I want your darkness to see what happens when it tries to play games with me."

My cock claims her over and over again. Stretching and filling her. Making her pussy spasm around my veiny, hard length.

"It'll never win. I'll bring it to heel every time."

Thrust.

"I'll fucking own it."

Thrust.

"Make it beg for mercy."

Thrust.

"This. Fucking. Pussy!" I let out a tortured groan as I slide my dick out, palm the length, and run the thick head through her soaking slit, before pressing forward again. "There's my good little cunt," I whisper, rubbing her clit. "Swallowing my dick the way I like it. So fucking greedy."

Her soft moans escalate in volume until she's screaming and panting, pleading with me to fuck her harder, rougher, dirtier. Who am I to deny her when she's begging me so nicely? But if she thinks we're done anytime soon, she's wrong. While her monster is retreating back into the shadows, mine is coming out to play.

Sliding my dick out from her tight pussy, I shift her ankle onto my shoulder, then palm my shaft and press into her ass.

Every time I have her at my mercy like this, I have to fuck her tight exit. I'm a glutton for the way her breath hitches and her face screws up in a heady mixture of pain and pleasure.

She doesn't disappoint, holding her breath.

"Don't push me out," I command, squeezing her throat until all she can manage are small sips of air.

Her tight ass slowly relaxes around my girth as her skin breaks out in a cold sweat. I drag my thumb over the swell of her parted lips. She's so sexy like this, with my cock in her ass and that look of trepidation, adoration, and trust in her eyes.

She shouldn't trust me. Not after she let her darkness play with me like I was her fuck toy. She's *my* fuckdoll. Not the other way around.

"Want me to claim this ass? Fuck it raw until you can't sit tomorrow?"

She nods eagerly, her heavy eyes holding mine.

"Such a good girl." I slide my dick out and slowly fill her back up. "Tell me you love my cock in your ass."

"I love your cock in my ass."

I groan, fucking her harder.

Her ankle is right there by my lips, so I turn my head and bite it, my hips slapping against her groin. Everything about her is delicate yet fierce. Whenever I think I have her where I want her, she surprises me with her untapped power.

Palming her chin, I bite and nibble on her plump bottom lip.

"Such a good girl," I whisper before dragging my tongue through the blood on her chin and claiming her mouth once more. Fuck, I'm home.

"Daemon," she moans, breaking away from my mouth as an orgasm steals her breath, and I pull out and release all over her wet folds.

With my hand on the wall for support, my other hand moves over my dick in expert strokes. Aurelia looks down just as the last string of semen rains over her pussy, coating her swollen clit and dripping down between her ass cheeks.

I step back and zip my dick away while she pushes her dress back down. Then she looks up at me, chewing nervously on her plump lip. "I'm sorry."

"It's okay, you can apologize to my friends on your knees."

I've not even made it through the door when the distinct clanking of belts rings out in the small space.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-EIGHT

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RONAN

Why is that I can't get the angel out of my head? The way she cocked her head as she assessed the situation when Daemon had that girl in his arms. At first, she was angry, a feral beast pacing its cage, almost irate. But then...

The calm and control that washed over her.

As much as I want to understand the darkness and how it functions, we're clueless. Today proved as much.

After she dropped to her knees, we left her locked in the bathroom while we gathered downstairs to discuss what the fuck happened. Daemon had been his usual self, too blinded by his own self-importance to grasp that he'd been under her control earlier. Dari and Alaric were alarmed, but cautiously curious, too.

It's obvious now that she's more powerful than any one of us can comprehend. Even more so than she herself can begin to imagine. I don't even think she realizes the power she possesses deep inside herself.

The conversation ended abruptly when Daemon stood up from the couch and announced he was bringing the angel to his bedroom because, in his words, he wanted to keep an eye on her during the night.

Whatever.

He's fucking pussy whipped.

Is he in love with her? I don't know. But he's drawn to her because she's a challenge, and Daemon likes those more than anything. He likes that she doesn't bend to his will unless he makes her.

He especially likes that she has the potential to be more powerful than him. That really gets his back up and provokes the alpha within him.

I bring the joint to my lips and squint as I take a deep pull, watching the flames dance in the fireplace. The others have gone to bed, but I can't sleep. Too restless from the day's events.

