

HARLEIGH BECK



SINS OF THE FALLEN BOOK 3

Touched by
Death

TOUCHED BY DEATH

SINS OF THE FALLEN

BOOK THREE

HARLEIGH BECK

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TRIGGER WARNINGS

Touched by Death 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.

*For you, because you're still here two books later, ready for
more spice and delicious depravity.*

CHAPTER
ONE

AURELIA

My knees take the brunt of the impact when I fall through the door and stumble to the ground. The first thing that greets me is the blinding sun and the fragranced air. I'm not even surprised to be back here in Eden. All the fucking doors lead here.

I slowly rise to my feet and brush off my knees, but then pause when strands of my hair fall forward. It's blonde and straight.

I don't have straight hair. Mine has a natural curl, or it used to.

While I finger the strands, there's a clearing of a throat behind me, and I whirl around.

"Are you okay?"

My heart stumbles to a halt in my chest. Lucifer is walking toward me, stark naked, in all his glory. I choke on my saliva when my gaze falls to his cock. Even soft, it's big.

Very big.

He comes to a stop in front of me and squeezes my arm. His palm is warm, and so are his blue eyes.

Breath caught in my throat, my gaze trails over his pale, shimmering skin, white wings, and blonde hair. "Lucifer?"

Stepping closer with concern written over his face, he palms my cheek. "You're worrying me."

"I'm fine," I somehow manage to choke out while scanning the clearing. Everything is so... colorful and abundant, just how I remember it. The trees sway gently in the breeze, bees fly from flower to flower, and the sun heats my bare shoulders.

I'm naked.

I palm my breasts. They're smaller. Beside my left nipple is a birthmark. It's tiny, but I know it wasn't there before.

“Genesis?” Lucifer’s voice shatters my thoughts.

Did he just call me Genesis? I look up at him, my hands still covering my breasts.

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Why wouldn’t I be?”

“I don’t know. After last night...”

“Last night?” I ask, then drag in a sharp breath when he guides me back, closer to the trees. My spine meets rough bark, and Lucifer cages me in. It’s unnerving to see him like this, in his true angel form. He’s just as beautiful and difficult to look at.

His eyes darken until they’re more black than blue. “Is this your way of silently begging for a repeat? I told you”—he strokes my hair away from my brow, his voice dropping in octaves until my thrashing heart is lulled by his nefarious intent—“we won’t get caught.”

“Get caught?” My voice trembles. I can’t think past the feeling of his fingers on my waist.

“I like it when you play innocent,” he drawls, dipping his fingers between my legs. “Are you wet for me, baby?”

I’m so surprised, I gasp. Fiery and corrupt pleasure bursts behind my eyelids and pools between my thighs.

Lucifer’s smile grows, and he presses down on my clit. “I knew you would be. Feel that, Genesis? Your greedy little cunt missed me.”

Genesis?

“What if someone spots us?”

What the fuck? Those aren’t my words.

With a dangerous smile, the kind of smile that obliterates my thoughts, he glides his touch lower, teasing my soaking entrance. “You think that will stop me from taking what’s mine?” Lucifer rams a thick finger inside me and grabs me by the throat. I cry out, but he nips at my bottom lip. “Such a greedy little whore. Does the thought of one of the elders

seeing you like this—in the throes of pleasure—scare you?” He drags his lips over my jaw, closer to my ear. My pussy clamps down on his fingers when he whispers, “Or does it turn you on?”

I’m falling apart at the hands of Daemon’s father in a body that’s not even mine.

But it sure as hell feels like my own when he chuckles darkly in my ear. Everything about him is an enigma. Even with the white wings and the translucent skin, he is darkness personified. It radiates off him when he smiles against the skin of my neck.

He works a second finger inside me, making me press up on my tiptoes. It hurts in the best way possible.

“Your lips felt so good on my dick last night,” he says in a tone that has my cunt gushing. “I want to fuck your tight hole.” Two fingers turn into three. The delicious burn is bordering on too much.

“Would you like that, Genesis? For me to finally take your virginity?”

I nod before I can stop myself.

What the hell am I doing? I can’t fuck Lucifer. It would be wrong on so many levels. But the words that would make all this stop drift away from my lips, like autumn leaves on the breeze, when he drops to his knees.

With his fingers still buried deep inside me, he nips at the inside of my thigh with his teeth. “Do you understand now why we need to leave Eden, baby? The elders will never change their minds. How can something this good be wrong?” He looks up at me, a flash of white teeth behind that deadly smile of his. “Do you think I’ll be able to survive an existence without feeling your greedy cunt squeezing my fingers?”

His words are far away, dancing on the wind outside the perimeters of my perception. My pussy pulsates around his thrusting fingers. I can’t hear him. I don’t want to hear him.

I want to come.

“Out there, behind the gates, lies freedom. We’ll never have to hide again.”

My knees buckle, and the moan that slips from my lips is foreign to my ears. The voice is not my own.

“Such a fucking good girl,” Lucifer taunts, gazing up at me from beneath his dark lashes. His thumb flicks over my clit again and again. “Tell me you’ll come with me, Genesis.”

Pulling on his silky hair, unable to inhale a full breath, I gasp. “I need your mouth on me.”

“Do you, now?” His smile widens. “And what will you give me in return?”

“Anything,” I choke out, the insides of my thighs soaked with my own arousal. “Please...”

“Come with me.” His lips hover inches away from my puffy pussy, his warm breath fanning my slit. But he makes no move to taste me. Not until I agree to leave Eden with him.

“You’re not playing fair.”

I feel like I’m witnessing this all play out, as though the words aren’t my own.

He licks me in one long stroke, a deep rumble vibrating his chest. “I play to win.”

I’m so fucking close.

But then, just as I’m about to agree to Lucifer’s crazy demand, the putrid stench of death, rotten flesh, and maggots invades my nostrils. I’m torn from the scene like something out of a movie, my soul jerked from my body.

I find myself in a bedroom, not unlike my own here in Eden, surrounded by the masculine smell of Amenadiel.

I know it’s him even before his chest presses up against my back. He sweeps my hair from my shoulder while I stare at the straw mattress on the floor. The curtains at the windows are drawn, and a lone candle sits by the bed. It flickers wildly, dancing in the muted light.

“You came,” he whispers, his fingers splayed over my bare stomach.

“I shouldn’t have,” I admit, lost in Genesis’s thoughts and sensing the trepidation that’s slowly fading with every kiss to the curve of my neck. Amenadiel pauses, then resumes nipping me with his teeth.

“If Lucifer finds out—”

“He won’t.”

“How can you be so certain?”

“My brother is a lot of things, but he’s not perceptive.” His hands trail higher and cup my aching breasts, tweaking and pulling at my nipples. “I’ve wanted to touch you for so long.”

“Ever since you walked in on Lucifer—”

“Yes,” he confirms, squeezing my soft flesh. “I was jealous.”

“Why?” My soul craves his truth.

“The look on your face when he licked you *there*... You were so beautiful. I wanted it to be me. I wanted to be the one who made you feel that way.”

My heart flutters in my chest. I like his admittance more than I should. The unselfish thing would be to walk back out instead of risking Amenadiel’s place here in Eden. But ever since he spotted us that day, I have thought about him.

His big, veiny hands.

The curve of his smile.

His big cock.

And I hunger for his touch.

“Lucifer wants us to walk out of Eden,” I whisper.

Dragging his fingers down my belly, he replies, “I know.”

I don’t say anything else because he cups my pussy possessively.

“What do you want?” Amenadiel asks, squeezing.

Every nerve ending in my body is on fire. I band my arm around the back of his neck and push my ass against him. The feel of his hard cock against my lower back makes me heady. I want him to hurt me the way Lucifer hurts me.

“I want you.”

The candle flickers out, like the whisper of reason inside me. This is wrong. I’m with Lucifer. He’s the one who introduced me to pleasure when he touched me for the first time.

“You smell so good,” Amenadiel praises, dragging his nose over the curve on my neck.

I’m torn from my conflicting thoughts, and my knees buckle when he slides two fingers inside me.

“*Fuck,*” he breathes. “You’re so wet and warm.”

My whimpers are loud in the silence. I’m shaking in his arms while he explores my body with slow, deep thrusts.

“Does it feel good?”

All I can manage is another moan. It feels more than good.

Who invented the word *good*? It’s so inadequate.

Amenadiel slides his fingers back out and guides me onto the bed, then covers my back with his warm chest. His nose nuzzles my neck, and I can feel him.

I can feel his hard cock slide between my wet folds and drag over my clit. He rolls his hips in time with my pants until I can’t stand it anymore. Until I feel like I might burst into a million fragmented pieces.

Shifting his hips, his dick lined up with my tight hole, he presses forward.

Burning pain has me whimpering as he tears through my hymen with his veiny cock. He’s so big, it steals my breath. I can feel him everywhere. Inside me and on top of me. He palms my hands and entwines our fingers when I crumple the sheet.

Amenadiel is so heavy on top of me.

I love that.

I love it even more when he groans against the crook of my neck.

“Fuck, baby...”

Arching my ass against his groin, I tell him without words to move.

He doesn't disappoint.

Shifting onto his knees, he fists my hair, shoving my head into the mattress that smells of straw and debauchery. Then he proceeds to fuck me hard until his cock and groin are painted with my blood.

It hurts so fucking good to be pounded like this. So hard, ruthless, and unapologetic. My scalp prickles with pain. I can barely breathe with my face squished against the mattress, but none of it matters when he slaps my ass. If anything, it makes me crave more.

More violence.

More pain.

More depravity.

Amenadiel was sweet and gentle.

Until he wasn't.

And then I hear it: the wet sound my pussy makes as it swallows his dick again and again.

He smacks me once more.

Slap!

Slap!

Slap!

There's no build-up. The orgasm, violent in its nature, washes over me with such power that I scream.

It goes on and on until I'm sure I'll suffocate, face buried in the mattress.

“You should see your blood and cum on my dick.”

“Amenadiel,” I plead as my pussy grips him tight. He hisses through his teeth, the primal sound tingling my nerve endings. Before I’ve had a chance to recover, he pulls out and orders me to get on my knees.

As I look up at him, I draw in a sharp breath. He’s covered in my blood, my virginity painted on his translucent skin and white feathers.

Impatient, Amenadiel reaches forward and grabs hold of my arm. He pulls me closer and fists his cock with his other hand before forcing it into my mouth. The coppery taste of blood and the tangy taste of my cum have me gagging.

“That’s my good slut. Choke on my cock.” Amenadiel holds me frozen with an iron grip on my blonde hair. “Look at me, Genesis. Let me see the blood on your mouth and face.”

When I peer up through my tears, he pulls out and sprays my face with his cum.

Shocked, I yelp.

With his fingers braided in my hair, he continues jacking his cock over my face until the last squirt lands on my lashes.

Afterward, while he catches his breath, I stare up at him, wondering about the animal that resides in him, Lucifer, and me.

I’m sore, ruined, and a glutton for more.

More pain.

More humiliation.

Unbothered that my face is covered in cum and blood, Amenadiel collapses onto the straw mattress. He pulls me down on top of him and bands one of his big arms around my waist.

I listen to his heartbeat until his breaths start to even out. He’s not asleep yet. His fingers walk up and down my spine, touching each vertebra.

“Do you want to leave Eden?” I ask, hugging him to me.

Amenadiel stays quiet for a long moment, and then, just when I think he won't answer, he says, "Yes, if it means I get to be with you like this."

My heart starts to race, and something flutters in my belly. I try not to read into his words.

Or my own feelings.

"Do you?" he asks, placing an arm beneath his head.

With my chin pressed to his chest, I stare into his eyes. Amenadiel is beautiful. Just like his brother. But where his brother is intimidating and scary, Amenadiel is safe and comforting.

"Yes," I confirm. "I do want to walk out of Eden."

His lips pull back into a slow smile, and he trails the backs of his fingers over my cheeks while I hold my breath. "Then let's do it."

"We'll have to escape Lucifer."

"And we will. As soon as we're out, we'll leave."

I swallow thickly, my heart thudding in time with his.

"Are you saying," he starts, stroking his fingers over my cheek and cupping my chin, "that you choose me?"

The words leave my lips in a breathless whisper. "Yes, Amenadiel. I choose you."

CHAPTER
TWO

GENESIS

PAST

Waiting in front of the gates, I stare up at the blue sky dotted with puffy, white clouds, too many to count. Two weeks have passed since I first slept with Amenadiel behind Lucifer's back.

It's wrong. I know it is.

But the more we sneak around, the more I crave it.

Crave him.

Lucifer made me fall from grace the first time he touched me, and now I can't look back. But Amenadiel awoke something entirely different inside me.

Something far scarier.

Emotions.

When I'm with him, I can't get enough. And when we're not together, I can't stop thinking about him.

I still haven't told Lucifer. He's so obsessed with his idea of escaping Eden that he barely has time for me. Except for at night, when he crawls into my bed and tries to fuck me.

Sometimes I let him.

Call me weak.

In those moments, he gives me something else I'm slowly coming to crave.

Pain.

And not just physical, but emotional, too.

Strangely, it feels even better to be fucked when shame taunts me like a shadow in the corner of the room.

You're fucking his brother.

You're nothing but a cheap whore.

You're lying to them both, you fucking slut.

Those thoughts that swirl in my mind only serve to make me even more aroused while Lucifer fucks me in every position possible.

Just then, the thud of footsteps sounds behind me. I turn slowly, drinking in the sight of Lucifer and Amenadiel side by side. They look so much alike, yet they don't. Lucifer is darker, somehow. Shadows follow in his wake. Amenadiel, with his secretive smirk, hides his darkness better.

Lucifer doesn't care enough to try to camouflage the changes that occurred in him since the first time he pulled me into the forest near the southern wall. He wears the shadows like a cloak. Even now, he lets his blue eyes darken as he looks down at my cunt. His tongue darts out to wet his bottom lip, and that seemingly innocent act is anything but.

His hungry eyes flick back up to mine, and he smirks.

While we stay locked in thickening lust, Amenadiel converses with one of the other angels that have joined us.

Breaking eye contact with Lucifer, I scan the clearing. We are eight angels in total. More than I thought.

When I look back at Lucifer, he's still watching me. His cock is hardening the longer he stares at me, as though I'm a meal he wants to sink his teeth into.

But unlike before, the heat in his eyes has shifted into something cold. Shivers crawl down my spine, and I force myself to look away.

I'm torn from my thoughts when his voice rings out. "Today, we do something no one has ever done before. We turn away from the light."

Sudden chills dance over my skin, so I wrap my arms around me to ward off the cold. It's an entirely new sensation.

"Once we walk out, we can never come back." Lucifer looks at us all in turn. "If anyone wants to back out, now is your chance."

No one moves.

I let my gaze trail up Amenadiel's ankles, legs, and cock, then higher still, over the planes of his stomach and chest, until they meet his blue eyes. Unlike his brother, his gaze is warm. There's even a twinkle of amusement.

I let it ground me while Lucifer continues talking.

Everything will be okay. As soon as we walk out, I'll be able to leave these mixed emotions behind me.

I choose Amenadiel.

Not the shame.

No matter how much I love it.

Lucifer breaks the circle and walks up to me. I count each step. Three in total.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" he asks me, tucking my hair behind my ear. "To leave Eden and never set foot here again?"

Swallowing thickly, I force down my second thoughts. I do want this. I can't stay here after I let Lucifer and Amenadiel fuck my every hole.

I have lied and cheated.

I'm not worthy of the light.

"I'm sure." My voice is surprisingly strong.

His answering smile is cold, void of emotion. He leans close, and I breathe him in—cinnamon, leather, and the woods.

"I have tried everything to get kicked out," he whispers so only I can hear. "I have lied, cheated, fucked, and inflicted pain on others. Nothing works. The light keeps shining, and the gates stay closed. I'm fucking trapped in this bowl."

My heart gets lodged in my throat. Something is wrong.

"But then I figured it out." His warm breath skims my ear, but it's chased away by the ice in his voice. "After a lot of searching, I finally found the hidden treasure that will see me

freed from this hell.” He circles his fingers around the back of my neck, holding me frozen. “Tell me, Genesis. Did you enjoy fucking my brother behind my back?”

Dread splashes down my spine, and I stiffen.

Lucifer breathes a soft, cruel laugh through his nose while something cold and sharp pokes my belly button. “I thought I had you where I wanted you but then you slipped through my fingers.”

“Lucifer,” I choke out through the thick fear clogged in my throat.

He hushes me, his fingers digging into my neck. I can already feel bruises forming. “In order to open those gates, we need a sacrifice.” His next breath fans my lips, warm and moist, and then he looks me in the eyes. “I figured, who better to provide that sacrifice than a dirty little whore like you who toys with hearts for fun?”

“Lucifer?” Amenadiel asks, his voice thick with alarm.

Lucifer ignores him, and the pressure on my belly button increases. “I thought for sure you wouldn’t let me touch you after you opened your legs for my brother. But you did. Night after night, you let me fuck you raw.” He huffs a breath, then his lips pull back into a smirk. “It was fun while it lasted.”

Pain sears through me. Hot, fiery pain.

“What the fuck?” Amenadiel breaks away from the circle, but the others crowd him, holding him back.

I choke on something warm and coppery as I look down between our bodies. A knife is so deeply embedded in my stomach that only the handle protrudes. Lucifer tightens his grip on it, digging his fingers into my neck at the same time. His cold, blue eyes watch me intently as he drags the knife in an upward motion, all the way between my breasts.

I choke on my blood, and the gurgling sound is loud in the deadly silence while he guts me with the knife.

“Does it hurt, baby?” he asks casually when my innards spill from my body. “Maybe I should hurt you more?”

He stabs me in the chest.

Again.

And again.

The knife sinks deep. Blood sprays, covering his handsome face.

I'm vaguely aware of Amenadiel screaming for him to stop. But more than that, I'm aware of the darkness that rises up inside me to claim my soul.

To our left, the gates creak open. Distracted by the sound, Lucifer releases me.

I fall.

And fall.

But the impact never comes.

A warm hand, gentle and soft, pulls me from the darkness and into the light.

“Come, Aurelia. Let's join your friends on the grass.”

CHAPTER
THREE

AMENADIEL

PRESENT

She's shoved back through the door, through the wall of fire and into my arms. The door slams shut and then it's gone.

Breathing hard, I blink at the empty space. My thoughts swirl too fast for me to untangle as she asks, "When did you realize that Genesis hides in the shadows inside me?"

I'm stiff behind her, arms banded around her slim waist. "Soon after we arrived back here."

"You didn't throw me to the darkness to get back at Daemon..."

Staring at the flames, I remain silent, not yet ready to admit the truth or the secrets I keep hidden from the world. She sees them anyway, her sweet voice drifting through the haze of my thoughts.

"You were trying to lure *her* from the shadows."

"Genesis is dead." My voice crackles as much as the flames dancing closer on the floor.

She slowly turns around in my arms, and I'm suddenly very aware of how warm she is from the flickering flames; how small and fragile she seems. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I had no solid proof."

"I don't believe you."

My throat jumps, but I stay silent.

"You're ashamed to admit you have feelings other than those born from the darkness in you."

The flames flicker in her eyes when I finally look at her, my throat bobbing on a swallow. "You need to be careful. The past needs to remain in the past."

“But how can it when you keep coaxing it to the surface? Tell me, Amenadiel, do you like playing with fire?” She pushes up on her tiptoes and walks her fingers up my chest, over the fabric of my shirt, caressing each button. “It looks like the past caught up with you and your brother.” Her sweet breath fans the stubble on my chin. “Genesis is back, Amenadiel. *The missing original.*”

Heart thrashing in my chest, my gaze scans over her ethereal face. I step back, clearing my throat. *It's not her. She died.* “Why did time not reset when you returned to Eden?”

“You’re asking the questions now?” She huffs a mocking laugh. “Trust you to focus on the unimportant details.”

“You went back. You should have reset the timeline.”

“Or maybe evil cares less about timelines and more about seeking revenge?”

I grow still, not daring to breathe. “Genesis?” Is it really her? It can’t be, can it? Yet, when she looks at me...

Behind us, the flames grow taller, flickering wildly, until she puts them out with an effortless click of her fingers. She motions to the scene in front of us, the shocked and worried looks on Daemon’s and his friend’s frozen faces. “Now, if you excuse me, Amenadiel. I have a mess to create.”

And with another click of her finger, time rewinds before I can stop it.

Before I can stop *her*.

AURELIA

“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 Lucifer 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, intention. 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 the ruler of Hell one day. Naturally, there is the question of marriage.”

“Marriage—” I start, but he continues before I can speak another word. “My son is already betrothed to a woman of high enough standing to be worthy of serving 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, 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.

My eyes collide with Dariana's, who watches me carefully while Lucifer arranges her hair to lie over one shoulder as if he's making sure she's perfectly presented. A cruel smile tugs at his lips when he pins his dark gaze on me and says, "You didn't think they cared for you, did you?"

My hands seek the cold stone wall behind me. Tears blur my vision as I choke out, "I need to leave."

"Wait!" Daemon hurries after me when I escape out the door, but his thunderous footsteps come to a skidding halt at the commanding tone of his father.

"Let her go! It's for the best."

As soon as I round the corner, I fall apart, opening up like an empty void, my soul swallowed whole by blackness. I tried everything to win them back. I fought Daemon. I put up with Dariana's toxicity. And it was all for nothing.

What was even real? I don't know anymore. All I know is that my heart lies splintered on the floor, fragile and broken, and at risk of blowing away at the slightest breeze from an open window.

Returning to Eden is not an option anymore. I have nowhere to go but back to Amenadiel's. I can't stay here, where I'll be taunted by the four tormentors of my splintered heart.

Faced with my poor choices, Amenadiel and his son feel like the safest option.

I push off the damp stone wall at my back and hurry down the hallway toward the front doors, desperately swiping at my wet cheeks. As I round another corner, I'm met with a wall of guards. They block the doors with their big builds. Their wings are nowhere near as impressive as mine but threatening nonetheless.

"Let me pass," I rush out, looking behind me briefly to ensure Daemon and the others aren't in pursuit. Unwelcome disappointment shadows my heart when I find the hallway

empty, but I shrug it off and focus my attention back on the guards. The flickering flames on the walls highlight their sharp features, lending them an air of cruelty and deceit. Exchanging amused glances, the tallest and biggest guard smirks in my direction. “You’re not to leave this building. Boss’s orders.”

“Which boss?” I bite out, taking a careful step closer. “While Daemon might not want me to leave, Lucifer does.”

Uncertainty flickers in their cold eyes. They look at each other again. The guard at the front clears his throat. “Master Daemon.”

“And you fear him more than Lucifer? The ruler of Hell?”

“The girl has a point.” One of the guards to the left speaks up but then clamps his mouth shut when the guard in charge cuts him a glare.

His body shifts to the side, and he looks anywhere but at me as he lets me pass. I don’t hesitate, slinking through the wall of bodies and escaping into the night.

It’s not until the cold air slaps me in the face that I manage to inhale a full breath into my burning lungs. My wings explode from my back, and I shoot up into the sky, knowing full well that Daemon won’t let me go. But he’ll have no other choice.

Now I know the truth.

Landing on the soft grass outside Amenadiel’s house, I suppress a shiver. Memories of the groups of humans I killed assault my mind as I peer up at the gargoyles that stare down at me with a wicked gleam in their soulless eyes. Thick ivy crawls the length of the stone walls, and as a lick of breeze slides through my long hair, the leaves rustle softly. A lone candle that flickers behind the stained-glass window draws my attention.

Walking up the stone steps, I debate my choice. Is this a good idea? No, it’s not. It’s a very fucking bad idea, but where

else can I go?

Imaginary eyes track me as I lift my hand to knock on the door. I pause, peering behind me at the thick woods surrounding the property. The sensation of being watched quickens my heart, and I turn back around and bang my knuckles against the door before I can talk myself out of it.

I count the seconds, ears pricked for movement behind me. It doesn't take long before heavy footsteps sound behind the door, followed by the groan of the rusted hinges as it creaks open to reveal Amenadiel in all his glory.

His eyes flick past me to the trees, and without speaking a word, he steps aside and lets me pass.

My shoulder brushes his hard chest, and I emerge into the spacious hallway.

The door creaks shut and then he walks past me, leaving behind a cloud of his masculine scent, like that of the night. Looking to my right, where his long cloak hangs from a peg on the wall, I clear my throat. "Are you not gonna ask why I'm here?"

He draws to a halt and slowly turns around, so slowly I hold my breath while my heart tries to climb up my throat's narrow passageway to escape. "Does it matter?"

"Yes," I answer, trying not to fidget. "It does."

Interest piqued, he steps closer, strangely wary of me. "Why?"

My curious eyes slide over his wings, the way they rise high above his broad shoulders and grace the stone floor, his dark feathers dragging across the grit and rock. "I'm trying to understand you."

"Don't."

"All this time, you tried to coax the darkness to the surface. Why? I know you have an agenda, Amenadiel. What is it? How does my monster benefit you?"

He goes to speak, but I interrupt him. "You want to dethrone Lucifer, and you tried to buy me to piss off your

nephew, hoping he would break the treaty. You also know about the betrothal between Daemon and Dariana. But this is about more than that, isn't it? Why would you lure my monster out from the shadows and fuck me in my dreams if it was all about Lucifer? Why would you steal something for yourself? That's what you did when you fucked me." Closing the distance between us, I look into his eyes. "You stole something for yourself."

His hand flies out, and he wraps his long fingers around my throat. "What do you remember from tonight?"

Confusion furrows my brows as his hand shifts on my neck, and his thumb drags over my bottom lip. "Tonight?"

His dark eyes excavate me in the ensuing silence, hunting for the truth, before he drops me like I'm worthless and strides off in the direction of his office. "Thought so."

My wings slump as his door slams shut. I don't know why I held on to some futile hope that he would tell me the truth. Of course he won't. If I want it, I'll need to dig it out myself with a spade and endless patience.

CHAPTER
FOUR

DAEMON

The wind whistles outside the tall windows, and the sconces on the walls burn higher. My father approaches me with twisted amusement shimmering in the black depths of his cold eyes before it gives way to something far darker. The palpable shift in the air tenses every muscle in my body. He stops in front of me with his hands clasped behind his back and his wings tucked. A smile reappears at the corners of his lips, barely there, a dancing flicker that's soon extinguished when he backhands me hard. "How fucking dare you threaten the throne for a girl?"

I'd tried to go after her, rounding the corner just in time to see her slinking through the wall of guards. But my father clicked his fingers behind me, and the guards fell upon me. I refrain from using my fire magic since I know far too fucking well, my father's punishment will be so much worse if I continue fighting. I'm strong, but I don't rival my father. *Yet.*

Dariana, Ronan, and Alaric watch from the sidelines with matching worry etched across their faces. They've seen my father flex his alpha before, but it never gets easier.

"She's just a girl," he spits, then backhands me again when I bare my teeth at him. "Cut it out! I will not allow you to obsess over a female."

"She's not just a fucking female," I growl, ignoring my burning cheek as I cut him a glare.

My father snorts, briefly splitting the air as he flexes his impressive wings before tucking them again. "You can wet your dick in any hole you want. What makes this angel so special?"

I know when to keep quiet.

"Interesting," he muses, observing me closely and cutting me to my core with his probing gaze. "Maybe I should fuck her myself to see what the fuss is all about."

My fight renews, and I wrench free from the guards, who jump back when my wings erupt in flames that spread across my shoulders and arms. “You stay the fuck away from her, *Dad*,” I sneer, stalking closer. “If you so much as lay a fucking finger on her, I will kill you!”

In my periphery, Ronan shakes his head no, but I don’t give a shit if I’m goading my father with my warning. Not when he’s encroaching on my territory and threatening to steal the girl I can’t get out of my fucking head.

Lucifer doesn’t attempt to school his amused smile. His eyes reflect the flames dancing tall on my wings and body. I’ve never lost control of my own hellfire like this before. “Are you challenging me, son? Are you sure that’s the card you want to play? I’m more powerful than you.”

“But I’m also your only son.” I shrug my shoulders carelessly, pretending to inspect the flames at my fingertips. My eyes flick up, and with a smirk to match his, I let the words sail through the air like silent arrows in battle. “The only heir to the throne. Unless, of course, you want to give it up to my uncle?”

My father’s smile falls, and he studies me while carefully weighing his options. We both know he needs me. “You’re marrying Dariana.”

Over my dead fucking body. I wet my lips before flapping my wings behind me to shrug off the flames. They fizzle out, embers glowing brightly at the tips of my feathers. I use my magic to put out the flames on my body. “You remind me every day.”

“Don’t get stupid ideas in your head, son. I don’t care how much you obsess over this girl; you’re betrothed to Dariana. She’s been promised to you since the moment of conception.”

Stalking past him and ignoring my friends, I bite out, “Nice talking to you too, Dad.”

“I’m serious!” His voice booms through the vast space, threatening to extinguish the flames on the walls as his magic flares.

Whirling on him, I point an accusing finger at his face. “So am I. There are no lengths I won’t travel to secure Aurelia as mine. I will kill every fucker who tries to stand in my way, and that includes you.”

Amusement trickles from his every pore as he throws his head back with a laugh. Behind him, the guards chuckle nervously, but soon stop when I glare at them all. “Son,” my father starts, schooling his features and taking leisured steps closer. His shoes clap on the marble flooring, and the firelight reflects off his raven feathers. There’s no denying the evil that resides in my father. The very blood that runs through my veins. “Do you know what your greatest weakness is? Besides the girl?” he adds as an afterthought.

With my hands fisted at my sides, I grind my teeth and fight the impulse to step back when he continues advancing. The stench of the hunt is thick in the air.

Not interested in a response, my father carries on. “You’re too impulsive.”

Movement behind me tenses my shoulders, but before I can react, a sack is placed over my head. My friends’ cries and grunts cut through the air as a scuffle breaks out.

“Take him down to the cellars. Don’t let him leave until he knows his place.”

My mouth is so dry that my lips have started to crack, and the deep lacerations on my face and arms sting like a motherfucking bitch. I can’t remember the last time I felt strong enough to lift my head. With my arms suspended from a hook in the ceiling, the chains dig into my crusted wrists. My toes barely touch the gritty ground, and coppery blood drips from the tip of my nose. My father’s guards have done a number on me since I was thrown down here and locked away. I’ve lost track of time. It no longer matters.

The light tapping of dripping water from somewhere behind me is the only sense of perception I can cling to.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

My father won't kill me, but he'll keep me here, beaten to within an inch of my life, to teach me a lesson in obedience. I brought it on myself when I showed my cards. I shouldn't have exploded on him and warned him away from her.

Pain lances through my skull, causing me to wince as I imagine him seeking her out for his own cruel amusement. I'm too weak to conjure a flame. Too weak to do anything but wait.

A pitiful groan slips from my cracked lips.

Where's Aurelia?

Even as the thought enters my head, I know the answer.

She's with Amenadiel.

Where else would she go?

My damn cousin better keep his hands away from her, or to hell with the contract.

Breathing in the damp air and the stench of rot and death, I release a guttural roar that tears through my lungs like sharp blades. The chains rattle overhead, hauntingly loud in the blackness shrouding me. I need to get out of here. I need to put things right.

She thinks I'm marrying Dariana.

"Fuck," I whisper defeatedly, swinging on the spot and dragging my toes over the gritty floor, suspended too high up to balance. The blinding agony in my shoulder joints has nothing on the thick, molten fury brewing in my chest. I'm going to destroy my father for keeping me from her.

Just then, the naked bulb overhead blinds me, and my father retreats from the shadows.

"Electricity," he drawls, reaching up to still the dancing bulb. "It's so overrated."

"Then light a fucking torch," I spit, blood spewing from my mouth.

Wiping away a speck from his cheek with deliberate slowness, he makes a point of looking at his thumb and smearing the bead of blood between his fingers. “Do you know how long you’ve been down here? Locked away in the darkness?”

My head lolls, a humorless laugh caressing my raw vocal cords.

“Three days.”

A tired breath escapes me. Three days away from Aurelia. Since when did I allow her to crawl beneath my skin like this?

“Three days of your cousin working his magic on her.”

The snarl vibrating in my chest has a smile pulling at the corners of his lips. My father likes to toy with me like a serpent with its prey. “How many more until she lets him between her legs?”

My incisors throb painfully, the sharp tips dripping venom at his taunts. “Shut. Up.”

“Unless, of course, you can convince me of why she’s not a threat to the throne.”

When I don’t respond, he shrugs his shoulders and kicks an abandoned knife on the floor out of the way. “I’ll tell you why she’s not a threat anymore: after the truth slipped out, she won’t let you near her again.”

“She won’t have a fucking choice,” I growl before I can stop myself. And then, because I’m already on a roll, I add, “I don’t care what she wants. I need her. She’s mine.”

“You think she wants a male angel as weak and pathetic as you? Look at you, son. Strung up like a weakling with your wings tied behind your back. You’re not even out there beneath the moonlight to protect her.”

My heart sinks at his words. He’s right; I’m weak.

“Your cousin is stronger than you and more able to win the female,” he taunts, adding salt to the wounds. “Do you think she’ll choose you after she sees you like this?”

My head flies up, and I wince as my skull explodes with blinding pain that bursts behind my eyelids. I try to peer at him but slam my eyes closed again and let out a tortured groan.

“She’s upstairs, looking for you. Do you want me to let the girl of your dreams come down here to see you like this? Pathetic and broken?”

He’s lying. I know he is, but my head still shakes and my lips still breathe out a plea for him to keep her away. If she sees me like this, she won’t want me. No female wants a male angel as weak as me. I can’t even fight off my own father. I’m at his mercy until he decides he’s had enough of me.

The door behind us creaks open. An elongating shadow crawls along the bloody stone floor before disappearing as the door clicks shut. My father turns to the guard and says, “Continue his punishment. Come find me when he’s unconscious and broken.”

DARIANA

Ronan closes his locker beside me and blows out a tired breath. I stare off into the distance. Students mull about, some with their arms laden with books on their way to class. When they spot us, they duck their heads and scuttle off. Unless they're females. Then they flash their most charming smiles in Ronan and Alaric's direction before noticing me. I do love watching the color drain from their faces at my snarl.

"Lucifer will release him soon."

Torn from my thoughts, I slide my gaze across the crowds of people until Ronan's muted, dark eyes lock onto mine. "Why the hell are we at school when Lucifer's guards are doing God knows what to him?" Straightening up, I pull the bag's strap higher onto my shoulder, careful to let my hair hide my face. I hate showing weakness like this. "We should try to free him."

"Dari..." Ronan ducks his head to my level and forces me to look at him. As he parts my hair, his brown eyes soften. "If we tried to save him, we'd be thrown into the cellars, too."

"Is that so bad?"

"Yes," he breathes out, wrapping an arm around me and pulling me into his embrace in a rare show of affection. "Lucifer can't kill his own son, but he can kill us to keep Daemon in line." His embrace tightens around me, and he places a soft kiss on the top of my head. "This is what Daemon would want. He'd want us to keep an eye on *her*."

Aurelia...

The girl in question has not spared us a glance since that night, refusing to acknowledge our presence. Never once did I think I'd be this bothered by her disappearance act. All along, I'd convinced myself that she worked for Amenadiel. But she has hardly left Dmitriy's side since that night. Almost as if she's using him as a shield.

Every time I spot them together, my teeth gnash, and something dark unfurls inside me. I know Dmitriy is up to no good. I just can't figure out his angle. And now that we know how powerful Aurelia is behind her sad smile...

"It's not good enough," I murmur, breaking our connection as I set off walking.

Alaric exits the girls' bathroom and falls into step with us. "Dmitriy hasn't spilled any of his secrets to Cosima."

"Why would he?" My voice drips with bitterness. I hate that we're clutching at straws.

"Because," Alaric starts, flashing fang as his lips kick up in a smile, "they fuck on the regular. If he spills his secrets to anyone, it's her."

"And why would she reveal his secrets to one of Dmitriy's rivals?" I ask with an eye roll.

Ronan slides his eyes to me as we turn the corner. "Like everyone else here, she wants a shot at the empty seat on the throne."

"Oh, come on. That's a long shot. Everyone knows Daemon is marrying me when the time is right." The words taste foul on my tongue.

"The other girls still have hope."

We enter the classroom and find seats at the back. Aurelia sits one row ahead, staring out at the darkness outside the tall windows, with a vacant look in her eyes. The left shoulder strap has slipped down her shoulder to reveal her smooth skin. As I watch, she slides her wavy hair to one side and picks up her pen. Then she drops it again as if she can't make up her mind.

Meanwhile, my gaze stays transfixed on the exposed curve of her long neck. Why won't she look at us? Not even so much as cut us an angry glare? Something. Anything to make us notice her.

"You're staring," Alaric points out, ruffling the front of his hair.

My throat jumps, and I shake myself off whatever trance clings to me like a morning mist. “I just hate that Daemon is suffering because of her.”

“He’s not suffering *because* of her. It’s not her fault that Lucifer is a psychopath.”

Unimpressed, I snort. “We wouldn’t be here if she hadn’t thrown that football at his head.”

Their chuckles draw my attention away from the angel. Elbow kicked up on the back of his chair, Ronan balances on the back legs. “That was an epic throw.”

Alaric hides his answering smile behind his fist as he scratches the corner of his mouth with his thumb. He drops his hand to the table and smooths his finger over a groove in the desk, all traces of humor gone. “There’s still a stalker out there. I don’t care if she hates us or not. We’re not leaving her alone.”

CHAPTER
FIVE

AURELIA

The days go by so slowly. I'm withering away, vaguely wondering where Daemon is but also relieved that he's not in class. It's difficult enough to be around *them* all the time.

The reek of fear and blood in the cafeteria never gets any easier to handle, but I soon learn to tune it out. I haven't dared feed on anyone here. Just the thought of luring the darkness inside me to the surface has my heart galloping uncomfortably in my chest. Instead, I force the hunger back down.

I need to find someone willing to let me feed on them. Someone safe.

"Don't leave me alone in here again," I say to Dmitriy with my eyes closed and my head resting back against the cold stone walls as his shadow falls over me. I've grown used to his woodsy smell these last couple of days.

His dark chuckle pulls a small smile from my own lips, and I open my eyes to look at him. Blood stains his bottom lip, but he makes no move to wipe it clean. Instead, he lowers himself down beside me and kicks his ankle up on his knee. With his arm outstretched behind me, he scans the cafeteria. "You can't hide behind me forever. They'll corner you sooner or later."

"They can always try," I mutter, clutching my aching stomach.

Dmitriy notices, his brows pulling low. "When was the last time you fed?"

My eyes lock with Ronan's across the cafeteria, where he sits on top of a table with his elbows on his thighs and his feet on a chair. His brown eyes burn into me from beneath his dark lashes before he breaks eye contact to greet a male student, who clasps him on the shoulder. I study the stranger. Like other angels here, his wings end just above the back of his knee. Unlike mine, which trail the floor. I keep them tucked,

but it's hard to hide their impressive size. I'm not blind to the male attention it brings, much to Dmitriy's amusement.

The guy loves nothing more than to slide his arm around my shoulders and bare his incisors at other males. It's a game to him, and he chuckles every time they scurry away like frightened mice.

"Look..." Dmitriy turns his body to face me. "You need to keep your strength up. With wings like that"—he gestures at them pressed up uncomfortably against the wall behind me—"you're bound to draw the wrong kind of attention."

The look I give him is deadpan. "Like you."

His laugh starts out slow, a soft chuckle at first that soon morphs into something deep and rich. Cupping my chin, he jostles me playfully. "Yes, like me. Why are you here, angel? You should stay far away if you know what's good for you."

Unable to stop a smile from dancing across my lips, I bat him off. "You're the lesser of two evils. I'd rather deal with you than the three of them." I fall silent, relaxing back against the cold wall. Dmitriy stays quiet beside me, but the heat of his gaze burns the side of my face. His soft touch follows as he tucks my hair behind my ear.

Picking at my nail polish and scraping it off from the corner of my thumbnail, I ask, "Do you know where Daemon is?"

"No."

My teeth destroy my bottom lip while his fingers trace the shell of my ear. I don't question why he's touching me like this or why he's being kind to me. In a world where cruelty is your ally, I feel so fucking lost and welcome having a friend.

It's foolish—I know it is. When I killed Oliver and escaped Eden, I had a plan and a purpose in mind. Now I'm stuck here with no clue about who I am or why I'm here.

"But I do know that he'll come back for you."

I scoff, avoiding his probing gaze.

“He will,” he reassures me, cupping my chin and bringing my eyes to his. I couldn’t look away even if I wanted to. I’m reeled in by the darkness in his eyes, the whisper of a promise to make me forget and take the pain away.

Why does he look so much like Daemon but also not? Why do I tingle in forbidden places when his breath licks at my lips like the ghosting of a promised kiss?

I lean away from his touch, then rise to my feet. “I need to go.”

His hand flies out and encircles my wrist. “I’m sorry.”

My eyes fall to where his fingers burn my skin. I’m hurting. That’s why my heart responds to the regret staring back at me.

“I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable.”

I jump at the sound of a throat clearing behind me, and Dmitriy’s eyes darken before he releases me and relaxes back. “Alaric,” he drawls, stretching his arm out over the back of the bench. I stand frozen in place with my breath caught in my throat. I don’t dare turn around.

“She’s claimed by Daemon.”

Dmitriy raises one eyebrow and pretends to scan the cafeteria. “Daemon isn’t here.”

My eyes threaten to fall shut when Alaric’s heat burns my back. He towers behind me, aching familiar. “Touch her again, and it’ll be the last fucking thing you do.”

Without thinking it through, I spin around and shove him back. “I decide who gets to touch me. Not you, and certainly not Daemon.”

Alaric kills the small distance in less than two steps, his lips brushing against the shell of my ear when he whispers, “You’re smarter than this.”

“Than what?”

“He’s playing games.”

My feet retreat a step. “And you’re not? All this time, Daemon was betrothed to Dariana.”

“It’s complicated,” he grits out, hands fisting rhythmically at his sides. He wants to reach for me but holds himself back.

“Complicated,” I echo. My throat bobs on a painful swallow as I allow myself a second to bask in his masculine perfection. The way his dark hair falls over his brows, and the glint in his stormy eyes as he holds himself back from grabbing me and punishing me with his lethal touch that would see all of my defenses crumble.

Since when did I become so fucking scared? Where has my fight gone? I don’t like this new version of me. “Leave,” I demand, gesturing to Ronan and Dariana across the room. “Your friends are waiting for you.”

His conflicted eyes skate past me to Dmitriy on the bench and then back. “If you think this is over, you’re wrong.”

“Run along now,” Dmitriy taunts behind me, and I fight the urge to growl at him.

Snarling, Alaric bares his teeth. “Watch it!” Then he’s gone, walking back across the cafeteria. I’m left a weak, panting mess that’s two seconds away from collapsing in a heap.

I somehow manage to sit back down and grip the edge of the seat. “You’re right,” I say to Dmitriy. “I need to feed.”

His warm touch strokes soothing circles on the spot between my wings. “What do you need?”

My eyes find his over my shoulder. “I need to visit the human world.”

It’s bad news to go there. I should stay in Hell and not entertain the darkness inside me. If I feed, I’ll not only nourish myself, but the monster, too. It’s growing restless, and the only way to keep it leashed is to keep myself weak.

But if I’m weak, I can’t keep up my defenses against them. And as I lift my gaze to find Alaric and Ronan watching me, I know I have no other choice. I must protect my fragile heart.

RONAN

“I hate this,” Dariana mutters, looking over her shoulder at the little witch across the cafeteria where she sits with Dmitriy. “I hate that he thinks he can just piss all over our territory like that.”

“I thought you didn’t trust her,” I point out lazily as I straighten up and fish a packet of cigarettes from my pocket. It’s frowned upon to smoke in here, but it’s not like anyone can tell us off. I light one up and blow out a cloud of smoke.

Dariana wafts it away with her dainty hand. “I didn’t. But that was before Lucifer kidnapped his own son to teach him a lesson.”

“What changed?” Alaric asks, hands in his pockets and his gaze locked on Aurelia.

As I bring the filter to my lips and inhale a deep breath, she says, “Everything.”

Smoke pours from my lips as I chuckle. “Everything?”

She jumps up next to me on the table and pulls her skirt down to cover more of her bare thighs before snatching the cigarette from between my lips. She takes a drag and blows the smoke right in my face, then responds, “If she’d been working with Amenadiel like we thought, she wouldn’t avoid us like the plague after finding out about the betrothal.”

I mull over her words, then shrug when she hands the cigarette back. “It’s a little too late now.”

A disbelieving sound escapes her plump lips and then she turns away from me to face the little witch. “It’s never too fucking late. Besides, whether she likes it or not, she belongs to us. If she doesn’t want to be ours, well...” Her cruel smile coaxes mine out to dance with hers. “Then we’ll just have to steal her choice and break her down, little by little, until she begs us to touch her.”

Nudging her with my shoulder, I smirk. “I like your evil side.”

“Screw that,” Alaric mutters. “She doesn’t have a choice to begin with. If she thinks she can hide behind Dmitriy, she’s in for a rude awakening.”

“We need Daemon back,” Dariana mumbles, resting her head on my shoulder. “I’m so fucking worried about him.”

“Don’t be.”

She ignores me. “He was always larger than life. To see him dragged away to the cellars... the blood left behind on the marble floor...”

“He’ll be fine,” I say reassuringly. “Daemon will always bounce back. It’s what he does.”

I wish I could believe my own words. While I know Lucifer won’t kill his own son, he’s a psychopath who singlehandedly birthed Hell and the separation from God. There’s not a kind bone in his body. If Daemon doesn’t willingly submit to his father, then Lucifer will break him until he’s in pieces before putting him together like a patchwork quilt. It may look pretty, but the pieces will never fit right again.

“Daemon will be back soon,” I murmur, bringing the filter to my lips. The embers crackle in the silence as I nod to myself. “He will.”

“The hell?” Alaric straightens, watching the little witch and Dmitriy exit the cafeteria. “Where are they going?”

“Beats me.” I jump down from the table, crush the cigarette beneath my boot, and set off after them. “But I’m finding out.”

We keep a safe distance away, too intrigued to let ourselves be known just yet. The little angel weaves through bodies ahead of Dmitriy, who follows behind like a lazy cat while making no secret of checking her out. It makes my fucking blood boil.

They exit the academy and set off into the sky, their impressive wings slicing through the silvery moonlight.

“Well, color me intrigued,” I say, bending my knees and shooting up into the sky. The cool air caresses my feathers as my wings unfold from my back.

We keep low, flying in and out of the treetops to keep hidden from view while keeping them in our sights.

“They’re about to enter the human world,” Alaric points out as we near the border.

“She’s hunting.” Dariana flies past me, her long hair moving in the wind.

“Why not drink from the girls in the cafeteria?”

“Unless she wants to hide the monster in her that comes out every time she feeds,” I muse, giving a hard sweep of my wings to propel me forward. My cheeks burn from the icy breeze, but all that soon changes when we cross the border. The air turns milder and more damp. It sticks to my skin, curling the ends of my hair.

“Where the hell is she going?”

“Beats me.”

We follow them until they finally descend to the ground and set off walking toward a remote village.

My shoes sink into the soft, tall grass, and I flex my wings once, stretching them out before tucking them back in and cracking my neck. While Aurelia traveled this far to hunt humans, we’re here to hunt her.

I take in the paddock and the lone horse asleep in the distance. A white, weathered farmhouse stretches tall to our left with all the lights out in the windows. Beside it, a parked, green tractor has seen better days. Tufts of grass and an abandoned tire lead the way to the dilapidated porch, where a swing chair creaks in the wind.

Dariana is the first one to set off, her short skirt sliding over her thighs with every silent step. “Come on, boys. What

are you waiting for? I don't know about you, but I'm curious to see what trouble she's about to get herself into."

Rolling my shoulders back, I follow, equally intrigued to find out what she has planned.

"Shit, I think I stepped in something," Alaric complains, rubbing his shoe on the grass.

"Stop being such a baby." Dariana quickens her steps until she reaches the fence. With a flap of her wings, she lands softly on the other side.

Alaric is still whining about the horse shit on his shoe when we finally reach the road. There's a small pub up ahead, and all my senses are homed in on it. The little angel is in there, eyeing up the human men.

Irritation gnaws at me when I think about her with anyone else. Human or not.

It amused me when Daemon was jealous, but now I'm experiencing the same annoyance. It pricks at my skin, an annoying sensation in the pit of my stomach and at the back of my neck that can't be ignored. I scratch at it, but it's still there, demanding I grab her in a chokehold and shake some fucking sense into her.

"Remember," Dariana quips, sensing my thoughts. "It's part of the hunt. You can't lose your temper and slaughter everyone in the pub, alright? Daemon isn't here to bail us out, and his father won't take kindly to us being obsessed with her, too."

"Fuck that," I bite out. "If she touches another man, I'll kill him myself. I don't give a shit if he's human and has a tiny dick."

"Maybe her choice of man is a human with a massive dick. Maybe it trumps yours in siz—"

Teeth gritted, I clamp my hand over her mouth to shut her up.

"Or maybe," Alaric starts, flashing a smile, "her choice of meal is a big-breasted woman with a tight cunt."

Dari is on him in a flash, wings and teeth bared as she tackles him to the ground. His booming laughter echoes in the silent night while he fights her off before climbing on top of her and restraining her wrists. With his knees on either side of her thighs, he flashes a sinful yet teasing smile and snaps his teeth at her. “Fiery.”

“Fuck you!” she hisses like a coiled serpent.

He jumps to his feet and helps her up with his outstretched hand.

“You play fucking dirty.”

“Well...” He nudges her with his shoulder. “You can’t go slaughtering everyone in the pub if you get jealous.”

With a final snort, she speeds ahead, leaving us to exchange amused looks.

CHAPTER
SIX

AURELIA

The hum of conversation drowns out the music in the background as we make our way to the bar and hop up on the barstools. The air reeks of beer, sweat, and sickly perfume—a scent I have come to associate with pubs.

Pulling beer, the barman spares me a glance and half shouts to be heard, “What can I get you?” His long, brown dreads are tied back, and intricate tattoos adorn his arms. The two top buttons on his black shirt, bearing the logo of the pub, are undone to reveal a smattering of dark hairs.

