

# Hell's Angel

The book cover features a muscular man with short brown hair and blue eyes, looking over his shoulder. He has a large, ornate tattoo of a cross on his left upper arm. He is shirtless and wearing brown leather pants, leaning against a black motorcycle. The background is a fiery, orange and red landscape with a large, glowing skull in the upper center. The title 'Hell's Angel' is at the top in a stylized, metallic font. The author's name 'Stephani Becht' is at the bottom in a similar font. The text 'Archangel Series Book 4' is in the upper right corner.

Archangel Series  
Book 4

Stephani  
Becht

**Hell's Angel: Archangel  
Series Book 4**

**By**

**Stephani Hecht**

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Hell's Angel: Archangel Series Book 4

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## **Dedication**

*To everyone at Greater Detroit Romance  
Writers of America. Your support means  
everything to me.*

## Chapter One

“You do realize that is probably a trap?” Appolion asked Abdiel. The fact his older brother actually agreed to meet with their demon mother still flabbergasted Appolion. The last time he saw her was when she came to his prison cell in Hell to tell him he was exiled for refusing to turn against his angel side and become demon. Even though Abdiel told him it was all a ruse his mother had used to free him from the constant torture he suffered, Appolion still doubted the demon bitch. Call him crazy, but after centuries of being kicked like a dog, he was a tad bit bitter.

Abdiel just shrugged and acted liked he didn't have a care in the world as they continued to walk through the neutral bar. Appolion knew it was all an act. Until he and Rachael had finally returned to the angel fold, Abdiel tormented himself over the loss of his youngest siblings. This is why Appolion vowed to himself, his brother was never going to know everything he suffered through at the hands of their demon father and brothers. The

less Abdiel knew about that, the better for all of them. Rachael stood off to his other side, while Michael, Cam, Gabi and Ana trailed behind them.

The bar was a dark, dingy hole in the wall that had never seen a mop or any other cleaning product. The floor was sticky with God knows what and the smell of demon decay was rich in the air. Rogue angels and various breeds of demons occupied several of the rough, filthy, wooden tables. They all cast nervous glances toward the group of angel warriors. Even though neutral bars were supposed to be a place where everybody got along, that rule wasn't always strictly enforced.

"I can't believe you agreed to this meeting," Rachael spat. She held a small dagger in her hand and was spinning it around as she gave the bar a disgusted look. "This place reeks. God, Cam, how can you stand hanging out in these dives?"

Cam gave her a crooked smile, showing off a brief flash of fang. Half-demon himself, he almost fit in with the crowd. "It's not like I come here because they make a mean burger and fries, Ray."

She turned and gifted him with a hiss. "No, you come here to mingle with this garbage. Nix was right, you must always find yourself washing off the demon whore stench."

"Be nice, Ray," Abdiel warned in an even voice.

Outside Appolion could hear thunder, a sure sign of how upset Rachael really was. Since she

had control of the skies, whenever she got too upset the weather always took a nasty turn. Appolion hoped that she would be able to control herself long enough for this meeting. But then again, that was what Abdiel was there for, to help contain their powers if any of the Order lost control of them.

"Ray doesn't want to be nice," Rachael snapped. "Ray's a little ticked her idiot brother agreed to meet our demon witch mother. Did you forget what happened the last time you saw her, Abdiel? That little heart to heart ended with you near death. I may have only been nine at the time, but I still see the sight of your battered body in my sleep."

More thunder boomed outside and Appolion cast a questioning glance at Abdiel. *Are you sure she can handle this? Maybe we should have left her at the house with Bear.*

Appolion was surprised when Abdiel's voice came back loud and clear in his head, showing how far his telepathic powers had developed. *She's stronger than she looks, Appolion. Besides, Mom said she wanted to see all three of us.*

Rachael gave them a shrewd look. "Are you talking about me in your heads? Because if you are, you better knock it off now."

Cam called from behind them, "Well, Ray, then you need to stop being such a bitc...bad angel."

A dark demon came forward, a smile on his ugly mug. He had several spiny protrusions running up his face, like a demented porcupine and small, even razor sharp teeth, like an even more demented piranha. He was wearing a pair of tattered jeans, a Harley Davison shirt, and brown cowboy boots, which strangely seemed appropriated for him. His long, bony fingers came up and clasped Cam's shoulder in a friendly gesture.

"It is good to see you, Empath King. Michael has kept you away for too long," his deep gravelly voice would have been menacing if not for the casual tone.

Cam gestured to the full bar. "Mangus, I see business has been good for you."

"Bah." Mangus waved a disgusted hand at the bar patrons. "They don't spend nearly as much money as you do when you're here."

Cam laughed and, for the first time in days, Appolion saw he made no attempt to hide his fangs. Even though Cam was the leader of the empaths and Michael's nephew, he was well aware many angels looked down at him because he was half-demon. That really stuck in Appolion's craw. Like it was Cam's fault he'd been captured and taken to Hell. Like it was his fault the demons had decided to try to force him to become a demon by injecting demon's blood



into his body.

Mangus handed a folded up piece of paper to Cam. The empath opened it and nodded after looking briefly at it. He pocketed it before taking out his wallet and peeling off several large bills. He handed them to the demon.

As he was putting his wallet away he said, "Tell the contact I'll pay for more if they can get them out."

The demon looked doubtful. "Are you sure that you know what you're doing?"

"No, but this is all I have to give him right now. It's the least I can do."

"He doesn't deserve your devotion."

Michael nodded his head. "That is one thing that you and I agree on, demon."

Cam shot a guilty look in Ana's direction. "I didn't ask for any comments from the peanut gallery," his voice was uneasy. Cam was obviously hiding something.

Ana went up to the demon and took his hand. "Hello, Mangus, I'm Cam's sister, Ana. I've heard you've helped my brother get out of some sticky situations. Thank you."

The demon appeared to be shocked a female angel would be so kind to him. He smiled broadly at her, showing off his sharp teeth. "I happen to admire and respect the Empath King, and not just because he spends an obscene amount of money in

my bar.”

Michael leaned in and spoke only loud enough for them to hear, “We probably should get this meeting started. We’re beginning to attract too much attention.”

The Chief was right. A group of demons, sitting at a nearby table, were conversing amongst themselves in demon talk about whether or not they should attack the angel warriors and then take the females. Appolion growled low in his throat and answered them in the same demon language.

“You shouldn’t fuck with the unknown. It may just come back and destroy you.” He started to raise his hand, to teach the bastards a harsh lesson when Abdiel cursed and pulled it down. Since Appolion was one of the Order of Four, he had his own special gift. His was the ability to shoot energy, which would destroy anything around him.

“Easy there, little brother. We are supposed to be incognito, remember?” Abdiel’s voice was calm and soothing.

“You didn’t hear what those bastards said. They want to take the females and use them. I won’t let anything happen to Rachael again. They’re not going to put their filthy hands on Ana either.”

Appolion let Abdiel lead him away, but he

made sure he got out one last warning growl. The demons at the table seemed relieved to see him leaving. Ana looked up at Magus and gave him an impish smile.

"If you think that was bad," she said lightly, "you should see him first thing in the morning. He is such a wakie grumpy."

"He just knows he has a beautiful mate that needs protecting." Mangus directed his attention to Abdiel, Appolion and Rachael. "Your mother is waiting for you in my office. I should warn you, she's not quite right in the head."

Rachel scoffed, "That's nothing new. Mommy dearest has never been playing with a full deck."

Cam and Michael set up post on the outside of the door, one at each side. Abdiel, Appolion and Rachael went inside the small, musty smelling office. Appolion could detect a small tremble go through his sister's body. Gabi and Ana followed so they could support their mates. As soon as he walked in, Appolion knew there was something wrong, terribly wrong, and they were all in for a world of hurt.

\* \* \* \*

By the time Bear sensed the anger and hate coming from the group of justice angels it was already too late. They flashed into the living room

and were on him before he could take two steps toward the door. A pair of them grabbed him by his arms and held him captive while another group dragged Uriel and Tiffany down the stairs.

As soon as he saw Tiffany's terrified face, Bear struggled even harder. One of the justice angels cuffed him hard in the side of the head. That made him more pissed, so he fought even more until another justice angel came up and punched him in the stomach. Bear gasped as the wind went out of him.

He was going to kick the justice angel's ass six ways to Tuesday for that one. He just needed to get his breath back first.

A pair of white boots came into his view and Bear scanned up so he could identify the owner. He wasn't overly shocked to see it was the head of the council, Jehel. The elder angel was looking back at him, his face full of disdain.

"Where are they?" he demanded in a cold voice.

Bear decided to take a page out of, his healer slash girlfriend, Tiffany's book and fake dumb. "Who? I'm afraid you're going to have to be a little more specific than that."

Jehel's colorless eyes flashed with anger and he backhanded Bear. Since he was wearing a large ring, he laid the flesh open on Bear's cheek. Even with blood trickling at a steady rate and his face

hurting like a mother scratcher, Bear still managed to shoot off a cocky smile. Which just earned him another blow. He could barely hear Tiffany crying because his ears were ringing so loudly.

Uriel started to struggle with his own captors. "How dare you come in here and attack us? You have no right."

Jehel curled his lip up at the archangel. "You have been harboring fugitives so that gives me every right. Tell me where Ana and the Destroyer are and we'll leave you in peace."

Uriel shot Bear a hesitant glance, then said, "We don't know where they are."

"Wrong answer, archangel. Unfortunately for you I know your weakness. Ever since you lost an empath and healer to demon assassins several years ago, you have been very overprotective of your team members. So every time you refuse to tell me what I want to know, I'm going to hurt your empath."

