

Stephani Hecht

Archangel Series
Book 2



**Captive Angels:
Archangel Series Part 2**

By

Stephani Hecht

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Captive Angels: Archangel Series Part 2

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Dedication

To Ken, Cody and Joie. Mommy loves you.

Chapter One

An ear-splitting, heartrending scream exploded through the room. On his feet in a flash, Abdiel stared at several small arches of light spinning around Gabi and Rachael. Bright blue in color, the arches moved in different directions and at varied speeds. They grew brighter and brighter until he saw neither female. "Gabi! Rachael!" As soon as Abdiel touched the blue light, he was thrown across the room and slammed against the wall. Briefly stunned, he slid to the floor in a slump.

Finally, after what seemed forever, the light slowly faded. When it dissipated, Rachael was a full-grown female. She screamed and held a limp Gabi in her arms. Terrified, she shoved the unresponsive female from her and shook her head back and forth. Fear stole her breath and she hyperventilated.

"Gabi, no!" Abdiel scrambled across the room and scooped his wife into his arms. Her half-

opened eyes were completely unfocused. With a slight shake of her shoulders, he stared as her head lolled to the side and she remained motionless, catatonic. He glanced up.

Rachael launched herself from the bed, crawled to the corner and wrapped herself into a tight ball. She whimpered and rocked back and forth, her dark hair shielding her face.

Abdiel refocused his attention. "Come on, baby, wake up." Tears formed in his eyes. "Please, don't leave me, Gabi." He was so upset all he could think about was that his love was gone forever as he held her close and started to weep.

* * * *

Cam dashed over, grabbed Rachael by the shoulders and yanked her to her feet. "What did you do to her?"

"Nothing," Rachel insisted. "I'm a good, little angel."

"No, you're not," he snarled. "You're a bad, bad little angel." He stared as she unleashed a shout of anger that sounded half demon, half angel. Her eyes darkened a shade, just like his whenever he was about to lose his temper. Sure enough, she shot off a bolt of energy hitting him square in the chest. With a grunt, he sailed across

the room and slammed into the wall.

Grabbing her head savagely between both her hands, Rachael unleashed another bloodcurdling scream. Every window in the room rattled, then shattered one by one.

"You know." Cam rolled to his feet and started toward her. "I really hate it when someone zaps me."

"You're not being very nice," she spat, her hand raised. Several books fell off their shelves and tumbled to the ground. "I don't think I like you."

A picture flew off the wall and shot toward his head. Cam's sideways dive avoided the hit, but slammed his right shoulder into his dresser. The hurt shaken off, he rolled to his feet and directed a hardcover book at her. It hit her in the back, knocking her to the ground. "You're not the only one that can do magic tricks." Cam knew full well his eyes were turning the dark blue, which matched hers. "I think it's time to teach you a lesson in manners, little chickadee." He shot off an arc of flames.

Moving with cat-like agility, she jumped out of the way. She yelled something at him in demon talk before she released another energy bolt.

He moved, but not quite fast enough. It hit him in the arm, lifted him off his feet and spun him around as he sailed through the air. Slammed into

the wall, Cam stood up and lifted his hand. Flames started to build up in it again.

* * * *

Abdiel clutched Gabi to his chest. Combined energy built to a hazardous level. The sky darkened. Lightning streaked through the ever-deepening cerulean. The entire house shook violently. Abdiel felt the dangerous energy, but was dimly aware all hell was breaking loose. Completely lost in his grief, he couldn't bring himself to care.

The door blasted open and Michael strode in, fire in his eyes. With a simple wave of his hand, the two angels' powers dissipated. "That is *enough* you two." He didn't yell, but his voice carried sufficient anger to scare both of them into obeying. "Gabi did this to herself."

That alone shook Abdiel out of his stupor. "Why?"

Rachael twisted her hands together nervously. "She wanted to give me back to you. She said you would never be truly happy until you had us back. I tried to stop her, but she was too strong. It's all my fault." She walked over to the bed and knelt on the ground. Bowing her head, she laced her fingers behind her neck and waited.

As soon as he saw the position, he breathed a ragged curse. He remembered the position well. He did it countless times himself as a youth. It was the way their father made them take their beatings. His own baby sister actually thought he was going to hurt her. How many times had she felt the sting of their father's whip against her back? He reached out to touch her head.

She shivered with fear and kept her eyes tightly shut. Her nostrils flared as she took in deep shuddering breaths.

"I will never hurt you, Rachael," he vowed.

She opened her eyes and looked up at him, her gaze disbelieving "I told her I was angry at you."

"You were angry with me?" This time when he went to stroke her hair, she didn't flinch.

"Every day when they first took us there..." She laid her head in his lap as tears spilled from her eyes, "I prayed you would come and get us. When you didn't, I hated you. I know it was stupid. There was no way you could have entered Hell, but I still blamed you."

"I would have come for you if I could have. I swear it." He gently wiped the tears from her cheeks.

"I know that now. I'm sorry about Gabi." She snuggled against his hand as if she craved a loving touch. "I really did try to stop her, but she

wouldn't let me."

"Abdiel," Michael interrupted softly. "Take Gabi to your bedroom. Raphael is here and he knows about the situation. Cam, you watch over Rachel and, for crying out loud, try not to destroy each other."

"How do you know who I am?" Rachael asked him, a small frown on her face.

"Let's just say you and your brother are not the only ones who have weird dreams." He turned and looked at her. "By the way, there was nothing you could have done to stop Gabi. Her heart was set on making you well." Michael walked over to Abdiel. "Don't give up hope yet."

Abdiel picked Gabi up in his arms, holding her gently, afraid of breaking her even more. When he walked by Rachael, she reached up and gave him a shy kiss on his cheek. Still timid about touching him, she refused to meet his gaze.

* * * *

When everyone left the room, Cam looked at her. "Why are you so afraid of Abdiel?"

"He's going to beat me," she whispered, although she'd already scanned her brother's mind and found he wasn't capable of doing such a thing. Still, she doubted as her family wasn't

exactly the warm and fuzzy type.

“Michael said it wasn’t your fault.” Cam started to pick up some of the debris in the room, then dropped the book and shoved his hands in his pockets. “Abdiel’s not like the rest of your family. He won’t hurt you ever. He promised not to and he always keeps his word.”

A quick duck of his head followed his swift glance, but not before she noticed the look on his face. Oh God, he felt sorry for her. If it was one thing she hated above everything else, it was pity. She was used to being hated. She and Appolion had grown up cutting their teeth on the preverbal hate stick. But she could never get used to someone feeling bad for her. It made her feel helpless.

Rachael stared down at the raggedy old gown she wore and realized she looked like a war refugee. She ran her hands over the offending material trying to make it stretch out as far as it could go. *Good molly, my legs are barely covered. This is no way for me to make a first impression.*

Cam went to his dresser and pulled out a pair of sweatpants and a tee shirt. As he handed them to her, they locked eyes for the first time and both of them froze.

She sucked in a breath. *Brother.* The thought came unbidden into her mind and, as soon as it

did, she knew it was true. Even though they had come from different parents, he was as much her brother as Appolion and Abdiel. They were linked by some higher power and had been since they were born.

Rachael reached up and touched his cheek, gently rubbing her fingers over the lingering road rash. He got that injury fighting Abdiel in order to get to her so he must feel the connection, too. Relief filled her at the prospect of her never going to be alone again. She had found...home. "Thank you for coming to me. Without you I would have been lost forever."

"After seeing the way you handled yourself earlier, I somehow doubt that," he mumbled.

"I sense your pain, your inner conflict, brother." She smiled at his shocked expression. It was going to take them both a little while to get used to being around another telepath.

"Get changed and I'll get you something to eat. I don't think we can keep you a secret anymore. Not since you and I pretty much went postal," he said gruffly.

"What do you mean postal?" She wrinkled her nose. Actually, she already knew what he meant. Rachael had been scanning his mind since the car ride home, plucking little bits of information from his thoughts and memories. However, she wasn't

ready to tell him that yet. The first thing she learned in Hell was not to reveal all your strengths or weaknesses.

"Sorry, I forgot you've been vegging out for the past few centuries. I mean since you and I tore apart the house. I think we broke every single window." He gave her a small smile before he left the room.

Rachael quickly took off the gown and pulled on the clothes he gave her. It felt so good to be in regular clothes. She looked over at the old, white dress and vaporized it with her mind. She didn't want anything around to remind her of her time in Hell.

Even though she was full grown now, she noticed with disgust that she was smaller than most females. Cam was no giant by any means, but his tee shirt hung to her knees. She cinched the drawstring as hard as she could on the sweatpants in order to keep them up. Somehow, she didn't think losing her drawers in the kitchen would be a good introduction into the angel world.

Rachael went into the adjoining bathroom and willed herself to look in the mirror. A giant crack ran down the middle, thanks to her and Cam's little spat, but otherwise, it was unbroken. When she saw her reflection, she gasped in horror. She reached out and touched the glass, trying hard to

will away the image looking back at her.

Her raven curls went every which way. Her deep, piercing blue eyes were wide and framed by long dark lashes. High, finely arched cheekbones enhanced full lips. She was the spitting image of her mother.

Rachael hissed a demon curse and shattered the mirror with a wave of her hand. She resisted the insane urge to turn the water on and scrub her face until the offending features were wiped away. She would have rather turned into a demon than look like her witch of a mother. She didn't just hate the female, she despised her.

When Douma and Forcas started to do the bad things to her, she went to her mother for help. Instead of helping her, as any other normal mother would have, the witch smacked her across the face and called her a lying whore. *How can a ten-year old female be a whore?* When Rachael refused to retract her story, her dear, old sweet mother gave her a beating that made their father proud.

Cam's voice floated across her mind. *Are you okay? I can sense you are upset.*

I'm just dandy. Hold your horses, I'll be there in a second. She tried to sound annoyed, but wasn't. Ever since Appolion cut contact with her, she had no one friendly to communicate mentally with,

until now.

Rachael walked out into the hall and Cam took her hand, led her down the stairs and into the kitchen. There were a couple of males there and they both looked at her with interest. Much to her dismay, she found herself hiding behind Cam. She just couldn't stand to be ogled.

"Be nice guys. This is Abdiel's little sister and you don't want to piss him off by hurting her feelings." Cam squeezed her hand reassuringly and directed her into a seat.

One of the males stepped forward. "Hi, I'm Daniel." He turned and looked at Cam. "Look, I'm really sorry about earlier. I shouldn't have said anything about your mother. That was a real low blow. It's just that I learned my sister was in town and she's up to her old tricks."

"Who's your sister?" Rachael asked as Cam poured them tall glasses of milk and set them on the table.

"My sister is a succubus."

The big swig of milk Cam just took, slid down the wrong pipe.

Daniel groaned. "Oh no, not you, too. I swear my sister has banged every male I know."

"What's your sister's name?" Cam gasped between coughs.

"Ramiakle."

"Then she's not the one I, ah...." He glanced over at Rachael and turned bright red.

"You're such a perv, Cam." She wrinkled her nose.

"Thank God, at least she hasn't gotten her claws into you." Daniel visibly relaxed. "I can tell you have some small injuries. It would be an honor if you would let me heal them for you. It's the least I can do."

"In case you forgot, Daniel, I beat the ever living tar out of you. You don't owe me anything."

Daniel still went over to him and touched his shoulder. Since the injury wasn't too serious, it only took a moment before his arm was back to normal.

When the healer moved to touch her, Rachael instantly tensed up and unleashed a low growl.

"It's okay, he just wants to heal you," Cam reassured. "I'll be sitting here right next to you the entire time."

"Don't worry, little one." Daniel gave her a crooked smile. "I would never want to face the wrath of your big brother, let alone Cam."

"It's not us you have to worry about, healer. Little Miss Muffet there could probably kick both of our asses."

Daniel went over and very gently touched her back.

Rachael scanned the healer's mind and found he meant her no harm so she allowed it. It still terrified her to have a male other than Cam or Abdiel touch her. Cam held her hand the entire time and, before she knew it, her back was healed.

Daniel pulled back from her with a look of awe on his face. His gaze darted between her and Cam before they shifted to one of the shattered windows. "You guys were the ones who caused all that to happen earlier, weren't you?"

Rachael looked over at Cam, wondering how he was going to explain this one away when the sound of pounding footsteps made her turn her head. Another healer, with several more hot on his heels, raced up the stairs. If Raphael called for extra healers, it could not be good.

It's all my fault. I did this to her. If I just stayed in Hell, none of this would have happened. Hot tears stung her cheeks. Rachael had always been taught tears were a weakness. In fact, the more she and Appolion cried, the more they were beat for it.

Stop thinking that way. You are where you belong now. Cam's voice soothed her instantly. *Don't diminish Gabi's sacrifice by thinking you are unworthy of it. Derel and the other healers are going to help her at this moment.*

As soon as they were the only ones left in the kitchen, Daniel fixed them both with a concerned

glance. "There is only one thing that could get this many healers upset. Is our Mistress injured?"

Realizing Daniel was deeply troubled at the thought of Gabi being hurt, Rachael told him everything that happened to her. By the time she was done, the healer paled and she felt despair coursing through him.

"We can't lose our Mistress. There must be something we can do." He paced a few more steps before he stopped and ran up to them. Grabbing both of their hands, a smile slowly spread over his face. "Come on, I have a crazy idea that just might work."

* * * *

Abdiel reached over and stroked Gabi's hair. Raphael, Michael, Derel and Ana stood around him silently. The other healers left the room, carrying the heavy weight of their grief with them. The news of The Mistress' condition traveled quickly and the echoes of screams and cries went through the house as more healers joined in their mourning. They all admired and loved her just as much as the archangels did Michael.

Abdiel gritted his teeth together as he fought to keep his own cries back. Part of him wanted to join the healers. He wanted to throw back his head

and yell out his pain for all to hear. True determination and years of holding his feelings in kept him from doing so.

Some insane part of him felt if he did give in and weep, he would be giving up all hope Gabi would wake up and he wasn't ready for that. Although he knew deep down it was hopeless because they tried everything and they couldn't make his Gabi better, he refused to surrender.

Part of him wanted to grab her and shake her by the shoulders. *Don't you realize I can't live without you? Without you, I am nothing.* She did this for him. To make him happy, she sacrificed herself, but he would never be happy again. He lost what meant the most to him. Abdiel leaned down and buried his face in her hair, breathing in her scent. Gabi lay still under him, her beautiful green eyes dull and lifeless.

Cam burst in with Rachael and Daniel in tow. "Daniel's got an idea, guys."

"It's hopeless," Abdiel replied dully. "There's nothing we can do."

"Cam," Ana said quietly. "We've already tried everything."

"You don't understand," Rachael implored. "Daniel really thinks Cam and I can help."

"No offense, guys." Abdiel didn't look up. "But unless something needs blowing up, I don't think

so."

Daniel went over to Raphael and went down on one knee. "Master, I believe we can use the power that dwells within the two of them to rejuvenate The Mistress."

"You mean jump start her like a car?" Michael asked, his voice laced with disbelief.

"That's exactly what he's suggesting." Raphael looked at the healer thoughtfully.

The room was silent as they all took in what Daniel was suggesting. It had never been tried before. But then there were never two angels with Cam and Rachael's gifts before either. They all looked over at Raphael and waited for his response.

"It would be very dangerous," he finally warned. "We could lose all three of them trying."

"It's a risk I'm willing to take," Cam said. "Gabi would do it for me in a heartbeat."

Rachael nodded her head. "Me, too. It is the least I can do."

Abdiel looked over at them, touched by what they were offering to do. They were willing to risk themselves in order to save Gabi. Yet at the same time, a part of him couldn't believe these two were capable of something so great.

Michael looked doubtful, too. "You two don't even have full control of your powers yet. In case

you forgot, you almost vaporized the house not even an hour ago.”

Cam pointed at Abdiel. “Remember, he’s the Control. He can shield our powers if we lose control.”

Raphael took charge. “Rachael and Cam, go on either side of Gabi and lay hands on her. Abdiel, hold their hands and try to keep a reign on their energy. Daniel, I want you to go over with Cam and sing the healing chants. Derel, come stand by me and do the same.”

Following his instructions, they formed a circle around her. Rachael and Cam looked at each other, nodded, then closed their eyes. They both placed their hands on Gabi and released their energy.

Abdiel was shocked by how strong it was. The air hummed as energy flowed into Gabi. He threw up a shield in order to keep it centered. It pulsed and strained to escape. He fought hard to keep it contained or else the power would surge out of control.

A glowing light settled over them. It felt warm and calming at the same time. Abdiel heard the healers’ strong voices combine in a rich melody. The sky turned a deep blue and streaks of lightning beat white paths throughout it. The horizon grew hazy as waves of heat were sucked

from the center of the earth and brought up to the surface. The color came back into Gabi's face. Her eyelids fluttered as her eyes came back into focus. She let out a strangled gasp, like a drowning victim revived.

Abdiel reigned in the healing light and the buildup of energy died down. Cam and Rachael collapsed on the ground. They were tired, but otherwise unhurt. Abdiel, found himself panting, exhausted from fighting their powers. It was harder than he'd thought.

"Abdiel," Gabi breathed.

Her voice was the most beautiful thing he'd ever heard. Abdiel scooped her up in his arms and hugged her tight. "It's going to be okay, honey." He kissed the top of her head.

"Did I get Rachael back for you?" She was still worried about him even though she could barely move.

"Yes, you did." He couldn't let her go. "You did real good."

"Where is she?" Gabi struggled to sit up. She followed Abdiel's gaze to his sister. "Why are you letting her lie there on the floor? And why is she wearing Cam's grungy, old stuff?"

He looked down at his baby sister. She looked so small and fragile, yet she was capable of so much. She had given Cam a taste of his own

medicine, matching his skills one by one. It was just as hard to keep her powers under control as it was Cam's. Abdiel pulled his sister onto the bed and gave her a big hug. "Welcome home, sister, and thank you for bringing Gabi back."

"You're not mad at me?" Rachael squeaked.

"I could never be mad at you," Abdiel reassured.

She gave him an impish smile before she scooted over to the other edge of the bed and hung her head over the far side. "We did it," she yelled at Cam. Reaching down, she smacked him on the shoulder. "Wake up, sleepy head."

"Leave me alone or I'll remember I owe you one for blasting me," he groaned. "Why is it, Abdiel, that every time I meet someone from your family, they find it necessary to zap my butt?"

"Maybe it's because of your winning personality," Gabi said tartly.

Abdiel laughed, relieved to hear her dry wit. Even though she still looked too pale and tired for his liking, he knew she was on her way to being better.

"Sorry about your windows, Gabi." Rachael did a bouncy movement on the bed.

"Do I even want to know?" Gabi asked. Her eyelids were beginning to droop.

Raphael came over and took her hand. "You

need to rest. You've been through a lot today."

Gabi obeyed her brother, closing her eyes. She grumbled in a sleepy voice, "I really want to stay awake and talk. I'm very interested to find out what they did to my windows." Exhaustion won. Clutching Abdiel close, she soon fell asleep.

* * * *

Gabi woke up to a pair of bright blue eyes staring at her. Startled, she sat up with a gasp. "Rachael, is there something you needed?"

"Oh goody," Rachael broke out into a huge grin. "You're awake. I was sick of being around boys."

"Where are the boys?" She nearly choked on the last word.

"They're talking about that Order of Four stuff." She gave a wicked smile. "They didn't even ask me about it, and I could tell them everything they want to know."

"Slow down," Gabi said. "What do you mean you know everything?"

"That creep Beelzebub knew all about the prophecy." Rachael gave out a bored, little shrug. "I just scanned it from his mind. He was so easy to read. It was actually pathetic."

Abdiel came in the room to check up on Gabi.

"Hey, you're awake."

Cam trailed behind him.

"Yeah," she said drolly. "Rachael was just filling me in on The Order of Four. Seems she knows everything there is to know about it."

Abdiel looked over at his sister, clearly shocked. She was trilling a piece of gum in her fingers as she hummed to herself. "What exactly do you think you know, Rachael?"

"I happen to know the names of all four angels." She blew him a raspberry. "You only know of two."

Abdiel gritted his teeth in frustration and Gabi couldn't blame him. It was like pulling teeth to get any information from Rachael. "Okay, who are the other two?" "Appolion and me, dummy." She blew another raspberry.

"See, I know right there that you're wrong." He rubbed his head like it hurt. "Appolion wants nothing to do with us."

"That's because he's being a jerk," Rachael scoffed. "You know, he shut his mind off to me. His own twin, the nerve of him."

Abdiel shook his head in disbelief. Gabi felt the same doubt he did. Sure Rachael had some serious mojo like Cam. But she was still a tiny, little slip of a thing. There was no way she would ever be able to fight demons. They would just flick their fingers

at her and send her flying.

The door slammed shut with a loud bang. The mirror on their dresser splintered. *Do you believe me now?* Before her brother could even blink an eye, she cartwheeled through the air. Her legs scissored out and caught his, slamming him onto the ground. Rachael opened her hand and a fighting dagger from the dresser top flew to her palm. She tapped him on the head with it. "You should never doubt me. I never lie. Now, do you want to hear the rest of it or not?"

Okay, she had made a believer out of them. Abdiel shut his mouth and held his hand up to indicate she should continue. Gabi bit back a giggle, nothing like having your own sister kick your can to humble you.

"You and Cam are right. You guys are the first two of The Order of Four." Rachael rolled to her feet. She idly flipped the dagger from hand to hand. "Cam, because he can harness fire, and Abdiel, because he is the Control. You know, the one that makes sure the powers of the other three angels don't go out of control."

"What would happen if it got out of control?" Gabi asked.

"That would be bad," Rachael said blandly.

"How bad?" Abdiel's brow creased with worry.

"The entire human world would cease to exist,"

she whispered.

"That would qualify as bad," Cam muttered.

"What role do you play in the Order?" Gabi asked.

"I can harness lightning and control the weather. That's why I can send out energy bolts."

"No offense," Cam interjected. "But that's not so unique. Douma and Forcas both can zap somebody."

"They just barely make a fizzle in the energy field," she scoffed. "What they do is a hug compared to what I can do. If I'd wanted to really hurt you earlier, I could have vaporized you. Just like you could have blown me off of Earth. We both were holding back when we fought each other."

"Oh great," Abdiel ran his hand through his hair. "You mean to tell me what you guys did earlier was a warm up?"

"Well, I couldn't exactly blow your sister up," Cam admitted guiltily. "I mean it would just be rude."

"But you see, brother, it's not Cam and I you have to worry about, it's Appolion."

"Why would we have to worry about Appolion?"

"The power Appolion has makes Cam and I look like fluffy bunnies. Appolion is the

Destroyer." She gripped the dagger blade tightly in her hand, her nervousness about her revelation clear. A small trickle of blood seeped through her fingers.

"I thought you said Appolion is an angel?" Gabi reached over to touch Abdiel's hand, his expression sick with dread.

"He is," Rachael spoke earnestly, eager to defend her twin. "He just doesn't want to believe it yet."

"What exactly is he supposed to destroy?" Cam tugged on his hair, betraying his own unease.

"It has no name. It's a monster worse than any of our worst nightmares." She squeezed the blade even tighter, causing more blood to spill.

Abdiel reached out and gently eased the knife away from her. "Are you talking about a demon?" His voice was strained and his glare concerned, no doubt because she was as pale as a ghost.

"No worse, it's the most evil thing hell has ever spawned. Douma and Forcas are growing it. When it's ready, they're going to release it on Earth. It'll completely annihilate both Heaven and Earth unless we can stop it."

"You mean to tell me you guys are the only ones that can defeat this thing?" Gabi asked gently.

Rachael nodded. "That *thing* won't be ready for

a while yet, but it *is* coming."

"How did you convince Beelzebub to let you go?" Gabi tried not to let her see how much her words had scared her. "I don't care what you say, he's no weakling."

"Neither am I." She ran a shaky hand through her dark hair.

"How can you be so sure you're right about all this?" Abdiel asked.

"You had the same dream I did. You were there with me, big brother. You know I speak the truth."

Gabi and Cam looked over at him, their eyes accusing.

Abdiel held up his hands in defense. "Look, I just thought it was a freaky dream. How was I supposed to know it was all real? Cam and Appolion were in it, too, and they didn't say anything."

Rachael rolled her eyes. "That's because it was our dream not theirs. They don't have that gift, just you and me do. Oh, and Michael."

Abdiel started to pace the room nervously. "If Douma and Forcas find out about Appolion, he'll be hunted down and captured. There's no one to protect his back. He's all alone out there."

"I know." Rachael shrugged her shoulders. "But he won't let me contact him so I can't warn him. He makes me so angry. You know what? I've

decided he's no longer my twin brother anymore. Cam is my new brother."

"We look nothing alike." Cam shook his head in mock sadness. "Nobody will ever buy it. You're stuck with Mini Dark Angel."

Chapter Two

The angel warriors banded together, and soon, the demons retreated. Working together with the humans, they stopped the looting and put out all the fires. Healers blanketed Detroit and, because of them, the human death toll was very low. Finally, the city returned to normal.

To Abdiel's great relief, all the visiting angels left their house, leaving only the four of them. It wasn't just the fact he hated his privacy being invaded, but there had been other issues as well. After Rachael and Cam had called attention to themselves by shattering every window in the house, there was no way to keep anything secret anymore. So now, everyone knew not only about Rachael, but also about the Order. Worse yet, they knew about Cam and Rachael's special gifts and had started to look at Rachael like she was a science experiment gone bad.

Cam was a whole different matter, however.

The empaths continued to follow him around like lost, little puppy dogs. The archangels accepted him as one of their own and gave him the respect the title deserved. Instead of being flattered with all the attention, it seemed to bother the young angel. It was almost as if he wanted to disappear into the shadows.

Abdiel could tell, even though she fought hard to hide such, it hurt Rachael that the other angels looked at her with a jaded eye. It didn't help matters that she had no control over her energy blasts and kept zapping anyone who even slightly ticked her off.

"Did I do that?" she would ask, dismayed as yet another angel was thrown off their feet.

"Yeah, you did that, Steve Urkle," Cam would drawl back.

The one piece of good news was that with Ana's diplomacy and Michael's bullying, the council decided to look the other way as far as Rachael was concerned, even though Jehel was far from happy with it. He had demanded a vote on the matter, but he lost. The council even lifted the restriction of flashing in Detroit. They were free to travel from place to place in their own way. Although Cam still preferred his motorcycle and Gabi was not about ready to give up her Beetle.

Abdiel and Cam went out patrolling every

night. They rooted out any stragglers still left behind from the attack and took care of any locals that showed their faces. Gabi was still too weak to join them, so she stayed home. Rachael was left behind as well. They had all agreed for now they would keep her improved condition a secret from the demons. Well, everyone but Rachael. She was itching to get out there and hand out some payback.

"I know how to fight," she yelled at Abdiel. "I'm not some child that needs to be coddled."

"You could have fooled me," Cam snickered. "Up until a few days ago you were still in Oshkosh overalls."

"How do you know how to fight?" Abdiel asked her. "You haven't had any training."

"I've always been able to sneak into your thoughts." Rachael shrugged as if it were no big deal. "Every battle you have ever fought, I was there with you."

"You do realize that's too frigging weird?" Cam's voice was filled with awe.

They all decided they were going to live their lives as normal as possible. They refused to let Douma and Forcas rule them. That would mean the demons were winning the war. They were not about to close themselves up and live in fear.

It would turn out to be the biggest mistake of

their immortal lives.

* * * *

Cam strolled around the college campus not shielding himself from the humans. He needed to feel like a normal college kid, not some freaky empath angel that wasn't really an empath, but something else never been seen before. Heck, it would be nice to truly be a mortal for a day. He wondered what it would be like not to have to worry all the time about demons and evil. It would be cool to have a life where your biggest worry was whether you would pass the next exam. Instead, he always had to be on alert, ready to play superhero. Oh, and don't forget the fact every demon was on him like one of the superstar Bounty Hunters.

A small female human saw him and waved. She bounded over to him with a toss of her long, blonde hair. "Hi, Cam. We're getting the old study group back together. Are you game?" She flashed him a winning smile displaying her even, white teeth.

"Sure, Becky." Cam smiled. He really valued the friendship he had with the human. "I'll try to make it when I can. I've been really busy at work."

"What do you do again?"

"Social work," he lied smoothly.

"Pam will be very happy to hear you're coming. She really likes you, Cam."

Cam got uncomfortable. That the human was attracted to him was no surprise even if he hadn't been telepathic as she made her feelings obvious. She flirted outrageously with him and used every advantage to be near him. Her hands always seemed to find their way to his arms when they were talking, and she took every opportunity available to accidentally brush up against him, but humans were strictly hands off.

Seeing Cam's unease, Becky turned to him with a surprised look on her face. "Oh my God, you're gay aren't you?"

"What?" Cam rolled his eyes. "No, I just can't get involved with anyone right now."

"Do you already have a girlfriend?"

"No, I just can't get into a relationship. It's not allowed." He inwardly groaned as that little nugget slipped.

"Are you in some sort of weird cult that doesn't believe in sex?" Becky looked horrified such a thing could exist.

"Something like that," Cam muttered. "Don't worry though, I don't drink the punch." His new cell phone rang interrupting the interrogation. He scowled when the number on the caller ID was

one he didn't recognize. Excusing himself from Becky, he walked around the corner for privacy.

If this was, yet another empath calling him with another problem, he was going to lose it. Ever since they had found out about his special gifts, empaths had been calling him with everything from advice to gripes about their archangels. At first, he'd purposefully given them bad advice just for grins and giggles, but the calls still kept coming in. Why didn't they just call his Aunt Amiteil? Although she was a cold, heartless bitch who never could spare a moment or a kind word for any of her nephews or niece, she still was the unofficial leader of the empaths. "This had better be good," he growled into the phone.

"Cam, this is Dina."

The voice on the other end was so weak he could barely hear it. Dina was Jehel's only son. *What in the hell is he calling me for, and how did he get my number?* Cam felt his stomach turn over. This could not be good. He tried to scan the other angel, but he slammed into a mental brick wall. He knew instantly it was Douma and Forcas. Not only were they capable of blocking his telepathy, but this whole set up just reeked of them. What was it with those two? Couldn't they take one day off?

"Dina, give the phone to the demons." He

realized he was talking to the other angel like he was a child, but his protector gauge had just gone into overdrive. The angel's bloodcurdling screams filled his ear. The old empath part of him took over letting the other angel's pain soak into him. Shielding himself from human eyes, he sank down on a stone bench. A cold sweat covered him as he started to shake.

"This is Forcas," an evil voice hissed into the phone.

Duh, I already guessed that one, jackass.

"Unless you come and meet us right now, I'll torture this angel. I'll direct all the pain to you so you feel every bit of it."

To prove his point, the demon held the phone near his captive. Cam heard a slap right before Dina cried out again. Cam whimpered as he felt Dina's fear wash over him. There was no way possible he could refuse Forcas's demands. They both knew it. They were using his biggest weakness against him. The worst part was it was Jehel's son. Here he was about to sacrifice himself for someone and that someone had a jerk for a father. That just stuck in his craw. "Leave him alone. I'll come," Cam grit out, trying not to get physically ill from all the emotions.

"We're in the park by your house." Forcas laughed evilly. "And don't even think of telling

Abdiel. If you try to contact him by phone or mind, I'll know right away and I'll hurt this pathetic angel even more."

Cam flashed himself to them and spotted Dina crumpled on the ground. He launched himself at the wounded angel and placed his hands on him. Flashing the captive to Heaven, he turned to fight the demons. A bolt of energy hit him in the chest and knocked him backward. Before he could recover, they were on him, kicking the crap out of him and wrapping a set of heavy chains around him.

Struggling to his feet, Cam lifted his hand to shoot off flame. The chains around him came to life. Surging with energy, they burned him before they rebounded his own power against him. He dropped to the ground screaming in pain. As the energy bounced around his body, he jerked around on cool earth. *Fuck, I'm in big trouble.* He fell into their trap and knew they would drag Abdiel into it using his pathetic ass as bait.