I gesture to one of the bottles in the fridge tucked beneath the counter behind him. “A bottle of cider, please.”

After handing the beer to the customer to my left and taking payment, he turns around and bends down to open the fridge. My eyes slide down to his shapely butt, where his slacks strain against the skin.

“You don’t wait around,” Dmitriy comments drily, drumming his fingers on the counter.

The barman straightens back up, places the cider in front of me, and tips his chin at my companion. “What can I get you?”

I like his defined jaw and the day-old stubble that decorates his tanned skin. He looks to be somewhere in his late twenties.

With his most charming smile, Dmitriy uses his magic to trick the barman into thinking we’ve paid. When I snort, he flashes me a wink. “Jealous?”

The cool liquid slides down my throat, and I shake my head. I’d placed a spell on the barmaid back in Ireland.

“What’s the deal with Daemon and the others? You’ve avoided them since you returned to my father’s house.”

Dragging my thumb through the condensation on the bottleneck, I shrug one shoulder and say, “It’s hard to talk

about.”

“Maybe it’ll help. I’m a good listener.”

The left corner of my mouth threatens to pull up, but the ache in my chest prevents it from slipping free. I sigh, bringing the bottle to my lips as I look at the mirrored wall behind the bar. My reflection stares back at me from behind the glass shelves filled with bottles of alcohol. After taking a sip and placing the bottle on the coaster, I slide my gaze to him and attempt a weak smile. “Daemon is marrying Dariana.”

“So?” He sounds genuinely confused.

Slowly spinning the bottle, I avoid his eyes. “So... I’m in love with him.” I blow out a breath and push the bottle away with a wince. “I’m in love with them all.”

Dmitriy studies me for a moment, causing my skin to crawl beneath his careful scrutiny. The urge to unzip my skin and run for the door has me breaking out in a cold sweat despite the muggy air. I scratch my brow.

“Look, I have never been in love. But the betrothal... It means nothing. Everyone knows it.”

“It doesn’t matter,” I say as though it’s not a big deal. But it is. It’s a big fucking deal, and the throb behind my ribcage is an insistent reminder that I allowed them to steal not only my innocence, but my heart, too. I should have been more careful, but I wasn’t. And now I’m paying the consequences of falling in love in Hell.

“I can’t be with them anymore.”

“Why?”

Irritation flares up inside me, and I blow out a frustrated breath. “I can’t, okay? Daemon is marrying the girl I love.”

“But you’re in love with him, too?”

“I never claimed it wasn’t a mess,” I reply, looking at him. “They knew all this time, and they never told me.”

Reaching out, he strokes a strand of hair away from my cheeks, and the stupid tears in my eyes escape. “You know he

won't let you go, right? Once my cousin sets his eyes on something, he'll burn down the world to keep it."

"You make it sound like he sets his eyes on girls a lot."

"No," he replies, shaking his head softly, his finger trailing down the curve of my jaw. "You're the first."

With my heart suspended somewhere between beating heavily and taking flight, I sweep my gaze over his face. His ruggedness isn't lost on me. Swiping at my pesky tears, I break our connection. "I need to protect myself. I can't let them break me over and over. I'm not strong enough."

He reaches forward and takes a sip of his beer, then wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and lets out an agreeing sound. "It makes sense. So what will you do when they come for you?"

"I won't let them."

While I expect him to laugh, he doesn't so much as smile. Instead, he studies my face intently before sweeping his dark eyes past me to stare into the distance. After taking a sip of his beer, he puts it back down onto a coaster he pulled from beneath an abandoned glass. His movements are careful and measured, and I can't help but notice the lethal grace in each shift of his muscles beneath his shirt. He looks at me, at my wings peeking up behind my shoulders. "They won't leave you with a choice. This is Hell, remember? When we want something, we take it."

Breaking eye contact, I mutter, "How could I forget?"

"Would it be that bad? To be with them again?"

It's a question I've mulled over in my head. "I can't watch him marry someone else."

"I get it."

"And if they marry, then what? I'll be their thing on the side?"

"I'm not gonna pretend I understand the dynamics between you all." He takes another sip of his beer while I curse the clogged feeling in my chest that refuses to go away. "So,"

Dmitriy starts, his tongue darting out to lick away the froth on his lip. With a tip of his chin in the barman's direction, he says, "What's the plan? Invite him out to dinner afterward?" His voice drips with amusement, and his eyes shine beneath the dim lighting as I shoot him a look of disapproval.

"Very funny." My eyes seek out the barman again and skate down his body, then back up to linger on the pulse point in his neck. The throb in my teeth as they elongate has my hand flying up to cover my mouth.

Dmitriy clasps my shoulder and gently squeezes it when I hurriedly take another sip of cider. "You'll get the hang of it soon."

I guzzle it down like it's my lifeline, then slam the bottle back down and scan the room. Wooden beams run the length of the roof, a fire crackles in a fireplace near the back, and lone candles decorate each table. I let my gaze slide over each one before closing my eyes and inhaling a slow, deep breath. In my mind's eye, shadows crawl out from between the gaps in the wooden flooring, a thick mist traveling along the ground and devouring everything in its path. It comes for me, chasing away the pain that grips my heart in a vice. The moment the cold brush of gnarled, crooked fingers with oozing, maggot-eaten flesh curl around my bare ankle, chaos erupts. Each candle blows out, and the flames from the fireplace spread across the floor, setting curtains and furniture alight.

Dmitriy chokes on his beer and jumps off the barstool. "What the fuck are you doing?"

The flames heat my cheeks, growing taller and fiercer, burning everything in their path—a vessel for mindless destruction. My soul feeds on the chaos and fear. Humans run left and right in their panic to find a way out, but the flames block the only exit.

Inhaling their exquisite screams, I jump off the barstool and home in on my meal near a window. He throws a chair at it, effectively breaking the glass and feeding the flames more oxygen. The curtain rod falls, and he ducks out of the way of the burning curtains.

“Jesus, fuck,” Dmitriy blurts, staring disbelievingly at the horror unfolding in front of us. “We need to get out of here.”

“What’s the hurry?” I ask, a small smile playing at the corners of my lips as the terror that clogs the air licks at my skin like a lover’s caress, promising pleasure and release. The blood in my veins thrums with power. Now, all I need is blood.

My meal helps as many as he can out the window before pulling a chair over, arm held over his mouth to protect him from the thick smoke. As he disappears through the window, I follow him, deaf to the screams and fear in the room.

Climbing out behind him, I land amongst the shattered pieces of glass in the grass and seek him out amongst the coughing, crying humans. I find him near the road, seated on the lawn with his head in his hands.

“What are you doing now?” Dmitriy asks. He sounds fed up with me, as though I’m an unruly child.

“What does it look like I’m doing?” I cross the grass, but Dmitriy stops me with a firm grip on my shoulder before I can reach the man I have my eyes on.

“I’m serious, Aurelia. What are you doing?” Gesturing vigorously behind him, his concerned eyes find mine again. “You burned the pub down within five minutes of entering. Why?”

I can’t explain to him why the darkness inside me craves destruction or understand why his doesn’t. Instead, I shrug him off and turn to make my way to the stranger with the dreads, but Dmitriy grabs my wrist and pulls me back. “Answer the question.”

My wings flutter behind me with unease as I scan the scene in front of me. Tall flames reach for the starry sky, and the air is thick with black smoke and coughing humans, some bleeding from scrapes and cuts. One woman collapses to her knees near the set of doors and releases a guttural scream that should horrify me. But a ripple of pleasure coils down my spine. I turn back to look at the man with the dreads, who

stares off into the distance as if it pains him to face the terror in front of him.

Dmitriy grips my shoulder and shakes me. “What is wrong with you? What is this?”

“Wrong with me?” I ask uncomprehendingly. “We’re fallen angels from Hell. We don’t have morals, remember?”

With that, I shrug him off and cross the lawn with one goal in mind—drain the human. The blood in my veins quickens with anticipation, and my heart thuds heavily as I crouch down before him and clasp his stubbly chin. As soon as his blue eyes find mine, I channel my stirring magic to place him under a spell.

“You’re gonna come with me,” I instruct when his eyes grow hazy and distant. Then I take his big hand and lead him away from the burning pub toward the dense cluster of trees across the road.

Dmitriy calls after me, but I don’t turn around, too seduced by the darkness inside me that calls me forward, whispering my name from behind the shadows stretching out on the grass. Breathing in the scent of the night, mixed with the inferno, I stretch my wings out behind me. Thick smoke conceals our retreating forms from prying eyes, but the instinct to hide him from view and to secure my meal from other potential predators is still at the forefront of my mind as we enter the tree line.

Pushing him up against a thick trunk, my nose descends on his neck, and my hands mold against the grooves in the rough bark. A soft, satisfied moan rumbles in my throat at the scent of his iron-rich blood. My clit pulses as I drag my tongue over the curve of his chin to taste his tempting lips. I bite down, digging my nails into the bark. He begins to emerge from his daze, and anticipation thrums in my veins at the thought of his fear, how it’ll taste when I finally release him completely.

Letting go of the cold bark, I squeeze the outline of his dick. He’s hard, much to my pleasant surprise, and I groan into his mouth and tangle my tongue with his. “There’s a good boy,” I whisper, reaching for the top button and undoing it

with a quick flick of my thumb. As I go to pop the next button in line, I'm suddenly wrenched off him and tossed to the damp ground.

Towering over me, Alaric bares his teeth with a feral hiss and puts his boot on my chest to keep me down. To say that I'm surprised would be a lie. I'm not.

Not even a little.

"I should have known," I say, laughing tauntingly. "Are you stalking me now?"

His eyes flicker with hellfire as he leans down to sneer in my face. "Did you think you could just walk away? That we would let you fuck around?"

"This debate is getting fucking old," I growl, attempting to push myself up, but he's too heavy. "It's part of the hunt."

I flop back down as Dariana's face comes into view. Unlike Alaric who looks two seconds away from strangling me to death, she winks. "Got yourself into trouble again?"

I flip her off, pick up the nearest stick, and hurl it at Alaric before frowning and attempting to lift my head off the ground. "Where's Dmitriy?"

"Ronan is escorting him home."

Blinking up at Alaric while deciphering the meaning behind his detached words, I release a disbelieving laugh. "If he does anything to hurt him—"

"Then what?" Alaric interrupts, increasing the pressure on my chest.

Annoyance flares up inside me, and I peel my lips back in an animalistic snarl. My meal, slowly emerging from his daze, slumps against the tree. If I don't act fast, he'll get away.

"I need to feed," I admit reluctantly.

"Is that so?" he mocks with a winged brow as he tilts his head to the side. "It looked to me like you were about to suck his dick. If it's cum you want, all you have to do is ask."

"Let. Me. Go."

“Ask nicely, little angel, and I’ll consider it.”

My growl intensifies, and he bends down and pats my cheek hard, causing me to snap my teeth at him.

Behind him, Dariana laughs at my pathetic attempts to intimidate him. There’s no scaring off a powerful angel like Alaric. I know it. He knows it. We all fucking know it. I still try, though.

Fuck if I’ll lie here like a good little angel and let him dominate me like this.

Flames dance at my fingertips, but they fizzle out with a click of his fingers. I try again, and he puts them out just as fast.

“Baby girl, while you have the potential to be more powerful than me, and you have been at times, you’re not in control of your powers yet.”

A red haze descends, clouding my vision. Alaric’s eyebrows shoot up before he releases a chuckle. His dark hair falls into his eyes as he lets his head fall to his chest. Shoulders shaking, he flashes his incisors with a lethal smile that renders me powerless against him. “The monster in you wants to come out to play, too.”

“We need to tread carefully,” Dariana reminds him.

He sweeps his eyes over my face as he replies, “I know. I’m not blinded by her pussy like Daemon is.” His gaze trails down my body to between the apex of my thighs, where my dress pools in a sea of black fabric. “Though her arousal sure smells fucking divine.”

With a snort and a laugh, Dariana mutters, “Sure,” as she walks past us to my meal.

Mine.

My feral growl intensifies at the threat of her stealing him away from me. Vicious snarls that belong to a feral animal rip through the night. “Lay a fucking finger on him, and I’ll make you regret it,” I threaten.

At my warning, she looks at me and drags a single nail down the front of his throat, over his pronounced Adam's apple. Pausing between his collarbones, she asks, "What are you going to do, little witch?"

My upper lip twitches while I continue snarling, pissed that she's touching him. "He's mine. I captured him."

"She's territorial," chuckles Alaric, boot on my chest, elbow on his thigh.

"I thought sharing was caring?" Dariana taunts, making a show of popping the buttons on his shirt, one at a time, until his tanned chest is bared.

With strength I didn't know I possessed, I fly up from the ground and push Alaric aside in a blur of movement. Dariana barely has time to react before I'm in between her and my meal. My wings are flared, and hellfire is licking its way up my arms. Her brown eyes reflect the wild flames as she lets out a loud, feminine laugh that rings out like chiming bells or a siren call at sea. Whatever magic she possesses in that soft lilt is dangerous.

"Back. The. Fuck. Off!"

Her tinkling laughter dies, and her hand flies out like a striking cobra. Flames erupt from her fingertips. She grips my throat tightly, and the fire that licks a path across my skin melts away my resistance. I wish I could just shut my emotions off and forget about her.

"You don't make the rules here, sweetheart. Not when Daemon is in trouble because of you."

My heart stutters in my chest. "Daemon is in trouble?"

"Do you care?" she bites out, flames crawling up my chin and dancing across my lips. "At the first sign of trouble, you fled."

"And you didn't?"

Her grip loosens, and her brows pull low. "What are you talking about?"

Inhaling the flames of her fire, I shut my eyes. “I came back. I found my way back to you, and you didn’t see me...”

“Look at me, little angel.” Her voice caresses the frayed strings that keep me tethered to her. Even now, my fight is futile as I open my eyes to find myself caught in her gaze. “I saw you.”

“No,” I choke out. “I killed to find you again.” My voice crackles with pain, but I press on, whispering, “I relinquished the last of my Light to be with you.”

“Yet you’re running.”

As my throat jumps beneath her burning touch, I drown in her eyes. “You’re marrying him.”

“Sometimes,” she says cruelly, “wingspan doesn’t make a queen.”

“But it does capture a heart. Enjoy your loveless seat next to the devil while he searches the crowd for me.” My hands fly out to my sides, erecting a firewall that forces her to stumble back. I stare at her through the crackling flames as the heat blurs the air. “Stay away from me, Dari.”

When Alaric takes a step forward, I cut my eyes to him. “Try to put these flames out. I’d love to see you try.”

As I finally turn around to feed the hunger inside me, I groan. My meal has escaped.

Fucking typical.

CHAPTER
SEVEN

DAEMON

“**L**ook at you, son. Pathetic and weak.”

My father’s words sound muted, drowned out by the loud ringing in my ears. I’ve long since lost feeling in my wrists. My eyes are almost swollen shut, and a roadmap of lashings covers my sore back. I’ve been deprived of blood to stop me from healing. But most of all, I’ve been starved of her.

“I’ve never been so disappointed,” he drawls, hands clasped behind his back as he circles me. “You’re weak. So fucking weak!”

The chains rattle overhead when my father stops in front of me and grips my chin. His eyes fly over my face, and he shoves me away as though I disgust him.

“All of this because of a girl.” The poison in his voice pricks like the thorns of a rose bush, its venom burning inside my veins. He walks over to the desk by the wall and peruses the selection of tools. With his back to me, he trails his fingers over a small vial with a bitter liquid that, when ingested, stops the victim from using their fire magic. I’ve been drip-fed it over the last week.

All it takes is a single drop to incapacitate you for days. When he picks it up, I begin to thrash.

“I hear it’s painful when it puts out the flames in your soul.” Walking up to me, he tosses the vial up in the air and catches it. “Have you learned your lesson?”

My head slumps; the fight has gone. I nod.

“Good.” Lucifer pockets the vial. “What is she?”

“She’s no one.” The words burn a path through my vocal cords.

“Why would she want someone as weak and pathetic as you?”

“I’m no one.”

“That’s right,” Lucifer agrees, looking down at me. “You’re an embarrassment of a son.” With a tip of his chin to the guard at the door, he orders him to release me.

Rough hands undo the chains around my wrists, causing me to collapse to the floor in a heap. Barely able to hold my head upright, my wings droop on the dirty, blood-caked ground.

As Lucifer walks up to me and yanks my head up with a tight grip on my hair, his muddy boots pin my feathers to the stone floor. If I weren’t so weak, I’d challenge him for the degrading act. But this is Lucifer, the most powerful angel around, and I just so happened to be born with the curse of being his heir.

“Disrespect me again, son, and I won’t take it so easy on you.”

His footsteps retreat, and I’m hauled to my feet by the guard, who drags me out of the dark room and into the brightly lit hallway. I squint against the light, my head pounding from the blows I’ve endured. Tossing me to the hard ground, he walks off without another word, leaving me to lick my wounds. I release a pained groan and roll over onto my back. Everything hurts. Even my bones fucking ache.

I eventually manage to climb to my feet and make my way to my room. Collapsing onto the bed, I black out.

“We need to fucking kill Lucifer,” Dariana snarls, waking me with her high-pitched voice as she paces the room. The mattress dips, and her soft fingers brush up against the bruising on my cheek. “Hey, sleepyhead.”

With my arms beneath my pillow, I burrow deeper, escaping her ghosting touch. “How did you know my father let me go?”

“A little bird sang. We left class as soon as we got word.”

“Great,” I mutter, too exhausted to say much else.

“You’re healing, but slowly.” The mattress shifts again and then she returns with a balm. “Shift onto your back.”

I do as she says, wincing at the throbbing pain. My ribs are on fire.

Unscrewing the lid and applying cream to a sore cut near my eyebrow, she keeps talking. I let the soothing tone of her voice dull some of the ache.

Ronan sits at the end of the bed, staring out at the blackness outside the window, his shoulders slumped. Alaric watches me from his spot near the door, where he leans against the wall.

“You had us so worried.” Dari’s voice snaps me out of my thoughts. I brush her off before slowly scooting up in bed, trying my damn hardest not to let on how much pain I’m in.

My pride hurts more than anything.

“I’m fine,” I reply. “My father felt the need to teach me a lesson, is all.”

“Is all?”

I don’t care much for the note of sympathy in her voice. Rubbing at my tired eyes, I ask, “What did I miss while I was otherwise occupied?”

“I hate how you make light of the situation,” she hisses, screwing the lid back on. With a sigh, she looks to Alaric, and I stiffen at the unspoken words flowing between them.

“What was that?”

“What do you mean?” Alaric asks, his eyes skating to mine.

“That look you shared just now.”

“There was no look.”

Narrowing my gaze, I move to leave the bed, but Dari stops me with a hand on my shoulder. “We kept an eye on her while you were gone.”

Relief washes over me, and I sink back against the pillows.
“The stalker?”

“Hasn’t made an appearance.”

“That’s good.”

Ronan speaks up, his eyes finding mine over his shoulder.
“Dmitriy has been all over her, and she won’t talk to us.”

As my heart clenches in my chest, I look away and grit my teeth. “He’ll keep her safe.”

A thick and heavy silence descends on the room. So heavy, in fact, it’s suffocating.

Dariana coughs, or maybe she scoffs. “Excuse me? Did I hear you right? Did you say Dmitriy will keep her safe?”

At my shoulder shrug, her jaw drops. She jumps to her feet. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“Dari,” Alaric says, a note of warning in his voice.

She shoots him a glare to end all glares, then pins me with her probing gaze. “Dmitriy will keep her safe?”

My jaw pulses. “That’s what I said.”

She blinks at me, then seems to shake her head as if to clear it of thoughts. “What the hell happened to you down there in the cellar? The Daemon I know would never let Dmitriy win.”

“Win? Dari...” I throw my hands out. “Look at me. With a click of his fingers, my father had me thrown into one of his cellars downstairs and tortured by his guards for God knows how fucking long. I can’t keep her safe.”

She stares at me some more, her brown eyes flying over my face, before storming over to the door and yanking it open. Alaric looks over at me as she strides out and slams it shut, but no sooner has she left than she barges right back in and points an accusing finger at me.

“You, Daemon, forget one very important thing. You’re not the only one who’s in love with the angel. We all are. So fuck

you if you think I'll let Dmitriy sink his claws into her just because your father had your fucking balls removed."

Laughing mockingly, I slide my feet out from beneath the blanket and stand up. Firelight flickers on the wall, and a wicker basket with logs sits propped up against the fireplace—for show, more than anything. Killing the distance between us, I tower over her. Even now, I can't stop the urge to flex my authority. "You soon changed your tune."

Crossing her arms over her chest, she glares up at me with enough attitude to induce an eye twitch.

"You didn't want anything to do with her."

"I didn't trust her, Daemon."

Shaking my head, I shoulder past her on my way to the drawers. Candles line the top. Hanging off one in the middle is a pair of lace panties.

Aurelia's panties.

My heart twinges. I yank the top drawer open and pull out clean clothes. After placing them at the foot of the bed, I make a beeline for the bathroom. Dari dashes in front of me before I can escape inside.

"What if he fucks her?"

Staring off to the side, I grind my teeth so hard, I'm bound to induce a headache.

"She'll have his scent all over her."

I count to ten in my head, but she keeps aiming those bullets at my heart like a skilled assassin.

"She'll come on his cock and moan his name."

With my hands on her shoulders, I shift her out of the way and barge past her.

"I can't believe you're not gonna get her back," she shouts through the door, slamming her small palm against it.

"You're no one."

"You're weak. You're so fucking weak!"

My father's voice taunts me as I turn on the shower and strip out of my ruined, blood-stained clothes. Steam fills the room, fogging my reflection in the mirror in front of me. Dari continues banging on the door and shouting profanities at me. For a girl who couldn't stand the little angel a few weeks ago, she certainly changed her mind.

Stepping into the shower and bracing my hand on the tiled wall, I hang my head. Water pours from my nose in a steady stream as I scrub at my neck. The thought of Aurelia and Dmitriy won't leave my fucking mind. By the time I reach for the soap, I'm assaulted by images of him fucking her. Cursing Dari for putting those thoughts in my head, I lather up and scrub my hair vigorously. Nothing short of violence can save me now.

What about the stalker? Dari said there had been no sighting, but why would the stalker give up? Unless they're biding their time, watching her silently from the shadows.

Anger quickens my blood. I toss the soap at the wall, watching it bounce to the shower floor and settle near the drain. The thought of a stalker that's obsessed with the angel, *my angel*, pisses me the fuck off. Does he imagine himself touching her? Hurting her? What the fuck does he want with her?

"You think she wants a male angel as weak and pathetic as you? Look at you, son. Strung up like a weakling with your wings tied behind your back."

The memory slams into me with such vicious intensity that I stumble back and grab my head.

"You think she wants a male angel as weak and pathetic as you?"

"Fuck you," I snarl, breathing harshly. "Get out of my fucking head."

As my heart rate begins to settle back into a healthy rhythm, I shut the water off. I step out of the shower and reach for one of the towels on the towel rack. After scrubbing my hair and body, I exit the bathroom and get dressed. Ronan is

where I left him, seated at the end of my bed with his phone in his hand. Dari stops her pacing when the door clicks shut behind me.

Alaric toys with a yoyo—a red one this time. Up and down, it slides. “Dari has a point.”

“About what?” I feign confusion, walking over to the mirror that’s mounted to my door. My hair stands in all directions. While I attempt to wrangle it into submission by running my fingers through it, Alaric pockets his yoyo and says, “We’re all in love with her.”

I scoff, not even sparing him a glance as I straighten up.

“I mean it, Daemon.” His voice drops, becoming more serious. “I’m not letting her go.”

“Neither am I,” Ronan mutters, typing out a text on his phone before looking up at me. “I don’t care that you’re the one in charge. Aurelia is ours, not Dmitriy’s.”

At his admission, my shoulders slump. My father’s words come back to taunt me, but I force them back down. “She knows about the betrothal. Did you not see the look in her eyes? Because I sure as fuck did. She won’t take us back.”

Releasing a disgusted sound, Dari opens her mouth to retort, but Ronan shoots her a look, then rises to his feet. His tall build rivals mine, but his eyes are softer. “What happened down there, Daemon?”

Steeling my jaw, I block the memories that threaten to bubble to the surface.

“This isn’t you, man. The Daemon I know doesn’t take no for an answer.” His hand comes down on my shoulder. I try to shrug him off, but he tightens his grip and jostles me. “The Daemon I know—my friend—would make her submit. What is it you always say? This is Hell. We take what we want, remember?”

“Well, I don’t want her.”

His fingers twitch on my shoulder, and he releases a surprised laugh, which soon deepens until it grates on my

damn nerves. “You can lie to yourself all you fucking want, but I see right through you.” Dropping his hand, he gestures to the others. “*We* see right through you.” His eyes soften, forcing me to avert my gaze. “Beneath that hard exterior hides the real you, Daemon. You’re crazy about this girl. Maybe you don’t like it, but it doesn’t change the fact that she’s got you by your balls.”

“Maybe it’s not about me.” Meeting his gaze, I shrug. “My father proved one thing this week.”

“Yeah? What’s that? Besides the fact that he’s a psychopath.”

I wet my lips and shove my hands in my pockets to stop myself from fidgeting. “I can’t protect her. I’m weak.” With another shrug of my shoulders, I try to sidestep him, but he’s faster, his brows furrowing.

“What are you saying, Daemon?”

A headache is forming. “How long did my father keep me locked down there, stealing my powers and ordering his guard to torture me?”

When Ronan stays silent, I continue, “Aurelia could have been attacked in that time. The stalker could have gotten to her. Where was I to protect her? To keep her safe?”

“We’re a team,” he says, the confusion in his eyes clearing. “You can’t keep her safe by yourself. Fuck that! She’s ours, and we protect her together.”

“I don’t know what you want me to say.” I’m over this conversation. “My future is not in my hands. I have no fucking control over it.” Gesturing to Dariana, I say to Ronan, “It won’t be long until I marry Dari, and what then? What happens to the little angel when I have a wife? Is she going to stand on the sidelines and watch us get married?”

“Ronan and I will look after her,” Alaric speaks up, his lips twitching, but I can’t see the funny side of it. Not now.

With a shake of my head, I leave the room. “It’s over.”

They follow me into the hallway, and Dari's voice stops me in my tracks. "I never took you for a scaredy-cat, Daemon. I must say I'm disappointed."

Without looking back, I continue down the hallway, shoulders tense. My slumped wings drag over the floor, collecting dust and debris, but I barely notice. I know my friends want me to fight for the little witch. I was going to tell her about my father's plans. But every time I had her to myself, I couldn't bring myself to do it. I'm not marrying Dari. I refuse to let my father dictate my future like that. But sometimes, like today, I don't see another way out.

CHAPTER
EIGHT

AMENADIEL

The sensation of bare thighs straddling my waist and the brush of fingers on my forehead stirs me from my sleep. My dick hardens when a feminine voice whispers in my ear as strands of long hair tickle my cheeks. “Wake up, baby.”

Realization reaches me through the murky waters of slumber, and my eyes fly open to find Aurelia’s face close to mine, her brown hair tucked behind her ear. I stiffen and grip her hips.

“Did you miss me?” she asks, grinding down on my hardening dick as my fingers tangle in the silky fabric of her skirt that’s bunched around her waist. My gaze flicks down to between our bodies, and I draw in a sharp breath at the sight of her bare pussy. The girl has foregone panties, and she’s grinding on my dick in the middle of the night. Stretching my neck, I peer at the bedside clock. It’s just past three in the morning.

“What are you doing, Aurelia?” I ask.

“I didn’t know you slept naked.” Her predatory smile reveals sharp incisors. “I like it.”

I try to move her off me, but she surprises me with her strength when she grips my wrists and digs her sharp nails into my skin. She tuts disapprovingly, sliding her sweet cunt along my cock. “I’ve waited centuries to have you to myself again. Have you not missed me?”

Blinking up at her, at her wings as they slowly unfold behind her, I swallow past the thick lump in my throat. “Genesis?”

A peal of seductive laughter dances over her mouth, and she straightens up and lets her head fall back between her shoulders. The action has her breasts straining against the low-cut dress. My eyes drink her up, trailing up her slim waist gripped between my hands, the swell of her tits, and her slender neck.

Fear, unlike anything I've felt before, coils around my heart and slithers through my veins. This is not the Genesis I knew back in Eden. This grinding version in front of me is something much darker and deadlier.

A chill winds its way down my spine as her eyes find mine. "Yes, baby, it's me."

I'm bewitched by the monstrous perfection before me. My hips rise off the mattress, seeking her wet heat.

Her teeth sink into the swell of her bottom lip before she says, "Did you expect Aurelia?" Her taunting laugh slithers along every inch of my skin like the reaper's seductive touch. "Aurelia is unavailable at the moment."

When she leans down to kiss me, I pull away at the last minute, the heat of her breath caressing my stubbly cheek.

"Why did you attempt to lure me out of the shadows if you don't want me, Amenadiel?"

I stay silent, my cock twitching against her folds.

"All the times you tried to coax Aurelia's darkness to the surface." Her lips descend, dragging across my skin until they move against the corner of my mouth. "I laughed at you and your pathetic attempts."

When she rises up, her hand comes to my throat and grips me tight. She sinks down on my cock, lip trapped between her teeth. Her pussy grips me fiercely, and I release a choked sound as my fingers bruise her hips. "Fuck..."

"Is this what you fantasize about at night? Me riding you again, Amenadiel, like the good old times?"

Pleasure bursts behind my eyelids. She begins to move, watching me closely with those cold, dead eyes. "Or is it her you want? The innocent little angel they all drool over? You like her too, don't you?"

Her pussy pulses around my dick. She grinds down, taking me so fucking deep that I choke on my own drool. "This is not a dream, Amenadiel. There are no tears in the veil. This is her body in the flesh."

My hand leaves her hip, and I drag my fingers up her body and over her ribs to palm a soft breast. I grit my teeth.

“Do you like how she feels?”

Flipping us over, I clamp my hand over her plump lips to stop her from talking. If it weren't for the shadows that shroud the bed, or the blackness in her eyes, she could pass as *her*.

“Why have you returned, Genesis?” I sneer into her ear while slowly sinking into her tight cunt. “Why are you here?”

As my hand slides from her mouth to wrap around her neck, she opens her legs further. “You always liked them innocent.”

Gripping the headboard with my other hand, the bed frame creaks loudly as I chase my release. Right or wrong, I could die fucking this girl. It's true that I started out hunting Genesis as soon as I suspected that she was hiding inside Aurelia's shadows. But as time passed, my intrigue with the innocent angel grew until my hunger for her was as insatiable as my blood lust. Genesis knows my weakness.

Clawing her nails down my back, eliciting shivers, she lifts her head off the pillow to bite down on my bottom lip, breaking the skin. Blood floods my mouth, and she drags her tongue over my lips, down the curve of my chin, and along my jaw, before nipping at my earlobe. “If you use a single flame to light a room of candles, are they all the same flame?”

Pulling out to the crown, I slam back inside. “You're not her.”

“Does it matter?”

“Fuck,” I grunt, burying my face into her neck while pistoning my hips. “It matters.”

“You're selfish, Amenadiel. You never fucked me like this. Aren't you going to at least try to get me off?”

Lifting my head from her neck, I reach up to brush her damp hair away from her sweaty brow, wishing I could bring Aurelia back from the shadows. But she's lost for now,

imprisoned by the devil's past. "Why should I? You're not her."

"You really don't love me anymore?" Her icy voice lacks emotion. "The boy who promised to love me forever dropped me for another candle."

Our lips brush with every powerful thrust. Reaching down, I grip her bruised hip. "Genesis died that day—slaughtered by my own brother. You're a demon."

Her lips spread into a cruel smile. "I know you want him dead, Amenadiel. Let's kill him. Together."

"Is that why you've returned? To kill my brother? Why seduce me?"

"I thought you were smart, Amenadiel?" she asks, wrapping her legs around my waist when my movements grow jerky. I can't hold it back.

I come, groaning against her parted lips.

"I'm here to kill everyone," she whispers as I fill her up with my cum. "This body will ensure no one stands in my way."

Heart thundering in my chest, I frown while slowly leaning back to look her in the eyes.

"Don't you see?" Her smile grows, evil incarnate. "They all love her. *You* love her."

I scramble away, breathing harshly, the moonlight glinting off my cock that's wet with my cum and her arousal. She sits up, slides off the mattress, and lets her skirt fall back down to cover her bare pussy. Wings stretched behind her, she conjures a flame and lets it dance across her fingers. Her eyes find mine over the flickering fire. "She's the ultimate weapon to Hell's destruction. Why do you think God let her out of Eden? Why the gates opened for her but no one else?"

"God doesn't seek revenge," I bite out.

"Doesn't He?" Her tinkling laughter raises the hairs on my neck. "Did you never read the Bible, Amenadiel?" With a tut, she continues, "In Deuteronomy, God promised to avenge

Himself upon the Israelites who rejected Him, and He'd do it in His own timing and according to His own perfect and pure motives. Well, baby..." Stepping between my legs, where I sit at the edge of the bed, she cups my chin and grips it tight when I try to wrench free. "That time is now."

Before I can respond, she walks out of the bedroom, and I stare after her swaying hips. It's only when the door clicks shut that I'm snapped out of my stasis.

Flying to my feet, I hurry after her, throwing open the door. The empty hallway greets me. As I turn the corner, I stop short. Dried leaves blow across the beam of moonlight on the entrance floor.

Staring at the wide-open front door, I curse.

She's gone.

CHAPTER
NINE

AURELIA

Shutting the door carefully, I wince when the quiet click somehow manages to crack like a whip.

“Aurelia, is it?” the headmistress asks, looking up from the paperwork on her desk. Her dark eyes, framed by long wispy lashes, take in my wings behind me as she rises to her feet. She gestures to the chair across from the desk. “Take a seat.”

Feeling like a deer caught in the headlights, I slowly make my way over and plop down as requested. She remains standing, watching me closely like a specimen she wants to harvest and investigate further. Her white and, by the looks of it, very sharp incisors glint in the candlelight when she smiles at me. There’s nothing friendly about it. The headmistress is a cruel and sinister angel, from what I’ve heard.

“How are you settling in?”

I clear my throat. “I’ve settled in well, thank you.”

She places her hand on the desk and drags her blood-red nails along the wooden surface, skating the paperwork on her way up to me. She seems to float on air. My throat turns dry, and I fight the urge to flee. There’s something about her, something as dark as Lucifer. “Rumors spread fast here at the academy.”

I wrack my brain, trying to figure out what rumors involve me. I keep to myself most of the time.

“As you may know, this is an academy for privileged students.” She stares at me intently and when I blink, at a loss, she swipes her hand from the desk in such a swift move that I jerk. “You’re from Eden originally? Is that correct?”

“That’s hardly a rumor,” I blurt, then shrink back when she narrows her eyes at me.

“We pride ourselves on teaching the children of some of Hell’s most important residents.”

Figuring it's best to stay silent, I wait for her to continue, trying my best to keep any more misbehaving retorts from escaping my mouth.

"I will not see anything threaten the excellence that we have achieved at this academy."

"Look," I start. "I'm excelling in my classes. You can ask the tea—"

"This isn't about your studies," she interrupts, and I snap my mouth shut.

"Then what?"

Her blood-red nails trace the silver pendant between her ample breasts. "Lucifer's son and his nephew cannot afford distractions."

Laughter outside the door drifts in through the thin wood as I stare up at the headmistress. My mouth opens and closes, but how am I supposed to respond? "Daemon and Dmitriy?"

"I'm sure you're aware of the rivalry between their fathers. Hell's future is in their hands, and I will not allow a female to come between the cousins and endanger the fragile peace that exists."

"Look..." I rise from my seat but sit back down when she silently glares at me. "I don't know what you've heard, but I can assure you that I'm not doing anything to entice a rift between Daemon and Dmitriy."

Moving around my chair, like a siren floating on water, she makes her way back and slides in behind her desk. "That is all. You're dismissed."

When I don't immediately move, she pins her eyes on me. "Or is there something else you'd like to discuss?"

I jump up and shake my head. "No, that's all."

"Good," she responds, flicking through the paperwork. As I open the door, she says, without looking up at me, "I want you to stay away from the heir, understood? I don't want to have to punish you. Not when you show such promise in classes."

The sinister undertones of her threat don't go unnoticed. I slip through the door and walk as fast as I can, weaving through thick crowds of students. I need to put as much distance between the headteacher and me as possible.

As I turn the corner, I collide with a hard chest and stumble back, but firm hands clamp down on my shoulders to stop me from falling on my ass. I don't need to trail my gaze up that defined chest hidden beneath the black T-shirt to know who it is. His masculine scent wraps me up like a warm hug, and I release a sharp gasp, but it's too late. His brown eyes capture mine like a thief in the night, and just like that, my heart leaps from my chest.

"I'm sorry," I blurt, and he drops me like the feel of my bare shoulders burns him. Stumbling back, I frown.

Daemon barely spares me a glance as he walks past, his wings stretching behind him before settling back.

With my heart lodged in my throat, I watch the crowds part for him before he turns the corner and disappears from view. *What was that?* Why did he walk past me?

Unbidden tears prick my eyes. I can't fucking help it. It's not like I want him anymore now that I know he lied to me, but to watch him walk away from me without even trying to win me back? Did I mean so little to him?

Sniffing pathetically, I swipe at my wet cheeks, then turn to continue to class. I pause, and my breath gets caught in my throat at the sight of the hooded figure at the end of the hallway. Black wings stretch tall behind him as he slinks away. Without thinking it through, I take chase, determined to confront him once and for all.

I bump shoulders in my pursuit, cursing the thick crowds. Turning the corner, I slow to a halt. A single torch lights up the dark hallway that seems to stretch on for miles without a single soul in sight. Shadows crawl closer on the stone floor, stretching and elongating, reaching for me. I swallow thickly, backtracking. Peering into the darkness, I see nothing. My eyes seek out the other torches, but they're missing from the brackets on the walls.

A shiver splashes down my spine. I look behind me quickly, but it's quiet down at this end. Swallowing down my fear, I press forward, blending with the shadows that wrap me up, slithering over my skin like serpents. "Hello?"

Just as I'm about to abandon the mission and turn back, the lone torch behind me flickers out, snuffing out the last sliver of light. My breath trembles as I slowly turn in a circle, trying and failing to wrangle my rising panic. "Who's there?"

My wings erupt from my back, and I take a single step back, only to gasp when my spine meets the cold, damp stone wall. I press a palm over my mouth, my breaths gusting between my fingers. As my knees threaten to buckle from beneath me, I place my other hand over my mouth and squeeze my eyes shut. Icy, cold panic trails like sharp claws down my neck and spine.

"Aurelia..."

I yelp, eyes flying open. Sharp, erratic breaths escape my lips and dampen my palms. I lower my hands and walk sideways, skimming the gritty, cold stone wall beneath my fingers. If I can trace the grooves, I'll find my way out eventually.

"Aurelia..."

I let out a scream and whirl around. My hair sticks to the salty tears on my cheeks, so I swipe the strands away and reach my hand out in front of me, meeting empty air. "Show yourself."

A brush of fabric on my bare arm rustles past, and I jump back. Breath caught in my throat, I listen for footsteps as the seconds tick by, extending into minutes. Each individual heartbeat thuds against my ribcage like the beat of a drumstick, a twisted symphony that entices the predator to breathe in my fear like a starved wolf. Footsteps drag over the stone flooring—deliberately slow, calculated, heavy steps designed to ratchet up my fear. The stalker is toying with me.

My wings flare threateningly as my lips peel back to reveal my elongating fangs. I hiss, conjuring a flame at my fingertips.

It licks a slow path up my arms, dancing in the blackness like the light inside me once did, before Daemon and his friends snuffed it out with their sinful touches. The darkness inside me creeps to the surface as a sinister laugh bubbles up from my throat. “Come out to play. I’m waiting.”

What the hell? What was that? No sooner has the thought entered my mind than I’m thrown back against the wall. A sharp blade digs into my throat, and a set of moist lips descend on my neck. Whoever it is breathes me deep into their lungs. I try to make sense of the situation, but my thrashing heartbeat makes me lightheaded. Or maybe it’s the graze of sharp teeth against the curve of my neck.

A lick of pain has me drawing in a sharp breath. He applies more pressure to the knife and sinks his teeth into me. Instinct kicks in, and flames erupt at my fingertips. I grab hold of his throat. With a grunt, he disappears back into the shadows. The stench of burned flesh lingers in the air as I straighten up and stumble to the mouth of the hallway, using the stone wall to guide me. Squinting against the light, I collapse to the floor in a heap of tears and disorientation.

“Shit!” Dmitriy is there to scoop me up into his arms. Cradling me to his chest, he strides down the hallway, past clusters of students who stop to gawk at the bleeding girl in his arms.

We exit the building, and his wings erupt from his back in a blur of motion as we shoot up into the starry night sky. The cool wind seeps through my thin dress and whips my hair around my face. I replay the events in my mind, how the stalker breathed me in before sinking his teeth into my neck, and more tears fall. I hate to admit how scared I’ve been.

We land outside Amenadiel’s house, and Dmitriy carries me inside. But instead of taking me to my room, he carries on down the hallway until we enter his bedroom. Shouldering through the door, his smell surrounds me as he places me down on his bed and sweeps my hair away from my tear-stained cheeks. Fingers brushing over the bite marks on my neck, he grits his teeth and growls deep in his chest.

“Why does it hurt so much?”

Tracing the cut, he shakes his head as if to clear it, then says, “It’s healing, but slowly.”

I try to sit up, but he guides me back down with his hand on my shoulder. “What do you mean by that? Why is it healing slowly?”

Instead of replying, he sits down beside me and inspects the wound in more depth. “I don’t think your stalker tried to kill you.”

Confused, I wince when his thumb drags over the cut again. “What makes you say that?”

Placing two of his fingers over the bite mark, his eyes find mine. “These.” He straightens up, puts his elbows on his thighs, and studies me from over his shoulder. “Killing you would be quick and easy. Looking at those bite marks, he enjoys you.”

“Enjoys me?”

“Your smell. Your taste.” He drops his head, his hair falling over his brow as he stares down at the floor beneath his feet. “If he wanted to kill you, he would have.”

“So what does he want?” I sit up, despite the disapproving look that he throws me over his shoulder.

“To mark you,” he breathes out after a while, looking past me to the window.

“Mark me?”

A soft nod accompanies the slow slide of his eyes in my direction. “The question is, why?”

Bringing my hand up to my stinging throat, I locate the bite marks that feel very much like branding. “You have a theory?”

“Other than the obvious? That he’s one of Daemon’s enemies or a psychopath with an obsession?” He shakes his head, staring at the bite mark on my throat. “But I would hazard a guess that this relates to the pub you burned down.”

I frown. “The pub? Why?”

“Not the pub, but the reason behind why you burned it down. That kind of darkness...” His eyes skate away as he jiggles his left knee. “It doesn’t belong to Hell.”

A sudden laugh escapes my lips, and I lower my hand. “So it’s okay for Amenadiel to annihilate families, but burning down a pub is different?”

“That’s part of the hunt. But you...” he drifts off, avoiding my gaze. With a sharp inhale, he pins me in place with his eyes. “You don’t feed on blood. You feed on fear and destruction. And that will attract all kinds of unwelcome attention.”

I grow still. What is he talking about? “Of course I feed on blood.”

“Do you?” Brow winged up, he watches me. “When did you last drink blood?”

I think back, but before I can open my mouth to retort, he shifts closer, placing his hands on either side of my waist and bringing his nose unnervingly close to mine. “Too long ago to sustain you, but you fed on fear at the pub. I bet you could expel enough power to fling me across the room.”

“What are you talking about?” My voice shakes as I flick my eyes between his.

The torches on the walls flicker wildly, as if they reflect my inner turmoil, and Dmitriy notices, scanning them all as his lips curl back into a knowing smile. When he brings the full weight of his eyes to me, I hold my breath. “Try it.”

“Try what?” I ask.

“Shove me back.”

“This is crazy,” I breathe out softly, squeezing the blanket. “It proves nothing.”

“Wrong.” He reaches out to stroke my face, his fingers burning a path across my cheekbone. “It proves everything.”

He moves in, and that's when it dawns on me that he's about to kiss me. I don't know what the hell to do.

When his warm breath hits my lips, panic flares up with such intensity that I shove him back with all my strength. In a blur of motion, he collides with the wall across the room and tumbles to the floor in a heap of masculine laughter. A framed picture crashes to the ground and knocks over a pile of stacked books.

Rising to his feet, careful not to step on the paperbacks, he brushes off his knees and quickly shakes out his impressive wings.

"I'm sorry," I whisper, worrying my bottom lip. "I don't know what came over me."

"Don't sweat it. My bruised ego will heal." The humor in his voice has me looking up at him. "But as I said"—he winks in my direction—"you feed on fear and destruction. Blood, while essential to a certain degree, is not the most vital sustenance for your survival."

Sliding out from the bed and standing up on shaky legs, I attempt to steady myself with a hand on the bedside table. "How can blood be essential and yet, at the same time, not?"

Dmitriy crosses the room in a flash and slides his arm around my waist. I can't think when his scent of cologne and a hint of the night waft from his button-up shirt.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," I reassure him, trying to conceal the shake in my voice.

"You need to rest."

I let him guide me back down, finally admitting that he's right. I don't feel too good.

"No fallen angel can survive without blood completely, but you could probably survive months without feeding from a human as long as you have access to fear. Why else do you think you torture your human victims, when other fallen angels seduce theirs?"

“Why is everything such a mess?” I ask around a yawn.

Dmitriy’s soft smile plays at the corners of his lips while he studies my face. “Get some rest. We’ll figure it out.”

I want to say more, but exhaustion sweeps in and drags me into a fretful sleep before I can utter another word.

CHAPTER
TEN

AURELIA

“A urelia?”

At the sound of Amenadiel’s voice, I swivel around and almost crash into the console table behind me.

“Where are you going?”

I look back at the front door, wracking my brain. “I can’t remember.”

He descends the last step and slowly walks up to me, observing me closely as if he’s searching for something. I don’t dare look away.

When he stops in front of me, I watch his hand like a hawk as it slides up the length of my arm, over my shoulder. It pauses, burning a path through my skin, before he drops it to his side. “Unable to sleep?”

“I have a lot on my mind.”

“You shouldn’t be out there alone. The stalker...”

My throat jumps on a swallow. He’s nervous, and that makes me strangely jittery. “Is everything okay, Amenadiel?”

His eyes skate past me to the front door, and I follow his line of sight, confused when my gaze falls to the moonlight on the floor. *The door was shut a moment ago, wasn’t it?*

“Come on,” he says, steering me away from the silvery glow that seems to chase me down the hallway.

We enter the living room, and I skirt the bear rug on the floor, baring my teeth at its growling face.

Amenadiel chuckles. “It’s been dead a long time.”

Embarrassed, I look away and pretend to study the yard outside. Frost lines the edges of the window frame, and the icy chill feels fresh against my heated skin. As I bring my gaze to the flickering torch beside me, I sense him shifting closer. His shadow falls over me from behind, his magic flaring the flame

on the wall before it burns lower, shadowed by his overwhelming presence. “She can’t reach you here.”

A crease forms between my brows as my eyes find his in the window. “Sorry?”

“Nothing,” he whispers, placing his fingers on my shoulder, almost tenderly, before gripping me a little tighter. I hold back a gasp, confused by the inner turmoil he evokes. His fingers slowly skim higher until, shifting closer, he hooks his fingers in my hair and moves the strands away from my neck.

Anticipation swirls in my stomach. Amenadiel holds my gaze in the reflective glass as he bends down.

To do what, I don’t know, because he stiffens before he can put me out of my misery.

“The fuck is this?”

Dread constricts my throat, like a snake coiled around it, when the torch flares brightly in response to the explosion of magic in the room. His wings slice the air, snuffing out the flame and descending the room into darkness. His hand comes around to palm my throat, and he presses his lips to my cheek, the deep timbre of his voice rumbling against my skin. “Who hurt you?”

“I followed my stalk—”

He pushes me away before I have a chance to finish the sentence. The torch flares back to life, and the fireplace crackles. With a growl, he burns a hole through the carpet while pacing back and forth. “Why the hell would you follow the stalker? Why put yourself in dangerous situations?”

Frowning, I open my mouth to speak, but he surges forward and bares his teeth.

“Don’t make me lock you up.”

I rear back. “Lock me up? Excuse me, but fuck you, Amenadiel!” As I try to shoulder past him, he curls his fingers around my arm and pulls me back, then shoves me against the cold window.

The cold air against the slick sweat on my neck is soon forgotten when he grips me by my throat. With his thumb pressed to the underside of my jaw, he tilts my lips closer to his snarling mouth. Every hard inch of him covers me, eliciting shivers that make me shudder.

“What are you doing, Amenadiel?” I ask, my breath ghosting his lips.

“I don’t know.” He shakes his head as if to clear the fog, then lowers his forehead to mine. “All I know is that you’re safe here.”

“Where’s *here*?” Seconds pass, maybe even minutes, while we breathe each other’s air.

“Between worlds.” His lips crash into mine, hungry and dominating. Sliding his hand around the back of my neck, he pulls me closer to his mouth. He yanks my skirt up above my waist at the same time. Falling to his knees, he buries his mouth between my legs and wrenches me closer by my hips. I let out a surprised gasp at the feel of his hot mouth sucking on my pussy through my panties.

“Look at me,” he demands. “Tell me you want me.”

I fly up in bed, breathing harshly. The thin sheet sticks to my bare thighs as I kick it off and roll out of bed. I collapse to the floor, causing the bedside table to topple over when I reach out to grab hold of it. Items crash to the floor, obnoxiously loud in the silent night.

The door flies open, and the candles in the room flare to life. Dmitriy crosses the floor in four strides and crouches down beside me as I snap my legs shut to hide my damp panties.

That’s when it dawns on me that I’m wearing his button-up shirt. Confused, I look down at it but soon meet his gaze when he tips my chin up with his fingers. “What happened?”

Your father ate me out in my sleep.

“Nothing.” I attempt to rise to my feet, but he scoops me up as though I weigh nothing and carefully lays me back down on top of his sheets before straightening up and running his eyes over my exposed legs. “I had a bad dream, is all.”

“Want me to stay with you?” he asks, cutting his dark eyes to me.