Jehel nodded to a justice angel. The angel started to punch Bear repeatedly in the face. Thanks to his seven older brothers, he could take a punch, but this was getting to be a bit too much. He used his last bit of strength and sent a vase flying across the room. It hit his assailant in the back of the head, knocking him out cold. The two justice angels holding him were so shocked that they let go of his arms.

Bear started to scramble for the door, but hesitated not wanting to leave Tiffany behind. That was all the opportunity they needed. They tackled him and dragged him back, his tennis shoes made squeaking noises on the wood floor.

Jehel kicked the broken vase off to the side. "Well, well, well, very interesting. It looks like another one of the Lehor brothers is a freak."

\* \* \* \*

Appolion looked in his mother's eyes for the first time in centuries and, when he saw the despair and anguish in them, he felt an emotion he never thought possible. He felt pity. Damned if a part of him didn't feel like he would do anything to make her feel better, too. His father was right, he was too much of a bleeding heart for his own good.

She sat in a chair and was flanked on either side by a half dozen demon guards. Even though she was in exile, she still wore the royal garb of Hell. Her dress was a heavy, black, velvet and dark rubies were sewn into the fabric. The sleeves opened at the wrist and flowed down so that her hands were covered.

Her hair was as beautiful as it had always been, dark and a luscious riot of curls. Just like Rachael's. She still had the same aristocratic bone structure she had in Heaven, accentuated by full

lips. The only differences were her eyes and her pallor. Her once beautiful blue eyes were now haunted and black. As if the color had deserted her when her soul left. Her skin was abnormally pale, she was so white she reminded Appolion of a ghost.

"The baby birds have flown back to their mother," she sang out on a reedy voice.

The guard standing closest to her placed a comforting hand on her shoulder. Appolion and Abdiel exchanged a glance, Rachael kept her attention focused on their mother. Ray's breath was coming out in rapid gasps and her cheeks were flushed.

Abdiel addressed her in a cool neutral voice, "You wanted to see us, Astaroth. Why?"

She gave him a forlorn look. "My own son calls me by my name and refuses to call me mother. Sad, yes, sad indeed."

Rachael snapped to attention. "That is because you don't deserve to be called Mother."

Astaroth swung her head side to side slowly and hummed softly to herself for several seconds before she answered that accusation. "The Rachael is still mad because I did not believe her when she told me the awful things Douma and Forcas were doing to her. I was wrong not to have listened to her, but I didn't want to think they were capable of that. They were my sons and I still had some

hope for them.”

Rachael let out a *tsk* of disbelief. “You abandoned me for years. I was alone and helpless.”

Astaroth brought her white hands to her throat. They reminded Appolion of a pair of white pigeons in their last death throes. He wasn’t quite sure whether he could believe anything their mother said. Mangus had been right, she was a certifiable loon. Must have been Dad’s charming influence.

Astaroth replied in the same singsong voice, “Mommy did not want to leave her little girl. Your father, Eurynome locked me up so I could not go to the Rachael. I wanted to hold her and make it all better like a mommy should. I wanted to tell the Rachael I was sorry and I would find some way to help her, but mean Daddy would not let me.”

Rachael shot her a doubtful look. “Why should I believe a word that comes out of your mouth?”

Appolion found himself nodding in agreement. It wasn’t exactly like their mother had a good track record with any of them.

“Because Mommy has come to give her babies a warning. They want to hurt the babies and Mommy can’t let them do that anymore.”

The demon guard who had his hand on Astaroth’s shoulder spoke up, “She does this at



great risk to herself. If Eurynome were to find out, he would make sure she suffered terribly even though she is already in exile. Everything she has told you is true."

Astaroth patted the demon's hand. "The Haures worries so much about me. The Haures is a good friend."

Haures pulled his deformed lips back into what might have been a smile. "It is an honor to serve my highness."

Abdiel's face showed shock. "Are you trying to say our mother is demon royalty?"

Appolion answered, "Both Mom and Dad were gifted with that title when they sold out Michael and you and left Heaven."

Rachael flipped her hair over her shoulder, crossed her arms and gave a bored look. "I guess that makes me a demon princess. It must be my lucky day. Look, Astaroth, I'm really busy. So just tell us what you need to say so we can leave this pit and go home. CSI is on tonight and it's a new episode."

A look of regret passed over Astaroth's face before it quickly flitted away. "Your father has made an alliance with your council and the justice angels. They mean to capture and hurt Mommy's babies because they are part of the Order."

Abdiel's face grew dark and stormy. "So it appears Jehel has finally made his move. Which

means we are now at war.”

\* \* \* \*

Bear was getting his ass royally kicked, his brain was starting to overload again, and he was pretty sure he was under arrest. It was looking like this was not going to be one of his top ten best days. He tried to suck in a breath, but ended up inhaling blood instead of air. That brought on a coughing fit, which sent sharp waves of pain shooting through his ribs. Dumb bastards probably broke them when they were kicking him.

“Stop,” Uriel finally yelled. “I’ll tell you where Appolion and Ana are, just leave him alone, please.”

Bear tried to tell him not to say anything, but all he succeeded in doing was sucking in more blood. He glared up at the justice angels beating him, making sure he memorized their faces. He wanted their images burned into his brain because he was going to make them regret this one day. He spat out a mouthful of blood and was finally able to breathe. “Don’t say a damn word to them,” he rasped.

Jehel kicked him square in the face. Tiffany would have screamed, but they had tied a gag around her mouth a long time ago. But not before she had called them every name in the book, then

some she had made up just for the occasion.

Uriel cursed loudly before shouting out, "They're at a neutral bar in Detroit. They have a meeting there."

A look of enormous guilt passed over Uriel's face and Bear felt bad for him. In order to protect Tiffany and him, the archangel had been forced to betray the others. It was a no win situation.

Jehel gave a cruel, satisfied smile. "See, that wasn't too hard was it?" He turned to the angels delivering the beating. "Don't stop, we need to teach Uriel here a lesson on obedience. I think seeing his empath taking a punishment will make this archangel think twice before he goes against the council."

One of the justice angels pointed at Tiffany. "What about the female? Do you want us to work her over, too?"

Jehel thought for second, then shook his head. "She has an older brother who is a very influential archangel. If we return her unharmed back to him, he may be more amicable to our cause. Now, the dirty Lehor brat is another story."

Bear shot a bloody, glob of spit at Jehel's feet. "When my brother, Cam, finds out about this he is so going to kick your ass."

Jehel curled his lip at him. "The Empath King is not going to have the chance. I'll see him destroyed first."

Before Bear could respond, they started to hit him again. He sent out a mental warning to Cam. *You guys need to run. Jehel and his goons know where you are and they're coming for you.*

Cam's voice came right back to it, bringing a small measure of comfort with it, *I'll tell the others. You don't sound right, Bear, are they hurting you?*

Bear did not want to tell him the truth for fear of distracting him during the upcoming battle. *I'm fine, they haven't laid a hand on me.*

Unfortunately at that moment one of the angels slugged him on the side of the head so hard the whole room spun and everything got a little hazy around the edges. He could dimly sense Cam still trying to reach him, but it took him several seconds to focus enough again to make out what he was saying.

Cam's voice finally came back, loud and sharp. *Bear! Bear! Damn it, Bear, answer me, now.*

*I'm sorry. I'm still here.* Bear struggled to keep his thoughts cohesive and failed. They started to shoot off in a jumbled mass he had no control of. *Crap, there is so much pain. Oh man, Tiffany is crying again. Don't look so sad, Uriel, you tried to protect me.*

*Shit, hang in there buddy I'm coming right now to help you.*

That was enough to snap Bear back to reality. *No, you have to stay and protect Ana.*

*Who's going to protect you? Appolion can protect Ana.* Cam's voice sounded broken.

*No, Cam they already have me. There is nothing you can do for me right now. You need to make sure that they don't get our sister, too.*

Jehel and several of the justice angels armed up, in preparation for their attack on the neutral bar. Before he left, Jehel gave Bear one last kick. That was enough for Bear to lose his last hold on consciousness. The angels holding him let go and the last thing he saw was the wood floor rushing up to meet him.

\* \* \* \*

Cam burst into the office, breaking up the happy family reunion. Appolion jumped to put his body between his friend and the demon guards who had drawn their weapons in alarm.

Cam was so jazzed he didn't even pay them any mind. "The justice angels just attacked Bear's house. They have him, Tiffany and Uriel. Bear says they are on their way here now. I'm not for sure, but I think they were kicking the crap out of Bear."

Appolion heard Ana let out a distressed cry at the mention of her youngest brother being harmed, he pulled her into him with one arm in order to give her some comfort. His mother got to her feet and addressed her guards, her long gown billowing gracefully around her feet. "Haures,

prepare your solders. We must protect my children," her voice was now lucid and as clear as a bell.

Haures balked, "Astaroth, if you do this then Eurynome will surely come after you."

"I don't care, I will not fail them again." She put her hands on the demon's arms and Appolion was stunned to see love in her eyes. "Please, I beg of you."

Haures returned her devoted look before nodding his head grimly. Michael ran into the room. He already had his sword out and he looked like a force to be reckoned with. The beer guzzling, country listen, football watcher was gone and was replaced by a battled hardened warrior.

"Bear was right," Michael said gravely. "Jehel is here with his justice angels and he's not alone. He has demon assassins with him."

Gabi gasped, "He's not even hiding his alliance anymore. He doesn't care who knows that he is playing with the enemy."