The creak of the floorboards announces her arrival. She enters the living room, wearing a short, flowing dress, her long legs on display.

My eyes skate down her body, feasting on her smooth skin, then flick back up. "How did you escape security?"

More importantly, how did Daemon stay asleep? The guy is a worse sleeper than me.

Her bare feet pad closer, black painted toenails sinking into the thick carpet. "I have my ways."

"If you fucked his guards, they'll be dead by the morning." She didn't. I'd be able to smell the males on her if she did, but I let the threat linger in the air.

Her smile is saccharine, and I like that she is comfortable enough around me to treat me to a healthy dose of attitude. It reminds me of Dari when we were younger. Back then, she used to dislike me for reasons unbeknownst to me. I've always been a charmer, in my opinion.

"I fucked them all. At the same time."

My smile is easy. "Daemon will still spank your ass for sneaking out of bed."

Wincing from his treatment earlier, she sits beside me on the couch. "Can't wait."

"Do you mean that?" I ask as she watches me smoke the joint.

"I do, yes."

I get the sense it's not because of the pleasure, even if that's a side perk. Her reasoning is something deeper. Something I can't begin to unravel, but because I'm curious, I ask, "How so?"

I take another pull on the joint, watching her through the curling smoke.

Aurelia shifts on the couch to face me and tucks her hair behind her ear. "I know what it's like to not be seen by him... or you..."

I pause, the joint dangling from my lips.

And like a predator in the night, she climbs onto my lap and straddles me. Her soft fingers stroke my hair away from my brow, then slide over the stubble on my cheek and jaw before tracing the dip on my top lip. I hold my breath, surprisingly affected by her touch.

Removing the joint from between my lips, she takes a drag while holding my gaze. I check my senses to ensure she's not pulling the same stunt on me that she did on Daemon earlier. But no, I still have my wits about me. I'm still in control of my own mind and actions.

She places the joint back and orders me to smoke, which I do, one arm slung over the top of the couch.

"I think you see me now," she breathes, rolling her hips against me.

I smoke in silence while she grinds herself against me. There's something about her that demands attention, and it's not her tempting cleavage or how the strap of her dress has slid from her shoulder to reveal more of the swell of her breasts.

But I am a man with a brain pumping blood to my dick, so I tuck the joint between my lips before yanking down her dress. Her breasts bounce free, swollen with pink, peaked nipples.

Leaning forward and reaching behind her, I crush the joint in the ashtray on the coffee table, then relax back to palm her full tits. They're a little more than a handful. Just fucking perfect. I cup a breast and swirl the tip of my tongue over the hard bud, over and over, until she tugs on the hair at my nape.

"You torture me."

I look up at her from between her full breasts. "Show me how you manipulate fire."

She stiffens in my arms. "Now?"

Massaging her tits, I bite the flesh of one before soothing the sting with my tongue. "Unless you don't want to."

Her throat jumps, and she leans back slightly and holds her hand up between us. With her eyes on me, she brings a small flame to life. It dances and flickers, clinging on for dear life when her next shaky breath threatens to extinguish it.

I bring my hand up, too. Flames dance across my knuckles, and she watches as I let my fire slide from my hand onto hers.

A sharp gasp leaves her.

I knew it wouldn't hurt her, not after she touched Daemon's flames earlier.

While we're immune to our own flames, hellfire is unique to each wielder. It has a fingerprint and a life essence of its own. Very few angels can combine their flames, so it's mesmerizing to watch mine dance around hers, almost as if testing the waters, before becoming one much larger flame. I find myself holding my breath.

She looks at me, and in that one brief second before our lips collide, I sense a shift inside me. It should terrify me, but my body acts on instinct. I palm the back of her head and jerk her lips to mine. Licking and nibbling, I explore her hot mouth and tangle my tongue with hers as if she's the

essence I breathe. My hands find her breasts again, grabbing, squeezing, and slapping her swollen flesh.

Her lips never leave mine while she grapples with my belt and frees my dick, as fucking desperate to ruin me as I am to destroy her. Lifting up onto her knees, her hands brace on my shoulders for support. I pool her dress around her waist and snap her panties straight off before driving two fingers inside her soaking cunt.