Swallowing my pride, I scoot over before climbing beneath the blanket. He crawls in beside me, pulls his T-shirt off, and throws it to the floor, then fluffs the pillow. When he’s settled, he rolls his head as the torches burn low.

Outside the window, the rain patters against the thin glass. I focus on the soothing sound as my eyes grow heavy again.

“You’ve had a difficult day,” he says after a while, the backs of his knuckles skimming my cheekbone. “Nightmares are bound to happen.”

“Why am I wearing your shirt?”

A soft sigh leaves him. “You were covered in blood.”

Humming, I roll over onto my stomach and burrow deeper into the pillow. It smells of Dmitriy and fresh linen.

CHAPTER
ELEVEN

DAEMON

“Well, if this isn’t fucking cozy?” I growl, two seconds away from tearing my cousin to shreds. As soon as I heard that the angel had been hurt and witnesses had seen Dmitriy carry her out of the academy, I flew over here with the others hot on my heels. Clearly, gossip doesn’t reach my ears as soon as it should, if this view is anything to go by.

Slowly shifting the little witch’s unfolded wing out of the way of his bare chest, Dmitriy slides out from the bed and rises to his full height. The fucking smirk on his face makes me want to grab his head and bash his face against the nearest wall, but with one look at the angel sleeping soundly in his bed, I force down the urge. My heart hurts at seeing her in Dmitriy’s shirt. Ronan and Alaric growl behind me, like snarling dogs. Dari sidesteps me, but I grab her hair and pull her back behind me.

Dmitriy watches the exchange with amusement sparkling in the depths of his dark eyes. They flick over my wings as they unfold behind me in a threatening display. “What can I do for you, cousin?”

“What happened?”

His brows fly up at the same time Dari’s jaw hits the floor.

“What happened?” she all but shrieks, pointing to the bed. “Are you not going to fucking slaughter your cousin for touching her?”

I hold my hand up, silencing her tirade. “What. Happened?”

Crossing his arms, biceps bulging, he swipes his tongue across his bottom lip. “The stalker happened.”

Stiffening, I look past him at Aurelia before shouldering Dmitriy out of the way and sitting down beside her on the bed. As I stroke her hair away from her throat, she stirs, mumbling Dmitriy’s fucking name in her sleep. It takes everything in me

not to cut off his balls and serve his head on a fucking platter, but the long cut on her olive skin has me pausing. I look behind me at Dmitriy. “He cut her?”

The smirk on his lips falls, and he scrubs at his jaw as he walks up to me. “Yeah...”

“I’m gonna fucking kill him,” I growl.

Clearing his throat, he looks at me. “Aurelia is dangerous, Daemon.”

Lost in my own thoughts, I ignore his statement. “Why not just kill her?”

“I think you need to hear me out. What I have to say is important.”

When he doesn’t immediately elaborate, I gesture wildly. “Go on then. I’m listening. You have two seconds.”

“I think she feeds on fear and chaos.”

Shoulders tense, Alaric walks up to us. “What do you mean?”

“Have you seen her drink any blood lately? How is she sustaining herself? You must have seen firsthand how she tortures her victims.”

“The body parts,” Alaric says under his breath, his eyes growing wide.

“Yes, and the other night, when this guy”—he gestures to Ronan—“escorted me home, she had just burned down a pub as part of the hunt.”

I slowly rise to my feet, hands fisting rhythmically at my sides, and look down at the angel and back. I’m too fucking restless to stand still, knowing someone tried to hurt her and I wasn’t there to protect her again. “What are you saying?”

“I think someone knows more about her darkness than we do.”

“Fuck off,” I snarl, pointing a finger to the bite marks. “What about them? Did you drink from her?”

“Me?” He laughs incredulously—a quick burst of chuckles that soon dies down when I roll my shoulders back. “No, that was the stalker.”

“Why is someone trying to hurt her?” Alaric asks, bringing us back on topic while Dari sits down on the edge of the bed.

“Fuck if I know. Look at her wings. She’s powerful. It doesn’t take a fucking genius to figure that out. Maybe someone doesn’t want her to be potentially more powerful than the heir himself? Ever thought of that? Maybe someone has developed a fascination with her, and maybe that’s why they tried to get a taste of her blood. You know that shit between angels is intimate.”

A growl reverberates in my chest, and he throws his hands out defeatedly while chuckling at my possessive nature. “For fuck’s sake, cousin. She’s safe, alright?”

Inspecting the items on the desk, Ronan snorts. “You fool no one with your good guy act, Dmitriy.”

“Fuck you.”

Peering over his shoulder with a wicked gleam in his eyes, Ronan simply shrugs. “Bend over the desk, and I’ll show you a good time.”

Dmitriy hisses a snarl but then snaps his attention to the bed when the angel begins to stir again. She blinks her eyes open before shooting up in bed with a gasp. Looking at us all in turn, she carefully asks, “What are you doing here?”

Pushing past Dari, who groans loudly, I fist the little witch’s hair and pull sharply to bare her neck. “Gossip spreads fast. What were you thinking chasing after the stalker?”

She bats me off, but I grip her chin hard enough to cause a weak, cock-stirring whimper to slip from her trembling lips. “I had to find out who it was.”

“And did you?” I all but snarl, digging my fingers into her skin.

“No,” she reluctantly admits, avoiding my gaze as I lean in close to her face. Breathing her in, I swallow down the flood

of relief I feel when I fail to find any hints of sex in her scent. Dmitriy is trying to get a rise out of me. He hasn't actually fucked her tonight.

I shouldn't feel so fucking pleased by that thought. Not when my father helped me see how wrong I am for a girl like her. But fuck if I'll sit by and let another man have her either.

When I look over my shoulder, Dmitriy chuckles under his breath and winks.

"I'll deal with you later," I growl, then turn back to the girl, who has my heart gripped in the palm of her hand. "Tell me exactly what happened."

Her eyes spit fire as she glowers at me. "Nothing happened."

"Bullshit," I sneer, jostling her. "What happened?"

"Fine." Her pulse thunders in her neck. It's so loud that I can fucking hear it sing to me like a siren at sea. "I followed him down an empty hallway. The torch went out, and he shoved me up against a wall and proceeded to press a knife to my throat and sink his teeth into my neck."

"Then what?"

"I burned him with my flame."

"Burned him with your flame?" I exchange a look with Alaric.

"Yes. Instinct took over. I didn't think."

Leaning in close, I trail my hand to the back of her neck and grip it tight while dragging my nose over her throat, lingering on the bite marks. "It's familiar," I whisper. "The scent is different... Foreign somehow, but still familiar." My fangs throb, and as my raven wings erupt from my back, I sink my teeth deep into her neck, erasing the stalker's fucking marks and replacing them with my own. She yelps beneath my grip but yields like a good girl.

A satisfied groan rumbles in my chest when her blood floods my mouth. She may be a fallen angel, but she's the most addictive drug in all the ways that matter. Dari clears her

throat behind us, interrupting my bliss. The snarl that accompanies the aggressive flaring of my wings has Dmitriy chuckling.

I break away and look over at Dari while wiping off the excess blood from my chin with the back of my hand. “What do you want?”

“We need to take her back to our place.”

“No,” Aurelia speaks up, and I frown as I turn back to her. “I’m not coming with you.”

“I told you she’s fucking stubborn,” Ronan mutters, shaking his head as he inspects a plant on the desk.

“She doesn’t get a say in the matter,” I state with an air of boredom.

Leaning in close, she sneers in my face. “You don’t get a choice in the matter, Daemon. It’s over between us.”

It’s for the best, right? I’m marrying Dari. Besides, why the hell would she want me when I can’t protect her from her stalker? My eyes flick down to the sore-looking cut on her throat, and I swallow down the ugly feeling that’s threatening to drown me in misery.

“Fine.” As I rise to my feet, Dari stares at me as though I’m an alien.

“That’s it?” she asks.

“That’s it,” I confirm, striding past her on my way out.

Alaric intercepts me before I get to the door, blocking my only way out. “You’re making a mistake.”

“A mistake?” I point at the little witch on the bed, ignoring the way my heart gallops in my chest with regret at the sight of her tears. “She wants nothing to do with me, and it’s for the fucking best. She knows the truth now.” I peer over my shoulder and sneer at her. “I’m marrying Dari.”

Gritting her jaw, she looks down at her lap. Her hair slides forward to protect her from the venom in my words. I walk out without another backward glance.

DARIANA

“Fucking asshole,” I mutter, sitting down beside her on the mattress. The other males in the room hover, unsure what to do. I shoot them all a glare. “Can you leave us alone for a moment?”

“She’s coming with us,” Alaric bites out. “I don’t care about Daemon’s opinion.”

As they sidle out, I reach for her, but she slides her hand out of reach. Her rejection stings, but I guess I deserve it after all the shit I’ve put her through.

With a sigh, I pinch the blanket instead, shaping it into a point before smoothing it out. “We never meant to hurt you. The betrothal... It’s complicated.”

She sniffs, and I hate that her hair hides her from me. I want to be able to look her in the eye and let her see the truth.

“Daemon is looking for a way to get out of it.”

Still no response.

“He’s in love with you. We all are.”

Her brown eyes, glassy with tears, peer out from between the strands of her hair, and she inhales a ragged breath. “I can’t come in the way of whatever agreement or arrangement you have. I refuse to get in the way of Lucifer’s plans.”

“Lucifer’s plans?” I blurt, blinking at her. “What about what Daemon wants? What I want?”

“You don’t want me.”

“How the hell do you know that?” I growl, shifting closer on the bed.

When she looks up at me, the fire in her eyes stokes my own. “You have done nothing but push me away. I’m done, Dari. I’m so fucking done.”

Grinding my teeth, I stare at her. “So that’s it? Daemon is right to just walk away?”

Pain flickers in her eyes as she looks away and swipes at the tears on her cheeks.

“Is that what you want? For me to walk out that door and never talk to you again?”

Her head shakes, and she whispers brokenly, “No, that’s not what I want.”

“Then what do you want?”

Swallowing thickly, she flicks her gaze to me, staring at me for such a long moment, I wonder if I’ll ever be allowed to inhale a full breath again. “I want to stop feeling...”

“I can help with that,” I whisper, reaching for her, but she scrambles back.

Jumping out of bed, she stays a safe distance away. “I didn’t mean it like that.”

“Then what did you mean?” Rising to my feet, I close the distance between us and reach for her trembling hand, pleased when she doesn’t immediately pull away.

Her softly spoken words, delivered with the venom of a deadly snake, strike without mercy. “I want to forget you.”

Her fingers slide from mine as an ocean opens up between us. “You don’t mean that.”

“I do.”

“I’ve been a bitch. I know tha—”

“I want to forget you,” she says again in a much firmer voice. “I want to step back through the door, travel back in time, and never set foot outside of the gates.”

“That’s nice,” Daemon drawls from the doorway, causing us both to snap our eyes in his direction. “Fucking nice.” His cold eyes find mine, and he jerks his chin. “Let’s go.”

He walks away, revealing Ronan and Alaric behind him, who stare at the angel with equally empty eyes. Ronan is the

first one to leave. Alaric lingers, pinning her to the spot with his heavy gaze before he, too, strides off.

Aurelia says nothing—an emotionless statue. I want to shake some fucking sense into her. Instead, I swallow down the hurt and sidle past her. But before I leave the room, I place my hand on the doorframe and peer at her over my shoulder. “I don’t know what Daemon’s father did to him while he was locked away in Lucifer’s cellar for defending you. But he’ll find a way to break through whatever horrors battle it out in his mind. He loves you. And if you go back to Eden, he’ll break down the gates to take you back.”

“You’re wrong,” she calls out when I turn to leave. “I did leave through the door, and he never came for me. No one did. If I left again, no one would come for me.”

“Well...” With a deep inhale, I look at her. “Maybe you’re right. Maybe Daemon will do the right thing for once and grant you your wish. You want to forget us? Then you need to be okay with us forgetting you, too.”

I walk away, blinking back tears. Why the hell did I let myself fall for her? Why the hell did I let my defenses down? This is what I get for swallowing down my pride.

CHAPTER
TWELVE

AMENADIEL

Music pulses through the black-painted walls, the sultry bass loud enough to be felt in the worn floorboards beneath my leather Oxford shoes. Lucifer is seated at one of the tables toward the back, with a cigar and a glass of brandy. Watching the orgy on stage, he swirls his tumbler before kicking it back. In my periphery, naked bodies gyrate, grinding against each other in a symphony of moans and groans. His eyes find mine as I pull out a seat at his table. “I thought this place was beneath you.”

Unbuttoning my suit jacket, I remove it and drape it over the back of the chair. I set to work on the sleeves, rolling them up my arms. “Not at all, brother. Though I prefer to partake rather than watch.”

Humming under his breath, he sips his brandy. As I sit down, he flicks the ash into a tray on the table. “What brings you here?”

A busty angel—dressed in a gold thong, with small raven wings dusted in sparkles—saunters up to us with a tray. Placing a tumbler in front of me, she fills it up with an amber liquid. Her tits are dangerously close to my face, but I’m bored for once. While her breasts are more than a handful, her wings are tiny compared to a certain little angel’s.

“We need to talk.”

With a tilt of his chin, he sends the female angel walking before pinning me with his obsidian eyes that are so dark, I sometimes wonder if there was ever a hint of light behind them. But his feathers were once white, and his skin used to shimmer.

Even so, Lucifer is one with the shadows that cling to his skin like a swirling mist.

Cigar smoke curls in the air while he watches me with a bored expression that I’ve seen many times before. After

putting the cigar out in the tray, he relaxes back against the leather booth and gestures lazily for me to go on.

My attention strays to the stage, where a pile of bodies writhes in time to the sultry beat—men fucking women, and men fucking men. “Genesis is back.”

Lucifer pauses with the tumbler halfway to his mouth, growing eerily still.

“Let’s just say she holds a grudge.”

Lowering his tumbler to the table, he opens his mouth to speak, then snaps it shut again. Spinning the glass, he chuckles darkly. “After all this time, you still manage to surprise me. I thought I had you figured out by now, but here you are, making me laugh.”

“I’m being fucking serious.”

He nods, looking up from beneath his dark lashes, with a slight smirk. “Tell me then, brother. Where is she? I don’t see her around.”

“She’s hiding... inside the angel.”

Not a single reaction flicks across his face as he studies me. The moans on the stage behind me escalate. He hikes his elbow up on the back of the leather booth and flashes one of his famous smiles that showcases his fangs and dimples. “You’re losing it, brother. Old age is finally catching up with you.”

Gritting my teeth, I look away, watching the angel behind the bar wipe down the sticky counter.

“She’s hiding inside the angel, huh? How exactly is she doing that?”

My attention returns to Lucifer, who gestures for the woman to refill his glass. “She’s hiding in the shadows.”

Lucifer ignores me, too enthralled by the busty brunette. She refills his glass and leans down to whisper something in his ear. As she leaves, he smacks her ass and pins his amused, dark eyes on me. “Hiding in the shadows? I didn’t know you were partial to hide and seek.”

“Can you be serious for once?”

“It depends,” he responds, picking up the glass of brandy and taking a casual sip, his eyes skating past me to the orgy. “The female angel at the back looks lonely. Care to join?”

Rolling my eyes, I follow his line of sight to a girl perched on the edge of the stage. “You have always liked them young.”

“They’re more eager to please.”

I study the girl who is likely a millennium younger than us—a fledgling with curiosity still burning in her gaze. Lucifer has always coveted that. Maybe because he’s so bored with his own existence.

“You’re partial to young females, too.” The left corner of his lip slowly slides upward as I bring my attention back to him. With a tip of his chin in the young female’s direction, he says, “Her wings are cut.” Eyebrows quirking suggestively, his smirk grows. “She can’t fly away.”

I snort with disgust. “Unlike you, I find angels with clipped wings as exciting as human girls. I like a challenge.”

“Like my son’s newest obsession?”

Brows furrowed, my gaze snaps to him.

Tapping the side of his nose with a single digit, he smiles knowingly. “It’s my business to know things.”

“You know nothing,” I spit, leaning forward and resting my elbows on the table’s dull, black surface. “I’m telling you that Genesis is back, and you accuse me of harboring feelings toward a fledgling?”

He simply smiles, staring at me with that unrelenting gaze of his that sees too much. Then, with a shrug of his shoulders, he looks back at the stage as he takes another sip of his drink. His throat bobs on a swallow, and he lowers the tumbler back down. Darting his tongue out to catch a drop of liquid, he says, “Genesis is dead.”

There’s no getting through to him. He’s too distracted by the orgy on stage and his own agenda where world domination is concerned.

At the sensation of warm hands sliding over my shoulders, I jump. Soft lips brush the shell of my ear while I stare at my brother across the table, who winks at me as he sips his brandy.

“We haven’t seen you here in a while, Amenadiel. You’ve been neglecting us.”

My fangs elongate, throbbing painfully, and I brush her off. “I’ve been busy.”

“Busy?” The female angel pouts, sliding her arms around my shoulders and bringing her naked breasts dangerously close to my face.

As I look at Lucifer, he drains his glass before slamming it down on the table.

“My brother has gone and fallen for a fledgling. While I would encourage his newest obsession, as it keeps the angel away from my son, I prefer to watch him squirm. Do me a favor, Alyssa. Fuck the tension out of him.”

Flames flickering at my fingertips, I ignore his amused laughter and rise to my feet with a snarl.

“You’re so damn pussy-whipped,” chuckles Lucifer. “Who knew you’d fall for someone? Never-fucking-mind my son’s fuck toy. This shit is too funny.”

“And who knew you’d be so fucking blind to the truth? I’m not interested in the girl, but in the woman hiding in her shadows. Genesis is back, and she’s out for revenge.”

“I’m shaking in my fucking boots,” he drawls, as he curls a finger at the barely legal angel with clipped wings. She hops down and makes her way over on bare feet. As she nears, I spot the bruising, cuts, and whip marks on her skin. Sometimes, it’s easy to forget what a sick fucker Lucifer is.

He slides his arms around her waist and pulls her down on his lap. When she ducks her head to hide behind a curtain of hair, he brushes it over one shoulder. His touch is deceptively gentle, but I know my brother. I’ve watched him in action.

His eyes find mine, glinting with lewd, cruel intent. “We can fuck her together. Like old times. Remember, brother, when we used to share girls? I miss the old you.” Laughter spills from his lips. He tips the girl’s chin with a single finger and looks at me. “You used to be positively evil.”

“Times have changed,” I respond while one of the male angels on the stage paints a female’s face with cum.

Lucifer watches the scene with a bored expression. Nothing less than extreme violence will soothe his restless soul. “I’m disappointed.”

I don’t respond, reaching for my suit jacket and sliding it off the chair.

“You need to relax,” he drawls, caressing the girl’s tits while I roll down my sleeves. “Genesis is dead. I should know—I killed her.”

With a snort and a shake of my head, I shrug into the jacket. It stretches tight over my shoulders as I button it up with one hand and throw back the drink with the other. “She’s back, and she’ll kill you in your sleep if you’re not careful.”

He pauses. “Is that concern I hear? Why would you warn me? Wouldn’t it suit your little agenda if the angel kills me?”

My brother has a point, and I have no fucking clue why I came here to warn him. But what he doesn’t know is that we’re all in danger.

Maybe I just wanted to see his reaction to the news. Truth is, Genesis’s death still plays on my mind centuries later.

Lucifer gives nothing away, though. His face remains a blank, bored mask while he pats the girl’s ass in a silent demand for her to get up. As she rises to her feet and sidles out from the booth, he says, “Are you sure I can’t entice you to share some young pussy? You look a little tense.”

Sneering at him, I walk off, calling out over my shoulder, “I see nothing has changed. I don’t even know why I came here.”

CHAPTER
THIRTEEN

AURELIA

Ankles crossed in the air, I look up from the textbook in front of me when there's a knock on the door. Dmitriy pokes his head through, spots me sprawled on the bed, and clears his throat. "Mind if I come in?"

Removing the half-chewed rubber end of my pen from my mouth, I shoot him a small smile in response. "It's fine."

The hinges creak as he opens the door further and enters my room before closing it behind him without taking his eyes off me. His dark hair is wet from a recent shower, and his dark gray T-shirt is damp at the collar. He points at my textbook. "What are you studying?"

I'm back to chewing on my pen while I watch his approach, the way his muscles bunch beneath the cotton fabric. "I have a hellfire exam this week."

"Practical?"

"Written and practical." I've spent the last three days with my head buried in books, learning everything I can. It's the only way I can distract myself from the maelstrom of thoughts in my head. No matter how much I try, I can't erase the look on Daemon's face when I told Dariana that I wish I could forget them, or the disappointment in Alaric's dark gaze before he followed Daemon. Worse yet, Dariana's words. "*You want to forget us? Then you need to be okay with us forgetting you, too.*"

The words play on repeat in my head until I wish I could claw my brain into pieces to erase those words. Fuck, I hate myself. I hate my heart even more for the yearning tugging at my soul. They lied to me about everything, and I can't move past the hurt I feel.

I shake off those thoughts when the mattress dips.

"Are you okay?"

“I will be when I pass this test,” I mutter, feeling strangely vulnerable. Sympathy is the last thing I want or need right now.

“You know you’ll knock the test out of the ballpark, right?”

His heady cologne tickles my nostrils when I shut the book and sit up. I scan my eyes over him and curse myself for checking him out, yet he reminds me so much of Daemon. The ache in my chest can’t unsee the similarities. Some weird, corrupted part of me wants a taste of him, if only to put a plaster over the festering wound left behind from the other night. “What makes you so sure?” I ask, eyes lingering on a stray drop of shower water on his neck, near his collarbone. I want to lick it away.

“Because,” he replies, wetting his lips before gesturing to my wings. “You’re the most powerful female angel around. Who else can burn down pubs with a thought command?”

Frowning, I flick my gaze to his face. “You think I’m powerful?”

He snorts at that and laughs lightly. When he looks at me again, the darkness inside me stirs, caressing the fringes of my consciousness with delicious, depraved intent, and I flinch.

Dmitriy doesn’t notice, shrugging his shoulders. “It’s obvious.”

My interest is piqued by the slightly impish look on his face, as though he’s embarrassed. “Why are you here?”

“My father asked me to check on you. You’ve barely left your room for the last three days.”

My brows fly up. “Amenadiel asked you to check on me?”

His soft nod makes me laugh under my breath. Amenadiel cares about no one but himself, so I find it highly amusing that Dmitriy believes I’ll buy his excuse.

“Let’s pretend I believe you,” I start, lips twitching with amusement. “What will you say to him? What did your little mission reveal?”

“That you’re still moping around.”

Taken aback, I frown. While I know I’ve spent the last three days fighting back tears and keeping my head down, it feels like a slap to the face to be outright accused of feeling sorry for myself. No one gets to admit my own truth except for me. But here he is, studying the fragmented pieces of my broken heart beneath a microscope and coming to his own conclusions. It makes my skin crawl.

“I’m not moping.” I sound like a whiny toddler.

His lips curve into a smile. “Then prove it to me. Stop hiding.”

The look I give him is anything but impressed, causing his smile to widen even more. Chewing my lip, I stare at his mouth, admiring the sharp points of his fangs. A thought occurs to me. “Wingspan is linked to power. Is it the same for incisor teeth?”

His smile slips as his brows pull together. “Why?”

“Well...” I stare at his mouth, mesmerized by how the hint of teeth seems to speak to something feral and dark inside me. “Your incisors are longer than other male angels.” *So are Daemon’s.*

“You’re observant.”

“Is it true?”

“I think so.”

I make a mental note to study his father’s next time I see him. Better yet, Lucifer’s.

“I have noticed yours are sharp as fuck,” he says, his voice pitched low as he cups my chin and slides his thumb along my lips, grazing the sensitive tip. It elongates in response, and he draws back.

Acting on instinct, I move in and press my lips to his. I don’t know why the fuck I do it, but I need... *something.*

His hands fly up to my sides as I nip at his lips, seeking entrance, but he doesn’t touch me. Instead, he kicks his head

to the side and puts his hands on my shoulders as if to hold me back. "I'm sorry."

Confused, I blink. *Sorry for what?*

"You're hurt, and I..."

My throat jumps as he looks at me, eyes shining with regret. "You're not thinking clearly."

"I'm not thinking clearly?" I echo.

"No..." Breathing in a deep sigh, he releases me to scrub at his face, then focuses back on me. "I have to be honest. My plan at first, when I realized Daemon was into you, was to flirt with you to piss him off. I wanted to steal you from him. Aggravate him enough to make him attack me. Break the treaty." A sheepish look heats his cheeks, and he clenches his jaw. "But then I got to know you."

"You got to know me?" I sound like a stupefied parrot. "I thought angels were selfish in Hell. You take what you want. You steal..."

He winces. "I like you, but as a friend."

My mouth opens to say something but soon snaps shut. *Dmitriy rejected me.* Heat burns my cheeks when the truth slams into me. I move to climb off the bed, but his fingers curl around my arm to stop me. "I don't want to take advantage of you."

The initial embarrassment turns to anger. I grit my jaw as I pull free and stand up. "Take advantage of me? This is Hell, Dmitriy, unless you've failed to notice? Ever since I got here, I've been told at every turn that it's a cruel, vile place filled with selfish people who make bad decisions." I swallow down the clogged lump in my throat and place my hands on my hips. "How can you take advantage of me? I kissed you."

Moving with the lethal grace of a panther, he rises to his feet and towers over me. Why does he have to remind me of Daemon? It only pisses me off more. I can't unsee the similarities. It's fucked up.

"I'm not him. I'm not my cousin."

Frowning, I take a step back, but he moves with me, refusing to let me escape until I've heard the truth.

“You're hurting and looking for ways to forget. Trust me when I say I'd love nothing more than piss my cousin off, but it's not fair to you for me to use you like that.”

“That never stopped you before.”

He draws to a halt, and I hold my breath when his brows furrow with confusion. As he searches my face, I see the question in his eyes, but I refuse to admit that we fucked once—in a different reality.

Silence reigns between us. Thick, heavy, and oppressive. A whirlwind of thoughts flickers in his eyes, countless questions battling it out, before he seems to make his mind up. He grabs my wrist and pulls me closer with a sharp yank. Stumbling forward, I collide with his hard chest and release a surprised yelp.

His big hand encircles the back of my neck, and he leans down to press his lips to my ear. “When I finally kiss you, I want it to be for the right reasons.”

“I thought you liked me as a friend. Nothing more.”

His heated breath fans the column of my throat, and he tightens his grip on my neck as he shifts impossibly closer. “I lied.”

Fisting his T-shirt, my heart thrashing madly in my chest, I tip my chin up to his mouth. I'm dying for his kiss. Thirsting for his touch. And maybe he's right; maybe I'm trying to soothe an ache inside me. Maybe I'm seeking Daemon in their striking similarities, but all thoughts of Daemon are gone now. Vanished into thin air.

His stubbled chin slides across my jaw, closer to my parted lips that seem to tingle with anticipation. I hold my breath, eyes falling close when he hovers, inches away from my yearning mouth. He's going to kiss me.

There's a knock on the door, and he stumbles back. Rubbing the back of his neck, he avoids my gaze as Amenadiel pops his head inside. Eyes flicking between us, the

line between his brows deepens, and he enters the room, looking from me to his son and back. “Everything okay in here?”

“Yes,” I manage to choke out, chancing a look at Dmitriy, unsure what just happened. The angel in question clears his throat, shoots me a weak smile, and bows like this is a historical fairytale, before slipping out of my room.

I blink after him, lips pursed. Did he admit he likes me? Everything is such a damn clusterfuck.

At the sound of Amenadiel’s heavy footsteps, I look away from the door to find him watching me wearily. He’s done that a lot lately—skated around me, like he’s unsure in my presence.

“What?” I question, a strange, defensive sensation washing over me when he flicks his eyes to the door.

With a slight shake of his head, he scans my room while walking closer to me. “I sent my son to check on you, but it didn’t feel right not to pay you a visit myself.” His dark eyes land on me, and I frown. Everyone is acting weird around me lately, and it’s confusing as hell.

Ridding myself of the odd sensation, I cross my arms, forcing myself to hold his gaze. Boldly. “Have you visited my dreams again?”

With a noncommittal shrug of his shoulders, hands clasped behind his back, he circles me in that unnerving way of his. “What’s the deal with you and my son?”

“You’re avoiding the question.”

“What do you remember of the night when you found out about my nephew and Dariana?”

Cocking my head to the side, I follow him with my eyes. “What’s with the interrogation, Grandpa?”

His lips twitch, as if he’s holding back a smile. “Grandpa, huh?” Surging forward and grabbing my jaw in a punishing grip, which sees my wings flare behind me, he stares into my eyes, searching for God knows fucking what. This man gives

me whiplash with his mood swings. Wrenching free is futile against his bruising grip.

My nostrils flare with indignation, and a vicious snarl rips from my throat while he continues to flick his curious eyes between mine.

“I know you’re in there, Genesis. Leave my son out of this!” he says tersely before dropping me like a sack of potatoes.

Rubbing at my sore chin, I sneer. “Do I even dare ask what that was about? You’re crazy, Amenadiel. Fucking crazy!”

His eyes flicker with regret, and he sets his jaw and shoves his hands into his pockets. It’s only then that I realize he’s forgone his suit jacket and removed his tie. His maroon shirt is unbuttoned at the collar, and I hate to admit that my eyes snag on the exposed skin and muscle. His wings are bigger than his son’s, and as he turns away to leave, I admire their impressive size. The way they seem to reflect the flames that flicker in the fireplace.

“Is there something I should remember from that night?”

At my question, he slows to a halt at the threshold of my room and looks at me over his shoulder. His powerful body follows, swinging around, and he approaches me carefully, studying me with his dark, expressive eyes. “You don’t remember anything out of the ordinary?”

Confused, I purse my lips. “Lucifer told me about his plans for his son.”

“Anything else?”

My eyes bug out. *Anything else?* The fact that the people I love have lied to me is bad enough without whatever this is. “No,” I reply, stumbling back when he comes for me.

“Seen any more doors lately?”

“What is this?” I ask, alarmed, as the backs of my legs connect with the bed.

With a growl, he grabs me by the throat, and I yelp, clawing at the prominent veins on his forearm, where his

sleeve has been rolled up.

If it stings, he doesn't let on. "Hurt anyone I care about, and I'll slaughter you so fucking slowly that by the time I'm done with you, you'll be begging for death. And even then, I won't grant it to you. Not until I've peeled your skin from your bones."

A splash of ice scatters over my skin at the sound of squeaking hinges behind me. Darkness descends on my soul. My eyes fall shut. I don't even need to look to know what's coming. It crawls, writhes, and groans across the dirty stone floor in a bid to grab hold of my soul and yank it back into the shadows. Pale and wrinkled fingers with cracked, brown nails, grab hold of my ankles in a bruising grip that steals my breath from my lungs. I open my mouth to let out a panicked scream, but it's already too late. A red mist clouds my vision, and the fear in my eyes morphs into amusement as a sinister tinkle of laughter slips unbidden from my lips.

I'm yanked to the floor, and icy hands pull me back toward the open door behind me. I scream, claw, and sob. My nails break off in my struggle, fingers dragging across the gritty stone floor. No one hears me. No one saves me. My stomach recoils at the stench of rotten flesh and grabbing hands. They pull at my hair and catch in my clothes.

With a final cry, I latch onto the doorframe, letting loose a hoarse, terror-filled scream for help. One by one, my fingers slip from the distressed wood.

"Amenadiel!" I scream, my breaths sawing through me. "AMENADIEL!"

With a final hard tug on my ankle, I disappear into the darkness, the door slamming shut before my eyes.

CHAPTER
FOURTEEN

AMENADIEL

The red in her eyes is there and gone in a flash, almost as if I imagined it. As she reaches up to stroke her soft fingers across my cheekbone, every muscle in my body stiffens.

“You’re so pathetically weak, Amenadiel.”

My hand flies up, and I grip her wrist hard enough that I could easily break her bones. “Don’t touch me, Genesis.”

I knew it was her as soon as the red faded in her eyes. Aurelia is trapped in the shadows.

“But we had such a good time the other night.” Snaking her hand free, she flattens it across my chest where my shirt is unbuttoned. With her lip trapped between her teeth, she peers up at me from beneath her dark, wispy lashes. It’s so easy to mistake this monstrous abomination for Aurelia, but the cold detachment that simmers beneath Genesis’s heated gaze is foreign. Aurelia’s expressive eyes have the power to bring a man to his knees with one look. This woman, this *monster*, crawled out of the darkest pits of Hell to tear us all into fucking pieces.

Gnashing my jaw, I look away, hating the feel of her hands on my skin as her fingers work the buttons, one by one, until she parts my shirt to reveal the expanse of my chest.

I fucking hate that I love her exquisite touch. How it burns a path to my stirring cock.

It’s not Aurelia, my head reminds me while my heart thrashes against my ribs.

“I thought fallen angels had no morals,” she taunts, chuckling at the clenching muscle in my jaw, tracing the trail of hair to my belt. “Yet here you are, battling with yourself.”

“What do you want?” I grit out.

Fingers walking a slow path back up my chest, she follows their journey with her wicked gaze. “You’re so serious, Amenadiel.”

“What did you do to her?”

“Don’t worry,” she says, bending down and licking a path from my belly button all the way to my left collarbone. “She’s not here to see me ravage you.” She grips my hard length, and I damn near choke on my saliva at how good it feels. It’s wrong, *so fucking wrong*, but my hips gyrate, feeding her eager palm more of my cock. She drags her tongue to my other collarbone, and it takes all of my willpower to clear my head enough to ask, “Where is she?”

“Locked away behind another door.”

Her words cause my heart to stutter. I shove her to the floor, breathing like a provoked bull. She starts to laugh, her head tipped back between her shoulders.

“Bring her back!”

Those dark, soulless eyes find mine, shimmering with mischievous intent. She bites her lip and crudely opens her legs. A damp patch decorates that small triangle of lace fabric.

As I watch, she slides a finger underneath and pulls them aside to reveal the pinkest, prettiest fucking pussy in the goddamn universe. I’m salivating at the sight of her wet folds and that perfect pearl I yearn to suck between my teeth.

“She will never know that you took advantage of her pert little body in her absence.”

Breaking out in a cold sweat, I seek out the door behind me, seconds away from bolting, but a lewd wet sound has my attention snapping back like a rubber band.

With her fingers buried deep inside her, she stares up at me while fingering herself in time to the throbbing in my dick. This is so fucking wrong.

“You’ve tried to fuck her before when she was out of it. Remember when you offered her the injured human? The time Daemon barged in and stole her from you?”

“That was not the same,” I argue, transfixed on those glistening fingers.

A moan escapes her lips, causing me to bite my knuckles and tear at my wild hair. “No, it was different,” she responds, sliding her wet digits out to circle her clit. “You didn’t want her then. You were coaxing *me* from the shadows. Hoping to make *me* submit.” A throaty laugh caresses her vocal cords as she shoves two fingers back up inside her. “When did it change, baby? When did the little fledgling worm her way beneath your skin?”

“Bring her back,” I grit out, fighting the need to give in to my carnal urges. I won’t let her win this power game.

“I think I’ll keep her locked away for now, but don’t worry.” Her smile turns feral, glinting with a dangerous edge that sends chills racing down my spine. “She’s not alone behind that door.”

My heart comes to a stumbling stop behind my ribcage, and I fist my hands by my sides, ignoring the raging erection inside my slacks. “Who the fuck is with her?”

“Sure you don’t want to help a girl out?” she asks, fingering her tight pussy with abandon. Kicking off her heel, she extends her long leg and drags her toes up the inside of my thigh until she’s right there, pressing her foot against my throbbing cock. I look down at her black-painted toenails and choke back a tortured groan. Fuck, I want to flip her over and make her regret taunting me for sport.

“Answer the damn question!”

Her tongue darts out to slide across her bottom lip while she stares up at me with drunk, lust-filled eyes that send my blood rushing south. I don’t blame my nephew for succumbing to this deadly nymph of an angel. She was sent by God to seek revenge on those who rejected Him.

With a final thrust of her fingers, her lips part with a loud moan as she succumbs to her orgasm. Aurelia is fucking breathtaking when she comes and, while this is Genesis, parading as the angel, it’s still her body. I can’t help but hold my breath as she shivers and shakes, thighs clenching together.

Fuck. Me.

Blinking those brown orbs open, she pushes up onto her elbows and reaches for my belt, but I dart back. “You’re no fun, Amenadiel. That erection looks painful,” she says with a pout before sitting up and pulling her skirt back down.

As she rises to her feet, I steel myself. Something tells me the hiding and the taunting are over. Aurelia is trapped in the shadows and out of reach, and this dangerous siren in front of me is here to stay.

Worst of all, there’s nothing I can do about it.

Not unless I’m willing to hurt Aurelia.

And the girl, much to my dismay, has gotten entangled in my heartstrings. Trapped like a fucking fly in a web. And I refuse to let her go.

“What are your plans now?” I ask when she combs her fingers through her matted, dark hair.

“It’s time to play.”

“Play?” I watch her walk past me. “If you hurt my son, I will slaughter you. Trust my words.”

“No, you won’t.” Her eyes find mine over her shoulder as she opens the door. “You’d never put a finger on *her*. Not anymore.”

With those parting words leaving a bad taste in my mouth, she’s gone, the door clicking shut in her absence.

I curse, kicking the bed frame in my frustration. Tearing at my hair, I breathe harshly through my nose, trying to wrangle the onslaught of panicked thoughts. I need to warn someone. I need to warn fucking everyone.

Lucifer didn’t believe me. But I sure as fuck hope the others will before it’s too late.

Leaving my room, I make a beeline for Dmitriy’s bedroom, only to draw to a halt halfway down the hallway when I’m greeted by groans and grunts.

What the fuck?

Fear for my son coils my insides as I make my way to his door and palm the handle. Pushing down gently, careful to keep the hinges from creaking, I peer inside to find him sprawled on the bed with his cock in his hand and an arm slung over his eyes. Teeth gritted, he frantically jerks his length, chasing the relief we all seem to need in *her* presence.

As I close the door behind me, my eyes catch on Genesis at the end of the hallway, where she leans against the wall while inspecting her nails. Her dark eyes flick up to mine, and she winks before straightening up and walking away.

Behind me, my son groans out Aurelia's name.

“You needed to see me?”

I look up from the book in front of me and wave Dmitriy inside. He shuts the door to my office, approaching me with a winged brow.

“Take a seat.”

As he plops down on the chair opposite me, I relax back in my seat, entwine my fingers on my stomach, and stretch out my legs beneath the desk. I'm still not comfortable. Running a hand through my dark hair, I ask the question that's on my tongue. “Are you involved with Aurelia?”

Dmitriy stiffens, but instead of spewing the first lie he can summon, he weighs his words, before settling for the truth. “I like her.”

“Have you done anything with her yet?”

“Are you asking me if I've fucked her?”

When I don't respond, he huffs a soft laugh and kicks his ankle up on his knee. “No, I haven't fucked her, Dad. You happy?”

“What's holding you back?” I ask out of sheer curiosity as an owl hoots outside. “If you like her, I mean.”

Frowning, he taps the armrest with a finger while studying me. “Do you want me to rape her? That’s more your thing than mine.”

I snort at the audacity coming from him. “I don’t rape females. Don’t confuse me with your uncle.”

He stays silent, and I take him in for a moment, noting our similarities. “I only asked because I’m curious.”

“She’s in love with Daemon and the others.”

My brows pull low. “You haven’t fucked her because she’s in love with your cousin?”

“I know you want the throne—” he starts, but I hold my hand up.

“I do, sure, but that’s inconsequential for now. We have more pressing matters to deal with.”

He waits for me to continue, and I fidget under his scrutinizing gaze. Who knew my own son would have more self-control than me? “Have you touched her at all?” I ask; it bothers me that I’ve succumbed to Genesis.

“She kissed me, but I stopped it. What is this, Dad? What’s with all the questions?”

“You stopped it?” I blink at him, unsure if I heard him correctly. He must have the self-control of a devoted priest.

“Yes,” he blurts, sounding exasperated. “I don’t want to be a rebound. Any other girl, sure, but not her. I refuse to live in Daemon’s fucking shadow anymore.”

“Are you sure you were born in Hell?” I quip, then laugh when his only response is an eye roll.

I should be more alarmed—we like the same girl, after all. Pushing those thoughts aside, the chair creaks as I lean forward and place my hands flat on the desk. “I need you to stay away from Aurelia.”

Dmitriy stares at me for a beat, then starts laughing, the masculine sound bouncing off the bookshelves behind me.

“Why?” he asks once he’s calmed down enough to formulate words, wiping away tears from his cheeks.

“She’s not who you think,” I reply vaguely, gauging his reaction.

“You clearly know something I don’t. If you want me to stay away from her, you’ll need to give me more.”

Fuck... I knew he wouldn’t just agree blindly. Though I’d hoped it would be that simple.

Easing back against the seat, I place my elbow on the armrest and scratch at my bottom lip with my thumb while watching him. “I don’t know how to explain it.”

“Try me.”

“Fine,” I concede, dropping my hand. “To cut a long story short, in order to escape Eden, your uncle killed a girl. That girl is back for revenge.”

“What has this got to do with Aurelia?”

“Well,” I start, clenching my jaw, “they’re the same person.”

Dmitriy blinks, then drops his foot to the floor, sits forward, and rests his elbows on his knees. “The fuck are you talking about, Dad?”

“Take a candle and use it to light a second candle. Is it the same candle?”

“No?” He sounds so uncertain; it would be humorous under different circumstances.

“But the flame is the same, right?”

“What’s your point?”

“Aurelia is the same flame as Genesis.”

“Who the hell is Genesis?”

I wave a hand dismissively, eager to move on. “The female angel Lucifer killed to escape Eden. First, there was Genesis. When she died, the same flame sprang up inside Aurelia.”

“That makes no sense,” Dmitriy mutters, scrubbing his face. “There wouldn’t be two of her then.”

“Yes, there would. While I haven’t been able to prove it yet, they’re like a coin. Genesis is the dark, and Aurelia is the light. Two dualities of the same flame, born from different experiences. When Lucifer killed Genesis, he slaughtered the Light inside her in order to open the gates. Do you get it? The world had not experienced darkness until that very moment. In other words, Genesis birthed Hell. What flamed to life in her soul, *what survived*, was pure evil. When that same flame sprang back up inside another ‘host,’ if you will, it had to coexist with the Light inside of Aurelia.”

Dmitriy stays silent, staring at me as if he’s trying to wrap his head around my words. It’s a lot to take in. I know; I can barely make sense of it myself.

“It bided its time. Waiting for the opportune moment to make itself known. It explains why Aurelia felt so drawn to the gates. Why she heard the whispers of the woods outside. The darkness inside her called her home.”

“This is crazy,” he says, jiggling his knee. “Is this why you let her get lost in darkness?”

“It’s not that straight forward. She came to me begging to learn fire magic and, as you know, that requires you to indulge in darkness. To welcome it. My suspicions stirred the first time I witnessed the aftermath of her killing. In all my years, I’ve never witnessed such evil. It’s beyond the borders of Hell. From then on, my curiosity grew.”

“Is this why she feeds on fear and chaos instead of blood?”

His response takes me aback, and he chuckles when he flicks his gaze up to see the shocked expression on my face. “Yes, I’ve noticed how she tortures and maims for hours on end, breathing in their screams and bathing in their terror, before finally going in for the kill. By which point, a lot of her victims have bled out. She picks them apart like a curious child with a stereo and a screwdriver.”

The visual sends shivers skittering down my spine. “I wasn’t certain until recently.”

“But now you are?”

Nodding, I breathe out a “Yep” and drag a hand down my face.

“And where’s Aurelia in all of this? Surely she can’t fight this Genesis?”

“She did fight. But now she’s trapped inside the darkness.”

“Trapped?” Alarm bleeds into his voice, and he straightens in his seat. “What do you mean, trapped?”

“I mean, when you see her next time, make no mistake. It’s Genesis. Aurelia is trapped somewhere inside the shadows swirling in those brown eyes, but we can’t reach her.”

“Fuck...” he breathes out, eyes wide. “What the fuck do we do?”

Reaching into my desk drawer, I root through it, on the hunt for a cigar. I require something to calm down this raging storm inside me. “I need you to pretend that you don’t know about this, while I figure out how to kill Genesis once and for all.”

Dmitriy’s wide eyes track me as I stand up and cross the room to the liquor cabinet. “If you kill Genesis... won’t you kill Aurelia, too?”

“Hence why you must pretend you don’t know the truth yet. Not until I have it figured out.”

“I won’t let you hurt Aurelia.”

Reaching for a tumbler and a decanter of whiskey, I avoid his gaze. The liquid sloshes against the sides as I kick it back. If only he knew how closely wound I am around her little finger, he’d soon challenge me with spread wings and aching fangs.

Fuck, what a mess my life has become.

Genesis has spun a nice little web.

The words taste sour on my tongue as I force myself to bite out, "I need you to warn Daemon and the others."

Dmitriy laughs disbelievingly. "He'll never listen to me."

"Make him listen." The sharp note punctuating each word makes him pause, the smile on his face falling away. "If you don't," I warn. "Aurelia could be lost out there..." I wave a hand through the air. "God only knows where. Forever."

CHAPTER
FIFTEEN

AURELIA

F umbling in the dark for hours and grasping at the icy, damp concrete walls, had left me exhausted. No light reaches this place, and my eyes never get used to the dark, no matter how many hours pass.

I sit pressed against the damp wall with my legs drawn up to my chest, trembling like a leaf until I finally succumb to exhaustion. I wake sometime later when a cold touch to my cheek rouses me from my slumber.

Scrambling back like a startled mouse, I stare at the hooded figure in front of me, his face hidden behind a black mask. A single candle flickers in the corner, the light barely enough to see by. He cocks his head and seems to study me. As I frantically pull my skirt back down to hide my panties, panic seizes me when I realize my wings are tied together and a chain around my ankle secures me to an iron hook on the floor.

“What the fuck?” I blurt, the chain rattling as I fly forward to tug desperately at the clasp around my foot. “What the hell?”

When I attempt to conjure a flame to keep him away, nothing happens. My magic is gone.

I look back at my stalker, and he takes a single step closer as if to test my reaction. Not a second later, I bare my teeth with a feral hiss, and he pauses again. Intrigue oozes off of him like heat waves in summer. I wish he would say something. Utter a word. I need to hear his voice.

Another hiss slips from my lips in warning when he takes yet another step closer. My fingertips itch with the need to conjure a flame, but nothing happens, no matter how much I try. And with my wings tied tightly behind my back, I’m truly at his mercy.

Crouching down in front of me, he studies me for a long moment before tentatively reaching a gloved hand out and

touching my ankle. Every muscle in my body seizes up, and a loud, animalistic, vicious growl climbs up my throat.

Fingers pausing, his dark eyes peer back at me from behind the mask. My lips twitch as I continue snarling with my teeth bared, like a feral animal he's caught. When he slides that gloved hand higher, I kick out at him.

He's faster, ripping his glove off and throwing a flame at me. He keeps it suspended midair, dangerously close to my exposed neck. The searing heat licks at my skin while he holds his hand out and smooths his other one over my ankle once more. Higher and higher, his gloved fingers travel, until the tips graze my upper thigh.

The snarl in my throat dies when he squeezes my leg. "Don't fucking touch me," I whisper viciously, cutting him down with my glare despite the fear that's slowly drowning me.

Shutting my eyes against the heat at my neck—the necklace of flames he threatens to brand me with if I don't behave—I wait for his gloved hand to slide higher. To take what he desires. But it never comes.

When I open my eyes, he's still staring at me from behind that mask, seemingly riveted by my face. Just as fast, the flame dies out, and he darts away from me, hovering near the lone candle in the corner. His long robes graze the floor with every small shift, dragging across dirt and debris.

"Who are you?" I ask, though I know I won't get an answer.

From a pocket in the robe, he pulls out a knife, and I let out a whimper as he takes slow steps closer. Rocks crunch beneath his leather boots, and the sound sends my heart ricocheting in my chest. Icy dread winds tightly around my throat. I try not to stare at the knife but when the sharp blade catches the glow of the candle, my eyes fall to it.

I scurry back when he's halfway across the small space, panic skittering across every bone in my body. There's no

escape. It's just a square room with a door that I can't reach. There's not even a fucking window. Nothing.

"Please, no," I cry out, kicking out again and forcing him back a step before crawling away. The chain pulls taut, preventing my escape. Sobs climb up my throat, clawing at the tight canal, when the heavy thud of his footsteps sounds behind me.

Close. Too fucking close.

Crouching down behind me, his gloved hand encircles my throat from behind, and he dives down to breathe me in. I try not to cry. I try not to break. But when the cold mask brushes up against my neck, a sob wracks through my chest.

A rumble I recognize as a satisfied masculine sound dances across my skin, carrying top notes of curiosity and base notes of anticipation. Releasing my hair, he grips a small section and saws it off, the sharp blade cutting through the strands with ease.

As he rises to his feet, I hold my breath, not daring to slump with relief until his footsteps fade.

Please, leave.

At the sound of a familiar creak, I slowly look over my shoulder. No sooner have I scanned the room than a surprised gasp escapes my lips.

He's gone.

DARIANA

I sneer at a passing angel that's dressed in nothing but underwear as I enter the crowded living room. Like a fucking hawk, I seek out Daemon, who sits on the couch with equally scantily dressed girls on each thigh.

At the sight of my furious face, a groan has barely had time to slip from his lips by the time I'm standing in front of him with my hands on my hips and my most deadly glare directed at the girls. Much to his disappointment, or maybe relief, they rise to their feet and walk away. Days have passed since we last saw the little witch, and Daemon still hasn't been able to fuck another female. It's like she has the boys tied up by their fucking balls, and it's starting to piss them the fuck off. The scathing look I pierce Daemon with doesn't help either.

"For fuck's sake. Out with it," he mutters, slouched on the armchair with his shirt and jeans unbuttoned.

It's the same story for Alaric and Ronan, who are spread out on the other couch, looking bored out of their minds while watching the dancing crowd of girls. They're all pussy-whipped, miserable males.

"I never thought I'd say this, Daemon. But snap the fuck out of it!" To emphasize my point, I click my fingers in his face.