* * * *

Gabi had taken Rachael shopping so Abdiel was home all alone, sitting in front of the TV when his cell phone went off. He saw it was Cam. "Hey, Cam, you get registered for all your classes?"

"Sorry, brother." Forcas's voice crept through the phone. "I think he's had a change of plans."

Abdiel jumped up. "What have you done to Cam?"

"He's all right for now. Do you know he willingly traded himself over for another angel? He's almost as noble as you."

Abdiel gripped the phone tight. They had Cam and he had no doubt in his mind they already hurt him and they would do a lot worse unless he figured out a way to get him free. "What do I need to do so you'll let him go?"

"Come on, brother." Forcas chided. "We both know what you need to do. Don't make me go into the stereotypical bad guy speech. Just come to the park by your house and get your friend."

Even though he knew it was a trap, he flashed himself where Forcas had directed. It was completely deserted except for his two demon brothers and Cam. He cursed his stupidity for not calling for backup. At the very least, he should have called Gabi and told her what was happening. She was going to have his hide for this, and he deserved it for being a moron.

Cam's hands were tied behind his back. The bindings bit into his wrists turning his fingers blue. A gag was cutting into his mouth. Already the gag was bright red from the blood coming

from his cut lip. His eyes were starting to swell shut. Forcas and Douma had obviously beaten him bad.

Yet they hadn't broken his spirit. Staying upright on his knees, he shot them a defiant look from his half closed eyes. His head moved as he tried to shoot off smart remarks around the rag in his mouth.

Abdiel was a little unnerved he hadn't heard his voice in his head. Why was he not communicating telepathically?

Cam's scrawny frame was dwarfed by a set of heavy chains covered in ancient demon markings. With his hands behind his back, he thought the chains were overkill, even for his brothers.

Abdiel saw red. "Let him go, you sons of bitches."

Cam tried to yell something at him, but it was muffled. Douma walked over and backhanded him. Cam tried to shoot off flame at the demon. The chains around him turned white hot and hummed eerily before he was thrown onto his back by an unseen force.

"How many times do we have to tell you?" Douma sneered. "Every time you try to use your powers, the Chains of Containment will turn them back on you."

So that's why Cam is not communicating with me

telepathically. These chains are trapping his gifts. The young angel jerked around on the ground from having his own powers turned on him. Abdiel moved forward to help him, but his brothers stepped in front of Cam and blocked his way.

"You have one choice, brother." Forcas came over and stroked Abdiel's cheek with a claw. "Come with us, or we'll pump him so full of demon's blood he'll be nothing but a blathering idiot."

Cam started to yell against the gag once again. Even though Abdiel couldn't understand him, he knew what he was trying to say. He smelled a set up and he didn't want Abdiel to agree to this. What Cam didn't know was Abdiel wasn't about ready to let Cam go to Hell and suffer alone. He wasn't going let him be deserted down there like Rachael and Appolion had been.

Douma held up a silver bracelet. It was an angel harness. A device used by justice angels, it made the wearer incapable of flashing. It was the angel equivalent to handcuffs. With a sigh of resignation, Abdiel held his hand out.

Cam started to yell harder against the gag, pleading with Abdiel, wanting Abdiel to flash out of there and leave him behind.

Douma snapped it shut.

Abdiel knew they had lied. They were never

going to let Cam go. Now they had both of them. And Gabi and Rachael were totally unprotected.

* * * *

As soon as they got the angels to the dungeon in Hell, they chained them to opposite walls. They left the Chains of Containment on Cam, but removed the gag. Now that they had him in Hell, they wanted to hear his cries of agony.

They started beating them, attacking the two angels without mercy or without letting up. It seemed to go on for hours. The worst part for Abdiel wasn't his own pain, but hearing Cam's grunts. Cam never broke though. He didn't give the demons that satisfaction. Abdiel found a grim sense of victory in that.

Finally, the demons stopped and left. The two angels sagged against their restraints panting and in pain. Their blood trickled down and mixed with the dirt floor. The uneven stones that made up the walls of the cell dug into their backs even as their bodies protested the way the chains twisted them. Abdiel tried to shift around to find a more comfortable position only to find there was none.

Cam started to sing Daniel Powter's song *Bad Day* in a weak, broken voice.

In spite of himself, Abdiel laughed. "I'm sorry I

got us into this, kid."

"I was the one who went to them in the first place," Cam admitted. "They had Dina and used his pain to draw me out. At least I was able to send him to Heaven before they got me in these damn chains. I was so stupid. Instead of fighting, I went up to the angel and helped him first. His pain and fear just overwhelmed me. I couldn't think straight. I guess I'm just a plain old empath after all."

"That's crap, and you know it." Abdiel spit blood out of his mouth. "If you were an empath you would've overloaded by now since we're in Hell. Yet here you are still shooting off your smart mouth."

The door to their cell swung open and Douma and Forcas strode in. They went to Cam, completely ignoring Abdiel. Forcas grabbed the young angel by the hair roughly. Cam tried to fight, but the chains kept him immobile. Douma held up a syringe for him to see. It was huge and full of demon blood.

Cam's eyes went wide with fear. "No, crap no," he whimpered. He tried harder to fight, bucking so hard against his restraints his wrists bled from straining against the chains.

"Don't, please," Abdiel hated begging his brothers, but he would do anything to stop them

from hurting Cam. "I'll do whatever you want. I'll even go before Lucifer and ask for his forgiveness. Just don't put that stuff in him."

"We've been waiting to experiment on this one." Forcas pulled harder on Cam's hair, tilting his head so his jugular was exposed.

Cam continued to struggle wildly.

This was his worst nightmare come alive, and Abdiel knew it. Abdiel also knew he was powerless to stop it. He cursed the day Cam had met him. Everyone he ever cared about had been hurt because of him. First, the twins when they were taken to Hell. Then Gabi when she brought his sister back. Now it was Cam, and all because his damn brothers wanted a lab rat.

Douma plunged the needle ruthlessly into Cam's neck and injected every last drop of blood into the angel. That finally succeeded in breaking him. Cam threw back his head and released a scream of pure agony. It echoed all through the bowels of Hell causing demons everywhere to stop what they were doing and look up in surprise.

* * * *

"Oh, Gabi, look at this," Rachael squealed in delight.

Gabi looked over at the dangerously short miniskirt her sister-in-law held up. "If I let you buy that, your brother will have my hide."

Rachael tucked it over her arm with all the other revealing clothing.

It seemed every time Gabi said something was too skimpy that was incentive for Rachael to buy it. Ever since she'd discovered she had breasts and curvy legs, she seemed intent on showing them off.

Rachael was currently dressed in a short, ruffled red skirt. It was paired with fishnet stockings and a tight, red top that showed off her belly. A pair of knee-high black boots with six-inch heels completed the outfit. Since they were out shopping, they didn't shield themselves to the humans. Several men stopped dead in their tracks in order to get a better look at her. Rachael seemed totally oblivious to all the attention.

"As soon as Abdiel sees what you're wearing, he's going to strangle both of us," Gabi huffed.

"My brother needs to remember I'm not that much younger than him." Rachael never looked up from the rack of clothes she sorted through. "You know, Cam bosses me around, too. I'm older than him, but he still acts like an old granny around me."

Gabi chuckled as she thought about how quick

Rachael had picked up on Earth lingo. It had only been a couple of weeks, but she'd assimilated. Obviously, Cam had been a good tutor. "He's just overprotective of you." Gabi took a black leather skirt from her hands and hung it back up. "I'm afraid all the Lehor brothers have decided you are their new sister." Cam had taken her to meet all of his brothers. They all took an instant liking to Rachael. They admired her spunk and quick wit. Not to mention the fact she could chug a whole can of whipped cream without coming up for air.

"Don't remind me," Rachael groaned. "The other day some poor empath tried to talk to me, and Ramiel all but growled at the poor guy." She wrinkled her brow in confusion. "I don't feel Cam or Abdiel on Earth any longer."

"Scan Heaven," Gabi ordered as her heart sped up with fear. "Maybe they went up there for something."

Rachel closed her eyes and went into a trance. When she opened them, they were full of tears. "They're not there either. We need to get back to the house."

Gabi didn't argue. She made them invisible to humans, then flashed them to their house. They were met with deathly silence. Gabi ran one way while Rachael went the other. They both called out for the males and neither received a response.

Gabi found Abdiel's phone on the ground. She snatched it up and scrolled through the history. The last call was from Cam. It had lasted thirty seconds. She clutched the phone in her hand desperately needing to touch something her mate had.

Rachael entered the room. She panted, her eyes wide. "I can't touch either one of their minds. There's something blocking me. It's not Douma or Forcas. It's something stronger."

"Here, try this." Gabi shoved the cell phone into her hand. "Sometimes Cam holds something someone has touched and he's able to read their past thoughts."

Rachael grabbed it and jerked backward as the memories slammed into her. She let out a small cry of distress. "Douma and Forcas have them both." She bolted toward the gym.

Gabi ran to keep up with her.

Rachael jerked open a cabinet and started to paw through the weapons stored there. Since Abdiel collected every weapon imaginable, the choices were extensive. The sky turned dark and thunder rumbled. Rachael breathed hard with anger. "I'm going to go get them back."

"You can't go to Hell." Gabi started to panic. They had Abdiel. They had her mate and she could do nothing to help him.

"Why not?" Rachael spat. "I know the place like the back of my hand."

Lightning split the sky and Gabi realized it was because Rachael was so distressed she was throwing her powers around without meaning to. Gabi grabbed her by the shoulders, "Look I'm just as upset as you are. That's my mate they have. But we can't do this without help." Gabi flashed them to the one angel that could aid them. The mansion was in the heart of Heaven. She pounded on the door. "Michael, we need you."

* * * *

They unchained Cam so Abdiel could have a full view of his thrashings. They even took off the Chains of Confinement. There was no danger of Cam using his powers now.

At first, Cam just flopped on the floor, crying out as waves of pain racked him. Then he got up and started to ram his head into the wall again and again, screaming about voices in his head. The demons stood back and watched him hurt himself while in the throes of his frenzy. Douma and Forcas laughed as the blood poured down the angel's face.

Cam rolled on the balls of his feet, holding his head in between his hands. Abdiel could see blood

trickle out of both his ears and he foamed at the mouth. Finally, he flipped onto his back with a sickening, bone-crunching sound. He started to convulse violently. His already injured head pounded into the ground.

Abdiel heard joints pop as his body protested the contortions the seizures twisted him into. The archangel fought against his own restraints, desperate to get to his friend. "I'm going to make you pay for this Forcas and Douma."

They just laughed even harder, then walked out of the cell, slamming the door shut.

All Abdiel could do was sit there hopelessly as his adopted brother was slowly destroyed right before his eyes.

Abdiel sat there in the darkness listening to Cam's ragged breathing. After what had seemed like hours, the young angel had finally quieted down some. Cam's face was unrecognizable. Between the beating the demons had given him and his own self-destructive fit, he was a bloody pulp. He still hadn't woken up and Abdiel doubted he ever would.

"Oh no, not my little puppy," a soft voice cried. A small female demon glided into the room. She was really quite beautiful with long blonde hair. She had dark green eyes like a tiger's and an impressive set of fangs. She immediately went to

Cam and ran her hands over him.

At the sight of yet another demon touching him when he was so helpless and totally defenseless, Abdiel got good and pissed. "Don't touch him," he snarled. Not like there was much he could do besides trying to down her with a well-placed loogie.

She looked up at him and her eyes flashed dangerously. Her black wings flapped opened as she displayed how much his comments, well...ruffled her feathers. "I would never hurt my little puppy. He's too sweet." She opened the small pouch she had over her shoulder and pulled out some manna. She tried to slip it in between Cam's lips, but he gagged on it. Undaunted, she forced some more into his mouth.

This time, the angel heaved as his body rejected it.

She nibbled on her bottom lip with her right fang before she turned to Abdiel. "He cannot take in the manna. Your friend is too far gone for it to help him."

"How is manna going to help him anyway?" Abdiel growled, still not trusting the demoness.

"One of two ways me and my sisters keep our beauty is by consuming manna." She rummaged through her bag again.

"What's the other way?" Abdiel asked wearily.

She pulled out a small dagger and a cup. "We drink angel's blood," she confessed. "Just like demon's blood can change an angel, angel's blood can stop a demon from physically turning all the way."

"You're a succubus, aren't you?" He leaned his head against the wall and rolled his eyes. "I don't want to know how you and Cam know each other, do I?"

"Which question do you want me to answer first?" She smoothed back Cam's hair. "Yes, I am a succubus, and yes, little puppy and I know each other because we did what succubi are best at."

"Do you get this close to every angel you know?"

"No, I have never given them a second thought." She smiled gently down at the young angel. "But Cam was different. He knew what I was and still didn't look at me with disgust. That's why I'm willing to risk myself for him."

"You can help him?" He really hoped this demon chick wasn't messing with his mind for jollies.

"How about you? Are you willing to sacrifice everything you have been told for him?"

"Of course I would. He's like a brother to me."

She walked over to him. "I need some of your blood. We have to feed it to him. Otherwise, he'll

completely turn demon."

"Is this some kind of twisted joke?" Abdiel was shocked she even suggested such a thing.

"Answer me one thing, archangel." The female looked him in the eye. "How do you think rogue angels last so long without turning? As soon as an angel turns their back on Heaven and embraces evil, they immediately begin the transition to demon. In order to slow down the process, they buy angel blood from the black market."

"You're lying," Abdiel spat. "The council would never allow something like that to take place."

"Please." The demon curled her lip in disgust. "Your precious council has known about the practice of angel blood for centuries. They just hide it from the civilized angel population. They have their own interests at stake."

From what he had seen of the council, he had to admit there was probably some truth in her words. He could easily see Jehel putting politics before what was moral. But Abdiel still blanched at the thought. Even if she was right about rogues, no pure angel had ever drunk another angel's blood. For all he knew, it could make Cam even worse. When he looked at Cam and saw him slipping more into a catatonic state, he made up his mind. After all, what did they have to lose? "If

this hurts him more, I'll hunt you down and make you regret the day you set eyes on me."

She cast a doubtful glance at the chains holding him to the wall. "Given your current situation, I don't think making threats like that is very effective." She cut a deep slash in his wrist. Holding the cup under it, she caught the blood that flowed out.

"How much blood do you need?" he complained.

"It's not like you can die from blood loss." She rolled her eyes. "You are immortal, after all." Finally, when the cup was full, she went over and knelt by Cam. She lifted his head and slowly let some of the blood trickle past his lips.

At first, he choked on the fluid. Soon he grabbed the cup with both hands and gulped it in. When he finally drained the entire glass, he opened his eyes halfway. "Lilith, is it really you?"

"Yes, but I can't stay long."

Abdiel was shocked to see actual tears in her eyes.

"Am I going mental or did you just give me blood?" Cam sounded revolted by the idea.

"If I hadn't done so, you would have turned or worse, gone completely catatonic. While the thought of you becoming one of us appeals to me, I knew that would make you unhappy. Don't

worry. It was pure angel blood. I would never poison you."

"It still hurts," he hissed as his eyelids fluttered.

"It will while the transformation takes place." She hung her head down while the tears flowed harder.

"What do you mean transformation?" Abdiel shot her a venomous look, the only weapon he could wield at the moment. "You said this would stop him from turning demon."

"He won't become demon, but he won't be full angel anymore either." She dared to look up at him. "He will have to continue drinking angel blood or else he will succumb to his dark urges. There may also be some physical changes as well."

"What do you mean physical changes?" Abdiel felt his heart speed up as panic surged through his body. "What's going to happen to him?"

"I honestly don't know." Her hands twirled around nervously. "The rogue angels chose to let demon power in them. Cam was forced to take it in when he was injected. This is a first."

"What the hell did you do to me?" Cam whispered before his body arched upward and he yelled in pain.

"I had to." She threw her head on his chest. "It was the only way to save you. Once this is all over and they grow tired of you, I'll take you home

with me. I promise to take good care of you, and it will only be the two of us forever.”

“He’s an archangel, not some stray puppy.” Abdiel was beginning to get a sick feeling in his stomach. Maybe the succubus had only been helping herself all along. It was suddenly beginning to look like she was trying to make Cam into her slave. Dear God, by giving her his blood, he had helped her.

Cam rolled onto his side and whimpered.

Abdiel was relieved to see the young angel’s breathing seemed less labored than before and he was at least conscious. It looked like the danger of him turning catatonic was over. Abdiel just hoped he had chosen the lesser of two evils.

Footsteps paused outside the cell door.

The succubus looked over at him and placed a finger over her lips to tell him not to say anything. He mimicked using a key to lock his mouth before he flipped her off just to let her know he wasn’t fooled by her innocent I-just-want-to-help act.

She returned the rude gesture, then flashed out of the cell.

Two demon jailers came in and unshackled him. They went to haul him up to his feet, but he shrugged off their hands and stood up by himself. Abdiel wouldn’t be dragged to his own torture session. He would walk on his own two legs for he

had no doubt in his mind that was where they were taking him. He remembered what Haniel had looked like when they found him. His stomach turned over. With one last worried look at Cam, he let them lead him out of the cell.

They took him to another cell and roughly ushered him in. In the center was a table with restraints for both the feet and hands. On the wall was a rack that held various instruments of torture. True to every stereotype, there was a plain light bulb hanging in the center of the room. *Oh, goodie this is so going to be fun.*

"Strap him down, then leave us," a voice said from the darkness.

He would know that voice anywhere. There had once been a time he had craved to hear it and it had spoken sweet loving words to him. "Hi, Persephone. Long time no see."

* * * *

Back in the cell, Cam swallowed another scream. The pain he was feeling now was completely different. Earlier his body had felt like it was burning from the inside out as the demon's blood had traveled through his veins. Now it felt like someone was tearing him apart bit by bit. Finally, unable to stand the agony any longer, he let loose

a yell.

He was barely aware that all his injuries were healing at a phenomenal rate. As his body transformed, bones broke and reset. Every muscle in his body went into spasms as they grew. He rolled up in a fetal position and heard himself calling out for Ana and his brothers as if he was a child again. When the pain became too much, he let the blessed darkness claim him.

Chapter Three

If not for her voice, Abdiel wouldn't have recognized her. Gone was the female he once thought he loved. When he'd last seen her, she'd been beautiful and regal with long, curly brown hair and wide, brown eyes, but like his brothers, the evil in her had changed her. A monster stood before him. Her skin, although unblemished, was a dusky shade of red. She had cold, soulless, black eyes and her hair was as dark as midnight. Her hands were long, curled inward and formed claws. There were long talons at the ends of her fingers. On the top of her head was a set of black horns.

She was dressed like some goth teenage boy's wet dream. Her black gown was long and flowed gracefully around her. The outfit was ripped in many places, the holes strategically placed so glimpses of her most provocative body parts showed through. She wore a black studded choker

around her neck with a large ring in the front so it resembled a dog collar. A gold snake bracelet coiled around her upper arm and ended just above her elbow. Her vinyl, knee-high boots had long spiked heels and silver buckles that ran the entire length up her leg.

Following her orders, the guards threw him roughly on his stomach on the stone table and restrained his hands and feet. When the fetid smell hit him, he tried to pull his face away as he gagged. The table was covered in dried blood. Some was a fresh, bright red. The rest was dark, and obviously, old. It seemed housekeeping wasn't top on the list of priorities for demons.

"Do you know what my specialty is, Abdiel?" she asked.

He looked down and didn't answer her, refusing to be baited. Seeing how she had pulled out a whip and he was spread eagle on a rack, it was a stupid question. She'd always been a little dense now that he thought about it. How could he have ever thought she was so great? Gabi was right. He'd been a stupid idiot.

"I torture others. I'm very good at it. In fact, I'm the best there is in Hell." She pulled his head up by his hair, forcing him to look at her.

"Good for you." He decided to use sarcasm a weapon. "I'm the Texas Hold 'Em Champion three

years running in Heaven.”

She bared her fangs and hissed, her eyes burning with fury. Smacking him on the cheek, her talons left several scratches.

Seeing stars, he shook his head to clear them away. Obviously, she had no sense of humor, but she did have a mean left hook. Her claws sliced away his shirt and bared his back. *Damn, that was my favorite one, too.* He wondered briefly why he was worried about something as little as that right now. Probably because he was trying to think of anything, but what was about to happen to him. He closed his eyes and braced himself as he heard the whip swish. Finally, the leather slithering ceased, then sang in the air. He bit his lip in order not to cry out as it cut into his flesh.

“You see that blood under you?” she asked.

Yeah right, like he could miss it since his face was right in it.

“Do you know who most of it belongs to?”

“Your boyfriend?” That comment earned him another lash of the whip. *Damn, she is one vicious bitch.*

“No, you smart mouthed fool. It belongs to your baby brother, Appolion.” She laughed at the look in his eyes and knew she scored a point. “I honed my skills on him for hundreds of years. When he kept refusing to turn demon, his

punishments were many. We used every technique we could think of, but he still refused to hurt any human. He's a stubborn, bleeding heart just like you. Appolion always got the same look in his eye you have right now. He's more like you than he will ever know."

"How could you? He was just a child!" he snarled. The whip came down again. This time, the pain was so bad he bit his lip and drew blood.

"I was right. You are just like your brother. He, too, refused to scream when he was being punished." Crack! "I tried and tried to break him, but he fought it." Crack! "We had to finally turn to more imaginative ways." Crack! "You would be surprised at how many demons are pedophiles."

That brought out a small cry of protest from him. While she couldn't break him with physical pain, she could with emotional pain. The mere thought of his brother being abused tore him apart, and she knew it. She was right. She was good at what she did.

"They love teenage angels. Lucky for them, we're not like humans. Those weak humans are only in their teens for seven years, whereas angels and demons are teens for many years. Until he finally grew to be a full grown male, your precious Appolion was very popular."

He fought against the restraints. "When I get

my hands on you, Persephone, I'm going to tear you to pieces."

"You'll never have that chance. When we win this war, and we will win, I'll not only have you at my mercy, but I'll also have your bitch mate, Gabi."

"Don't talk about her. You aren't even fit to say her name." That threw her in a fury. She backhanded him before she started to use the whip on him again. Fueled by deep seated jealousy she started calling him every name imaginable as she went into a frenzy. Finally, halfway through the beating, he lost control and let some cries of pain escape.

Exhausted and covered in his blood, she stopped. "I am going to give your precious princess to Beelzebub," she shrieked. "Do you know he has been taken with her since we all were in school? All those years you were mooning over me, while she pined for you, he drooled over her. It's like some bad love movie. He'd love a chance to finally screw her and he'll enjoy doing it in front of you."

"If he so much as touches her, I'll amputate his hands and feed them to him," Abdiel whispered, barely conscious.

She called in the guards. "Take him back to his cell and bring me the other one."

"No." He struggled to lift his head. "Leave him alone. He's already been hurt enough. I'll take his place."

Persephone's mouth opened in shock. "You're willing to take another session for him?"

"Yes," he gritted out between clenched teeth. "Just leave him alone."

She went over to the wall and pulled a set of pliers down. Walking toward him, she gave him a wicked smile. "You angels have always shocked me by how much you care for one another. It almost surpasses the affection you have for those lowly humans. I can't believe how you and the other angels let love and compassion rule what you do. That will be your eventual downfall."

* * * *

"What do you mean there's nothing you can do?" Gabi shoved Michael in the chest before turning away from him in anger.

Michael raked his hands threw his hair as he paced around his living room. "Angels can't go into Hell. You know that just as well as I do. Just like we have protective fields around Heaven, the demons have put up their own barriers. If I took an army there and tried to infiltrate it, the shields would make them so sick they wouldn't even be

able to move, let alone rescue anybody. I'm sorry, Gabi, but there's nothing we can do except hope the demons decide to release them on their own."

"Some consolation that is." Gabi wrapped her arms around herself. "The only time they ever release a captive is if they've already destroyed them. And the only reason they do it then is so they can terrorize us." Just the mere thought of finding Abdiel the same way they had found Haniel broke her heart. With an agonized moan, Gabi collapsed to the ground.

Rolling into a fetal position, she sobbed. They had Abdiel, and she could do nothing to get him back. The demons were hurting him and it was tearing her heart apart. She had never lost it like this before. She'd always been cool and in control of her emotions, a true ice princess. But that was before Abdiel melted the ice and found the way to her heart.

"If you won't go for him, I will," Rachael challenged their leader. "Unlike you, I'm no coward. I'll figure a way around these barriers."

Even in Heaven, her rage was evident. Lightning flashed through the sky, dangerously close to his house. She was teetering on the edge and the only one who could bring her back was in Hell.

"You step one toe into Hell and the demons

will be on you so fast your little head will spin," Michael's voice held a warning. Every angel, including Abdiel, always backed up when they heard that tone.

Rachael however, took one step forward and glared at him. "How can you just sit by and do nothing? Don't you care anything about them?"

"Of course I do," he thundered. "Cam is my nephew, damn it."

Gabi rolled to her feet and stood there in stunned silence with Rachael. Gabi couldn't have been more shocked if Michael slapped her in the face. She'd never even suspected Michael and Cam were related. "Does Cam know you're his uncle?"

"No, none of them know, not even Ana."

She had the sudden urge to hit him again. "How could you keep something like this from them?"

"Lehor and I never had the best of relationships. When her children were born, we weren't even on speaking terms."

"How about after she was mentally destroyed? Why did you keep it a secret then?"

"I'm a leader. I can't afford to look like I'm playing favorites." Even as he defended himself, he couldn't look her in the eye.

"They needed you, Michael!" she yelled.

"They had their Aunt Amiteil to take care of them," he said lamely.

"Please, Lehor's sister is a cold bitch that never gave them a second thought. Ana and the boys were totally alone, and you know it. But then you should know all about Amiteil since she is obviously your sister, too. I should have known all along. You both share the same stone hearts."

"You're bordering on insubordination, Gabi." Michael's voice had taken on a cold edge. "You had better watch it."

"I'm going to tell them the truth," Rachael shot out heatedly. "As soon as I see Ana and the brothers, your precious little secret is going to be out."

"As Chief I forbid you both from saying a word." Michael pointed a finger at them.

Rachael gave him a scathing look. "You may be Gabi's Chief, but you're not mine. I never made any vows, remember?"

Michael stormed over to her and looked down into her eyes.

Even though he towered over her, Rachael stood her ground and didn't take a step backward.

"Whose side are you on, Rachael? Are you a demon or an angel?"

"I...I..." she stuttered. Suddenly, her anger dissolved and was replaced with grief. She looked

so lost and small. "I just want my brother back. He's the only one that ever loved me and now I've lost him. I want Cam back, too. I'm so lost without both of them."

Then Michael did the most shocking thing of all, he took the small female in his arms and held her tenderly as she cried her heart out.

Gabi could only look on in stunned silence as he murmured soft words in her ear and stroked her hair while slowly rocking her.

He looked over her shoulder and met Gabi's gaze. "I always watched over them, even though I never let them know it. I know it was a piss poor substitution for what I really should have done, but I at least did that. I intend to start making up for it now, but I need you two to promise not to say anything to them until we get Cam and Abdiel back. Ana and the boys have enough on their plates right now without this being added to it."

Rachael pulled back so she could look at him and nodded. Michael used the pad of his thumb to wipe away a stray tear from her cheek.

Gabi was starting to feel a little awkward with the whole situation, almost like she was intruding on an intimate moment. Holy Moly, who was she kidding? She *was* intruding on an intimate moment and it involved Michael of all angels. If the situation wasn't so serious, she might have

laughed.

"I know a way to get them back." He never took his gaze off of Rachael.

"How?" Rachael asked.

Gabi had the sudden urge to raise her hand and say, *yoo hoo, grieving mate here*. Abdiel was in Hell and Michael was making nice with his sister. She was starting to get royally pissed off and she must have projected that fact because the two of them pulled away and shot her guilty glances.

"Pretty soon, the demons are going to know all about Rachael and her powers." Michael got back to business. "They will get that information from Cam and Abdiel."

"Abdiel would never break and talk under torture," Gabi protested proudly.

"There are plenty of telepaths in Hell able to rip that information out of their minds. The demons won't have to torture them to get it."

"He's right, Gabi. They'll find out about me, one way or another." Rachael wrapped her arms around herself.

"The way I see it," Michael added, "is when Lucifer's top general, Mammon, finds out Beelzebub actually gave away one of the Order, he is not going to be a happy camper. It won't matter to him that Beelzebub didn't realize you were a member. Beelzebub is going to be willing to do

almost anything in order to save his own sorry hide. We will strike a deal with him. We bring Rachael and they bring Cam and Abdiel to the battlefield. Winner gets all of them."

"Are you crazy, Michael?" Gabi gasped. "You'll need an army to pull this off, and the council will never agree to this crazy plan."

"The council can go take a flying leap. Like I said before, I will right this wrong. Cam is my nephew and this is personal. As for the army, let me worry about getting it organized."

"I'll call to Beelzebub and tell him I want to meet him." Rachael went beside Gabi and took her hand. "Michael is right. They only have two of the angels. They'll want me, too. I will also let him know Appolion and I can communicate telepathically. The demon will assume I can track him down that way."

"When is the last time you heard from Appolion?" Michael asked.

"A few hundred years," Rachael admitted. "Beelzebub doesn't know that though. I'll tell him I can find Appolion. The stupid demon won't be able to resist the chance to get all four of us."

Gabi jerked her head up. "No, you can't do this. It will destroy Abdiel if they get you, too."

Rachael pressed her forehead to Gabi's. "We just have to make sure we don't lose then. Abdiel

is my brother and Cam is like a brother, too. I won't let them suffer in Hell. I know what it's like down there."

"Are you ready for this, Rachel?" Michael asked gravely. "Cam and Abdiel won't be in any condition to fight, and Appolion is still MIA. You're our biggest hope for success."

Gabi looked at her sister-in-law. She was so tiny and innocent looking. She held so much power in her small, delicate hands.

"Bring it on. Those demons aren't even going to know what hit them." Her blue eyes grew dark. "Nobody hurts my brothers and survives to tell about it."

* * * *

When Persephone finally got bored with him, the demon guards had to carry him back to his cell. As soon as they entered it, the smell of vomit met them. Cam was curled up in the corner moaning softly. He'd gotten sick all over his clothes. One of the guards went up to him and hauled him to his feet. The young angel swayed on his feet as his head lolled back.

"You promised to leave him alone," Abdiel protested.

"Surprise," the guard sneered. "Demons lie."

Who would have thought? We can't let you have all the fun, archangel. Persephone is going to enjoy messing up your friend's pretty face."

"The surprise is on you, asshole," Cam snarled as he jerked himself upright. "This empath's got a little bite in him." He smiled showing off a pair of fangs.

That didn't shock Abdiel as much as his eyes. They were still blue, but were a dark, deep blue and the blue filled up almost the entire area, leaving very little white, and were rimmed with black. The pupils looked just like the succubus', long and feline in appearance. His body structure had changed, too. His pants used to be several sizes too big and hung on his frame, now they actually fit. In the matter of hours, the angel had amassed several pounds of lean muscle mass. Gone was the scrawny kid, now replaced with a hardened warrior.

Cam bared his fangs and sank them deep into the demon's throat. Ripping out his jugular, he drank in its blood.

Abdiel was surprised when the blood didn't poison him. In fact, it seemed to give him even more energy.

Throwing away the monster's body, he turned to face the other guard. The remaining demon whimpered in fear. Cam smiled at him and wiped

the blood off his chin. "Not as good as angel blood, but it will do for now."

"You're not supposed to be able to take in our blood," the guard protested. "It's poisonous to angels."

"Bad news for you. I was never good at following the rules." Cam licked his lips before he flashed his fangs again and bent his knees, preparing to launch himself at the remaining demon.

"Cam, stop," Abdiel yelled as panic welled inside him. "You don't know what drinking that crap will do to you."

"What will it do? Turn me into a monster? Oops, too late for that," Can retorted, however, he didn't bite the demon.