“So fucking wet for me already.” I curl them, coaxing Aurelia to roll her hips in time with my thrusts. “And so greedy for my fingers.”

Her head falls back between her shoulders, and like a siren call at sea, her slender throat moans out for my mouth.

She takes my breath away, riding my hand with abandon and digging her nails into my shoulders while she takes what she needs.

“Ronan...” My name flows from her lips on a soft sigh that has my dick jumping against my tensing stomach.

I slide my digits out from her tight pussy and rest back against the couch with my dick clasped in my hand. “Sit on my cock.”

The flames in the fireplace burn brighter in response to my magic when she sinks down on my throbbing length. She’s so tight that it almost hurts, and I grit my teeth against the intense pleasure of being inside her.

I guide her up and down with my hands on her hips, my teeth sinking into my bottom lip as the wet sounds of her cunt fill the air. “Fuck me just like that, baby.”

The image of her bouncing on my dick, and her tits bobbing enticingly, is one I want to imprint on my mind.

“Oh, Ronan,” she moans, snaking her hand between her legs to rub her clit. I slap it away before pressing down on her throbbing nub with my thumb. “Don’t you fucking dare. Your orgasm is mine.”

She begins to shiver and shake on top of me, her movements growing jerky. Lifting her off, I guide her over the armrest, and slide inside her from behind. My fingers tangle in her dark hair, and my hips piston against her ass while she takes my pounding with her sweet ass in the air.

“Ronan. Ronan. Ronan,” she chants, and I swear I’d do anything to be the object of her pleasure. In the past, I’ve fucked to get off or to seduce my meal to make the most of their blood.

This is something else.

It’s a calling.

I need to get this girl off if it's the last thing I do. I need her to sing my praises to the God she turned her back to. I need him to hear what I do to her. But more than that, I want her orgasm for myself.

My hand comes down on her ass in a hard slap. "Come for me." I slap her again and again until, finally, her pussy clamps down on my dick. She tries to muffle her cries into the couch cushion, but I pull her back by her hair. "I want to fucking hear you scream my name, little angel."

Two more thrusts... three... and then I still inside her tight cunt and grit my teeth as I fill her full of cum.

I don't know how long I stay with my dick buried inside her before reluctantly sliding out and pulling my jeans back up. Aurelia stays draped over the armrest, my cum slowly trailing from her pussy and down the backs of her thighs.

Stepping forward, I swipe my cum up and push it back where it belongs, leisurely fingering her cunt while she catches her breath.

"I don't think I can move."

Her admittance makes me smile. With a final slap to her ass, I scoop her up into my arms and carry her naked upstairs to my bedroom. Unlike Daemon, I don't have guards stationed outside the door, which is lucky, because the thought of them seeing her naked awakens the possessiveness inside me. I don't want to explain to Daemon's father why I killed his hired guard.

After kicking the door shut, I place her down on my bed. I lie beside her and pull the quilt up to her shoulders. Cocooned against me like this, she feels so small and innocent.

So fragile.

Only, she's anything but.

Struck with the intense urge to protect her, I stay awake while she sleeps. My gaze never strays from the door in case her stalker decides to pay a visit.

AURELIA

Lucifer sits on the armchair in front of the fireplace while we wait for dinner to be served. He stares at me from across the room, dressed in a wine-red button-down with a slim black tie.

Daemon has given the staff strict instructions to keep the girls unharmed and quiet, so they don't trigger the darkness in me to rise to the surface. It feels like a science experiment, but judging by the tense silence in the air, I guess they don't want Lucifer to find out what happens when I lose myself.

I overheard them in the kitchen earlier, discussing how my power could awaken the alpha's need to dominate.

Lucifer is the ultimate alpha in this neck of the woods.

I'm not sure what that means, but it doesn't sound good, so I keep my mouth shut and my wings tucked. It's best to be safe than sorry. The last time Lucifer wanted to get rid of me, he tried to sell me to Amenadiel. If it's one thing I have learned, it's not to underestimate the ruler of Hell.

As if pulled forward by his own curiosity, he rises from the armchair and walks up to me.

Seated on the couch, Daemon watches his approach with tense shoulders and a carefully blank face.

"Why is it that the longer I watch you, the more familiar you seem?"