Wings spread out on either side of the armchair, he pushes himself up, slides an arm around the backs of my thighs, and pulls me on top of him. "Have you fucked anyone lately, Dari?"

"No, I sure as fuck haven't. And if you think I'm touching you when you're moping around like a fucking loser, you're dead wrong."

His chuckle rubs me the wrong way. I try to push off him, but he bands both arms around me. It's awkward, to say the least, to lie sprawled on top of him like this, with my cheek

pressed against his warm chest. “It’s the same for you, huh? Can’t fuck anyone but a certain little brat with a golden pussy? Screw that shit. I’m over it.”

“Yeah?” I ask, digging my nails into his chest and renewing my efforts to push up. “How’s that going? Have you dipped it in any wet holes lately?”

“Have I fuck,” he says with a snort, finally releasing me.

Jumping up, I brush my hair out of my eyes. “Instead of behaving like a fucking toddler who lost his blood source, why don’t you do something about it. Take her back.”

His head shakes, and I don’t miss how he avoids my gaze. “That’s a bad idea.”

Fed up with him and his lazy ass, I walk straight up to the nearest female, grab her by the hair, and haul her out. She kicks and screams like a fucking banshee.

When I return to the room, the other girls run for the door, not wishing to be subjected to the fury blazing in my eyes. To make sure they run fucking far away, I launch a fireball at their asses. “Stay the fuck away!” Breathing out a heavy sigh before plastering on a smile that’s not at all psychotic, I turn my attention to the pathetic boys I’ve been laden with since birth. I point to Alaric and Ronan. “You and you. Go fetch the little angel. I’ve had enough of this. I’m hungry and need to dine on a wet pussy tonight. I don’t care if she’s growling or hurling insults at me. I want her tied to my bed by the night’s end. Got it?”

Ronan jumps up and salutes me, but Alaric takes his time, unfurling and rising to his feet like a lazy cat. As he stretches his arms overhead, his black T-shirt rides up to reveal a sliver of olive skin and a trail of dark hairs. “You’re starting to sound like Daemon.”

“Daemon is a whiny brat. At least I’m not letting my pride stop me from going after what I want.”

“You heard her,” Alaric says, stretching out his wings behind him before tucking them back in. “She doesn’t want us anymore.”

“Well, there are a lot of things we don’t want in life.” I point to the door, with a blood-red nail. “Go get her.”

“Bossy,” chuckles Ronan as he leaves.

With a quirked brow, I wait for Alaric to follow, but the annoying shit ruffles my hair first. “You’re cute when you’re wound up.”

I bat him off, teeth bared.

Laughter follows him out the door, and I wait until the front door slams shut before zeroing in on the alpha of the pack, who has lit a cigarette and sunk deeper into the cushions. As I watch, he brings it to his lips, takes a deep, slow drag, and lets his arm flop over the armrest. The prominent veins that paint a roadmap on the underside of his arm draw my attention for a brief second. Leather bracelets encircle his wrist, and two thick, silver rings adorn his fingers—one on his thumb and one on his middle finger. Everything about Daemon is sensual, from the way he moves, to the way he drawls his words in that deep, husky voice of his—almost as if he’s whispering filth in your ear.

But now, there’s something else that strikes the eye. Something I haven’t seen before. A vulnerability that shines through his hard exterior. I’m on a mission to chip away at it and find the gold hidden underneath.

Cigarette back between his lips, he watches me approach with a dark glint in his eyes that he reserves for his sexual encounters. If he thinks I have any intention of touching him tonight, he’s wrong.

I want to do something far worse.

I want to break through to him because, for whatever reason, he hides behind an impenetrable exterior.

Climbing onto his lap, I hike my skirt up and straddle his lap. The familiar sensation of his warm hands sliding a slow path up my thighs threatens to derail my thoughts. I snatch the cigarette from his lips and take a long, deep drag to calm my soul. I’m fretting, and I don’t know why.

“What happened to you, Daemon?”

The expression on his face never changes, but his hands' journey falters on my thigh. It's so quick I almost miss it. "It doesn't matter."

"It does." I blow the smoke at his face—because I'm a bitch, and he's aggravatingly stubborn. "You're my friend, Daemon. Possibly my best friend, and believe it or not, it hurts to see you like this."

His sensuous lips pull up to the left in just the hint of a smirk. Stroking circles with his thumbs, he studies me for a long moment. "You don't need to worry about me."

"Dammit, Daemon," I growl, reaching behind me to crush the cigarette in the ashtray. When I turn back, his finger is on my lips in a bid to silence the tirade that's threatening to spill from my lips, but like an avalanche, there's no stopping it. "I love you, Daemon. We all love you. Don't you get it? While you were trapped in the cellar, being subjected to God only knows what kind of torture, I was going out of my mind with worry. Ronan and Alaric were the only things that kept me from going after the angels hurting you. It was hell!" I point to my chest, tears wobbling in my eyes. "*I was in hell.*"

His thumb ghosts my cheekbone, drawing a rattling breath from my aching lungs.

"So I'm asking you, what happened, Daemon? What happened to break you like this?"

"My father happened," he whispers, watching me intently. "He made me see the truth."

"And what's the fucking truth?" I all but shriek. "Tell me, Daemon. What the hell is it?"

His hand falls away, and he cuts his gaze to the window. Outside, the moon slips behind the clouds, snuffing out the stream of moonlight on the floor. "I'm not good enough for someone like her. I can't protect her against danger."

"Goddammit!" I jump off his lap and begin to pace, unable to keep the frustration inside any longer. "You are enough! Why can't you fucking see that? She's so fucking in love with you, and the only reason she's pushing you away, *pushing us*

all away, is because she's scared. This is what your father wants. Are you gonna let him win?"

Daemon says nothing, and it angers me enough to collapse to my knees between his spread legs. Placing my hands on his muscular thighs, I stare up at him through stinging, blurry eyes. "Please, Daemon. Don't let him win. You don't want me. You don't want this..." My voice breaks on the last note, and the pesky tears wobbling precariously on my lower lashes fall. I reach for his hand, stroking the veins on top of it with my thumb. "What did they do to you?"

A muscle clenches in his jaw as he stares down at me with empty eyes. But behind the void, something flares to life. I cling to it like a life raft, pushing up higher onto my knees. "Talk to me."

"They tied my wings and fed me a potion that put out the fire in my soul. While I was unable to practice fire magic or move my wings, they beat me, cut me with knives, whipped me, and threatened to rape her if I wouldn't let her go."

Drawing in a horrified gasp, I stare at his face, noting every tic in his jaw, every flex of muscle. They emasculated him and stole his wings. His hellfire. They broke him down mentally over the course of a week. A proud male angel, like Daemon... I can't even begin to imagine him tied up and whipped by lesser males with smaller wings while they taunted him with threats of fucking his female. Just the damn thought boils my blood. No wonder he shies away from Aurelia now. No wonder he feels incapable of protecting her. It'll take time for him to find his pride again. To see that no one is more worthy of a fierce angel like her than him. I can't imagine what he went through, and I know he's holding back the true horrors of what they did to him.

"Daemon," I whisper, and his gaze, swimming with regret and shame, slowly skates back from the window. "Don't let your father win. We will figure it out. Together. We always do." I implore him with my eyes to see the truth. "No one can protect the little witch better than you." Waving a hand at the door where the others left a few minutes ago, I add, "Better than all of us. Together."

His throat jumps on a swallow, and I press on. “I have never met a fiercer angel than you. I don’t know what they did to you down there, but I do know you, Daemon.” Reaching up, I place my palm flat on his chest, over his thudding heart. “You won’t let some pathetic, smaller-winged males break you down to the point where you let another man steal our angel from us. She’s ours. It’s time we get her back.”

“I couldn’t protect her.” His voice is weak and so fucking tortured that I want to claw my own heart out because his haunted gaze makes it hurt like nothing else. Instead, I reach up and cup his cheeks. “You know as well as I do that if they hadn’t tied your wings and fed you some bullshit potion to put out your flame, like some chicken shits afraid of their own shadows, you’d have roasted them with a flick of your fingers. Don’t let them steal your power, too.”

When he draws in a breath and nods softly, I feel like I’ve won the damn lottery. My smile slips free, and I throw myself at him, almost strangling him with my arms wrapped around the back of his neck. Nose buried in his neck, I don’t even attempt to hold the stinging tears back. “I fucking love you, Daemon. You’re my favorite person in the whole fucking world.”

“And you’re so fucking emotional, I don’t know if I should be scared or not.”

Laughter slips free from my lips. I hold him tighter, sniffing pathetically against his warm skin. “Promise me one thing.”

“Anything.” His arms slide around my waist, hugging me close.

“Don’t let your father win again.”

His warm breath shifts the hairs on the top of my head as he presses a soft kiss there. “Next time, I’ll kill him.”

CHAPTER
SIXTEEN

DMITRIY

Pacing my bedroom, I chew on my thumbnail while debating my options. Flickering torches line the walls, chasing away the chill in the air, but I'm too agitated to feel its bite against my skin. If my father is right, which I suspect he is, we're in trouble. I can't just fly over to Daemon's house and knock on the door. He won't let me inside, for fucking starters. And if I do manage to make it past the threshold, he'll scoff at me if I forward my father's suspicion. "Fuck," I grumble, pulling at the strands of my hair. "Think, Dmitriy, think."

Daemon and I have never gotten on. Our rivalry was born the moment we entered this world, a twisted inheritance our fathers gifted us. But somehow, here we are, caring about the same girl.

Mr. Hawthorne, who teaches mind control in humans, once grumbled, "Females bring nothing but trouble," on his way past my desk. At this moment, I'm inclined to agree.

She's Daemon's girl; I know that. Yet I can't help these unwelcome emotions that have sprung up in me ever since she entered my world. I've tried to suppress them. Tried to ignore how my gaze wanders in her direction when she enters a room. At first, when I noticed my cousin's piqued interest, I planned on using that to my advantage. I even let my father play his weird games, never questioning why he brought groups of humans to the house and let the angel slaughter them like livestock while we watched on in shock, horror, and morbid curiosity.

In my mind's eye, I can still picture her hunched over a man, hand buried deep in his gut while his pained, choked grunt accompanied the blood that poured from his lips. The way his eyes had popped wide open when she pulled his innards out, as if she was a curious child, playing with oddities.

I knew then that something was wrong.

The door creaks open, and I come to a sudden stop when Aurelia—sorry, *Genesis*—walks inside. I’m instantly on alert, tracking her like a hawk while she peruses the books stacked on my desk. What if my father is wrong? What if it’s not some girl my uncle murdered? What if it’s actually her?

Hands fisted at my sides, I let my gaze wander over the expanse of her long neck when she moves her hair away to expose the smooth olive skin. She picks up a book, reads over the blurb, then puts it back down. Turning around, her brown eyes land on me, and she smiles.

I don’t know what I expected.

Maybe I thought she’d look different.

“Are you okay?” she asks, her brows pulling down as she takes a step toward me.

Forcing my tense shoulders to relax, I return her smile and rub at my neck. “Sorry, I’m just tired.”

Her frown smooths out, and she trails the tips of her fingers across the navy, silk bedsheets on her way over. I count each step, watching her short skirt dance against her toned thighs.

“I was thinking about that kiss you denied me.”

Fuck me.

I clear my throat, cursing the jolt of pleasure that shoots straight to my dick when she looks at me with those hungry, brown eyes that somehow glitter with a deceptive innocence I can’t place. It does wicked things to my body.

“It’s all I’ve been thinking about,” she admits, coming to a slow stop in front of me. Her wings flex behind her as she reaches out to trace one of the short sleeves with her finger. Her touch grazes my skin and sends electric jolts everywhere she touches.

I grit my jaw, willing myself to stay strong. To not succumb. Not until I know for a fucking fact that it’s not Aurelia. Besides, she doesn’t return my feelings, and fuck if I’m gonna get lost in her while she thinks of my cousin.

No fucking way.

“You have feelings for me,” she purrs seductively, her eyes flicking up to mine and holding me entrapped in that silent siren song of hers that pulls me closer.

“Yes...” There’s no point in lying.

“What would Daemon say?”

The truth is there, in the slight curve of her lips. My father was right. Aurelia wouldn’t want to hurt Daemon.

Stay away from him, sure, but mindlessly toy with fire like this? No... Ever since she found out about the engagement, she’s hidden away, using me as a shield.

As she plasters on a more demure look, I look past her to the open door. I need to get out of here somehow. There’s no question as to her intentions when she looks at me with that heated gaze. Since she feeds on fear and chaos, I also have a sneaking suspicion that she feeds on emotional chaos, too. She’s certainly stirring it now as she steps even closer, her tits pressing up against my chest.

“Why don’t you touch me, Dmitriy?” That small hand of hers encircles my wrist and guides my hand to her soft breast. Fingers twitching, I bite back a groan as I look down to see my hand engulfing her bust. Aurelia’s tits aren’t big; they’re a perfect handful. The urge to pull down her dress is messing with my head.

I’m saved from further torment when the sound of heavy footsteps echoes through the hallway, closer and closer. Daemon comes to a stop in the doorway, bouncing his gaze between us with suspicion written all over his face. That’s when I realize my hand is still on her breast.

Fuck.

I drop it like I’ve been burned, but it’s too late. Fury burning in his gaze, he strides up to me and clocks me in the fucking jaw. Pain explodes, and I stumble back, only just managing to catch myself on the bedside table. He’s on me then, and we go tumbling to the floor, fists flying in a flurry of growls and flapping wings.

“You get your filthy fucking hands off her.” Another blow to my face stuns me temporarily before I get the upper hand and roll us over. With my knees on either side of his hips, I flare my wings behind me and ram my fists into his furious face. Blood explodes from a cut on his brow, and he shoves me off. Spitting a wad on the floor, he swipes the back of his hand over his forehead, wiping away the excess of blood, but it keeps pouring.

I barely duck out of the way when he shoots a fireball at me, the flame singeing my cheek. With a curse, I roll to the side, sit back up, and erect a firewall between us. One he must cross if he wants to get to me.

We glare at each other over the dancing, crackling flames.

“You fucking touched her!” he snarls, teeth reflecting the orange glow. “You had your damn hands on her.”

A cursory glance in Genesis’s direction confirms my suspicion. She’s feeding on the conflict in the room—a true vampire in her own right.

I hold out a hand, palm facing up. “It wasn’t like that.”

He snarls, lips peeling back further over his sharp teeth. Alaric and Ronan shadow him, pacing in the background with their eyes pinned on me, awaiting the command to rip me to shreds for laying a hand on their woman.

Fuck everything to Hell. It’s not like I can tell them about Genesis now. How she tried to seduce me and fed on the emotions warring inside me, as well as the sexual energy in the room. I can’t tell him any of that. Not when he’s defending his territory. There’s no getting through to him now. Not when the alpha in him flexes its metaphorical wings in a bid to chase off competition.

“Look...” I say, keeping my voice low so as not to aggravate him further. He’s already snarling like a provoked wolf, and I don’t blame him. If that were me, walking in on a scene like that, I’d do the same. “I am not after your angel, alright? I won’t steal her from you.”

I don’t think.

“Why did you touch her?” Dariana speaks up from somewhere behind Daemon. I’m not sure exactly where. I don’t peel my eyes away from his near-black ones.

“It was a stupid mistake.” I can’t exactly tell them that she asked me to. They’d never believe me.

Another vicious snarl rips loose from Daemon’s vocal cords, and he rises to his feet, towering close to the flames. We don’t have the connection that would see us able to share hellfire. If he touches mine, he’ll hurt himself. Little is known about fire-bonding. Some angels are born with the ability to bond to a mate, while others form that connection as a forging bond blossoms. But whatever binds angels together is distant in the room now. Flames lick up the length of his arms, and his extended wings give an aggressive flap.

The kind of flap that says, “Stay the fuck away!”

Message received.

I climb to my feet, blood dripping from my chin as I put out the flames. Daemon never takes his eyes off me, pacing in front of the angel.

I know better than to look at her now while he’s this triggered. Breathing like a provoked bull, he yanks his hair.

A soft touch to his arm seems to snap him out of whatever mental nightmare he’s stuck in, and everything about him calms at the sight of Dariana.

“It’s okay,” she says softly, her raven hair tied up in a high ponytail. “She’s safe.”

I almost snort at that. Safe?

Now is not the time to have this conversation.

“Missed us, little angel?” Ronan asks, sliding his arm around Genesis’s shoulders with an easy smile.

“What are you doing?” she asks when he steers her out of the room.

“These games end today. You’re coming with us.”

Drawing to a sudden halt, she peels his arm away from her shoulders and throws me a wary glance. I'm so thrown for a second that I question everything. Especially when she looks at me that way, like she's scared of going with them.

She can't be. It's part of Genesis's plan.

"I'm not going with you," she says in a shaky voice that stirs the alpha in Daemon and every other man in the room.

"It's not up for debate," he growls out, his voice final. Bored, even.

Her mouth falls open in pure outrage, and it's so believable, I find myself riveted by the scene unfolding in front of me. Maybe my father is wrong?

Poking a stern finger into Daemon's chest when he tries to sidle past her, she puts enough venom into her voice to sweet-talk every swinging cock in the room. "What part of 'it's over' don't you get?"

There's that attitude that reeled in his attention like a fish on a hook in the first place. If Genesis is in there, she has watched and learned.

The air thickens with tension as Daemon flicks his dark eyes to her finger. She pokes him again. Either she's blind to the rage shimmering behind his onyx orbs, or she's provoking him on purpose. In a swift move, he bends down and hauls her over his shoulder. With a hard slap to her ass, he carries her out of the room.

Ronan chuckles and shakes his head as he follows hot on their heels. Alaric, on the other hand, lingers, watching me like he's trying to figure me out. The sound of Dariana's heels clicking on the floor fades away as she exits the room.

"Daemon isn't the only one with a mean right hook," he says, biceps flexing in his arms as he shoves his hands into his pockets. "Touch her again, and you won't just have one pissed-off male angel, but three to contend with."

Arching my brow, I chuckle humorlessly. "You three, I can deal with. Dari, on the hand..."

Alaric's gaze shifts over his shoulder to the door and then he brings his attention back to me. Rocking back on his heels, he drags his eyes down my body and back in an assessing way that tells me he's measuring what kind of threat I present in the light of things. "Stay away from her, Dmitriy. I won't warn you again."

With those parting words hanging in the air along with the scent of burnt fabric, I watch him leave, clueless to the danger they're about to bring into Lucifer's home.

"Alaric," I call out before he has a chance to exit.

He spins around, hand on the doorframe.

"I have information on the angel that you'll want to know."

His eyes narrow, cutting me to the bone. Suspicion sneaks into his expression. I scratch my jaw, blowing out a stiff breath through my nose. "Aurelia is gone. That girl, that *monster*, is not the girl you're in love with."

A snarl starts up in his chest, but I hold my hand up in a soothing gesture. "Just be careful, is all. Sleep with your eyes open."

After he's left, I turn around and kick over my nightstand. What the fuck am I supposed to do now? I don't owe Daemon anything. I don't even fucking care about him. But maybe it's true that blood runs thicker than water, because the thought of the wolf entering the lamb's paddock makes my stomach coil tight.

They don't even know the shitstorm that they're bringing into their fold.

The Trojan horse.

I let out a frustrated roar, clasp the short strands at my nape in such a tight grip that it borders on torture. I need to do something. I can't just stay here and watch the girl destroy Hell.

My home.

Fuck the treaty. Fuck the contract. Fuck the damn throne. Who the hell cares?

Swiping up my leather jacket from the end of the bed, I slide it on and stride out of the room. If Daemon wants me gone, he'll have to challenge me for the girl. Until then, I'm here to fucking stay.

CHAPTER
SEVENTEEN

AURELIA

Any moment now, the lone candle in the corner will burn out. It's almost to the bottom, the dying flame flickering low. I don't know how long has passed, but I do know that if darkness descends to swallow me whole, I'll break. I can't face it again, the oppressive silence that seems to scream to be heard over my thundering heartbeat. Shivering, I wrap my arms around myself and rest my chin on my knees. My eyes fall closed as I exhale a rattling breath. I need to wrangle the panic that has its talons in my ribcage, as if it wants to pry me open any moment now.

A whimper escapes me when a soft hiss alerts me to the candle's demise. Darkness descends on the room. I shoot my head up and push to my feet. As I take a small step back, the chain drags across the damp concrete floor. I've tried everything to free my ankle. Nothing works. I'm stuck here—a prisoner of the darkness, chained and broken.

My breaths saw out of me as I press my palms flat against the wall behind me. Inside my chest, the panic flares, throbbing and pulsing with its own heartbeat. I curse myself for succumbing to it.

Just then, a silent creak has my head whipping to the side, ears pricked for any sound. There's a rustle, followed by a small flame that flares to life, dancing and flickering on my stalker's fingertips while he watches me from behind the mask. Bending down, he lights a new candle on the metal tray, and I stiffen when he straightens up.

Black wings peek up from behind his shoulders. As I inch further away, they flex restlessly.

“Please, let me go. You can't keep me here.”

The way he stares at me from behind the mask has me breaking out in a cold sweat. His gaze probes, slithering over every inch of exposed skin like a slick tongue.

Crossing the room, he grabs my chin in a bruising grip and shoves my head hard against the wall. My skull explodes with pain, and blinding, white spots dance and swirl before my eyes. I let out a cry. The world spins in and out of focus, the floor tilting up to greet me.

Holding up a vial with a blue liquid, he flicks the cork lid with his thumb, sending it scattering across the floor. I clamp my mouth shut when he puts it to my lips and keeps me frozen with his other hand. Nostrils flaring, I fight him the whole time. With a hard yank, he forces my eyes to his, then digs his fingers into my cheeks to pry my mouth open.

I try to knee him in the balls. He sees it coming and dodges out of the way before ramming my head into the stone wall once more. I let out a pained whimper, the world spinning around me. I'm vaguely aware of a bitter taste in my mouth as the liquid slips down my throat, followed by intense burning. My soul has been set on fire. At least, that's what it feels like when my body begins to jerk and convulse.

As I slide down the wall and collapse in a heap on the floor, drugged and dazed, he strokes my hair away from my brow and says in a voice that's vaguely familiar, "So pretty." His fingers stroke and stroke. "So very pretty."

I try to sit up, but my body won't obey. I end up sprawled on my side instead.

"Shh, don't fight it. We can't let you set fire to the place."

More whimpers escape past my lips when his touch trails a path up my bare thigh. Pausing at the short hem, he stares down at me. Nausea churns my stomach. I'm going to be violently sick if he doesn't get his filthy hands off of me.

His fingers slip underneath the fabric, burning a path across my mud-streaked skin. With the skirt pooled around my waist, he takes a moment to study me.

"Please, no," I whimper.

He bends over me and pulls at the ropes holding my wings to ensure they're secure. Then his hand returns to my hip, exploring me in ways I don't want to think about. The haze in

my brain is a welcome one as his hand dips between my thighs.

He mumbles something incoherently and pulls my hair with his other hand. While he takes and steals, I swim in and out of consciousness, vaguely aware of the flickering candle's hazy glow. Dark, ominous shadows dance across the concrete walls, threatening to smother the only light source in the room. My heavy arms feel like lead as I drag my fingers through the grit on the floor. No matter what I do, they refuse to obey.

Lifting the black mask above his chin, he sucks on his fingers before reaching forward again to caress my raven wings. At the sensation of his fingers sliding through my feathers, I snarl weakly. He pauses for a beat, head cocked as he listens to the feral sound.

As he bends over, the cold mask brushes my skin. "You ruined my life, little angel. You shouldn't have come here. Hell isn't a place for an innocent little angel like you."

"Fuck you," I choke out in a croaky whisper, trying to focus my gaze on him. He's a blur through the drugs swimming in my system.

"Fuck me?" He chuckles, sliding his fingers over my slit. "You're not in a position to make demands. As for now, you're my toy and nothing more. See, that's what happens when you escape Eden; you cause trouble."

My tongue feels too big for my mouth. Too big and too dry. "Please, let me go."

"Not until I've got my revenge."

"Revenge?" I slur my words as he grips my shoulder and rolls me over onto my back. "I don't understand."

"You don't have to understand," he says dismissively, brushing my hair away from my cheeks. My own scent lingers on his fingers. I want to hurl. "I know from watching you closely these past weeks that a certain someone will go to great lengths to get you back."

"Your voice..." Why is my throat so dry? "I recognize it ___"

“Shh.” His weight descends on my body, muscles bunching beneath the fabric of his robe as he crawls on top of me. “Tell me, little angel, has he fucked you yet?”

A sob claws its way up my throat. I place my hands on his chest to push him away, but I’m too weakened by the concoction. No matter how much I will my body to obey, it won’t.

“Please, stop,” I plead, knowing he won’t.

Securing my wrists overhead, he buries his nose in my neck, the cold plastic biting into my skin. With a sharp inhale, he breathes my scent deep into his lungs before releasing a shuddering groan. “You’re his weakness and my very own little weapon. As long as I have you in my possession, he can’t take everything from me. I have to admit”—he breathes me in again, his dick twitching inside his pants—“you smell exquisite, the tempting scent of innocence lingering like a sweet aroma.”

“Please, stop,” I beg as the candle flickers out. But he doesn’t stop. He never stops.

“He wants you.” His hot breath tickles my ear now that his mask lies discarded somewhere on the gritty floor. The stubble on his cheek prickles my cheekbone when he enters me. “And that makes me want you, too. Claim the angel who travels through doors.”

“When Daemon finds me,” I manage to choke out as I struggle against his tight grip on my wrists, the chain rattling loudly in the darkness, “he’ll tear you to shreds.”

Invading my body, over and over, he breathes heavily in my ear. I hate him. I hate him so much. My body vibrates like a live wire about to implode.

“He won’t find you, little angel. No one will.”

AMENADIEL

The candle on the desk is burning low, its soft glow flickering across the page in front of me. Beside it sits a half-empty tumbler of scotch. I can't focus, and it's pissing me off. Slamming the book shut, I ease back in my chair and stare mindlessly at the desk, at the tall stack of books and scattered papers. Where the fuck is she? And I don't mean Genesis.

Where is Aurelia? I can't find her when I enter through the tear in the veil. But then again, the girl's mind was always a mystery. A fucking maze that seems to have swallowed her whole.

I've studied the information contained within the countless books on my shelves, but I can't find anything about tears in the veil.

Maybe because only the most powerful angels can enter through them.

Fucking typical that I happen to be one of those lucky few.

Rubbing my tired eyes, I run a hand through my hair. I'm not getting any further with this tonight. Not when I'm this exhausted.

Standing from my chair, I shut the book I've been reading before snuffing out the candle with a wave of my hand. Magic pours from my fingers with ease, without me even thinking about it.

Silence greets me in the hallway. Without Dmitriy and that bothersome female around, the house is quiet. Too quiet.

The torches on the walls burn brighter in response to my magic as I pass, their shadows chasing mine. I ascend the large staircase to the upper floor, then take a left toward the wing where my bedroom is situated.

A flicker of light spilling out from beneath my bedroom door to chase away the night is the first sign that something is

wrong. As I near, I draw to a halt, listening for any sounds that might tell me who's paid me a nightly visit.

Irritation flares up inside me. I don't like surprises, and there's only one person who knows the extent of my dislike for uninvited midnight guests.

Upon opening the door, I'm greeted by the sight of my brother sipping scotch in the armchair near the fireplace. With his foot kicked up on his knee, he's the epitome of relaxation after a hard day's work.

Shutting the door behind me, I wave a hand toward my bed, injecting an air of boredom into my voice. "Is there a reason why there's a naked, dead girl in my bed with her wings removed?"

"Don't you recognize her?" Lucifer asks, lowering the tumbler.

Sucking on my teeth and fighting the urge to throw him out, I lift my gaze to the wall behind my bed, where her small wings have been mounted like a fucking trophy. "Should she ring a bell?"

Lucifer doesn't even attempt to wrangle the amusement in his eyes as he watches me remove my suit jacket. "The female angel from the club. You missed quite some party."

"Why is it that you felt the need to kill this one? Boredom?"

He takes a long sip. "Since when did you become such a bore? It was just a bit of fun."

With a disgusted snort, I discard my suit jacket on the end of the bed, annoyed by how close it lies to the dead girl's foot. "It goes without saying that you need to keep your playthings away from my bedroom."

"I was hoping you'd join us."

"You're tidying this shit up before you leave." I point to the wall. "And take her wings with you."

After draining his scotch, he stands up and places the empty tumbler on the mantelpiece. "Makes you feel powerful,

no? To have their wings mounted to your wall?"

I don't even bother with a response. My brother has always been power-hungry. I am too, but torturing angels for sport and keeping their body parts as trophies is not my thing.

I stiffen at the feel of his hand on my shoulder.

"I'll let you have her ass as a peace offering. She's dead, sure, but those holes are still warm. Come on, brother, when was the last time you let loose a little?" He jostles me, mouth too close to my ear. "Had some fun?"

"Why are you really here?" Shrugging him off, I turn to face him. "You haven't bothered to pay me a personal visit in what? A century? What brings you here now?"

His lips curve into a dark smile. With a shrug of his shoulders, he walks past me to stroke his hand through the dead girl's dark hair. She's face down, propped up on her knees with her ass in the air. Congealed blood dots the mottled skin around the severed stumps. I'm no innocent angel—the sight of her ruined body, the bruises and cuts, stirs no emotion inside me. I don't feel sympathy or disgust. I'm just annoyed that my pesky brother had to bring her here. Now I'll have to change the sheets.

"Do I need a reason to see my brother? My own flesh and blood?"

"Yes," I reply, deadpan.

Reaching out and tracing his fingers down the girl's spine, he stops at the top of her ass, where his cum has yet to dry. "I recently had to teach my son a lesson." With slow strokes, he smears his semen, tracing swirls and patterns. "But something tells me it's not enough."

"Your son is not my problem," I respond, stepping past him and making my way over to the minibar across from the fireplace. After pouring myself a drink, I turn to face him again. "Why are you here?"

"I want your son to keep the girl busy."

I nearly choke on my drink. “Did you not listen to a word I said the other day?”

He steps away from the bed and pretends to peruse my bookshelves. “You spouted some bullshit about Genesis being back from the dead.”

“My son is on his way to warn Daemon.”

His head swivels my way. “I won’t be held accountable if Daemon kills your son. Not when Dmitriy seeks out trouble by approaching him.”

With a shake of my head, I kick back the last of the drink and revel in the delicious burn as it travels down my esophagus. “Maybe you need to teach your son some self-control. He’s a hothead and a liability more often than not.”

Lucifer smirks, as if his son’s violent nature is something to be proud of. “He’ll take my place one day. He needs his dominant nature, or the world will eat him alive.”

Snorting, I place my tumbler down on the bar counter. “Your son will burn this place to the ground before he’ll ever let my son near Aurelia.”

“Aurelia,” he says, tasting the name like a fine wine, one he’s not entirely pleased with. Maybe because it doesn’t belong to him. “What’s so special about this one? A true fallen angel, like us.”

I stay silent, not liking his train of thought. The way his mind schemes.

“Interesting,” he says finally as he walks past me. “Tell your son to keep the girl busy.”

As he walks out, I call after him, “Take the dead girl with you... and the fucking wings!”

Does he? Of course not.

CHAPTER
EIGHTEEN

ALARIC

“**W**hat are you doing here?”

I turn from the living room window to see Dari leaning against the doorframe. My eyes skate down her long legs, which stretch on for miles. Her bare feet sport red-painted toenails that match her fingernails—a splash of color in this dark world.

“Daemon has her tied up on the bed.” Frowning, she pushes off the doorframe and walks deeper into the room. “Are you sure you don’t want to play?”

My gaze skates past her to the open door and back. Dmitriy’s words have played on my mind ever since we flew back.

“Just be careful, is all. Sleep with your eyes open.”

“Does she seem different to you?”

Dari draws to a halt. “Different? If by different you mean kicking and screaming like a feral animal, then no. Ronan found it highly amusing to secure her wrists to the bed frame while she snarled at him with her teeth on show and glowing, red eyes.

Hands in my pockets, I study her. “Dmitriy said something.”

“Of course he did.” She rolls her eyes and, with a dismissive flick of her wrist, says, “He just wants to get under your skin.”

I’m not so sure about that. Something about the look in his eyes when he said those words picks at my brain like a miner with a chisel. “She’s tied up? Can’t hurt anyone?”

Dari snorts like the thought is absurd. “What is she gonna do? There’s one of her and four of us. Besides, Daemon is so pent up; one wrong move, and he’ll be balls deep in her throat just to shut her up.”

“Nice visual.” I chuckle, rubbing at my neck.

“You want to help us piss her off or not?”

It’s not like I have anything better to do. I’m relieved to have her back and though I’m wary after Dmitriy’s warning, I’m also intrigued by it. Intrigued by the danger she poses with that untamed darkness inside her.

Following Dari upstairs to Daemon’s bedroom, we enter through the door. Aurelia sits near the headboard with her right wrist chained to it and a murderous look on her face.

When she spots me, she narrows her eyes, and the growl in her throat intensifies.

Daemon is seated on the desk chair, looking extremely pleased with himself, while Ronan leans against the back wall with his feet crossed and eyes glued to the phone screen in his hand.

“What did we miss?” Dari asks, walking deeper into the room.

“Not much,” Ronan says, typing away. “Just Daemon near salivating at the sight of her chained to his bed. You’d think it’s his birthday.”

“I have to say,” she replies, skirting the bed with slow, measured steps and a predatory look in her eyes. “I like her at our mercy like this.”

Aurelia snaps her teeth at Dari, and I can’t help but laugh at her foolish bravery. Dari isn’t someone you challenge. None of us are.

Stopping by the edge of the bed, Dari reaches out and twirls a strand of Aurelia’s dark hair around her finger. “Snarling and growling won’t get you anywhere but spanked raw.” She looks at Daemon as I lean back against his desk and cross my ankles. “What are we doing with her?”

A dangerous chuckle shakes his shoulders. “What we always do. Fuck the defiance out of her. Break her down, little by little, until she submits. Edge her until she can’t fucking take it anymore.”

“I like the sound of that.” Dari hums under her breath, mindlessly twirling and tugging on the strand of hair wrapped around her finger. “Especially the edging part.” In a quick move, she releases the hair, grabs Aurelia by the throat, and brings her face level with the snarling angel. “I want to fucking drown in your pussy juices while you beg me to let you come.”

A creak at the door steals our attention away from the angel. Daemon shoots to his feet when Dmitriy appears in the doorway with a sheepish look on his face.

“Sorry. I knocked, but no one answered.”

“What the fuck are you doing here?” Daemon crosses the room in a flurry of movement, too fast to catch. “How fucking dare you enter my house?”

Dmitriy’s eyes skate past him to Aurelia on the bed and back. He swallows thickly. “Believe me when I say that I’m not here to start a fight, for once.”

Unconvinced, Daemon steps into him, forcing him back a step. “Then why are you here, looking at *my* angel?”

Ronan clears his throat, and Daemon stiffens, then concedes, “Our angel.”

With a chuckle, Ronan pockets his phone. “That’s better.”

Dmitriy stifles a chuckle at their exchange, and I study him closely before sliding my gaze to the angel on the bed. I do a double take. There’s something in that gaze of hers that feels... *wrong*.

The way she tracks their exchange and smirks when she thinks no one is looking.

She notices me staring, and I narrow my eyes to let her know I don’t buy her act. Something is up. And while I don’t want to let Dmitriy drive a wedge through this fragile bond, I can’t help but study her. Something is off. I can sense it with every nerve ending in my body.

“Daemon,” I speak up, not taking my eyes off the shackled angel on the bed. “I think you should hear him out.”

In my periphery, Daemon burns a hole through the side of my face before turning that lethal gaze on his cousin. The cogs in his brain turn over while he considers my words. With a final exhale, he steps back.

Dari and Ronan almost choke on their own spit when Daemon concedes. I have to admit, I didn't think he'd listen.

Not that he does it willingly, and the scathing look he levels at Dmitriy as he enters the room would see a lesser man run for the door. "You have two seconds to make your fucking point, or I'll make you regret ever setting foot in my house."

Dmitriy looks at the angel on the bed, his gaze flicking from her face to the bedpost, taking in the handcuff that keeps her restrained. "I might need more than two minutes."

Daemon opens his mouth to retort and spew some unhelpful bullshit, no doubt, so I raise my hand to silence him. "We're listening."

In my periphery, Ronan shoots me an amused glance, while Dari throws her hands out as if she's fed up with this song and dance and just wants to feast on the angel's cunt.

"I spoke to my father—"

Interrupting him, Daemon lets out a loud, frustrated groan.

"Like I said," Dmitriy says, injecting his voice with enough dominance to make Daemon stiffen and narrow his eyes, as if sensing the challenge in the air, "I spoke to my father."

Intrigued, I straighten from the desk. "Go on."

"When Lucifer and Amenadiel escaped Eden, a sacrifice was required. Lucifer murdered a female angel, called Genesis." He looks between us pointedly and crosses his arms. "That's how they got the gates to open."

"So?" Daemon asks impatiently.

Waving a hand at the girl on the bed, Dmitriy says, "She's Genesis."

Daemon stares at him incomprehensibly for a moment, the cogs turning in his brain. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

On the bed, Aurelia laughs, and the sound sends chills down my spine.

“You’ve seen the darkness claim her firsthand.” Dmitriy steps closer to Daemon with a look of determination burning brightly in his dark eyes. “I know you have. And I know you’ve seen the depth of the evil that lurks behind those shadows. We seduce our meals and place them under a spell to make them pliant. We don’t torture them for hours and prolong death. We don’t feed on their fear and pain.” With a finger aimed in her direction, he says, “Yet that’s what she does. She doesn’t need blood. That’s an assumption on our part. What she needs is something far more evil than what we can begin to comprehend.”

“So what are you saying?” I ask when Daemon continues staring at Dmitriy.

“I don’t fucking know,” he concedes, throwing his hands out defeatedly. “But I do know that Genesis is not Aurelia.”

“Genesis is not Aurelia?” Dari sounds confused as she walks closer to us with a deep frown between her brows. “I don’t understand.”

“When Genesis died that day, true evil was born by Lucifer’s actions. Heaven and Hell. Light and Dark. Genesis and Aurelia are born of the same flame. Genesis is the darkness to Aurelia’s light—the part of her that was called home by the forest outside the gates.”

“Are they two separate entities?” Ronan asks, straightening from the wall.

Dmitriy never takes his eyes off Daemon. “Think of it like this. Take a candle and use its flame to light another candle. Are they still the same candle? Then take the two candles and combine their flames. What have you got?”

Daemon blows out a frustrated breath. “I don’t get it.”

Beside us, Aurelia, *Genesis*, continues laughing on the bed.

“You don’t have to get it, Daemon.” He points at the angel again. “Don’t fall under her spell. Aurelia is gone.”

“What do you mean, ‘gone’?” I ask.

His gaze skates to me, thick with regret. “The darkness in her has taken over. Aurelia is lost in the shadows.”

“That’s not possible,” Dari whispers with an edge of desperation in her voice. “She can’t just get lost in the shadows.”

“Can she not?” His eyes burn with determination. “Remember those first few angels who walked out of Heaven. We all know some of them lost themselves to the shadows.”

“But there has to be a way out.”

“It’s all in her mind, right?” I interject. “The shadows? The doorways?”

“Of course it’s in her mind.” Daemon sounds frustrated enough to start trashing the place. “Everything is in our fucking minds. Fire magic, for fucking starters.”

“She mentioned the tear in the veil, and how Amenadiel helped her.” Dari’s eyes widen. “Maybe he can enter her mind through the veil and bring her back?”

Daemon snorts, chuckling under his breath.

“None of *us* are powerful enough to do it,” she points out. “The only angels with that kind of power are...”

“Amenadiel and Lucifer,” Ronan finishes for her.

Releasing an angry growl, Daemon makes a beeline for the bed. He grabs the angel by the throat and snarls in her face. “If this is a game and you’re not this Genesis,” he spits out, sounding disgusted, “now is the time to come clean before I tear you to pieces, limb by limb.”

Her sickening laughter goes on and on, until, overcome with frustration, he jostles her.

“It’s no use,” Dmitriy speaks up, causing Daemon to growl threateningly. “This was Genesis’s plan all along. Hide in the shadows and let us all fall for Aurelia.”

A beat passes.

A beat in which his words sink in with the heavy weight of an anchor colliding with the seabed.

“Don’t you get it? We can’t hurt her. None of us can.”

I look at him, a frown marring my forehead as I take in the thin line of his lips and the crease between his brows. “You’re in love with her.”

Sucking on his teeth, he doesn’t deny or affirm it, and that’s all the answer we need.

Daemon lets go of Aurelia and turns so fucking slowly, it feels like an eternity has passed by the time he sets his stormy eyes on Dmitriy’s stoic face. In a few short steps, he closes the distance between them and grabs Dmitriy’s T-shirt. “If you ever put a single finger on her, I will cut you up and feed you to the dogs in the underworld. I don’t give a shit about your feelings, cousin. You will never touch her. Understood?”

A muscle works in Dmitriy’s cheek. “Yes, I hear you loud and clear. *Cousin.*”

Daemon drops him and steps back. With a look over his shoulder at the angel on the bed, he runs a hand through his hair. “We need to speak to my uncle.”

Curious as always, Dari approaches the bed, swaying her hips with every soft, seductive step. “I don’t like bitches who play games,” she says when she nears before placing her hands on the mattress. She brings her face close to Aurelia’s. “Listen to me very carefully, *Genesis*. Aurelia once said to me that no one came for her when she found herself trapped in Eden.” Tongue tracing over her bottom lip, she chuckles darkly. “If you think you can keep her from me, you have another thing coming.”

She reaches out and strokes Genesis’s hair behind her ear. “I will find my angel, and I will bring her back to me. That’s a fucking promise. Then, when she’s back, and her cum coats

my lips, I'll find a way to kill you so painfully that Hell's own hellfire resembles a spa trip in comparison. I don't know how or when, but I'll catch your little flame alone, and I'll snuff it out." Leaning in close to the angel's ear, she breathes out loud enough for us all to hear, "Maybe it's true that your death birthed Hell, but you've never spent a day in this playground, sweetheart. The kids here are mean. Don't go throwing rocks unless you're willing to take a severe beating." Straightening up, she adds. "And lose."

With those words hanging in the air, she walks out of the room.

Releasing a soft chuckle, Ronan shakes his head and sets off toward the door. Daemon watches him go before turning to me and Dmitriy. "I'll get every guard in the building to keep an eye on her."

I clap his shoulder on my way past. "Dari is right. Let's get our angel back."

CHAPTER
NINETEEN

DAEMON

After hunting high and low for Amenadiel, we find him hidden deep in the belly of the library back at the academy, of all places. Arms laden with old, spine-creased books, he pauses when he turns and spots us. His eyes flick between us all before settling on Dmitriy. “I guess you got through to them, after all.”

As he breezes past us in a flurry of cologne and whiskey-scented breath, I follow hot on his heel. With a heavy thump, the books land on the nearest table, disturbing a leaflet that goes flying. He clicks his finger, lighting the lanterns on top—three in total.

Before he can sit his ass down on the chair that he pulls out, I growl, “How do we bring her back from the shadows?”

Without even so much as a look in my direction, he sits down, reaches for the book on top, and opens it to the first page. “If I knew that, I wouldn’t need to waste hours reading through pointless material written by clueless angels, would I?”

His response tightens my muscles, but I let it slide as my gaze snags on the title of the book on top of the pile. I pick it up and take a seat in the nearest chair.

“What’s it about?” Alaric asks, no doubt intrigued by the sight of me willingly picking up a book.

“Timelines,” I mumble, distracted as I scan the page.

“You’ll find some useful information,” Amenadiel replies, turning another page, “but most of it is nonsense.”

“You’re such a pro, right?” I mutter, and his eyes flick up from the book.

Watching me from across the table as the flames in the lanterns cast a soft glow over his face, he states matter-of-factly, “Some of us are powerful enough to travel through tears in the veil. Others are not.”

“You should write a book.” Alaric takes a seat beside me, the chair scraping on the stone floor. “You know more than most angels here.”

“I don’t know enough,” he says bitterly, and there’s something in his tone that makes me look over at him. I study the way his jaw flexes with frustration and how his dark eyes fly over the page while he tugs at his dark hair with his free hand that’s not drumming out a beat on the desk.

“Why are you so tense?” The accusation in my tone doesn’t go unnoticed.

He drags his eyes up to meet mine. But instead of replying, he snorts dismissively, tosses his book aside, and grabs the next one in the pile. “This is bigger than you young ones can grasp.”

Abandoning my book, I ease back in my seat and cross my arms, biceps bulging against the straining fabric. “Explain it to us.”

Dmitriy is watching our exchange closely, hovering on the outskirts of my periphery. The urge to rip his fucking head off for harboring any kind of feelings toward the little witch begs me to fly out of my seat and attack him. It takes all my willpower not to listen to that voice. Now there’s something else grating at me. I don’t like the bead of perspiration on my uncle’s temple.

“Genesis is back for revenge. She claims God Himself orchestrated all of this in His own perfect timing to seek revenge on the seven angels who turned their back on Him. Her claims go so far as to say that’s why the gates opened for Aurelia.” His eyes flick between us all. “If that’s true, God used Aurelia as a weapon against us. To weaken us.” He looks at me, and a muscle works in his jaw. “The next one in line to fall under her spell is your father. And if your father falls...”

My heart stalls in my chest.

No fucking way.

“This is far-fetched,” Ronan interjects, shattering my thoughts. “Are you saying she’s making us fall for her? Then

what?”

With a shrug of his shoulders, Amenadiel sits forward to read another page. “I don’t know God’s ultimate plan for revenge. But I do know none of you would ever hurt her, and that makes her dangerous.”

“Hang on,” I say, placing my elbows on the table. “You said the next one in line to fall under her spell is my father...”

Amenadiel turns another page.

“Do you like her, too?”

When he doesn’t reply, a growl rips through my vocal cords. I slam my hands on the table, relieved when he finally cuts his eyes to me. “Answer the fucking question.”

“Don’t piss me off, Daemon. It won’t end well for you.”

I shoot up from my chair, and he follows suit, flaring his wings aggressively. The urge to back down tickles the back of my neck, but fuck if I will. Gritting my jaw, I let him see the hellfire flicker in my eyes. “I won’t hesitate to challenge you for her.”

He stares at me for a beat, then the darkness and raw fury in his gaze give way to amusement. Sitting back down, he grabs another book. “Aurelia is a weakness to us all. That’s why we’re here, preparing to derail God’s plan for revenge.”

Dari slides in beside Amenadiel and grabs a book, too, in a silent plea for a ceasefire. She peers up at me from beneath her dark lashes, and I crumble beneath the blaze that burns deep inside her soul. “Sit down, Daemon.”

Fuck it. I pull my chair back out and take a seat. Ronan follows suit, and Dmitriy soon slides in next to my uncle.

“What are we looking for exactly?” Dari asks, tapping her long nails on the desk. “Or should I ask what *you’re* searching for?”

Amenadiel barely spares her a glance. “I have tried to reach her in her mind when I step through the veil, but I can’t find her.”

“What do you mean, you can’t find her?”

“Think of the mind like a maze. It’s a vast space.”

“But you’ve found her before.”

“That was different.”

“How so?” I ask, shutting the book in front of me.

Amenadiel tracks my movements. “She wasn’t trapped in the shadows. The darkness has a hold on her now.”

“If she’s trapped, you should still be able to locate her.”

“Not if it’s deliberately keeping her from me.”

When I frown, he continues, “Genesis told me that Aurelia isn’t alone in the shadows.”

“She’s not alone in the shadows?” Alaric looks from Amenadiel to me and back. “Who’s there with her?”

“I don’t know,” he replies. “That’s what we need to figure out.”

Ronan sits forward. “Do you think it’s someone who belongs to the shadows or someone powerful enough to travel through worlds? You stepped through the veil. What’s to stop someone else from doing it too?”

“Like her stalker,” Dari interjects, sitting up straight. “Oh, fuck!”

Amenadiel holds up a hand, falling silent when a group of students walk past the desk. When they’re out of earshot, he says, “Very few can enter through a veil. That would take someone very powerful. It’s more likely to be a subconscious fear.”

“What are you talking about now?” I ask skeptically.

“The mind is a place of imagination. While Heaven and Earth are physical, the mind is not.”

Easing back in my seat, I cross my arms, tipping my chin. “Go on.”

“Our world, as well as the human world, follows certain laws of physics. The human world is more restricted than ours,

sure, but we are still bound by laws. We can manipulate hellfire with our minds, but we can't shapeshift. We can't manipulate Light because we're not of the light. We are restricted within our magic." Tapping his temple, he looks at us all in turn. "The mind has no such restrictions. Once you enter through the veil, you better pray the person whose mind you're inside favors you or, at the very least, isn't aware of the power at their disposal. You can't manipulate *their* magic, but they can manipulate it themselves. Why? Because the mind *is* magic."

"What has this to do with subconscious fears?" Alaric asks, bringing us back on topic.

"Aurelia hasn't learned to harness her own power yet. She's lost in a dream, and in that dream, her own fears can take on shape."

"Fuck, that's heavy," Alaric grumbles, scratching his stubble.

"The darkness can take on the resemblance of a person, even. We just don't know what's happening inside her mind. But we do know that if she learns to harness her own power, like she did when she defeated me by manipulating and weaponizing her own Light to mend the veil, she can defeat what holds her captive from us."

"That sounds easier said than done," Dmitriy says, blowing out a tired breath.

"That's because it is. She'd have to wake up out of her own delusion first."

"But what about Genesis?" Alaric asks, blinking at the desk.

"How do we kill her?" Ronan looks between us.

Amenadiel turns another page in the book. "That's what we need to figure out."

"Let's just hope we're wrong about the stalker. That he hasn't got her trapped somewhere in her mind." Dmitriy looks at Amenadiel. "We could be wrong, right?"

“Of course.” Amenadiel scoots his chair back and scrubs a hand down his face. “I can enter through the veil, but I can’t locate he—”

Before he can finish that sentence, Dariana butts in, “Daemon can find her.”

Amenadiel freezes, and Dari hurries to add, “He likes to hunt. Trust me, Daemon knows how to hunt. If anyone can hunt her down, it’s him.”