Abdiel was relieved to see he was still willing to listen to him.

They could hear other guards running toward the cell.

Cam grabbed the remaining demon by the head and twisted his neck in a way that would make Steven Segal proud. Six more demons rushed into the cell. Cam threw back his head and laughed, acting like he was actually looking forward to another fight.

Not that Abdiel really blamed him. After all they had been put through, it must feel good to

give some back.

As the demons came into the cell, they stopped, horrified at the sight of their two fallen comrades. When they saw another demon with his throat ripped out, their jaws dropped in fear. They looked at Cam with a disbelieving stare. He used their hesitation to his advantage. Running at them, he tackled the closest one, bringing it to the ground. He straddled the demon and got in a few punches before the others dragged him off. He managed to pull away from their grip and stood with his fists up as the demons formed a circle around him. As they attacked him, the angel fought well, but he was hopelessly outnumbered and had no weapon besides his fists. They finally managed to take Cam down, but not before he took out four of them.

"You fuckers are so lucky I don't have my flame back," he told them as they pulled him out of the cell. "I would roast your asses, then make s'mores over your smoldering remains."

Abdiel cursed the demons that took Cam away. Then he cursed the demons lying injured in the cell. Finally, he cursed the demons coming in to drag their wounded away. None of it made him feel any better.

He then started to curse himself for failing Cam. As the archangel it was his duty to make

sure all the angels under him were safe. Instead, he had royally screwed up, and now one of the few friends he had was morphing into some kind of monster. Remembering how innocent and kind Cam was the day he first came to their house, Abdiel had to blink back the tears. Even if he did manage to get them out of this mess, he would never be able to look Ana in the eye again. She had trusted him to protect her little brother, and he hadn't done a very good job.

Even if he could get free of the chains, he was useless now. Looking up at his mangled hands, he winced. Persephone had snapped every finger. That was after she had used the pliers to pull out every nail. Not to mention the fact his back was basically hamburger.

He let out a hysterical, half-mad laugh as he thought about what Michael would think if he saw him now. To think his Chief had actually thought he was to be some great leader who would help save the world. Some hero, he couldn't even save his best friend.

His only solace was that Gabi was safe. When he remembered her smell and the way her body felt around his, it helped to ease some of the pain. He knew he would never see her again. There was no way Satan would ever let him go. Not after he had dared defy his authority all those centuries

ago. If anyone could hold a grudge, it was Lucifer.

He could only imagine how mad Gabi must be at him. He had gone off without letting her know what he was doing. She'd reminded him countless times how they were a team. That he was not alone in the world anymore. A small smile curved his lips. His little hellcat was probably spiting fire right now.

* * * *

"When we get Abdiel back, I'm going to skin him alive," Gabi told her sister-in-law. She and Rachael were waiting in the same park where they had taken the males. Rachael had contacted Beelzebub telepathically and arranged a meeting. The demon had thought it would be fun to meet them at the scene of the crime. Tired of all the waiting, Gabi felt like screaming. It had been a whole two days since they had taken Abdiel and they were still no closer to getting him back than before.

Both females were armed to the hilt. Gabi had not only her crossbow, but several daggers and throwing stars tucked away. Rachael had a scabbard on her back with a sword. It had been Abdiel's when he was a young archangel in training. She also had two retractable blades attached to her wrists. Their biggest weapons were

hidden in the trees around them. All seven of Cam's brothers kept a close watch on them. If the demons tried to pull a fast one, they'd be in for a nasty surprise.

Beelzebub flashed in front of them. With him were two of his generals. He didn't speak at first. He just looked at the two females with an evil smile on his face.

Gabi felt like she was being sized up in the slave market, but didn't betray that thought in her cold stare. He settled his gaze on Rachael.

His lip curled up in disgust. Rachael all but growled at him as she shot him a venomous glare. There was obviously no love lost between the two of them.

"Well, look who's a big girl now," he sneered at Rachael. "You called for me, so here I am. What in the hell do you want?"

"You know what I want," Rachel responded. "I want Cam and Abdiel released."

Bub laughed in her face. "Now why would I do that? What will you offer me in return?"

Rachael turned and directed her hands at one of the generals sending a ball of energy at him. The demon yelped in pain as it struck him in the chest and threw him backward. Bub looked scared for a moment before he turned to her and started to applaud mockingly. The general struggled to his

feet and went to attack the females, but Bub held up his hand to stop him.

"I'm offering myself," she said coolly. "Not only will you have me, but I can track my twin brother. You know you'll never get Appolion without me. Without him, you will never have the completed Order of Four."

"Even if I were to trade them for you and you managed to get your twin that still wouldn't help me. We would need Abdiel and his little punk. We need all four of you, not just two." Bub held up four fingers in her face to prove his point.

She smacked them away. "We challenge you to a battle. Pick the place and bring as many demons as you want. Winner gets all four of us, loser leaves with their tail between their legs."

He looked at the two females uneasily. "Does Michael know you're proposing this deal?"

Gabi made a big deal of rolling her eyes. "Who do you think is amassing the army as we speak?"

Bub looked over at her with lust in his eyes. "I agree to your deal. However, I have one stipulation of my own. When you lose, I want Gabi, too. She will be mine to do with as I want."

"Fine," Gabi said without hesitation.

Bub reached over and stroked her cheek.

She shuddered, but held her revulsion in check.

"You don't know how long I have wanted you,

princess," he whispered.

She gave him her most haughty, royal look. "The only one that calls me princess is Abdiel. He is the only male I will ever love. Whereas you are nothing but a slug."

Bub snarled in anger. "I could just take you now. You're just two females, and there are three of us."

Rachael pulled out her sword and pointed in at the two generals as Gabi grabbed a dagger from her waist and aimed it straight at Bub's black heart. The seven Lehor brothers came out of their hiding places with their weapons drawn.

Bub took one look at the situation and backed down. He let out an angry hiss at Rachael. "It must feel nice to have someone finally looking out for you, caring for you." He gave a snide smirk. "Do you want to know a secret, my little bitch? Appolion wasn't exiled. Your mother freed him. How does it feel to know she loved him enough to do that for him while she let you rot away in that bed? Do all these angels know what a whore you are? Do they know all the things Douma and Forcas did to you? The things they made you do to them? You're not the sweet, innocent thing they think you are."

"Shut your dirty, filthy mouth," Nathaniel yelled.

Bub ignored him, leaned forward and sniffed her. "I can smell you demon brothers' stench all over you even now. How can you possibly think Heaven could even want you when you're tainted?"

"She's been up to Heaven and Michael accepted her, you slimy bastard," Gabi spat. She felt a roar of anger ripping through her body. If they didn't need the demon for negotiations, she would have destroyed him herself. Rachael tried to keep on a brave face, but it was easy to see this devastated her spirit.

Bub continued his verbal torture. "When they realize Abdiel isn't coming back, do you really think they're going to let you stay around? They're going to send you packing so fast your head's going to spin. Then you'll be alone, just like before."

Derel pulled back the string of his longbow, an arrow pointed at Beelzebub's face. "Nobody talks to our new sister that way, you piece of demon trash. Just say the word, Rachael, and I'll shoot off his freaking face for you."

The demon backed down, realizing he had finally pushed the brothers to the end of their limit. "Fine." Beelzebub spat at her feet. "Go prepare your army. I'll send a messenger later to let you know the time and place."

"Agreed," Rachael said, never lowering her sword. "Just remember, if we don't see Cam and Abdiel, the deal is off."

"They had better be in one piece, too, or else," Gabi added.

"Or else what?" the demon asked.

Gabi gave Bub a look so cold and evil the demon shuddered. "Remember, I was the angel called on to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah." Her voice was pure venom. "If they're not brought to us whole, what I do to you will make it look like those two cities had it easy."

Bub looked downright afraid before he flashed himself and his two cronies out of the park.

Even though the demons were gone, Rachael remained rooted in her spot. She lowered her head in shame and refused to meet any of their eyes.

The youngest brother, Barakiel, came over and put his arms around her. "That demon doesn't know what he's talking about. We'll never leave you alone. You're one of us now. We love you, and that's not going to change even if we don't get Cam and Abdiel back."

Jophil and Cassiel came and stood on either side of her. They were the only set of twins in the Lehor family and had the honor of being born right smack in the middle of the age hierarchy. Although they were archangels like their older

brothers, they weren't angel warriors. They were part of angel police force called the Enforcers. They were completely identical in looks right down to the long, blond bangs hung over blue eyes.

"Hey, don't pay any attention to anything that stupid demon said," Jophil soothed.

"Yeah, we'll always look out for you. Us twins have to stick together." Cassiel finished for him.

"What's Abdiel going to say when he finds out what Forcas and Douma did to me?" Rachael whispered.

Gabi's heart went out for her. She sounded so sad and ashamed. While Rachael tried hard to act as if nothing ever got to her, she obviously had more baggage than she ever let on. "Abdiel isn't going to blame you, and neither do we." Gabi gave her a fierce hug. "We love you, and that's never, ever going to change, no matter what."

All of a sudden, Barakiel yelled and crumpled to the ground. He started to let out sharp cries of pain as he rolled side to side. A fine sheen of sweat covered him and he grew deathly pale.

Rachael went to him and took him in her arms. She rubbed his back.

"It's Cam." Barakiel looked like he was about ready to get sick all over the place. "They're hurting him right now. Oh God, it's terrible.

They're trying to destroy him. I can feel it."

"He's connected to Cam. He's feeling his brother's pain." Rachael explained to the others.

"Crap, what are they doing to him in Hell that's so bad it's affecting Bear this way?" Nathaniel asked, his face turning green.

"Come on," Gabi took charge. "We need to get him back to the house and into bed."

* * * *

As soon as the demons started to drag Cam to the torture chamber, he got his fight back. Spinning around, he broke free from the two demons. He drove his fist in the face of one demon before he used a flying back kick to down the other. He knocked both the demons senseless in a matter of seconds. His freedom was short-lived as another group of demons ran and brought him to the ground.

Two of them pinned his arms behind his back while the rest took turns punching him. Closing his eyes and trying to concentrate through the pain, he sent out mental images to the demons. It worked. Some of the guards started to run around in circles, confused. He started to work mentally on the two that held his arms. He felt his powers returning to him, and he knew if he could get his

hands free he might be able to throw fire.

Just when he thought he might have a chance, Douma and Forcas came storming up. Cam's head felt like it was going to explode when Douma brutally slammed a barrier in place. Forcas came up and pinched Cam's cheeks together forcing his mouth open.

When the demon saw his fangs, he hissed in surprise before he leaned closer to the angel in order to look at his eyes better. "Mammon, you better come and get a look at this," Forcas called, still pinching the angel's mouth open.

A tall, dark demon came forward. As soon as he got closer, the evil rolled off of him. It was ten times stronger than any other demon Cam had felt before. He was ashamed to feel himself tremble in fear.

Mammon looked straight into the angel's soul with his dead eyes.

Those black eyes pinned him in place and he couldn't look away because of the paralyzing terror. He felt the evil exude from the demon in waves. His body started absorbing the hate, anger and demon power. "No," Cam protested. "I won't let you make me one of you. You'll have to destroy me first."

"Fine," Mammon smiled coldly. "We'll do this the hard way."

A huge explosion of pain rebounded throughout the angel's skull. He felt every good memory, feelings of love and happiness, savagely ripped from his brain. Dimly aware of someone screaming in agony, he realized it was him, but couldn't help it. He never thought there could be pain this bad.

It felt like every cell in his body was exploding and dark pits of burning acid were left in their wake. He knew they were destroying the old him and replacing that Cam with a new one, an evil one. He tried to fight it, but felt his control and will drifting away into the darkness.

By the time Mammon released his mind, the only thing left was hate and anger. He wanted to destroy and kill, to feel the blood of his victims running down his throat, he wanted to bathe in it. He vaguely remembered he had a family, someone who loved him, but he found that did not matter to him anymore.

No, you are an angel warrior. You have taken sacred vows. You must fight this. You can fight this, he told himself. He focused hard on the little bit of love still left in him. He found that some of his control returned, and he even started to remember Ana and his brothers.

They threw Cam into a small cell, then slammed the door behind him. He got up from his

hands and knees and looked around. He was surprised to find he hadn't been taken to a torture chamber. He was even more surprised to see there was a female angel sitting in the corner of the room.

He felt sick to his stomach as he realized what the demons had done. They'd thrown him in with a female thinking he would turn and attack her in his unpredictable state. The worst thing is he honestly didn't think he was above doing just that. In a panic, he turned to the door and pounded on it. "Let me out of here, you sick sons of bitches."

"They won't answer," the female said. "They never do."

Cam closed his eyes and laid his head against the door. He was shocked when the female came up and touched him on the shoulder. Her soft touch instantly made him full of lust. He found himself fighting the monster in him. *Get a grip, Cam. Don't give Mammon the satisfaction by letting yourself be turned into a demon.* "Get away from me," he gritted between clenched teeth. He didn't turn and look at her lest she see his fangs and be frightened.

"You're hurt," she gasped, caressing his wounds.

"Are you a healer?"

"No, I'm an archangel."

“Then my wounds are no concern of yours,” he spoke harshly. She still was too close to him. He could smell her blood, hear it rushing through her veins. He started to breath hard as a red haze obscured his vision. His hold on his sanity slipped. If he could, he would have run from the room in order to put as much distance between him and the female.

All he needed was one taste. Just one little nip, then he would leave her alone. It’s not like anyone would ever find out, and it wouldn’t hurt her, much.

Losing control, he turned on her with a feral growl. Throwing her on the ground, he bared his fangs. She let out a terrified scream just as he sunk them deep into her neck. His last coherent thought was that the succubus had been right. Angel blood did taste so sweet.

Chapter Four

The monster that was once Cam was not gentle with the angel pinned under his body. She was strong, but he held her in a tight grip and drank her blood in long, deep drags. The piece of meat started to squirm even more. He grabbed her by the hip in order to hold her still. As soon as he touched that area, his head snapped up and his mind started to fire with memories. Memories that were not his own.

It was his brother Nathaniel and he was looking at this female with a small smile on his face and love in his eyes. Next, the female and Nathaniel were in a bed having sex and his brother was marking her. Finally, he saw Nathaniel alone, mourning the loss of his mate.

Cam rolled the female over and pulled down her leather pants just a couple of inches. When he saw what was on her flesh, he let out an anguished sob. It was the Lehor tiger. He had

attacked Nathaniel's mate.

Shit, fuck, damn. Nathaniel's mate, this was your brother's female and you hurt her. You stupid piece of garbage. Shit, fuck, damn. Cam threw her away from him and ran to the opposite corner. He heard someone yelling in demon talk and was sickened to realize it was him. *Get a hold of yourself, do not let them win. You can fight this. You're an angel warrior.*

The problem was the demon in him wasn't going away. He could still hear himself spitting out words in the demon language and he wanted to get back at the female so badly he was clawing at the ground. He closed his eyes and prayed for relief.

"You're not alone. I'm with you, my son," a female's voice assured.

He opened his eyes and saw his mother standing there. She was surrounded by a soft golden light and wore a flowing, white dress. He scrubbed his face with his hands, not believing what he saw. *How can Mom be here? Last time I checked, she was still in Heaven catatonic.*

Yet, when she took him in her arms, she felt real. As soon as he was in her embrace, the demon thoughts went away. He closed his eyes and let her goodness wash over him, cleaning off all the evil thoughts Mammon had forced in him. "I wanna go home, Mama," he moaned out,

knowing he sounded like he was five again.

"I know, baby, and I wish I could take you there."

"They're going to destroy me, Mom."

"No, they cannot afford to let one of the Order perish. They'll try to turn you into one of them first. You must resist, my son. It won't be easy, but you must for all of our sakes."

"Why didn't you tell me what I really was?" Cam asked. "I might have been able to prepare myself better if I had known about my powers sooner."

She looked down sadly. "I was wrong about that. When you get home, you must go to your uncle. He will be able to help finish your training. Whatever you do, you must not trust your Aunt Amiteil. She is going to try to use you for her own political gain."

"I don't have an uncle," he protested. Maybe he really was imagining this whole thing.

"It's time for you to know the truth. Michael is your uncle. I'm his younger sister. We had a terrible fight before the day of my mating ceremony, and we never spoke as brother or sister again."

"Now I know this is one big hallucination," he muttered. "There is no way in hell I am related to the Chief."

"You're not hallucinating," the female angel said from across the room. She was holding a hand to her injured neck and looking at Lehor with awe. "I see her, too. It is the Lady of the empathys, my Nathaniel's mother."

Lehor turned and gave her a smile. "Do not give up hope, daughter. It will take years, but you will see Nathaniel again."

"Wait, wait, wait." Cam waved his hands in denial. "No offense, Ma, but the last time I saw you, you were staring off into space in the healing chambers. How is it you're here talking to me now?"

"My powers were once as great as yours. Michael is helping me channel them so I can come to you. I don't know how often I will be able to do this though. I can already feel my strength slipping away."

Cam started to say something back to her, but she vanished. He looked over at the female and saw her still holding her neck. He ducked his head and winced. He couldn't believe he had totally lost it and bit another angel. "I'm sorry," he said softly.

"I know," the female angel responded.

"Normally I don't go around attacking angels, honest. This demon just messed with my mind, and I wasn't myself."

"It was partly my fault. You did try to warn me

to stay away. I recognized you as Nathaniel's brother and didn't listen."

"How come none of us ever knew about you? Nathaniel never told us he had a mate."

"My father had promised me to another male, but as soon as I met your brother, I had other plans. We didn't dare tell anyone we were in love."

"But you're marked. There's no way to hide that. Every male around you would have known."

Her smile was dreamy as she remembered. "It was the night I was captured. I had finally decided to defy my father, and I let Nathaniel claim me. We were going to tell his family the next day. Little did I know when I went out patrolling that night there was not going to be any tomorrows for us." She told him all about her. Her name was Belora and she was an archangel. She had been captured five years ago and had never found out what had become of her empath and healer.

"What do I look like?" he asked reaching up to touch one of his fangs.

"Your eyes look like a cat's." She narrowed her eyes as she sized him up. "Besides that and your fangs, you look like any other angel."

He twisted around to look behind him. "Oh crap, please tell me I don't have wings, too. I freaking hate heights."

She laughed lightly. "No wings. Don't worry you're completely wingless. You are safe in the knowledge you are still earthbound."

That gave him some measure of relief. "It must be lonely down here."

"That's the worst part of Hell," she confessed. "It's not the physical pain. It's being all alone."

Four guards entered the cell. Rather than wasting the energy it took to fight, he got up and walked over to them. They wrapped the Chains of Confinement around him. *Must have been that comment about roasting their asses.*

"Cam," Belora called.

He stopped and turned around.

"Tell Nathaniel I love him."

He nodded to her before they led him out. They took him to an empty cell. Inside were the guards he injured earlier. They were healed and looking for pay back. On impulse, he tried to blast them. As soon as he attempted to do so, the chains around him zapped him with enough force to send him sprawling backward. Even though the pain was agonizing, he scrambled to his feet. He didn't want to become their personal hackey sack. As long as he kept standing, they couldn't hurt him too bad.

That plan lasted for about two minutes. He managed to stay on his feet for the first half dozen

blows. After that, they drove him to the ground. They viciously kicked him. One of them broke his nose, and he started to choke on his own blood. All of a sudden, someone hauled him up to his feet by the scruff of his shirt. Fuck, it was Mammon and he looked pissed.

"I just checked on the female I gave you, and I all I found was a little nip on her neck," he spat. "I am very disappointed with you. I guess you need another lesson."

Before Cam could fire off a smart comeback, Mammon slammed back into his mind. This time the pain was even worse than before. By the time Mammon was done with him, Cam was begging the demons to destroy him.

* * * *

Gabi sat on their bed, holding Abdiel's pillow to her face, inhaling his scent. It had been weeks since the meeting with Beelzebub and they still hadn't heard anything. Slowly, bit-by-bit, her hope to get him back died away.

The Lehors had all moved into the house with her and kept a grim, silent vigil. Ana was pale and thin, a ghost of her former self. None of the brothers smiled anymore. Barakiel was the worst off. Somehow, he was receiving all of Cam's fear

and it was affecting the empath so bad he could hardly get out of bed.

"Oh, God no, just leave him alone," Barakiel cried from the next room.

"I'm here, Bear," Rachael cooed. "It will be all right. I'll get Cam back for you."

Dear, sweet Rachael had comforted Barakiel these long weeks. Ana had been absorbing Cam's pain, as well, so she had been unable to aid her brother. Rachael had been taking care of him for her. In fact, Rachael took care of all of them. She was the one that brought meals to Gabi and Ana urged them to eat, the one who broke up the many fistfights the mentally unstable brothers were getting into, the one holding them together.

Rachael was not the silly, immature girl Gabi had first thought she was. Her new sister was a strong, capable female. She came at just the right time and was the only thing that gave Gabi the strength to go on.

Ana walked into her room and joined her on the bed. Her blonde hair was pulled back in a messy ponytail and she was wearing one of Cam's shirts. Dark circles rimmed her light blue eyes. "You want to know a secret, Gabi?" she finally asked, breaking the silence.

"What's that, Ana?"

"Cam was always my favorite. I know I wasn't

supposed to have a favorite brother, but Cam and I were always the closest. We're more alike than anyone ever thought."

"I know, Ana. I've always known how much he means to you. Cam knows, too. He always talked about you and tried to do good by you."

"Something really bad has happened to him in Hell." Ana had big, fat tears rolling down her cheeks. "I can feel it. What are they doing to my baby?"

Gabi had no answer for her so she just held her in her arms and let her cry her heart out.

* * * *

Abdiel closed his eyes and tried to think around the haze of pain. *How many days have we been locked up?* Since there was no daylight in Hell, he'd lost track long ago. Most of the time had been spent alone. After they had taken Cam away that first time, they never brought him back. Although he'd heard Cam scream plenty of times, it seemed to happen on a daily bases.

One of the more talkative demon guards had told him Mammon had made Cam his special project. Abdiel felt guilty for, while they'd almost seemed to forget about him, Cam was getting the worst of it.

Abdiel remembered the guard told him they hadn't been torturing him as much anymore because they wanted him healthy so he could fight in their little angel battles they had. He learned the demons liked to make captured archangels fight each other in a pit for entertainment.

"No, I'm not going back," Cam yelled from the hallway.

There was some scuffling sound and a big thud.

"He got away, get him." A demon called.

Abdiel heard footsteps, then the sound of a hand smacking against his door.

"Oh, look he wants his friend," one of the demons mocked.

"Cam, you fight those bastards," Abdiel yelled. "Don't you let them win. Remember who you are." He heard more scuffling, then the sound of them dragging him away.

"No, please," Cam nearly sobbed now. "Don't take me to him. I can't stand to be mind fucked again."

Abdiel waited in the ensuing silence, dreading what was coming next. Sure enough, about five minutes later, it came. Cam's screams of agony started to tear through Hell. Each one ripped through Abdiel's heart, slowly breaking his spirit. It went on and on, never seeming to end. He wondered how Cam was able to keep existing

after so many punishments. The door to the cell opened and half a dozen demons walked in. One of them came and unchained him from the wall while the others roughly manhandled him to the ground.

Some of the dirt kicked up into his face and Abdiel choked on it, making his eyes water. "If you guys wanted a date, all you had to do was ask," he sputtered out between coughs.

"You were always a smartass," a gravelly voice declared from the doorway. "Some things never change."

Oh crap, that was another voice he would recognize anywhere. "Hey, Dad, didn't expect to meet you here. My birthday was a couple of months ago. Are you here to bring me a present? It better be good if it's this late."

One of the guards cuffed him hard in the head for his comment while another ground his knee deeper into the angel's back. Off in the distance, he could still hear Cam's screams and that added to his own terror. If his father was here, then whatever they had planned for him must not be good. Abdiel knew his father, Eurynome, hatred ran as deep as Lucifer's.

Eurynome stepped into view and Abdiel was hard pressed to hide his shock. The demon looked nothing like he had when he'd left Heaven. His

skin was pitch black and oily in appearance. Razor sharp teeth were crammed so tightly in his mouth they stretched his jaw and distorted his face. The only thing that remained the same were his intense blue eyes, but they were now rimmed in gold. He was dressed in a tight fitting leather tunic with matching black pants.

"I know you have seen Appolion." The demon hunched down so he could look more directly into the archangel's face. "I will give you one chance to tell me where he is."

"I don't know where he is." He tried to draw in a breath, but only succeeded in sucking in more dirt. "Even if I did, I would never tell you."

The demon shook his head. "Abdiel, Abdiel, Abdiel. When are you going to learn you can't save the world? If you had looked out for yourself and not tried to play hero all your life, then you would have never ended up here. Now I have to punish you."

One of the demons ripped what remained of the back his shirt so his right shoulder was bared. That's when Abdiel noticed the black bag his father had in his clawed hand. The demon reached inside and pulled out a tattoo gun. The angel's heart thudded painfully in his chest. His own father was going to brand him. When a male angel marked his female, it was an act of love and a sign

of dedication. This was different, it was meant to degrade and demean Abdiel. By putting his mark on Abdiel, Eurynome was marking him as his bitch.

"You do this, and I'll do everything in my power to destroy you," Abdiel vowed as he struggled wildly with the guards. It was a useless battle for they had a tight hold and weren't budging. Even if he hadn't been weakened from his captivity, he wouldn't have stood a chance.

"You won't live long enough to leave Hell, let alone destroy me," Eurynome chuckled. "You should be happy I'm giving you this mark. Now you'll match Appolion."

Abdiel roared in anger at the thought of his baby brother being abused. Grinding his teeth against the pain, he closed his eyes as the needle started to go in and out of his skin. The pain wasn't the worst part of it, the humiliation was. Putting the tattoo there was his father's way of saying, *I won. This male dared to challenge me and I beat him. Hell, I more than beat him, I broke him.* Halfway through Cam screams stopped echoing through the hallways so the only sounds were his harsh breathing and the laughter of the demon. When it finally stopped, he was covered in sweat and breathing rapidly.

Abdiel didn't even care when they dragged him

over and chained him to the wall again. His shoulder throbbed in time with the beating of his heart. Closing his eyes, he refused to look at his father.

“Remember, son, I own you. You dared to defy me and I brought you to your knees for it.” Eurynome’s hot breath brushed the angel’s cheek.

Abdiel tried to pull away, but was brought up short when his back slammed into the wall. There was the sound of retreating footsteps before the door slammed and he was alone with his humiliation. He didn’t bother trying to crane his neck so he could see it, the last thing he wanted was to see what his mark of shame looked like. Even if he were by some chance able to ever get free, how would he be able to face Gabi again? The instant she saw him, the healer in her would know he had been tattooed. Worse yet, there was no way to ever get the mark off. The ink the demons used was resistant to any type of angel healing.

A bright flash of golden light bathed the cell and suddenly Lehor was in there with him. Her appearance brought him abruptly out of his pity party.

She leaned forward until her light blue eyes stared directly into his.

He let out a disgusted breath. “Great, just what I need. Another freaky dream about Cam’s mom.”

She reached out and smacked him on the cheek.

"Ouch, that hurt," he said incredulously. "Knock it off, chick."

She smacked him again, this time a lot harder.

"You know, Cam never mentioned you had a violent streak."

"I'm sorry, but I needed to get your attention, archangel. My son is in trouble, and you are the only one who can help him."

Abdiel made a great show of looking up at his chained arms. "In case you haven't noticed, I'm in no position to help anybody."

"You must reach out with you mind and reach him that way."

"Cam can't communicate telepathically. They keep those chains on him all the time."

She let out a frustrated sigh. "You must use your powers then."

Abdiel gave her an aggravated look. "I don't have those powers. If I did, don't you think I would have used them by now?"

"You can visit him in your dreams. I will help show you the way." She gave him a beseeching look. "Please, Abdiel. He won't answer me anymore, and we are in danger of losing him. You are the only one that will be able to reach him now."

Abdiel had a ray of hope, the first one since

they had been taken. "This is all real, isn't it? I'm not dreaming you."

"Well, it certainly took you a long time to catch on," she said tartly, displaying where Cam had inherited his smart mouth. "Now, are you going to help or not?"

"Of course I'm going to help. I'd do anything for Cam." This had to work. He knew it was Cam's only hope of survival.

She placed her hands on his temples. "Close your eyes and relax. Just think about Cam. Clear your mind and focus only on him."

He followed her instructions, shut his eyes and let his mind go. Slowly he felt himself leave his body and all the pain it contained. When he opened his eyes, he was in a dark room and no longer in chains.

He saw Cam huddled in the corner, his head tucked into his chest. The young archangel was nearly unrecognizable. Dressed only in his bloodied, ripped blue jeans, his bare chest was a mass of welts and cuts made from vicious beatings. He had his hands over his head and rocked back and forth, making soft mewling sounds. Suddenly, everything he had gone through seemed insignificant. It, in no way, compared to what Cam endured. "Cam, it's me, Abdiel. I'm here to talk to you for a while."

Cam whipped his head up.

What Abdiel saw in the young angel's eyes terrified him. They were completely void of expression. They were dead.

Cam curled up his lip and let out a demon snarl. "You're just another mind trick Mammon is playing with me." He snapped his fangs. "Go away and leave me alone."

"No, Cam, it's really me. I'm here in some dream state, but it is me."

He cocked his head to the side and studied Abdiel closely with his new cat eyes. His shoulders relaxed and he heaved a sigh of relief. He got up and hobbled closer. "Am I sleeping, too?"

"I think it's just me, otherwise you would still not have your injuries. I think I'm having an out of body experience."

"However you got here, I'm glad to see you." Cam couldn't stand any longer so he crumpled to the ground at Abdiel's feet. "It's too late for me though. I can't hold on any longer. The next time they get the chains off of me, I'm going to use my powers and destroy myself."

"Don't talk like that. Your family needs you. Ana couldn't go on without you."

"I can't fight it anymore, Abdiel," Cam sobbed. "I can take the whippings and the other physical

torture. It's what Mammon is doing to me that's breaking me. He goes inside my mind and shreds it. My God, it hurts so bad."

"I want you to say the angel warrior vow every time he starts that crap. Use it to block out the evil. It will help you remember who you really are."

"I don't even remember it."

"Sure you do, kid. Say it with me."

They recited it together.

"I take the sacred vow of the angel warrior. With the shedding of my blood and thus the blood of my forefathers, I swear to give up all my privileges and freedoms in order to fulfill my duties. I promise never to waver in my devotion to my brethren and the human race. I shall always place their needs, desires and life before mine. I will always walk on the path of light, never venturing into the darkness and, if I do, I ask my fellow brethren to either bring me back or, if I refuse to return, destroy me."

* * * *

"This is foolish and you know it," Jehel said angrily.

"You've already told me that several times," Michael replied in clipped tones.

Gabi couldn't help but grin at the flippant way

he was treating the council leader. They were in the main tent at the center of the command post set up in Siberia. As soon as Beelzebub had let them know where the battle was to take place and the day, Michael had started to gather angels and set up a battle plan. He'd been briefing Gabi and Rachael when Jehel had come storming in looking for a fight.

"The council has forbidden you to go ahead with this battle." Jehel was livid. He obviously wasn't used to having his authority questioned.

"The council can kiss my lily white backside," a voice spat out from behind them. Ana stood there flanked by her seven remaining brothers. She was dressed for battle in all white leather. She had two small swords that hung in hoops at her hips. The weapons were called sai and, much like tonfa, were used one in each hand. Standing there with fire shooting out of her eyes and her body tensed to attack, she looked like an Amazon warrior, all her fury directed at Jehel.

"May I remind you that you are a member of the council?" Jehel asked her coolly.

"No longer, I quit." She spat at his feet to prove her disgust. "If the council isn't willing to try and get its own angels back, then I want nothing more to do with them."

"You're just like your brothers," Jehel sneered.