I stay silent, acutely aware of the shift in the air, when he starts to circle me. A blind person could sense the crackling tension in the air.

Dariana tries to break it. "It's nice to have you back, Lucifer. You've been gone for a while."

His eyes remain laser sharp, focused entirely on me as if he's peeling me like the layers of an onion. "What is your intention with my son?"

My eyes automatically find Daemon, who remains a statue. I remember this from last time. He barely moves when his father is around. "Intention?"

Lucifer stops in front of me and buries his hands deep in his pants pockets. His shirt stretches tight across his shoulders, and his dark hair is styled back. "Yes, intentions. You're not marrying my son."

My eyes pop wide open as my heart takes flight. "Who said anything about marriage?"

"Oh," he hums, "so you admit my son is nothing more than a fling?"

I'm so confused. Shifting on the spot, I open and close my mouth in search of the right words.

Lucifer speaks first. "My son is the only heir to the throne. He will be king one day. Naturally, there is the question of marriage."

"Marriage—" I start, but before I can speak another word, he continues. "My son is already betrothed to a woman of high enough standing to be worthy to serve by his side."

My heart ceases to beat, and Lucifer tilts his head with a smile, attuned to reading a room.

"You didn't know?"

"Father," Daemon warns, his tone low and threatening.

If anything, it makes the smile on Lucifer's face grow. His eyes flick over my shoulder, and he holds his hand out. "Come here, Dariana."

I gasp, my mouth falling open as she rises from the couch and walks up to us with obedient steps.

"Meet Daemon's future wife. *His betrothed*. The female angel who will one day produce an heir to the kingdom."

Tears prick the backs of my eyes as they lock on Dariana. The girl I once fell for... It turns out she knew all along and never thought to tell me. She let me fall for him when he played his twisted power games. She let me fall for *her*.

My feet carry me backward, first a single step, which is soon followed by two more.

When Daemon notices, he flies up from the couch and gives me a warning glare.

The kind that tells me not to go anywhere or I'll be in deep trouble. I don't heed his warning, intent on protecting the damaged, bleeding organ in my chest.

I've desperately tried to gain their love again, but it turns out it was never mine to own.

I look back at Dariana, and for the first time, I see what she is. She's a royal in waiting.

She's the woman chosen for Daemon. The one deemed worthy. She's the one who'll get every damaged and imperfect part of him.

The one who'll get to feel his child kick inside her.

Not me.

It'll never be me. I'm a placeholder. The heartache I've endured to get them back has been for nothing.

Everything was for nothing...

A sob escapes me—a pained, haunted sound that cuts through the silence like a sharp knife. It slices my heart, tearing the organ into tiny pieces that float through the air like confetti.

In the midst of my heartbreak, I hear the creak of an old door behind me.

The door no one else can see but me.

More tears fall, but I don't fear the pale hand covered in rotting flesh and maggots. Not anymore.

Dark smoke seeps through the stone walls and glides down the damp surface to pool on the floor. Closer and closer it crawls, tendrils of smoke creeping toward my feet.

My eyes snag on the wide-open door and the gaping darkness inside. It calls to my bleeding heart. Whispering promises that claw beneath my skin and pull me closer.

I step through the thick fog at my feet, disturbing it with every step.

"What is she staring at?" Dariana asks, looking to Daemon for help, who is inching closer.

Screams of terror emanate from the darkness. I pause, barely daring to breathe. The air is cold, and my breath puffs out in front of me. I take another hesitant step closer.

"Daemon?" Dariana's voice is growing urgent. The others are on their feet, too.

Lucifer is watching me with a crease between his brows.

Their concern can't save me now.

I look down and pause. My dress is torn, and my chest is covered in stab wounds, too many to count. Touching my fingers to the bloody lacerations, I stumble back, only to be pulled forward again as the voice inside the doorway screams.

What's happening?

The walls crumble to dust around me, and the flames inside the fireplace spread out over the floor, setting furniture alight and burning everything in its path.

In the midst of the chaos, Lucifer watches me closely with narrowed eyes.

“It must be a vision, right?” Dariana asks the others. “She’s seeing things?”

I’m close now. The door is right in front of me, demanding my full attention. Inside lurks the birth of evil—the very essence of fear, pain, and betrayal. I can sense it with every fiber of my being. I’m drawn to it like the tide is drawn to the moon. It calls me closer, whispering sweet nothings to the monster inside me.