Abdiel shook his head. "That's because, as far as he is concerned, we are the enemy now."

Astaroth looked at her children sadly. "It is not just any demon that is coming for you. It is your father. Eurynome is on his way and he will harm Mommy's babies."

Haures looked at Michael and gave a gravelly

laugh. "Isn't this ironic, a demon general fighting side by side with the Chief of the archangels?"

No one had a chance to answer that remark because the bar erupted in chaos. They could hear the sounds of gunfire, screams and furniture breaking, and it was getting closer. Everyone pulled out their weapons and got ready.

## Chapter Two

Appolion looked around at his small group and realized they didn't stand a chance. "Ah, Abdiel, you wouldn't happen to have an escape plan handy would you?"

"Sure I do, everyone flash out now," Abdiel ordered.

They all tried, but nobody went anywhere. They all looked at each other with such dumbfounded looks Appolion would have laughed his ass off if the situation hadn't sucked so much. Even the demons in the group seemed at a loss as to what to do.

Michael was the only one who didn't look surprised. "The council has blanketed the area so we can't escape. We are going to have to run on foot."

"Can you shield us from view?" Abdiel asked Appolion.

Appolion gave a helpless shrug. "No, there's too many of us."



"Is there another door out of this office?" Appolion shouted to Mangus. The screams were getting closer, showing how little time they had left before their enemy was on them.

The demon bartender just shook his misshapen head, at which Cam cursed and said, "We're sitting ducks here in this room. It's going to be a slaughter."

Appolion gave him a wicked smile and raised his hand. Releasing a ball of energy, he directed it at the back wall. It glowed blue before a huge hole was blown into it, revealing the street behind it. He couldn't help but feel a little cocky at showing up the other members of the Order.

Rachael muttered, "Showoff."

Cam quipped, "I could have done that, too, you know."

Ana gave them a disgusted look. "God help us from the egos of the Order."

Gabi said, "Now you know what I've been having to live with. Can you imagine having to live with Cam, Rachael and Abdiel, all under one roof? There were some days were I thought I was going to save the demons the trouble and kill all three of them myself."

Appolion grabbed Ana by the wrist and dragged her out the hole. The rest of the group followed and soon they were all gathered in the cold, wet, alley. Appolion could hear the demons

from the inside bar joining in the fray, adding to justice angel's manpower. Even with his mother's guards, they were vastly outnumbered. He could join his energy with Rachael's and Cam's and blow the whole building up, but there were some innocents inside. Plus it just didn't sit right with him to destroy other angels. Even if they were coming after him. God, it sucked to have a conscious.

"We need to split up," Michael said. "It wouldn't do any good to have all of the Order captured. As it is, they already have Bear."

Cam shook his head. "I'm not leaving Ana. I promised Bear I would keep her safe."

Michael gave him an annoyed look. "Just once I would love it if you would say, *Okay Michael, I'll do whatever you ask and without any smartass remarks, too. You are my Chief after all and I did take a vow to obey you.* Damn it, Cam, think. You and Appolion together would make too tempting of a target."

Appolion agreed, "He's right, buddy. We need to stay apart for now. We better get moving, too, they're almost here."

Astaroth pulled out a small sword. "Go, we will try to hold them back for as long as we can."

Appolion swallowed hard against the sudden flood of emotions that went through him. Their mother was sacrificing herself for them. There was

no way they would be able to get away if they stayed and she had to know it. He wondered how he should show his gratitude. Would a simple, *Thank you Ma*, suffice or is this where a hug came in? He looked over at Abdiel and Rachael for an answer and saw from their faces they struggled with the same inner dilemma. Finally it was Ana who saved them all, she went over and embraced Astaroth.

"Thank you," Ana whispered. The dim lights, shone on her hair that was every shade of blonde. She had it pulled back in a bun, but it was still beautiful. "I will never forget this."

Appolion followed his mate's lead and hugged his mother. He buried his face in the top of her head and was briefly brought back to a time so long ago when he had actually taken comfort in her arms. That was before everything had gone to hell, literally. Since he couldn't seem to find the right words, he said none.

Once he had pulled away, Abdiel moved forward and embraced Astaroth. He gave her a quick kiss on the cheek before he went back to Gabi's side. Rachael hesitated for a few moments then she, too, went to her mother. Astaroth held her the tightest.

"I am so sorry I did not protect the Rachael better. That is Mommy's biggest heartbreak. Once Mommy realized the truth, she tried to destroy the

Douma and the Forcas herself, but Eurynome stopped me.”

Rachael started to cry. “Come with us, Mama, I can protect you.”

“Mommy has no place in the Rachael’s future.” She turned to Michael. “Guard her well, Chief of archangels.”

Michael nodded formally to the female demon. “I will, Astaroth, I vow it to you.”

Rachael went to his side and the Chief took her hand. Appolion was surprised at the intimate way Michael gazed at their sister. He looked over at Abdiel and saw he was stunned, too. The only one that did not seem shocked was Cam.

Not wanting to contemplate the subject anymore, Appolion took Ana’s hand and started to run. Abdiel and Gabi ran in another direction, while Rachael and Michael took another. Poor Cam had Mangus as his escape buddy.

They ran for several blocks before Ana pulled to a stop. “Where exactly are we running to?” she asked breathlessly.

He opened his mouth to answer, then closed it because he didn’t know where in the hell they were going. “I dunno,” he finally said. He spotted a motorcycle parked nearby and pointed at it. “There, at least we won’t have to run on foot anymore.”

Ana gaped at him, her light blue eyes wide

with shock. "That would be stealing."

"It would be just borrowing," he argued before giving her a devilish grin. "Besides, I'm an outlaw, remember?"

"Fine." She crossed her arms. "Are you planning on hotwiring it?"

"I'll do better than that." He mounted the bike and started it simply by touching it. He cocked his hand at her and she rolled her eyes before climbing on behind him.

"Gotta love having those mad Destroyer skills around," she muttered in his ear.

He would have laughed at her comment, but he felt a strong demon presence building up. Ana's arms tightened around him indicating she felt it, too. Several Hounds from Hell came out of the shadows and surrounded them.

Before they had turned demon, Hounds from Hell used to be shifter angels. Those were angels who could take the form of animals. Now they were trapped forever in their new twisted animal form, unable to shift back. The Hounds were furless, covered only in a black leathery skin. Huge ears, which were overly long and pointed, lay flat against their enlarged skulls. They walked on all fours, like a dog, however they had cloven feet that made loud clapping noises as they approached. Their bright red eyes glowed as they pulled back their mouths in a snarl, revealing

yellow fangs.

Could it frigging get any worse? Hounds from Hell were some of the most vicious demons out there. He couldn't even shield themselves from them either. These demons had a heightened sense of smell and would still be able to detect them.

He gunned the bike and tore the hell out of there, the Hounds hot on their heels. Ana shot one of them in the flank with her Glock, causing it to flip end over end as it howled in pain. Her bullets were infused with holy water and they could do a lot of damage to the beasts. There were so many demons, however, he knew shooting them would only slow them down some.

The Hounds were as fast as the bike. One of them came up and started to snarl and claw at his leg. He shot off an energy bolt and the demon incinerated. As soon as it was gone, another one lopped up to take its place.

He quickly veered the bike off to the left onto a side street, hoping the Hounds would overrun the turn and have to backtrack, buying them some time. The Hounds switched direction just as quick, unfortunately, and stayed right on them. He couldn't help but smile when he heard Ana let out a curse word that would have made Cam blush.

One of the Hounds leaped over the bike and stood in the middle of the road, blocking the way. Appolion blasted it away with an energy ball just

as they were about to hit it. He was so distracted he totally missed the one that dove from the side. It caught Ana and brought her down with it. Appolion lost control of the bike and skidded across the pavement before he finally came to a stop. He shot to his feet, guns in both hands, trying hard to ignore the burning pain which ran up the entire length of his body. He shot the Hound that stood over Ana. It snarled at him before it ran off to lick its wounds.

The entire time he ran to her, he chanted silently to himself, *Please, be okay. I can't live without you. Please.* She was completely still, not moving a muscle. As he got closer, he could see the blood seeping from her wounds and his breath hitched in the back of his throat. Dear God, not his Ana. He finally got to her and gathered her slender body into his arms. He was relieved when she let out a little moan. He held her tight, breathed in her scent of strawberries and champagne, and treasured her warmth, even as the Hounds approached them and started to snap their teeth.

The Hounds surrounded them, but made no move to attack. Appolion raised his hand to blast a couple of them and only a weak fizzler came out. Son of a bitch, what a time for his powers to crap out. He didn't know if it was because he was hurt or if he had overextended them earlier. Frankly he

didn't care why. He was just pissed they had let him down when he had needed them the most.

A couple of the Hounds parted and let a demon pass through. Appolion let out a half hysterical laugh when he saw it was his father. Perfect, just fucking perfect.

"It's time to come home, Appolion," his father's voice was calm and, for once, there wasn't hatred on his face.

Appolion just shook his head and held Ana tighter. He buried his face deep in her hair, maybe if he wished hard enough, Eurynome would just disappear and leave them alone. He felt his father's hand touch his head and he shuddered in revulsion. As Eurynome ran his fingers through his hair, Appolion was brought back to a time in his childhood when such a touch meant much worse and dirty things were about to happen. He was grateful Ana was unconscious so that she did not have to witness his utter humiliation.

"Why can't you just leave me alone?" he whispered. "Haven't you already done enough to me?"