"Thank you, that's the best compliment I ever got." Ana held her head up haughtily. "The only reason why we're in this mess is because my brother had to rescue *your* son. Cam traded himself for your little wimp and you thank him by leaving him to rot in Hell."

"Like losing your worthless brother is any big deal." Jehel treaded dangerous water. "We are all better off with both of them were they are."

The brothers went for their weapons. Gabi looked over at Michael and saw him simply cross his arms and lean back against the table, making no move to help Jehel. To the shock of everyone, it was Rachael who stopped the confrontation.

"He's not worth it," she said placing her body between them and Jehel. "We need to concentrate on getting our brothers back."

"I think it's time for you to go, Jehel." Michael smiled.

Jehel finally noticed the brothers. Gone was their usual carefree manner. It had been replaced with cold, hard rage. No one ever insulted one of their own. The five that were archangels lowered their weapons, but made no move to put them away. Derel was not as considerate. He kept his longbow armed and pointed at the elder angel.

"I'll make sure to inform the council of your wish to leave," Jehel said tightly before he turned

to Michael. "This whole thing just reeks of nepotism. We all know that if it were not for the fact Cam is your nephew, this battle wouldn't be taking place."

When he heard the surprised gasps coming from the Lehor's, Jehel let out a satisfied grin. "So Uncle Mike never told you he's your mother's brother I gather." He stormed out of the tent.

"Michael, is he telling the truth?" Barakiel asked in a small voice.

"Yes." Michael finally dared to look at his niece and nephews.

"Are you that ashamed of us that you refused to claim us?" Ana snapped. "Or was it that you were so ashamed of our mother because of what happened to her?"

"Ana, that's not why," Michael placated. "I just can't afford to look like I'm favoring any of my warriors over the others. Honestly, I..."

Ana just held up a hand, dismissing him, her blue eyes on fire. She turned her back on him and walked out. The brothers followed. Michael closed his eyes in sad resignation.

Gabi almost felt bad for him. Almost. As soon as they left, she sank into a nearby chair. "Most angels think the same way Jehel does. Nobody is going to come and help us get them back. They have always acted like Abdiel was no better than

his family. They're probably glad to get rid of him, too."

"Gabi, go look outside the tent," Michael ordered quietly.

She ignored him. "The only ones going to show up are Cam's empath friends, and all they'll do is barf all over the demons."

"Gabi!" Michael yelled in order to get her attention. Once he had it, he ordered again, "Go look outside the tent."

She obeyed him and went to the entrance. What she saw brought tears to her eyes. There were hundreds upon hundreds of angels getting ready for battle. More were flashing in every second. They went on for as far as the eye could see. Every type of angel was represented – archangels, healer, empaths, shifters, even some of the angel police force were present.

"Every single one volunteered. I did not have to recruit anyone," he told her. "Abdiel is one of the most respected and admired archangels."

Since she couldn't go out and thank each one of them individually, she ran and hugged Michael instead. "But everyone has always acted like they were afraid of him," she sobbed.

"That was before you tamed him and showed everybody he had a heart." Michael pulled her away so he could look her in the eye. "We will get

him back for you, Gabi. I promise."

* * * *

The angels were in formation ready for the demons to arrive. Rachael and Gabi stood side by side at the front. The Lehor's stood right behind them, determined to protect them. The brothers were out for blood. The demons had taken one of their own and now there was going to be hell to pay. No pun intended. All seven of them were there, even Barakiel who had never been in battle before. There had been no argument when he insisted on coming. If you hurt one Lehor, well then, you had the entire clan to deal with.

Ana paced back and forth, spinning her sai so rapidly they were a blur. A flurry of emotions surged throughout her body, making it impossible to stand still. If she could only see Cam, she would feel better. No, she wanted more than that, she wanted him home, safe and in her arms. She needed to hear one of smartass remarks, to be able to yell at him for pulling some stupid stunt, to tease him about how scrawny he looked in his too-big jeans.

Her brothers started to bicker again, and she listened to them in an attempt to calm her mind. As stupid as it sounded, it was reassuring to hear

their familiar banter.

"Why did they have to pick frigging Siberia?" asked Barakiel.

"Demons just love the cold. It gives them a break from Hell," Nathaniel shivered. He was sporting a nice shiner, courtesy of Ramiel. They'd gotten into it because Nathaniel had wanted to watch A&E while Ramiel wanted to watch Animal Planet.

"Are you sure about that?" Barakiel wrinkled his brow in confusion. "I thought it wasn't really hot in Hell."

"He's just pulling your chain, idiot," Derel drawled. He had refused to heal Nathaniel's black eye because he'd been pissed off at him at the time, too. He liked Animal Planet. "Don't be so gullible."

"I think they just love to see us freeze our balls off," Ramiel griped.

Ana shot him a dirty look. "Can we at least pretend we are a civilized family? There are other angels looking at us like we're freaks."

"Come on, Ana," Rachael turned to smile at her. "That's why I love you guys so much. I don't think I could take it if you guys were normal."

"Ah, guys," Nathaniel beamed at her although the smile never reached his eyes. "She likes us. She really, really likes us."

"Time to look lively boys and girls," Gabi called.

Demons had started to flash in. There were hundreds of them and they came in all shapes and sizes. There was even a pack of Hounds from Hell. They were the most vicious of demons. Fortunately, they had the only thing that could beat them, Hayyel and his pack of wolves.

Ana frantically scanned the opposite group, looking for Cam. Unable to spot him, she panicked. *What if they had already destroyed him?* She didn't think she could live with herself if they lost Cam. She should have told him sooner about his gifts, shouldn't have shielded him so much.

The two groups stood silent facing each other. The only sound was the wind blowing across the field. It whipped through Gabi's hair making stray strands blow into her face. She held hands with Rachael, the two of them looking every inch the powerful female warriors they were.

"You know the deal, Beelzebub," Gabi called loudly. "Show us Abdiel and Camael."

Ana was relieved when four demons dragged the two angels forward. They made a great show of forcing the two males to their knees. As soon as the demons released them, Cam fell forward on his face. Abdiel swayed, but managed to stay upright.

Ana's heart lurched when she saw Cam was not moving at all. She heard her brothers cursing loudly. Barakiel began to tremble. He grabbed his nanchukus so tightly his knuckles turned white.

"Ramiel, Nathaniel, you see those chains around Cam?" Rachael whispered. Both of them looked at their little brother with horror on their faces.

"Yeah, what about them?" Ramiel asked.

"They contain ancient dark, demon magic. They're using them to suppress his powers. The first thing you must do is get them off him."

She spoke with authority leaving no doubt in Ana's mind she was right.

"Consider it done," Ramiel replied.

"I hope you remember your end of the deal, Gabrielle," Beelzebub called back. "If we win, we get you and the female twin."

"Gabi, no don't do this," Abdiel cried in an anguished voice. "Please, I'm begging you."

"Persephone," Bub called behind him. "Show the angels what we do to those who do not keep their mouths shut."

Persephone walked up to Abdiel and uncoiled her whip. She brought it down on his back with a loud crack. The blow propelled him forward. With his hands bound behind his back, he was unable to catch himself. He landed on the ground next to

Cam.

"You're going to pay for that one, witch," Gabi yelled. She brought up her crossbow and aimed it at Persephone. As soon as she shot it, the demoness dived to the side. The arrow narrowly missed her and hit a demon behind her.

Once she struck the first blow, both sides charged. The two armies ran toward each other with an ear-deafening roar. The demons and angels met with a surge of violence and mutual hatred.

Gabi, Rachael and the Lehor's fought side-by-side, trying to get to Abdiel and Cam. The two males were still on the ground and being trampled by the demons. Unfortunately, there were several demons between them and the two archangels.

* * * *

Abdiel was able to lift his head enough to see Gabi and Rachael fighting. He was proud to see that, even though Rachael was the smallest angel, she fought better than any other angel. She used one of his old swords and handled it as if it custom made for her.

Even though three demons surrounded her, Rachael showed no fear. One of the demons grabbed her from behind. She lifted her legs up

and kicked the second demon in the chest hard enough to send it flying backward, then head-butted the first demon with the back of her head. The third demon tried to run, but she sent a lightning bolt and zapped him in the back. That dropped it like a ton of bricks.

Gabi was just as impressive. She had her crossbow slung on her back and was opting to use a short sword for hand-to-hand combat. A demon charged her. Releasing a blade in the tip of her boot, she kicked the fiend in the heart. The demon vanished as it retreated to Hell.

They were finally able to get to Cam and him. Abdiel could tell by the horror on their faces how bad he and Cam must look. He knew it was going to be ten times worse when they got a better look at Cam's altered appearance.

Gabi moved to untie his hands, but stopped and gave a cry of protest when she saw their mangled condition. She used her sword and gently sawed through the bindings.

He could feel her hot tears falling on them.

"What did they do to you?" she sobbed. As soon as he was free, she brought his hands to her lips.

"Forget about me." His voice was ragged with emotion. He thought he'd never feel her gentle touch ever again. "Whatever possessed you to

make such a stupid bargain?"

"I promised never to leave you alone again." She brushed back his hair. "I will go with you anywhere, even Hell." She kissed him ever so softly.

Even though there was a battle of epic proportions going on around them, he felt like he had come home.

When she pulled back, there was a small smudge of his blood on her cheek. "Now I have a little score to settle with a certain female demon." She stood up, her expression lethal. "She dared to touch something that is mine."

There was nothing he could do but watch her fight. There was no way he could hold a sword, much less engage in a battle. But after seeing the way she handled herself, Abdiel knew he didn't have to worry about his wife. She was in Amazon Princess mode. Instead, he turned to see how Cam was doing.

* * * *

Gabi scanned the crowd looking for Persephone. All of a sudden, the demon came out of nowhere and backhanded her across the face. She barely dodged the blow from the whip that followed.

Gabi responded with a roundhouse kick that

caught Persephone on the head. The demoness staggered back, dropping her whip. Gabi dove and grabbed it. Rolling to her feet, she turned to face her former rival. She lashed out and struck Persephone with her own weapon. "Doesn't feel too good, does it?"

Persephone's black eyes widened with fear when she saw what Gabi was capable of. "Have mercy on me, Gabi. Think of how long we've known one another."

"Have mercy on you?" Gabi asked incredulously as she lashed out with the whip again. "Like you had mercy on my mate?"

Persephone didn't answer. She simply rolled into a ball on the ground and tried to shield herself from any further attack.

Gabi struck her a few more times before she tossed the whip aside with disgust. Pulling out her short sword, she straddled the demoness. "If you so much as even think of Abdiel again, I will hunt you down and make you regret the day you were born," Gabi vowed. "My only regret is you're immortal, so this won't kill you." With those words, she buried her sword deep in the demon's black, shriveled heart.

Persephone let out of shriek of pain and was banished back to Hell.

Gabi felt her lips curve into a cruel smile of

satisfaction.

* * * *

Ana kept running her hands over Cam, just to reassure herself he was really there. When he finally moaned in response, it was the best sound she ever heard in her immortal life. She watched Ramiel and Derel struggle to get the chains off Cam. Rachael came over and touched them. The locks clicked as they unlocked. Ramiel ripped them off and threw them aside.

As soon as Cam was free, he grabbed Derel. "You need to heal me now," he begged his brother.

Derel ran his hands over him. The healer let out an anguished sob. "I just can't heal you that quick, Cam. Your injuries are too severe. I've never seen anyone hurt this bad."

"In that case then, I'm sorry." Cam bent his head toward Derel's arm.

"Ouch, Cam, you just frigging bit me." Derel was indignant. "Ana, you want to lend a hand here? Cam is sucking on me like some kind of leech."

"What has gotten into you?" Ana asked him even as her heart started to pound hard with fear.

When Cam finally released Derel and looked at

her, she gasped in horror. *Dear, sweet Lord, he has fangs. Sharp, hard, fully functioning fangs and he just used them to drink his own brother's blood.* Cam licked the remaining blood off his bottom lip and she actually began to shake. She reached out to touch his teeth, to reassure what she saw was real, but he pulled back from her.

When Cam's wounds healed right before her eyes, she felt her knees go weak. This wasn't regular angel healing. This was something dark and evil. She looked into his eyes and what she saw there made her unleash a small cry of distress. They were filled with anger, hate and the need for vengeance.

She knew then her little Cammie was gone forever. She had gotten her brother back, but he was damaged, forever. Her skinny, dorky, little brother was now a mixture of archangel and demon.

"What happened to your scrawny butt?" Ramiel gaped. "Did they pump you full of angel steroids or something?"

"No, they did much worse," Derel answered. "They poisoned him with demon's blood and tried to turn him."

"That's not what caused all those injuries." Ramiel snapped. It was obvious he was just as upset as the rest of them. "You scanned him,

Derel. Tell me what they did to our brother."

Derel only looked down at the bite mark on his wrist and refused to answer. His shoulders were shaking in silent sobs. Cam slowly got up to his feet. Ramiel grabbed him by the arm and gave him a questioning look.

"No, I'm not telling you," Cam said darkly. "Don't ever ask me again about what happened there."

Ana heard someone chanting, "Not my Cam. Not my Cam." She dimly realized it was her. "I should have protected you better," she rasped out. She wanted to cry so badly her throat ached from holding it back.

"I'm sorry, Ana Bana," Cam whispered. "We can talk more about this later. Right now, I have to fight. I need to make them pay for turning me into one of them."

Ana had worn his backpack into the battle. They always teased him about that ratty, old backpack. He carried it everywhere. They called it his Linus blanket. She took it off and handed him his tonfa.

He silently took them and ran toward the fight. He left the backpack behind. A demon had little Barakiel pinned to the ground. Cam picked it up with one hand and yelled something in its face in the demon language right before he ripped its

throat out. As soon as it vanished back to Hell, Cam helped Barakiel up to his feet before joining the battle.

“What did he just say to that demon?” Ramiel asked.

Ana knew because she had heard him say the words in English in her head. “He sent a warning, any demon that dares to harm one of us will be sent back to Hell in pieces.” Unable to take anymore, Ana wrapped her arms around herself. Letting out a keening cry, she fell to her knees. Derel hugged her trying to give her some comfort. However, she was too far gone for that. She threw back her head and screamed in agony. The last little bit of innocence her family managed to hold on to, was gone forever. It died in Hell.

* * * *

Abdiel looked over and saw Cam and Rachael standing back to back. Cam was throwing off his flame destroying everything in sight. He was letting his anger rule him and it was spilling over to Rachael, making her powers erratic as well. If they kept going, the demons weren’t going to be the only ones in trouble. With a curse, he ran toward them. “Cam it’s over, we won,” he shouted. It was true. The demons were flashing

away left and right, retreating.

Rachael immediately obeyed and lowered her hand.

Cam kept firing.

Finally, Abdiel threw up a shield in order to stop him.

Cam slowly dropped his hand and closed his eyes with a sigh. "What's going to become of me?" he asked in a hoarse voice. "There is no place for me to go."

"You belong with us, Cam." Rachael threw her arms around him. "Gabi, Abdiel and I will always take care of you and love you."

Abdiel sighed with relief when Cam put his arms around Rachael and returned the hug. He could kiss his sister. She'd known exactly what the young angel needed to hear. He turned to where the Lehors were gathered. Their grief and worry was almost palatable.

Rachael tugged Cam by the arm and led him to Ana and his brothers.

Gabi walked up to him and placed a hand on his arm. "Let me heal you," she said softly.

He awkwardly pulled her to him and kissed her, trying to wash away all the bad feelings. They gained their freedom, but at a terrible price.

Chapter Five

Gabi sat on a chair between the cots that held Abdiel and Cam. She had already healed Abdiel, but Cam was a different story. What the demons had done to him could not be undone. He was forever going to be different. She put herself into a trance and scanned his body. Analyzing every molecule of his blood, she saw how it mutated. Although he was still an angel, he now stood with one foot in the demon world.

She still couldn't bring herself to give him the worst news of all. Unless he drank angel blood on a regular basis, he could succumb to the evil that was now a part of him. Their sweet, innocent Cam was gone.

There was one silver lining to the cloud. Cam's body now carried an antibody to the demon's blood. She was certain if she could isolate it, she could make an antidote to the poison. The demons would no longer have an advantage over them.

Michael came over and looked at Cam. The Chief's face was both sad and haunted at the same time.

Cam slept on, completely oblivious to his uncle's presence. Occasionally the young angel's brow would wrinkle as he was swept into another nightmare.

"Where is the rest of the gang?" Michael finally asked.

"Barakiel got his first battle injury and he wanted to show it off to the others before Derel healed it."

A ghost of a smile passed over his face. "They hate me, don't they?"

"Pretty much, yeah."

He ran his hand through his hair with a resigned sigh. "How bad was...I mean, what did the demons...crap."

Gabi arched her brow. "Are you trying to ask how injured Cam was?"

"Yes, I am."

"He was bad, Michael, real bad. It took both Derel and me to heal him. They did horrible things to him. What they did to his mind was even worse. Ana tried to scan him and he was so damaged in there it gave her a migraine. She's sleeping it off now."

Michael swallowed hard. "I really, really

messed up.”

“Yes, you really, really did.”

He looked down at Cam again.

She could have sworn he teared up a bit. Having known him all her life, she never once saw him this emotional. Her anger melted away. “Look, Michael, you just need to give them time. I know Ana and the boys. While they may be mad at you now, they won’t stay that way long. They don’t have it in them.”

“I guess that’s more than I deserve right now.”

He ruffled her hair and left.

Gabi thought about the Lehor family and all they lost. She knew it was only going to get harder for them.

Raphael walked over to her. At the devastated look on her face, he opened his arms.

Without hesitation, she embraced her brother. A small part of her was shocked as she could count the times on one hand Raphael ever shown any affection.

“We are transferring all the injured back to the healing chambers,” he told her when she finally pulled away.

“I thought the council didn’t want anyone that was poisoned up in Heaven.”

“I’m overruling them. With the high number of casualties, we need the extra magic the chamber

provides."

"Listen, Raphael, about Cam—"

"Do you still trust him?"

"Of course I do."

"That's good enough for me." He gave her a kiss on the top of her head.

"I think I can make an antidote for the poison." She relayed what she found in Cam's blood.

When she was done, he nodded his head thoughtfully. "That just might work. It can't hurt to try. We need to work quickly, however. Several empath's were infected during the battle and they're in danger of losing their minds."

She flashed to the healing chamber and got rooms ready for the males. By the time she got back, Cam was awake and sitting. He wore sunglasses to shield his eyes from the other angels. He had his iPod cranked up as loud as it could go.

"How's Mr. Dark Angel doing?" He pulled out his ear buds.

"He's going to kick your ass if you keep calling me that," Abdiel grumbled.

"You're awake," she breathed as she leaned over to examine him.

Abdiel pulled her down with a growl.

Gabi giggled girlishly when he nuzzled the side of her neck. She loved it when he did that. Cupping the back of her head with his hand, he

moved his lips to her mouth. When he nipped her bottom lip, she completely forgot they were not alone. She started to crawl onto the cot.

“Eww. Get a room,” a disgusted voice said.

Gabi looked up with a gasp and saw the youngest Lehor brother shooting them a mischievous smile. He was completely dressed in goth. His black pants had numerous zippers and loops and he wore a Good Charlotte tee shirt. The most shocking thing was his bright blue hair. “Hey, Barakiel.” She sighed as she climbed off Abdiel.

Cam curled his lip at his brother. “What the hell have you done to your hair? You look like frigging Angel Smurf.”

“Yeah, well with those sunglasses on you look like Billy Idol,” Barakiel shot back.

“Come give me a hug, little brother.” Cam opened up his arms. “I thought I would never see you again.”

To Gabi’s shock, the idiot fell for it. Barakiel went over to his brother ready to embrace him. As soon as he was close enough, Cam grabbed him and put him in a headlock. Barakiel struggled to get out of it until the cot flipped over and dumped them both to the ground. The two brothers continued to roughhouse.

“I swear if you bite me, I’ll bite back,” Barakiel

gasped, his brother's knees on his chest, his breathing a struggle.

Cam cuffed him on the side of the head. "Please, with all the junk you eat you would probably taste like corn dogs and chips. Thanks, but no thanks."

Gabi started to laugh. She couldn't help it. Just seeing Cam act like his same old self made her feel so good. Pretty soon, Abdiel joined her. The two Lehor brothers looked over at them, no doubt wondering if they finally went looney. "I'm supposed to bring you both to the healing chambers," Gabi said, sobering.

"I'll pass, thank you." Cam's voice was full of panic. "I was thinking maybe I should just wait for you guys at the house."

"Ana figured that's what you would say. That's why she sent me to get you," his brother said with an evil smile. Barakiel flashed the two of them to Heaven before he had time to argue.

"Great," Gabi muttered when she saw Cam's sunglasses had fallen off during the wrestling. She snatched them up before she flashed herself and Abdiel to the healing Chambers.

Upon their arrival, she saw Cam rub his eyes and hiss with pain. The pure white light of Heaven was too much for him now. She quickly shoved on his sunglasses.

"What the hell, Gabi?" he snapped.

"I know this is all scary, Cam," she soothed. "But believe it or not, there is some good that can come from this."

"What could possibly be freaking good about this?"

"I think I can use you to make an antidote for this poison. You will be able to help countless empaths from being destroyed."

"No, thank you, I'm no lab rat," Cam growled.

"Just think about it, you could save you own kind."

"What, half-breed demon slash angels? I need to check around, but I'm pretty sure I'm the only one who fits that bill."

"I'm getting an assignment," Barakiel said quietly. "They need a new empath in Flint and I'm it. The last empath is in the insane ward with Mom and Dad because of this crap. Do you want that to happen to me?"

Cam gave him an aggravated look. "Don't—"

"All the empaths are in danger."

"—lay—"

"More and more of them are turning out of desperation."

"this guilt trip—"

"We all need your help, me included."

"—on me."

"Please Cam." Barakiel gave him the puppy dog eyes. "Do it for me."

"That's not fair and you know it," Cam sighed before he turned to Gabi. "What would I have to do?"

"I would just need to take some blood," she told him.

Cam blanched. "You mean you would have to stick me with a needle?"

She sighed. Angels were notoriously wimpy when it came to needles. They tended to become spoiled by the fact that healers could mend them simply by laying hands on them.

"I don't even want to hear it." Barakiel rolled his eyes. "We all got stuck this morning just so we could donate blood for your sorry hide."

Cam's brow wrinkled in confusion. "What are you talking about?"

"Gabi told us that you would need blood." Barakiel was talking to him like he was a child. "Since we didn't think it would be a good idea for you to go around vamping out on everybody, we donated ours."

"I must be losing it," Abdiel muttered in her ear. "All this is actually starting to sound normal to me."

"Can you still eat normal food?" Barakiel asked Cam.

"I dunno," Cam fiddled with his hair.

"I know where Ana has all the junk food hidden in her house. Let's go nosh." Barakiel grabbed Cam and started to drag him out of the room. "I'll bring him right back. I promise, Gabi."

As soon as they were alone, Abdiel turned around and captured her in his arms. "I thought they'd never leave," he murmured against her lips.

"I'm angry at you," she protested weakly. Her body was already arching in so she could touch every inch of him. The kiss he gave her was so soft and tender it made her want to weep.

He trailed his fingers down the side of her throat until he reached the front zipper of her jacket. She went to pull his shirt off, but he shook his head and took a jerky step back. Confused, she stepped toward him, only to have him pull back again. Then realization slowly dawned on her. When she had healed him, she found the tattoo that had been forced upon him. He had been in the healing sleep when she looked at it. It was his family mark, like the one he had placed on her, but his was surrounded by demon writing. When she Michael translated it for her, a cold fury swept through her.

Property of Eurynome.

She could only imagine the shame he must

have felt when his father did that to him. Abdiel was a proud male, even after all the centuries of being treated like a pariah, she had never once seen him hang his head in shame like he was doing now. She took his chin in her hand and tilted his head up so she could meet his gaze. The despair she saw there made her heart break.

"If I could heal it away, I would," she told him.

"I know," he replied in a broken whisper.

"You have nothing to be ashamed of. You made a tremendous sacrifice for one of your team members. Cam would have never survived captivity without you. He told me what you did for him."

"It wasn't enough. Look what happened to him. I'm his archangel, I should have protected him better. I failed him like I failed the twins and this was my father's way of reminding me of that."

"Cam's safe now and so is Rachael. Every demon you defeat from now on will prove your father wrong."

The look on his face said he was still unconvinced, but he didn't argue anymore. Gabi went to take off his shirt, and this time he let her. Her breath hitched when she saw he was still covered in blood and grim. "Wait right here," she whispered. She went into the adjoining bathroom and filled the large tub with of hot water. Stripped

down, she stepped in. "Abdiel," she called seductively. "I'm waiting."

When he walked in and saw her waiting there his face darkened with desire.

She gave a sexy little giggle and watched him struggle to get the rest of his clothes off. When he was undressed, she crooked her finger at him. He reached out for her, but she shook her head and pushed his hands away. "You're still hurt," she whispered huskily in his ear. "Lucky for you. You have your own personal healer."

With gentle, loving hands, she carefully washed the blood from his back. Even though his wounds started to heal, there were still several red welts. She kissed each of them one by one, laving him gently with her tongue. Gabi smiled to herself at his moan, then moved around and straddled him so they were face to face. She grabbed his hands and slowly brought them to her lips, then took each of his fingers in her mouth and suckled them. "If you ever go off and leave me again, and I will destroy you."

He opened his mouth to answer, but hissed instead.

Her hand had trailed down and she was gently caressing his hard cock. When she looked at his face, she was amazed. His dark eyes were hooded with desire and his normally hardened warrior's

face was soft and tender. The fact she had that power over him was heady.

She arched her back so her breasts were closer to his face and he took advantage. His tongue made several lazy paths over her nipple before he gave it a slight nip. Waves of pleasure mixed with pain shot through her body and she arched even more against him, urging him on. She continued to stroke his cock with one hand while her other gripped his shoulder for support. With a growl, he grabbed her rump to bring her closer and rubbed her core against his erection. He didn't enter her yet, instead he brushed against her clit. Now both her hands were on his shoulders and she couldn't help but undulate her hips against him so there was even more friction.

"You don't know how often I dreamed of this," he murmured against her flesh. "I would sit in that hot, putrid cell and remember how good your body felt against mine. How good you smelled. How sweet your flesh tasted." His hand dipped down so he could brush a finger against her opening. "I love it when you get wet for me and I don't mean from the bath water."

She would have blushed at his bluntness had he not been giving her such a longing look. "I missed you, too."

"Make love to me, Gabi."

She shifted her weight to take him. As his thickness filled her, she threw her head back with a sigh of happiness. Gabi found a slow, easy rhythm as she rode him, not wanting it to be over too soon. She wanted it to last forever because, now that she had him back, that was exactly what they had. Forever.

Much too soon she felt the pleasure building up in her, getting ready to crest. He must have sensed it too because he gripped her hips tight with his hands and took over control. With hard, quick thrusts, he brought her over in wave after wave of heaven. After a few more moments, he joined her.

"I thought I'd never feel like this again," he spoke against her throat right before he kissed it.

Already she was on fire for him again and, when she felt his erection against her leg, she knew that he was ready for another round, too. He tenderly dried her off, with a towel, his fingers lingering at all the right spots, then led her back into the bedroom.

She expected him to direct her to the bed, but instead he took her to wall and braced one hand on either side of her head, trapping her. The look in his eye was no longer tender, instead it was intense, almost animalistic. She knew that the first time in the tub had been for her. Now he was going to take her hard. He was going to regain his

claim on her. Shivers danced over her body. It wasn't from fear, but excitement. Letting out a low growl, he leaned down and captured her lips with his.

* * * *

He kissed her, his body feeling like it was on fire. He wanted to touch every inch of her, to consume her. What had happened in Hell had torn him apart. Not only was he traumatized, but it had nearly destroyed him that Cam had been victimized, too. The terrible emptiness he felt could only be filled by her. By her love.

He picked her up and wrapped her legs around his waist. Pressing her back against the wall, he entered her in a hard stroke. He drove his cock in as deep as he could, wanting to claim every inch of her. She urged him on by digging her nails into his back. He pulled back and slammed into her again and again. As he took her, he buried his nose in the hollow of her throat, reveling in her sweet rose scent. He licked a bead of sweat off her neck, tasting the salty goodness as he caressed her satin skin.

He knew he wasn't being gentle with her, but she wasn't exactly being gentle with him either. She seemed to need this wild sex as much as he

did. Her heels dug into the small of his back and he could feel her leg muscles straining to pull him in even deeper. When he looked at her face, he saw her cheeks were flushed with desire and her green eyes were seductive, beckoning for more. She made soft mewling sounds that coordinated perfectly with his thrusts.

When she came, she threw back her head and cried out. He covered her mouth with a kiss so that her sounds were muffled. As soon as her body started to tighten and spasm around him, he joined her. Semen shot from him as she tightened around him, milking his cock dry. He still held her in his arms when they were finished while they both caught their breath.

"I need to get going," she sighed regretfully. "They should have the lab set up by now, and I have work to do."

He nodded and let her slide down his body to the ground. Giving her a quick peck on the tip of her nose, he turned to get dressed. She had been thoughtful enough to have a change of fresh clothes waiting for him. It felt good to get rid of his old clothes because they reeked of Hell.

They made their way to the laboratory situated in the center of all the healing chambers. Gabi pushed open the glass doors and they entered a cold and clinical room.

Watching the numerous angels bustling around the room in white lab coats, his jaw went slack with shock. It seemed so human, not at all like the mystical healing techniques he was used to seeing. Hell, there were even microscopes and test tubes lining the walls.

Gabi smiled. "This isn't the first time demons introduced poison into the war. In fact, almost every human disease has been invented by demons. We built this facility several hundred years ago in order to keep up."

"I'm sorry. I thought humans were the only ones that practiced this type of healing," he admitted.

"Please." She gave a small chuckle. "We were the ones who taught the humans their modern medicine. They just don't know it."

Barakiel came through the lab doors. Cam followed, dragging his feet.

Even though his sunglasses covered his eyes, Abdiel knew his gaze was sweeping the lab, looking to see if anyone was gawking. However, everyone seemed oblivious to their presence.

A male angel rushed over to Gabi's side. Small in stature, his head, topped with a mass of tangled brown hair, barely reached her shoulder. His lab coat was wrinkled as were the rest of his clothes. Appearances aside, he carried an aura of authority

around him. He was clearly the one that ran the entire lab.

"If Camael is ready, we have everything set up and ready to go," he said. "If everything goes as expected, we could have the antidote ready in as little as an hour."

"That quick?" Abdiel asked.

"Yes," Gabi nodded. "We are considerably more advanced than humans. Something that could take them months to accomplish, we can do in hours."

A tall, brunette female walked over and handed Cam a travel coffee mug. "Come with me and we'll get your blood."

"What's this?" Cam eyed the mug, suspicious.

"I'm sorry, sir," the female's voice was nonsense. "We will have to take a considerable amount of blood, and your body is going to need to replace its fluids."

"I can't drink this, Gabi," Cam argued. "Not in front of all these angels."

"Why not?" Barakiel growled. "You vamped out on Derel right in the middle of a battlefield of hundreds of angels. Why let a few lab dorks freak you out?"

"Thank you for the compliment." The female shot Barakiel a filthy look. "We'll go to the table over in the corner so nobody will see you. Besides,

for all they know, all that's in that cup is Starbucks." When Cam still looked doubtful, she added, "I'll give you juice and a cookie after."

Barakiel grabbed Cam by the elbow and led him over to the examination table.

Abdiel watched amazed at how the youngest bother handled Cam. With a few well-placed jokes, he made it seem like there was nothing abnormal going on. It was obvious that the youngest Lehor was the peacemaker of the family. He suspected that's why Ana sent Barakiel in the first place. Cam finally drifted off to sleep, his body exhausted after all the abuse it had suffered. Barakiel gripped his hand and finally let his true emotions show.

Abdiel went over and pulled up a chair next to him.

"He's never going to be the same again, is he?" Barakiel ducked his head trying to hide his tears from the archangel.