“Only one small problem,” I drawl, standing up. “I can’t enter through the veil.”

“You can with my help,” Amenadiel reluctantly admits. Then, as if he realizes what he’s said, “I’m not powerful enough to get you all across the veil. But I should be able to conjure enough magic to bring Daemon with me.”

“Nothing beats a bit of family bonding,” Ronan quips as he stands up, and I glower at him.

“Don’t get any ideas.”

“What happens when we get her back?” Dari asks, tightening her ponytail.

Amenadiel shoves his hands inside his pockets. “Let’s not think that far ahead. We need to find her first. Before Genesis sinks her claws into Lucifer. Daemon and I will enter through the veil to try to locate her. Meanwhile, don’t let Genesis out of your sight. And whatever you do, don’t fall under her spell. She’s dangerous, and she knows how to hunt angels the same way we hunt humans.”

Ronan stifles a laugh, shooting me a brief look that I choose to ignore. “Trust me, we know.”

Grumbling under my breath, I walk past him.

Trust me to get laded with my uncle, whom I also suspect harbors a crush on the little witch. Her nickname is proving truer by the minute—the way she seems to have cast a spell on us all. If my uncle is correct, and this is all part of her dream somehow, then we’re all at her mercy until she decides she’s done with us. Like dolls with torn limbs.

CHAPTER
TWENTY

LUCIFER

I'm very rarely surprised these days. When you've been around for centuries, life becomes a bore.

So when my son's latest obsession steps through the door to the club, I blink twice. Clad in a pleated, suspender skirt and a black, leather bra that barely contains her small, but perfect, breasts, she looks like a damn vision. My heated gaze trails down her long, smooth legs to her high heels and back. As she nears, sidling past the chairs and tables closest to the stage, where two male angels spit roast a petite female, I watch her approach. Something tells me my son would slaughter everyone in this club for seeing her dressed like a temptress.

I know before she's even lifted her gaze in my direction with that small, flirtatious smile of hers that the outfit is for my benefit. But why?

The intrigue makes my balls tingle with anticipation. I plaster on my best bored expression as she nears, despite the fact that this turn of events tickles something dark inside of me.

Pulling out a chair beside me, she plops down, and I let my gaze fall to her crossed legs. My gaze travels higher, noting how taut her stomach is and how her chest rises and falls with every inhale. A speck of blood dots her right breast, like a pearl of seduction for me to drag my tongue through and smear over that perfect, unblemished skin. "Bored of my son already?"

Her plump lips curve into a smile, and my eyes fly up to her seductive mouth. I've met her before, but something about her tonight draws me closer. I can't wrap my finger around what it is. Maybe it's the forbidden fruit she presents. If I fuck her, and I most definitely will, my son will be crushed. Something about that thought adds to the allure.

My mind conjures images of me hauling her onto the table and burying my face in her soaking cunt.

Though, I notice one thing; she keeps her wings tucked, like she wants to keep my attention away from their sheer, impressive size. Even tucked, they're impossible to unsee, and a quick scan of the room confirms that every swinging dick in here notices them, too. Something about that irritates me enough to snap my fingers in the air.

Out of nowhere, a busty barmaid pops up by my side, and I gesture restlessly around the other patrons. "Throw out every man in here. I want them gone immediately."

Casting an uncertain glance at the stage, she asks, "What about the performers?"

"Did I fucking stutter? I want every male out of my sight." As she leaves, I pin my eyes on the angel in front of me, relishing in the expanse of her smooth, bare skin. "Nothing good will come from this."

Her smile slowly grows—so slowly, I find myself watching with rapt interest how she holds my attention so easily. Once a mere annoyance, now she's all I see. "I like to stir a little trouble."

"Is that so?" I murmur, reaching forward to grab my glass of whiskey. As the alcohol slides down my throat, I cut to the chase. Enough of this charade. I care little for mind games. "You're not Aurelia. My son would never obsess over a girl who crawls so easily to his father, like every other girl in the kingdom. Why are you really here, Genesis?" It's pathetic how she thinks I'll fall into her trap so easily. It takes more than a seductive outfit and a devilish smile. I eat women like her for breakfast.

She fingers the strap of her suspender skirt. "Too much?"

I snort, placing the glass back down on the table, and ease back in my chair. "It's laughable how easily you thought you could trick me. My son is nothing like me. He's obsessed with Aurelia and craves her pussy juices like a human man addicted to heroin. But he'd kick her to the curb at the drop of a fucking hat if she came on to me." I let my heated gaze fall down her fuckable body. "I saw through your little act the very second

you entered the building. The question is *why*. Why are you back? Why now?"

Trailing her heeled toes up the inside of my calf, she smiles a seductive, lazy smile that slides over my hardening dick like a damn caress. "You ask a lot of questions, Lucifer. Have you not missed me?"

I scoff. "I don't care for whores."

"Yet you have an insatiable appetite for them," she replies, waving a hand around the almost empty room. Then she laughs, a tinkling sound that rings out like church bells. "You're not still sour about that, are you? That I fucked your brother?"

Despite the centuries that have long since passed, my stomach churns with residual bitterness. My damn brother and his relentless need to acquire everything I have. The pussies I fuck. *The fucking throne*.

"You are," she giggles, and I shove her heeled foot from between my thighs.

"What the fuck do you want? Enough of the mind games. You're boring me."

"I don't think I am." Placing her feet on the floor and leaning forward, tits squishing together, she trails her eyes over my face. "I think you haven't been this intrigued since the day you stepped out of Eden. You are a bored man, Lucifer. You like a little chaos to spice up the monotony of life. And what would be sweeter than bending your own son's latest obsession over a table and filling her every hole with cum?"

"There's only one problem with that," I grumble, hating to admit that she's right. "You're not her. And while fucking you would be a certain way of pissing off my son, it defeats the purpose if it's a vengeful ex, masquerading as forbidden fruit. It would be a poor replica."

"Poor replica," she echoes, reaching out and grabbing my whiskey glass. With her eyes on me, she takes a sip. Her throat jumps as she swallows it down before licking her lips. "I think

we both know that I'd do a better job than some innocent little angel from Eden."

"You were one once, remember?"

"I have a vague recollection," she says before chuckling softly and placing the glass back down on the table. "But you don't like innocence, Lucifer. You thirst for something darker."

"Not true," I reply, bored of this conversation and eager to move on. "I crave whatever experience will thrill me. As it is, I happen to be intrigued by what kind of woman would keep my son interested enough to not succumb after a week of torture. Whatever it is about the little angel, it is something worth exploring."

"Before doing what?" she asks with a twinkle in her eyes. "Killing her and removing her impressive wings?" She angles to the side to show me hers. Not that she has to; they're massive. "They'd look good on your wall, wouldn't they?"

I entertain the thought for all of two seconds, then stand up and button my suit jacket. "If this is some poor attempt at seduction, you'll need to try harder. I'm not tempted in the slightest by your bitter grudge."

As I turn to leave, she blurts, "I want Amenadiel dead."

Interesting.

I search her face, excavating the defiant look in her eyes in a hunt for cracks. I know she's up to something that will benefit only her. "I didn't become the ruler of Hell by being naive, Genesis." I step closer and grab her chin hard enough to make her wince. "When I see weakness, I destroy it. Don't fuck with me."

"I'm not fucking with you," she hisses through clenched teeth as I dig my fingers into her skin.

Immensely enjoying my marks on her unblemished skin, I lean in to breathe her in, taken aback for a second when I smell blood, gore, and death on her beautiful neck. Remembering the speck of blood on her right breast, I smell her again, looking for any hints of whom she might have killed.

When I'm satisfied there's no sign of my son amongst her victims, I shove her away. "My brother happens to entertain me more alive. And just like my son and every other male around, it seems he's rather taken with the little succubus. It makes me all the more curious about her. Where is she, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Lost in the shadows, Lucifer. You know how they like to feast on innocence."

Studying her, I hum under my breath.

Maybe I underestimated Genesis.

"I have a luxury apartment upstairs," I offer as I place my hand on her smaller back, where her fragile spine meets the hem of her pleated skirt. It'd be so damn easy to snap her in half and end this charade once and for all. But I'm intrigued. Too fucking intrigued. "Maybe you'd like a drink, away from the throngs of people?"

Her smile is predatory. "For old time's sake."

"I love how the stench of torture and death greeted us the moment you opened the door," she says when I close it behind us.

"I figured a woman like you, born from Death itself, would appreciate its aroma."

She spins around to face me, and my gaze falls to her long legs when the skirt flares around her thighs. It's annoying how seductive she is. Annoying because I want to suffocate the life out of her while she comes on my cock.

I stride past her, down the corridor. Framed paintings line the walls on each side, each one of an angel before I either fucked them or killed them, depending on my mood.

Genesis pauses to study each one until I'm ready to grab her by the hair and haul her deeper into my lair. "How do you convince them to set foot in here when it reeks of death?"

“I’m Lucifer,” I say, as if that explains everything. “They turn a blind eye.”

“Interesting,” she muses, flashing me a flirtatious smile over her shoulder before moving to the next picture on the wall.

Fuck her for making me stare.

I turn fully, scanning the sheer size of her wings. My own can’t be much bigger, and that lights a fire in my groin.

As if she can sense my gaze, she stretches them out to their full beauty, then tucks them back close to her body. Enough of this.

Grabbing the back of her neck, I slam her up against the wall and press myself against her wings. She doesn’t even try to fight me, much to my disappointment.

Cheek squished against the wallpaper, she thrusts her ass out. “I knew you wouldn’t be able to help yourself.”

Reaching up with my other hand, I slide it across a wing, relishing in the smooth feathers. “I bet my son branded these in cum. What man could stop himself, if presented with the opportunity to fuck such powerful perfection? It’s a shame he got to Aurelia first.”

“He sure knows how to fuck,” she goads, wiggling her ass. “Better than you and Amenadiel.”

Digging my fingers into her neck, I press my lips to her ear. “Now, sweetheart, we both know that’s not true. Little sluts like you thirst for power. There’s no one around here more powerful than me.”

“What do you do with them once they enter through the front door? I bet you don’t fuck them against the wall.”

“I don’t,” I admit, sliding my hand back down her wing. “I tie, gag, fuck, and kill them. And not always in that order. Sometimes I like to remove their wings first. There’s something so fucking sweet about their tortured screams.”

“Your dirty talk is making me wet, Lucifer. I missed your filthy mouth.”

“Shut up,” I growl, releasing her neck and clamping my hand over her mouth. “Where is Aurelia?”

Her soft laughter is muffled behind my palm as she stares up at me from behind, her neck bent at a sharp angle.

When I slide my hand down to the front of her throat, she says, “Let’s roleplay.” She bats her lashes and purrs in her most innocent voice, “Please, don’t hurt me, Lucifer. I’m scared.”

I shove her away, angry at the electric current of pleasure that rushes to my dick when she looks at me like that. “You’re gonna bring her to me, or I’ll hurt you, Genesis. Don’t make me kill you twice.”

She turns, leaning back against the wall, tits heaving with every harsh inhale of breath through those succubus lips. “If at first you don’t succeed, try again.”

Killing the distance between us, I trap her between the framed pictures. “Bring her to me!”

“Why?”

“Because,” I reply, inhaling her warm breath, “I want to show her the face of true evil.”

“No,” she says with a soft, teasing laugh. “You want to fuck your son’s girlfriend. It’s as simple as that. The one angel you can’t have.” Arching her back and pushing her tits into me, she bites her bottom lip. “A powerful angel like you thrives on a good hunt. It’s in your blood to invade and conquer. Aurelia is the ultimate challenge to you. Not only because she’s claimed by your son, but also because she’s possibly the only angel more powerful than you.”

A bark of laughter rips from my lips. “More powerful than me?” I push off the wall and continue down the hallway. “No one is more powerful than me.”

She follows behind, her steps lithe and silent—a predator stalking its prey. “You always underestimated the female race.”

I don't bother to spare her a glance over my shoulder as I push open a set of doors. As I step aside, she sidles past me, the sweet fragrance of her perfume assaulting my senses like a seductive whisper.

She turns in a circle in the middle of the room, taking in the blood-red walls and the big bed in the center with its black drapes and silk sheets. Whips, ropes, gags, floggers, and a multitude of other tools line the walls. Most women gasp when they see them, but Genesis seems more riveted by the large set of white wings mounted above the bed.

My lips spread into a sinister smile as I approach her from behind. "Do you miss them, Genesis? The weight of them?"

When my hands land on her shoulders, she turns her head slightly. "You removed my wings."

Swiping her hair from her neck, I duck down to breathe her in. "My first trophy."

I don't miss how her throat jumps—the first crack in her steel facade. Her heady scent intensifies with the storm of emotions that thickens the air the longer she stares at her past. My eyes roll to the back of my head as I imagine sinking my teeth into the column of her long neck. It's no longer a craving so much as a dying need. I need to fuck this sweet body. I need to fuck it and ruin its perfection.

"You're a sick man, Lucifer," she murmurs in a choked voice as she slowly turns in my arms.

"We finally agree on something."

When her eyes collide with mine, I grab her by the throat hard enough to draw a delicious yelp from her lips. She stumbles when I walk forward. The backs of her legs collide with the edge of the bed, and I duck down to sink my teeth into her bottom lip. Her racing pulse thunders beneath my fingertips. Not a single breath slips past the constricted column of her throat while I nip and bite at her delicious mouth. By the time I've drunk my share and shoved her down onto the bed, blood coats her swollen lips.

“You shouldn’t have come back here, Genesis,” I tell her as I climb on top of her. “Little moths shouldn’t fly so close to the flames.”

She bares her teeth with a hiss. When she thrashes on the bed, I overpower her with ease. “I guess I’ll have to hurt you to get what I want.”

Arching her back, she attempts to buck me off. “You would never hurt me.”

“Is that so?” I laugh, nearly crushing her tiny wrists in my tight grip. “Why’s that?”

“Because you’ll never get to fuck *her* if you do.” Lifting her head off the mattress, her brown eyes flash red. “You’re all victims of her in your own unique ways. It’s pathetic how you all want a piece of the little angel. How easy it was to use her innocence against you.” The red recedes and gives way to a cruel smile. “Now *he* gets to claim her instead, and fuck, baby... He’s taking advantage of having her all to himself without obstacles in his way. Even now, I can feel her distress. Her helplessness.”

Something ugly rears its head inside me. Some foreign, weird sensation I don’t know how to place. I bruise her wrists with my grip. “What the fuck are you talking about? Who’s claiming her?”

A manic laugh bubbles from her bloody lips. “You’ll never know. She’s gone, Lucifer. The shadows have her now. Your life is ruined. Your son will go insane hunting for her. Did you know they’re bonded by hellfire?”

“Fuck,” I grunt, letting go of her wrists and grabbing her in a chokehold. My hands engulf her small neck as I begin to choke the life out of her. I choke and choke, grunting with the effort, cock straining painfully against my pants despite the fucking anger that boils my blood.

Only when she begins to lose consciousness do I release her with a roar. I scramble off the bed, breathing hard as I tear open the bedside drawer. The contents spill to the floor. I toss

the drawer aside, snatch up the handcuffs, and secure her wrist to the bed frame.

“Fuck,” I whisper, then louder, “FUCK!” Tearing at my hair, I begin to pace the black rug on the floor. Why the fuck am I this affected by her? And when did my son bond his hellfire to hers? I kick over the nightstand as she coughs on the bed, clutching desperately at her sore throat. Her eyes find mine, glinting with a sick amusement. “Do you know what that means, Lucifer?”

“Of course I fucking know what it means to combine flames with another angel,” I bark, pointing an accusing finger at her. “This was your game all along, wasn’t it? Steal my only heir from me?”

She tugs the handcuff as she replies, “You’re so dramatic. Did you honestly think God wouldn’t seek revenge in His own time? You turned your back on Him.”

“So what’s your plan? Deprive my son of his female now that they’ve combined flames? Slowly drive him insane? To what end? Just to punish me?”

“Since when did you become such a saint, baby? You were willing to fuck her brains out just a few minutes ago, and now you’re worried about your son? Why? Because you found out about their bond? While it’s true that hellfire-bonded couples go insane if they’re forced apart, he’s not the only one she’s bonded with.”

I pause, whipping my head in her direction. “Who else?”

Her shoulders rise and fall with a shrug. She rattles the handcuff. “Release me, and I might tell you.”

“Not a fucking chance in hell. Not until you tell me what I want to hear.”

Easing back against the bed frame, she watches me pace the room. Rain patters softly on the glass as the minutes tick by. “You’re all bonded to her in some way. Whether it’s by fire, emotion, or because you’re victim to your own possessive nature doesn’t matter. It all leads to the same end.”

“Yeah, what’s that?” I spit, flames erupting from my fingertips.

“None of you are able to hurt her.”

Surging toward the bed with my incisors bared, I growl, “I will kill you one day, Genesis. Mark my fucking words. Your days are numbered.”

“You’ll end up hurting her. And then your son and his friends, maybe even your own brother, will kill you. I wouldn’t even have to raise a finger. Everyone you care about in your own unique, twisted little way will turn against you if you so much as lay a finger on her. I’ve done my homework, Lucifer. I won’t make the same mistake twice. This time, you can’t hide behind your followers.”

Shaking my head with disgust, I drop down into the nearest armchair and blow out a ragged breath. Head in my hands, I stare down at the floor. She made them combine flames, bonded them in the fucking fire that forges Hell, and then she tore her from my son. My only heir. The one who will one day rule Hell. And unless he gets her back, he’ll slowly go insane until only darkness remains.

I think back on the angels who exited Eden with me—the few who succumbed to the darkness. Locked in the deepest parts of the cellar beneath the academy, they slowly wither away, trapped in an endless nightmare with no escape. No longer angels, but pure demons.

The thought of my son losing control because he’s deprived of half of his hellfire sends cold shivers splashing down the length of my spine. Who would’ve thought the female angel I warned him to stay away from is the key to the throne?

CHAPTER
TWENTY-ONE

AURELIA

The soapy water in the metal bucket sloshes over the sides when he drops it to the stone floor.

Crouching down in front of me where I huddle in the corner, he dips his hand into the water and picks up the sponge. After squeezing out the excess water, he grabs my chin. Despite my futile attempts to wrench free, he swipes the sponge through the tears and dirt on my cheeks. His calloused fingers add more bruises to my already sore skin, and I whimper as he angles my face up to wipe the column of my throat. Bites and more bruises decorate the tender skin. He's deceptively gentle while wiping off the excess blood before dipping the sponge into the bucket. He wrings out the excess water and sets to work again with soft swipes that are at odds with the violence he's unleashed on my body since I entered this nightmare.

When I whimper again, he pauses at my collarbone, those dead eyes watching me from behind the mask. I want to rip it off him.

Abandoning the sponge in the bucket, he leans in close to my neck and slides his wet hand up the inside of my thigh. The cold bite of his mask makes my skin crawl as he whispers, "Mine."

Everything about him repulses me. Hell has opened my eyes to a lot of horrors, but nothing holds a candle to this.

Speaking of candles, a group of pillar candles sits in the corner. Gone is the lone flame. Four of them flicker wildly, placed on a metal tray. My favorite pastime when I'm alone is to watch the wax drip down the sides in a race for the bottom.

When he picks the sponge back up, the water sloshes again. With his eyes on me, he palms my leg and slides the wet sponge over my shin. He takes his time, removing every piece of dirt and grit. And for some sickening reason, it brings tears to my eyes. This act of kindness threatens to obliterate

the walls I've erected since my entrapment. I don't want to feel. Numbness has been my ally. Yet this...

"I love my marks on you," he whispers in that familiar voice I can't place while swiping the sponge over a sore bite mark on my thigh. "A day will come when you do, too."

"Go to Hell," I snarl, stiffening when the sponge travels higher, tracing the hem of my skirt.

"We're already here, remember? Besides," he murmurs as the sponge disappears beneath the fabric. "I don't need you to like my touch. It makes no difference."

"Why are you doing this?" I hate the shaking in my voice. "You don't want me. I'm no one."

"On the contrary..."

The sponge is right there, sliding over my sore, swollen folds. I screw my eyes shut.

"You're everything."

I try to shut my legs, but he pries them open. My heart begins to thrash inside my chest when I look down to see the flames engulfing his hand as it hovers over my thigh.

"Deny me again, and I'll burn you," he threatens, making me whimper with icy fear.

As he leans in closer, I hold my breath. "There's something about your fear that's tantalizing."

Cold water pools beneath my ass, and I'm both grateful and disgusted.

Grateful because he's washing himself off me.

Disgusted because he's touching me.

"Let's take this dress off."

"Please, no," I beg, but it falls on deaf ears. Rough hands pry it off me, tearing the fabric in the process. When I'm naked, he brings a small flame to life at the tip of his finger and brings it close to my nipple.

I press back against the cold, damp concrete wall at my back.

“It doesn’t matter how much I hurt you,” he says absentmindedly, watching the flame create shadows that dance over my breast, like beasts chasing one another. “I can never get enough.”

“You said *he* wants me. Who were you speaking about?”

Snapped from whatever sinister daydream held him captivated, he stares at me from behind the mask. I hate that I can’t see his hair beneath the hood that obscures him from me. “He took everything from me.”

“Who?” I press, then cry out when the flame at his fingertip grows higher, singeing the flesh of my nipple. With a flick of his hand, it’s gone.

He grabs my throat, engulfing the tender skin with his large hand. “He thought I would go down without a fight. That I wouldn’t retaliate.” The palpable disgust in his voice washes over me like the bucket of water beside us. He releases me, picks it up, and dumps its soapy contents over my head. A river of cold water floods the floor as I squeal and begin to shiver almost violently.

Teeth chattering, I look up at him as he stands and stares down at me like I’m dirt beneath his shoe. He steps closer to finger my soaking hair. I’ve long since stopped trying to use my tied wings. I don’t even have my hellfire at my disposal. To say that I feel powerless would be an understatement.

“I can sense their desperation. They’re hunting for you.” Fingers sliding into the damp strands, he pulls tight. “Does that make you feel good, knowing they’re searching for you?”

Tears spring to my eyes, and I push up onto my knees when he continues to pull. “Does it soothe the darkness inside you?” I hiss. “To hurt me?”

“I’m only doing what he wishes he had the balls to do to a pretty little thing like you. It’s in our nature to dominate. And with big wings like yours, I’m surprised he didn’t chain you

up already.” He snorts disgustedly, tossing me to the wet floor. “I’m not as weak as him.”

My wings ache to stretch out, to flare aggressively. I settle for baring my teeth instead, and he backhands me hard enough to send me flying into the wall. Pain explodes across my cheek, causing a whimper to shake my trembling shoulders. I huddle, knees drawn up to my naked chest.

“Don’t piss me off.”

The candles blow out, descending the room into darkness as he leaves. Wrapped up in a black, empty void, I palm my throbbing cheek. Shivers wrack my body, the icy cold slowly seeping into my bones.

“I want this nightmare to end,” I whisper. “Please, let it end.”

DAEMON

As we walk up the front steps to the house, I slow to a halt and cock my head sideways. “The door was closed when we left, right?”

Too absorbed by his phone, Ronan bumps into my back.

Beside me, Dari laughs as she opens the door the rest of the way and enters.

Ronan claps my shoulder on his way past, and I fight the urge to grab him by the wing and haul him down the front steps. I point an accusing finger at Amenadiel behind me. “Don’t try any funny business. This is my house.”

“You mean my brother’s house?” he quips, stepping past me.

Alaric grasps my shoulder too and jostles me. “Interesting ceasefire, huh?”

I sneer at him, about to open my mouth to speak when Dari’s voice steals my attention from inside the house. “Guys, you need to see this.”

Frowning, I walk inside with Alaric and Dmitriy on my heels. The first thing that hits me is the coppery smell.

“Blood,” Alaric says behind me, his voice thick with alarm.

I pick up my pace and shoulder past Amenadiel and Ronan. My eyes widen as I take in the state of the grand entrance. Blood covers every inch of every surface—blood and body parts.

“Your guards?” Dari asks, her voice barely audible over the loud rushing in my ears.

“She killed them all,” I whisper, stumbling deeper into the room. “Holy fuck...”

“Well, that’s what I call a massacre,” Amenadiel points out.

“We miss all the good parties,” Ronan grumbles, and I shoot him a look over my shoulder. With a shrug, he steps over a severed leg, trying damn hard not to chuckle under his breath. I wish I could see the funny side of it, but now I have to think of a way to explain to my dad why his entire hired guard is dead. I see that going down well.

“How is it that a female angel can cause such destruction by herself?” Alaric asks, and Dari snaps her head in his direction.

“Did you have to bring gender into this?”

Rolling his eyes, he continues, “Well... *gender aside*, it was one against how many?”

“Fifteen,” I mumble, dragging a hand down my face.

“How is this possible?” Dari asks. “We left her chained to the bed. Both wrists.”

“How the fuck am I gonna get this cleaned up?” I grumble, wincing when I step on a severed finger.

Amenadiel can't hide the amusement in his eyes as he stands by the grand staircase and stares up at the chandelier. “I'm impressed by her inventiveness. I don't think I've ever impaled someone on a chandelier and torched him.”

Looking green, Dari stares up at the charred corpse, too.

“I repeat, how the fuck am I gonna get this cleaned up before my dad returns?”

Ronan fishes a joint out of his pocket and puts it between his lips. “Hire a cleaning crew.” With a click of his fingers, he lights it. “The question I'd like to know the answer to is, where has the little witch gone?”

My eyes widen. “Fuck!”

Their laughter follows me upstairs as I run to find Genesis. She's nowhere. The bedroom is empty except for a dead guard chained to the bedframe, his decapitated head sitting neatly on my bedside table.

There's blood fucking everywhere.

Spinning on my feet, I check all the other rooms, too, but she's gone.

"No luck?" Alaric asks when I descend the staircase.

I snort a laugh and shake my head, angry with myself for letting her out of my sight. I should have foreseen this. Though how would I know a petite little angel like her could tear through my father's guard like they were nothing more than toy soldiers?

I come to a halt at the bottom of the stairs and place my hands on my hips. "What the fuck do we do?"

"We need to find her," Alaric says. "She's dangerous."

"Where could she have gone?" Dari asks, sidestepping a large puddle of blood on the floor.

Amenadiel joins us, hands in his pocket. "There's only one place she'd go."

He sounds so fucking sure, and for reasons unbeknownst to me, it rubs me the wrong way. Crossing my arms, I sneer, "Yeah, where's that?"

"She went to search for your dad."

"And you know this how?"

"As I said," Amenadiel drawls, "he's the next one in line to fall under Genesis's spell. Not only that, but she holds a grudge."

"A grudge?" I raise a brow.

"You know how stubborn women can be," he replies with a disarming smile that has me sucking on my teeth in annoyance.

"Are you going to tell us about this grudge?" Dari asks, watching my uncle closely. "I feel like there's information missing."

Amenadiel spares her a brief glance and shrugs his shoulders. His eyes find mine as he scrubs his beard. "We both dated her."

“Now, wait a minute.” Dari holds up a finger. “You both dated her? What does that mean exactly?”

“I may or may not have fucked her behind Lucifer’s back.”

Dari’s mouth falls open. “You did not!”

He tugs at his tie.

“I can’t believe you, Amenadiel.”

Alaric shoots her a look. “Really, Dari? You can’t believe he fucked Lucifer’s girl?”

“We were gonna tell him,” Amenadiel interjects, kicking a foot out of the way. “But the timing was never right. Lucifer found out about the affair and used her as a sacrifice to open the gates.”

“I can’t fucking believe this,” I mutter, rubbing at my neck. “Can we please focus on what to do next?” Dropping my hand down by my side, I scan the room. “We need a plan.”

We’re so out of our depth here. This darkness, this *monster*, is far more powerful than we could have ever imagined.

“Well...” Amenadiel looks around the room. “You and I are going to step through the veil and hunt for the angel while the others go find my brother.”

“And where will we find him?” Ronan asks, handing his joint to Alaric. “I doubt he’s in his office.”

“The club,” Amenadiel replies. “He has an apartment above it.”

“Of course he does.” Ronan releases a chuckle. “Daddy Lucifer has a secret apartment for his conquests.”

I slap him over the back of his head on my way past. “Don’t ever say that shit again.”

“Oh, come on...” He follows after me. “Your father is a womanizer.”

“My father is a psychopath. Don’t confuse the two.”

“Well, he did create Hell and is solely responsible for an entire generation’s separation from the Light, so...”

Alaric tosses the joint into a pool of blood on his way out of the grand entry as we take a left down another hallway toward my father’s office. Restlessness has me fidgeting the entire way there. I scratch at my neck, click my thumbs, and scrub the stubble on my jaw. I hate not knowing where the little witch is.

“You know how to hunt,” Dari says, hurrying to catch up with me. “If anyone can find her, it’s you.”

The narrow hallway stretches out in front of us, the walls lined with gold-framed paintings and sconces. I skirt around a console table with a vase of wilting black roses on top.

“I know you can,” she adds softly, like she’s trying to convince herself more than me.

Shoving my hands into my pockets, I shoot her a small, reassuring smile. “We’ll find her and bring her back.”

She looks at me with those big, brown eyes that swim with regret and things unspoken. Sliding my arm around her shoulder, I pull her into me as we near the office door. “Do you doubt my abilities?”

Her smile is weak, but it’s there, and that’s all that matters. We’ll get through this like we get through everything else—by not giving up.

“I could never doubt you, Daemon.”

I catch Dmitriy’s eyes as I look behind us. The unreadable look on his face is mirrored in my own. With a slight tip of his chin, he offers the one thing I never thought I’d earn from him.

Respect.

“Bring her back to us.” The tremble in Dari’s voice pulls me back to the present moment.

I squeeze her to me as we reach the office. “I will.”

CHAPTER
TWENTY-TWO

DARIANA

A loud spark in the fireplace draws my attention. Amenadiel falls down onto Lucifer's desk chair like he's the king of his domain and kicks his feet up on the desk. Ankles crossed, he flashes a smile that showcases his sharp canines. "I always wondered what it felt like to sit behind my brother's desk—the seat of power. I must admit, I'm disappointed."

"Get your fucking feet off," Daemon growls, shoving them to the floor with a swipe of his hand. "Don't get comfortable."

I scan the large bookshelves behind the desk. Old books with cracked leather spines take up every inch of the sagging shelves. A large painting of Lucifer hangs on the wall to my left, his dark eyes seemingly following me as I walk the length of the room. It smells of him in here—his spicy cologne and the smokey remnants of his signature hellfire. A leather couch sits beneath the windows, which are draped in heavy, moss-green curtains. I wonder briefly how many women he's fucked on it, and how many powerful male angels have feared for their life while sweating their balls off beneath Lucifer's scrutiny. He's never been a stranger to murder and torture.

"You need to locate my brother and Genesis. Don't let her out of your sight. When we find the angel and release her from the shadows, she'll once again regain control of the darkness inside her." Amenadiel waves a hand in the air dismissively. "At least that's the best outcome."

"And the worst outcome?" I ask, dreading the answer.

Amenadiel lets his dark eyes skate across the room to where I stand by the window, silhouetted by the moonlight. "Well, that's hard to say. In order to return, she needs to fight the darkness inside her first." The chair creaks as he sits forward and places his elbows on the desk. "Make no mistake, this version of Genesis was born from the shadows. Aurelia is still that innocent little angel who escaped Eden."

“Can you speak English?” I snarl. “We’re running out of time.”

Another spark shoots from the fireplace. The left side of Amenadiel’s mouth pulls up. “Aurelia is still an angel deprived of the light. This battle, if you want to call it that, is a battle of the soul. In order to survive, she must leash the darkness inside her and bring it to heel. Genesis, on the other hand, pats it like a tame tiger.”

“Why’s that?” Alaric asks, uncrossing his arms. “How can she be so powerful when Lucifer killed her that day?”

“Because she *is* of the shadows. Lucifer killed the light inside of Genesis. Without light, only darkness remains. Come on, it’s not rocket science. Adjusting to the darkness takes time.”

“This is your fault,” I mutter, and he cuts his eyes to me. “If you hadn’t tried to lure her darkness to the surface to find Genesis, none of this would have happened.”

“Is that so?” He rises to his feet, the chair scraping across the floor. Rounding the desk, he homes in on me like a predator zeroes in on their prey. “Are you telling me you never toyed with her darkness?”

My gaze flits to Daemon, but soon returns to Amenadiel when he continues in that taunting drawl of his that’s edged with smoke and danger. “Never tried to lure it to the surface? Never tossed her a bone to see if she bites?”

“Shut up,” I hiss, squeezing my eyes shut on the images flashing through my mind of Daemon fingering Aurelia while she was tied to the bed.

“It’s nothing to be ashamed of.” He’s too close; I can sense the shift in the air right before the soft brush of his calloused fingers graze my cheekbone as he tucks my hair away. “You’re a creature of Hell, sweetheart. We’re hardwired to feel drawn to the darkness. It seduces us and lures us deeper into its clutches.”

I open my eyes and reach up to swipe his hand away. “Let’s just get her back.”

Scanning his cold, brown eyes over my face, he inches closer. The urge to step back seizes me in its iron grip. It takes everything in me to stay rooted to the spot in the light of his domineering presence.

“You can’t let your emotions rule you, Dari. Not anymore. Genesis is cunning. She has taken her time studying you all in turn and finding your weaknesses.” He leans in and lowers his voice. “Do you know what that means, Dari?”

My throat jumps, and I shake my head softly.

“It means that she’ll weaponize your emotions and use them against you.”

“I think we need to worry about not getting slaughtered,” Alaric says, perusing the bookshelf. He looks over his shoulder and adds, “She did kill Daemon’s guard, after all. What’s stopping her from killing us when we find her?”

“Nothing,” Amenadiel admits, and I look up at his side profile as he peers over his shoulder at Alaric. “But she would have already done it.”

Dmitriy throws himself down onto the leather couch, stretching his arm across the back. “What does she want?”

Chuckling, Amenadiel drags a hand across his mouth. His scent invades my nostrils, warm and heady as he shifts to the side. “She wants to kill my brother and me; there’s zero doubt about that. But unless you’ve noticed, the darkness feeds on chaos and destruction. What does that tell us?”

“That it’s a bad idea to fuck your brother’s female behind his back?” Alaric quips, lighting up a cigarette and tossing the lighter to Ronan across the desk.

I scrunch up my nose. “You fucked Aurelia behind Daemon’s back, remember? Or have you conveniently forgotten?”

“That’s not the same thing.” Alaric takes a drag, holds it in his lungs while watching me, then blows it out to the side. “Daemon knew.”

“How could I not? You reeked of her, and you didn’t even try to hide it. You’re fucking lucky I didn’t cut your dick from your body,” Daemon mutters, walking over to the window behind me. He shifts the curtain aside to peer outside.

“I figured we don’t keep secrets from each other.”

“It’s never too late to castrate you,” Daemon warns, letting the curtain fall back into place before turning around and pinning his impatient gaze on Amenadiel. “What are we waiting for?”

Spinning back around, Amenadiel looks at me pointedly. “Don’t fall for Genesis’s tricks. Even when you think Aurelia is back, be careful. Don’t try to lure her shadows to the surface until she’s regained her strength. We don’t know what the hell she’s been subjected to while locked away in the dark.”

“The stalker?” I ask, a lump forming in my throat. “You think he got to her?”

“For fuck’s sake,” Daemon growls, striding past us. “Let’s get this show on the road.”

Amenadiel watches him pace like a caged circus animal, and then he looks back at me and clasps my shoulder. “Keep your wits about you.”

His touch burns me in the most curious way possible. The man in front of me has always been an enemy, yet now, I see something flicker to life in his cold eyes—a glimmer of light. I frown, leaning in closer for a better look, but he drops his hand, steps back, and motions for the rest of us to leave the room. “Go find Genesis.” With a shake of his head and a soft chuckle, he scratches behind his ear. “I never thought I’d say this, but make sure my brother is safe.”

DAEMON

As the door clicks shut, I look back at Amenadiel, wondering how the hell I found myself in this situation—alone with my father’s archenemy. They say blood runs thicker than water, but as I approach the desk where he stands with his hands in his pockets and a small curve to his lips—the physical similarities between us undeniable—I wonder what his ulterior motive is. I learned early on that my uncle does nothing out of goodwill. There’s always a plan where he is concerned.

“Before we enter through the veil,” I say, keeping my voice level. “Let’s get one thing straight. Aurelia is mine. I don’t care what games Genesis has played behind the scenes, how many hearts she’s caught in her web. Aurelia belongs to me. I will kill anyone who tries to challenge me.”

“You’re bonded by hellfire.” Amenadiel removes his hand from his pocket to knock his knuckles on the desk. “Nothing short of death will see that bond severed.”

My brows pull low as he holds my gaze unwaveringly. When he walks past me like a lazy cat on the prowl, I blurt, “Is that a threat?”

Wings trailing over the floor, he slowly spins around. “It’s a statement, Daemon. Take it as you will, pup.”

Snarling, I fist my hands while he turns to face me. There’s a time and place to be ruled by my instincts, and now is not the time. I need him in one piece to take me through the veil. And while I’m sure I could inflict some damage on my uncle, I’m not stupid. He’s ancient and harbors more power in his pinky than I do in my entire body. Unlike him, I’m not yet powerful enough to enter through cracks in the veil. But I meant it when I said I’d kill him if he decided to challenge me for Aurelia.

“What do we do now?” I ask, watching him closely, unable to shake the sense of distrust I feel around him.

“I need your flame.”

“Excuse me?” I scrunch up my face. “What the fuck?”

“I need your flame,” he repeats matter-of-factly, looking bored.

“What the fuck for?”

“Well, you’re not powerful enough to enter through the veil on your own, so we need to combine hellfire.”

“You can’t be serious.”

“Do I look like I’m joking?”

I blink at my uncle. “No, you don’t. But it’s not that simple. It’s fucking dangerous, for starters. We can’t combine flames with just anyone.”

“Look...” He walks back over, crosses his arms, and leans his hip against the desk. “Do you want to save the girl or not?”

“Yeah, bu—”

“No fucking ‘buts.’ You either combine your flame with mine, or she stays lost.”

“Shit...” I run my hand through my hair. “Fuck, okay... What do I do?”

“So...” He straightens up and uncrosses his arms. “Cracks in the veil can rarely be seen, but they can be felt.”

“How?” I ask, intrigued.

Scanning his eyes across the room, Amenadiel mulls over the answer. “It’s hard to explain. Let’s call it a disturbance, or a weakness in the energy field.”

“That’s stupid.” I snort. “You don’t expect me to buy this shit, right?”

“I don’t care what you believe,” he replies. “When Aurelia escaped Eden, it created a crack in the veil when the gates opened. Why? Because Light and Dark are opposite forces. Think of it like a thunderstorm. What happens when the hot air collides with the cold air?” He mimics an explosion. “Boom.”

“Okay...” Impatient, I gesture for him to continue. “And then what?”

“The crack in the veil allowed me to enter Aurelia’s dreams and maneuver my way around the maze that’s her mind without her knowledge.”

“And how did you know about the crack? You said you sensed it?”

“I did,” he confirms. “The first time I laid eyes on her at the academy, when I descended the stairs, remember? I felt it then, and it made me curious.”

I stare at the dying flames in the fireplace, the heat warding off the cold nip in the air. Thoughts swirl in my head. “How come my father hasn’t entered through the crack?”

Amenadiel snorts a laugh. “Your father, while he likes to think he’s always a step ahead of the threats around him, is too blinded by power to notice much of anything.” His tongue darts out, and he looks at me for a brief moment before asking, “Are you ready?”

With a shrug, I hold my hand out and let a small flame flare to life on my palm. Flickering wildly, it dances. My uncle holds his hand over mine, searching my face, intently. “It’ll hurt. Nothing about this forging will be natural. Whatever you do...” A flame flickers to life, spreading across his palm like wildfire. “Don’t let go.” Then he grabs my hand, and I grit my teeth against the explosion of white-hot pain that sears through my veins in a race toward my hammering heart. My pupils dilate, and my jaw clenches tight as I fight back a guttural roar. Amenadiel is no better off, gripping my hand so tightly, it won’t surprise me if he breaks bones. But that pain fades in comparison to the agonizing torture of Amenadiel’s flame burning a path through my soul.

Collapsing to the floor, our eyes meet. In that brief moment, bonded by fire, I understand every decision—right or wrong—he’s ever made. I see his internal struggle with living in my father’s shadow. I even see the battle between light and dark that’s existed within him since the moment he exited Hell. Despite what he wants the world to believe, a drop of Light still clings to his heartstrings, refusing to part with his

charred soul. Determined to eliminate his biggest weakness, Amenadiel has tried everything to relinquish it, without luck.

I know he sees me, too—the torture my father has inflicted upon me throughout the years. Every cruel thing I’ve ever done.

But more than anything, I know he sees the little witch and the imprint she’s left on me, like a tattoo on my heart.

One I can’t part with.

Just as soon, our attention gets diverted by an incoming thick mist. Rolling across the stone floor, it devours everything in its path, slowly slithering over the cracks. Closer and closer.

“Holy fuck,” I whisper. At the same time, the flames in the fireplace flicker out. An icy chill licks at the exposed skin on my arms as the temperature in the room rapidly drops. “You never said it’d be like this.”

“What did you expect? Rainbows and roses?”

“I don’t fucking know, but this is creepy.”

“Welcome to Hell, where the fun never ends.”

I squeeze my eyes shut when the mist rolls over us—damp and cold, like a dewy morning breeze in autumn.

Releasing my hand, Amenadiel jumps to his feet, and I open my eyes to see him dusting off his thighs. I push up to my knees and scan the town square. A cherub fountain sits in the middle, the water long since gone. Everywhere I look, I’m met with derelict, boarded-up shops and pubs. Weeds grow through the cracks in the pavement, and near the fountain lies an abandoned bike, the front wheel still spinning.

“Welcome to the world of the little witch. It’s a very unpredictable environment, so don’t get comfortable.”

I blink at him, at a loss for words. One quick scan of the town square has shivers tickling a path down my spine like caressing fingertips tracing each vertebra. A lineup of colorful, but weathered doors to my left catches my attention.

Beside me, Amenadiel chuckles. “Don’t look so surprised. You’ll soon learn that Aurelia has a thing for doors.”

“Why doors?”

“Beats me, but look on the bright side. At least we don’t have to cross a body of water or a tightrope.”

“So what are they?”

Tugging at the lapels, Amenadiel straightens his long coat. “In my experience, they lead to her dreams. If she’s asleep, that is.”

“And if she’s not?”

A look of mischief crosses his face, and he shrugs. “Fantasies mainly.”

My jaw turns to granite. “Fantasies? You spied on her fantasies?”

“Well, daydreams. Thought forms. Whatever. This is her mind, Daemon.” He waves a hand to the lineup of doors. “You can find anything behind those doors.”

I scan the town square again and do a double take when my attention snags on the bike.

It’s leaning against the fountain.

“There are inconsistencies, too.”

My throat jumps, and I look back at my uncle. “So, how do I find her here?”

Amenadiel studies me for a long moment, assessing me with cold, scrutinizing eyes. “You’re the hunter, according to your friends. Hunt her.”

“This is fucking crazy,” I breathe out, dragging a hand over my mouth while staring at my uncle. “Something about this isn’t right. You’re powerful enough to enter through a crack in the damn veil, but you can’t find her once you’re here?”

Sucking on his teeth, he looks mildly annoyed as he walks over to the doors. “Using my powers and hunting for lost

females trapped by the darkness are two different things entirely. One skill grows with age, the other by sheer foolishness. You're more like your father than you realize."

"What's that supposed to mean?" I ask, taken aback as I walk up behind him.

He tries a door, but it's locked. "You both like challenges where the female species is concerned. Don't tell me you hunt for fun." He flashes a smile over his shoulder. "You hunt for sexual gratification."

Shaking my head, I scoff, but he ignores me completely as he continues, "Your father, on the other hand, takes it to the extreme." He tries another door, rattling the handle. "Boredom is a cloak your father has worn since the Light spat him out. No matter where he is—surrounded by pussy, riches, and depravity—nothing brings him excitement. Not anymore. If ever."

"Why are you telling me this?"

"I don't know," he admits, moving to the next door in line. "But I do know one thing..." His lips spread into a smile. "This door is open."

"What will we find on the other side?"

"I don't know, but we're about to find out. Unless, of course, you want to stay here?"

I look behind me at the parked bike, the mist swirling on the cobblestones. "No..." Turning back to him, I jerk my chin in the direction of the weathered door. "Let's do this."

CHAPTER
TWENTY-THREE

LUCIFER

“Where do you think you’re going?” she asks as I head for the door.

It slams shut in front of me with such force, a breeze tickles my feathers and threatens to snuff out the sconces on the walls. They soon burn brighter in response to my growing annoyance. Swiveling on my heels, I narrow my eyes on her. She stands beside the bed with her hand outstretched.

“That’s a neat little party trick,” I muse, walking closer. “Manipulating matter. How did you get out of the handcuff?”

“What can I say? My time in exile has been spent well.”

I hum under my breath, stopping just a few feet away and watching her comb her fingers through her dark tresses. “Any other tricks I should know about?”

Her smile takes on a filthy edge, and she saunters up to me with swaying hips and flames that flicker in the depths of her darkening eyes. “You have no idea, Lucifer.”

I clear my throat, debating my next move, when my eyes snag on the vial on the bedside table. Swiping my tongue over my bottom lip, I focus my attention back on her face, noting the perfection of her flawless skin. “I have a question.”

“The mighty Lucifer, the ruler of Hell, admits he’s not ahead of the game for once.” Her taunting smile begs to be punished.

Sidestepping her, I walk up to the bedside table, and with my back to her, finger the small vial. Her gaze burns my neck. “You and Aurelia are inseparable, is that correct? Light and dark. Yin and Yang.”

“Born of the same flame, yes.”

I leave the vial. “That’s interesting.”

A frown mars her forehead when I slowly turn and make my way over to her with slow, measured steps, ensuring her

eyes track every ripple of muscle. I know she can sense the shift in the air. Tingles between my shoulder blades spread out in anticipation of what I'm about to do.

My eyes lock with hers. "You're here to kill me." It's not a question. "To seek revenge for what I did to you."

Genesis is a smart girl, sensing that I'm preying on her. Her lips stay firmly shut, eyes watching. Assessing.

The best part of the hunt is always the stalking.

To toy with the prey while their mind tries frantically to analyze the situation.

"I should give you credit where credit is due. Few angels would have the patience you have. It must have been torture to hide in the shadows all that time, trying to blend in and not let the darkness bleed inside the gates. Watching and waiting for the perfect opportunity to leave Eden."

A muscle clenches in her jaw. "The Light let me out. It seeks revenge. Everything in the universe has a balance. Your betrayal shifted the scales."

Leaning in, I whisper in her ear. "On the contrary, we created balance when we left." I place a kiss on the slender column of her neck. She smells divine, like the night draped in stars. Gripping her left hip, I let my other hand get lost in her hair. "How do you plan on killing me, Genesis?"

"Now that would be telling," she breathes out, and I don't miss the slight shake to her voice. While she's born from the ashes of pure evil, she also inhabits Aurelia's body—a prone angel from Eden. Innocent and fragile, like a petal, and bound by desires that should have no place in the wicked games of deception that we play. It's her greatest weakness and my weapon of choice. "Beasts roam the dark woods that line Eden. You should be careful lest you get lost and devoured." My lips find hers in an explosive kiss. The kind of kiss that threatens to bring a man to his knees. She tastes and feels like heaven—my own elixir.

Like deceit and corruption. A product of my own making. It makes me fucking heady.

Guiding her back, closer to the bed, I inhale her breaths, stealing them from her starving lungs. My fingers tangle in her long, silky locks. I pull sharply, drawing a sharp gasp from her kiss-swollen mouth while fucking it senseless with my tongue. As the backs of her legs connect with the bed, I expose her neck and pepper kisses down the smooth column in a race to the dip at her collarbone, where her pulse flutters wildly. Pausing briefly as my fingers skate around her hip bone to dip between her thighs, I look over her shoulder at the vial on the nightstand.

Anticipation drugs me as I guide her back onto the mattress, lips traveling further south, past her collarbones and down her chest. I kiss the swell of each breast before dragging my tongue from her right to her left and nipping it. The urge to sink my teeth deep into her flesh has my wings stretching out behind me. When my fingers trace her slit through her soaked silk panties, my throbbing, sharp fangs graze my bottom lip.

“Exquisite,” I whisper, looking up at her from beneath my dark lashes while her supple chest rises and falls beneath my smirking mouth.

I never claimed to be good. Never claimed to care much for self-control. So while I have her like this—laid out like a feast—I take advantage and slide her left strap off her shoulder. Hooking my fingers in the low-cut cup of her leather bra, I pull it down and free her tits.

My son will kill me for this, for seeing her this way. But I no longer care. She watches me with that heady, pleading look in her eyes—a look that tells me her century-old grudge and the need for revenge have been momentarily shelved. The threat of Daemon’s fury is as alluring as the scent of Genesis’s arousal.

Her back arches off the mattress when I close my mouth around a nipple and tweak the other with my thumb and finger. I pinch and pull, swirling my tongue. How easy it is to topple her queen. How easily she falls under my spell. Disgust washes over me like a frothing wave at the beach.

Abandoning her peaky nipples, I crawl up her body and grab her slender throat. I bring those supple, kiss-swollen lips that my son has fucked to mine, and whisper, “Do you know what separates you from Aurelia? What makes her different?”

Shaky breaths dance across my lips when she looks up at me through her drunken lust. “I dance with the darkness while she drowns in it.”

My lips peel back in a snarl as I reach for the vial at the table. She’s too lost in the ocean of seduction to notice. Too drunk on the promise of a hard fuck with the Devil himself. “You’re desperate.” In a swift move, I flick the lid off and bring the vial to her plump lips, watching the blue liquid drip onto her tongue. “Aurelia would never give in to me this easily. Maybe you dance with the shadows, but in doing so, you’ve become immune to the dangers that lurk within.”