His father pulled his hair so Appolion was forced to look at him. "You are all I have left Appolion. Now that Douma and Forcas are destroyed, you are the only one who can help me regain my glory."

"You're out of your mind if you think I'm going



to help you do anything.”

Eurynome looked down at Ana, his eyes glimmered. “You know what happens to helpless females down in Hell. Or did you forget about the female archangel you tried to help so long ago?”

Appolion closed his eyes so his father wouldn't see the guilt stamped in them. Of course he remembered the female archangel. He'd been young, about Bear's age, and he had been foolish. The instant he'd seen the beautiful blonde angel in chains, he had fallen in love.

He watched her for days, secretly peeking into her cell before he tried talking to her. She never responded, but she did seem to be a good listener. Soon, he was going to her cell every day and pouring his heart out. He told her things he never dared tell anybody else, his fears, shame and hopes.

Finally, he got the courage up to try and save her, deciding he was going to escape and take her with him. He stole the keys and opened her cell door, but she refused to budge. She just cowered in the corner, her spirit too broken by the repeated rapes and torture to move.

Eurynome found them and decided to teach Appolion a lesson by forcing his son to watch while they had slowly destroyed the female archangel. Bit by bloody bit. Her screams tore through Hell for hours.

Appolion swallowed hard. "No, I haven't forgotten."

His father stroked his hair again. "It doesn't have to be that way again, son. Just think of the power you and I could have. The two Destroyers together, uniting our gifts. We could rule both Heaven and Hell."

"Gee thanks, Dad, but I'm not interested."

Eurynome raised his hand to strike him, but stopped when Jehel flashed in with several of his justice angels. Appolion couldn't help but wonder what they had that he didn't because he still was unable to flash himself. The angels all had guns out and they were pointed at the demons.

"Thank you for your help, Eurynome," Jehel said. "We will take the prisoners now."

His father snarled at the justice leader. "We had a deal, angel. I get my son back and you get the Empath King."

"Change of plans, demon. I'll be taking the Destroyer into my custody, too. Don't worry, I will see he is properly disposed of. The council will send him and his allies to the Lake of Fire."

Somehow Appolion didn't think the Lake of Fire was the name of some fancy vacation spot. He wasn't so sure going back to Hell looked like a bad idea anymore. It didn't look like he had much say in the matter though.

Eurynome took one look at the number of

justice angels and the guns they held, then backed off. He spun around and walked away, without a word, the Hounds at his heels.

Once the demons left, Appolion wasn't surprised to feel the cold barrel of a gun pressed to the back of his head. He clutched Ana to his chest and kept his eyes down. He looked at the leader's boots and saw blood spattered there. *Bear's blood*. Appolion glared up at him. "How could you hurt Bear? It's us you're after, not him."

Jehel gave him a cruel smile. "Wrong, I want all the Lehor brothers to be in chains. They have been a thorn in my side for far too long."

The justice angels moved to take him in custody, but as soon as they got near Ana, Appolion let out a low growl. They all jumped back before they recovered enough to pull out their swords and prepare to attack. Jehel held up a hand to stop them.

Jehel nodded his head toward Ana. "If you keep fighting us, Destroyer, she will continue to suffer and bleed out and we don't want that, do we? Let us take you both into custody and I will make sure she gets the best healers."

Appolion hung his head, he had no choice but to do as Jehel wanted and they both knew it. He gave Ana one last hug and kissed her cheek tenderly before he stood up and held out his hands. The justice angels moved swiftly and put

an angel harness on him. When they added a set of gold chains, Appolion gave a questioning look at Jehel.

“A gift from my demon friends,” Jehel supplied. “If you try to use any of your powers these chains will rebound them back on you ten times over. They also make it impossible for you to contact anyone with your mind. You’re totally helpless now, Destroyer.”

To prove his point, Jehel came up and spat in Appolion’s face. Appolion just shrugged it off. It wasn’t the first time he had been spit on and it probably wasn’t the last time either.

One of the guards grabbed him by the arm and flashed him from the street. They landed outside a large building. Before Appolion could even look around much, they dragged him inside. It took him several minutes to realize he was in Heaven and in some angel prison.

He had to give the angels credit, the inside of their jail was a whole lot cleaner than the demon prison. It even smelled purdy, too, like lemons. He couldn’t help but wonder how this place could be a real punishment at all. Did they say to their criminals, “As punishment, you must stay in our four star hotel style prison and inhale its fresh citrus scent.” He was led down a long hallway that had numerous doors lining it. They must have decided bars and cells would clash with their

décor.

"What have you done with Ana?" he asked the guard.

"She's been taken to the healing chambers. Our best healers will make sure that she's taken care of," the guard's voice was not unkind.

As they passed a door, Appolion pulled to a stop. He sensed Bear on the other side and the kid was hurting. Appolion started to struggle with the guard as an overwhelming drive to help the empath came over him. It took four guards to pin him to the wall. "Why hasn't anyone healed him?" He gasped as they slammed him onto the ground.

"He's being punished for disobedience. Now calm down or else Jehel will take it out on the little Lehor." The guard actually seemed to be worried about that happening.

That was enough to make Appolion stop fighting. "Could you at least let me in there, just for a few minutes?"

The guard gave him a sad look. "Jehel has forbidden any contact between any of you."

A small male angel stepped away from the wall he had been cowering against. "I'll go check on him for you, Destroyer. I'll try to make him as comfortable as possible."

The guard gave a slight shake of his head. "I don't know if that would be such a good idea, Dina. If your father found out, he'd be pissed at

both of us.”

“So, then don’t tell him, Lash.”

After a few moments, Lash reluctantly nodded his head. The small male gave Appolion a timid smile before he ducked into Bear’s room and shut the door behind him. Appolion tried to sneak a look inside, but he was too far away to see anything. Strangely though, his anxiety level had gone down quite a bit once he knew Bear wasn’t going to be alone anymore.

They led Appolion to his own room and attached his chain to the wall. His *jail cell* was the size of a large bedroom and all white and clean looking. But for the chains, he could have almost forgotten he was even in prison.

Before he left, Lash turned and said in a low voice, “I talked to the justice angels that attacked the neutral bar. Your mother managed to get away, she still lives.”

Appolion nodded his thanks as relief washed over him. Even before he had learned the truth about Astaroth, he had never wanted to see her hurt. His door was slammed shut and he was alone. *Welcome to Heaven, there big guy.*

\* \* \* \*

“It’s still not working, I can’t reach either one of them,” Cam announced as he opened his eyes and

tried hard to hide the shame of his failure.

The Lehor brothers all let out a collective "Fuck!" Which shocked the hell out of Cam, his angel brothers had never shared his affliction of *Potty Mouth* before now. The worry about Ana and Bear was getting to all of them. They had all met up at a secret safe house Michael had set up in order to re-group. When Ana and Appolion hadn't shown up, Cam had tried to mentally contact both of them with no luck. With Ana and Bear there was only a blank space and with Appolion he had ran up against a mental brick wall.

Nathaniel grabbed him roughly by the arm. "That's not good enough, Cam. You try again. Aren't you supposed to be some powerful super angel?"

Cam nodded and obeyed his brother because he lived to please Nathaniel. He pushed himself harder than he ever had before. Even though he could feel his body grow weaker and weaker by the second and every cell in his brain screamed out in pain, he still tried.

Whenever he came out of his trance for a breath Nathaniel would bark, "Try again."

So he kept trying. He could feel blood start to trickle out of his nose, but he still did not dare stop. He knew he was finally getting close. Yes, he could hear Ana. She was off in the distance, her

voice weak, but she was there. Just as quickly her mental connection was viciously snatched away only to be replaced by a horrible evil presence.

Cam's body arched as a whole new set of pain rushed through it. Crap, he hadn't felt agony like this since he had been in Hell. Some demonic force had a hold of his mind and it refused to let go. Cam could dimly hear himself yell in demon talk as he begged with it to release him. Several strong hands slammed him on the ground, then held him in place. He heard Ramiel's voice in his ear, trying to bring him back, but the pain continued. He opened his mouth and let out a scream.

\* \* \* \*

Michael flashed into the room and saw Cam convulsing on the floor. He was surrounded by his brothers who were at a complete loss as what to do. Michael pushed his way through them and knelt beside his nephew. Cam's eyes were opened, but they were glazed over and fixed to the left. His skin was clammy and ashen gray. Michael wiped away the blood that was tricked from his nose and pushed back his sweat soaked blond hair. Cam didn't even notice, he just continued to mutter in demon talk in a fast frenzied pace.

"What is he saying?" Ramiel asked. He looked close to tears.



Michael hesitated then supplied, "He's saying, *Let me go, please. I will bow down to you if only you let me go.*"

Nathaniel let out a disgusted sound. "You mean to tell us he's making deals with demons now?"

Michael turned on him. "You wouldn't understand. You've never felt real pain like he is suffering through now. Do you have any idea what happens to one's mind when they are isolated and tortured like Cam was? You wouldn't have survived a day in Hell, yet Cam managed to come back to after a month. So don't you dare act so high and mighty, Nathaniel. You would be begging, too."

Michael wanted to take those words back as soon as he said them. The last thing Nathaniel needed was to be reminded of how bad things were for captives in Hell. His mate was there and that was probably all he thought about. But then that didn't excuse the way he treated Cam.

Michael took a deep breath and said, "He's just a kid, he never asked for any of this."

"None of us did." Nathaniel's eyes were emotionless ice chips.

"Damn it, he needs your support, not your disdain."

"He should have thought of that before he

pulled all the crap he has these past few years.”