"No." Abdiel felt a lump well up in his throat. "I'm sorry, but Gabi said the change is permanent. I should have tried to stop the succubus from making him drink the blood, but he was starting to become comatose. I didn't know what else to do."

Barakiel's eyes snapped up and bore into his. "Don't have any regrets. You brought our brother

back to us, and he's not like Mom and Dad. That's what's important. All this other crap, we can deal with. We're family, and we stick together through good and bad times."

The female lab tech came over and gave Barakiel a cookie. Patting him on the head, she walked away.

"I'm not a child." Barakiel called after her. He bit into the cookie.

"Cam's very lucky to have you guys as family," Abdiel said softly. "You should all hate me now. It was my brothers that did this to him."

"Dang it, archangel." Barakiel shot him an exasperated look. "Those things that did this to Cam and you, aren't your brothers, we are. You and Rachael may not share the same blood as us, but we couldn't love you anymore than we do. Any one of us would gladly sacrifice ourselves for you two."

Abdiel was shocked at Barakiel's speech. The mature words were in complete contrast to his dark gothic look. This little empath who had just completed his training was able to put both him and Cam at ease. They both fell into a comfortable silence as they watched Cam sleep and waited to see if his misfortune could be the miracle all angels had prayed for.

Chapter Six

Cam hunched over the toilet as the last of the dry heaves painfully wrenched their way through his body. Dumb ass that he was, he'd taken a gander at himself in the mirror and, what he found staring back at him, sent him diving for the can just in time to lose his lunch.

He was one of them, a demon. By all rights the council should send him right back to Hell where he belonged. The only reason why they probably hadn't already done so was because he was part of their precious Order of Four. Or maybe his dear old uncle had intervened on his behalf.

One thing he learned from his time in Hell was if you kept your trap shut and pretend to be invisible, you learn all kinds of neat things. Another thing he learned was not to sleep too deeply. Too many nasty surprises could be sprung on you if you were caught with your guard down. As soon as Michael started talking with Gabi back

on Earth while they stood over his cot, he woke up and heard every single word they said.

It was true, Michael was his uncle and never claimed them as his. Cam could care less about himself, but the fact the Chief rejected his brothers and Ana, pissed him off. They never did anything wrong. In fact, every single one of them devoted their lives to the *good fight*. Now his family was falling apart and it was all his fault. When little Bear started to cry in the lab, he wanted to pull his brother in his arms and comfort him, but he didn't know what to say.

Don't cry for me, Bear. Don't you see? The real Cam is dead. They destroyed and buried him in Hell. All that stands before you now is a worthless piece of shit. That's what I am, too, a worthless piece of shit that does not deserve any of their compassion or love. They didn't know how close he had come to turning. He had been about ready to lick Mammon's boots and give in, just to stop the torture.

Only Abdiel knew that. Abdiel had grabbed him and pulled him back from the brink. The one who reminded him what he was and the sacred vows he had taken to protect. He also knew that Abdiel would never tell anyone about what really went on down there. Even though he didn't deserve it, Abdiel respected and loved him too much to do that.

As soon as the antidote had worked, everyone was jumping up and down for joy. Yippy skippy! Now the demons couldn't poison angels anymore. Oh yeah, it came a little too late for his sorry ass. While everyone else was able to skip around free and untouched, he was seriously fucked up both physically and mentally.

Although all the change hadn't been bad. He was wearing Nathaniel's leather pants and one of his long sleeved black shirts. Normally the clothes would have hung on him. He'd bulked up and filled the clothes out. He wasn't scrawny anymore. Maybe it was time to ditch the jeans and tee shirts and dress like all the other archangels.

He didn't feel like a real archangel though, regardless of what Michael thought. Sure, he could fight as well as anyone, but he was still a freak. He felt like he was a confused mixture of angel parts, a tad of empath, mixed with a sprinkle of telepath, with a dash of archangel. Oh, and don't forget the heaping spoonful of demon, too. Now he knew what a platypus felt like. Obviously, Michael must agree with him somewhat because he never held the formal naming ceremony for him that all archangels had.

He felt Ana's presence the minute she entered his room and his gut tightened with guilt. It was her blood he drank earlier. He knew it the second

he sipped it from that cold, clinical mug. All of her emotions, feelings and memories slammed into him like a sledgehammer and he learned something never suspected before.

Their Ana was lonely. She devoted her entire life to raising them and, now that Barakiel was leaving, she felt she had no more purpose. Ana wanted nothing more than to find a male and settle down to start her own family, but no male ever gave her a second glance. If her cold demeanor didn't run off suitors, her eight brothers did.

"Hi, Ana," he walked out of the bathroom.

She turned and gave him a fake, sickly smile. "How are you feeling?"

Let's see, he thought. I have a pounding headache and a queasy stomach that I suspect is from being in Heaven. All I can think about is getting into a good fight and getting laid, not necessarily in that order. What does that make you think of your little brother, sis? However all he grunted was, "Fine."

"Cam—"

"Look, Ana, I said I was fine, and I meant it. Your little Cammie is doing just peachy. Let it go already."

"Don't lie to me." Ana narrowed her eyes. "I can feel all the anger and confusion rolling off you."

"Yeah, well I've had a bad hair day." He sat on the edge of the bed and started to pull on his black combat boots.

"Are you planning on going somewhere?"

"No, it's just always good to be prepared. There are enemies everywhere."

"But we're in Heaven. You're perfectly safe here."

"I'm sure that's what Abdiel thought the day his brothers and Lucifer almost destroyed him."

"That was different. Surely you don't think anybody up here would want to harm you."

"That's bullshit and you know it!" He ground his teeth together and got control of himself. "Douma and Forcas knew I was going to be alone and away from the house that day. How did they know that? Someone with insider information had to tell them. Who was it, Ana?"

She looked down at the ground before softly answering him. "We think it was Anfial. Ramiel said that she took off the day after you were captured and neither he nor Daniel have heard from her since, no one has."

Cam closed his eyes as he took in this latest piece of news. Another empath had turned. Even though he was now supposedly an archangel, he would always be first and foremost an empath, and it hurt him his own kind was suffering. He

realized now that the Empath Guild hadn't been blowing hot air all along. Ever since his mother had been incapacitated, there had been no one to lead the empaths, to provide them with structure, to stand up for their rights.

He had paid the ultimate price for that, too, and it had all been thanks to another empath. If he ever got a hold of Anfial, he'd wrap his hands around her throat and squeeze her until that annoying voice was shut up forever. Just thinking about her pissed him off so bad the mirror in the bathroom shattered as his powers surged.

He heard Ana gasp and, when he caught the look on her face, he turned away in shame. She had the look of fear on her and it wasn't fear for him, it was fear of him. He cursed under his breath and breathed several times until he got control of himself. "Sorry," he finally said.

"You have to learn how to control the rage," her voice was laced with worry.

"Tell me, Ana." He stood and walked over to face her. "What did you find when you scanned me? Don't try to tell me you didn't do it either. I know you too well to believe that for one minute."

"I don't want to discuss this right now." She refused to look him in the eye.

"You detected evil in me?" he demanded. When she refused to answer, he gave her a slight

shake of the shoulders. "Damn it, Ana, I deserve to know the truth."

"You already know the answer," Ana said dully. "We can stand here and act stupid all we want, but we both know you're part demon now. Cam, you're something our world has never seen before. An angel that was able to fight conversion to full demon. You may have some evil in you, but your heart is still angel. Don't ever forget that."

"I just want things to go back to the way they were before," Cam cried in a ragged voice. "I don't want to be special. I don't want to be part of the Order. I don't want to be part demon. I just want to go back to being my old, dorky self."

"I know you do, sweetie." She pulled him into a hug.

He closed his eyes and allowed himself to feel the familiar comfort her arms offered. "They are all idiots," he whispered against her hair.

"Who?" she asked as he pulled away from her.

"You are the most beautiful and smartest female I know." He cupped her chin and made her look at him. "Any male in his right mind would gladly fight through the eight of us for you."

"Have you been reading my mind?" She shot him an irritated look.

"No, I have not been reading your thoughts." Technically, that was the truth. "You're very good

at shielding your mind. Hayyel taught you well."

"You better be telling me the truth. Come on, we have to go. Michael is passing out commendations for the battle and he specifically asked that you be present."

"Fine, but only to show how grateful I am to the warriors that fought to free us, not because Michael asked me to. Right now, I wouldn't spit on our dear uncle if he were on fire. But we sit in the back where no one can see us. Step outside for a second and let me finish getting ready."

As soon as he ushered her out, he locked the door using his mind. Pulling the piece of paper out of his pocket, he thoughtfully fingered the numbers on it. He knew he shouldn't even be considering calling her, but he also knew he needed to find some way to release all the emotions boiling up in him. He dialed the number before he lost the courage. As soon as he heard her voice, his body tightened in response.

"It's me." He cringed when he realized he was licking his lips in anticipation.

"What does my little puppy need?" She had laughter in her voice.

"You know what I need." He gripped the phone tight, hating himself for admitting such. They arranged to meet later that night at a neutral bar.

Neutral bars were usually dingy hole in the wall places. Frequented by rogue angels and demons, there was a no fighting rule in place that was more fragile than any Middle East peace treaty. Although no alcohol was served there, it was a hot bed for illegal activity. No self-respecting, law-abiding angel would ever set foot in one, but Cam did not particularly care about that right now.

He left his room and followed Ana to the ceremony hall. When they reached the huge double doors, he could hear they had already started. *Great, nothing like walking in late to call attention to one's self.* He was going to crack the door just enough to slide in when Ana pushed both doors wide open. Every angel in the hall looked at them, including Michael who stood at the front. He turned to shoot a dirty look at Ana only to discover she snuck away to sit with Derel.

"Camael, we have been waiting for you," Michael called.

It started slowly sinking in for him. Every archangel was present and standing at attention at the front of the hall. They had their swords drawn and pointed down. Michael held a sword flat balanced between both hands. On either side of him were Gabi and Abdiel, both smiling. It was an archangel naming ceremony. It was *his* archangel

naming ceremony.

He slowly walked forward, his boots making the only sound in the hushed hall. Having attended all five of his archangel brother's ceremonies he knew exactly what to do. Once he reached Michael, he went down on one knee and bowed his head.

"Wait!" a voice called out in the back.

Cam whipped around toward the source and saw his Aunt Amiteil rushing forward. *Now what?* He somehow did not think she was coming up to give him a welcome home kiss.

Once she reached them, she bowed slightly to Michael. The Chief was giving her a look of warning, but she ignored it. "Before you continue, Michael, the empath's have one request to make," she spoke loudly so all of her words carried through the hall.

"Amiteil, don't do it." Michael growled so low only the three of them could hear.

"We would like Camael to be our leader."

Cam clamped his jaw together so it didn't drop open with shock. What the hell was his aunt thinking? He was the last one that should be a leader. He was so screwed up right now he couldn't even manage his own life, let alone every empath's. He stood up and faced his aunt. "What is this, some sick joke?" he asked softly, before he

opened his mouth to show her his fangs. "Look at me. I'm some monster, not the next leader of the empath's."

"No, you are our savior," she replied, loudly. "You are the only one strong enough to lead us through these hard times. Our kind are in disarray. We need someone to stand up for us, to protect us when no one else will."

He knew she was painting him into a corner. When she put it that way, there was no way he could refuse her. That bitch was smarter than he gave her credit for.

Think carefully before you accept. She thinks you are too young and will turn to her for council. She intends to control you and use you as her own personal puppet, Michael's voice warned in his head.

Is that why you are finally having my naming ceremony? So I will be one of your archangels and under your control? Cam snapped back.

No, I do it to honor you. Not only have you sacrificed a lot, but you have proven yourself worthy.

I'm freaking touched. So you will claim me as one of your archangels, but you are too ashamed to claim me as your nephew. He slammed off contact before Michael could respond. His mind raced. *Maybe some good could come out of this. The empath's did need someone to stand up for them and to lead them. With Ana's help, I might be able to do it.* "I accept with great honor," he shocked everybody by saying in a

loud, clear voice.

"Of course, I will council you until you are fully ready to lead." Amiteil bowed.

"No, I take full leadership now. Today." He took one look at his aunt's shocked face and bit back a smile. *Check fucking mate, bitch.* She had no choice but to nod to him before she went into a full bow at his feet.

Every empath in the room followed suit and bowed to him, even Barakiel. Cam swallowed a mouthful of bile as the repercussions of what he just did hit him like a sledgehammer. Holy crap, he wasn't ready for this. He looked at Ana, and she must have read the panic in his face.

It will be fine. I will help you. You won't face this alone.

Her soft, gentle voice soothed him and gave him courage. He waved his hand over the group of kneeling empaths. "Rise now, my fellow empaths, and know you are now facing a new time. Gone are the days where we go unprepared into battle." Holy crap, were these words of wisdom actually coming from his trap? All that time alone in Hell with nothing to occupy him but his thoughts must have done some good. "Keep your heads and hopes high. I vow to you all that I will do everything in my power to make sure all empaths have a brighter future."

This brought a roar of cheers from all the empathes. He knew then he did the right thing. Even if the mere thought of leading them did scare the piss out of him. He turned and saw that Gabi and Abdiel were both so shocked at his speech their jaws dropped. He just gave them a little, sheepish shrug.

"Now that we have cleared up that matter, shall we continue with your naming ceremony?" Michael said once the cheering had stopped.

Cam could have sworn the Chief actually looked impressed with him. Cam nodded and once again, knelt at Michael's feet.

"Do you accept this sword?" Michael raised the blade.

"Yes, with great honor."

All the archangels banged their swords on the marble floor. The sound echoed through the hall.

Michael lowered the sword and Cam kissed the blade, symbolizing the weapon was now his most treasured possession.

"Do you accept the title archangel?" Michael continued.

"Yes, with great honor."

Again, the archangels hit the ground with their swords.

Michael lowered the sword.

This time Cam wrapped his hand around the

blade. He squeezed it tightly until blood trickled down and dripped onto the gold floor. "I swear a blood oath to always protect the human race and my fellow angel brethren from Lucifer and his followers." Cam recited the archangel oath that was as old as time. Different from the angel warrior oath Abdiel and he had recited in Hell, this vow was taken only by new archangels. Even though he was never taught the words, they poured from his lips easily because they were ingrained into his heart, his soul. "I will always put their needs before my own and willingly sacrifice myself if necessary. I vow to never use my powers for evil and always remember the ones who have fallen before me."

"Rise archangel, Camael, and be accepted by you brothers," Michael instructed.

Cam rose and took the sword from Michael. As soon as he turned around, all the archangels saluted him by raising their swords into the air. Cam followed suit raising his up, too. The entire hall erupted into a loud cheer. To Cam's shock, the cheering continued for several minutes. Never in history had there ever been such a response to a new archangel.

As soon as the naming ceremony was over, Cam rushed outside. When he found who he was

looking for, he let out a whistle. Barakiel stopped and shot him a guilty look. *Sorry, I got to go do something*, the coward mouthed to him. Cam shook his head and pushed his way through the crowd until he got to him. He grabbed Bear by the front of his shirt and eyeballed him. "Why didn't you tell me what the empaths had planned?" Cam asked in a deceptively calm voice.

"They told me at the last minute. I didn't have time to find you."

"You could have told me this way." Cam thumped his finger on Bear's head to show what he meant.

"You know I can't initiate a link, Cam. Only a telepath can do that."

"Remember when we were little and we used to talk to each other in that language nobody else could understand?" Cam waited for Bear to nod before he continued. "Our lips were not moving. We were talking in our minds, little brother."

Bear grew pale and shook his head in denial.

"You must have forgotten about that. Just like you forgot that half the time when I got into trouble for moving stuff with my mind, it wasn't me, it was you."

"Why are you making this stuff up?" Bear smacked his brother's hand away. "Do you get your jollies out of freaking me out?"

"No, Bear, it's all true."

"Screw you. I don't have to listen to this crap." He shrugged out of Cam's grip and stormed away, shooting a heated look over his shoulder.

Cam left the area before he had to deal with anymore of his brothers and made his way to the infirmary. Ever since the visions in Hell, he had a burning desire to visit Lehor. Not that he really believed for one cotton-picking moment it really was his mother who calmed him in Hell. He just needed to see her for himself, to really put this issue to rest.

He opened the door to her room and found her sitting in the same chair she was always in. He walked over and switched on the television set, not that she would watch it, but it made him feel better to have her staring at that rather than the plain white wall.

He went down on his knees and looked her straight in the eyes. Well, as much as he could through his dark glasses. He itched to take them off so he could see her even better, but remembered how much the Heavenly glow hurt and left them on.

He searched for any signs of life, but saw the same thing he always saw since she had been destroyed, nothing. "Mom, it's me, Cam," he whispered. Her dull blue eyes didn't even give the

smallest flicker of recognition. He reached out and tried to touch her mind with telepathy. All he got was a strange jumble of words. *Box, dog, teacup, boys...* He pulled out, unable to bear hearing her insanity.

Her hair was still beautiful, so long it formed a puddle of gold in her lap. He laid his head in it, nuzzling the softness like he was a five-year-old baby again. "I'm scared, Mom," he confessed. "I think I'm turning into a full demon. It will kill Ana if I do. Everybody is expecting all these great things from me, and I honestly don't think I can be what they want me to be. If they all only knew what was going on inside of my head, they would all despise me. I have such evil, vile thoughts. It's almost like there is a monster inside of me, eating me up from the inside out."

She continued to look out vacantly.

Not that he had expected her to answer. "I sometimes think that you and Dad were the lucky ones." He made the vile admission with his eyes down. "If I had become catatonic like your two, at least then I wouldn't have to live with the guilt. I should have been stronger. I should have been able to fight the demon blood. Instead, I let it take over me. I was weak."

He realized his mother's lap was wet because he'd cried all over her. Dear God, he was weak,

one second in the presence of his mommy and he was blubbering like a baby. He brought her cold, lifeless hand to his lips and kissed it. "I've got to go now, Mom. I'll come back soon."

He got up and walked out of the room, wiping his eyes on the way out. He closed the door and turned around to find Nathaniel standing there. Crap, he had been trying to put off telling his brother what he found in Hell, but it looked like now was as good as time as any. Bear already hated him. Might as well shoot for a deuce.

"Hey, Cam." Nathaniel smiled. "Visiting Mom?"

"Yeah, figured since I was in Heaven, I might as well stop by." Cam grabbed his brother by the arm "Look, there's something I gotta tell you. I saw Belora when I was in Hell. I talked with her."

Nathaniel turned pale. "You saw Belora? She's alive?" When Cam only nodded his head, Nathaniel grabbed him by the shirt and pushed him against the wall. "Tell me everything, Cam, now."

"She's in a cell chained up. She's been there ever since they captured her."

"Have they hurt her?"

"I bit her." Cam closed his eyes against the sudden hatred he saw on his brother's face.

Nathaniel started to punch him.

Cam made no move to defend himself. He let his brother give him the punishment he deserved. It didn't stop until Nathaniel finally got control of himself and threw him away with an agonized cry.

"How could you, Cam?" he yelled out. "Why Belora? I love her."

"I know you do." Cam wiped away the blood from his bottom lip. "As soon as I knew she was yours, I stopped. I'm sorry, Nathaniel. It was right after they turned me, and I didn't know what I was doing."

Nathaniel reached down and hauled him back up to his feet.

Cam winced, totally expecting another beating. However, Nathaniel pulled him into a tight embrace. When Cam realized he wanted the hatred over the compassion, his stomach dropped. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," he babbled repeatedly as his big brother sobbed in his arms.

"I don't know you anymore." Nathaniel pushed Cam away and left.

Cam walked off in the opposite direction. He just needed to get the hell out of there before he ran into someone else. He made it as far as the lobby before he literally, ran into someone else. He instinctively wrapped his arms around that someone to prevent them from falling and was

shocked to feel the soft curves of a female.

"Oh, I am so sorry," she exclaimed as her deep green eyes widened in embarrassment. "I am such a klutz."

"That's all right," he replied as he drank in every inch of her with his gaze, from her deep red hair right down to the dainty ankles peeking out from under her white dress. "You're Haniel's sister, aren't you?"

"Yes, my name is Amadeaha, remember? We met at your house, although I must say you have changed a little bit."

"What can I say? I've been eating my spinach." She let out a small laugh that seemed to dance over his skin like raindrops. He even found himself smiling back at her despite his crappy mood.

"You can let me go now. I don't think we have to worry about me falling anymore," she informed with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"Yeah, right. Sorry about that." Once he released her, he expected her to run away, however she continued to stand there and smile. He noticed that Jehel was off to the side, with another male, both of them giving him an angry glare.

"I'm afraid my father and Uncle Jehel don't approve of me talking to you," she confessed.

"They probably know I'm a bad influence."

"Lucky for both of us, I don't give a rip what they think."

That last comment made him laugh for the first time since capture. She stood on tiptoe and gave him a soft kiss on his cheek. She smelled like lilacs. He'd forgotten how much he loved that smell. He had a tree that grew outside his window back on Earth. Every spring he would leave his window open just so he could smell it. "You're really going to tick them off by doing that." He tried not to notice how strained his voice sounded.

"They are just going to have to get over it. I wanted to thank you for finishing my brother's mission for him. All he had left is his honor."

She then walked away, leaving him feeling an odd emptiness. He resisted the urge to go after her. She was a female, sure, but she was an angel and he was not worthy of her anymore.

He knew now that was why he had lashed out at Bear earlier. His brother was everything he used to be, a small, geeky kid without any real responsibility. He would give anything to have the old him back. Most angels would give their hind teeth to have the power he now held, and he just wanted to turn his back on it all, but his damn honor wouldn't let him.

Like Haniel, his honor was all he had left.

* * * *

Even though he knew he shouldn't be doing it, Cam went to the neutral bar that night for his date with the succubus. He couldn't help himself, even though he was supposed to be the leader of the empaths and an archangel, the demon part of him still screamed for some release. And right now, the demon part was stronger than the angel part.

As soon as Cam entered the bar, he scanned it for danger. There were several demons seated at tables, but they didn't pay him any attention. He returned the favor by walking by them without a second glance. Several rogue angels were scattered about the place. They eyed him nervously, but after taking one look at his huge, opposing frame clad in all black and the sword strapped to his back, they all hastily turned and looked down.

"We don't want any trouble here, archangel," a demon from behind the bar called.

Cam turned to him and hissed, baring his fangs.

Startled, the bartender jumped back. The bottles behind him rattled.

"I promise to be a good, little boy," Cam growled in a deep voice.

The bartender filled a glass and pushed it

toward him. "Here, it's on the house."

He eyed the drink suspiciously. "What is it?"

"Pure angel blood, female, too." The demon's hands shook.

Cam smiled to himself, pleased he was able to get that kind of reaction from others. He took off his sunglasses for the first time that day. As soon as the bartender saw his eyes, he trembled even more.

He drank the blood and was instantly lost in its sweetness. Since he was not related to the blood, it carried no thoughts or memories. Instead, it gave him an instant high as the power and lust rushed to his head. The injuries Nathaniel gave him earlier healed. The demon behind the bar looked at him with pure terror. Cam let the empath part of him soak up that emotion. For the first time in his immortal life, he found himself liking the taste of fear. He pulled out a fifty and slammed it on the bar. "Give me another."

Slender hands wrapped themselves around his chest. "I'm here for you, puppy," she purred in his ear.

He pulled her into his lap and pinned her to the bar before roughly kissing her. He felt her tongue slide into his mouth and slowly explore his fangs, perhaps reveling in what she helped create. Shielding her from view with his body, he slipped

his hand under her short skirt and discovered that all that separated her from him was a tiny pair of panties. When he nudged them to the side to stroke her wet folds, she moaned loudly in his ear. Slipping one digit inside her, he brushed his thumb against her clit. With a sigh of pleasure, she started moved her hips in a slow sensual pattern. Their kissing grew more frantic as she rode his hand, her juices coating his fingers. He knew he really shouldn't be finger fucking her in the middle of a crowded bar, but it was a turn on having others watch him get her off.

"Come for me now," he commanded into her ear. She obeyed him, throwing her head back and unleashing a cry that carried across the room.

He eyed a nearby tabletop and was half tempted to throw her on top of it and have his way with her right there. He knew that she would not protest. Hell, she probably would enjoy the audience more than he would. However, he wasn't about to give more of a show to the whole bar.

He jerked her to her feet and led her to the bathroom. It was dark, dingy and filthy like the rest of the bar, but he didn't care. He had barely closed and locked the door before she was on him. She started to tear at his clothes, but he stopped her hands. "Don't rip my shirt again."

She then literally climbed up him to get to his neck.

How frigging hot was that? Wrapping her legs tightly around his waist for leverage, she sank her fangs into his neck. Hissing with pleasure, he slammed her back against the wall and ripped her underwear off. Freeing himself from his pants, he thrust into her. She never let go of his neck, feeding on him as he pounded into her furiously. If he closed his eyes tight enough, he could imagine it wasn't her he was with. Instead, he was with a female angel, one with deep red hair and flashing green eyes.

After a few moments, Lilith rolled her head back with a moan. "I have never tasted better," she panted. Her bright eyes glowed eerily. "Your blood makes me feel so alive. It's so strong and yet so sweet. Do you know what they are calling you? The Empath King. I'm fucking one of the most powerful angels in Heaven."

He didn't answer her because he was a little too occupied with her body. Looking down at the column of her white throat, he licked his lips. The urge to bite her was so strong his fangs ached. He remembered Abdiel warning him not to drink demon blood and tried to fight his thirst. But as he climaxed, he lost control. With an animalistic roar, he pierced her throat with his teeth and started to

drink deeply.

It wasn't until much later that he left the bathroom. Lilith was still in there humming softly to herself and covered with even more bite marks than he was. Slipping on his sunglasses, he marched down the center of the bar like he owned it. He mentally sent out a challenge and three demons fell for the bait. As he got to the door, he felt them follow. He smiled to himself as he walked outside.

He almost stopped dead in his tracks when someone nudged his mind. Whipping around, he halfway expected to see Douma or Forcas there. They weren't. Deciding he must be losing his mind, he went outside and waited for the three demons. He was happy to hear them coming out. He so needed a good fight.

* * * *

Cam walked quietly through the house trying not to wake anyone up. He didn't feel like explaining where he was all night. He winced from his many bruises because he had taken a beating. He'd still won the fight and pummeled the crap out of those three demons. Still, his eye was swollen shut and, since he couldn't very well ask Gabi to heal it and

the thought of drinking his own family's blood repulsed him, a good old fashioned ice bag was going to have to do the trick.

Just as he was closing the freezer door, the kitchen light turned on. *Busted!* He turned around and saw Abdiel leaning against the counter. Deciding to play it casual, Cam slipped on his sunglasses and smiled. "Hi, Abdiel," he said brightly. "You're up kind of late."

Abdiel wasn't fooled for one moment. He walked over and pulled off Cam's sunglasses. Turning the younger angel's face side to side, he examined the bruises and scrapes. When he saw all the bite marks, he cursed in displeasure. "Where did you go?" Abdiel snapped.

"Some neutral bar." Cam yelped in pain when a concerned finger probed his injured eye. "I wasn't the only archangel there, you know."

"That still doesn't make it all right." Abdiel pushed the ice pack to the other angel's face. "Those places are dicey at best."

"I dunno, it kind of reminded me of the tavern Luke found Han Solo in."

"How did you get all the bite marks?" he shot back sarcastically.

"Rough sex," He winced as the words slipped out.

"Damn it, Cam. What are you thinking? Did

she give you the shiner, too?"

"No, I picked a fight with a few demons after I was done with her. Look, why are you riding me so hard about this? If one of my brothers showed up like this, you wouldn't say one damn thing."

"Your brothers don't have a huge bounty on their head," Abdiel said between clenched teeth. "What if Douma and Forcas had been there? We can't afford to lose you."

"Yeah, wouldn't want to lose a member of the freaking Order. That would just be tragic."

"This has nothing to do with the Order. We can't afford to lose you because we all care for you too much. I know what they did to you down there. I could hear it. It would destroy me if I knew that you were going through that again."

"I can take care of myself, Abdiel. You just have to trust me on that one." Cam started to go up the stairs, but hesitated, tapping his hand on the banister. "Abdiel, don't think I've forgotten what you did for me in Hell. If you hadn't come to me, I would have been lost. I also wanted to thank you for not telling anyone about how close I came to turning."

"I just figured that was between you and me and could stay that way. No one would understand everything that went on there."

"Why are you up so late? Is it because you have

nightmares, too?" He knew the other angel didn't respond because they both already knew the answer. There were no pleasant dreams in their future. That possibility was smashed the minute they had entered Hell.

Cam went into his room and stopped dead in his tracks. On the bed were several shopping bags full of clothes. Opening the card that sat on top, he smiled. *I knew you were wanting some new duds so I took the liberty of picking these out. Love ya, Rachael.* He moved the bags over enough to lie down.

He tried to sleep, but every time he drifted off, a memory of his torture came rushing back leaving him drenched in sweat and out of breath. Cam stared off into the darkness, cursing himself for being weak. He was supposed to be a strong, macho archangel and here he was wishing that Ana would come and comfort him like she used to when he was a small child.

Just slow down your breathing and try to focus. It will help the panic pass, a male voice directed in his head.

Cam sat up, shocked. The voice almost sounded like Abdiel's yet it was slightly different. It couldn't be the archangel though. He was the only one that could initiate a telepathic link besides Rachael. *Crap, Douma and Forcas must be messing with my mind.*

No, I am not Douma or Forcas. The voice was angry now. I'm insulted that you would think that. My demon brothers are complete assholes.

Cam laughed aloud. They're not on my MySpace Friend's list either. So who in the hell are you?

I'm not in Hell anymore, thank you very much, and I'm Appolion.

No frigging way. Cam's mouth dropped open in shock. No offense, but why are you contacting me and not Rachael?

My family is so dysfunctional that we should be on the Springer Show, Appolion replied dryly. I saw you earlier tonight at the bar and immediately sensed you were a telepath. I know you live with Rachael and Abdiel. I was hoping you could answer some questions for me.

So that had been the mental push he felt earlier. Cam settled back on the bed and told him everything. He explained the Order, told him about his and Rachael's powers and how Abdiel fit in. He even divulged what happened to him in Hell. Appolion listened thoughtfully and even interjected some humorous observations of his own. Cam slowly began to like and trust him and soon was telling him about his transformation. Since Appolion was trapped between both worlds, too, he completely understood.

We have been talking for hours and you have not tried to talk me into coming back. Appolion seemed

surprised.

Hell. Cam sent back, if it weren't for the vows I took as an archangel, I would be tempted to join you in exile. I feel like a freak most of the time, even around my sister and brothers. They would probably be relieved if I left.

I need to hit the sack. Appolion yawned in his head. I have to work tomorrow. I'm going to leave the link up though so you can talk to me anytime you want. Just you though, tell Rachael not to even try reaching me. Even though you claim she and Abdiel are cool, I am just not ready to deal with any of my family yet.

After what you shared with me about your parents and brothers, I don't blame you. Cam smiled when he imagined how pissed Rachael was going to be. Thank you for letting me vent. If you ever need me for anything, let me know.

Chapter Seven

Gabi woke up and instantly reached over to Abdiel's side of the bed only to find it cold and empty. She sat up and saw him standing in front of their bedroom window, a dagger in his hand. The soft, early morning light cast harsh shadows across his face as he scanned the street in front of their house. "Did you sleep at all last night?"

"Sure, I just woke up not too long ago." He never looked away from the window.

"You're lying to me. You've not even taken your boots off, let alone come to bed."

"Yeah, well, sleep is overrated anyhow," he snapped, still refusing to turn around.

Gabi juggled her options in her head. She did not know the best way to approach him. She was afraid that if she pushed him too hard, that he would just shut her out. However, she was also afraid that if she didn't help him face his fears that they would take over both of their lives. She

finally decided on the latter option. It was time for her mate to talk about what happened. "What was Hell like?" She pretended not to notice his annoyed expression.