Her entire body stiffens as the drug takes effect. I secure her wrists and pin her down with my weight to keep her from thrashing. “Meanwhile, the angel, with her fine-tuned instincts, can sense danger a mile away.” A smile of pure evil curves my lips. “Predators like me thrive on the hunt. We like to chase the little rabbit through the dark forest. Nothing entices us more than the sound of their pounding heartbeat and frightened whimpers. The way they throw wild glances behind them to gauge how long they have left until they’re captured and devoured. And with a girl like Aurelia, an inherently innocent angel, there’s always an element of excitement which fragrances the air in the most tantalizing way. It’s a fine line between predator and prey in that moment.”

“What did you give me?” she chokes out through gritted teeth as she convulses beneath me.

Ignoring her question, I let her see the nefarious intent in my eyes. “To catch a hunter like me, the biggest predator in these woods, you’ll need to change your tactics. I’m disappointed, Genesis. I expected more from a conniving whore like you.”

“What. Did. You. Give. Me?”

“Oh, that?” I pick up the empty vial and wiggle it in the air. “It’s a little potion, brewed by a very special angel with some very interesting powers.”

A final few jerks stiffen every muscle in her body before she goes slack, her terrified eyes welling with salty tears. Like a calm ocean, her chest rises and falls with every soft wave that laps against my lips with each trembly exhale. I take a moment to study her now that her powers are dormant, and she poses as much threat as a pathetic human.

I’ve always liked this part the best, knowing I have them under my complete control.

Climbing off the mattress and rising to my feet, I walk over to the wall and grab a length of rope. Genesis’s eyes widen when I reach for a set of gleaming, sharp scissors. I tie her up, shift her over onto her front, and flip her skirt up to expose her smooth ass. Groaning out loud, I squeeze her flesh, torturing myself with the forbidden fruit. “Did my son slap these?”

“What happened to my powers, Lucifer?” The frantic, panicked tone in her voice does wicked things to my body.

I smack her ass before prying her big wings open, pleased that she’s too drugged to fight me. They slump on either side of her, grazing the marble flooring. Running my fingers through her feathers, I contemplate fucking her. My cock wants to bury itself so deep inside her, I see stars for years to come.

For the first time since I can remember, I’m not bored. I’m very fucking entertained for once. The only thing that would make this better would be if it were Aurelia craning her neck to look at me over her shoulder.

But it’s not.

Even so, the fantasy whispers filth in my ear.

“Your powers are gone. For now.”

She whimpers, causing me to frown at the pathetic sound. Something tells me the light to her dark isn’t so fucking pliant.

My son would never be so hung up on this female if she showed her fear so easily.

I crave her fight as much as her cunt. The desire to fuck her raw while she fights sings to me across stormy waters. Leaning over her, I tangle my fingers in her hair and pull, whispering, “You’re lucky there’s a fire-bond, or I’d fuck you until you didn’t know your own name anymore. And then, when you’re milking my dick for the hundredth fucking time, I’d slice your throat and watch you bleed out on my sheets.” I nuzzle her neck. “I think I’d like that—to paint my bed red with your blood.”

“What are you gonna do with me?”

Sliding my hand through her hair, down between her shoulder blades, and across her feathers, I reply, “I’m gonna cut your wings.”

“Cut my...?” A shrill cry rips from her lips when I reach for the scissors beside us on the mattress.

Clamping my hand over her mouth, I muffle the sound. My dick jerks inside my suit pants. The fear is my favorite part. That, and the raw panic and the frantic drugged thrashing. “Shh, quiet now.” Sliding the scissors through the feathers, I relish in her feral, muffled screams and attempts to wriggle out from beneath me. Her movements are sluggish, uncoordinated, and weak. “I’m gonna cut your wings and then, when you can’t fly, I’ll fuck you raw before cutting out your tongue. My son never needs to find out it was me who hurt his precious little angel. It’ll be a secret between you and me.”

Her salty tears wet my hand as I line up the scissors. Anticipation quickens my blood. My heart pounds against my ribcage, desperate to break free.

“It won’t hurt. Much.”

Before I have a chance to make the first cut, the door flies open, and Dariana, Ronan, Alaric, and Dmitriy tumble through. They come to a halt when they spot us on the bed. Dariana looks from me to the scissors in my hands and back.

Barging forward, Ronan and Alaric tear me off Genesis and toss me to the floor while Dariana approaches the sobbing angel on the bed. Throwing an uncertain look behind her at Dmitriy, she swallows thickly and flips Genesis's skirt back down.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Alaric growls, glaring down at me with enough anger to set fire to the place. I can't help but fucking laugh. They know better than to challenge me; I'm the ruler of Hell, after all.

Watching me climb to my feet, they stay silent. I walk over to the minibar and proceed to pour myself a stiff drink. I need it now that they've interrupted the hunt. Every nerve ending in my body buzzes. I'm still high on the adrenaline.

“What were you doing with the scissors?” Dariana asks, making me roll my eyes at her naivety.

Clenching his jaw, Dmitriy answers for me. “He was about to cut her wings.”

“Cut her wings?” Blood draining from her face, Dariana looks from Dmitriy to me before her eyes skate over to the white wings mounted to the wall behind the bed. “You're a psychopath, Lucifer.”

Unbothered, I shrug as I take another sip. “Normal angels don't defy God.”

With a look of disgust, she slides her gaze in my direction, but Genesis's labored breathing steals her attention, and she turns away from me to untie her wings.

“That's a bad idea,” I mutter, throwing back my whiskey. Not that she listens. Untying the ropes, she peers at Dmitriy beside her. “Do you think it's Genesis?”

“My father said it is. Aurelia is lost in the shadows.”

“How do we know?” She looks around at the people gathered in the room. “There's no way of knowing.”

“Of course there is.” I refill my drink and take a long sip before placing the tumbler on a side table as I walk over. Now that my nerves are settling down, I can think straight again.

“What makes Aurelia unique? Genesis is the ashes of the shadows that were left behind after I stole her light. She’s different from Aurelia.”

“You talk like you know her,” Alaric sneers, and Ronan claps him on the shoulder to calm him down.

“I don’t know her,” I admit. “Not like you. But I do know my son, and he wouldn’t develop an obsession with someone who lets herself be so easily seduced by me.”

“What’s your point?” Ronan asks, watching me closely. Out of the three of them, he’s the calmest. He observes and calculates.

“Never-fucking-mind that,” Alaric growls, walking up to me and pushing me back a step. “How fucking dare you touch her? You were gonna cut her fucking wings... Then what? Fuck her? Is that why you’d pulled her skirt up over her ass?”

Releasing a blast of fire from my hand, I send him flying across the room, fed up with his fucking attitude. “Do I need to remind you of who I am?” I growl as I stride up to him where he lies crumpled and groaning on the floor beside the desk. “I’m the fucking Devil. Do not fuck with me, or you won’t live to see another day.”

Rushing up to him, Dariana crouches down between his spread legs and holds her hand out placatingly. “He knows. Don’t hurt him.”

Dmitriy and Ronan walk closer, watching the scene unfold with tense muscles and clenched jaws.

With a roll of my shoulders, I let the fire on my palm die out. “What my son seems to forget is that this is my kingdom.” I poke my chest. “I rule Hell. *Me*. If I want to cut an angel’s wings, I will. It doesn’t matter who she is, or who the fuck has fucked her cunt before I got my hands on her. Not even where my son is concerned. Aurelia lives in my kingdom. Therefore, she’s mine.”

Alaric goes to snarl, but Dariana silences him with a hard stare before turning in my direction again. She’s unable to look me in the eye now that my dominating nature oozes from my

pores like heat waves. It makes lesser angels cower. I'm the ultimate alpha and the most powerful fallen angel here in Hell. No one challenges me unless they have a death wish. She knows it, just like every man in the room knows it. They're blinded by their desire for the angel on my bed.

As I turn to look at Genesis, I do a double take. Silence settles over the room while we stare blankly at the empty sheets. I snap my eyes to the window. It's open.

It's fucking open.

Black curtains billow in the breeze, swaying seductively as I stride over and look outside. She's gone. The clouds part, lighting up the empty lawn and the thick clusters of trees lining the property. "Fuck," I growl out, slamming my hands down on the windowsill. "FUCK!"

"I don't understand..." Dari whispers uneasily. "She was tied up."

"That didn't stop her back at Daemon's house," Ronan points out.

At the mention of my son, I swivel around and cock my head to the side while scanning their cozy little group. "Where is Daemon?"

When they exchange glances, I retrieve the decanter filled with whiskey and throw them a quick look over my shoulder. "If he's dead, I'll have you all thrown into a dungeon to rot." Chuckling under my breath, I reach for a tumbler, pour the whiskey, then place the decanter down. I take a sip and let the burning sensation caress my throat as I take in the somber energy in the room. Genesis got away... It's laughably tragic. She's a liability if I ever fucking saw one.

"I don't have a dungeon. Well..." I shrug. "I do, but that'd be boring. I think I'd much prefer something a little bit more entertaining, like waterboarding and prolonged torture before removing your wings."

One look at their group, at the sheer horror on their faces, has me chuckling again. I take another sip. "Where's Daemon?"

“Well,” Dmitriy starts, clearing his throat. “It’s a long story.”

CHAPTER
TWENTY-FOUR

AURELIA

“**D**aemon,” I whisper, shrouded in shadows and huddled in the dark corner. Time has ceased to exist in this dark, windowless room. Shaking and shivering, my tears have long since dried. Monstrous shadows dart for the corners, gleaming eyes watching me as the candles threaten to flicker out.

“I’m here.”

My heart gives a painful thump. “You found me.”

“I found you.” Heavy footsteps drag over the concrete floor, past the drain in the middle. The smell of midnight and dew accompanies the fingers that tip my chin up as he stops in front of me. “Did you miss me?”

“So much,” I answer, my voice croaky from lack of use.

The fingers slide down my jaw in a caress that starts out tender but soon turns rough when he grips it tightly and rams the back of my head into the wall. “What have I told you? I don’t want to hear his fucking name.”

Throbbing, agonizing pain explodes inside my skull, and I’m vaguely aware of the cold bite of steel against my cheek. Crouching down, he taps my lips with a knife. “I’m looking for a way to break your fire-bond with the heir. Once it’s severed, we’ll find a way to replace it with ours.”

“Please, let me go,” I whimper.

“They’re coming for you.” He shushes me when more tears fall. “Don’t worry, I have a plan. I won’t let them take you from me. We’ll be together with no barriers soon. I promise.”

His voice fades in and out, a distorted murmur that seems to whisper one second and scream the next. The world is an endless blur.

“Shh...” His mask warps and contorts as rough fingers brush my hair off my tear-streaked cheeks. I try to move away,

only to cower when his palm connects with my face in a hard slap. “Don’t be ungrateful.”

Robe swaying around his pants-clad ankles, he rises to his feet and blends with the shadows. In the ensuing silence, the creak of a door whispers sweet nothings to the despair inside me. *He’s gone.* One by one, the candles flicker out, descending my world into complete blackness. Shrouded by the shadows, I listen to the call of the woods. They whisper my name, like a song on the wind. Haunting and eerie. A rustle of leaves in the midnight mist. Crooked, thin branches that snag in my hair. Pinecones and broken sticks beneath my bare feet.

As I pull my knees up to my chest and rest my head against the damp concrete wall, the chain rattles, reminding me of my prison.

“They’re coming for you.”

I let those words carry me away like the soothing notes of a lullaby.

AMENADIEL

As we exit through the door, we're greeted by a high, ribbed, vaulted ceiling, stained-glass windows, and flying buttresses. Antique, English oak pews line each side of the church. Up ahead, a pulpit with intricate detailing draws the eye. Tall candles light up the space everywhere you look.

No sooner has the door shut behind us than Daemon scents the air and takes a left, weaving through the pews.

"A cathedral," I say with a chuckle, my voice echoing in the vast space as I look around at the impressive building. When I spot Daemon halfway down the aisle, I do a double take. He's sniffing the damn air, with his fangs on full display and near-black eyes. "I never took you for such a bloodhound."

Ignoring me, he takes off toward the tall front doors. They creak open like unused, rusty hinges when he pushes down on the wrought-iron handles. Leaves blow across the floor, carried on a sudden chilly breeze that brings in the scent of midnight and fireflies.

Shrugging off the sensation of eyes following me, I stride down the aisle. A prickle ghosts my neck, and a bead of sweat trails a slow path between my shoulder blades and down my spine. Keeping my steps even, I emerge into the dark night. Daemon is turning in a slow circle between two weathered gravestones covered in ivy. "She's close."

I look around the dark graveyard, eyes scanning over the cherubs, shrubs, and tombstones. The silvery moon offers just enough light to see by, lending an ethereal, eerie air to the place. As I walk a few steps forward and turn to look up at the monstrous cathedral, a chill makes its way down my spine. Blinking up at the tall spires and fanged, winged gargoyles, I suppress a shudder.

"Why do you look so spooked, Grandpa?" Daemon taunts, the gravel crunching beneath his boots as he steps onto the

narrow path.

With a dismissive scoff, I walk past him. “I’m not spooked.”

His heavy footsteps behind me sound on the gravel and then he’s there, walking beside me and annoying me with his broad and tall build. He’s a male angel in his prime. It’s easy to feel threatened. Even by my own flesh and blood.

“I meant what I said earlier; I won’t hesitate to challenge you for her.”

Of course he won’t. He’d fight to the death now that they’re bonded by fire. He might’ve before. His obsession runs deeper than he realizes.

“And I’d meet your challenge.”

He pulls me to a sudden stop, and I fight the urge to throw my head back with a frustrated growl. The last thing I need is a disagreement with my nephew while inside Aurelia’s mind. “What does that mean? Do you like her?”

Grinding my teeth, I look away toward the trees at the edge of the cemetery, where the tall branches sway in the breeze. But the bite in his tone soon draws my attention back to the fire that burns in his onyx eyes. “Let’s get one thing straight. This isn’t some sick family affair. I won’t share her with you.”

“I think you need to focus on that bloodhound nose of yours instead of picking a fight.”

He glares at me for a moment longer before scoffing and walking ahead. I let my gaze drift over his tense shoulders, noting all the ways he reminds me of my brother. They both have the same stubborn spirit. But where Lucifer is cruel and cold, Daemon is passionate and loyal.

I follow behind him, ignoring the prickle at the back of my neck. Somewhere in the distance, an owl hoots. “How confident are you that you’ll be able to locate her?”

“I’ll find her,” he says, his voice dark and low-pitched enough to stir my own inner demon.

A raven takes flight from a nearby gravestone as Daemon steers off the gravel path to cross the lawn. Wet leaves stick to my shoes, and pinecones sink deep into the soft grass. I decide to point out the obvious. “The shadows are hiding her from us.”

Daemon points to the other side of the lawn. Partly hidden behind the thick branches of a fir tree is a mausoleum with a great dome of white marble in the center. More vines crawl up its weathered wall to obscure it from curious wanderers. The intricate designs carved into the bronze door draw my eyes as we approach. “You think she’s in there?” I ask skeptically.

“I don’t think,” he drawls. “I know.”

The two life-sized angel sculptures on either side of the door seem to stare at us with empty, soulless eyes.

“Wait,” I rush out when Daemon strides ahead, driven by instinct, ready to barge inside the mausoleum without a second thought.

“We don’t know what’s in there. We need to be smart about this.”

With a scathing look in my direction, he shakes his head with disgust and strides ahead. “How did you have the fucking guts to exit Eden if you’re scared of your own shadow?”

“I’m not scared of my own shadow,” I argue, following behind him. “Don’t you feel it?”

He looks at me over his shoulder. “Feel what?”

“The eyes. We’re not alone.”

Slowing to a stop in front of the crypt, Daemon scans the tree line and the cathedral. His wings slowly unfold from his back, as black and threatening as the night. Mist swirls around his ankles when he peels his lips back into a fierce snarl, his senses on high alert. Meeting my gaze, he lets his fangs retreat before turning on his heel and entering the building. “Let’s find her.”

As we step through the large bronze door, the darkness inside swallows us whole. Daemon lights a flame that hovers

in the space between us, casting a soft glow over the small, empty space.

Turning in a circle, I take in the paintings of fallen angels on the walls. Great battles between good and evil. The light and dark, engaged in an eternal dance. Two lovers circling each other, both wary and a little afraid. “Do you know what this is?” I ask Daemon.

He looks like he’s two seconds away from tearing someone to pieces. “She’s not here...”

“Look at this.”

He’s not listening. “Where the fuck is she?”

“Look at these paintings, Daemon.”

A frown mars his forehead when he seems to snap out of his own derailing thoughts. He walks up to me and lets his gaze roam over the wall. “What am I looking at?”

“These are her inner battles. Don’t you see?” I point to a sequence of paintings of a true angel at war with the darkness inside of herself. “I bet if we wait long enough, they’ll change before our eyes.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?”

“We’re in Aurelia’s dream—her mind, if you will. Symbolism is everywhere. Why do you think we’re in a cemetery, of all places? Why do you think the town square is the first thing we see when enter through the veil?”

“Is that a trick question?”

With a shake of my head, I turn back to the wall. “This is where you’ll find the myriad of complex emotions that lie buried deeper than her conscious mind can reach.”

“Are you aware of what a boring old man you are?” he asks with enough frustration in his voice to make me chuckle. “She’s still missing, we’re stuck in her mind with no idea of where she is, and you think I give a shit about a bunch of paintings?”

Sliding my hands into my pockets, I lean closer to the wall and narrow my eyes as I study each painting in greater detail. “You said you sense her here, right?”

“Yes,” Daemon all but barks. “She’s fucking here. I know she is. But where the fuck is she?”

I jump back when Daemon throws a fireball at the floor like he can’t control the storm of emotions inside him. It shoots up. Untamed, vicious flames flicker wildly while he breathes like a provoked bull.

“Fuck,” he breathes out with a heavy sigh, dragging both hands down his face. “I’m going fucking insane.”

“It’s the fire-bond,” I point out, turning to face him. “Your need to reunite with her is as strong as your urge to breathe. When did you first bond?”

“I don’t know,” he replies, watching the flames. “I only realized how powerful she is back at the mansion when I trapped her inside a fire prison, and she drew my flames inside of herself.” Shaking his head, his jaw flexes. “I should have known then.” After a short pause, he admits, “I kind of did, but I wasn’t ready to accept it.”

We stand in silence for a short beat, both deep in our own thoughts. “Ronan knew,” Daemon says, rubbing at the back of his neck. “He tried to mention it to me, but I dismissed him.”

“It’s not something that happens to a lot of angels.”

He watches me across the flames, his face aglow as shadows flicker under his eyes. “Fire bonding to more than one angel is unheard of.”

“Yeah...” A smile slants my lips. When he turns back to the wall, I follow his line of sight. “But nothing is ever impossible.”

Daemon stays silent, leaning closer to the wall. As I approach, he reaches up and slides a finger through a long crack in the marble. “You think these are symbols of her subconscious mind? Her thoughts and feelings?”

“Something to that effect,” I reply with a soft shrug as I stop beside him.

His eyes find mine, and he drops his hand. “Everything here is her imagination, right?”

“Sure?”

“When you entered her dream.” He looks back at the wall. “It was essentially a creation of her mind. A stage, if you will.”

“Of course—a backdrop.”

“So, she’s here.”

Leaning with my shoulder against the wall and my hands in my pocket, I cross my ankles. “Never thought I’d say this, but go on.”

“Can you not feel her? She’s here. Trapped in the shadows.” His eyes cast around the small space, chasing the flickering shadows that dart from the bright flame on the floor. “We need to reach her somehow. This is her mind, and she led us right here.” He points frantically at the wall. “Symbolism. You said it yourself. She led us right to the center of her subconscious mind. What was it you said? Thoughts and feelings that are buried too deep for her conscious mind to reach?”

“Interesting.” My lips slowly kick up into a smile as I push off the wall.

“The shadows hide her from us.”

“Let’s go see if we can find some more clues.”

Daemon looks back at the wall as I make my way to the door and exit into the cool night air. A crow that’s seated on the mausoleum roof scrubs its wing with its beak before cawing loudly. All around, the wind rustles the leaves in the tall trees. I’m just about to turn around when my eyes snag on a flickering candle on a metal tray that’s placed on the first step of the cathedral. Despite the wind, it barely moves.

One look behind me confirms that Daemon is still intently studying the paintings. “Come have a look at this.”

DAEMON

“Just a second,” I call out, narrowing my eyes on the painting of Aurelia covered head to toe in blood. A knife that’s dripping blood is slipping from her fingers as the gates to Eden creak open. By her feet lies the corpse of a male angel with white wings. Death cloaks her, leading her forward into the night.

A sudden gust of wind causes the bronze doors to slam shut. I whirl around. The flames on the floor nearly flicker out, threatening to descend the space into complete blackness.

“Amenadiel?” I dart my gaze around the small space before slowly moving forward. Dry leaves crunch beneath my shoes. I cross the small space, drawing the fire back inside me with an outstretched hand. Curling my fingers around the handles, I push the doors open and do a double take when I’m greeted by complete blackness. Gone are the cemetery and the gravestones. The weeping angels and the cathedral with its creepy gargoyles and peaked spirals.

Taking a single step forward into a small room, I’m engulfed by the shadows. A soft whimper in the corner makes me pause. Beside me, four candles on a metal tray flicker to life, casting a soft glow over the room. At first, I’m too surprised by the small flames, that I don’t notice the rattle of a chain on the floor. Frowning, I let my gaze dance across the space until I spot the hunched, naked figure in the corner.

With her wings tied up, the thick rope wrapped around her raven feathers several times to keep them restrained, she looks so small and fragile. My heart stalls behind my ribs. The sharp sound of the chain that encircles her bony ankle hits me in the chest like a bullet wound, and I tear across the small space in four strides. Scooping her up in my arms, I tuck her head beneath my chin and hold her so fucking close, I worry I’ll break her already broken body. From what little I’ve seen so far, there’s a chance I’ll combust in flames. Emotions I never knew existed wrap around my thrashing heart like a coiled

serpent. My blood boils while I try not to crush her to death. Through gritted teeth, I snarl, “Who the fuck hurt you?”

Aurelia’s small, trembling hands clutch me to her with a fierce grip, despite her fragile state. “You’re here.”

“Of course I’m fucking here,” I whisper, burying my nose in her hair. “I was always coming for you.”

Applying pressure to my chest, she creates space between us—space I need to eradicate as soon as fucking possible—and peers up at me through teary eyes. “Are you really here?”

“I’m here.” I cup her chin, noting each and every bruise and bite mark on her once-flawless skin. The fury inside me demands revenge. Painful fucking revenge. “You’re not gonna hurt me?”

Frowning, I stare into her eyes. “Hurt you?”

“He hurts me every time you appear in my dreams.”

“Fuck.” Leaning in, with her chin gripped tightly in my hand, I press my forehead to hers. “This isn’t a dream, little witch.” A breath puffs from my lips. “Well... It is, but it’s not. You need to wake up, little angel. You need to step out from the shadows and force Genesis to retreat.”

“You need to leave. Before he comes back. He’ll hurt you, Daemon.”

Gritting my teeth and letting go of her chin to fist her hair, I dive down to whisper against her cracked, trembling lips, “I won’t let him. Don’t worry.”

“He’s dangerous.”

Silencing her with a hard kiss, I curse myself for hurting her all over again. But then, when she climbs onto my lap, I grip her bruised hips and pull her closer. The chain scrapes against the floor, and the darkness inside me likes the thought of her chained and broken. It feeds on the pained whimpers that paint my biting kisses with desire and pleas for more.

Her arms slide around my neck, and she cries out when I reach down between our bodies and ram two fingers inside her cunt. The need to claim and hurt her is an insatiable beast that

can't be brought to heel. Sinking my teeth into her split bottom lip, I pull it away from her teeth while she rolls her hips in time with my hard thrusts.

“Daemon,” she cries out, tearing at the hair at the nape of my neck. I love the way her small body writhes and undulates. I love that I get to grab her by the throat and finger-fuck her until her sore little cunt gushes all over my hand.

“Such a dirty little angel,” I growl, taking in her bound wings, bruised and cut skin, and the pleading hunger in her eyes that begs me to erase the cruelty inflicted upon her with my own. “Take what you fucking need. And when you’ve come all over my fingers like a dirty little whore, you’re gonna wake up from this damn nightmare, fly back to me, and fuck my face until I’m drowning in you.”

“Daemon,” she moans again when I flick my thumb over her swollen clit. I want the damn thing in my mouth. I want her to grind it over my fucking lips until she comes so hard, her scream can be heard inside the gates of Eden.

“When I’m done fucking you, little witch, I’m gonna find whoever thought he could steal you from me, and I’m gonna peel the fucking skin off his bones. No one lays a finger on you and lives to see another day. No one hurts my angel.”

Her pussy clenches tight around my fingers, and a soft whimper—the kind that makes my dick ache—parts her lips.

“That’s it, little angel, fuck your devil’s fingers. Let me feel you squeeze me tight.” Ducking down, I bite her nipple hard enough to make her cry out in sharp pain mixed with depraved pleasure. Her cunt makes a mess, slick arousal dripping down her thighs and soaking through my jeans. She’s fucking divine, riding me like a little whore while the shadows that lurk nearby hiss at me like fanged monsters with glowing eyes. Throwing my free hand out, flames erupt in every corner, as I let my magic pour freely.

Slowly slithering across the walls, like mist on a forest floor, the hellfire devours the retreating darkness.

Throwing her head back, Aurelia grinds her pussy against my hand with deep, slow rolls of her hips.

My tongue eagerly laps up the beads of blood on her peaked nipples before I drag it across the bruised expanse of her chest to her other breast. Palming the soft flesh, I stare up at her from beneath my lashes while letting my fangs press into her skin. They tingle with the anticipation of marking her. I bite down, groaning loudly at the back of my throat when her warm blood fills my mouth. Instead of retreating, the monster inside me grows more restless. It wants me to flip her over onto her stomach, reach for the chain, wrap it around her throat, and fuck her hard from behind. The urge is so strong, I strike her breast again. But this time, it's deep enough to cause an answering snarl to slip from her throat, clasped between my fingers.

Gripping her hip with my free hand, I guide her over my lap. Faster and harder. Her pulsing pussy squeezes me tight, and I continue to drink from her as she comes with a loud cry. Every muscle in her body tenses. With a final grind of her hips, her wings erupt from her back, breaking the bonds that held her.

As she comes down from her high, I watch my flames engulf the room. Cocooned in a protective bubble, we stare at each other. Her at my eyes, and me at the sheer fucking beauty in front of me.

I stroke her damp hair away from her cheek and trail my thumb over a faded bruise. "I found you, little angel. Now come back to me."

As I skim my fingers over her lips, she begins to fade. I cling to her for as long as I can, but it's not long enough. Nothing ever is.

Her soft whisper echoes long after she's left me to put out the flames of my inferno. Long after my heart has stopped thrashing. And long after the weathered door appears to guide me home.

"I'll come back to you, Daemon. I promise."

CHAPTER
TWENTY-FIVE

RONAN

“This is so fucking bad,” Dariana says as we return to Daemon’s mansion later that evening. Lucifer sent out a search party, but Genesis is still missing.

“It’s bad,” I agree, walking past the sweeping staircase. “But at least it’s clean in here.” Throwing a look at Dmitriy over my shoulder, I fish a packet of cigarettes out of my pocket. I’m in the mood for a joint, but this will have to do for now. “Why are you still here?”

With a snort, Dariana shoulders past me and heads for the living room while Dmitriy trails behind like a lost puppy. Though I respect him for not running scared, I wish he’d drop the fascination with the little angel. She belongs to us.

As if Alaric has the same thought, he snarls at Dmitriy on his way past before disappearing into the living room and flopping onto the couch. Deciding to throw Dmitriy an olive branch, I grip the doorframe to stop him from entering. Confused eyes meet mine, and with a small shrug, I peer into the living room. Then I look back at him, surprised to see how close we’re standing and how strangely comfortable I feel. “They’ll come around. Time is your ally, alright? Stick around and things will soon change.”

A muscle clenches in his cheek as he stares past me. “Why are you telling me this?” The deep drawl in his voice slithers over my extended arm along with the soft whisper of his breath when he exhales. I should lower it and let him pass, but intrigue keeps me rooted to the spot. “I don’t know,” I reply honestly, and he cuts his gaze to me. Unlike Daemon’s, his eyes have speckles of green in the brown. “I should tear you to pieces for looking at Aurelia like you want a taste of her, but something makes me curious enough to tolerate your presence near her.”

A beat passes and then he smiles in a way that sends a jolt of pleasure to my dick. I’ve never felt an attraction to a male before, but something about the way he obsesses over my

angel hooks me and won't let go. His woodsy scent and the lingering notes of hellfire tease my senses when he shifts closer. "Why are you really here?" I ask, my dick straining against my jeans.

Reaching out, he places his hand on the doorframe, too. There's nothing casual about it. My instincts tell me I'm being hunted, and while that should awaken the desire to fight, I'm oddly curious. I watch him closely as his eyes slide from the room to my face.

"I'm here because I can't get the girl out of my damn head." His breath whispers across my lips. "Do you know how many fucking times I've rubbed my dick to thoughts of her?"

My cock jumps inside my jeans. "Probably nowhere near as many times as I have."

"But you've had her pussy—"

"And mouth," I interrupt.

"And mouth," he echoes, staring at my lips. "I don't care if I have to hang around to get you all to accept me or if I have to slaughter you all with my bare hands. I'm gonna fuck that sweet mouth too, and I'm gonna fuck it hard. I have the patience of a fucking saint."

Damn it all to hell.

With a soft chuckle, I drop my arm from the doorway and let him pass, holding his gaze when he slides past me. Our chests brush and then he's gone. I watch his ass move inside those black jeans as he walks over to the nearest armchair.

"Pass me the cigarettes," Alaric demands, holding his arm up in the air, and I toss them to him.

Dmitriy's dark eyes track me. I enter the room and throw myself down onto the other couch opposite Alaric and Dariana. One leg flung over the side, the other drawn up, I use my arm to cushion my head. Dmitriy's attention skates down to where my black T-shirt has ridden up to expose my abs.

Sliding my hand inside my jeans, I readjust my raging boner, and his intense gaze follows my movement. Two

seconds away from jerking myself off in front of everyone, I pull my hand out just in time for Alaric to toss me the packet of cigarettes.

“How long do we wait for Daemon and Amenadiel?” Dariana questions, kicking off her heels and propping her bare feet on the coffee table.

Dragging my eyes away from her wiggling toes, I light up the cigarette and take a deep fucking drag to calm myself down. “Let’s not worry until the morning.”

“But what if we can’t trust Amenadiel not to hurt Deamon?”

Dmitriy tears his eyes from me and sneers at her. “If he wanted to hurt Daemon, he’d have done so already.”

“Maybe he’ll leave him there, trapped in her mind?”

Resting one leg over the armrest, he throws his hand out and lights the fireplace with a sudden burst of flames. “Are you always this distrusting of others?”

“We’re in Hell, and your dad is an asshole. Of course I am.”

His eyes find hers again, lingering for a moment while they assess each other. With a deep inhale, he lets his gaze slide in the direction of the fireplace. “All we can do is wait.”

“If he betrays Daemon, we’ll kill you,” Dari states, trying to provoke a reaction out of Dmitriy, who keeps staring at the flames.

A loud crackle disturbs the ensuing silence. I rub my eyes, tired as hell from the long day. “Where do we think Genesis is hiding?”

Alaric stares at the cigarette that’s almost down to the filter. Smoke leaks from his lips in a sensual, swirling dance. “Far away so that Lucifer won’t be able to track her.”

“What if Aurelia fails to step out from the shadows?”

“She won’t,” Dmitriy speaks up, still staring at the flames in the fireplace with a contemplative look on his face.

My eyes sweep over the defined line of his jaw, his straight nose, and the thin line of his lips. His T-shirt has ridden up his back and, as a result, pools low enough at the front for me to catch a glimpse of his tanned chest. “What makes you so sure?”

He cuts his eyes to me, causing blood to rush south when the weight of his gaze lands on my face. “I’ve seen firsthand how strong she is.”

Reaching forward to crush his cigarette in the ashtray on the coffee table, Alaric snorts with disgust.

Dariana watches our exchange like she can sense a shift in the air.

“Strong, huh?” I hold his gaze. “Care to elaborate?”

An indulging smile dances across his mouth, and the flame he conjures at his fingertips slides across his knuckles—a seductive showcase of his powers if I ever saw one.

As I look over at Dariana, I’m met with a winged brow and a question in her gaze, which I choose to ignore. Pinning my eyes back on Dmitriy, I place the cigarette back between my lips and mumble around the filter, “Tell me about her powers.”

He watches me take a deep drag before clearing his throat and breaking eye contact. “My father’s methods may have been questionable, but Aurelia was determined right from the start to grow her powers. Indulging in the darkness allowed her to do that.”

“But she’s lost to the shadows now,” I point out, flicking ash on the floor.

Watching me silently, he responds, “She is. But if she’d never engaged with her own darkness, she’d never stand a chance at breaking free once Daemon finds her. Don’t you get it?”

“Get what?” Alaric asks, sitting forward with his elbows on his knees. “What are you not saying?”

“Well.” Dmitriy slides his finger across the armrest, back and forth. “If Daemon finds her, he’ll show her she still has

something worth fighting for.”

“So?”

“So...” Sitting forward, he stares Alaric in the eyes. “The light will always defeat the dark.”

I choke on cigarette smoke. After hauling myself up into a sitting position, I bang my chest with my fist. “The light? What are you talking about?”

His dark gaze slides back in my direction. “My father once admitted to me that the light clings to him like a persistent dew drop he can’t shake. That drop,” he emphasizes, “is what will ultimately chase away the shadows. Why? Because she possesses far more power inside that single drop of light than any flame of Hell. Goodness drives away darkness.”

Dariana blinks, then looks at Alaric and me as if we hold the answers. Turning back to Dmitriy, she says, “Are you saying she still has the Light inside of her?”

“Of course she does. It’s the essence of her flame. While Genesis arose from the ashes of Death, Aurelia was born of the Light. She battles the eternal war inside of herself.”

Thick and heavy silence falls on the room.

Relaxing back into the armchair, he rubs his finger over the armrest again. Back and forth, back and forth. A twisted lullaby that sings to each of us as we watch the movement.

“When Aurelia realizes that you all love her, that Light inside her will force the shadows back.”

“Philosophical bullshit,” Alaric grumbles.

Dariana shoots him a glare, then shoves him over with a hard push. “I think it’s romantic.”

He shoves her right back, causing her to tumble off the couch. She pops back up, grabs a handful of his hair, and pulls him down.

Tossing a fireball into the air and catching it, I mull over his words while Dariana jumps to her feet and sets fire to his pants.

Flying to his feet, he spits out a curse but then grows silent. I look up from where the flame webs between my fingers, and I pause.

“Why am I not running around like a squealing pig?” Alaric asks, though he knows the answer.

Dmitriy’s lazy drawl cuts through the stunned tension. “You’re not just fire-bonded with Aurelia, but with each other too. She’s the bond that glues you together.”

“Fuck,” Alaric says, using his own magic to put out the flames. His jeans are in charred tatters. “I’ll have to borrow a pair from Daemon.”

Dariana follows him out of the room, leaving me alone with Dmitriy, who’s back to staring at the flames in the fireplace.

Rising from the couch, I walk up to him. His attention slowly shifts across the room, and he looks up at me with dark eyes that hold enough secrets to sink a ship. Trying to decipher or unravel them is of no use.

“You seem to know a lot about the light.”

“I don’t,” he drawls, watching me. “I know nothing more than you do.”

My gaze slides down his body, pausing briefly on the bulge in his jeans before sliding back up to his smirking face.

“Ever sucked a dick, Ronan?” he asks, his voice dripping with amusement.

Not one to back down from a verbal challenge, I dart my tongue out to wet my bottom lip while appraising him. “Ever let anyone fuck you in the ass, Dmitriy?”

“Touché,” he says with a deep, lazy chuckle that shoots right to my dick in the most delicious way. “Why don’t you bend over the coffee table, and I’ll fuck yours.”

A scoff rips from my lips. Entertained as hell by the glimmer of mischief in his gaze, I look behind me at the open door before turning back and leaning forward to grip the back of the couch. Trapping him with my hands on either side of his

head, I look him in the eye. “It’s a good thing you amuse me, or I’d make your fucking life hell for thinking you can show up here and mess with our dynamic.”

“Where did the friendly Ronan go that told me time is my ally?” He pretends to look past me to the door. “Did he leave with the others?”

“Very funny,” I mock. “Do anything to come in between my friends and me, and I’ll make you regret it.”

“I thought you were the easygoing one in your little trio. Maybe I have you pegged wrong.”

My cock throbs, straining so hard in his presence, I damn near give in to the urge to do something about it. “We all hide sides of ourselves,” I reply. “Are you as bad as you’ve let on all this time?”

His lopsided smile takes on a dangerous quality, and he reaches out to hook a single finger in my jeans pocket. “I’m worse.” His eyes glow with flames. “So much fucking worse.”

Pushing off the armchair, I straighten up and point an accusing finger in his direction. “Don’t mess with my friends or me.”

“I’m just here for Aurelia.”

Snarling low in my chest, I surge forward, but his hand shoots out and grabs me in a chokehold. Sitting forward in his seat, he digs his fingers into my throat and bares his incisors. “I have, in fact, fucked a man in the ass. And let me tell you, Ronan. Yours looks damn tempting in those jeans.” He shoves me away just as fast, causing me to stumble against the coffee table. Rising to his feet, he walks out without another word, leaving me to stare after him with gritted teeth and clenched fists.

Asshole!

CHAPTER
TWENTY-SIX

AURELIA

Blinking against the bright sunlight, I stir when soft fingers stroke my hair away from my brow. “There you are.” Freya’s soft voice rouses me further from the clutches of sleep. I lift my head from her lap and look around the field. “Don’t worry, you haven’t been asleep for long.”

Confused, I peer back at her, and she hurries to add, “Today’s lesson is about the importance of forgiveness...” Her voice drifts away as my gaze wanders the expanse of the field. Angels with white wings that shimmer beneath the warm sun listen intently to the Elder on the podium. A tickle on my shoulder draws my attention to a small, blue butterfly.

“Are you listening?”

The butterfly takes flight. I look at Freya. “Huh?”

“Colossians,” she says, reaching out to brush away a strand of hair stuck to my damp bottom lip. “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

I startle awake with a gasp, my hand flying up to my sore throat where the sensation of gnarled, pale fingers that dig into my skin still lingers. Choking on air, my lungs burning, I roll over onto my back. Overhead, thousands of twinkling stars burn brightly while somewhere in the distance, a fox barks.

Footsteps approach from my left and Amenadiel crouches down beside me in the clearing, his long cloak pooling on the grass. His calloused fingers trail over the bruises on my cheeks, and he lets his gaze sweep over my face before whispering, “Fight it. Fight *her*.”

Pain rips through me as shadows seem to dart from the tree line to snap their vicious teeth at me.

“You’re stronger than this,” he says, his voice firmer. “Fight the darkness.”

My spine arches in an unnatural curve, threatening to snap as I release a choked cry. I dig my fingers into the damp grass. Everything hurts. An eternal battle as old as time plays out in my soul while I writhe on the grass that's covered in a thin layer of dew.

Shadows hiss at me. Ghostly figures leer over Amenadiel's shoulders with glowing eyes and rotten flesh.

"Look at me," he orders, cupping my chin. "Whatever you see is a figment of your imagination. Focus on the light."

"I don't know how," I grit out as the clouds part to reveal a blood-red moon.

Sliding his arms beneath me, he lifts me into his arms and scoops me up as though I weigh nothing. The soothing scent of midnight and hellfire settles over me like a warm blanket. I wonder briefly when Amenadiel became my safety. "Focus on the one thing that burns brighter than a candle in the dark."

Raven wings and eyes as dark as the night flash in my mind. Softly spoken words and snarling teeth. "*I want you.*" The whisper of a memory from a time when Daemon confessed his love caresses the fringes of my awareness like a cool summer breeze on a warm day. All around me, the shadows hiss, forced to retreat back into the tree line.

"I'll be damned," Amenadiel whispers, stroking his fingers over the palm of my hand where a small beam of light swirls in the air like a thousand floating dust particles. Intrigued, he slides his fingers through it, caressing the light with hesitant curiosity. When I glance up, my breath catches in my throat at the sight of the tears on Amenadiel's lashes.

Clearing his throat, his hand retreats, and he helps me to sit. "You're breathing normally again."

I look down at myself, at the pleated skirt and leather bra I'm wearing. "What happened?"

"You lost yourself to the darkness."

I lower my gaze and swipe at my wet cheeks. Fragmented memories assault my mind. I flinch when Amenadiel reaches out to cup my chin.

His hand retreats, and he puts his elbows on his knees. “You fought and won. I knew you would.”

Resting back against the big boulder behind me, I look around the small clearing. “Where am I?”

“Deep in the forest.”

My gaze snaps back to Amenadiel, who rises to his feet and dusts off his knees. The black shirt beneath his cloak has the top three buttons undone, and my attention is drawn to the silver chain that disappears beneath the collar. Running a hand through his dark hair, he motions to me. “You need to feed to regain your strength before the shadows overpower you again.”

With great effort, I climb to my feet on wobbly legs and press my hand flat on the boulder to steady myself. “How did you find me out here? What happened?” Memories hover at the fringes of my consciousness of Daemon visiting the cellar where I was locked up. I try to strain my mind, but they’re out of reach, teasing me with snippets of imagery.

“Daemon and I crossed the veil and saved you. But you had to fight off the shadows to free yourself.”

I attempt a single step, arms outstretched by my sides to balance me.

Steadying me with his hands on my shoulders, his wings erupt behind him to block out the night. “Easy now.”

“How will I feed to regain my strength? Won’t that coax the shadows to the surface?”

“It will,” he agrees, stroking his hand down my hair in an almost tender gesture before stepping back. “But if you don’t feed, the shadows will claim hold of you anyway.”

My wings ache as I stretch them out behind me, the feathers rustling in the late-night breeze. “They were tied,” I whisper, wincing as memories of being locked in the dark flood my mind. “I was shackled.”

Gritting his teeth, Amenadiel looks past me toward the trees. “We’ll find out who the stalker is and kill him.”

“Can we go back now?” My shaky voice is almost lost on the breeze.

Looking back at me with dark eyes that peel me open, he nods softly. “Sure. Come here.”

Hesitating, I stay rooted to the spot.

With a sigh, he motions to me. “You’re weak. You can’t fly on your own in your state. Not until you’ve fed.”

When I still don’t move, a muscle clenches in his cheek. “Look, do you want to get back or not?”

Something holds me back. It unnerves me that I feel this safe around him—the man who used to be my prime enemy. Wrapping my arms around myself, I swallow past the thick lump in my throat and blink back tears. My voice is so quiet, he’s forced to step closer to hear me. “I don’t know myself anymore.”

“What do you mean?”

A small shrug. “I used to fight, you know? Now I’m... I’m scared.” I chance a look at him. “I’m weak.”

“You’re not weak,” he says with conviction, placing his hand on my arm and squeezing gently. “You could never be weak.”

“I don’t remember much from my time in the shadows, but I remember *him* and how he hurt me.”

A snarl rumbles low in his throat, but it cuts off just as quickly. Cupping my cheeks, he brings my eyes to his, the cool breeze moving through his dark hair. “He won’t hurt you again.”

“Take me back to Daemon, please.”

His fingers flex on my cheeks. He looks at me for a long moment, his dark, unreadable eyes flicking between mine before he scoops me up and shoots up into the sky with lethal grace and power.

Seated on the floor in front of the crackling fireplace, I don't bother to look behind me when the sound of footsteps disrupts the silence. "Where's Daemon?" I ask.

"Out looking for you," Dmitriy replies, coming to a stop at my back. "They all are."

I prop my chin on my knees and wrap my arms around my shins. "How long was I gone for?"

Lowering himself down beside me, one leg stretched out, one bent, he rests back on his hand and lets the other dangle over his knee. "Long enough."

I look at him, studying the way the firelight flickers over his face. "You don't want to tell me."

"I don't think it matters. One day. A year. Your harem is going crazy without you."

A weak smile plays at the corners of my lips. I've had a shower and changed into a clean dress. Strands of my still-wet hair tickle my cheek with my next exhale. "And what about you?"

He slides his gaze away from the fire to look at me. When he doesn't reply, I shrug one shoulder.

"Have you been going crazy?"

His brown eyes sweep over my face before he brings his hand up to his mouth to hide his smile. He rubs the corner of his mouth with his thumb. "Is it Aurelia or Genesis asking that question?"

My smile grows impossibly wide. "Does it matter?"

"Yes." Dropping his hand from his mouth, he reaches out to tuck my hair behind my ear. "It matters a lot."

Breath caught in my throat, I stay silent while his fingers linger on the sensitive spot below my ear.

“They’ll be back soon. You better prepare yourself. Daemon is on the warpath. In all my years, I’ve never seen him this worked up.”

While I appreciate that he saves me from answering, a small part of me wants him to elaborate on why it matters. The question tickles my lips, demanding to be asked. I swallow it back down and look back at the flames. His gaze burns the side of my face until I can barely breathe.

“What happened to you?”

Like a bucket of ice water, his words splash over me. I flinch, turning away from him. When his fingers reach for me, I physically recoil, remembering the stalker’s touch. “Don’t.”

“I’m sorry. I won’t touch you again.”

With my back to him, gaze lowered to the floor, I ask him the question that’s been on my lips since my return. “Why can’t I conjure hellfire?”

“Lucifer, he... he fed a vial of potion to Genesis. Your powers are dormant for a few days.”

“I know about the vial. The stalker, he... He made me drink it, too. But the light...” I drift off, remembering the beam of light on my hand that chased away the shadows and how Amenadiel explored it with his fingers.

“What about the light?” Dmitriy shifts closer, the heat of his breath wafting over my exposed shoulder.

My chin touches it as I peer back at him in the firelight, our lips dangerously close. Visibly swallowing, he stares at my mouth.

“It doesn’t matter.”

His eyes flick up to mine, and he frowns. “What are you talking about?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“When are you gonna get it?” Leaning in closer, he looks down at my mouth as he whispers, “Everything about you matters.”

My heart stalls. But before I can answer, the door flies open. I jerk back, looking over his shoulder as Daemon and the others come tumbling through the door.

“Get the fuck away from her!” Daemon growls, striding forward.

With a defeated sigh, Dmitriy climbs to his feet and steps back, hands held up in a placating gesture to soothe the raging bull that’s tearing across the room to get to me.

Flipping the armchair over, Daemon crosses the floor in five large steps and hauls me to my feet. Crushing me to him, his voice rumbles in my ear, “Thank fuck!”

I’m not sure how to feel. Relief to be back in his arms holds me in a chokehold. But as my eyes collide with Dariana across the room, the ugly truth of our predicament slaps me in the face. She’s marrying Daemon.

As though she can read my thoughts, her eyes narrow, and she gives a small shake of her head. A shake so small, it’s barely noticeable.

“Daemon,” I whisper, then stronger, “Daemon!”

He looks down at me, arms still banded around my waist in an iron grip as though he might lose me to the shadows at any minute.

“We can’t.”

His brows furrow, and he stiffens. Then he looks to the side, where Dariana stands with a defeated, broken look on her face. Realization dawns, and he looks back at me with gritted teeth and hellfire burning in his gaze. Reaching up and gripping my chin hard, he leaves me no choice but to drown in his dark, determined gaze. “No, little witch. It’s not fucking happening. We’ve played this game too many fucking times now. I don’t give a damn what you want or don’t want. You’re ours, and if you think you can walk out that door because of some stupid fucking idea that my father has in his head, you’re dead wrong. I won’t ever let you go.” Bringing his face close enough to mine for our noses to bump, he growls, “I’ll chain you to my fucking bed if I have to.”

When I visibly flinch at the assaulting memories of my time in the darkness, a cruel smile lifts his lips to reveal his slowly elongating fangs. “He’s a dead man walking, little witch. No one chains my angel but me.” Then his lips descend on mine in a fierce kiss that’s more than a simple claiming. It’s a ravishing of my soul, a complete plundering of my essence. Daemon leaves no stone unturned.

Forcing his tongue between my lips, he smiles into the kiss when I gasp. “You belong to me,” he whispers before driving his tongue back into my mouth to tangle with mine. “I won’t ever let you go.” His teeth sink into my bottom lip, the sharp sting turning me delirious with frenzied desire. “I don’t care what it takes, or what depraved lengths I’ll have to go to in order to keep you. I won’t ever stop hunting you, little witch. Do you know why?”

Whimpering, I clutch his T-shirt.

“Because I love you. This thing between us? It’s beyond obsession.”

My lungs burn when I moan into the kiss. His words seduce me as much as his dominating touch and biting kisses.

Breaking away from my lips, he tosses me at Alaric, Ronan, and Dariana. His voice is deadly cold. “Break her.”

CHAPTER
TWENTY-SEVEN

AURELIA

“With pleasure,” Dariana says, smiling cruelly while Alaric and Ronan pace behind her, each with matching smirks.

Backing away, I yelp when my spine meets Daemon’s hard chest. His hands clamp down on my shoulders, and with a lift of his chin, he orders Dmitriy to leave the room. His voice brokers no argument. As Dmitriy passes, his brown eyes collide with mine. But then they slide away just as fast, and he leaves the room.

Soft fingers, calloused and sure, slide my hair away from my shoulder in a caress that wrings my heart of every emotion it has ever clung to. And like blood, it pours from my chest. Daemon leans down and presses his damp lips to the curve of my neck. Behind us, the flames shoot sparks into the air. My eyes slide shut against the pain that whispers inside me.

“Don’t shut us out,” Dariana pleads, taking my hand. “The fighting stops now.”

“No,” I breathe, my lips parting with a sigh, lashes fluttering as Daemon peppers heated kisses over my skin.

“What’s holding you back?” she asks.

My heavy gaze skates past her to Ronan and Alaric, who pull their T-shirts over the back of their heads. Discarding them on the floor, they exchange smirks before looking over at me. Everything they do, from how they communicate silently to how they pop the buttons on their jeans, is synchronized, like that of a seductive dance designed to break down every wall I’ve ever erected.

The small side smile on Alaric’s lips and the way his dark hair falls into his eyes when he lifts his gaze to look at me from beneath his dark lashes have my heart fluttering wildly. Combine it with the sincerity in Dari’s eyes and Daemon’s fierce grip on my hip and exploring lips, and I’m putty in their spun web.