Nathaniel gave Cam’s semiconscious body one last disgusted look before he walked out of the room. Michael only spared him the briefest of glances before returning his focus back to Cam. There would be plenty of time to kick Nathaniel’s ass later. He placed his hands on his nephew’s temples and slowly Cam’s mutters ceased. Michael sighed with relief when Cam’s eyelids fluttered before closing as the demon released its hold on his mind.

Michael glared at the remaining brothers. “If any one of you ever pulls a stunt like this again you will have me to answer to.” He waited for all of them to guiltily nod their heads before he continued, “Now help me get him into bed.”

\* \* \* \*

Cam woke to the taste of blood in his mouth. Someone had their wrist pressed to his lips and he was feeding off them. He tried to force himself away, but his weak body was starving for the ancient powerful blood. He drank in the precious fluid in long slow drags, feeling it seep into every cell of his starved body. He knew it was Michael’s blood because fragments of Michael’s thoughts started to quick fire through his brain.

Michael was worried about him, because he

had pushed it too far and left himself open for the demon. He felt the anger Michael felt at Nathaniel, because it was Nathaniel who had bullied Cam into it in the first place. Finally, he felt the love Michael had for him, how he thought of Cam as his son and how it devastated him to see him in pain.

"You can stop worrying, I'm okay," Cam said softly as he pushed Michael's wrist away and sat up.

"No, you're not," Michael argued. "You just had your brain scrambled."

"It's not the first time that I've been mind fucked." He stood up gingerly and was pleased to see he wasn't having too many after effects. Must be because Michael's blood was so strong. "We don't have any time to spare. We need to get Bear, Ana and Appolion back. Hell, I'll even spring Tiffany."

"We need a battle plan, Cam. We can't go in there half cocked."

Cam hated to admit it, but his uncle was right. He nodded before he sat back down on the bed and crossed his arms. "Okay then, let's start planning."

## Chapter Three

This had to be someone's sick ideal of a joke. Ana looked down at the dress she wore for the tenth time, just to make sure that her eyes were not playing tricks on her. Nope, what she saw was what she got. She was dressed up like some angel whore. The outfit looked like it had come straight out of Nix's closet. It was white and had less fabric than a pair of underwear.

She walked across the healing chamber and tried opening the door. Of course, locked. She gave it an aggravated kick and let out a yelp of pain since all she had on were a pair of opened toed high-heeled sandals. She hobbled away as she pulled up the impossibly low top of her white dress. She rolled her eyes when it just popped back down, showing way too much boobage for her liking.

She closed her eyes and tried to reach Appolion, only to run into some kind of barrier that she could not get around no matter how hard

she tried. She nibbled on her bottom lip as she told herself not to worry. But she still found her mind twisting around as it brought up various scenarios. Had the demons captured him? What if he were laying somewhere hurt with no one to help him? Or had the justice angels gotten him?

Unable to stand the uncertainty any longer she went and pounded on the door with her fists. "You have no right to hold me here. I demand a full trial in front of the council. Let me out of here you rank bastards."

The door suddenly swung open so fast it made her stumble backward. She landed in an untidy heap and tilted her head up to see who it was. Jehel stood over her, a bemused smile curving his thin lips. His long light blond hair was pulled back in a ponytail and his colorless eyes were even more cruel than usual. Ana's heart started to pound in her chest when she saw something else in his eyes, lust.

"You Lehors just don't know when to shut up," he said. "Maybe it is time I taught you a lesson in how a female ought to behave."

Ana scrambled to her feet and walked backward, desperate to avoid him and his hungry gaze. He followed, matched her step for step until her back was up against the wall. Once he had her trapped, he let his eyes slowly look her up and down, taking his time in doing so that there was

no way she could miss it. He planted his hands on either side of her head and leaned in to smell her hair.

She started to tremble from head to foot and she hated herself for showing the bastard any sign of weakness. He stroked her throat with the back of one hand and she swallowed back a sob and some bile. His breath was hot and wet on her ear and every time it brushed against her, it felt like a vile intrusion. He smelled of cloves and mint, and she knew that she would never be able to be around those scents ever again because they would always remind her of him and of this time.

She pushed at his chest with her hands. "Stop this right now," her voice came out in a choked sob, even though she tried to make it sound steely and cool. "I'm marked, I already have a mate. It's forbidden for you to touch me."

He grabbed one of her hands with his and she was shocked by how strong he was. He curled a lip and snarled at her, "Just because you've been screwing the Destroyer doesn't mean that I can't have a taste of the Lehor slut. I've waited for this for years, but you were always so frigid and such a cold bitch."

She decided to use sarcasm to bring him down a couple of notches. "This is a new low, even for you, Jehel. Dressing me up like a Bond girl, coming in and trying to have your way with me,

why you're fulfilling every bad B-movie stereotype out there. Give me a freaking break, jackass."

He just pressed his body in tighter to hers. She tried vainly to pull back when she felt his erection push against her hip. He was not ashamed of his aroused state, quite the contrary, he started to rub it up and down her body.

"You need to think about your future, Ana," he panted. "Your mate is going to be destroyed and then you will be free to choose another. I am the most powerful angel in Heaven, I could give you everything your heart desires. Think of the prestige you could have by being my mate."

She gave him the coldest and haughtiest look she could manage. "Do you honestly think that you could even begin to measure up to Appolion? You're not even half the male he is."

He growled at her and pulled her by the back of the hair so hard she saw stars. With a harsh tug, he forced her head up and slammed his lips into hers. She tasted blood in her mouth as his brutal assault caused her teeth to cut her lips. When he forced his slimy tongue into her mouth, she gagged in revulsion. Jehel started to squeeze one of her breasts, all the while still rubbing his groin against her, like a dog riding someone's leg. He dug his fingers even harder into her breast and she gasped as pain shot through her. He used that

opportunity to push his tongue even further down her throat.

"I have always loved you, Lehor," he sighed against her mouth. "Why did you have to choose Reese over me?"

Ana's body jerked at the mention of her parents' names. This jackass actually fantasized she was her mother. She forced herself to go limp in his arms and acted like she enjoyed his assault. Once she sensed his guard was down, she brought the point of her high-heeled shoe down hard on his toe. She followed up by driving the heel of her palm into his throat. He choked and staggered away.

She ran toward the door, only to find he locked it behind him when he came in. She started to pound on it and screamed for help. He came up and grabbed her and threw her on the bed, the slit of her dress ripped all the way up her thigh. She bounced right back to her feet and he backhanded her.

She fell into a vanity table, her head cracked against the corner and pain shot through her temples. Terrified of what would come next, she looked up in the mirror. A whimper escaped her lips as she saw him approach again, his hand fumbling with the opening of his pants. She focused her attention back on the mirror and concentrated, channeled all of her mental energy



at it. She had been able to shatter a mirror once before, maybe she could do it again. To her relief it worked, the mirror cracked then splintered into a million pieces.

Ana grabbed one of the largest shards and clutched it tight. It cut deeply into her hand, but she pushed away the pain. Spinning around, she slashed out with it, opening up the entire side of Jehel's face. He howled in pain and called out for his justice guards.

They instantly came in to the room and pulled back. As they took in her torn dress and bloodied face, Ana saw doubt on their face for the first time. Jehel took a cloth out of his pocket and held it to his cut face.

"Take the whore to her rogue angel," he said snidely. "She can now suffer the same fate as him."

\* \* \* \*

Appolion stared down at the gold floor and shook his head. Only in Heaven would you find cells with gold floors. Hell, the toilet that was in the corner was even gold. He plopped down at the bed and tried hard not to be impressed at its softness. Because after all even a gilded prison was just that, a prison.

Well he had finally come home to Heaven after

all. He realized that he was humming *Knocking on Heaven's Door* and stopped himself. He pulled impatiently at the chain that connected his wrist to the wall. The only thing he succeeded with that move was to irritate the chaffing on his wrist even more. Jehel had been right, those damn things did rebound his power. Just to be pissy he had tried as soon as they locked him up. His back still hurt from when he had slammed onto the floor in convulsions.

The door of his cell opened and Ana was pushed in. His relief at seeing her was short lived. Her lips were cut and bleeding, a bruise was starting to appear on her cheek and her clothing was torn. As soon as she spotted him, she ran over and threw herself into his arms. He held her so tight he must have hurt her, but she didn't complain.

She cried, "I was so worried about you. I thought those Hounds had gotten you."

He smoothed down her mused hair. "I'm okay, babe. What happened to you, and why are you dressed like Nix?"

"Jhel tried to make me..." she stopped and buried her face into his chest.

He put his hand under her chin and tenderly tilted her head up so he could look into her beautiful, clear, blue eyes. "Did he force himself on you?" he fought hard to keep the anger out of

his voice, lest she think it was directed at her.

When she shook her head, he let out a pent up breath.

"I fought him," she said with a devilish grin. "Ramiel and Cam are always making me keep up on my hand-to-hand battle skills and it paid off."

"I should have been there to protect you." He gently touched her bruised face. "I'm hurt myself, so I can't even heal you."

"Just kiss me, Appolion. I feel so dirty and unclean and only you can make that go away."

He lightly feathered his lips across hers, being as tender as he could so he would not hurt her any more. Next he moved to her bruised cheek, letting his tongue slip out so it could both caress and taste the satiny smoothness. The swell of her breasts were showing because her dress was cut so low and he could see the vivid marks that Jehel's fingers had left behind. Appolion wanted to roar with anger, but he held it in because she had seen enough violence today. Instead, he lowered his head and started to run soft kisses along them. She thrust her hands in his hair and arched her body into him.