"It was Hell. What do you think it was like?"

"Were you and Cam kept together? Did you, at least, have each other?"

"No, they separated us almost from the first day. I could hear him while they were torturing him though."

She felt a small sense of victory when he came and sat on the bed with her.

"It was horrible, hearing him suffering and not being able to go help him."

"Did they keep you chained up the entire time?" When he only nodded, she continued. "They didn't feed you guys at all, did they? I saw the way Cam attacked his food when the healers first brought it to him."

"No, I only got a couple of meals some female demon left for me. You want to hear something real pathetic? At the time, I actually thought it might have been my mother."

"You may be right." She reached over and stroked his hair. "Did you know Appolion wasn't exiled? Your mother just told him that. She really set him free."

"Where did you hear that?"

"Beelzebub rubbed it into Rachael to hurt her feelings. Unfortunately, it worked."

A brief flash of anger went through his dark eyes. "I wish he'd stayed long enough during the battle so I could have paid him back for that one. I noticed both he and my brothers hightailed it out of there as soon as things got hairy."

"Do you know why they decided to fixate so much on Cam? Was it Douma and Forcas that messed with his mind?"

"No, it was Mammon who mind raped Cam. He decided to make him his *special project*."

As soon as she heard Mammon's name, her stomach flipped over in fear. Every angel knew about the most powerful and ruthless demon in Hell. No wonder Cam had been so damaged when they got him back. "How did he find out Michael was his uncle? Did Mammon tell him?"

"Cam won't admit it, but his mother came to him and comforted him while he was down there. She told him. Mammon just had fun rubbing in the fact that Michael never wanted to claim him."

"How horrible." She remembered how the other Lehor's reacted to the news. "How could no one have known they were related?"

"You forget how disorganized things were in the angel world back then. We were the first class of students to be formally educated in the school,

remember? It wasn't until after the fall of Lucifer that the council was even formed. Most angel families didn't really even know each other. They all lived their own separate lives. The few angels that did know the truth about Michael probably knew they better keep their mouths shut."

"Until Jehel opened his big trap," Gabi spat venomously. "The little maggot loved the reaction he got from Ana and the boys."

"That's okay. He got his. Did you see his face when the emaphths made Cam their leader? He looked about ready to explode. This means Cam will be sitting on the council now."

"Cam's got a whole lot of responsibility all of a sudden. I hope he can handle that coupled with everything else that has happened to him."

"Ana will help him with the leadership stuff. She's good at that sort of thing."

She noticed the dark circles under his eyes. She doubted if he had slept more than a couple hours since his return home. The few times he let his guard down enough to sleep, nightmares woke him. "Are your dreams about what they did to Cam?" she asked gently.

"Sometimes," he admitted. "Other times I dream about what might happen in the future if we don't stop it."

"Stop what?"

"That super demon Rachael told us about. She was right. It's real and it's going to come for us all."

"You need to sleep, Abdiel. You look terrible."

"I don't know if I can anymore. I worry that if I fall asleep I'm going to wake up back in Hell."

"Here, lay down with me," she urged. "I'll stay awake and watch over you. I'll make sure you don't go anywhere."

"I'm fine, honestly," he protested, even as he let her pull him down.

Gabi put his head in her lap and brushed her fingers through his hair. He fell asleep within a couple of minutes and she kept her promise to him. She sat there and watched over him.

* * * *

They'd been sitting at the kitchen table eating lunch when Cam finally rolled out of bed and joined them. As soon as Gabi saw him, she knew he'd been up to no good. He had a nice black eye he made no attempt to hide in addition to a split lip. Several scratches ran down the side of his face before they disappeared into his black turtleneck shirt. He was pale and his hands shook as he reached for the plate of sandwiches.

"I talked to Appolion last night," Cam said

casually.

Rachael and Abdiel's heads snapped up like someone slapped them.

Cam seemed unaffected by their reaction. He just sat there and ate, acting like everything was normal.

"What do you mean you talked with Appolion last night?" Abdiel finally asked.

"He called me on the physic friend's network line."

Rachael jumped up and slugged his arm. "Why didn't you come and get me?"

He winced. "I got a little sidetracked." Cam had the good graces to look guilty. "You know how I can get a little chatty sometimes."

"Just how long did you talk with him?" Gabi asked, more than a little annoyed.

"I dunno." He shrugged his shoulders. "Couple hours."

That was the final straw. She was going to strangle him. First, he'd taken off last night without telling them where he was going. Then, he stayed out all night raising hell and now this. Not to mention he was trying to hide numerous bite marks. As soon as he walked into the kitchen with his black eye, she scanned him for more injuries. She was no idiot either. She knew how he had gotten chewed on, that little perv. Now he

was sitting there admitting he had spent hours talking to someone that claimed to be Appolion without any real proof the voice was telling the truth.

"You just can't talk to anyone that pops into your head." Abdiel looked ticked as well. "You can't be sure it was Appolion. It could have been anyone."

"It was your brother," Cam said firmly. "He sounds almost like you, Abdiel."

"Why would he contact you?" Gabi shook her head in confusion. "More importantly, why now, after all this time?"

"He saw me last night and figured out who I was." Cam said evasively. "I think he's reaching out now because the demons have been trying to capture him lately. I guess up until then, they pretty much ignored him since he left."

"What exactly did you tell him?" Abdiel he leaned back and crossed his arms.

"Everything," Cam admitted, refusing to look at Abdiel.

Gabi groaned. She was really getting sick of Cam's impulsive behavior.

"Did he tell you where he's been all this time?" Rachel frowned. It was obvious she was more than a little that her twin had not contacted her.

Cam shook his head. "He refused. He's afraid I

would tell you guys.”

“Would you?” A month ago, Gabi would not have asked that question, but she didn’t know what Cam was capable of now.

Her doubt seemed to hurt him. “Of course I would Gabi. I told you he contacted me, didn’t I? Just because I’ve done a few stupid things doesn’t mean I’d deliberately hurt Rachael and Abdiel.”

Gabi instantly felt guilty. Even though he was going through tough times, Cam was still Cam. He still had his sweet, tender heart. He just hid it beneath layers of shame, guilt and hate now.

“Did he tell you why he won’t connect with me?” Rachael looked completely crestfallen.

“He says he doesn’t want anything to do with his family. After what his brothers and parents did to you guys, he’s a little bitter.” Cam gave Rachael a little smile and reached out to squeeze her hand. “Personally, I think he was trying to protect you. He went through a lot of crap, and he was trying to shield you from it.”

Gabi got up and hugged Rachel, her heart breaking along with the female. If what Cam said was true, then part of her understood why Appolion would cut off contact with his twin. Their link had been so strong Rachael would have suffered alongside him during his abuse much like Barakiel had with Cam. Another part of her

wanted to slug him for hurting her so much. Until they had brought her home, Rachael had been alone in the world.

"Do you think you could talk him into coming home?" Abdiel asked.

"Right now, no. Douma and Forcas have him scared of Michael and you. They told him you guys are hunting him down."

Gabi was so sick of hearing those two demon names. Come on, they really needed to get a hobby and not one that involved breeding a super demon.

"What has he been doing all this time?" Rachael obviously was trying to be strong and hold her tears back. "How has he been surviving?"

"He's very good at shielding his presence from both demons and angels."

When Cam mentioned that, Gabi remembered that's what he had done for them on the first day of the riot.

"He's been living like a human for centuries. He even works human jobs. He's been a doctor, policeman, firefighter and a paramedic just to name a few."

"That would explain the paramedic uniform he was wearing," Gabi mused.

"For someone that claims to not to be an angel, he sure seems to be very protective of humans,"

Abdiel said hopefully. "Every job he's ever had has been geared toward protecting or healing."

"I agree." Cam nodded. "He has a lot of guilt and feels like he needs to do penance. No demon would feel that way."

Gabi reached over and tilted Cam's face toward her. He scowled, but made no move to stop her. She touched his black eye before she pulled down the collar of his shirt to look at the bite marks. She cursed softly under her breath when she saw how vicious they were. She had seen succubus bites before, but never this many. "Is this what I think it is, Cam?" She looked up and met his gaze. "A penance?"

"I don't know, maybe," Cam admitted with a small shrug.

"What for? You did nothing wrong."

He shifted his gaze away from hers. "We all have sins to pay for. I'm no different."

"What could you have possibly done to deserve this?" her voice cracked. "This succubus was downright brutal with you."

"You would be surprised at what I'm capable of."

"Was it the same succubus that came to you in Hell, Lilith?"

"It's not like I keep a little black book filled with demon names."

Abdiel ran his hand through his dark hair as he heaved a deep sigh. "You need to be careful. I don't trust that female demon at all. You should have heard the way she went on in Hell. She's got a weird fixation with you."

"So what if she does?" Cam responded quietly as he looked down at the table. "It's not like any female angels are going to be lining up to be with me. What female would want to be my mate now?"

"I had plenty of them asking me about you after your naming ceremony." Gabi argued. It was true, too. She had to leave the hallway just to get away from them.

"They're only interested in me because I was just named leader of the empath's. They don't even care about me because I'm, well...me. You understand what I'm trying to say?"

Gabi did. She couldn't count the times males had approached her in the past just because of her position within Heaven. It had hurt every time to know that they wanted her power, not her. "If you want me to heal you, just let me know." She instinctively knew he would refuse any help from her.

"I'll be fine." He downed the rest of his sandwich in one hungry gulp and got up. "I'm going to the gym."

"I'm coming, too." Rachael popped up and ran to join him.

"No zapping each other," Abdiel yelled. "Weapons and fists only."

They both groaned in protest, bringing a smile to Abdiel's lips. It soon faded as he stared down at the ground deep in thought.

Gabi knew he was replaying the conversation in his head. She also knew he was upset to hear Appolion was afraid of him. She climbed onto his lap and put her head on his chest, trying to give him some comfort. "It sounds like your baby brother is as stubborn as you are," she teased.

"I'm not stubborn," he protested.

She laughed right in his face. "You are the most stubborn male I have ever met." She softened the comment by kissing his neck.

"I don't think we're ever going to get him back," he sighed.

"Don't give up on him yet." She reached up and brushed the lock of hair off his forehead. "He did contact Cam after all, and he did it because he knew he lived with you. That's a big step forward."

"Great, just what we need," he drawled. "Two males with a serious guilt complex lamenting together. They'll probably form a rock band and sing sappy ballads."

"You got to wonder why Appolion decided to come to Detroit. Personally, I think you and Rachael are drawing him here. He may be scared of you, but he still wants to be close."

"He's out there all alone, Gabi." Abdiel played with her fingers. "He's just as hunted as we are, and he has no one to protect him. At least we have each other."

"As long as you and Cam don't go running off and play hero on your own again."

"I promise no more stupid stunts." He kissed the corner of her mouth before holding her so tight it almost hurt. "I can't stand to go through being apart from you again."

She wiggled her hips in his lap, smiling when she felt him respond. He slipped his hand under her shirt and nudged her black, lacy bra up so he could cup her breast. When he softly feathered her nipple with his thumb, she arched her back and let out a soft whimper. He kissed her long, slender neck just the way she liked. Grabbing, his dark hair tight in her hands, she tried to pull him closer, even as she did that wiggle thing again against his cock. He unzipped her pants and his hand softly caressed her already wet flesh.

"I need you now," she declared. Every since he came home, they hadn't been able to get enough of each other. It was as if they were making up for

lost time.

Getting up, they stumbled their way to the closest room, never breaking off their kiss. It was the office. A large oak desk occupied the center of the room. It was huge, more than large enough to accommodate both of them. He shut the door behind them and locked it. "Strip," he commanded. His lips curled up into a rakish smile.

With a small giggle, she obeyed him, shedding her clothes in record speed. He did the same thing, baring his muscular body for her appraisal. She was pleased to notice he no longer tried to hide his tattoo from her.

Grabbing her by the shoulders, he spun her around and gently bent her over the edge of the desk. "Hold on and close your eyes," he ordered as he ran a finger down her spine, making her shiver. "If you disobey me, I'll stop."

Whimpering with desire, she did as he asked, closing her eyes and gripping the edge of the desk so tightly, the wood bit into her fingers. The surface felt cool against her bare flesh and teased her nipples. Her breath came out in pants as she waited and waited for him to do something. He kept her in suspense and that only increased her desire as she imagined the ways he planned on pleasuring her.

Just when she thought she couldn't wait any longer, his tongue caressed her inner thigh before traveling up further. A shriek of pleasure burst from her lips as his velvet touch caressed her clit in slow sensual paths. Shocked, she let go of the desk and opened her eyes. He instantly stopped.

"You're not obeying me, Princess." He blew on her swollen flesh, the cold air teasing her even more.

"Sorry, I'll obey," she whimpered. "Don't stop." Closing her eyes, she held the desk again. As soon as she did, he resumed his sweet torture. His tongue speared inside her before slurping up her fluid. He devoured her like she was his last meal. Teasing all parts of her flesh with his lips, tongue and teeth, leaving her sweaty and weak with desire. Her hips gyrated against his face and, even though she was embarrassed by her wanton behavior, couldn't stop herself.

When she came, it was so intense she couldn't hold back her screams of pleasure. He continued to love her with his mouth until she came twice more. She bit her lip to hold back the loudest of them, not wanting the others to know what they were up to, but it was hard. He pulled away and she waited with baited breath to see what he planned next. Gabi jumped when the tip of his erection pushed against her entrance. She waited

for him to plunge into her, but it didn't. Instead, he teased her by barely brushing against her. She thrust her hips back, but he pulled back, not taking the bait.

"Abdiel. Please."

"Please, what?"

She let out a growl of frustration and thrust her hips back again. "I need you."

"You need what?" His cock entered her, but just barely before he pulled it out again.

"I need you inside me. Now stop teasing me," she snarled.

"You're cute when you get angry." Gripping her hip for leverage, he finally thrust all the way into her.

She let out a gasp as he filled her. Gabi started to open her eyes, but remembered his warning and squeezed them tightly. The last thing she wanted now was for him to stop.

"I love you so much, Princess." He started to make love to her at a fast urgent pace.

Gabi urged him on by tilting her backside up so she could take him in even deeper. His balls slapped against her clit, causing ripples of pleasure to dance down her body. His grip on her tightened as he got closer to the edge. She started to thrust back, meeting his halfway. With a loud groan he came, his hot seed spurting inside of her.

After a few more strokes, she joined him. She screamed so loud there was no way Cam and Rachael didn't hear her, but she didn't give a damn anymore. She was so overcome with desire that all her inhibitions were gone.

Afterward, they both stayed in place as they caught their breath. He was still inside her and she could feel him getting hard again. She smiled, eager for their next round. Something in the other room hit the wall so hard the entire house shook, followed by a thud that sounded suspiciously like a body hitting the floor.

"Ouch! Damn it, Rachael, Abdiel said no zapping," Cam yelled from the gym.

Gabi laughed as they pulled apart, the mood totally spoiled. "When this is all over, we need to get away for a few days."

* * * *

Much to Rachael's delight, she got to go patrolling with them that night. Much to her dismay, big brother Abdiel took one look at her racy outfit and made her change. It was dark before they started slowly walking the streets, with Cam in the lead scanning for demons. They all had their weapons out and ready. Rachael still had Abdiel's old sword. He offered to have a new one made for her,

but she refused. Gabi could tell it touched him that she wanted to use something that had been his.

"Hey, Cam," Rachael called out after several minutes. "It's my turn to scan for demons."

Cam gave her a conflicted look and Gabi could almost hear the hamster wheel in his head spinning as he mulled it over. He'd always been the one to search for the demons. Gabi knew he felt it his responsibility to lead the way into battle.

"But I'm the empath," he finally said in a lame voice that was very close to sounding like the old Cam.

Rachael made a big show of rolling her eyes. "I'm very good at tracking demons. I've had a lot of experience in that area, in case you forgot."

"You heard the lady," Abdiel called, a small smile playing on his full lips. "Switch places."

Cam sighed before shrugging his shoulders. He came and stood by Gabi.

She reached up and took off his sunglasses, ignoring the irritated look he gave at her actions. "Quit hiding your eyes from us," she ordered as she slipped the glasses in her jacket. "Personally, I happen to think your eyes are beautiful."

"I agree," Rachael responded never taking her gaze off the street ahead of her. "Do you know they sell contacts on the internet that make humans eyes look like that?"

"Great." Cam smiled, showing he really wasn't offended. "It's good to know the internet likes me. It's such a reliable source after all."

"You should try signing up for a dating service on it," Abdiel added. "Maybe that would get you to leave that succubus alone."

"Yeah, I could just see the profile now." Cam held his hand up and cocked his head to the side, like he could almost see the ad. "Single male angel with psychotic disposition seeks like-minded female."

"Don't forget to add she needs to bring a fire extinguisher on the first date." Abdiel clapped Cam on the back as they laughed.

Rachael stopped walking and started jumping up and down in excitement, her blue eyes practically glowing. "Oh goodie, there are demons nearby."

Gabi couldn't help but smile at her sister-in-law's enthusiasm. "Come on, boys," she said. "Let's go find those demons so Rachel can zap 'em."

* * * *

Appolion was walking through the city patrolling, which was totally stupid because he'd never gone out and actively hunted demons before. He'd

always kept his head down and only fought when absolutely necessary. Yet here he was, acting like he was some lame archangel protecting the world from evil.

He had been perfectly fine until Abdiel came to Earth. Appolion had known the instant his big brother left Heaven and he'd been drawn to Detroit like some pathetic loser. He cursed the small part of him that wanted to run to his brother, hoping for love and acceptance. The last time he had tried that with a family member, he ended up bitch slapped, laughed at and spit on.

He really meant to leave Detroit once Abdiel had seen him, then Rachael showed up. He missed his twin so much it hurt. Every time he felt her call him, it had been torture not to respond to her, but he didn't want her to know what happened to him or what he'd been forced to do. He was too ashamed to show her that side. He would still give anything just to be with her for five minutes. When he had cut off any contact with Rachael, it was like he lost a piece of himself.

When Abdiel asked him to come home with him and his female, Appolion almost agreed. He was so sick of living all alone with only the occasional human for a friend he was willing to face Michael. But he'd been too scared to leave the life he lived all these centuries. What would

Abdiel think of him if he knew about all the things the demons had done to him? What if he couldn't enter Heaven after being tainted by Hell? What if he really was a demon even though he fought turning?

He knew he shouldn't have contacted Cam. It was just when he saw him at the bar and remembered the angel lived with his siblings, Appolion seized on the opportunity. He still could not believe they actually thought he was part of their stupid super hero team. He may be a telepath, but he didn't have any powers like Rachael or Cam. *Nada, zip, nothing, what you see is what you get.*

Appolion stopped dead in his tracks when he felt something breathing on the back of his neck. He whipped his guns out of his waistband as he spun around. He let out a foul curse as five Hounds from Hell greeted him with snarls. The demon dogs fanned out, surrounding him. "Just flash out of here, you idiot," he muttered under his breath. He knew he couldn't do that though. If he didn't send these demons back to Hell, they would find some innocent humans to prey on.

He started to hum, then stopped and rolled his eyes when he realized it was *Who Let the Dogs Out?* He sighed. *Okay, it's official folks, I'm losing it.* The Hounds continued to slowly circle him, but

they made no move to attack. He kept his guns aimed and cocked even as he grew more apprehensive from their behavior.

Several throwing stars flew out from the night and buried themselves into his body. Instantly, Appolion's entire body felt like it was burning from the inside out. He furiously dug at the stars trying to rip them out. Several different voices started to scream and cry in his head. Clamping his hands over his ears, he tried to shut them up, but it was useless. The tormented wailing continued. Remembering what Cam told him, Appolion realized he had just been poisoned with demon blood.

He fell onto the street, lying on his back, as he writhed around in agony. Someone walked up and placed their foot on his chest, pinning him to the ground. He barely noticed them until they stomped on one of the stars and ground it deeper into his body. When he saw who it was, Appolion stifled the whimper to avoid showing his fear.

It was Forcas and Douma was right behind him. They both smirked.

Rachael, help me. He knew he had no right to call out to her, but he could not go back to Hell.

Appolion, is that really you? she responded.

The soothing concern in her voice gave him some comfort, despite the fact those damn voices

were still shrieking in his head. *Please, Rachael, don't let them take me back there.* He knew he was being pathetic by begging his sister to come save him, but he was too desperate to care.

Don't worry, we're coming.

Her reassuring words helped calm him down some. "Get your fucking foot off me, you son of a bitch!" Appolion yelled to Forcas. His brother ground the weapon even deeper into his chest causing Appolion to groan in pain.

"Look what the dogs dragged in, Douma," the demon said. "Here we were, looking for Abdiel and his crew and we get a little bonus. You always were good at hiding your stench, Appolion."

"You know you're both still dickheads. Some things never change."

Forcas kicked him in the side of the head. "You're still the same cocky, little shit, too. You'll soon change your tune when you find yourself in your old cell in Hell."

"Please, Forcas, don't take me back to Hell." Appolion cringed at the pathetic groveling tone his voice had taken. "If you have any compassion in your heart, you'll do me a favor and destroy me instead."

Even as he asked the question, he knew it was hopeless. His brothers would never give up a chance to watch him suffer. They were going to

take him back to Hell. His life was once again going to be filled with torture and abject loneliness. The poison pulsated through his body. He arched his back as another wave of pain hit him. Foam seeped from his mouth. His vision clouded as the screaming voices threatened to split his skull.

A flurry of arrows rained down, hitting the Hounds. The demon dogs howled in pain as his brothers started to curse. Appolion lifted his head and was shocked by what he saw. Four tall warriors walked toward them. There were two males and two females, and they were all dressed in black leather. As they marched side by side down the center of the street, they made formable sight.

Appolion smiled when he recognized Rachael, Cam, Abdiel and Gabi. His sister had not let him down, and judging by the expression on the other angels' faces, his demon brothers were in big trouble. He suddenly felt like a little kid being saved from the neighborhood bullies. "My big brother is here and he is so going to beat you up."

Of course, Douma and Forcas didn't get the joke. Forcas just gave him another swift kick before they turned and got ready for battle.

Chapter Eight

Crap, crap, crap, double crap. Abdiel growled in anger. Rachael had been right, Appolion was in a world of trouble and, as usual The Brothers Grimm were behind it. He was lying on the street yelling in pain as Forcas stood over him stomping him in the chest. Abdiel heard Rachael curse foully behind him. While part of him was appalled his sweet, little sister knew such language, another part of him totally agreed with her. That was their Appolion that was being treated like he was nothing more than a cockroach being stepped on.

Gabi fired her crossbow at Forcas causing the demon to jump away from Appolion in order to avoid being hit. At the same time, Cam threw several small throwing daggers at Douma. The demon brothers ran in the same direction as the Hounds. Retreating, for now.

As soon as the demon was no longer pinning him down, Appolion rolled to his knees and put

his head between his hands. He made no move to stand up. Instead, he rocked back and forth and moaned.

Damn it, the bastards poisoned him. “Gabi, do you have the antidote with you?” Abdiel asked.

Gabi nodded, her bright green eyes flashing with anger when she saw all the throwing stars sticking out of Appolion. Blood was slowly oozing into his dark blue tee shirt that had the name of a human firefighting company stamped on the front.

Appolion obviously hadn’t lost his sense of humor, however. He raked them over with his gaze before throwing out snidely, “In all that frigging leather you look like rejects from the Hell’s Angels biker gang.”

Cam snickered as they ran to help his smart mouthed ass.

Rachael started to remove all the stars, letting out small cry of distress with each one she yanked free. When she saw the wounds left behind, she touched each area lovingly.

Appolion flinched at her touch, but let her continue. They all heard the snarls indicating the Hounds were coming back.

“You guys help Appolion,” Cam said. “Rachael and I will be doggy bait.”

“Douma and Forcas are still close,” Appolion

gasped between clenched teeth.

"That's the story of our life, big boy," Cam said drolly. "Don't worry. Rachael and I can handle ourselves."

Appolion managed a ghost of a smile before another wave of pain hit him. He barked, "Take my guns with you. They're over there on the ground."

Cam walked over and picked them up. He handed one to Rachael before giving a dubious look. "What good are these going to do? Human weapons never work against demons."

"The bullets are infused with holy water. It's one of the few things that can take down a Hound from Hell." Appolion wiped away the blood that dripped from his nose.

"I think you've been watching too many late night horror movies, little bro," Abdiel said doubtfully. "That stuff doesn't work against demons. It's just a myth."

"Have you ever tried it before?" Appolion shuddered when Gabi wiped his face. "Trust me, they work. I buy them from the black market."

Cam shrugged before he started running toward where the Hound's howls were coming from.

Rachael shot a worried look at her twin before she followed. After a few steps, she stopped and

turned around. She ran back to Appolion and threw her arms around him.

He grunted in pain when she slammed into him, but he still hugged her back.

She pulled away and left to help Cam.

Abdiel saw her wipe away a tear with her finger. "Come on, Appolion. We need to get you out of the street before Forcas and Douma come back." He went to help his brother up.

Appolion avoided his hands and struggled to his feet by himself. He managed to stumble a couple of steps before he crumpled to the ground.

Abdiel let out an aggravated sigh at his brother's stubbornness.

Gabi shot him an I-told-you-so look.

"Fuck, this hurts," Appolion snarled. He looked over at Gabi and cringed. "Sorry about that, Abdiel. I'll try to watch my language around your female."

* * * *

"I'll make sure to cover my ears next time," Gabi said sarcastically. She grabbed him by the back of the collar and dragged him behind the shelter of a dumpster.

"I forget how strong female angels are," Appolion gasped. "I've been living around

humans too long.”

Gabi saw him foam at the mouth again and realized he was getting worse. She pulled the antidote out of her pocket and tapped the side of the syringe. When she rolled up Appolion’s shirt, he pulled his arm back, his eyes wide with fear.

“What the hell is that?” His voice was horse with panic.

Abdiel knelt down so he could look his brother in the eye. “It’s just the antidote. I know it’s hard, but you just have to trust us. We would never hurt you. If you can’t believe in me, then believe in Rachael. If I so much as harmed a hair on your head, she would zap me into the next century.”

They locked gazes for several tense moments before Appolion reluctantly nodded his head. “Aren’t you going to wipe the injection site with alcohol?” he asked incredulously.

Gabi rolled her eyes. “You’re immortal, remember? I could lick the needle and nothing would happen to you.” She injected him before he could change his mind.

He laid back and seemed to relax a bit as the antidote started to work its way through his system.

Abdiel went to the front of the dumpster to watch out for Douma and Forcas. Off in the distance, a gunshot resounded.

"Whoo hoo!" Cam's voice echoed through the streets. "Take that you demented, twisted Lassie wannabe."

"I guess holy water does work after all." Gabi stared laughing.

Appolion joined her. "I should go see if they need help." He started to get up.

Gabi stopped him. "No, you're still wounded. You need to be healed and this time I'm not letting you get away until I've helped you," she said firmly.

"I've had worse, honestly."

"I know you have." She gave him a tender smile. "You still carry some of those injuries. Let me take those away for you."

"I'm not worth the hassle." Appolion looked down.

Even in the dark, she could still see his face redden with shame. "Of course you are." Gabi rubbed his arm. When he did not pull away, she took that as a good sign. "You're Abdiel's brother, that's enough for me."

"So are Forcas and Douma," there was a small hitch in his voice.

"You and Rachael are nothing like Douma and Forcas."

That seemed to convince Appolion enough to allow her to lower him onto his back again. "It's

all a waste of your time," he still argued. "If you're doing this because you think I'm part of that Order thing, you may as well save it. I don't have any mad skills like Rachael or Cam. All I have is telepathy and telekinesis and even those powers aren't as strong as theirs."

"What about that thing you did to the demon that made it choke?"

"Oh you mean the Darth Vader thing?" He shook his head ruefully. "That was just a jazzed up form of telepathy. I just made the demon think it couldn't breathe."

"You forget you can also shield your presence from others."

"That was just a survival mechanism." He sighed when she gave him a doubtful look. "I figured out how to do that little trick when I was real young. It's better if you go unnoticed in Hell."

She smiled sadly at him before she put her hand over his eyes and put him in a relaxed state. It would have been better to put him completely asleep, but she only had a thin thread of trust from him to begin with. Somehow, she knew if she knocked him unconscious and dragged him back to the house, it wouldn't be the start of a good friendship. The demons would be coming back soon, so she had to work quickly and get as much done in the little time she had.

Gabi closed her eyes and slipped into a trance. Her heart lurched when she realized just how damaged he was. Numerous wounds were scattered throughout his body, both internal and external. Some were so vicious and old she didn't know how the poor angel survived so long. The pain must have been horrific.

She paused when she felt the energy force that was held down by his battered body. It was stronger than the ones she felt in Rachael and Cam, much stronger. Appolion was as powerful as his twin had predicted. He just didn't know it yet. She hesitated only a moment before she healed the area around his energy field, releasing his powers. He was in for one hell of a shock. He may not want to be a hero, but he was.

Gabi worked fast knowing that time was running out. She was a great healer. Unfortunately, Appolion was one of the worst cases she had ever seen. She still tried to be as meticulous as possible. Working from the inside out, she fused together flesh and bone trying to make him whole again. A fleeting part of her wondered when he had ever been whole. With an aggravated growl, she pulled out as she sensed Douma and Forcas coming down the street. There was so much more that still needed to be done.

Appolion gingerly sat up.

As he flexed his shoulders, she could see his shocked expression. It was probably the first time he was able to do that without pain. Hot tears spilled unchecked down her face.

He saw them and his jaw dropped. "Nobody but Rachael has ever cried for me," he said in awe. "I'm not worth it."

"Quit saying that," she told him. "You're a wonderful angel with a pure heart, and don't even think of arguing with me about that. I was inside you, Appolion. I saw what they've done to you, and yet you never gave in and turned."

He reached out and placed his palm over her stomach. "You shouldn't be out here fighting. You're pregnant."

"No, I'm not," she argued as her breath left her. "I would know it."

"Sorry, Charlie." He grinned, showing off an adorable set of dimples. "But in case you forgot, I was born healer, too. You're definitely preggers."

"Well when you put it in such medical terms, how can I argue?" she shot back tartly. Her hand still went protectively over her stomach. With a quick search, there was no doubt in her mind, he was right. She was having Abdiel's baby

"I better go help Abdiel," he said gruffly, standing up. "Douma and Forcas are getting closer."

"Appolion," Gabi called.

He looked at her.

"Rachael wasn't the only one that wept over you. Abdiel did, I saw how he was right after your father took you to Hell. It devastated him. Then I held him in my arms while he cried over losing you again just recently. He never got over not being able to save you and Rachael." She saw a mixture of emotions pass over his face—pain, confusion and finally, hope.

He gave her a little smile, then went to help Abdiel.

* * * *

Abdiel had just unsheathed his sword when Appolion came up and stood by his side. "You doing okay?" he asked his younger brother.

"Never better. Your female is a great healer." Appolion pulled out his own weapon.

Abdiel scowled when he saw its wavy blade. It was a kris and a demon one at that. "Where did you get that?" He pointed to the offending weapon.

"I lifted it off a demon I dusted." Appolion shrugged. "It's not like I can go and order a custom built weapon like you can. I have to make do with what I can get. Demons don't carry

around fancy swords like you archangels.”

“Oh great, I don’t even want to know what other demon weapons you have tucked away, do I?”

Appolion gave him a wicked grin before he pulled out various weapons from every pocket of his blue cargo pants. There were several different types of daggers, throwing stars and a set of brass knuckles. Every single one of them was fashioned by demons.

“I’ve seen you fight, little brother. You’re far too good of a warrior to be using weapons like that. Demons have never done quality work.”

“I’m not a warrior,” Appolion scowled slightly. “I’d just as soon hop into my little rabbit hole and wait for all the fireworks to be over.”

“I can tell,” Abdiel said sarcastically. “Everybody walks around with an arsenal that would make Steven Segal proud.”