Just as I’m about to cross the threshold, I’m pulled back against a hard chest.

“No.” A simple command.

My eyes fall shut as Amenadiel wraps his fingers around my throat from behind. “That is one door I can’t let you enter, Angel.”

“You promised the veil was mended.”

“Well,” he whispers, his lips brushing the shell of my ear, “I lied.”

I knew it. Ever since that first dream, I knew he’d tried to convince me I was going crazy.

But why?

“Step away from the door, Aurelia.” His voice is a cold threat, but underneath it lies something else.

A resemblance of fear.

It’s there in the slight tremble of his voice.

I turn in his arms, needing to see it with my own eyes. “What’s behind that door, Amenadiel?”

Hands pull and tug on me. Daemon shouts at me to look at him, but their screams are whispers in the distance. It’s just Amenadiel and me here, suspended between worlds.

“What’s behind the door?” I repeat.

His eyes flick over my shoulder, and he swallows audibly. “There are some truths you don’t want to know.”

Another earsplitting scream raises the hairs on the back of my neck. My eyes fall shut as my heart matches the rhythm of the fearful, throbbing energy in the resuming silence. It pulsates against my skin, clawing for a way inside.

“What will I find behind that door?”

Amenadiel’s voice is careful. “If you enter through that door, you will reset time as you know it. Some changes can never be reversed.”

I slowly turn around and step out of his arms, inching closer to the black void behind me. "It's okay, Amenadiel. I already know what's waiting for me on the other side."

He tries to grab me, but I shoot my hand out and erect a firewall between us. It spreads like a match to a trail of gasoline, and when he tries to walk through, his clothes catch fire and he steps back with a curse.

"You can't pass it. I'm stronger than you in many ways, Amenadiel. Guess why?" As if on cue, another bone-chilling scream echoes from the doorway, and ice-cold, rotten fingers grip my arms and pull me back toward the darkness.

"Listen to me very carefully, Aurelia. You do not want to step through that door," he bites out through clenched teeth.

"You never answered my question. Why am I stronger than you? Why am I the most powerful angel to ever enter Hell?"

The almighty Amenadiel tears at his hair. "Fuck, step away from the door, Aurelia."

"Hear that scream? That's me, isn't it? Those rotten, maggot-eaten hands? They're mine, too. Your brother didn't birth Hell. I did. And when I step through that door, what I'll find is *me*."

Amenadiel paces back and forth, then stops and looks at me with pleading, bloodshot eyes. "What do you want? What can I do to make you step away from that fucking door?"

I search for the organ in my chest that bled emotions not too long ago. It's an empty, hollow shell, as if the darkness has already feasted on it. I guess it's good, in a way. Daemon is engaged to Dariana, and I have been a piece on their playing board to cure their endless boredom until the day they walk down the aisle to carry on their legacy while I rot, alone in the woods.

"I do wonder one thing, Amenadiel."

His eyes snap to mine, and he tries to cross the flames to get to me but ends up burning his hand.

"You knew all along. I'm not going to ask how, but I will ask this: how were you planning to wield my power against Lucifer? It was your plan all along to get me here. You introduced me to the darkness before I was ready. *Chaos*, you called it... You watched me flounder in it and fight desperately to survive. You even fucked me in my dreams. Why? What were you planning?"

I take one more single step back.

Amenadiel springs forward, his hand outstretched over the burning flames as if to beg me to come back.

I don't let him reply. "Unfortunately for you, I don't want to hear the truth from your lips. No, not anymore."

The smell of rotting flesh, maggots, and buzzing flies enters my nostrils as the hand on me slides over my throat.

"It's time I find out for myself."

The arms pull me back, and I stumble into the icy darkness as the door slams shut with an echoing finality. The last thing I see before the world goes black is Amenadiel's terror-stricken face.

A voice whispers from somewhere deep inside the void. "*Genesis...*"

To be continued.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harleigh Beck lives in a small town in the northeast of England with her hubby and their three children. When she's not writing, you'll find her head down in a book. She mainly reads dark romance, but she also likes the occasional horror. She has more books planned, so be sure to connect with on her social media for updates.



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