"Make love to me," she moaned.

He cast a nervous look at the door. "What is it with you and public places, kitten?"

She gave him a wicked, seductive smile. "After so many years of being the good girl, it's a turn on

to be bad.”

He shifted them around so that his body shielded hers from the door, just in case somebody decided to look in. The movement was awkward because of the chains, but he was determined so he managed. He instantly returned his attention to her breasts. He nipped and sucked at her nipples, through the fabric of her dress. She buried her hands in his hair and swayed against him. He cupped her softly rounded backside and brought her even closer to him.

It was her, not him, that finally pulled the top down so that her beautiful full breasts were open to him. He latched onto one of her nipples, alternating bites with gentle swirls of his tongue. All the while, he used his hand to tease the other one. Her fast pants told him just how much she liked it, that and the gentle tugs she was giving his hair as she urged him on.

She moaned in protest when he moved his mouth away and started to nuzzle her neck. He reached under her dress and caressed her over her silky panties. Perfect, she was already hot and ready for him. He slipped his hand under the panties and thrust a finger inside her. She let out a little whimper as she rocked against his hand, her body spasmed around him as he moved his finger slowly in and out.

He continued making love to her this way for

several minutes before he withdrew his hand. He brought his wet fingers to his mouth and licked them, his gaze never left hers. She licked her own lips as her eyes darkened even more with desire.

"I love the way you taste," he confessed.

"Please, Appolion, I need you," she begged. Her mouth was slightly open and her cheeks were flush with passion.

"You need me to do what?"

"I need you inside me now," even as she spoke, she stared to claw at the fly of his bloodied jeans.

"What do you need inside you?" he persisted. His breath hitched when she finally managed to open his pants and reached inside.

"This, I need this inside me." She wrapped her hand around him and gently squeezed. He threw back his head with a hiss and briefly lost his footing.

She let out a throaty giggle. "Looks like I'm the one in control now."

Deciding that it would be rude to argue, he braced his hands on the wall for support and let her play with him. Her small hands and slender fingers were a gift from God. They brought sensations from him that he had never thought possible. Just as he was about ready to come, he pulled her hand away.

"Now," he ordered in a gruff voice. She nodded, quickly shimmed out of her panties and

kicked them aside. When she went to unlace her shoes, he shook his head. "Leave them on."

He picked her up by the waist, grabbed her legs and wrapped them around his waist. He braced her against the wall and plunged into her hot velvet heat. He drove in as far and hard as he could, wanting to consume every inch of her. She whimpered out his name and he thrust into her a second time, making her call out his name again, this time in a loud scream. He barely felt her high heels digging into his back and realized she was holding back, for fear of hurting him. But that was what he wanted, twisted little puppy that he was. "Squeeze me harder with your legs," he ordered between thrusts.

"I shouldn't, you're injured," she moaned.

"Tighter, please hold me tighter."

She did and the heels dug deep into his back. He closed his eyes and savored the erotic feeling of pain mixed with pleasure. Maybe he was a sick bastard because this was some of the best sex he ever had. Then again, maybe it was just any sex with Ana was some of the best sex. He highly suspected it was the later.

He felt her tighten up around him as she came and that pushed him over the edge. He bit back a cry and buried his face in her neck as his body released into hers. When they had finally caught their breaths, he slowly lowered her to the ground.

"I'm going to miss you," he whispered.

She cupped his face with both of her hands and looked at him with a tender smile. "You are not going anywhere. My brothers, Abdiel and Rachael will find a way to free us."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because I know them. They won't let us down."

Appolion held her close and allowed himself to hope.

\* \* \* \*

Cam flashed to the hallway right outside of the council chambers. Raphael, the leader of the healers, and Michael were already there. Despite the seriousness of the situation, they looked calm and collected. If someone were to glance at them, they would have thought there was nothing amiss. Which couldn't be further from the truth. All three of them were armed, not only with their swords, but a whole armories worth of weapons.

"Well?" Cam asked them.

Michael nodded to the door. "They've already started the proceedings in Appolion's trial."

Cam put a hand to his chest. "They didn't invite me? I'm so hurt. Wait, I know, my invitation must have gotten lost in the mail."

"Don't feel so bad," Michael quipped as he

grinned at his nephew's joke. "They didn't even invite Appolion and it's his trial."

Cam caught Raphael snide smile out of the corner of his eye so he snapped, "What?"

Raphael chuckled. "I heard you made your great escape with some demon. Do you have a new roommate?"

"Sure, Magus is Janet and I'm Jack. Don't get jealous though because you can be Chrissy. You would look fan-fucking-tabulous in a pair of blond pigtails."

Raphael almost seemed amused. "So what female was in your room last night? I heard voices, amongst other things."

Cam shot a worried look over at Michael before he mumbled, "Nix."

Raphael's jaw dropped. "Nix? As in oracle Nix?"

Michael gave one of his annoyed glares. "I told you not to call her, Cam."

"I didn't honest," Cam protested, irritated with himself that he still had the driving need to please Michael. "She just showed up in my room, and well I just couldn't resist."

"You should have tried harder," Michael barked. "What were you thinking?"

The words slipped out before he could stop them, "Just maybe I am sick of having to wash the demon whore stench off of me." He quickly



looked down at his feet because he didn't want to see the looks on their face. Pity, disgust or hate, whatever they might be, he just couldn't stand to see it from them. Especially Michael.

Raphael said, "You and Nix, doing the nasty. Now that is fan-fucking-tabulous."

They all laughed at Raphael's rare show of humor, the tension immediately broken.

"Do you want me to try to contact Ana again before we go in?" Cam asked.

"Sure, just be careful," Michael responded.

Cam closed his eyes and sought out his sister. This time he was finally able to contact her right away. They conversed for several minutes and what he found out had him in frenzy. He opened his eyes and let out a demon snarl.

"Ana is with Appolion. They're both fine for now." He pointed a shaking finger at the door. "When we get in there, Jehel is mine."

The others took one look at his face and didn't argue.

## Chapter Four

**R**amiel was worried. But that wasn't new. It seemed like he was consistently worried about one thing or another lately. He worried whenever he saw Cam getting sick and out of control. He worried when Bear's voice started to pop into his head as the kid's skills started to develop. He worried about the way Nathaniel had started to pull away from all of them, and the looks of hatred that he shot Cam when he thought nobody was looking. Right now he was worried like crazy about Ana.

He still could not believe it was Ana who had got them all in this mess. She was always the straight and narrow one of the family. She never so much as ripped a tag off a mattress before and now she was running off with the first hot male that she set her eyes on.

This had all started when that Appolion had come into their lives. Man, Ramiel loved Abdiel and Rachael, but their brother was a different

story. To make matters worse, Cam and Bear liked the damned Destroyer, too. He wasn't too shocked about Cam, his brother didn't exactly have the best taste in friends. It was Bear that was the real kicker. He didn't just like Appolion, he idolized the male. You would have thought that Appolion had invented sliced bread.

There was something that both Cam and Bear weren't telling him about the whole Ana and Appolion thing. He jerked to attention as a disturbing thought occurred to him, the dagger he was sharpening cut his thumb. Surely they would have let him know if that bastard had marked her. He put his thumb to his mouth and sucked away the blood as he darted a sidelong glance at Derel, just daring him to ask if he needed healed. Derel was smart and ignored him.

Ramiel shook his head and he even let out a weak chuckle. He was an idiot for even thinking such thoughts about their sister. No way that *their* Ana would ever do anything like that. Right? He was interrupted from his unpleasant thoughts when his other brothers came into the room.

"We're ready," Mael said. Mael was the only brother that wore his hair below collar length. Today his long blond hair was tied back with a leather tie. Mael had the dubious honor of being considered the meanest of the brothers. His expression matched his reputation as he tucked

several small daggers into various hiding places in his clothes.

“Good,” Ramiel grunted before he addressed the Lehor twins. “Did you guys get a hold of the other teams?”

Both Case and Joe gave identical nods, their long bangs flopping into their eyes. For once they didn’t chatter away at million miles a minute and finish each other’s sentences. Their usual dancing blue eyes were dulled over with anger and they looked almost as mean as Mael.

Nathaniel had followed them into the room. “Where the fuck is Cam?” he snapped out in a real *We are Family* way.

Ramiel braced himself for the coming confrontation. “He’s with Michael and Raphael. They’re pleading Appolion’s case to the council right now.”

Nathaniel curled his lip. “Do they honestly think that’s going to work?”

“No, they’re just trying to fool the justice angels into thinking that we are going to try to free Ana and Bear through diplomatic measures. We just hope that the justice dicks don’t figure out us brothers are going to break them out illegally at the same time.”

Nathaniel gave a disgusted shake of his head. “So while we’re out there risking our necks so we can free our brother and sister, he’s going to be

sitting nice and safe in the council chambers. That is to typical."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Derel asked from the corner of the room.

Derel was the only healer in the family and maybe that's why he was the quietest and most gentle of all of them. Unless you got him pissed off enough to fight, then he could hold his own with any of the brothers. Right now he looked like he was about ready to jump Nathaniel for his snide comments. Ramiel rubbed his aching head, he so did not need this right now.

Derel got to his feet. "Why are you being such a dick to Cam anymore, Nathaniel?"

Ramiel said, "Guys, stop." But, it was too late because it had already hit the fan.