“Funny,” Appolion mused. “I was trying to impress The Rock.” He tilted his head up and sniffed loudly. “Do you smell singed dog hair? I think Rachael zapped herself a demon.”

“She’s going to be impossible to live with now,” Abdiel groaned.

“Don’t worry,” a voice said from the darkness. Forcas came into the view, Douma at his side. “You three won’t be seeing that much of each

other in Hell and that's where you're going back to. I think we'll take the Empath King, too. Mammon misses him so much."

Appolion gripped his kris so tight his knuckles turned white. "Hey, Forcas. Hey, Douma," he spat their names like foul curse words. "Why don't you go take a flying fuck. Tell Mammon to take one while you're at it."

"Such language, Appolion. You're going to shock your new angel friends with a mouth like that." Douma tsked. "Of course, you've got to wonder what they would say if they knew what you did to that female angel back in Hell. You remember, I'm sure. It was right before you left us. Now what was that angel whore's name?"

"Ambriel. Her name was Ambriel," Appolion's voice shook. "You know damn well what her name was and she wasn't a whore."

"Enough of this talky talky crap," Abdiel interrupted, more to put an end to the mental torture inflicted on Appolion than anything else. "Are we going to fight or what?"

"Isn't this just epic?" Forcas laughed, showing off his jagged teeth. "Brother against brother. Human filmmakers would just love it."

Appolion started calling them every foul name in the book. When he used up all the human ones, he switched to an ancient demon language and

used those, too.

Once he was finally quiet, Abdiel gave him an amused look. "Done?"

Appolion nodded.

Forcas let out a primal roar before he ran to attack Appolion. The angel met the demon halfway. Their swords met with an ear-shattering clang. Soon the two exchanged blows and parries at a rate so fast it was almost impossible to follow. Abdiel took this all in from the corner of his eye. He kept his main focus on Douma. His demon brother stretched out his arm and crooked his fingers forward, beckoning Abdiel.

The archangel shot the demon a look of disgust. "I can't believe that you just did the *come hither* thing with your hand," Abdiel said incredulously. "How lame can you be?"

Douma tried to shoot off a ball of energy, but Abdiel easily deflected it. When the demon saw his dark magic wasn't going to work, he resorted to hand-to-hand combat. That was a big mistake, fist and blades were what Abdiel was best at.

When Douma raised his sword in order to strike, Abdiel easily dodged to the side while bringing his blade across, cutting the demon's belly. Spinning around, the archangel stuck the demon's arm next with his sword.

Douma shrieked as he pulled back the stump.

The demon's curved blade was on the ground, the steel glinting in the moonlight. A disembodied, bloody claw still clenched the hilt.

The demon tried to flash away, but Abdiel held up a hand and put up a shield.

Trapped, Douma yelled in terror.

Abdiel turned to help Appolion, but soon realized the angel didn't need it. Forcas was a mass of cuts and gashes. The demon tried feebly to fight back, but Appolion was too quick. Although the angel's skills were rough and undisciplined, they were a force to be reckoned with. It was easy to see how his young brother had survived all these years on his own.

When Forcas tried to retreat back to Hell, Abdiel stopped him, too.

Appolion looked up at the archangel in awe. "I didn't know you could do that." He smiled at the sight of his two demon brothers quivering in fear as they lay there helpless, side-by-side on the ground.

"Neither did I." Abdiel turned around at the sound of running footsteps.

Cam and Rachael stood there panting as they surveyed the scene. Cam gave the carnage an appraising look. Rachael's narrowed eyes remained focused on the demons as she whispered something low under her breath in

demon speak with an angry hiss, her bottom lip trembling slightly.

"Hey, Cam," Appolion called out with a wicked grin, the smile never reaching his eyes. "Douma needs a hand. Ya wanna give it to him?"

Cam gasped in laughter. "He always wanted to be Satan's left hand man."

"You guys are killing me with these corny B-movie lines." Rachael tightened her grip on her sword and stepped closer to her older brother.

To Abdiel, it was clear she was terrified of her demon brothers. It was also clear she tried her best to hide it.

"What are you going to do with them, Abdiel?" Gabi asked quietly.

"I'm going to end this right here right now," Abdiel gritted between clenched teeth. "I'm sick of us always having to live in fear and always having to look over our shoulders. These two have done enough damage. Cam, Rachael, I want you guys to destroy them."

"Are you sure?" Gabi put her hand on his shoulder. "We could call in Michael. He would do it for you."

"We're your brothers," Douma yelled, his demon eyes wide with fear. "You may talk a big game, but we all know in the end your soft heart won't be able to destroy your own family."

"After what you did to Cam and Appolion, you are no longer my family." Abdiel snarled. He looked at Appolion for his consent.

The angel nodded his head before he whispered, "Please, do it. I'm begging you."

"How about you, Rachael?" Abdiel murmured. "I'll understand if you can't."

Rachael was already raising her hand. "For Cam and Appolion, I can do anything. After all the pain these two maggots have caused, it would be my honor to rid the world of their existence."

He turned to ask Cam if he could do it, but saw the question wasn't necessary. Cam's eyes were glazed over in fury and hate. He obviously hadn't forgotten it was Douma and Forcas that turned him into what he was. The only reason he probably hadn't already released his flame was out of respect for him. Abdiel looked over at Gabi.

She nodded before she said, "I love you."

"Do it," Abdiel ordered Cam and Rachael.

The two of them turned their upturned hands toward the demons. Rachael took Douma while Cam took Forcas. It was no surprise to see the cold, deadly gaze on Cam's face. However, the fact Rachael wore the same expression showed how deep she hid whatever abuse she suffered, too. Gone was the usual caring and compassionate female, now replaced by a warrior seeking

vengeance.

When the energy hit the demons, it slammed them into the wall of a building. The monsters withered and screamed in agony as the energy started to rip them apart from the inside out. The two demon bodies pulsed and shifted into gruesome shapes as their cries became more pitiful. Finally, just as it seemed it would never end, Douma and Forcas blew up.

Abdiel pulled Gabi to his chest and shielded her as body parts, blood and gore rained down on all of them. When he looked up at where his two brothers had once been, there was nothing left but blackened, smoldering ashes. He sighed in relief as he realized they were finally free from Douma and Forcas and their evil.

Chapter Nine

*G*one they were, gone for good. Not sent back to Hell only to return again another day, but destroyed forever. His brothers would never be able to hurt him or anyone he loved ever again. So why didn't he feel relieved? He should be happy, and instead he felt cold and dead inside.

"It's all right. It's all over," Gabi cooed in his ear. As always, she knew exactly what he was thinking and how he was feeling.

Abdiel held her tight and looked over to Rachael and Appolion. The twins were holding onto each other for dear life while she sobbed. Appolion stroked Rachael's hair and murmured to her, trying to calm her down. Meanwhile, Cam stared at the piles of ash with a sardonic smile on his face. Abdiel could see him running his tongue over one of his fangs.

"You made me into a monster and it came back to bite you in the ass," Cam whispered at the

smoldering remains. He didn't seem to realize he ranted in a low voice. "You should have just left us alone, but no, you had to come and try to take me back to him. I'm never going back there, never. Mammon is never going to mind fuck me again. I won't let him."

Abdiel closed his eyes as the guilt sank in. If anyone was the monster, it was him. He destroyed his own brothers tonight. They may have been demons, but they were still family, and he ruthlessly cut them down. Worse, he used his own baby sister to do it.

"You are not a monster." Rachael picked up his thoughts and pulled away from Appolion in order to look at her older brother. "I wanted to destroy them even more than you. I've never told you what they did to me, Abdiel. I was too much of a coward."

"Ray," Appolion gave a slight shake as his face softened with concern. "You don't have to do this."

"Yes, I do." She wrapped both of her arms around herself and briefly averted her eyes before she brought them back up to capture Abdiel's gaze. "It's time he knew. When we first got to Hell, the first thing they did was separate Appolion and me. They didn't put us in cells. They put us in our own bedrooms. But with the

locks on the door, the effect was the same."

"They didn't want Ray and I to have even each other," Appolion added, his voice sounded so sad and hollow like he still felt the sting of the separation. "They knew if they kept us from each other, we'd be weaker, and they were right. But they didn't know we could talk to each other telepathically. For a while, we were able to do at least that."

"Douma and Forcas would come into my room," Rachael spoke so softly it was hard to hear her. "They said it was stupid of them to go looking for a willing female when they already had one waiting for them."

"Oh dear, God, please no," Cam whispered as the impact of her words were enough to finally pull him out of his trance. "What did those two bastards do to you?"

"They would take turns with me," Rachael continued. "I tried not to cry, but it hurt so bad. After they were done, I felt so dirty. I just didn't want to even exist anymore. They came and did that to me every day for a whole year. When I tried to tell Mother, she didn't believe me. When I told Dad, he just laughed in my face and told me that if I knew what was good for me, I would keep my mouth shut. So you see, Abdiel, I had more reason than you to want them destroyed."

"Is that why you put yourself in that frozen state?" Gabi asked. "So you could get away from them?"

"I honestly don't know how I did that." Rachael shrugged.

"I did it," Appolion stated. "The entire time they were violating you, I knew it. Like I told Gabi earlier, I was born a healer so I just urged you to go to sleep. I thought if you were out of it, they would leave you alone. Unfortunately, I was only ten at the time and didn't know what I was doing so I made the urge too strong. I didn't mean to make it permanent."

"Okay, I'm just going to state the obvious here," Cam said, shaking his head. "You were only ten, dude. No freaking healer I've ever known could do anything close to that until after they reached adulthood."

"That just goes to show you how pathetic I am." Appolion snorted. "I started out with some pretty nice gifts, but they've gotten weaker as I've gotten older. I guess it sucks to be me."

"You're wrong, Appolion," Rachael argued. "I saw it in a dream and you know my dreams are never wrong. You are the Destroyer."

"Please, give me a break," Appolion gave the entire group a disgusted glare. "The only thing I can destroy is a large pepperoni pizza. How many

times do I have to tell you angels? I'm not part of your little club and I'm no hero. I don't have special powers, see?" He held up his hand and pointed it off to the side to prove nothing would come out of it. A huge ball of energy shot from his hand and blew up the garbage dumpster. Appolion was so shocked, he fell flat on his butt, his mouth open, his eyes wide.

Despite the grim situation, Abdiel almost laughed at his brother's dumbfounded expression.

"What the hell?" He looked down at his hand like it truly offended him.

"I tried to tell you," Gabi said meekly. "Remember the first day when we met and I told you an injured angel could not heal other angels? Well, I guess the same thing goes for all your gifts. When I healed you, all of your powers came pouring out."

"Well just put them back in." Appolion growled.

Gabi gave him an aggravated look. "I can't do that. As a healer you should already know that."

"I said I was born a healer. I never said anything about being a healer." Appolion got up and started to pace. "Sorry, I know you're supposed to be some great and mighty healer, but I've never had a lick of formal training in the art of healing angels. Over the centuries, I've been to

four different medical schools for humans, but I don't know bupkis on angel anatomy."

"You're just mad because you've just realized everything I've been telling you is the truth." Rachael pointed an accusing finger. "For the first time in your immortal life, you may have to put somebody else's needs before yours, and you can't stand that. Do you know how much you hurt me when you cut all contact with me?"

"That's not fair, Ray." Appolion stopped pacing and gave her a hurt look. "I was trying to protect you."

"Oh save it, Appolion," she gave him the hand. "You can say that you were trying to protect me all you want, but we both know that's bull. How about after you left Hell? You weren't being abused then, but you still kept me out of your mind. Why?"

"Do we really need to go through all this now?" he snapped.

"I was all alone down there!" She ran up and slugged him hard in the chest. "How could you do that to me?"

"Because I couldn't trust you wouldn't lead the demons to me!" Now he was just as angry as her, and his blazing blue eyes bore into hers. "Face it kiddo, we come from some seriously messed up DNA. Mom turned, Dad turned, Forcas turned,

Douma turned, and it's just a matter of time before we do, too."

"Do you really think that?" Abdiel interjected. "You honestly think that just because of our family history the three of us are damned?"

"We are beyond damned, big brother," Appolion redirected his glare. "We are thoroughly fucked, and the worst thing is now that Rachael and I are full strength, we're going to be difficult to defeat."

Abdiel wanted to shake some sense into his brother, but stopped himself when he remembered that not too long ago he felt the same way. Before he met Gabi, he shut himself away from the world, just like Appolion. He now realized he had been a first class idiot. His family wasn't the ones who had beaten and deserted him. His family was standing in front of him now.

He looked over at his beautiful mate who would always stand by him no matter what. He then turned to his baby sister. Even though she'd suffered just as bad as any of them, she refused to let the past rule how she lived in the present. Shifting his gaze to Cam, who he loved like a brother even though the kid had been to Hell and back, literally, Abdiel knew he would always have his back. Finally, he focused on Appolion. Poor, scared, moronic, Appolion. If his little brother had

stopped worrying about turning long enough to really think everything through, he'd realize he was wrong. Demons don't go to medical school and devote their lives to helping humans, but he knew the younger angel wasn't ready to hear that, yet.

"I'm not going back with you," Appolion told him, his jaw set in defiance.

"Nobody asked you to," Abdiel said with a casual shrug of his shoulders.

Appolion acted shocked his older brother agreed. It seemed to take some of the wind out of his sails. He recovered and shrugged his shoulders, "Your high and mighty council would put me in chains the second I even tried to enter Heaven."

Abdiel had to concede to himself that his brother was most likely right. There's no way the council would look the other way with Appolion like they did with Rachael. Appolion had been free from Hell for years and never attempted any contact before now. They would view him as a suspect spy or worse, a rogue. Abdiel knew that, even though it was going to tear his and Rachael's hearts apart, they were going to have to let their brother go. "If you ever want to come home, I'll always be here for you."

Appolion gave him a dismissive wave of his

hand and turned around to leave. After a few steps, the angel stopped, turned and looked at them. "I really did miss you guys," he admitted in a strained voice.

Rachael threw herself into his arms and the two hugged for several minutes. When they finally pulled away, she fixed him with a stern look. "Promise you won't cut our telepathic connection again. I need to be able to talk with you so I know you're all right."

"I promise to talk with you whenever you want to." He smiled sadly down at her.

Cam walked up and offered the guns.

Appolion refused to take them. "Keep them. I have plenty more. Ask that bartender you met the other night where to get replacement bullets. Mangus knows all the connections to the local black market. Just make sure your council doesn't find out you have them."

"Why would the council give a rip about that?"

He raised a dark brow, his grin snide. "The council thinks using holy water is too human from what I hear. Angels can be so hypocritical."

Abdiel took his long sword and handed it to the younger angel.

Appolion took it with a confused look. "What's this for?"

"I want you to have this. You need a proper

weapon if you're going to be out here alone."

"I can't take this. I know how you archangels treasure your swords. You guys treat them like they're your—" He stopped and flashed a guilty grin in the female's direction. "You treat them like they're your right hand."

"You're more important to me than any weapon. I just hope someday you realize that."

Appolion took the sword and looked down at the gleaming blade. He opened and closed his mouth a couple of times.

As usual, Gabi, the diplomat, found a way to ease the awkwardness. "Why don't you tell Abdiel the good news, Appolion?"

"You sure?"

She nodded.

He announced, "You and your mate are having a baby, Abdiel."

"Really, is he right?" Abdiel grabbed Gabi and made her look at him. When she smiled in response, he pulled her into a tight embrace.

"It's going to be a boy," Appolion added. "He's going to have Rachael's blue eyes."

"You mean your blue eyes, too." Abdiel smiled when his brother gave him a dismissive wave. "Maybe he'll sing his own soundtrack, too, just like his Uncle Appolion."

Cam snickered. "The last thing we need is

another angel karaoke machine."

"Please," Appolion rolled his eyes. "Don't let him hang around with his Uncle Cam too much or else the kid will be hooked on hockey and female demons. Keep the kid around Rachael. She'll make sure he's halfway decent." With those parting words, he flashed out, leaving them standing there alone.

* * * *

The first thing Gabi wanted to do once she got home was take a nice, long shower and wash all the demon gore out of her hair. As soon as she flashed herself into the kitchen, she heard the TV blaring. She turned and frowned at the others. "Did one of you guys forget to turn the set off?"

"It's Ana." Cam sighed.

Now why the hell was she here at this time? They all went to the living room. The usually graceful and regal angel was sitting with her head hanging off the end of the couch and her feet propped up against the back. Her hair was loose for once, and Gabi couldn't help but admire how beautiful it looked when it was free. The honey-blond locks were soft, curly and streaked with both highlights and lowlights. Gabi wondered why Ana chose to always pull it up in a tight bun

when most females would give their hind teeth for hair like that.

Instead of her usual formal white, she wore a pair of blue jean shorts and a Red Wings shirt. She had fuzzy, pink bunny slippers on her feet. All around her were wrappers from various candy bars and empty chip bags. She pumped candy into her mouth. Gabi and the other three angels just stared in shock.

"You guys stink." Ana never took her gaze off the TV.

"We've been kind of busy tonight," Cam said warily. Obviously, her uncharacteristic behavior was throwing him for a loop.

"I know. You guys destroyed some demons." She made a sarcastic yippie motion with her finger. "Quick someone call CNN. It's not going to do any good you know. There will be more stepping up to take their place. Demons reproduce faster than bunnies."

"Well aren't you in a foul, rank mood," Cam snapped. "Besides it wasn't just any demons, it was Douma and Forcas."

"Oh." Her blue eyes grew wide. "I just picked up that you destroyed some demons. I didn't know it was The Brothers Grimm."

"What do you mean *picked up* Ana?" Cam narrowed his eyes. "Only a telepath could do

that."

She took off one of her bunny slippers and threw it at him. "Because you're big spinster of a sister is good for something besides wiping snotty noses and getting you guys out of trouble. Did it ever occur to you that you might not be the only telepath in the family?"

"Since when have you been a frigging telepath?" Cam asked.

"I've had *some* ability, but it's always been very weak." She shot him an accusing glare. "But now thanks to you my mind has more traffic in it than Woodward Avenue."

"What did I do?" Cam threw his hands up.

Rachael gave a knowing chuckle. "When you kept going into her mind, you inadvertently taught her how to create and maintain a psychic connection. Way to go, Einstein."

"But I didn't do it on purpose." Cam pointed the pink bunny at Ana. "She never told me she was psychic."

"That's because I didn't even know myself, not really." Ana rifled through the empty wrappers before finally finding a full one. She ripped it open with her even, white teeth. "I always assumed it was wistful thinking on my part. Remember, Mom was such a powerful telepath and I've always wanted so bad to be just like her. Like I told you

before, the power was very weak. I kept telling myself I was imaging things."

"Is that why you're on my couch pigging out?" Gabi smiled at the sight of the prim and proper angel putting an entire peanut butter cup in her mouth at once.

"No, it's not the reason why," Ana said in a garbled voice. "But you guys really need to take a shower before we talk anymore. You smell like burned garbage and it's making me lose my appetite."

"I can tell," Abdiel drawled.

Ana raised one long, elegant middle finger up at him.

Cam hooted in laughter before tossing the bunny slipper back at her head.

* * * *

It was several minutes before they had all cleaned up and met in the living room again. Rachael had gotten a whole gallon of ice cream out of the freezer and her and Ana were eating it straight from the carton. Cam sat on the other side of the room with a travel coffee mug in his hands Rachael had forced him to take. With each sip, his color improved and the shakes started to leave. Abdiel sat down on the couch and Gabi settled

into his lap.

"Cam," Rachael said slowly. "Every time we're home, you get all cranky and pasty looking. Is the house making you sick?"

"You're a telepath so you should already know the answer to that question," Cam's tone was as sour as the look on his face.

"It's the protective spells isn't it?" Gabi suspected as much for a while, but hadn't brought it up until now.

"Yeah," he admitted. "The little monster in me doesn't like the shielding chants. It's no big deal though I'm adjusting."

"We could weaken them," Abdiel offered. "It might help some."

Cam shook his head. "You've got to protect Gabi and Rachael, not to mention the future Baby Dark Angel. Don't worry about me. I'll deal with it just fine."

Abdiel put his hand protectively on Gabi's stomach. Even though it was still flat and there was no indication a baby was in there, he didn't doubt Appolion's words for a second. *Wow, I'm going to be a father.*

"I'm all out of food," Ana complained.

"I'll go get you my stash from my room," Cam offered.

"That was your stash." She held her stomach. "I

think I'm going to be sick."

"Serves you right, you little hog," Cam shot back with an amused glint in his eyes. "Are you going to tell us why you've gone on this bender or not?"

"I got sacked," Ana wailed.

Rachael threw her arms around the crying female and tried to comfort her.

"I thought you quit the council. How can they fire you?" Cam was clearly angry anybody would upset his sister.

"Not from the council," she sobbed. "They told me my services as a justice angel are no longer needed."

"It's because of me isn't it?" Cam closed his eyes and sighed in disgust.

"Actually you're name didn't even come up in the conversation. They refused to tell me why. I just got my walking papers."

"Come on, Ana, cheer up," Gabi urged. "Don't let those jerks get you down."

"It's not just that, Gabi," Ana said with a delicate sniff. "Today I dropped Bear off at his new home in Flint. It wasn't until I met his big, bad archangel and his Britney Spears lookalike healer that it finally settled in. All my brothers are gone."

"His healer looks like Britney Spears?" Rachael

asked.

"Yes, the early skinny one not the later post-Kevin one."

"Okay, back on topic guys." Cam rubbed his forehead. "Why would the fact that we are all gone bum you out? I would think you would be glad to get rid of us."

Ana took a shaky breath. "I sat there in that cold, empty house and realized that after all these years, I have nothing. My whole life has always been you boys, the council and being a justice angel and now, all that's gone. I'm nothing but an old spinster. I may as well go out and buy twenty cats and get it over with."

"You know what you need?" Rachael announced. "A girl's day out. Tomorrow, you and I are going to get all gussied up and hit the mall. Nothing like shopping yourself silly and having male humans ogling you to make you feel better."

"Please, Rachael," Ana said dryly. "No male has ever ogled me, demon, angel or human."

"That's because you've always kept you best assets hidden," Rachael argued. "You need to let that gorgeous hair of yours down more. Not to mention you've got a killer set of gams. You borrow one of my skirts and we'll see how much attention you get."

"No way, Ana," Cam ordered. "You're not

stepping foot outside of the house in one of *her* outfits. I forbid it."

"You forbid it?" Ana arched a brow. "You forget that I was the one who changed your diapers, little male."

"Abdiel," he groaned. "Ya wanna help me here?"

"Sorry, bud." Abdiel thoroughly enjoyed the archangel's discomfort. "You're on your own."

"Rachael, stay away from my sister. You're a bad influence."

Rachael wrinkled up her little, button nose and stuck her tongue out at the young archangel.

Cam stuck his tongue out back at her.

Abdiel let out a loud bark of laughter. Cam was easily six-foot four and every inch hard muscle. His black tee shirt and leather pants added to his badass look and that was even before you tossed in the fangs and borderline psychotic attitude. The sight of him sticking his tongue out like a kindergartner was hilarious. Soon the entire room cracked up, Cam included.

"I wouldn't nag too much if I were you anyways, Cam," Ana said. "Not with the way you've been carrying around with that female demon."

Cam's jaw dropped open before he recovered and snapped it shut. "You know about that, huh?"

He looked down at the ground.

She released an aggravated breath. "I knew the very first time when we came to pick you up from that warehouse."

"Why didn't you say anything?" Cam startled to shuffle his feet.

"What was I supposed to say?" Ana shot him an incredulous look. *"Hi, Cam, nice to see that you finally got laid."* That would have been just a little awkward."

Gabi ducked her head into Abdiel's shoulder so Cam wouldn't see her laughing at his completely dumbfounded look. Abdiel wasn't as considerate. He smirked right in the young archangel's face.

Cam shook his head before he leaned forward and put a bullet on the coffee table. He sat back and shot a questioning look at his older sister. "Do you know what this is?"

"Duh, it's a bullet." She shrugged her shoulders as she looked at him like he'd lost all of his marbles.

"It's just not any bullet, Ana." Cam fixed her with a stern look. "It's a bullet that's been infused with holy water."

"Where in the hell did you get that?" She picked up the bullet and looked closer at it. "Did you go to some freaky vampire fan convention or something?"

"We got them from Appolion tonight." As he talked, Cam watched her face closely, looking to see what her reaction would be. "Guess what? They work. What I want to know is did you know anything about this? Appolion said the council knew all about holy water working."

Ana gave him a hurt look. "Do you really think I would keep something like this from you boys? My God, Cam, every day I worry something is going to happen to you or one of your brothers. I would never hide a potential weapon from you guys. I love you too much."

"What about angel's blood?" Cam took her hand in his and gave it a slight squeeze. "Do you know anything about that being sold on the black market?"

"Why would that be sold on the black market?" Ana's face grew pale. "Aren't you the only one who needs it?"

"No Ana, it seems rogues and some demons use it in order to delay the change."

Gabi cast a worried look at Ana before she added. "Is it possible some members of the council kept this from coming out? Would there be anything for them to gain from keeping us in the dark?"

"Yes, I can see certain members using this information to manipulate others."

"How would that help them?" Rachael asked.

"For starters, they now know a major weakness of a member of the Order." Ana went over to Cam and gently stroked his face. "They know Cam needs angel's blood to survive. They could possibly hope to manipulate the market and control Cam by cutting off his supply. We didn't tell anyone we were donating our blood to him, so they may think the black market is the only way he can get it."

"What do they have against the Order?" Gabi wondered.

"I have some ideas," Ana snapped. "Give me a few days to prove them though. They've gone and pissed me off which is a big mistake."

"Would you mind watching over Double and Trouble here for a few days, Ana?" Abdiel pointed at Rachael and Cam. "I'm taking my mate on a honeymoon. Now that my brothers are dust, we might actually get some time off."

"Go have fun, you kids deserve it," Ana replied with a wicked smile.

Cam and Rachael started to argue they didn't need a babysitter, but it was a waste of their breath. Abdiel already flashed himself and Gabi out of there.

Chapter Ten

“Suck me, Empath King.”

Cam was back at the neutral bar again, and this time, he was with three succubi. He had slipped Mangus a wad of cash in order to use the demon's back office, and it was a damn good thing he did. It would have been a might bit crowded in the bathroom. Cam still didn't know how he ended up with the trio. It had originally only been him and Lilith going at it, but after a few rounds, the blonde demon had left. The others had slowly come in, one by one, and Cam wasn't about ready to turn down a free meal.

Right now, he was only using one of the females, a real flexible redhead. He had her pinned down to the ground in the missionary position. *An oldie, but a goodie.* The other two were sitting close by, naked, watching.

One of the voyeurs, a tall brunette, must have gotten sick of waiting her turn because she came

up to Cam and stretched out over his back. Cam moaned, aroused further by the sensation of her soft body and breasts pressed against his back while yet another warm body writhed as underneath him. Cam reached his hand back and stroked her finely shaped rump, lest she think he didn't appreciate her efforts, all the while still screwing the first demon. He could feel the redhead tighten around him as she started to come.

"Suck me," she commanded again.

So Cam bit her in the neck. He meant only to take a little bit. He already drank so much demon blood tonight that everything was starting to get hazy, but she grabbed him by the back of the head and jerked his fangs deeper. Cam both tasted and felt her come then, and it was enough for him to join her. The brunette reached down and gently squeezed his balls, giving him the orgasm of his life. He felt her fangs sinking into his back as she drank from him even as he was feeding off the redhead.

No sooner had he finished than the brunette grabbed him by the shoulder and threw him on his back. Before one could say, *what da fuck?* she'd already straddled him and was riding him. The fact he was already hard and ready to go again didn't surprise him. Ever since his transformation,

he couldn't get enough sex. In fact, he craved it almost as much as blood. But he was tired, damn tired. He'd let the demons take too much of his blood. Derel had warned him about this when he saw Cam coming home almost every night with bite marks. He'd said if he let them feed too much from him or if he took in too much demon blood, it could throw his whole body out of whack. Dumb ass that he was, Cam had gone and done both tonight.

As soon as the brunette finished using his body, he scrambled to his feet and pulled his clothes on. The room spun in slow, lazy circles and his head felt fuzzy. He'd never been drunk before, but he was pretty damn sure this is what it felt like. He steadied himself by putting a hand on the wall and tried to act casual. "I'll be right back," he told his demon posse. He would just go out, drink some angel blood, then be back in shape. He wasn't about to call it a night yet.

The one female demon he hadn't taken yet came up and pressed her naked body against him. "You can't leave." She pouted and ran her hands over the bulge in his pants. "I haven't had my turn."

Cam chuckled her softly on the cheek. "I'll be gone for only five minutes. Just make sure that you're ready for me when I come back."

"What are we supposed to do while we're waiting for you?" The brunette frowned.

"Keep yourselves occupied." Cam smiled as a wicked thought came to his addled mind. "Better yet, keep each other occupied." He left the room and made his way down the hallway, stumbling several times because some asshole had made the floor wobbly. He started to make his way to the bar and stopped dead when he saw his brother Mael was sitting on one of the stools, nursing a very macho soda. Cam groaned. He'd forgotten Mael had insisted on coming with him tonight.

Mael was the third oldest Lehor brother, but he was by far the biggest and meanest looking. Not that either of the attributes helped him a lick tonight. He pulled the short stick and was put on Cam duty. Cam didn't feel one bit sorry for him. He wouldn't be here at if it weren't for all the brothers meddling. They had decided Cam would be taking a babysitter with him whenever he went to the bars at night.

So for the last week, Cam had to put up with one of them tailing him wherever he went. The last thing he needed was for his archangel brother to see him in this condition. He leaned against the wall, trying hard to ignore the fact there was some sticky substance on it, and weighed his options. He could go up to the bar and get the blood he

desperately needed, but then Mael would know for sure he was blood drunk. The last thing he needed was to give his brothers more ammunition against him. So he decided to go with plan B, hide in the shadows and hope Mael got sick of waiting and left.

Since he had nothing better to do with his time, Cam slowly took in the bar. *What a freaking dive.* The tables all had rough wooden tops that looked like they'd never seen a wet cloth while the filthy floors were covered in dirt, grim and God knows what else. The entire joint reeked of demon and garbage.

Several demons were sitting around the bar talking in their freaky demon talk. About a dozen rogue angels were there as well, each of them casting nervous glances in Mael's direction. There were a handful of archangels as well. They were the lowest of the low among their ranks. Most other archangels would never trust them enough to turn their backs on any one of them. They were treacherous leeches, every single one of them, and his brothers knew he was mingling with them on a daily basis. *No wonder they are looking at me like I'm some loser. I've hit rock bottom, hard and fast.*

Mael jumped and almost grabbed his sword when a small succubus came up from behind and playfully tugged at his long ponytail.

Cam recognized Lilith's sister.

She gave Mael a wide smile, showing off her fangs. "Mind if I take a seat?" She nodded to the stool next to him.

Mael gave an indifferent hug. "Just promise you won't bite."

Her laughter was soft and light. "I'll be a good, little demoness. I just figured since we're both waiting for our siblings to finish fucking like bunnies we might as well keep each other company."

"Please, don't hold back, tell me what you really think," he said sarcastically.

"If you want pretty foo-foo, then you'll have to find one of your female angels."

The bartender set a glass of angel's blood in front of her.

Cam felt a little guilty about eavesdropping on his brother's conversation, but not enough to show himself. He noticed Mael gave the succubus a disgusted glare as she gulped down the angel's blood.

"Don't look at me like that," the dark haired female said. "I didn't ask for this any more than your brother did. I was only twelve when my parents took me to Hell."

"I'm sorry." Mael shifted uncomfortably in his seat, an uneasy look on his face. "How much

longer do you think they'll be?"

"Who knows?" The female rolled her eyes. "The last time I checked, he was with not only my sister, but two other females.

Cam wasn't about to give himself away by correcting her. He'd been with three females, but Lillith hadn't been one of them. In fact, he hadn't seen her since she left the back room earlier. *Now where had that little demon taken off to?*

Mael choked on his cola. "You guys take turns with him?"