“Why are you doing this?” I ask when Daemon slowly slides the dress down my shoulders, his fingers brushing over my arms in a whisper of a touch that I feel down to my toes.

With his lips on my shoulder, he smiles, whispering, “Because Genesis can’t survive the light in you.”

“The light in me?”

“Can you not see it?” Dari trails her soft fingers along my cheekbone. Tears glisten on her lashes, and my own heart thuds heavily in response as my eyes widen. She places her hand on my chest, between the swell of my exposed breasts.

The dress pools around my feet, kissing my ankles on its way down.

“Look at that...”

A breath gets caught in my throat at the sight of the light that pours from my chest beneath her hand. As if she’s drawn in like a moth to a flame, the tears in her eyes slide a slow path down her cheeks. She leans in to replace her hand with her lips.

“Only the light can defeat the darkness,” Daemon tells me, his lips back on my ear, brushing the sensitive shell. “We were wrong all along to encourage you to indulge in the darkness.”

Dariana’s warm mouth envelops my nipple, and she tweaks the other one between her finger and thumb.

“I like the darkness,” I admit. “I like how invisible it makes me feel.”

A presence to my left alerts me to Ronan, who joins us and slides his hand around the side of my neck. He dives down to breathe me in, his warm lips descending on my tingling skin. His voice skates along my collarbones like a midnight breeze. “Meanwhile, the light scares you.”

“Yes...”

Another hand cups my chin and guides my eyes to Alaric on my other side. His dark eyes drift over my face like a lost ship at sea that’s called home by the mermaid’s song. “It’s time to face your fears, babe. Love is scary. Fuck, we know.

This is Hell. Love has no place here, yet you brought it into the devil's abode. How is that possible, little witch?"

Daemon steps back, and Alaric slams his lips to mine, devouring me like he's feasting on the light pouring from my chest.

Hands caress every inch of my skin, and lips explore my body like an uncharted trail that leads through a mythological forest. I lose myself in them. In the Light that pours from my soul like an expression of the deepest truth of me.

Lost in their touch, I open my eyes to see the door behind them. The door that's open to reveal another timeline. One where they're waiting for me from across an ocean of possibilities.

A timeline where I first felt sin's delicious touch. How it spun my entire world on its axis to create this moment right here. Amenadiel was wrong. I never erased time. I created a new timeline, and this is where they meet. The fork in the road. The river that leads to the ocean. All it would take would be a single step, a split second's decision, and I'd be back in their arms. But then...

Ronan guides my lips to his with his calloused fingers on my chin. His forehead comes down on mine briefly as he implores me to see the truth in his eyes. "What are you doing to us? Can't you see it? The way you cradle our hearts in the palm of your hand so effortlessly?" He kisses me then, and I part my lips to welcome his warm tongue. Dariana is on her knees before me, dragging her hands up my thighs.

Breaking away from Ronan's mouth, I look over at the door, but it's gone. In its place is Dmitriy.

Leaning against the door frame, he makes no move to join us, but he watches with that look in his eyes that cements my decision to stay in this timeline. With that decision, a twinge in my heart lets itself be known. There can't be a win without a loss. We can't gain without letting go. And we can't truly love if we don't let it hurt.

Rounding us, Daemon points a stern finger at Dmitriy. “Step over that threshold, and I’ll kill you.”

Dmitriy never takes his eyes off me. Not when the others step back for their leader, who approaches me with an intense look in his eyes that feasts on my naked, glowing body and black wings like I’m the most beautiful, precious treasure he’s ever found. I want to memorize the way he commands my attention so easily.

Pulling his T-shirt over the back of his head, he grips the ends, puts it around the back of my neck, and pulls me closer. His scent is everywhere, heady and woody. His wings unfold behind him, and he encircles us in a cocoon of emotions that bring me to my knees.

“I’m scared, Daemon.”

“I am too,” he admits, winding the T-shirt around his hands and forcing me closer until my breasts press up against his bare chest.

“You are?”

His lips slant in a naughty smile that sends tingles to my clit. “Yeah,” he breathes out lazily, watching me closely with his brown eyes that darken by the second. “I have never feared anything until the moment I laid eyes on you.”

“You mean when I threw a football at your head.”

The T-shirt slides from my neck, and he lets it fall to the floor before palming my neck with one hand and my cheek with his other. He presses his lips to my temple, and his breath caresses my face. “Even before then.” Brushing his thumb through a tear on my cheek, he holds me closer. “Give me all your tears, little witch. I want it all.”

“How do you know I’m not Genesis?”

“Because of this...” His lips descend on mine, demanding complete obedience. He kisses me like I’m the very air he breathes. The way he touches me with complete control and dominance in every stroke and every soft caress has me moaning into his mouth.

When he breaks away, I stay with my eyes closed, tasting the moment like a drop of rain that will soon fall from my lips to get lost on the ground amongst every bad decision I've ever made.

But this.

This is not one of them.

“Open your eyes.”

I do.

“Do you see now?”

His face is aglow with the light that pours freely from me.

“What's happening?” I ask.

His side smirk tingles my lips, where the memory of his kiss lingers. He sweeps his eyes across my face and brushes away strands of hair that are stuck to the tears on my cheeks. “I don't know, but I think whatever happened when you were gone broke you completely. You had no choice but to reconnect with your light in order to survive.”

At the mention of my stalker, I stiffen, but Daemon is there to kiss away the ugly memories. Gripping me tightly, he lifts me up and guides my legs around his waist. I cling to him as the shadows threaten to resurface. They taunt me at the fringes of my consciousness, like elongating shadows that dart forth, only to slink back just as fast.

“Hey, hey, hey,” Daemon whispers when the glow that pours from me starts to dim. “I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. None of us are.”

I see the truth in his eyes as he lays me down in front of the fire and straightens back up. Hovering over me, wrapped in death and shadows, he's every nightmare brought to life. And he's fucking exquisite.

I hold my breath while he strips out of his remaining clothes. With a look in the direction of the others, he communicates without words. They join us, their footsteps soundless on the floor.

I lie in front of the fire with my soul bared, trembling with nerves. Four fallen angels, each equally dark and dangerous, stare down at me. At the light that's still pouring from my skin.

Dariana asks, "Genesis is gone, right?"

"What's hidden in the dark is revealed in the light," Alaric says. "Genesis runs with the shadows... She can't stand alongside the Light."

"And that's what makes our angel so powerful," Dmitriy says, walking deeper into the room despite Daemon's warning.

They all look over at him as he walks over to the armchair and sits down.

With his ankle on his knee, he rests his elbow on the armrest and rubs his lips. "Not only is she of the light and able to let it bleed back into her soul..." He gestures at the window almost desperately. "...outside of the fucking gates." He looks at the others in turn before swallowing thickly. "Don't you get it? The light doesn't reach across the borders. Yet it has found a way through her. *Love* has found a way through the darkness." As he blows out a breath, his eyes lock on mine and he says to the others, "She's the only one who can run with both the shadows *and* the light. The only one who can bring the two forces together."

Silence descends on the room while I lie vulnerable, scared, and needy on the floor. My nipples tingle. Daemon scans his eyes over me, as if I terrify him. His throat jumps and then he slowly lowers himself to his knees between my legs. Bringing a flame to life on his palm, his eyes find mine. He slams his hand to my chest and lets his arm erupt in flames. I watch with my breath caught in my throat as my light welcomes his hellfire, the two forces burning brighter together now that his eyes stay locked on mine.

"Fuck," he breathes, grinding his teeth. "I can feel the Light." He looks up at the others. "I can fucking feel it."

"What's it like?" Dari asks, dropping to her knees beside us and bringing a flame to life on her own hand. The others

join us, too, their flames becoming one as they place their palms on top of each other. Daemon, then Dariana, followed by Alaric and Ronan.

“Please touch me,” I plead, aching with desire between my legs. “I need you all.”

Daemon shoots a look over at Dmitriy, but his eyes return to me when I whisper his name.

“Touch me, Daemon.”

He’s on me then, his naked body draping over mine, his hungry lips exploring every inch of my skin with one goal in mind: to break me open. I kiss him back with just as much fire as the flames that lick a path over his chest. He lets go of his control, groaning into my mouth. When he looks at me, his eyes burn bright red, and his sharp incisors dig into his kiss-swollen lip. I let my fingers get lost in the dark hair at the nape of his neck and lean up to kiss him again. He tastes like the woods and the remaining embers of a bonfire in the early morning hours—the scent when the rain slowly puts them out.

His hard dick digs into my thigh, and precum coats my skin where he rubs the crown of his cock.

With his arm banded around my waist, he impales me in a swift move while Alaric and Ronan stroke their dicks on each side of us. On her knees beside me, Dariana traces my parted lips with her fingers.

Daemon claims me in front of the fireplace.

He’s the alpha. He fucks me first.

Capturing Dariana’s finger with my teeth, I suck it into my mouth and moan as my pussy clenches around Daemon’s cock.

“You want a dick in your mouth?” Daemon asks, his voice laced with humor.

I whimper in response, and he climbs off me. With a soft chuckle, he sits down and guides me to straddle his lap with my back to his chest before wrapping his hand around my throat. Lips pressed to my ear, he digs his fingers into my skin

until my pulse thunders beneath his touch. “Why don’t we bring the shadows out to play too?” His lips slowly unfurl into a wolfish smile—the kind of smile that holds me in its grip and refuses to let go. It’s erotic and nefarious, promising unbridled pain and pleasure. He lifts his chin, and Ronan and Alaric step forward with their cocks in hand. “Dari,” Daemon says. “Make our little angel come while I fuck her sweet cunt.”

“I thought you’d never ask.” Taking slow, seductive steps forward, she stops between mine and Daemon’s spread legs and cups my chin. Her dark eyes reflect Daemon’s flames. She stares down at me, with lips that I’m dying to feel on my pussy. “Promise you won’t fight us anymore.”

“I can’t,” I reply, and her grip tightens in response.

“That’s good,” she whispers. “That way, we get to hurt you more.”

As Daemon guides me over his cock and sinks inside me, she lies down on her front and looks up at me from between my spread thighs. “Do you have any idea how beautiful you are as you take Daemon’s cock?”

Alaric and Ronan grab my wrists, and I wrap my hands around their thick lengths in anticipation.

Dariana slowly leans in, and like a tease, she stops with her tempting mouth inches from my clit. Every slide of Daemon’s dick drugs me further.

When Dariana leans in and darts her tongue out to taste his cock as it slides in and out of me, I nearly fucking combust. Swirling the pink tip of her tongue where I’m joined with Daemon, she brings her thumb to my clit and swipes it.

Pleasure sparks in my core, and I can’t hold back the loud moan that slips from my lips. Ronan wraps his hand around mine on his cock and fucks my palm with slow thrusts. On my other side, Alaric slides his fingers into my hair and fists it tight. When I tear my gaze away from Dari between my legs, he bats my hand away from his cock, palms it, and thrusts it between my lips. It’s so sudden and deep that I gag almost immediately.

Dariana smacks my clit. “I fucking love this pussy.”

Behind me, Daemon rests back on an elbow, fucking me from beneath. The violent nature of his thrusts has my tits bouncing with every powerful slam of his hips. “She’s so damn tight!”

They’re everywhere. Dariana pinches my bundle of nerves, causing me to choke on Alaric’s cock. A thick string of saliva connects me to him as he slides back out to jerk his dick over my face while staring down at me with his other hand in my hair. “So damn pretty. Let go, babe. I can see the shadows swirling in your eyes. You’re safe with us.”

Before I can respond, his cock is back in my mouth, sliding down my throat.

Dariana sucks my throbbing clit between her teeth. She nibbles and bites and licks. Feasting on me until I don’t recognize the choked sounds of pleasure that leave my mouth every time Alaric offers me a brief reprieve from his massive cock. Moaning and writhing, I soak Daemon’s cock. Wanting more. Wanting less. It’s too much and not enough.

“I want to come on her wings,” Ronan says, holding my hand on his cock in a death grip while he fucks it with abandon. “I want to see my cum coat her feathers.”

“You and me both, brother,” Alaric chokes out. “I want to smear my cum fucking everywhere.”

I come. Every muscle in my body stiffens, and the light inside me explodes from my body in a bright flash before settling back and fading away. Spent and breathing hard, the wave slowly recedes. I let them use me. I let them use my body for their own pleasure.

Alaric slides out of my mouth and brings my hand to his slick cock. “Jerk me.”

Insatiable, Dari continues feasting on my cunt while staring up at me from beneath her wispy lashes. I can’t look away from the sight of her plump lips on my clit and her pink tongue tasting my arousal on Daemon’s cock, licking and sucking at the spot where we’re joined.

I come again when she smacks my swollen nub. Moaning loudly, I drop my head back between my shoulders and stare up at the ceiling. Pleasure floods me with enough power to make me see stars. The racing organ behind my ribs feels like it's about to break free.

My pussy pulses around Daemon's dick, and he releases inside me with a masculine, rumbling groan.

"Tongue out," Alaric orders, palming my hand on his cock. "Time to ruin your perfection."

Ronan and Alaric aim their cocks at my face, their devilish eyes devouring the hazy lust in my gaze. The silent plea for ruin. Their hot release rains over my lashes and lips in quick spurts. White cum slides a slow path down my cheeks and chin. I drag my tongue over my lips to catch as much of it as I can. With a choked grunt, Alaric continues stroking his cock. I eagerly let his final squirt of seed coat my tongue.

I'm ruined, covered in cum and saliva.

As Alaric steps back, I look over at Dmitriy, who lets his dark gaze slide down my marked face and body, taking in the semen that slides a path down my throat before pooling in the hollow between my collarbones.

The heat in his gaze has the ache between my thighs starting back up. But before I can squeeze my thighs together to alleviate the ache, Daemon shifts me off him, jumps to his feet, and strides toward Dmitriy with his hands fisted and hellfire dancing on his arms. "You're fucking dead!"

CHAPTER
TWENTY-EIGHT

DAEMON

He shoots up from the seat with his hands held out in front of him, but that's the only sign of distress. Everything else about him is calm, as though he's resigned to his fate.

He's dead.

That's what he is.

Fisting his T-shirt, I haul him close. "Cover yourself," I growl at Aurelia, keeping my eyes locked on my cousin. To Dmitriy, I say, "See the cum on her face? See how she's covered in my brothers?"

When his brown eyes slide in her direction, I jostle him. "Don't fucking look at her."

"Daemon." Aurelia speaks up from her spot near the fire where she's putting her dress back on. "Don't hurt him."

A snarl rips from my lips, and I bare my teeth at Dmitriy. But then the little witch adds, "Please," in a soft, vulnerable voice that gives me pause. Looking in her direction, I'm met with her big eyes and ruined perfection. "You don't have to accept him, but please don't hurt him."

My gaze sweeps over her face and body—the majestic black wings that seem to frame the fireplace behind her. "If you think I'll ever let him lay a single finger on you, you're wrong, little angel."

"He's been there for me," she says, slowly rising to her feet while keeping her gaze locked on mine. Her voice is stronger now and more determined. Behind her, the flames seem to grow taller in response to the strong emotion that pours from her. She takes a step closer, and I snarl in response, tightening my grip on Dmitriy's T-shirt.

"Careful, little angel. I will hurt him."

"Please, don't."

"Why?"

“He’s my friend.”

“Friend...” I chuckle humorlessly before shoving Dmitriy with enough force to send him flying across the room. He knocks over a couch, causing Aurelia to startle at the loud crash.

Walking over and grabbing her in a chokehold, I snarl in her face, “You think my cousin wants to be your *friend*?” I spit the word. “Wrong! Can’t you see that he wants to feast on your sweet pussy until you come all over his tongue?”

Her defiant eyes stare up at me, glassy with cock-stirring tears and attitude, but she keeps her lips pressed shut. It doesn’t matter. That look in her gaze speaks a thousand words.

“Let her the fuck go!” At the sound of my cousin’s deadly threat, I stiffen. “I won’t warn you again.”

Aurelia’s teary eyes fall shut as I slowly release her to turn around. “Daemon,” she whispers, sniffing pathetically.

Ignoring her unspoken pleas for me to not hurt him, I level him with a murderous look that’d bring a lesser man to his knees. When I feel my little angel peer at him from behind me, hellfire ignites at my fingertips. The concern that oozes off of her pisses me the fuck off. “Are you challenging me?”

A muscle clenches in his jaw as he stands tall in front of me with his wings carefully tucked. It doesn’t matter; the challenge is clear as day in his eyes and the defiant tilt to his chin.

I cock my head to the side, studying him closer. “I’m the devil’s son.”

“I’m his nephew.”

Silence settles in the room. We stay locked in a stare-down, each measuring the other as the seconds tick by.

Dariana shifts somewhere to my right while Ronan and Alaric watch the scene unfold with bated breath. One wrong move on Dmitriy’s side, and they’ll tear him to pieces at my command—contract or no contract.

“What exactly is it that you want?” I ask, fisting my hands at my sides.

Dmitriy never takes his eyes off me as a small smile spreads across his lips. “You know exactly what I want.”

“Just let us kill him,” Alaric growls, and I hold my hand up to silence him.

I take a single step closer to Dmitriy, and he notices, tracking my every move with eyes that miss nothing. “I’m intrigued enough to let you live for a few precious seconds longer. Tell me, cousin, what do you want with my little angel?”

“I want a turn at marking her,” he says boldly.

Pausing, I frown and let my attention trail from him to Aurelia and back. A humorless laugh climbs up my throat. “You have some fucking nerve.”

That small smirk of his never falters. “Let me mark her.”

“Let me set one thing straight,” I growl out as I step into his space. “You. Will. Never. Touch. Her.”

DMITRIY

Daemon shoves me back a step, turns around, and grabs Aurelia by the arm. Her eyes find mine over her shoulder as they sidle out. Alaric and Dariana leave the room, too. Ronan lingers, looking over at the door before turning to me. “Well, that went better than I expected.”

Scoffing, I reach for the nearest object I can find—a candle on the coffee table behind me—and toss it full force at the fireplace. “Whatever.”

“I’m serious. You’re breathing, for one. If it were anyone else, they’d be in pieces by now. Daemon has killed for less.”

Sucking on my teeth, I stare at the crackling flames. Defeat weighs my shoulders down.

Ronan takes a step closer with his hands in his pockets. “You should look at it like the glass is half-full.”

The humor in his voice doesn’t go unnoticed, but I’m in no mood to crack a smile. “I want to challenge him for her,” I admit, chancing a quick look at him as he moves across the room with the grace of a lazy lion.

“That’d be a very bad idea.”

I scoff. “You don’t say.”

“So what’s the plan?” he asks as he stops beside me, but I don’t reply.

Staring intently at the flames, I slide my hands into my pockets and draw in a deep, tired breath, unsure why I’m so affected by the angel.

“You gonna hang around until you wear Daemon down?”

“Something like that.” I look at Ronan. The humor and heat in his dark eyes. “Wouldn’t you?”

With a shrug of his broad shoulders, he stares at me for a beat before stepping closer and letting his gaze drift from me

to the fire. “I think you have one heck of a fight on your hands if you want Daemon to let you anywhere near her.”

“I’m not going anywhere. Not while there’s a stalker out there.”

“I appreciate that.” His eyes return to me, sweeping over my face as if he’s intrigued by the similarities between his leader and me. “You’ll have to submit to him.”

I’ll die first. Grinding my teeth, I bite back my retort.

Ronan notices, amused by the tic in my cheek. “He’ll never accept you otherwise.”

“I’ll kill him before I submit.”

Ronan chuckles appreciatively, a hint of fang gleaming in the firelight. “I’d love to see you try.” He moves even closer, and I hold my ground. His masculine scent mingles with mine. “In fact, I find the thought of you going head-to-head with Daemon quite intriguing.”

“Intriguing or arousing?” I arch a brow, and his smile broadens in response, as if my response delights him.

“Maybe I’m intrigued *because* the thought is arousing.”

When I don’t reply, he leans in close. So close I feel his breath on my lips. “I like the taste of your jealousy in the air.” My gaze lands on his lips, and he whispers, “It’s fucking delicious.”

“I’ll paint Aurelia in cum soon too,” I reply, my cock straining against the denim. “I don’t care what it takes.”

“Interesting,” he muses, showcasing his lethal fangs with another predatory smile that makes my heart thud heavily inside my chest. “I don’t know how to feel about your threats.”

“I don’t care how you feel.”

The heat from the tall flames barely registers. Ronan lets his wings slowly unfold from his back in a subconscious display of power. Though he’s not the alpha of the pack, he’s loyal to his leader. And while he can sense this sexual tension between us, he won’t hesitate to defend Daemon. “Be careful,”

he whispers, eyes swirling with a deep red mist that's reminiscent of blood. "I'm intrigued by your threats, but I won't hesitate to kill you, Dmitriy, if you threaten my family."

"Kill me or fuck me?"

"Fuck *and* kill."

Now it's my turn to whisper, "Interesting."

We're so close that his heat burns my chest, and his breaths tickle my lips with his every deep exhale.

"Careful," he warns when my wings unfold behind me. "I'll tear into you like a damn shark until there's nothing left but fleshy remains."

"Vicious."

His amused chuckle, which is pure sex, licks across my lips like a tempting promise of trouble. "You have no idea."

With a look at the flames and back, I smirk. "Just wait, Ronan. One day soon, my cum will coat yours on Aurelia's pretty face."

His tongue darts out to trace across his bottom lip as he lets his predatory gaze drop to my mouth. "A part of me wants you to be right."

"And the other part?" I ask.

His dark eyes flick up to mine, and with a dirty smile, he says, "The other part wants to watch Daemon tear you to shreds."

He walks out, and I stare after him before calling out, "Challenge accepted."

His broad shoulders shake as he exits the room, but he never turns around to see the filthy smile on my lips.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-NINE

AURELIA

Daemon drags me down the narrow hallway to his bedroom without a glance back. The others make themselves scarce, as if they can sense he needs this moment alone with me.

No sooner have we entered his bedroom than he shuts the door, pushes me up against it, and grabs my face with his big hand. His lips descend on mine, and I let him devour me until my heart beats so hard that I can feel its insistent throb in my temples. This kiss is a claiming, as raw and desperate as the pulsing throb between my legs.

Daemon breaks away, and his hungry mouth trails biting kisses down my neck before he's back to taste my kiss-swollen lips.

"Fuck," he growls, digging his fingers into my jaw. "Fuck it all to hell! You bring me to my knees."

"Daemon," I whisper as I drag my hands down his hard chest and rippling abs. "What about Dariana?"

His hot breath stalls on my lips, and he leans back to flick his eyes between mine before a deep sigh wafts over my mouth. "I'm not marrying her."

"But your father said—"

"It doesn't matter, little witch. Forget what he said."

"I can't just forget."

"Of course you can," he growls as he lets his hand slide from my jaw to my throat, his warm fingers encircling the slender column. His lips are back on mine, stealing my retort with hard kisses that send heat to my swollen clit. "None of that shit matters, okay?" Biting down on my lip, his tongue swipes up the blood rushing to the surface. "Fuck, you drive me insane."

"What about Genesis?" I ask when he drags his nose across my jaw.

Pausing at the tender spot below my ear, he places a soft kiss on my heated skin and eases back to look me in the eye. “We’ll figure it out. I promise, baby.”

“What if I get lost to the shadows again?”

“You won’t.”

I want to believe him so badly, but I don’t.

I can’t.

Not while the memory of the flickering candles on the metal tray burns bright in my mind’s eye.

“Thank you for finding me.”

His entire body grows still.

“You found me, Daemon.”

“I will always find you,” he replies, placing his hand on the door and tucking my hair behind my ear.

“You will?”

“Yes.” His voice is barely above a whisper, but my heart hears his promise like a tailor-made song.

“I’ll hold you to that promise, Daemon. Son of Lucifer.”

His throat jumps enticingly, and a flash of vulnerability dances with the flames of hellfire in his eyes. But then all gentleness disappears. He spins me around and sinks his teeth into my neck where it meets my shoulder. Blood pours to the surface, warm and slippery. Crowding me against the door with his big body, he laps it up while I push my ass back against his groin.

With a final, “Fuck,” he turns me around and slams his mouth to mine. At the same time, he fists his dick as though he’ll die if he can’t bury himself to the hilt inside me at this instant. Banding his arm around my waist, he lifts me up and rubs the crown of his cock through my soaked slit.

“Please,” I whimper as he presses inside me. “I need you.” Clinging to him, I let him hurt me in the best way possible, loving the sharp sting. He slams his hips home and sinks his

teeth into my bottom lip. Daemon is many things, but he's not gentle when he fucks. And I don't want him to be. I want him to erase my stalker's every unwelcome touch with his own brutality. I want him to hurt me and fuck me and kill me slowly with hard kisses that chip away at my heart's defenses. If I thought I stood a chance against him, I was wrong. When he fucks me like this, pinned against the door, I come alive. Every part of me, every wilted, fragmented, and broken piece, returns home on his soft breaths against my neck and lips.

Daemon pounds me hard until he's all I see. Every burning kiss sears my heart like the ink of a tattoo gun.

"You wanted to forget us," he growls out on a hard thrust. "Did you think I'd ever let that happen? No..." He grunts. "I don't care what it takes or how hard I have to fuck you. I'll engrave myself on your heart, little angel." His cock slides out to the crown, teasing my soaked entrance, and his dark eyes hold mine, never wavering as he buries himself inside me. Behind him, his wings stretch out, as dark and threatening as the promise in his gaze.

"I'll hurt you to get my way," he promises. "I'll cut you open if only to leave my scars on your soul."

My fingers slide up the expanse of his warm, sweaty chest, over the hard planes of muscle. "We'll hurt each other," I correct him. "Again and again until one of us walks away."

A low snarl vibrates his chest beneath my touch. He picks up his pace, fucking me with long, deep strokes that steal my breath. "It's too late to walk away, little witch. You're already leashed, and I won't set you free."

With heavy eyes, I watch him take me against the door while the shadows that lurk in the corners of the room grow taller and longer.

Daemon spins us around and carries me over to the bed. He lowers me down on top of the crumpled sheets and climbs on top. The mattress dips beneath his heavy weight. Much to my dismay, he keeps himself out of reach, suspended above me on his knees with one hand beside my head.

As I hold my breath, he trails a single finger along the curve of my jaw, down the column of my neck. He lingers on my pulse point, his touch sending illicit shivers down my body.

“I need you, Daemon,” I beg, both loving and hating how vulnerable I feel when he looks at me like he is now. “Please.”

Wrapping his fingers around my throat, he applies enough pressure to cause pleasure to trickle down to my core. “You reduce me to an animal.” His heated gaze skates the length of my body, causing my pussy to throb at the feeling of his eyes’ caress. The hunger that seems to whisper like heated breaths on my sensitive, swollen folds.

Shifting down my body, he yanks my dress up, not satisfied until it’s in a pool below my tits. He peers up at me from between my spread legs with a look that’s so devastating, I don’t dare look away. Like a targeted missile aimed at my fragile heart, he lowers himself down until his lips are right where I need him, hovering a hair’s breadth away. His fangs gleam in the flickering firelight from the torches on the walls, and my fingers tangle in his soft, unruly hair. I get lost in the strands, tugging and pulling while he holds me hostage with his intense gaze.

“Taste me,” I all but plead, lifting my hips off the mattress. “Please, Daemon.”

There’s that side smirk. The one that sends a spark of heat to my clit. Throwing my head back on the pillow, I let my thighs clamp down on his head. “You torture me, Daemon.”

A sharp sting has me hissing out a breath. I lift my head off the pillow to see a trail of deep-red blood trickle from his mouth on my thigh in a race toward my pussy.

With his teeth buried deep in my skin, he watches me from beneath his dark lashes. His fingers skate up the inside of my thigh in a soft caress that makes me tingle in the best way possible. He slides his heated touch through the streak of blood, and I inhale a sharp gasp when he smears it over my soaked clit and circles my slick entrance.

Mesmerized, I watch his teeth retract. He places a soft kiss on the incisor wounds before biting down on his own wrist. Blood rushes to the surface, trailing a path toward his elbow. Daemon's dark eyes clash with mine. Smirking sinfully, he holds his wrist over my pussy and fists his hand. The first warm drop lands on my sensitive clit like a slap of his hand, and I gasp out as more blood drips onto my soaked cunt.

Unsatisfied, Daemon brings his wrist to his mouth and bites down again. With his eyes on me, he tears through the skin and proceeds to let the blood pour freely over my slit and between my ass cheeks.

Once the steady flow becomes a slow trickle, he lowers himself back down and covers my throbbing pussy with his hot mouth. I gasp, fisting the sheets like the white, soft fabric is my lifeline. Daemon devours me. His tongue lashes at my clit almost viciously. It's too much and not enough at the same time. He sucks, nibbles, and licks, leaving me a writhing mess atop his crumpled, blood-stained sheets. My wings drag across the bed until they're unfolded and drooping to the floor on either side of the bed. I shudder, my back arching off the mattress.

"Fuck, Daemon," I whimper.

When he looks up at me with blood smeared over his mouth and cheeks, I come. The sight of him covered in his blood and my arousal is a flint to my steel. I let out a scream, unable to stop the onslaught of pleasure that grips me like Daemon's ruthless hand around my throat. Every muscle in my body tenses, and my pussy pulses its release.

Before I've come down from my high, Daemon climbs up my body—a prowling lion that's about to devour its kill.

Grabbing my ankles, he brings them to the side of my head. I'm bent in half, staring up at him as he grips his cock and drags the crown through my soaked folds. He sinks inside me, his veiny length filling me up to the brim. As he slides back out, he slaps my clit that peeks out through the hood. "Such a dirty little angel."

Just when I think he'll never give me what I need, he grips the shaft and applies pressure to my tight exit. The pain is immediate, burning through me with delicious intensity. I love that Daemon doesn't take it easy on me and how unapologetic he is in his pursuit of pleasure.

His fingers flex on my crossed ankles, and he stares down between our bodies, watching his dick slowly stretch me open. I hold my breath, in awe at seeing this powerful fallen angel, the heir to Hell's throne, fill me up with his cock. Beads of sweat stick to his skin, which only adds to the urgency.

"Fuck me," I beg, and his eyes shoot up to mine. He doesn't need to be asked twice. Falling forward onto his hands, he grabs hold of my throat and slams his hips home, sheathing himself to the hilt in my ass. It's not the most comfortable position, but the raw look in Daemon's eyes as he pulls all the way out and slams his cock inside me again makes it all worth it. In fact, I never want him to stop looking at me like he is now. I want him to fuck me to within an inch of my life and then do it all again.

"Fuck, this damn ass," he says with a grunt, bruising my neck with his tight grip. "So. Fucking. Good."

Snarling at him, I bare my incisors. My empty pussy drips with need and throbs in time with his brutal thrusts.

"Don't," he warns, cutting off my airflow. "Don't bare your teeth at me while I'm balls deep in your ass, little witch. I'll only hurt you more."

I do exactly that. With a hiss, I let him see the red mist swirling in my gaze. Nothing entices me to misbehave more than his raw fury and the instinctual need to dominate, which flashes in his eyes right before he climbs off me. His wet dick bobs against his rippling stomach, and he orders me to run.

Hesitating, I blink up at him as he drags his fingers through his sweaty hair.

Lowering his hand, he clucks his tongue. "Did I stutter, little angel? It's time to fucking run. If I catch you—and mark

my damn words, I will—I'll fuck you to within an inch of your life.”

“But the windows,” I blurt, shifting on the bed. “They’re all boarded shut, and the guards—”

He pulls open a drawer and picks out a dark T-shirt and a pair of jeans as he says over his shoulder, “Then you better fucking hide well, don’t you think?”

My heart jumps in my chest, fluttering wildly with excitement at the promise of a chase in his dark eyes. With one final look in the direction of the door, I bolt.

CHAPTER
THIRTY

AURELIA

Excitement courses through my veins like a heady drug. I escape down the narrow hallway, past the paintings on the walls. As I come hurtling around the corner, I nearly crash into Alaric, who steadies me with his hands on my arms. But before he can open his mouth to speak, I'm on the run again, my tangled hair flying behind me as peals of laughter rip from my lips. Clamping a hand over my mouth, I stop in the large foyer and dart my gaze around. One look at the grand staircase, and I dismiss the thought of fleeing upstairs. Daemon will see it coming a mile away. Behind me, two security guards block the front doors, my only escape route.

Making a swift decision, I dart left down another dark and narrow hallway lined with expensive artwork and the occasional marble sculpture. Heavy drapes block out the boarded-shut windows. Unlit candle chandeliers, covered in spiderwebs and melted beeswax, hang from the tall ceiling.

The sconces on the wall stay unlit, and the welcome darkness offers me protection from the lurking predator that's on my trail. I blend with the shadows, moving swiftly across the marble floor on light feet. Taking a left at the end of the hallway, I press myself against the wall and peer around the corner. Nothing but stillness greets me—an eerie silence that seems to brush up against my exposed skin like a cool breeze late at night.

Soft notes of classical music break through the silence, and I snap my head to the side, hunting for its source. Up ahead, one of the doors is cracked open to reveal the flickering glow of a lit fireplace.

Intrigued, I push off the wall and follow the source of my curiosity. The cool marble floor kisses my bare feet. With a final look behind me to ensure Daemon hasn't found me yet, I press my palm against the wood and apply enough pressure to cause the door to creak open. I peek inside, too intrigued not to.

Crossing the threshold, I take in the lit fireplace. Intricately carved patterns cover every surface. Beside it sits an armchair and a small console table with an open book and a half-filled wine glass.

Near the window, chained to a metal pole, is a naked human woman. Her generous tits bear the markings of a monster. A monster who's currently fucking her from behind while she fights against the restraints. Her choked sobs should repulse me, but the stirrings of evil inside me awaken at the sight of her terrified eyes. Glassy with tears, they lock on mine across the room. It dawns on me that, unlike other fallen angels, Lucifer hasn't bothered to place his prey under a spell.

He's a true hunter, like me.

A vicious monster.

Lucifer notices me, too. He releases his meal and walks up to me, stark naked and covered in sweat and sinister intent. His very hard, very veiny cock glistens against his rippling abs as he runs a hand through his mussed-up hair.

I take a step back out of instinct, but he's faster. In a blur of movement, he has me pressed up against the wall with his big body that smells of sex and debauchery. His big hand covers my mouth, silencing my soft whimper.

A sound I'm not entirely sure is one of fear.

"You should know better than to interrupt the hunt."

His eyes burn into me, making me tingle in forbidden places. I let my gaze roam over the sheer breadth of his wings, and he unfolds them in a display of power and dominance, almost as if he wants to make me weak at my knees.

It has the desired effect. My pussy clenches on cue like a treacherous little whore when he showcases his power like this. "You feed on fear," I state the moment he lowers his hand to strangle me with his big, calloused hand.

Like me.

My breath gets caught in my throat. He starts to squeeze, feeding on the fear that sparks in my eyes. "I do," he admits,

pressing his naked thigh to my core. “I feed on ruin and destruction.”

Like a panicked rabbit darting across a grassy field, my heart thuds wildly against my ribcage.

“I feed on soaked pussy and innocence.” He grinds his thigh against me as if to prove how wet I am.

My lips part, and his eyes home in on my mouth before the pressure against my core turns painful.

“You shouldn’t have entered the devil’s lair, little angel.”

He releases me just as fast and strides over to the human with determined steps and flared wings.

Slumped against the wall, achy and needy, I watch him impale her on his cock. The sensible thing would be to run. To open the door and flee. But I don’t.

Rooted to the spot, I watch him fuck her ruthlessly in pursuit of some elusive urge to kill the boredom in him. His eyes never leave mine, and I never once look away. I couldn’t even if I wanted to. Not when he takes her so completely, as if it’s me he’s imagining in her place.

When he grips her by the hair at the back of her head and beckons me with a curled finger, I swallow back the delicious fear that’s coiled around my heart and take hesitant steps forward.

Vaguely aware of the sparking flames in the fireplace and the haunting classical music in the room, I’m pulled forward by his magnetism.

A fly caught in the spider’s web.

“Drink her dry,” he orders on a hard thrust. “Kill the human while I stuff her full of cum.”

My fangs ache and throb with an insistent need at the command in his voice. I look at the terrified, strung-up human and back. The dark lust in Lucifer’s eyes demands obedience. It demands complete submission.

Sliding in between the girl and the pole, I gasp. Her body rocks against mine with Lucifer's every brutal slam of his hips. He fucks her like he wants to ruin her, and it sends tingles of shivers crawling down my spine.

As I slide my hand into her hair, it brushes up against Lucifer's fingers. I throw him one last glance before leaning in and sinking my teeth into the woman's pulse point. The sheer fucking ecstasy that explodes inside me when her iron-rich blood fills my mouth has a loud moan rippling through my chest.

Fuck, she tastes of exquisite fear and imminent death. I want to taste the reaper on her. I want to feast on his final touch as he claims her soul.

With a brutality that belongs to the cold night, Lucifer chases his release while I sink my teeth deeper into her neck. Unable to stifle the urge to inflict damage, I retract my fangs and strike again. Blood pours down the human's chest and over her full breasts. My fingers glide through its slickness, and I squeeze a tit before pinching her nipples into hard peaks.

Her cries soon die down, and her weak pulse slows until her last heartbeat plays its haunting song beneath my lips.

Lucifer pulls out, tosses her aside, and pulls me into him. No sooner has a startled gasp left my lips than he flips my skirt up and milks his cock over my bare pussy. Hot squirts of cum coat me, covering my sensitive folds and the remnants of Daemon's blood before trickling between my thighs.

Lucifer holds my gaze the entire time, claiming me unapologetically as though I'm another object in his kingdom to own and ruin. Another object to have caught his unrelenting attention.

As the last spurt of his cum rains over my pussy, he smirks. Then, with one final tug on his dick, he pats my cheek hard and says, "Good girl. Now run back to my son and let him lick my cum off your pussy."

"You fucking asshole," I say weakly when he unchains the corpse and throws it to the side as though it's nothing more

than a piece of trash.

The muscles in his sweaty back move enticingly as he walks over to his desk. Casting a quick glance over his shoulder, he grabs a decanter of amber liquid, removes the cap, and fills up a glass. His eyes hold mine as he takes a sip. I'm two seconds away from storming over there to slap the smug look off his face, when he flicks his eyes down my thighs. The sensation of his sticky cum shouldn't excite me this much. Not when a thick haze of fury clouds my vision. It shouldn't affect me at all. But it does.

“Run along now, little girl.” He jerks his chin in the direction of the door. “Unless you want me to fuck you over my desk before removing those pretty wings as a trophy, I suggest you leave.”

My throat jumps on a swallow as I decipher his cruel words. I know better than to stare him down. I also know better than to let my light shine through the palms of my hands. The last thing I need is to catch the devil's attention. But like a glutton for punishment, I can't stop myself.

It would seem that Little Red Riding Hood has a fetish for dangerous and deadly wolves.

His low chuckle is as sinister as the nefarious look in his eyes. He sets his tumbler down. Every shift of muscle is intentional, like a seductive dance designed to entrap me and hold me frozen in place while he takes his time stalking me.

“I see Genesis underestimated your powers.” He tuts, walking closer. “Look at you...” In a sudden blur of movement, he crosses the floor and grabs me in a fierce chokehold. With his teeth bared, he growls, “That wasn't a smart move, little angel. You know I can't let an angel that's more powerful than me exist in my kingdom.”

I choke out, “You won't kill me, Lucifer.”

“No? Tell me why, sweetheart.”

Heart thrashing inside my chest, I challenge him with my eyes. “Because you crave the light. If you kill me, you won't have access to it.”

His humorless smile is slow to form. “You’re a little shit-stirrer, angel.”

“I play my cards well,” I counter, pulsing between my legs. “Ever heard the saying, keep your enemies close?”

His heated, soft breath wafts over my lips. He peels me back, layer by layer, until all that’s left is my exposed and shivering soul. “If you weren’t fire-bonded to my son, I’d chain you to that pole like a worthless human.”

“If you weren’t his father, I would kill you so fucking slowly you’d beg me to deliver you into the hands of the reaper himself.”

“Those are big words from a little fledgling that’s covered in my cum.”

I bare my teeth with a vicious snarl, and he lifts me off the wall and slams me against it. “Don’t entice me further. I’m already hard as a fucking rock again and ready to tie you up and fuck your wings.”

I’m just about to choke out a response when a sound in the hallway outside startles me. Lucifer’s cruel smile grows, and he leans in to whisper in my ear, “Run, little girl. Once my son smells my cum on your pussy, he’ll kill you with his bare hands. But not before fucking you until you’re a broken, ruined mess. There’s no coming back from this. If you thought the hunt was for fun, think again. This time, the hunter is out for blood.” His warm breath caresses the curve of my skin in a whisper of seduction. “Your blood.”

Without thinking, I shove him off, wrench open the door, and run blindly down the hallway. The hem of my skirt sticks to the cum on my thighs. I’m marked with the devil’s scent. All the while, Lucifer’s words scream loudly in my ears.

“Run, little girl.”

CHAPTER
THIRTY-ONE

AURELIA

My lungs burn as I flee down hallway after hallway.

Behind me, Daemon's dark voice disturbs the pounding of my heartbeat in my ears. They prick to hear his taunting threat. "There's nowhere to hide, little witch."

As I escape into the ballroom, my pounding footsteps on the expansive marble flooring echo loudly. Overhead, a domed ceiling that's covered in detailed paintings of fallen angels and battles looms like a gaping, vast void. The maroon curtains have been tied back to let the moon cast streaks across the cold floor, and its ethereal glow surrounds me like a misty fog in an enchanted forest. I spin around, my hair flying around me, and look back at the large doors. There's no sign of Daemon yet, so I dart left to hide behind one of the large marble pillars. Seconds pass and then the heavy creak announces his arrival.

With my heart in my throat, I close my eyes, cursing my hiding place. I'll have no choice but to run again. But where? I look over at the windows again. All the other ones have been boarded shut except for these. I could break the glass and flee into the night. But what would I use? The room is void of items.

"I can hear your fluttering heartbeat, little angel."

My hand flies up to my mouth to stifle the frightened whimper that threatens to give away my hiding place. Daemon's heavy footsteps sound on the floor, followed by the soft rustle of his wings and his enticing, toe-curling chuckle. More footsteps follow, and Ronan's voice sends my heart skyrocketing. "Let's spread out."

"What's it like?" Daemon asks me with a hint of dark humor in his voice. "To be hunted like a helpless, pathetic little mouse? You're trapped, Aurelia. There's nowhere left to hide. No option but to step out from your hiding spot and submit."

Fuck him. I grind my teeth, lowering my hand from my mouth.

A soft peal of feminine laughter drifts through the silence to stroke over my bare legs in a ghosting touch. “We’re gonna fuck you hard, little angel. Your tears won’t save you now—” Dariana is abruptly cut off, and the sudden, intrusive silence sends my heartbeat into overdrive. Hand on the pillar, I chance a look around the corner. Daemon scents the air once, twice, and then everything about him falls eerily still, like the last ripple on a glassy pond.

The others stiffen too, sensing the shift in the air. How the playfulness morphs into dangerous intent. “That fucker!” Daemon growls out. “I should have known.”

“What’s wrong?” Dariana asks carefully while Daemon walks deeper into the room, closer to where I’m hiding.

Panic holds me in its grip with deeply buried talons that refuse to let go. I need to run, but where the fuck to? I’m trapped.

“My father...” Daemon says, stopping and spinning in a circle while breathing in the air. His head snaps in my direction, and I startle with a gasp.

Darting my gaze around, I spot a nearby door that leads to the secret passageways. Without thinking it through, I make a run for it. In my panic, I tumble to the floor. My knees take the impact, but I’m too high on adrenaline to notice the throb that blooms in my kneecaps. I’m back up in the next second, running like my life depends on it.

Wrenching open the door, I escape inside, slam it shut, and slide the bolt into place just as Daemon’s weight crashes into the wood. With a yelp, I stumble back. The dark passageway is so narrow that I can’t stretch my arms out to either side of me. I tuck my wings close to my body, cursing the potion Lucifer fed me. Unable to conjure my fire magic, I resort to inhaling a deep breath. I focus my mind on the light. A flash of it explodes in the passageway, blinding me for a brief second before it settles back down. It’ll take me a long time to learn how to manipulate it properly.

I hold my hand up like a torch and glance behind me. Daemon drives his boot into the door, sending a cloud of dust into the air.

“Shit,” I whimper, turning back around and setting off down the hallway with no idea where these secret passageways lead. The walls feel as if they’re closing in, and my shaky breaths puff out in front of me in the damp, cold air. I swallow back a pathetic sob and move forward. Something soft scurries past my ankle, causing me to cry out and jump back against the damp wall. The light dims for a brief moment, descending the small space into darkness. My heart thuds heavily in my chest, each individual beat grinding out a tune of despair and unbridled fear. I focus on my breathing. Deep inhales. Deep exhales.

Pushing off the wall, I put more focus on the light to make it glow brighter. The shadows dart back in response, hissing and spitting in front of and behind me.

I come to a fork in the tunnel and make a swift decision to turn right. The air grows colder as whispered, ghostly voices slither down my spine. Sweat beads on my neck, and strands of my long hair stick to my skin.

My hesitant yet rushed steps slow. Up ahead, on the dirty ground, is a metal tray with pillar candles.

Four in total.

The flames barely flicker, as still and calm as the chilling silence in the air. I walk closer, unable to take my eyes off that tray of candles. The sinister whispers grow louder, while imaginary hands reach through the walls to grapple at my arms. Torn nails scratch and claw at my exposed skin.

I come to a stop in front of the candles and peer down with my heart in my throat and a potent taste of fear on my tongue.

“Go back,” a voice of reason whispers in my ear.

I pay it no attention.

Not when my gaze snags on the door to my left. With a thick swallow, I reach for the handle and push down. The hinges creak loudly in the thick silence.

Peering inside the dark, gaping space, I hesitate. A whisper of cold air greets me as I step over the threshold and shine my light over the small space. Photographs of me cover every inch of the walls. Photographs of me chained naked with my wings bound.

Pushed up against the wall sits a small wooden desk. To the side is a mattress with crumpled, dirty sheets and a pillow that's been tossed to the floor.

Moving closer to the desk, I pick up a notebook. Angry, scrawled handwriting litters every page, like the rantings of a madman.

*Then there was her. A fucking angel
amongst demons.*

*At first, I planned to kill her to hurt him.
To take away his forbidden secret obsession.
But now, I want it all. I want my revenge. I
want her.*

I flip more pages while my heart continues beating out an erratic rhythm inside me. Whoever my stalker is has stayed here, right under our noses. Maybe he's still here? Inside the house?

Placing the book down with trembling hands, I turn, only to let out a scream. Warm hands clamp down on my shoulders, and Dmitriy hauls me close. "What the fuck is this place?"

For a brief moment, I cling to his T-shirt and hold him close. Then, as I peer up at him, fear claws its way up my constricted throat. I shove him off and stumble back. "How did you know about this place?"

Confused, he opens his mouth to speak, but I cut him off. "It's you. You're the stalker."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

“You’re the fucking stalker, Dmitriy,” I all but scream as my hands fly up to fist my hair. He takes a step toward me, but I dart back onto the mattress, the soft fabric sinking beneath my weight. “You kidnapped me.”

Watching me uncomprehendingly, he starts to speak, but then his attention gets diverted by the notebook on the desk. Walking past me, he picks it up and scans the pages. As he flips through it, the rustling sound disturbs the silence. I contemplate making a run for it, but something keeps me rooted to the spot. His eyes flick to the photographs on the walls, and he turns in a circle, taking them all in. “We need to tell Daemon.”

When he turns to me, I press back against the wall. “Don’t come any closer.” Images of the masked stalker assault my mind in the ensuing silence that chokes my shaky plea.

“Aurelia?” Dmitriy whispers, stepping closer, but he stops when I whimper. “You don’t think I did this, do you?” He points at the photographs. “You’re not accusing me of stalking you, right? That’s not what this is?”

“Why are you here?”

“Why am I here?” His lips purse, confusion written all over his face. “I saw you turn down this hallway.”

“You just happened to be around, lurking in some secret passageways?”

“The fuck?” he chokes out before a short burst of harsh, incredulous laughter rips from his lips. When he looks at me, all traces of humor evaporate like a morning mist. With a jab of his finger in the direction of the wall, he says tersely, “I did not do this!”

“Then who, Dmitriy? Who else knows about these passageways?”

“Everyone!” he shouts. “Everyone knows. It’s what the servants use to get around.”

“The servants?”

“Have you never wondered why you never see them?”

Tears spring to my eyes the longer he glares at me. The truth is that I have wondered.

“Have you forgotten that Lucifer is my uncle? While my father and uncle despise each other, they are civil enough. I know this house like the back of my hand, and so does Daemon.”

“Why would you use the passageways?”

“I was tracking you. Do you think Daemon would take kindly to me being around you? Especially after sex? Come on, Aurelia. You’re an angel. You know better. Males are the most possessive right after a claiming.”

I look away but then squeeze my eyes shut when I’m met by hundreds of photographs of myself. “I want to get out of here,” I whisper into the silence.

Stepping closer, his boots sink into the mattress, and he corners me against the wall. With an almost impossible gentleness, so in contrast with how the masked stalker forced himself on me, he strokes his fingers through the tears on my cheeks. “It pains me that you have so little trust in me.”

“I don’t trust anyone anymore,” I admit, opening my eyes.

A muscle tics in his jaw, and with a final sigh, he steps away and musses up his hair at the front. “You’re smart.” His dark eyes find mine. “You shouldn’t trust anyone but yourself.”

As urgent footsteps sound in the hallway, I swipe at my cheeks. “I don’t even trust myself. Not while the shadows are with me.”

“They always will be.”

“You should go,” I tell him when he scans the photographs. “Escape while you can.”

Dmitriy looks at me, and I decide to trust the vulnerability that shines through the darkness that peers back at me.

“They’ll come to the same conclusion I did if they find you here.”

With a shake of his head, he replies, “I’ll face my cousin if it makes you feel safer.”

“They’ll kill you. Contract or no contract.”

“Do you believe I did this?” he asks, turning his body to face me fully. “Because if you do, I’ll stay.”