"Why are all of you always so easy on him?" Nathaniel challenged back

Derel ignored his question and went up to Nathaniel until they stood toe-to-toe. "You know what kills me the most about this whole situation? Cam still worships the ground you walk on. He always has, ever since when we were kids and he, Bear and I would go watch you on the practice field. You should have heard him talk about you. To him you were the best big brother ever. You were his hero."

Nathaniel refused to back down. "Things are different now."

"How?"

"That thing he has become is no longer our brother. Jehel is right, he is an abomination."

That remark pissed Ramiel off. Before he could haul off and slug Nathaniel, Derel beat him to it. Nathaniel hit Derel back and soon the two of them went at it full hilt. Ramiel grabbed Derel and pulled him back, while Mael took Nathaniel and slammed him into the wall, hard.

Derel gave Ramiel an anguished look. "He has no idea what they really did to Cam in Hell. When we got him back and I scanned him, it almost destroyed me. They did things to his body that I still see in my nightmares. You want to know what the worst part was? I saw traces of demon healing, too. Those fuckers would heal him just so they could start all over again."

Ramiel patted him on the back. "I know, buddy."

Derel pulled away from him. "No, that's just it, none of you know, except maybe Bear. After all Cam went through we're lucky it didn't drive him insane. I see the way you guys look at him, I don't know why he even bothers with any of us anymore." He went over and picked up his bow. "Look, let's just get going. We're wasting time."

Mael still had Nathaniel pinned up to the wall. He gave him a steely glare and asked, "Are you in or not?"

Nathaniel pushed Mael's hands away. "Of course I'm in. Just for the record though, how are we going to flash out of there once we get Ana and Bear? As soon as there's a breach in the prison, the council is going to blanket Heaven."

Ramiel sighed, "Oh ye of little faith, Michael and I already have that one covered. The Chief has called on all of our supporters. They're going to attack the prison and the council chamber a half hour after we get in."

Nathaniel's eyes got wide and he let out a low whistle. "So this is finally it? We're going to war?"

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Michael pushed open the double doors of the council room and strode in like he owned the place. Cam and Raphael followed, a couple of steps behind. Cam couldn't help but feel proud that Michael was his uncle. He was in there to kick ass and take names and all for Ana, Appolion and Bear.

Jehel was in the middle of a speech, but as soon as he spotted them he stopped dead. His face hardened with anger. "You dare to enter the council chambers armed?" he boomed.

Michael gave a casual shrug. "We would have dressed up for the occasion, but we were in a hurry. We'd already missed so much of the

meeting. Odd thing, someone completely forgot to tell us about it."

"That is because the council is severing all ties with you and your angel warriors. We can no longer tolerate the unlawful actions that you have displayed lately."

Cam slumped down into a nearby chair, he pulled out a throwing star and started to idly toy with it. "Well that just sucks. I always stopped by Starbucks on my way to the meetings and I was only one punch away from getting a free granda mocha." Cam smirked to himself when the vein on Jehel's temple started to throb. Raphael and Michael pulled up chairs and sat down, too. Cam shrugged his shoulders and said, "Too bad for you morons, looks like we're not going anywhere."

Jehel ground his teeth so hard together Cam could hear it all the way across the room. "You would be wise to mind your mouth," the justice leader spat. "That was a lesson your little brother learned the hard way."

Cam caught Michael's concerned look out of the corner of his eye, but the Chief didn't have to worry. Cam kept his cool and didn't allow himself to lose control of his temper. There was too much riding on this.

Although he couldn't resist asking, "How about Ana? Did you smack her around because she talked too much? Or was there another reason?"



How's your face by the way?" Cam used a finger and traced a line on his own cheek where Ana had cut Jehel.

Michael shifted forward in his seat. "If you want us to leave, then we will. Just release the prisoners into my care and you'll never have to see any of us again."

Jehel looked at Michael like he was something vile he had stepped on. "I'm so sorry, Michael," he said in clipped tones. "That is not an option. The council has already found all of them guilty. They are scheduled to be executed by being thrown into the Lake of Fire tomorrow. There will be no appeals."

Cam kept his attention focused on the throwing star so he wouldn't attack the bastard right then and there. A justice angel ran into the room and whispered something in Jehel's ear. He turned and looked at the three angel warrior leaders and pounded his fist on the desk.

When he spoke, his voice was cold and hard, "I have just been informed the Lehor brothers have were spotted making their way to the prison." He motioned to a group of justice angels. "Take these three into custody. They are guilty of aiding in an attempted prison escape."

Cam, Raphael and Michael jumped to their feet and pulled out their swords. They stood back to back and formed a tight circle as they prepared

themselves for the attack. Cam cringed when he realized they were outnumbered at least twenty to one.

"You really don't want to do this," Michael shouted to Jehel. "I have several of my angel warriors outside that door. They're on their way in right now."

The entire room turned to look at the double doors expectantly. Only, nobody crashed through like they were supposed to. The silence was deafening as everyone waited, and waited, for nothing. Oops, it appeared that the Calvary was a bit late.

Cam let out an aggravated breath. "Didn't anybody think to synchronize their watches before the battle, or am I the only one that watches action movies?"

"Cam," Michael said out of the side of his mouth. "I need you to stall for time until help gets here."

Cam gave his uncle a wicked smile and raised his hand. "Gladly."

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"Shit, we've been spotted," Ramiel growled. Since the prison had a permanent anti-flashing blanket on it for obvious reasons, the brothers had to flash out in the open street. Not exactly a great option

for them, but it couldn't be avoided.

"By the justice angels?" Derel asked.

"No, those assholes spotted us about a minute ago. I'm talking about them." He pointed a finger at three female angel warriors.

"Damn, that's the Tiffany crew. What the hell are they doing here?"

Ramiel groaned when the dark-haired female crossed her arms and said, "We're coming with you."

Ramiel did not know what annoyed him more, that these little fluffs thought that they were going to tag along or that he knew all of their names. He was going to kill Bear for dragging this bunch into the family fold. Of course, they had to get his sorry little ass back first.

"Look, Heather," he said evenly. "We don't need your help yet. Stay back and attack with the second wave."

"No way." Jules joined the argument. She put on hand on her hip and cocked it to the side. "Bear and Tiffany are our friends and we're going to help them."

Ramiel was shocked when Derel said softly behind him, "Let them come."

He turned just to make sure Derel wasn't kidding. Unfortunately he was dead serious. "You can't be for real Derel."

Derel nodded. "They were the ones who helped

Bear at the club, remember? As far as I'm concerned, they've proven themselves."

Heather tilted her head to the side. "That was sweet, thank you, Derel."

Ramiel thought he was going to go all empath and puke on the spot when Derel gave a flirtatious grin and Heather almost fainted at his feet. Instead he ran a frustrated hand through his hair and let out a slow breath. Damn it, why couldn't he of come from a normal family? "Fine, they can come," he finally said.

Megan jumped up and clapped her hands. "Cool-ie-o because we've already got a prisoner for you."

Ramiel almost swallowed his tongue when she reached into a doorway and dragged out a small male angel. He was tied up and gagged, but there was no mistaking the cold colorless eyes. It was Jehel's only son, Dina.

Ramiel composed himself enough to ask, "You've kidnapped the head of the council's son?"

Megan patted Dina on the cheek roughly. "Kidnapped is such a harsh word. We just borrowed him for a while. Call him our insurance policy."

Dina tried to say something so Ramiel pulled the gag down. As soon as his mouth was free, the words tumbled out, "My father isn't going to care if you have me or not. He hates me. I told you

guys that you didn't have to tie me up. I'm more than willing to help you out."

Heather rolled her eyes. "Why should we believe a word that comes out of your mouth?"

"I'll prove it to you. I know a back way into the prison, I'll show you."

Ramiel was till leery. "How do we know that you are not walking us into a trap?" He made sure to add enough menace to his voice so the small angel knew not to screw with them.

Dina gulped as he eyed the brothers. "You don't, but if you go the other way you'll be caught for sure. They're waiting for you there already."

Ramiel shot a questioning look at Mael who just shrugged and said, "What do we have to lose? If he's lying, we'll just destroy him."

Jules held a dagger close to Dina's jaw. "If he's lying, I'll personally cut out his tongue myself."

Mael flashed Ramiel a wicked grin and quipped, "I think I'm in love."

Ramiel grabbed Dina and shoved him forward. The angel led them through several dark tunnels until they finally reached an old wooden door. Ramiel slowly pushed it open and cautiously stuck his head out. The hallway was clear. Obviously, they had not stationed guards this deep into the prison because they had not expected the angel warriors to get this far. Dumb move for the bad guys, good luck for the good

guys.

Dina jerked his head to the right. "Your little brother is in that one. He's hurt pretty badly."

Mael grabbed the poor hostage by the front of his shirt. "You mean to tell me that no one has called a healer for him? You're just letting him suffer?"

"I tried, I really did. But my father wouldn't allow it. I helped him as much as I could, honest. I just left his side." Panicked, the angel spoke in quick short bursts. "Look in on him yourself. The key to the door is in my pocket."

Ramiel took it and unlocked the door. Bear was lying down on the bed, his face toward the wall. When he finally rolled over, Ramiel let out a slow breath. Those bastards had worked little Bear up good. Both of his eyes were black and swollen shut. His lips were cut and crusted with blood and he held a hand to his right side in a protective gesture.

Bear still managed to smile at him. "What took you guys so long?"

"Oh, I don't know," Ramiel drawled as he helped Bear to his feet. "There was a Red Wings game on and we didn't want to miss the end."

He walked Bear out into the hallway so Derel could help him. As soon as they got there, all three females rushed them at once. Ramiel was pushed away as they started to dote all over Bear.