Cam smirked. *See I'm not you're dorky baby brother anymore.*

"Your brother, Cam, is *very* popular Not only does he do amazing things with his hands, but his blood is unlike any other."

"What do you mean?" Mael asked sharply. "Not the hands thing, that was T.M.I., but what's so different about his blood?"

"It is so full of life and energy it makes you high." She sighed wistfully. "It's like the Red Bull of angel blood."

"Sorry, sweetheart," he said blandly. "But Cammie's going home as soon as he comes out."

"Well, seeing how your brother is already taken, I guess I'll have to settle for you." She stood and tugged on his hand.

Yes, go with the nice little succubus, Cam thought

privately. *That way I can get my damn blood and get back to my fun orgy.* When his brother shook his head, refusing, he almost growled in frustration.

"Thanks, but no thanks," Mael jerked his hand away.

Her eyes flashed with anger. "Well aren't you so high and mighty. We'll see how arrogant you are when your brother is back where he belongs." She spun around to walk away.

Mael reached out, snagged one of her wings and dragged her back to him. He twisted the wing in his hand, trying to make her more cooperative with pain. That plan backfired when she gave him a seductive smile.

"Oh, pain. Pain is good, archangel. It turns me on. Just ask your little brother."

He pulled out a dagger and spun it in his hand before he slammed it through her wing and pinned it into the wood table.

She unleashed a demonic cry. Several patrons looked their way before turning away. It was best to mind one's own business at neutral bars.

He grabbed her wrist and twisted her body awkwardly until she faced him. "What are you talking about when you say Cam will be back where he belongs?"

"Lilith wants to take him back to Hell with her." She panted from the pain. "The other day

while Cam was screwing her, he made the mistake of calling her the wrong name.

"Who's Lilith?"

"That's my sister's name." She bared her fangs at him in anger. "Us filthy whores do have names you know."

"So, is she jealous over another succubus? Did he make a mistake and forget what demon slut he was with."

"No, worse, he called her by an angel name. Does the name Amadeaha mean anything to you?"

Cam cringed. He hoped Lilith hadn't heard him when he made that little slip. It seemed she had caught it and it pissed her off.

"What does your sister have planned?" Mael continued to grill the demoness. When she hesitated in answering, he twisted the dagger in her wing.

"She's set up a trap for him and she's going to take him home with her tonight." She yelped. "She's going to drain his blood so he'll be too weak to fight back."

"She's going to be able to drink that much of his blood?"

"No, she has the other succubi back there right now to help her. She knows your brother has no qualms about taking more than one of us at a

time." She gave him a malicious smile. "You see, your brother is no better than us. He's a whore just like me. That's why he has a pair of fangs and eyes like a succubus. He's one of us and that just kills you, doesn't it, archangel?"

Cam recognized the dangerous glint in his brother's eyes. The demon saw it, too, but too late.

Mael took the dagger out of Lilith's sister's wing and buried it deep in her chest. She screamed right before she flashed back to Hell.

Cam smiled at his brother's actions. Mael really was one badass.

The bartender, Mangus, walked up to Mael. "I heard what she said," the demon rumbled. "I've already had one of my staff go lock the back door so they can't sneak him out that way."

"Thank you. You know for a demon, you're not half bad."

"Yeah, well for archangels you and your brother are not half bad. Just don't let anyone know I'm a big softie."

Cam curled his lip. He didn't need their help. He could handle anything those damn demons threw his way. He'd show them that, too. Pushing himself from the dirty wall, he sent out a mental, *Fuck you*, to a group of demons sitting at a nearby table. Then he headed for the door. Walking became even more difficult for him and the room

spun even more.

Cam hid his condition well. He marched down the center of the bar with his long, black leather trench coat flaring behind him, acting as if he could rip apart anything that came in his way. The entire time he was saying the same chant that all drunks say in their heads when they're trying to hide their condition, *Maintain, maintain, maintain*.

He stopped once he was outside and waited for the demons to join him. They did not disappoint. Soon they came spilling out of the bar and formed a tight circle around him. Cam was only slightly annoyed to see Mael was following them. Maybe once his brother saw he could fight on his own, he would leave him alone. Cam curled his lip at them. "Good work, boys. I didn't think you'd have the guts to fight me."

Moving so fast nobody could see him, Cam flipped over the closest demon until he was behind it. The demon tried to scamper away, its glowing red eyes wide with fear, but the archangel kept it firmly in his grasp. Cam ripped into the demon's throat and drank deeply from the fiend before he finally let it slide to the ground. As soon as the monster hit the street, it vanished back to Hell.

The other four demons started to shake with fear. But they weren't ready to retreat yet. One

pulled out a gun and shot the archangel square in the chest.

The angel staggered back a few steps before he straightened up and gave the shooter a disgusted look. "You just shot me," Cam stated the obvious. "With a bullet dipped in demon's blood. Hey, guess what, dumbass? It's not going to work. I've drank about ten gallons of the stuff already tonight."

Cam tried hard to ignore the fact his words were coming out slurred now. He knew the gunshot did some damage because the warm blood from the wound soaked into his shirt. He swayed on his feet before shaking his head slightly to clear away the fog. Mael shot him a worried look so Cam shot him the bird in retaliation and giggled. *Since when do I freaking giggle?*

Mael swung his long sword sideways at the shooter. The demon's head came cleanly off its body and rolled on the ground.

Cam glanced down and smiled at it before he looked up in alarm. "Quick, Dael, muck down," he raised his hand.

Mael quickly translated his brother's muddled language and hit the dirt.

Cam released a ball of fire, hitting the demon about ready to strike Mael with its sword. The

demon was blasted across the street before it slammed into a building. The remaining two demons finally had the good sense to flash themselves out of there. Cam looked over at the bar just in time to see Lilith walk back inside, her eyes flashing with anger. Her little plan hadn't gone so well after all. *So the bitch was trying to set me up. How rude.*

As soon as they were alone, Cam sank to his knees, laughing hysterically. He couldn't help it, the dumfounded look on his brother's face was suddenly the funniest thing he ever saw. *You're not maintaining very well.* Mael went over and grabbed him by the collar hauling him to his feet. Cam tried to stand up, but found his legs weren't working very well anymore.

"Are you drunk?" Mael asked disgusted.

"Blood drunk," Cam slurred. "No alkie haulie for angels. Lucky for me, demon's blood is better than whiskey if I get enough of it."

"Idiot," Mael muttered, his mind racing so fast he was sending out thoughts to Cam without meaning to. *Great, now I'm stuck figuring out what to do with my injured, idiot, drunk brother. I can't very well take him back into the bar. While most of the demons tend to leave him alone out of fear, with him being injured, it would be a whole different ballgame. Even with Douma and Forcas destroyed, there is still a*

huge bounty on Cam's head. Taking him back to the house is out of the question, too. Ana's there and, if there is one thing I fear, it isn't evil demons, it's the wrath of Ana. I can't even try to sneak Cam back into the house now that Ana's a physic.

Finally, Mael spotted an empty car. He dragged Cam over, touched the lock and opened it up. With the door ajar, he threw Cam in none too gently.

Cam thunked his head on the way in and there was no mistaking the satisfied grin on his brother's face when he mumbled, "Ouch."

Mael got into the passenger side. "You've really got to stop pulling this stuff. It's time to end this pity party."

"Sorry, I just lost control tonight," Cam curled up into a ball and pretended to sleep.

Mael jerked him up roughly. "That's bull and we both know it. While you were occupied with the enemy, I had a little talk with the bartender. He told me you're in there almost every night and the routine is always the same."

"Fine, so what? It's the only way I can sleep at night. Every time I close my freaking eyes everything comes back in a flash." Cam started to do that babbling thing drunks do. "I see the ones that we left behind in Hell. I should have figured out a way to get them out. Crap, Nathaniel's mate

is down there, and I bit her. I took my own brother's female, threw her down on the ground and fed off of her. What kind of monster does that make me? I barely stopped myself before I really hurt her."

"You were able to control yourself in the end," Mael reminded.

"Sure, now I just buy blood every night that probably came from either her or some other poor angel in chains," Cam slurred his words even worse. "I'm no idiot. They have to get that blood from someplace. I can try to fool myself all I want, but there are no willing donors giving out blood anymore than there are cows giving up burger patties."

"Speaking of blood, you need some, Cam. Not only do we have to dilute all the demon's blood you sucked down, but we have to replace all the fluids you gave to those demon whores." He pulled up the sleeve on his shirt and put his wrist by Cam's mouth.

He weakly pushed it away. "No thanks," he could only talk in a whisper because he was getting so weak. "It skeeves me out when I have to drink from family."

Mael pulled out one of his daggers and made a deep slash into his own wrist.

Cam still tried to fight him at first, but the smell

of the blood was too enticing. He grabbed his arm and, as he started to drink, things went black for a moment.

When Cam came too, his mind less muddled, he noticed Mael's injured arm clutched to his chest. Too much damn blood came from it. "Let me see your arm."

Mael shook his head. "It's okay."

"Let me see it, now."

He relented.

Cam cursed. There were several deep bite marks surrounding the original cut. He hated himself at that moment for attacking his own brother.

Mael gave a half smile. "It's no big deal."

Cam grabbed a scarf from the backseat and wrapped it around his brother's injury. "It is a big deal. I almost gnawed your arm off."

"Please, even with fangs, your puny butt couldn't take me on."

"You want to know a secret?" he asked, his voice clearing up. "Even though we destroyed Douma and Forcas, their super demon is still coming for us."

"Why would you say that?"

"It's been calling to me." Cam shuddered. "Not just at night either. It comes during the day, too. It

wants me to completely turn and join up with it. It says if I don't, it will not only destroy me, but you guys, too."

"Are you sure it's for real?"

"Oh yeah." He nodded. "I can feel the evil from it. It's unlike anything I've ever felt, and I met some real gems when I was in Hell. Don't worry though. I told It to piss off. I'm not going to turn. Not only do I have you guys to think about, but I took vows and I'll never break them."

"I know that, little brother. We all do." Mael put his hand on his brother's shoulder.

"What the hell?" Cam looked over at the bar.

Mael followed his gaze. "Is that Michael?"

"It sure is." He slipped off his sunglasses so he could see better. He discovered his new demon eyes gave him great night vision. "What the hell is the Chief doing with an illegal arms dealer? A demon one at that?"

* * * *

"Oops. Oh, crap. Duck, Abdiel!"

Abdiel brought his head down just in time for the football to sail overhead and into Nathaniel's hands.

"Sorry." His smile begged to differ. "I didn't expect you guys to poof in right in the middle of

us."

"Why are you all crashing here? Don't you have homes of your own?" Abdiel asked with an aggravated tone he really didn't feel. During the week he and Gabi were gone, he actually started to miss everybody.

"Surprise," Rachael yelled from the kitchen. "Ana's called a family meeting. Consider it your welcome home party."

Abdiel laughed. Even though she was right and it was just family, the entire house was full to capacity. A few months ago, he had been alone in the world and now he had more brothers and sisters than he knew what to do with. Not that he was complaining.

"Hey, Barakiel," Gabi called. "You changed your hair back."

The young angel looked up and smiled. "Yeah, my new archangel Uriel likes it better this way."

Gabi went and sat across from him at the table. "I've known Uriel for years. Is he being good to you? Because if he's not, I'll have a talk with him."

"No, he's really cool. In fact, he didn't even order me to change my hair. He just asked nicely. It's my healer that's driving me batty."

Cam gave a snide chuckle. Bear rolled his eyes.

Now that the youngest Lehor was blond again, Abdiel was taken aback by how much he looked

like Cam. *Well, Cam, before he got a new pair of choppers and about fifty pounds of lean muscle mass.*

"I know every healer," Gabi said. "Which one are you stuck with?"

"Tiffany."

Now it was Gabi's turn to laugh. She quickly recovered and patted Bear's head. "I am so, so, so sorry."

"Tiffany isn't even an angel's name," Bear grouched. "She refuses to tell us her real one. She's the biggest airhead. Her only concerns are shopping and what color to paint her nails. I feel like I've moved in with Paris Hilton."

"You've got to tell them what you did to her cat." Cam slapped him on the back.

"She brought this pure white, longhaired Persian cat with her. The other night she made me mad, so I shaved it bald."

"That's cold, man," Abdiel could barely get the words out he was laughing so hard.

"The bad thing is for some reason it made that stupid cat like me even more." Bear shook his head, clearly dumbfounded. "Hairball won't leave me alone."

"Where's Ana?" Gabi asked as soon as they all stopped laughing.

"She's at her new job," Cam replied. "She said she would be here as soon as she could."

"Ana got a new job?" Abdiel asked with a raised brow.

"Yup, she's a cop now." Cam jumped when Ana flashed in.

"The proper term is enforcer, fang-head," she snapped, her hand on her hip. She wore an enforcer's uniform, black leather pants and a short, cropped black leather jacket with blue trim.

On her hips, she had something on that Abdiel had never seen any enforcer wear before— guns.

When she saw his expression, she patted them. "Mael picked them up for me the other night. Don't worry. We got some for you guys, too. It wouldn't be fair not to share."

"Since when do you use black market weapons?" Abdiel asked, more than a little shocked. Ana was the last angel he would have ever suspected of illegal activity.

"I'm not about ready to let those demons get a hold of one of us again. If that means we use weapons the council doesn't approve of, so be it."

"But you're walking around with them in the open," Gabi pointed out. "You're kind of rubbing it in everybody's face."

"What are they going to do, fire me? Besides my new boss, Jacob, has ordered a whole bunch himself. When he found out there was something we could use against demons and the council had

been hiding it all this time, he was pissed."

"What else did you find out, old wise one?" Abdiel crossed his arms.

Ana opened her mouth, then closed it. She seemed to be trying to find the right words. "I found out a lot and most of it is not good. Nobody knows about my telepathy, so I was able to get inside them and find out things."

"That's just rude, Ana," Cam teased as he wagged a finger at her. "It's not nice to snoop in other's minds. It's just a gross abuse of your powers."

"Give it a rest." She batted his finger away. "Desperate times call for desperate measures. I've found out some pretty scary stuff. The council, in particular Jehel, wants to break up the Order. He knows if you guys are as powerful as predicated, you will have more control in Heaven than he does."

"Is he really that power hungry?" Gabi asked.

"He deliberately set Dina up to be captured in order to get Cam. Is that hungry enough for you?"

"You mean to tell me he risked his own son in order to get me?" Cam had a disgusted look on his face.

"Yes, and that is not even the worse part of it. He was working directly with Forcas and Douma in order to put you guys out of commission. They

struck a deal the demons get you guys and Jehel doesn't have to worry about the Order unseating him."

Rachael came into the kitchen along with the rest of the males and they all stood around. "How low is Jehel willing to go?"

"Oh believe me, he has gone much lower before." Ana breathed heavy. "You four are not the original Order. There were four other angels before you. The first two were your parent's, Abdiel and Rachael. In fact, your dad was the original Destroyer."

"Appolion is just going to love hearing that one," Rachael muttered.

"Who was the third one?" Cam asked as he stared to pull at his hair.

"It was Mom." Ana reached out and pulled his hand down. "But as soon as I mentioned the original Order, you knew that. We've always known Mom was a strong telepath. That's why you and I have developed such strong skills. In time, I think Bear will gain them, too."

"Oh hell no." Bear gave a vigorous shake of his head. "I'm just a simple empath."

"That's what I said at first, too," Cam said grimly. He looked at Ana. "Jehel set up Mom and Dad, too, didn't he? He wanted Mom destroyed so she wouldn't be a threat to him anymore."

When Ana nodded her head, all eight brothers started to curse. "That doesn't make sense," Mael snarled. "Mom was destroyed after Abdiel's parents defected to Hell. The Order had already been broken up."

"He still felt Mom was a threat. He didn't want to risk losing any of his precious power," Ana said bitterly. "The worst part is I can't even prove any of this. All I have is wild accusations that no one is going to believe." She turned to look at Abdiel. "I've got even worse news I'm afraid. They have declared Appolion a rogue and have put out a search on him. The archangels that are working for the justice angels have already come here to Earth to start hunting."

"Good luck," Rachael scoffed. "My brother is very good at shielding himself. They'll never find him."

"Yes they will, Rachael," Ana said firmly. "The justice angels have the best trackers in Heaven looking for him. They will find him, and they have orders to bring him in, willing or not. There is some good news, however."

"My brother is being hunted down like a dog. How could anything be good about that?" Abdiel growled.

"Well as you all already know, Jacob is the Chief of the enforcers. He's suspected that Jehel

has been dirty for years, but he could never prove it. When I came to him with our problem, he was more than happy to help. Appolion is now wanted by the enforcers, too."

"How is that supposed to help?" Rachael wailed.

"Because now I can go hunt for him." Ana couldn't have shocked her brothers more than if she had run down the streets of Heaven buck-naked. "I'll go and convince him to come in peacefully."

All at once, the kitchen was in an uproar. Abdiel, Rachael and every single brother were arguing they should be the ones to go fetch Appolion. Everyone agreed it was much too dangerous for Ana to go out there alone.

"Enough," Ana finally yelled. "I'm going and that's final. Abdiel, if you or Rachael go, Appolion will view it as a betrayal and he will never trust you again."

Abdiel hated to admit she was right. If Appolion thought his own family deceived him again, he might do something stupid.

Ana turned and looked at Cam. "I need you to stay in contact with Appolion. You and Rachael are the only connection we have to him now. If he cuts you off because he senses you're after him, we lose one of the best advantages we have

against the justice angels." Ana pinned each of her brothers with a steely look. "As for you lunk-heads, back off! This is my assignment, not yours."

"Look, Ana, it's going to be dangerous out there," Ramiel started. He was the oldest brother and, because of that, obviously decided to be their spokesman. "Not only do you have demons coming after this guy, but now some overzealous angels, too."

"I know you boys want to protect me," Ana said softly, "but this is something I have to do. For years, I sat on that council and tried to live up to its expectations. Now, after all this time, I find out that it's all been a lie. That they were the ones that made Mom and Dad the way they are today. Don't you see I have to do something so some good comes of all this? Abdiel brought Cam home to us. The least I can do is bring Appolion back to him."

"You don't owe me anything, Ana." Abdiel didn't want to see her hurt either.

"I know I don't. If you want to know the truth, I'm looking forward to getting out there and mixing it up a bit."

"Little Miss Uptight Ana, getting down and dirty with some demons?" Bear smiled, breaking the tension in the room. "I'd pay money to see that."

Ana ignored her youngest brother and turned to address Cam. "I need you to contact Appolion right now and let him know about the justice angels. We can't afford for them to get to him first."

Cam nodded before he closed his eyes. After a minute, he winced. "Damn, he's pissed. He's yelling all kinds of nice things in my head."

"Tell him not to worry, I'm coming for him."

"Consider it relayed." Cam opened his eyes wide, his message simultaneously aloud and telepathic. "Dude, if I tell her that she'll kick my ass."

Ana narrowed her eyes. "What did he say?"

Cam took a deep, steadying breath. "He said, *yippi, diddly, diddly, doo! Some female empath is coming to save me. Now I have nothing to worry about.*"

Her mouth opened and closed several times, her light blue eyes wide with disbelief. "That arrogant jerk," she finally managed to strangle out. "Tell him to come into my mind and say that to my face."

Cam smirked. "He said, *no way, Jose.*" It was obvious he enjoyed relaying these messages a little too much.

"Well isn't that real mature."

Abdiel ducked his head trying to choke back

his laughter. The coughs that surrounded him told him the brothers were doing the same thing. It was kind of funny seeing someone stand up to Ana for once.

"Great," Cam groaned. "Now he's singing in my head and its Blondie's *One Way or Another*."

"Oh," Rachael gasped. "I like that song."

"No, dude," Cam argued with the unseen Appolion. "I won't tell you what she's wearing. That's my sister."

Ana went over to Cam and stalked him, completely forgetting he was just the messenger. "You tell that no good, pig of a male that I *am* coming for him." Her brother got up and quickly backpedaled until she him pinned against the counter.

"He wants to know if you're going to able to drop the bon-bons long enough to do that." Cam put his arms up in anticipation.

"Stupid jerk." Ana hit her brother several times in the chest and stomach.

"Ouch, Ana, stop. He's gone."

Ana gave him one last slug for good measure before she walked over and pulled some files out of her bag. "Fine, let him be arrogant, it'll be easier that way. Appolion just thinks he's smarter than me. But little does he know, I've figured out his little secret."

Abdiel was actually starting to feel a little sorry for his brother. He'd never seen Ana this riled up, not even the time when Barakiel sneaked and got his nose pierced. Her cheeks were flushed and her pink lips were pressed tight together with anger. A thick lock of her blonde hair had escaped the usual immaculate bun and was swinging in front of her eyes.

Ana didn't even bother to brush it out of her way. She finally gathered up several newspapers and slammed them down on the table. Some of them were so old they were cracked and yellowed.

"What's your big plan, Ana?" Cam asked, still rubbing the spot in his chest where she hit him. "Are you going to keep signing him up for newspaper and magazine subscriptions until he finally turns himself in?"

"Don't worry," Abdiel drawled. "She'll still remember to renew Cosmo for you."

"Mr. Dark Angel made a funny," Bear smiled.

Abdiel went up to him and ruffled his hair.

"This is how I'm going to get Macho Pants," Ana declared proudly.

Gabi and Abdiel started sorting through the newspapers. He could see they were old articles on several different serial killers. Was Ana trying to say that his brother was a murderer? He instantly dismissed the thought. If she really

thought Appolion had done these killings, she'd have just let the justice angels have him.

"I'm sorry, Ana." Gabi had a small frown on her lips. "I just don't get it."

"Maybe this will help." Ana pulled out a paper from one of the files. "I compiled a list of places Appolion has lived in the past using both the information he gave Cam and reports of unauthorized angel activity. When I compared the dates and locations, I found a pattern. I think he's been hunting down serial killers."

"Are you sure?" Rachael looked through the paperwork.

"It would make sense. We all know most serial killings are either the work of demons or humans are under strong demon persuasion."

"That little booger." Gabi turned to smile at Abdiel. "What was all that talk he was shooting off about keeping his head down and hiding in his rabbit hole?"

"Don't forget, he claimed he was no hero, too." Abdiel knew that he had a stupid grin on his face, but he couldn't help it. He was proud of his baby brother. Appolion was out there helping his mortal brothers even though he had to do it all alone.

"How's all this going to help you find my brother?" Rachael wrinkled her nose in confusion.

"I just need to figure out where there is a killer active and wait for him to show up."

"Ana." Abdiel rubbed his head. "Do you have any idea how many serial killers there are active at any given time?"

She held her head up. "I didn't say it would be easy, but it's all I got. It just may take a little time."

"Thank you for going to save my little brother."

Ana ducked her head, embarrassed by the gratitude.

"I just have one last question," Rachael said. "Who was the Control over the original Order?"

"I was," a voice answered from the kitchen doorway. Michael stood there tossing a baseball from hand to hand.

Bear gave a small yelp, shocked by the Chief's sudden appearance.

Abdiel saw Mael and Cam exchange a look before Cam fixed the Chief with a hard stare.

"You were the Control?" Gabi asked her lips forming an O. "Why didn't you tell us about the other Order?"

"There's a lot they're not telling us, isn't there Michael," Cam snapped. "But then that's nothing new is it?"

Abdiel knew finding out Michael had been his uncle after all these years was a big blow to Cam, but he still was shocked at his behavior. The

young archangel would hardly even look at the Chief before, and now he was snarling at him. In fact, it looked like Cam was thoroughly pissed at Michael and was two steps from attacking him.

"Back down, boy," Michael's voice was low, but full of menace. There was a reason why he was the biggest, baddest archangel. "If you have a question, why don't you just ask it?"

"Fine," Cam snapped. "Did you know about the holy water or the angel's blood?"

"I thought the holy water was just a myth. As for the angel's blood, yes I did know about that."

"So you knew all along and never said anything?"

The younger angel's teeth ground together, but Abdiel was proud he maintained his cool.

Cam glowered, "How could you keep something like that from us?"

"It was a matter of security. If a bad angel were to use it to hide their going rogue, they would be able to spy on us, or worse. Do you honestly think that I like the idea of those demons draining captured angels dry? Those are my warriors they are doing that to."

"What were you doing at the neutral bar the other night?"

"I was doing a couple of things." Michael walked over and stood toe-to-toe with Cam. "One

was having to scare a certain succubus away from one of my nephews."

"Look, Michael—"

"No, you listen, that female demon has an obsession with you."

"That's ridiculous. She does not."

Michael grabbed Cam's cell phone out of his pocket and started to scroll through the history. "Yeah right, that's why she called you fifteen times today and it's not even evening. Lilith sucked you dry of blood the other night, knowing full well you were going to pick a fight with those demons. She wants you to be captured again."

"Now you're beginning to sound like Mael. She wouldn't do that. She's a succubus. I'm just another lay to her. She just understands me better than anyone else right now."

"Surprise, she's a demon." Michael smacked Cam on the forehead as if he were trying to beat some sense into him. "She would love nothing more than to have you become her own personal pet in Hell and believe me, it wouldn't be as fun as it sounds. Stay away from her. Lilith's one dangerous chick."

"Since when do you give a flip about what happens to any of us, *Uncle Mike*?" Cam asked with heavy sarcasm. "I think I liked it better when you ignored us."

"If Mael hadn't been there last night, you would have been in big trouble. You're losing control and you're going to drag your entire family down with you. I'm not asking you to stay away from that female demon, I'm *ordering* you to do so. You're still an archangel and I'm still your leader, no matter how you feel about me otherwise."

"Fine, I'll stay away from that particular succubus," Cam conceded angrily. "But you have to tell me one thing first. What the hell were you doing talking to an illegal arms dealer?"

"Let's just say I'm no longer following the council's dictates. Everything Ana just told you is true. Jehel and several others have betrayed us all." Michael ran his hands through his mane of dark blond hair and started to pace. "The powers of Heaven are now divided."

"Are we going to have a war?" Abdiel remembered the last civil war that took place in Hell when Lucifer revolted.

"Nobody's formally declared it, but we're coming close. The council wants to either have total control of the Order or disband it. As leader of the angel warriors, I cannot allow that. The Order is supposed to help balance the power while protecting mankind. The council members want to use it to promote their own agendas."

"So what are you going to do now, Michael?" Cam was still shooting him dark looks.

"The better question would be what are *we* going to do?"

He gave him suspicious glare. "What are you talking about?"

"You, Raphael and I need to visit all the angel warriors' homes and see where their loyalties lie."

"You're crazy if you think I'm going anywhere with you."

"I think it would be good for you to get away from everybody and get your head together. This mission will do that."

"So you get me back from Hell and all of a sudden you want to be my protective uncle now?" Cam shook his head in disgust. "Are you going to insist we spend quality time together now? We could go to the ballpark, maybe go bowling together or better yet, I could sit on your lap while you teach me how to drive a car."

Rachael let out a loud peal of laughter. When everyone in the room turned to look at her, she quickly recovered and coughed into her hand. "Sorry about that." She blushed. "I just got a visual of that last one in my head."

Michael and Cam continued to give her identical looks of annoyance.

Now that Abdiel knew they were related, it was

easy to see how much a lot of their expressions and movements were the same. In fact, Cam looked a lot like Michael, especially now that he'd gone through the change.

Michael turned back to Cam. "The way I see it is until you get a grip on yourself, your dear Uncle Mike is going to be on you like white on rice, kiddo. I'm not about ready to stand by and watch my nephew slowly destroy himself. You need to remember you're the leader of the empath's now. You have responsibilities and other angels looking up to you."

"I've been trying, Michael. I've been going to all those stupid council meetings, haven't I?"

"Yeah, and you've been making a great impression, too." Now it was Michael's turn to lay on the sarcasm. "Especially when you make that game show wrong answer buzzer sound whenever Jehel talks. Now get ready to leave because Raphael is waiting for us."

"All right, I'll go." Cam snapped his teeth together. "But just for the record, this totally sucks."

"Noted." Michael gave him a brief smile before he turned to the others. "I need to know where all of you stand. Are with me or the council?"

"You know I will always stand by you, Michael," Abdiel said formally. He bowed down

to the Chief, showing his allegiance.

The brothers followed suit, all swearing their loyalty and sword arm to Michael.

Cam came up last, he bowed the lowest. "Please forgive me for doubting you, Michael," he said without lifting his head. "I swear to follow wherever you lead me."

Barakiel was still sitting at the table. He looked over at Rachael and mouthed, *so much drama*, then rolled his eyes.

She clapped her hand over her mouth to hide the smile.

Bear stopped grinning when he realized Michael looked at him. "Sorry?"

Michael rubbed his head like it ached. "You need to formally declare your side too, Barakiel."

"Oh, yeah right." He hopped down and bowed at Cam's feet and became as serious as a heart attack. "I vow to always stay by your side, my Lordship."

"Bear get up, you don't have to bow to me," Cam sputtered.

"Yes, he does," Ana said, then bowed to him. Since she was no longer a justice angel, she was now considered an empath, too.

Cam had no choice but to awkwardly acknowledge their pledges of loyalty. It was clear he had a lot to learn about leading and it seemed

like Michael had decided to be the one to teach him.

"Who else do you think will be on our side?" Abdiel asked.

"The entire force of the enforcers, all the angel warriors, half the angels in Heaven and half the shifters." Michael tossed the baseball over to Ana who looked surprised, but easily caught it. "The big problem is I suspect that Jehel has some rogues and demons on his side."

"So do we." Cam flashed his fangs.

"Were you really the original Control?" Gabi asked as Abdiel came and wrapped his arms around her.

"Yes, I was." He looked at the Lehors. "I have never forgiven myself for losing your mother. When they destroyed her and your father, I decided the next Control would be better prepared. That's why I worked so hard to make sure Abdiel was ready."

"You knew all along that I was going to be the Control? What else do you know?"

"I know lots of things. Like Cam shouldn't offer his help so much because someone is going to take him up on his offer when he least expects it. I also know Ana needs to pack an extra pair of pants with her before she leaves. Heck, I even know that Rachael should always make sure she's alone in

the room before she dances to her iPod. The one thing I don't know is whether we're going to be able to beat the council. We need to prepare for hard times. I cannot guarantee all of us will survive."

Rachael put her hands on her hips and cocked her head to the side. "You're one confusing angel, Michael."

"He's right about one thing." Abdiel hugged Gabi tighter. "Even though we destroyed Douma and Forcas, that was just the tip of the iceberg and now we don't just have demons to worry about. We're going to have to fight our own kind."

* * * *

Later that night, Abdiel lay in bed on his side with Gabi pressed to his chest. They had just finished making love and they were both naked. His hand was slowly caressing her softly rounded hip. Up and down, up and down, his fingers gently teased.

"Are you worried?" she whispered into the darkness. Her voice was warm, like honey.

He leaned down so he could drink in her scent. *Roses*. It mingled with the smell of their lovemaking. "I'd be a liar if I didn't say I worried about you and the baby, but I have no regrets."

"None?"

"My God, female, don't you realize I would walk through the fires of hell to be with you?"

"Yes I do." She rolled over. Her long, slender fingers danced across his chest. "I just like to hear you say it."

He responded by tickling her. She wiggled underneath him while she let out peals of laughter. When he finished, she lay under him panting for air. He let out a hiss as her movements aroused him. When she realized this, her beautiful green eyes became dark with desire. He used his lips and teeth to tease the side of her neck, right where he knew she loved it.

"It scares me to think of how close I came to never having you," he admitted. "If Michael hadn't sent me to be your archangel, I never would have realized how much I love you. I'd still be sad and miserable if it weren't for you."

She cupped his face in her hands and drew him in for a deep, sensual kiss. "But he did send you to me, Abdiel. Neither one of us will ever be alone again."

About the Author

Stephani Hecht is a happily married mother of two. You can usually find her snuggled up to her laptop, creating her next book.