“Why are you doing this, Dmitriy?” I ask, a hint of urgency sneaking into my tone. “Why won’t you run?”

As he stares at me from across the dark room, I hold my breath. There’s something in that intense look that strips me bare. Then, as if he makes his mind up, he crosses the room in three strides, grabs my face, and puts his lips on mine.

Everything stops.

Every fucking thing.

“From the moment you entered my world,” he whispers against my tingling lips, “you turned it on its axis. I don’t understand what it is about you or why you make me feel this way. But know this, I’ll wait. I don’t care how long it’ll take. One day, my cousin will accept me into the fold. And when that day comes, you better be ready for me.”

Then he’s gone, exiting the room and blending with the shadows. Tears bead on my lashes, and I bring my fingers to my swollen lips where his kiss lingers, whispering secrets to my aching heart. I’m so confused.

I don’t get to give it any further thought because Daemon, Alaric, Ronan, and Dariana stumble into the room and draw to an abrupt halt. Eyes scanning over the walls, Daemon curses, all thoughts of the chase gone.

“Shit,” Ronan says shakily, turning in a slow circle. His eyes find mine as I tremble on the mattress. “Are you okay?”

Am I?

Casting a quick glance at the doorway, I swipe my tongue across my bottom lip, tasting the remaining dampness of Dmitriy’s kiss.

Ronan kills the distance between us and hugs me to him while Daemon and Alaric inspect every inch of the room.

My eyes lock on Dariana, who clenches her jaw. The worry in her gaze tells me she's scared for me. The lengths my stalker is willing to go to secure his need for revenge. Our enemies are mounting, and it's only a matter of time before something happens to shatter our illusion of fragile safety.

I know. I've been there before.

"Babe..." Ronan's voice steals my attention. He cups my chin and presses his lips to mine, replacing the memory of Dmitriy with his own biting kiss.

I let him taste me. I let him push me up against the photographs and growl into my mouth.

"What do you think?" Alaric asks Daemon as he rips down a photograph and tosses it to the floor.

Daemon grinds his teeth so tightly at the sight of me bound, naked, and chained that I worry he'll damage his teeth. When he finally speaks, his voice drips with spine-chilling evil. "He better pray someone else gets to him before I do because I'm his worst fucking nightmare. No one hurts my angel and gets away with it."

"Can you pick up on anything?" Dariana asks, looking away from me.

"He's not been here for a while. His scent is faint but familiar."

"Familiar?"

Daemon turns, and his eyes cruise over me, lingering on my bare thighs where his father's dried cum marks me. "He's masking his scent on purpose."

Dariana and Alaric exchange glances.

Daemon takes one final, long look at the room. "I'll inform my father. He'll have this room scoured from floor to ceiling for evidence." His dark gaze lands on me with the charged air of an inbound storm. "Take her upstairs, scrub her clean of my father, and tie her to my damn bed."

Dariana clears her throat. “Last time we tied her to a bed, she escaped.”

“Good point,” he muses, and I stiffen when a cruel smile unfurls on his lips. “Take her downstairs and throw her into one of the cellars.”

“What the fuck?” I blurt, eyes wide. “The cellars?”

“Welcome back to Hell, little angel.”

CHAPTER
THIRTY-TWO

LUCIFER

W hiskey glass in hand, I choke on my drink when my son storms into my office like a thundercloud that's ready to unleash on a choppy ocean. It's funny as hell.

Not that he sees the funny side of it.

Such a spoil sport.

Striding up to me, he hauls me up from my chair and tosses me onto the desk. Paperwork goes flying, and a candle crashes to the floor. "You came on her fucking cunt?!"

"In my defense, I didn't fuck her."

Daemon is not amused. Teeth bared, he grips my shirt, lifts me off the desk while I hold my hands up placatingly, and slams me back down with enough force to crack the wood. "I will kill you one day!"

"Lighten up, son," I say with a chuckle. "It was just a bit of fun."

He snarls loud enough that my temper flares, and I shove him back.

"That's enough! Don't forget your place."

His snarl only intensifies as he flares his wings in an aggressive display of power that would get a lesser man killed. I allow it for all of two seconds before closing the distance between us in a flurry of movement and grabbing him in a chokehold. My own wings unfold to stretch the length of the room. "I am Lucifer, the damn devil. Is that clear? Or are you still mistaking me for a Christian youth leader from the human world? If I want to coat the girl's pussy in cum, I will. And you should be grateful that I felt generous enough to leave her tight little cunt alone for you to ruin. Behave like a damn immature brat, and I might fuck all her holes next time."

"Try it," he snarls before his lips peel back to showcase his sharp, gleaming fangs. "I'll slaughter you."

Releasing him, I pat his cheek once. “This is why I always told you to stay detached. Women mess with your head if you let them. This particular female has become your weakness. Not even a fucking week with my best torturer could make you see sense. Nothing short of killing her will solve the problem.”

As predicted, he flies at me, ready to fight me to the death to protect his fire-bonded. Erecting a wall of flames between us, I force him back, smiling at him from across the fire. “Don’t tempt me, son. You know I wouldn’t hesitate to kill her.”

Gnashing his teeth, he tests the flames but jumps back with a hiss.

“Now that you’ve chewed me out for coming on your girl,” I say, rolling up my sleeves. “Why are you really here?”

Shoulders tense, he tosses a livid look in my direction. “We found a room in the passageways.”

“A room? There are plenty of those.”

“Her stalker has used it.”

I freeze, looking over at him. “Excuse me?”

Testing the flames again, he curses under his breath when he burns his arm. “Her stalker set up camp in one of the rooms. I’m talking crazy shit. Countless photographs of her chained up and a notebook with some twisted, scrawled notes. It’s how he got in. Hidden in plain sight in the secret passageways.”

Head cocked, a mixture of emotions bubble to the surface as I mull over his words. “You’re telling me Aurelia’s stalker stayed in my own damn house, under my nose, and I didn’t know about it?” Strangely, I don’t recognize this foreign emotion inside me. The idea that my son’s annoying plaything is unsafe in my house buzzes like an irritating mosquito in my head.

Uncharacteristically annoyed, I suck on my teeth. The seconds tick by. Someone who’s obsessed with my son’s fire-bonded broke into my home and stalked her from the inside.

He probably watched her fuck my son too... *Mate* with my son.

As I look down, I frown. Flames lick a path up my arms, spreading like a blazing wildfire. I rarely lose control of my hellfire, but now I'm pissed. In fact, I'm so fucking pissed that nothing short of murder will soothe this untamed rage inside me. But who should I acquaint with my demon? A servant? A guard? A human?

"Can you put these fucking flames out?" Daemon growls, shattering my destructive thoughts. With a sweep of my hand, they fizzle out.

"I'll get my best hunters on it," I say, more to myself than Daemon. While I mess with him to piss him off, no one else gets to threaten my family and the people they care about. Not unless it's their wish to die a slow and excruciatingly painful death.

"I meant it, Dad," Daemon says, stopping in front of me and puffing out his chest. "I'll slaughter you if you touch her again."

"And I meant it when I said you should stop behaving like a brat unless it's your goal to make me fuck her like a whore on my desk. What did we learn from Adam and Eve?" I pat his shoulder as I make my way past him. "The forbidden always tastes the sweetest. And your Aurelia, a sweet, innocent angel from Eden, looks more and more like a juicy red apple by the day. How can I not want to sink my teeth into her soft flesh when you tell me that I can eat from all the other trees but hers? Fuck, son. If that's not a beacon call to the biggest predator in the woods, I don't know what is."

Daemon's fierce glare burns my back as I leave the room, but I don't wait to hear his reply. Not now when I have bigger prey in mind. Someone had the damn nerve to enter my house uninvited and threaten the innocent little angel, who, much to my dismay, is proving to be quite an entertaining distraction from the mundane.

One day, when my son is my age, he'll understand why a little chaos is a good thing. But for now, he's so driven by his

protective instincts that he can't see past his own aching balls
and desire to claim the angel.

DARIANA

The cells in the basement leave a lot to be desired. They're small, reek of torment and death, and the cold, damp air seeps into your bone marrow. Not to mention the rat that scurries across the floor.

"Let me the fuck out," the little witch growls, pacing the small confines of her barred cell.

Alaric's yellow yoyo spins out before he pockets it and straightens off the brick wall. The filthy smirk on his lips tells me he's amused by this turn of events, and I have to admit that I'm not entirely unaffected myself. Daemon never ceases to surprise me when it comes to the little angel.

His sheer creativity.

"We can't do that," Alaric drawls as he stops in front of the bars and cocks his head to the side, that sinful smile spreading across his sensual lips.

Aurelia charges the bars and bares her gleaming teeth with a crazed look in her eyes. "Fuck you!"

His hand flies out and grabs her by the throat through the rusty bars. "You do realize that your fighting only excites us more, right? It *entices* Daemon more. And when Daemon sets his attention on something, he's not satisfied until it's in pieces by his feet."

"I'm fully aware," she bites out, clawing at his wrist. "Do you like to pretend to be him when he's not here? Exert your dominance over me the way he does?"

Over by the far wall, Ronan chuckles before lighting up the cigarette between his lips.

"I do like to exert my dominance over you," Alaric admits darkly. "I like it when you squirm with need."

The sconces on the walls burn brighter in response to her anger, and we all snap our heads up. The little witch's powers are slowly returning. It's about fucking time.

“Would you look at that,” Ronan says, straightening up from the wall.

“What do we think about the stalker?” I ask while pacing the room. I’m restless, and unease twists my insides.

Eyes glued on the spot on Aurelia’s neck where he strokes his thumb back and forth, Alaric replies, “It must be someone we know. Someone who either lives here or who has access to this house.”

“Someone who can go unnoticed amongst the servants,” Ronan agrees, taking a deep drag. White smoke escapes his lips as he shrugs. “Or maybe it’s actually a servant?”

“I don’t like how close he’s been to her this whole time.”

With a hard yank, Alaric pulls the angel closer, and the bars rattle as she crashes into them with a sharp gasp. “What I’d like to know is how Genesis escaped the bindings the first time.”

Ronan walks over and stops beside him. Cigarette back between his lips, he speaks around the filter, “They were secure. She had no way of escaping.”

“Try to escape this prison cell,” Alaric taunts, forcing his thumb between her snarling lips. “I’d love to see you try.”

She bites down hard enough to make him release her with a curse and step back. Eyes burning with fury, he glares at her and points a stern finger in her direction. “You’ll regret that. Just you fucking wait until Daemon shows up.”

Her saccharine smile could melt butter, but there’s something behind it, a vulnerability that’s new. “I’m used to prisons, remember? This”—she waves a hand around the rusty bars—“is just another chain.”

The unease inside me thickens at the slight shake of her voice. Enraptured by her fiery attitude, the boys don’t notice. They’re drawn closer by the promise of trouble in her gaze. They crowd the bars, leaning against them with their shoulders. Alaric steals the cigarette from between Ronan’s lips and takes a deep drag.

“Just think, babe,” Ronan says to the little angel with a smirk. “We’ll soon fill your every hole.”

She flips him off, causing him to chuckle and snatch the cigarette back. Smoking in silence, he watches her through eyes that glint with amusement at her predicament. There’s something enticing about trapped prey.

The door behind me opens, and Daemon enters in a cloud of aftershave and bad intentions. His broad shoulders stretch the fabric of his black T-shirt, and his jeans hang low on his hips. His cocky walk is intentionally slow, as if he enjoys the slight catch in Aurelia’s breath. He circles the cage once, his gaze cruising down Aurelia’s body and lingering on her bare thighs where his father’s cum still coats her skin. “She fucking reeks.” His eyes find mine through the bars. “You didn’t wash her like I asked.”

With a shrug of my shoulders, I sink my teeth into my blood-red lip. “I quite like the thought of the devil’s cum on her.”

“The devil is my fucking father,” he growls out, his voice eerily silent yet steady at the same time. “Why don’t you fuck him yourself if you like his cum that much?”

“I don’t want to fuck your dad, Daemon,” I state boldly, my heels clicking on the gritty floor as I walk closer to the cell. “I want to lick his cum off her while making her come around my fingers.”

His winged brow and slight side smirk make my clit tingle.

“Go ahead. Lick her clean.”

Ronan tosses the keys in my direction, the cigarette dangling from his lips. With a wink, he slides it between his middle and pointer and takes another deep drag. As the embers crackle in the tense silence, I walk up to the cell door and reach for the iron lock.

A sharp hiss inside the cage snaps my attention to Aurelia, who’s anything but happy. It’ll take a lot of groveling to make her forgive us for entrapping her like this. But unluckily for her, I quite enjoy the scent of her anger.

“So feisty,” I taunt as the keys jangle in the lock.

“If you think I’ll let you anywhere near me, think again,” she snarls, causing delicious tingles to settle in my core. Behind me, the boys chuckle.

“I think we both know you’ll let me do more than just go near you.” My small side smile has her eyes narrowing. The lock clicks open, and I hand the padlock to Alaric without taking my eyes off the angel. When the door creaks open on its rusty hinges, her wings erupt from her back and press against the sides of the cage.

Amused, Ronan, who’s still leaning against the bars, flicks a feather and turns his head sideways to blow out a cloud of cigarette smoke.

As I enter the cell, the click of my heels on the gritty stone floor silences the vicious, animalistic snarls in her chest. “There’s nowhere to go, little angel. You’re trapped.”

Pressed up against the back of the cell, she peels her lips back over her teeth and hisses like a snake.

Fuck, I love that sound.

“Are you sure you’re up for this?” chuckles Ronan, sending the still-lit cigarette flying to the floor with a flick of his fingers. “She might kill you if you take another step.”

“Don’t you know me at all?” I ask him while letting my eyes roam over the threatened angel cowering against the bars. “I like a challenge.”

Aurelia’s lips twitch viciously, and when I pull the bars closed behind me, the snarl in her chest starts back up. Fierce, dangerous, and tempting as fuck. “Lock us in.”

Daemon’s deep chuckle bounces off the damp brick walls. Soon after, the click of the padlock cements my fate. I’ll either die in here, torn to shreds by Eden’s own angel, or I’ll find myself trapped in her Heaven. “Now, baby,” I whisper, reaching out to drag my fingers along the bars. “It’s just you and me.”

“I don’t want to hurt you,” she replies. “The shadows are close to the surface. If you’re smart, you’ll leave this cell.”

“Interesting,” I muse, counting each step. One. Two. “Why are you so threatened? I only want to touch you. Lick Daddy Lucifer’s cum off your pussy.”

“I’m caged,” she replies, a soft snarl penetrating the haunted notes that caress her vocal cords. “I can’t escape.”

“No, you can’t,” I agree as I stop in front of her. “You can never escape us.” Trapping her with my hands on the bars, I let my heated gaze flick down to her lips. The sight of her gleaming fangs excites me more than she can ever comprehend. If I had my way, they’d be buried deep in my skin while she makes a mess of my hand with her soaked pussy. “Admit that it gets you wet, little angel.” I duck and lick a path from the base of her throat, where her collarbones meet, to her chin and over her soft lips. Her audible gasp and trembling breaths dance over my mouth. I let go of the bars to grip her by the small of her waist. “Admit that some twisted part of you likes this cage. You’re trapped like a fragile little bird with cut wings, and the only way out is through sweet obliteration.” A soft puff of air licks at her supple lips. I chuckle and let go of her waist to dip my fingers between her thighs. “I can offer you the merciful death you long for, little witch.”

“You’re wrong,” she says shakily, gripping the cell’s bars on each side like they’re her lifeline. “There’s nothing merciful about dying at your hands.”

“Or my tongue,” I reply with a wolfish smile as I find her soaked slit, teasing the soft curls. “It’s fucking messy to dance with my reaper. But that’s how you like it, isn’t it? Messy, bloody, and destructive. Unless it hurts in the best fucking way possible”—I shove two fingers inside her—“you don’t want it.”

A tiny whimper slips off her tongue, and I dive in to taste its exquisite, seductive notes. I bite her lip and work a third finger inside her pulsing cunt while she lifts her leg and rests her knee against the bars.

“See, baby,” I whisper, tasting the blood on her swollen lips. “Nothing beats death’s sting. You’ll die at our hands over and over again.”

Swallowing thickly, she chokes out, “Fuck.”

Her soaked pussy clenches around my fingers, the wet sounds luring the male angels in the room closer. Crowding the cage, their hungry eyes watch the little witch roll her hips against my hand like a seductive dance that has them frothing at the mouth.

I like her like this. Pliant, desperate, and willing to sacrifice her own soul for the orgasm I’m coaxing from her sweet body. My thumb sweeps over her swollen clit. I look down at her puffy cunt, the way it welcomes my fingers again and again. Hit with the urge to taste her, I slide my fingers out and suck them clean of her slick arousal, the tangy taste doing filthy things to my body.

Breathing harshly, with her pink pussy on full display, she stares at me from beneath her heavy, wispy lashes. Red mist swirls in the depths of her gaze, and there’s something so alluring about the struggle that plays out before me. I drop to my knees and ram my tongue inside her tight pussy.

“There’s our good little whore,” Daemon drawls somewhere nearby. “Let her feast on your cunt while we watch.”

Aurelia rolls her hips, grinding her sweet pussy against my mouth. I grip her hips. My tongue slides out to circle her swollen clit over and over until she’s quivering and pleading for more. I fucking love the way she grinds that wet slit against my lips, all of her angelic inhibitions evaporating before my eyes.

Easing back, I slap her pussy. “So fucking greedy.” With a naughty smile, I grip the back of her knee and lick a hot, slow path up her thigh, through Lucifer’s dried cum on her skin. The salty taste combined with her tanginess is a heady concoction. I want more. So much more.

I hold her gaze while I lick and nibble on her skin. She watches me with those heavy, seductive eyes that bring me to my damn knees. I'd do anything to get to worship her like this. Marked by the devil himself.

When my tongue drags over her soaked folds again, she throws her head back against the bars with a loud cry of demented pleasure.

Behind me, the click of the lock and the creak of the bars have my lips spreading into a smile against her throbbing clit. The clomp of Daemon's heavy boots and the scent of his heady aftershave precede his cruel words. "Time to chain her up and show her what happens when her worst nightmares come true."

CHAPTER
THIRTY-THREE

DARIANA

“Chain me up?” Aurelia asks when I rise to my feet and step aside for Daemon to shoulder past. He grabs her arm, hauls her out of the cage, and throws her up against the brick wall, where several chains attach to the hooks in the wall. “What the fuck are you doing, Daemon?”

“You let my father come on your pussy,” he says, chaining her wrists while she stares up at him with wide eyes.

“I didn’t fucking let him do anything,” she argues, pulling on the restraints and visibly wincing at the sound of the chains.

With the reflexes of a striking cobra, he grabs her throat. “What were you doing in his office?”

Her words come out rushed and choked beneath his tight grip. “I was running from you. I found his office by mistake.”

“Mistake,” he snarls, reaching for another chain and circling it around her throat. “And you thought it was a good idea to enter the room?”

Her throat jumps against the chain. “I didn’t know it was his office until I was already inside.”

A low, sinister growl climbs up his chest right before he grabs her dress and rips it down the middle. It hangs in tatters from her body, her heaving tits and pretty pussy on full display. Daemon reaches out to squeeze her left breast hard before tweaking her dusky nipple. Then, as if he can’t help it, he slaps the underside of her tit. “Admit that you’re a greedy whore. That a small part of you enjoyed it when my father marked you with his cum.”

His cruel words get her back up, and the chains rattle when she knees him in the balls. As he doubles over in pain, she jeers, “I fucking loved it. Is that what you want to hear, Daemon? How I wished he would have come on my face and painted my lips with his seed?”

Doubled over, eyes glowing red, Daemon releases a savage sound that sends chills down my spine.

The little angel isn't done with her taunts. "How I wish he would have fucked me on his desk until I came so hard on his cock that your touch would fade in comparison?"

Shooting up, Daemon is in her face in the next second with his hand clamped over her mouth and his fingers rammed deep inside her soaked pussy. "See how fucking easy it is to shut you up? Want me to leave you down here? Want my father to unleash his monster on you? Is that what you want? His cum? His cock?" He shakes his head. "I don't fucking think so. Not when your pussy clamps down on my fingers like it never wants to let go."

Aurelia's glassy eyes stare up at him as he finger-fucks her brutally with hard, punishing thrusts.

"Let's get one thing straight." He slides his fingers out, removes his hand from her mouth, and forces three wet digits between her lips. "You're always gonna be a whore for me, little angel."

As she chokes, the tears in her eyes spill over, but Daemon doesn't let up on her. Nothing but the sheer destruction of her persistent defiance can soothe the hunger in his eyes.

"Come on, baby," he taunts, reaching up to grab her tangled, matted hair with his other hand. "You can choke better than that."

I look over just in time to watch Ronan, with another lit cigarette that dangles from his lips, unzip his jeans and take his hard dick out. Alaric follows suit.

Noticing, Daemon's cold smile spreads across his lips.

"Have you seen this?" I ask Daemon on my way over to them. I stop beside Aurelia and lean my shoulder against her wing, where it's pressed up against the wall. "See how wet she is." To demonstrate, I drag a single finger through a bead of arousal trailing down the inside of her thigh. They watch me suck it clean. "Delicious."

Daemon chuckles appreciatively before turning back to the object of his obsession—the strung-up angel with fire in her teary eyes. His dark gaze slowly travels down her naked body and back. He pulls his fingers from her mouth and drags a single digit from her lips, down her chin and throat. Lower it trails, between her supple breasts, before circling her belly button in a teasing touch. Aurelia tries her restraints again, but no amount of pulling or tugging on the chains will set her free. Not now when she's at Daemon's mercy. "I think it's time to teach you an important lesson, little angel." He dips his hand lower and spreads her pussy lips with two fingers. Her pink clit peeks out, and he looks down at it with such hunger in his dark eyes, my own clit tingles in response. "How badly do you want to come, Aurelia?"

"Let me go," she begs, trembling beneath his intense gaze. "Please."

Releasing her pussy lips, he pats her cunt once, then steps back and says to me, "Bring her to the edge, but don't let her come."

"I thought you'd never ask," I reply as I take his place and sink to my knees in front of the angel, who stares down at me through heavy eyes that beg me to stop this.

To continue.

Leaning in close enough to inhale her intoxicatingly sweet scent, I peer up into her dark eyes. "You're a drug, little witch. A deadly, addictive drug." I dig my fingers into her hips and bring her cunt closer to my mouth. She shivers visibly, jerking beneath my touch. I place a soft kiss on her slit while holding her gaze. "And I'd kill to feel you inside my veins." I cover her pussy with my mouth, and she lets out a cry that's both tortured and needy. I fucking love how she undulates beneath the lashes of my tongue. The way she floods my mouth with her arousal, and how my cheeks and lips glisten with her when I flick my eyes up to hers. Tongue buried deep between her puffy pussy lips, I drag it all the way from her soaked hole to her throbbing clit. I nip it, sucking on it until she shivers like a leaf.

So fucking close.

“Not yet,” I whisper, blowing on the pretty pearl. Behind me, the boys jerk their dicks, the sound of their labored breathing and Aurelia’s whimpers creating a symphony of seduction.

“Please,” she pleads. “I need to come.”

“Is that so?” I taunt her before swirling my tongue over her clit and bruising her hips with my tight grip. “Do you think you deserve to come?”

Daemon’s chuckle makes my own lips twitch.

“It hurts... I need to come so badly.”

I hum, kissing her sweet bundle of nerves. “That’s a shame.”

She shivers and shakes. Perspiration beads on her brow. My tongue drags up the length of her slit again and again, sucking and nibbling on her clit. I can’t get enough of her cunt.

“Please,” she pleads again, staring down at me, and I almost give her what she needs.

Almost.

“That’s enough,” Daemon growls breathily.

Rising to my feet, I step aside and lean against the cell while the boys walk up close to her naked body. Their intention is clear as day.

Paint her in cum.

Mark her as theirs.

Erase Lucifer and leave the little angel a tortured, aching mess.

Their bulging arms move swiftly as they stand shoulder-to-shoulder in front of Aurelia. Daemon refrains from spreading his wings, and I know it’s for my benefit. If he does, I won’t be able to witness their animalistic claiming.

With a final grunt, Ronan comes, his cum raining over her belly and pussy in quick spurts. Soon after, Daemon lets out a deep growl and jerks his dick harshly as he comes over her shivering body. Not one to disappoint, Alaric comes too, his cum squirting in an arc and raining over her tits and stomach. It's so fucking primal.

I squeeze my thighs together to alleviate the ache there. I'm horny.

With a final tug on his dick, Alaric lets out a satisfied growl.

Reaching out and dragging his fingers through their combined cum, Daemon grabs the little witch's chin with his other hand and smears their seed over her mouth before pushing his fingers between her lips. She gags, causing a cruel smile to play at the corners of his lips.

He slides his fingers through their seed again and smears it over her cheeks, his touch rough and dirty. Meanwhile, Ronan tosses his packet of cigarettes to Alaric, who proceeds to light one up.

"Do you know what's most telling about all of this?" Daemon asks her as he grabs her by the throat and leans in close to breathe in his scent on her skin. A satisfied, masculine rumble vibrates his chest. "You could have escaped your confines at any moment, little angel. We both know you're powerful enough." He snaps his teeth at her and exits the room, calling out over his shoulder, "Come on, let's leave her alone with her throbbing pussy to think about her bratty behavior."

Ronan and Alaric chuckle as they follow Daemon, but I push off the bars and make my way up to her.

Covered in cum and tears, she's a beautiful storm.

One I'd like to drown in.

Placing my hands on the damp brick, I lean in close to her face and swirl my tongue over her supple lips, tasting the boys' claiming. Her trembling breath mingles with mine, and I

look her in the eye with a final nip to her bottom lip. “He’s right, you know?”

Aurelia says nothing, shivering as the cum on her skin slowly turns cold.

“Your hellfire is coming back. I know you feel it. And with the Light inside you, there’s no limit to your power. Yet here you are, strung up in chains like helpless prey.” I press my lips to her ear. “A whore to be used and discarded. But it’s okay.” I suck her earlobe between my lips, then let go. “While you pretend to be weak, we’ll play with you until you break. But we all know that you’re the strongest of the pack. You’re not the prey, little witch. You’re the hunter. Toying with us like a cat with a mouse.” Then, with a final smirk, I push off the brick and walk out. But before I leave, I look back at her over my shoulder. “Enjoy your chains.”

AURELIA

Loose pieces of grit stick to my bare feet as they move across the cold cobblestones. My white dress swirls around my ankles and disturbs the thick, white mist. It rolls across the ground, carrying with it the earthy, wet scent of the forest: pine, broken pieces of bark, and sap.

“Amenadiel,” I call out as I wrap my arms around myself to ward off the cold that seeps beneath the thin fabric of my dress. Goosebumps dot my arms, the hairs standing on end. I sweep my gaze around the quiet town square. The cherub fountain in the middle—framed by boarded-up, derelict buildings—stares back at me with empty eyes. Parts of its face have crumbled away with time. An old, rusty bike with a horn leans up against the fountain.

“Amenadiel?” My voice echoes in the silence.

Chills crawl up my spine like a thousand little spiders that spread out across my shoulder blades. My wings flex behind me in response.

“Amenadiel isn’t here.”

I swivel around, my skirt flaring around my thighs. Strands of my hair stick to my moist lips, so I swipe them away.

Genesis steps out from the shadows by the side of a boarded-up bar. What was once a neon sign has partly come away and now hangs on its side. Her dark hair frames her face, and her cold, soulless eyes track me as she seems to float across the cobblestone. Dressed in a long, black dress with a high thigh slit that highlights her every curve, she’s a vision. And so unlike me, in my tattered white dress and blonde hair.

Wait a minute? Blonde hair?

With a gasp, I peer behind me at my white feathers. I lift my hands up and stare wide-eyed at my translucent pale skin.

“You can’t escape who you are,” Genesis taunts, head cocked to the side.

I look from my hands to her and swallow past the thick lump in my throat.

“You’ll always belong to the Light. Not *them*.”

“And you’ll always belong here, trapped in the shadows.” I don’t know where my bravery is coming from. In reality, I feel so small.

“Sweetheart,” she says with a sinister edge to her voice as she walks past the fountain. She trails her fingers over the weathered stone, and water pours from the cherub’s horn in response to her magic.

Magic which I don’t know how to wield.

I back away out of instinct, and she laughs under her breath. “I’m not trapped here. Don’t underestimate me, *Aurelia*. I’m biding my time.”

Spinning in a circle and disturbing the swirling mist, I shout, “Amenadiel!”

Where the hell is he? I can always reach him through my mind. But not tonight.

I sense her behind me and turn back around. She’s closer now, shrouded in shadows and mystique. Her dark eyes resemble the night itself as she lets her raven wings unfold from her back. Behind her, the bike lies on its side near the fountain, the wheel spinning. A vagrant breeze blows through the town square, shifting my skirt around my thighs and my hair across my shoulders.

“Are you ready to taste death, little angel?” Lowering her voice, she whispers, “It’s foul.”

When she takes a sudden step toward me, light explodes from my hands in a display of raw power that frightens me. I fall back onto my ass, startled and shocked.

Genesis cackles, the evil sound shriveling every ounce of bravery inside me. Throwing her hand out, she sends shadows rushing at me like a sandstorm of racing horses. I scramble to my feet and set off running. My harsh breaths puff out in front of me as tears cascade down my cheeks. Light pours from my

chest. I'm a glow of silvery light that darts across the town square like a shooting star. Unable to wrangle the panic, I release a guttural sob.

“You're so damn pathetic with your little light. Do you think glowing like a fucking stick at a festival can defeat pure evil?” With another push of her hands, the shadows shove into me from behind, and I fall to the ground with a scream. Pain explodes in my wrists. I roll over onto my back and watch her approach. Her hair moves in an imaginary breeze. Shadows dance over every inch of exposed skin. “I must say, I'm disappointed by Eden's own little angel. What a pathetic attempt by a ‘powerful’ God at bringing His Light into the darkness.”

Icy, shadowy fingers crawl up my body and wrap around my throat. She brings her hand out in front of her and makes a show of tightening her fist. I gasp as the shadowy hand around my throat cuts off my airflow. Panic flares inside me, and I reach up to pull it off, only to meet air.

“What are you gonna do, Aurelia? Fight me with your Light?” She laughs, tightening her grip.

Gasping for breath and grappling at my throat, I kick my feet out on the cobblestone. Overhead, the stars twinkle brightly. Dark spots form at the edge of my vision, but she doesn't let up. Instead, the crazed look in her eyes intensifies. She's enjoying this.

“Do you get it now? I *am* more powerful than you.”

“While you pretend to be weak, we'll play with you until you break. But we all know that you're the strongest of the pack.”

My body convulses. The urge to inhale a breath burns my lungs.

“Colossians. He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

“No, you're not,” I manage to choke out. And with the last of my strength, a strength I didn't know I had, I let the silent power inside my center explode outward. A silvery light that's

so bright, I'm forced to shield my eyes, rushes forward like a shockwave, reducing the buildings around us to rubble.

A scream rips from my lungs as I shoot awake, the chains rattling against the wall. My hair sticks to my sweaty forehead. I swallow down my harsh breaths to calm my racing heartbeat. What the hell was that dream?

A single torch burns on the wall, casting a dim glow over the cell. The barred cage door is still open. Over by the corner, a rat scurries across the floor.

Chest heaving, I bang the back of my head against the wall. Something is wrong. I can sense it. Wriggling my hands, I try to free myself from the chains again without any luck. I need to see Amenadiel and tell him about the dream. If anyone can help me figure it out, it's him.

When blood trickles down my wrists, I release a frustrated whimper and bang the back of my head against the damp wall again. What the fuck do I do?

What was it Dariana said? My thoughts rush at me, too many to decipher. Sweat drips down my temple.

"Last time we tied her to a bed, she escaped."

"Genesis... How did you escape?" I whisper out loud, tasting my own sweat on my lips as I dart my tongue out in thought. I look left and right, but the room is empty.

I'm alone.

Closing my eyes, I inhale a few steady breaths. "I am the fucking Light. The Light lives in me. I am not some weak, pathetic angel." Fisting my hands, I focus my mind, straining to the point of a headache blooming behind my temples. Slowly, so fucking slowly, the chains slide from my wrists and neck. Excitement bubbles up inside me, and I lose focus.

"Shit..." I try again without luck. Frustrated with myself, I tug harshly on the chains, cursing the sharp pain that radiates through my bones. "I am not a fucking prisoner. No one gets to chain me up again." With that thought in mind, I clamp my

eyes shut, inhale a deep breath, and let memories of Eden and of Freya flash through my mind.

Every smile.

Every laugh.

The sun beaming on my face.

The feather-soft touch of her fingers on my cheek while we lay on the soft grass.

The feel of the rough bark beneath my fingers as I climbed the tree to peer over the gate.

My hair, flying behind me when we ran across grassy hills amidst colorful flowers and butterflies.

“You’re my best friend, Aurelia. I’ll always have your back.”

The shackles slide from my skin, and my thoughts shatter like shards of exploding glass.

Stumbling away from the wall, I stare wide-eyed at the chains where they hang from their hooks. I bring my hands up in front of my face. Bracelets of blood decorate each wrist, trails of red racing toward my elbows.

I curl my fingers around my throat, remembering how the chain dug into the skin. I’m free.

I’m fucking free.

Before I can give it any further thought, a door slams somewhere in the distance.

“Shit...” Exiting the cellar, I let the shadows hide my naked form. I need to find Amenadiel.

Daemon won’t let me go to see him, so I’ll have no choice but to sneak out.

I need answers. I need him to teach me how to control my powers before Genesis returns.

With those thoughts in mind, I set off toward the exit.

CHAPTER
THIRTY-FOUR

AURELIA

“Hey,” I breathe when the door creaks open, strings of hair shielding my face.

Amenadiel’s eyes fall down my naked, ruined body before skating past me toward the thick tree line behind me. Without a word, he steps aside and lets me enter the house. I’m ashamed to admit that relief floods me at the familiar scent of him that’s thick in the air. The door clicks shut, and the flames on the walls grow taller as he walks past. His shoulder brushes mine, causing my skin to break out in goosebumps. Dressed in a charcoal suit, his tie hanging loose around his neck, he looks tired, as though he’s spent endless nights awake. “It goes without saying that you shouldn’t be out by yourself when there’s a crazed stalker on the loose, yet here you are. Naked.” His teeth grind and then he says with a tired sigh, “I’ll be in the office. Grab yourself a shower.”

The tips of my ears heat at the reminder of what Daemon, Alaric, and Ronan did. I’m marked with their scent. It thickens the air, but Amenadiel never mentions it. Though I know he can smell it.

“Amenadiel,” I whisper, arms crossed over my chest. Unsure why I feel so nervous, I wet my lips and chance a look at him, where he stands near the door to his office. “Thank you...”

When he stays silent, watching me with those dark eyes that are so like Dmitriy’s and Daemon’s but also not, I rush out, “For not turning me away.”

A muscle works in his jaw. He wants to say more. Instead, with a small nod of his head, he enters his office.

I stare at the empty spot outside the door for a long moment, my heart thudding heavily inside my chest. He’s okay. The unease inside me that’s lingered since I woke up in Daemon’s cellar has beads of sweat forming on the back of my neck. I can’t shake the strange feeling.

After making my way upstairs to the bedroom, I move through a shower and let my hair dry in front of the lit fireplace in the bedroom. The flames flicker tall, warming my cheeks as I sit naked with my arms banded around my legs and my chin propped on my knees. Why is it that I feel so safe here? That a small part of me missed Amenadiel? Why do I feel so torn? And why do I feel like something bad is about to happen to the people I love?

My eyes blur the longer I stare at the flames. Has Daemon noticed that I'm gone yet? Does he know I'm here? Does he suspect it?

With a soft sigh, I rise to my feet and decide it's time to talk to Amenadiel about my powers. He'll know what to do.

I get dressed in a black dress with lace detailing at the chest and a pair of heels that are too tall for my liking.

I'm wobbling down the steps when my gaze lands on his open office door. My heart does a weird flip, and I grip the railing. Why am I nervous? Why do I feel this weird mixture of emotions inside me?

When I knock softly on the doorframe, Amenadiel looks up from the paperwork in front of him. He's hung his suit jacket on the back of the chair and rolled up his sleeves to reveal his corded forearms. His eyes slide up my legs, stomach, and chest. When they finally reach my face, I'm holding my breath.

"What brought you here, angel?" he asks, relaxing back into his chair, a pen between his fingers.

As I step deeper into his room, it dawns on me that I feel as though I'm entering the lion's den. Each click of my heels on the floor hits me like gunshots. "Where were you?"

His brow creases, and he tosses the pen onto the table. "You'll need to be more specific."

The dying embers in the fireplace draw my attention for a brief moment. Two logs of firewood remain in the basket next to it. I focus my attention back on Amenadiel. "I had another dream."

With his chin resting on his palm, he watches me.

He looks imposing in the moonlight that pours in through the window to his left. Half of his face is in shadow, and his eyes seem to glow in the darkness.

“I was searching for you.”

He says nothing, so I add, “You’re always there. Why not this time?”

“Don’t you think I have better things to do than to hang out in little girls’ dreams at night?”

“You tell me,” I respond, stopping at the side of his mahogany desk. Nails clicking on the surface, I watch him intently. “You’ve visited mine often enough.”

His brown eyes look up at me from beneath his dark lashes almost lazily. I can’t decipher if I intrigue him or if he’s bored with me. Something excites me about the way he seems to hunt me with the small smirk that slides across his lips. His gaze slowly cruises down my body, and I bite down on my tongue to calm the violent spark of pleasure that shoots to my core. My clit pulses in his presence.

“Where were you?” My breathy voice gives me away, which should mortify me. But when he flicks those dark eyes back up to mine, I revel in the tension that thickens the air like an electric current.

“Why are you really here?”

My heart stalls in my chest as he slides his desk chair out and rises to his feet. He’s so tall, towering over me. Ancient and powerful.

“My light is coming back,” I say, retreating a step when he takes one forward, like a silent dance between lovers.

“It is, huh?” His voice is a seductive drawl that caresses my skin like an invisible touch. It slithers beneath the fabric of my dress to tease my hardening nipples.

One step further back, then another. Amenadiel follows me step by step, heartbeat by heartbeat.

“Yes...”

“Interesting.” In a flurry of movement, he’s in front of me, and I’m trapped against the desk by his muscular arms. His wings are out, showcasing his raw masculinity and power. When his fangs elongate, a gasp leaves my mouth. He flicks his eyes to my lips and whispers, “Tell me, angel, why were you searching for me across the veil?”

I can’t speak. Not when he looks at me like he wants to devour me whole.

Before I can open my mouth to speak, his lips are on mine, and his hand is on my throat.

Gripping me tightly, he feasts on my soul. His tongue tangles with mine, and the sharp scrape of his teeth drives me wild. I claw at his shirt, his hair, his neck.

Moaning into his mouth, I grab his hip and pull him closer to me, the leather belt cool beneath my touch. We’re a clash of limbs and snarls. His hard cock grinds against my exposed pussy through the fabric of his charcoal suit pants. The friction has another moan slipping from my lips.

He shoves me back with his hand on my throat, and my spine meets the paperwork on his desk. With his eyes on mine, he unbuckles his belt one-handed and pulls down the front of his pants.

“You shouldn’t have come here, angel.”

Arching off the desk, I let him see the need in me. The need for him to fill me up with his dick and fuck me hard. To finally do all the demented, depraved things I’ve craved since the first time he visited me in my dreams.

A gasp leaves me when he yanks down my dress to expose my heaving tits. The straps snap, and the sudden sting heightens my arousal. Kneading my left breast, he leans over me and takes the nipple into his hot mouth. His tongue swirls over the throbbing peak, and I let out a breathy moan.

“Amenadiel, please...”

“Please, what?” He looks up at me through dark eyes that burn with dangerous desire and pent-up lust. “I want to hear you say it. I’ve waited long enough.”

Clit pulsing with need, I wet my dry lips and plead, “Please fuck me, Amenadiel.”

“I can’t hear you, little angel.”

“Fuck me.” My voice comes out choked, my tits heaving with every labored breath. “Please, fuck me.”

The lust-filled gaze in his dark eyes takes on a dangerous edge. “I thought you’d never ask.” Straightening up, he drags his big hand down my body, between my tits, all the way to the apex of my thighs. Then, as he holds my gaze, he grips my trembling hips and takes me in one hard thrust.

My back shoots off the desk, and I curl my fingers around the edge. “*Fuck!*”

His hand is back on my throat, bruising my pulse point, as his hips piston against me. Slapping skin and strangled sounds of pleasure fill his office. He fucks me hard and dirty. The way I always imagined Amenadiel fucked. Despite the dewdrop of kindness inside him, he’s a monster at the very core.

A core that’s now torn open and bleeding all over my exposed soul.

My gushing cunt makes a mess of the front of his suit pants. I’m so aroused and lost to every stroke of his big cock against my pulsing inner walls that the wet, lewd sounds my pussy makes barely register. I couldn’t care less.

Not when he fucks me like he’s on a mission to ruin me for other men. As though he has something to prove.

“Amenadiel,” I moan, and he chokes out a strangled, “*Fuck.*”

Rubbing my swollen clit with his thumb, he never takes his eyes off me, watching the emotions flicker across my face. I stare at him the entire time with my heart in my throat, where it whispers how right this moment feels.

And how wrong.

Framed by his massive wings that are as mysterious and dark as the night, he takes my breath away.

Leaning over me, his lips find mine in a hard kiss. “Those boys can never make you feel like this,” he snarls between kisses. “They can never fuck you this good. Not like an angel as ancient as me.” He bites my lip, drawing it away from my teeth. Then he lets go and dives in for another kiss, as soul-destroying as his tight grip on my throat. “There’s a good girl. I can feel you strangling my dick.”

He fucks me harder, causing the desk to scrape on the floor. His whiskey glass topples over the side, the crash obnoxiously loud amongst our labored breaths and moans. I don’t ever want him to stop fucking me.

“Fuck, you feel so good,” he whispers before pulling out and flipping me over. With his big hand fisted in my hair, he pulls my head back. At the same time, he rams his cock inside me and proceeds to bruise my hipbones against the desk’s edge.

Teetering on my tall heels, my cunt pulses rhythmically around his veiny dick. I’m coming apart, arousal dripping down my thighs.

His wet lips, parted with a wolfish smile, find my ear. “Come on my cock, angel. Scream my fucking name.”

He doesn’t need to ask twice. The filthy command in his gravelly voice settles in my clit, delicious and forbidden. I come with a loud gasp, clamping down on his dick.

“Fuck, that’s it,” he growls, taking me harder. Every damning thrust of his hips against my ass is as ruthless as the fierce grip he has on my hair. Just when I think I’ll never survive his brutal claiming, he pulls out. His hot cum rains over my ass in quick squirts, each one branding me like a blazing iron.

Running his fingers through his cum on my lower back, he trails them between my ass cheeks and applies pressure to my ring of muscles. I stiffen, but he tightens his grip on my hair and proceeds to fuck his cum inside my ass. The sharp sting

has me panting through my teeth. Like his nephew, there's nothing gentle about Amenadiel's touch. As soon as I gave him consent, he took what he wanted.

"So fucking perfect," he says, circling the remaining cum over my puckered hole.

I moan at the intense sensation, arching my back and pushing my ass against his fingers. Fuck, I need him to take me there.

With a final slap to my ass, he steps back, pulls me up, and tangles his fingers in my matted hair. His lips descend on my neck, kissing and biting until I'm putty in his arms. Only then does he kiss my lips. It's different this time. The hard sweeps of his tongue against mine have my heart singing to his tune. "Good girl," he praises between kisses, gripping me tighter and nipping at my lips. "Melt for me."

And I do.

I fall apart completely when he sinks to his knees and covers my soaked, sore pussy with his hungry mouth.

Anchored to the intense look in his eyes, I come apart on his tongue, moaning his name the entire time like a prayer on a warm sea breeze.

CHAPTER
THIRTY-FIVE

AMENADIEL

Mist rolls along the cobblestone, disturbed by my wide steps and the long coat that moves around my calves. I pull it tighter around me, chin tucked close to my chest. It's cold here, and my breaths puff out in front of me. The trickling water in the cherub fountain accompanies the soft crunching of stray pebbles beneath my shoes. I spare a quick glance at the boarded-up buildings and the bike that lies abandoned on the ground. Aurelia's mind is silent tonight as she sleeps softly in my bed, unaware of my presence.

Up ahead, three colorful doors hover in midair, suspended between realities. A small smile tugs at the corners of my lips as I walk past the bike. With a quick glance behind me to ensure I'm alone, I enter the third door and exit into the cathedral. The countless candles that are spread out across the vast space flicker to life in response to my magic and cast a dim glow over the pews. Shadows dart across the walls, spooked by the warming flames that chase away the chill in the air. I blow on my hands as I make my way down the length of the cathedral. Overhead, thickening darkness spreads across the ribbed, vaulted ceiling. It sneers at me as I pull open the large, creaky front doors and step outside.

With one look at the tray of candles on the ground, I cross the grass, weaving between ancient, ivy-covered gravestones on my way to the mausoleum. As though her mind shields it from intruders, the structure is partly hidden behind the thick branches of a fir tree. Ivy climbs up the white marble, the green leaves rustling in the cold breeze. A crow, perched on the shoulder of one of the life-size marble angels beside the bronze doors, caws loudly. Head cocked, its beady, black eyes watch me closely. I barely spare it a glance as I pull open the heavy bronze door and enter the small space.

Greeted by the intricate paintings that decorate every available surface, I let my smile unfurl. "Hey, angel."

As I watch, the sconces on the wall flicker wildly. While she's not conscious of my presence, she can sense me.

Dropping my head back between my shoulders and closing my eyes, I inhale a deep breath into my lungs. The bronze doors slam shut, and my smile grows even bigger. Arms stretched out beside me, I let the moment linger. Victory tastes sweet on my tongue. No one can stop me now.

Well, except for...

Opening my eyes, I lower my arms and look back at the door.

I cross the small space, curl my fingers around the iron handles, and push the doors open. Complete darkness greets me. Gone are the cemetery and gravestones. When I take a step forward, a metal tray of candles flares to life by my feet. Four in total.

A pained groan in the corner has me lifting my gaze. Chained to the wall, blood coating the left side of his face from a cut on his eyebrow, Amenadiel watches me with haunted eyes.

I cross the small space, and his gaze flits down to the knife in my hand with its long, curved blade. As I near, he tugs violently on the chains and roars at me, the sound muffled behind his gag. A used glass vial breaks beneath my shoe as I crouch in front of him.

“What’s it like?” I ask, cocking my head and watching him with twisted amusement in my eyes. “To have your powers stolen from you.” My gaze lifts, and I make a show of scanning the damp, concrete walls. “To be so pathetically helpless. An angel as ancient as you.” I look back at him and incline my head. “As us.”

A bead of sweat trails down his temple, leaving a streak through the dried blood. He glares at me when I smirk. “Did you really think you could enter *my* timeline and try to kill me? Steal *my* life? Did you think it’d be that easy?” A cruel chuckle bubbles up from my chest, and I look to the side for a brief moment while my shoulders shake. Scratching my jaw

and dragging my fingers through my stubble, I slide my gaze back to him. “You should have made sure I was dead. As it were, you made it so fucking easy to attack you when you entered the veil with Daemon. He never suspected a thing when he exited the mausoleum and found me waiting for him by the cathedral.” Tongue in cheek, I chuckle again and scan the flickering candles in the corner.

He tries to speak behind the gag, so I reach forward and pull the dirty kitchen towel from his mouth.

“You have some last words?”

He wets his cracked lips, his head lolling on the concrete wall. “You won’t get away with this. They won’t fall for it.” Lifting his head, he sneers, “*She* won’t buy your lies.”

“Wrong.” My smile is as taunting as the gleam in my eyes. I press my fingers to his nose and tilt my head to the side. “Smell that? That’s her pussy.”

Amenadiel tries to shift his face away from my hand, so I grab his face and drag my fingers over his nose and lips. “While you were chained up here, unable to save the girl you’ve fallen for, I fucked that sweet cunt until she screamed my name and begged me for more.” I shove him away and chuckle darkly, watching him glare at me. The defeat in his eyes tells me he already knows how this ends. “Now she’s mine,” I taunt, leaning close to his face. “And I think I want to keep her. What’s even better is that I don’t have to stalk her anymore. That shit was getting tedious. Now I can fuck her anytime I want. She thinks I’m you, the Amenadiel from the first timeline—the pathetic, soft version of me. And not the Amenadiel from the second timeline. The one you tried to kill so that you could make a cozy life here. That was rude, by the way.”

Reaching out, I curl my fingers around one of the chains. “You like her chains? Of course, I only chained her ankle. It was more fun to watch her try to get away from me. It’s one thing to fuck her when she’s willing and gagging for it. And another thing entirely to fuck her when she cries and begs me to stop. I quite like both.”

A growl reverberates inside his chest. If he could, he'd rip me to pieces and set fire to the remains. But as it is, only one of us dies tonight, and it won't be me.

For once, I'll stand victorious.

"Now," I drawl, dragging the blade down the length of the chain. "It's time to take my life back. Did you enjoy playing house with my son? I have to say that I'm disappointed he went along with it. I thought for sure he'd avenge my death when you told him how you disposed of me." With a bitter chuckle, I lift his chin with the blade. "I want to look into my own eyes as the life bleeds from your soul. I want to see what my own death will look like."

"Fuck you," he sneers, spitting at me.

"As soon as I've killed you and left you here to rot inside her mind, I'll return to my bed and fuck the angel in the ass. How does that sound? You'll die knowing you couldn't save her." I lower my voice, caressing his mounting anger with my taunting whisper. "You failed in all timelines."

A choked grunt cuts through the moment as I grab him by the back of the neck and stab him in the stomach. Using my sheer strength, I stare into his wide, glassy eyes and drag the knife in an upward motion, all the way to his sternum. The sickening, wet sound of his blood and innards pooling in a sea between us has a slow and victorious smile forming on my lips. Tossing the knife to the side, I reach in. My hand slides over his ribs in my hunt for his slippery heart.

Curling my fingers around the organ, I rip it out and toss it up into the air like a football before catching it again. "So long, *Amenadiel*."

To be continued.

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