"Oh, you poor thing."

"Those mean justice angels hurt you so bad."

"Those jerks didn't even wash the blood off of you. That is never going to come out of your shirt."

Ramiel groaned and wondered how it could get worse. It did. Joe and Case had let Uriel and Tiffany out and the small female ran full tilt toward his baby brother.

"Oh, Bear, I've been so worried about you," she screamed before she threw herself at him.

The pair stumbled back several steps until Bear's back slammed into the wall. Since he was so injured it must have hurt like hell, but Bear didn't complain. He was too damn busy playing tonsil hockey with Tiffany. The two of them apparently could give a rat's ass that they had an audience as they got reacquainted. Bear even started to rub her ass. Ramiel cocked his head to the side to get a better look, just because he couldn't believe his eyes. He noticed Case and Joe do the same thing with their own heads.

The Tiffany crew, on the other hand, just happened to think that the couple were as cute as buttons. They "oohed" and "awed" and even got all teary eyed, like they were watching a Hallmark movie. Poor Dina looked like he wished he were anywhere but there.

Ramiel untied the small angel. "You can go

now. Thanks for helping us."

Bear tore his face away from Tiffany. "No, he has to go with us."

Nathaniel cocked a brow. "Why?"

"Because his father treats him like crap. Dina told me all about it when he came to visit me earlier. He's not safe here anymore. Especially if Jehel finds out what he did for us."

Ramiel shook his head. "I'm sorry, buddy, but that is a big negative. We can't be harboring the enemy's son. Michael would have a coronary."

Bear kept on. "He's the only one that even tried to help me."

Ramiel took in Bear's battered body. "How the hell do you figure?"

"He brought me an ice bag and water. It's the best he could do, he's not a healer."

Dina hugged the wall like he was trying to make himself invisible.

Since he looked like he was going to rabbit and Ramiel didn't want him to leave until the matter was resolved, he grabbed the kid to hold him in place. He just made sure it was a gentle gesture this time.

Bear gave Ramiel the puppy dog eyes. "Please, I promise he'll be my responsibility."

Ramiel took one look at Bear's forlorn face and felt himself cave. He always had a soft spot as far as his baby brother was concerned. "Do you



promise to feed and water your Dina every day?"

"And take him for a walk at night?" Mael added.

Nathaniel cracked a smile. "And clean up the carpet if he yaks because of hairballs?"

Bear grinned and nodded his head as he *crossed his heart*. The females all giggled. Dina looked completely at a loss for he no doubt thought he just stepped onto the planet Crazy.

Bear asked him, "You want to come with us?"

"Are you for sure?"

Ramiel sighed, "Yes, we're for sure."

The relief on the angel's face was almost heartbreaking. "Um, yeah. I, mean, thanks I'd really like that." He shuffled his feet awkwardly before he pointed at another door. "Your sister and the Destroyer are in there."

Ramiel frowned. "Why are they locked up in the same room?" Not waiting for the answer to his own question, since he was pretty damn sure what it would be, he snatched the keys and unlocked Ana's door. What he saw almost knocked him flat on his ass.

Ana was snuggled up in Appolion's lap, sound asleep. Her hair was not done up at all, like it normally was, it was loose and tumbled down her back in golden waves. Her lips were swollen and bruised and not from any beating. Appolion's hand rested on her thigh, possessively.

As soon as Ramiel looked close at Ana he knew that the bastard had marked her. "Morning Ana Banna," he shouted, sarcastically.

She woke up and gasped in shock as she jumped to her feet. Appolion got up just as quickly, grabbed her and put her behind him in a protective gesture. Ana peeked over his shoulder and gave a guilty wave to her brothers.

"Hi, boys," she called.

Ramiel gave her an annoyed look. "When were you planning on telling us that you had a mate, Ana?"

Ana's didn't even glance at him, she appeared to be looking for something she had misplaced. "I knew you guys were going to make way too big of a deal of the whole thing. God, Ramiel, don't have a cow."

"Don't have a cow? This is a big deal, Ana. He should have asked our permission before he even laid a hand on you."

Appolion gave him a filthy look. "I did ask permission, jackass. I talked it over with Cam."

Ana continued to look around the room. Appolion held out his closed up fist and pressed something into her hand. Ramiel almost choked when he realized it was her panties. Oh God, he did not even want to think about his sister having sex. Appolion gave him a challenging glare.

"So, are we going to have deal with this here

and now?" he demanded.

Ramiel almost smiled at his cockiness. "You mean to say that you are willing to take on all us, unarmed and with one hand chained to the wall?"

Ana tried to step in between them, but Appolion pulled her back behind him. Ramiel could hear her mutter, "Oh honestly, you both are so stupid."

"Ana stays with me, she's mine," Appolion said. "I don't care if I have to beat all of your asses to prove it."

"I'm not an object," Ana argued. "I'm a living, breathing, female."

He turned and let out a slow exasperated sigh. "Yeah, I know you're breathing because you keep interrupting me with your nagging." He softened the comment by brushing a thumb on her cheek.

Ana made goo-goo eyes at Appolion before she said to Ramiel, "Be nice to him, I love him. Cam and Bear like him."

"Please," Ramiel drawled. "Cam hangs out with demons and Bear could find good in anybody."

A large roar outside the prison interrupted them.

"What the hell is that?" Appolion asked.

"Michael called up all his angel warriors," Ramiel explained. "They're attacking the prison and the council chambers even as we speak."

"Why?"

"To save you guys, why else? Sheesh, you're kind of slow on the uptake, Dickstroyer." He wasn't quite ready to forgive and make friends with his sister's mate yet. He turned to his brothers. "We need to find a way to get Mom and Dad out of the infirmary. We can't leave them behind."

"We can't do that." Bear shocked him when he said, "We're supposed to leave them."

"Who in the hell told you that?"

Bear took a deep breath and glanced nervously at his brothers. "Mom did."

## Chapter Five

Cam tore the hell out of the council chamber and, judging by the shit-eating grin on his face, he was enjoyed it way too much. Michael stood side-by-side with Raphael and fended off anyone who was stupid enough to try attack Cam. For the most part though, the council members were being smart and scattered for cover.

Cam directed a fireball right where Jehel sat. The desk exploded and burst into flames. After the way that Jehel attacked first Bear and then Ana, that move did not surprise Michael in the least. Michael caught a glimpse of movement as Jehel found someplace else to take cover.

Cam reached out and snagged a female with dark red hair and threw her under a table behind him. Her long white gown flared out before it settled back down, the ends pooled onto the gold floor. Her dark green eyes went wide with fear and she tried to wiggle out and get away. Cam stood in front of her so that she, not only could not

leave, but he could protect her from harm. He paused long enough to turn around and growl at her, "Stay put, Amadeaha."

She obeyed, but not before Michael caught a defiant look on her face. Cam gave her a warning glare before he returned his attention to destroying the council's furniture.

She finally yelled at him, "You need to stop this nonsense. Someone is going to get hurt."

"Did you just say *nonsense*?" He shot off a fireball at Jehel's new hiding place, causing the justice leader to scamper for cover again. "You sound like someone's grandma."

"And you're acting like a petulant child," she snapped back.

Even though he stood in the middle of a war, Michael had to smile at her gumption. It wasn't often that somebody could match wits with Cam. He should have known that it would be this female that would do it. It was no big secret that Cam had it bad for this justice angel.

The double doors crashed down and several dozen angel warriors came through, Abdiel in the front. He made a beeline right for Michael as the others fanned out and started to battle the numerous justice archangels who had come to protect the council.

"You're late," Michael growled.

Abdiel flashed him a cocky grin. "Sorry about

that, Chief. There were so many of us we had to flash out in the street and a whole hell of a lot of justice angels were waiting for us. So we had to kick their asses before we could come save yours."

"Where's Rachael?" as soon as he asked the question, Michael winced, realizing he had revealed too much. "I mean, was anyone hurt?"

Abdiel arched a dark brow at him. "So far we are all just peachy." He stopped, cold cocked an attacking justice angel and pointed off to the right. "My baby sister is over there."

It wasn't lost on Michael when Abdiel put a heavy emphasis on the word *baby*. Unfortunately, there was nothing baby about her. She was wearing tight, leather, black pants with a matching cropped shirt. Every time she moved, the top rode up and showed off a bit a creamy flesh. Her long raven locks were in one single braid that went down the center of her back, ending at her slender waist. She had on high-heeled boots and they, in no way, impeded with her ability to fight. She moved with the dexterity and grace of a cat.

"Fuck, Michael, watch out."

Cam slammed his body into Michael's. Michael heard the gunshots a split second before he felt Cam's body jerk into his, once...twice...three times as the bullets hit his nephew. Shit, while he had been salivating over Ray like some green puppy, he let his guard down and Cam had to

jump in and save his hide. Cam's sunglasses fell off and Michael looked deep into his eyes as an enormous wave of guilt rode over him.

Okay, no deal angels were immortal so a few gunshots would only hurt like hell. Cam would be just fine. But Cam started to pant and his eyes rolled back in his head. Michael staggered against his weight as his nephew collapsed in his arms.

Cam whimpered and said, "Something's wrong. I've been shot before and it never hurt this bad."

Michael started to call for a healer, before he could get a word out, Raphael was there, his strong hands helped steady Cam. He quickly scanned Cam as he tried to make some sense of his condition. Raphael's dark green eyes showed he was just as worried as Michael. Abdiel and two other archangels spread out and kept the enemy away from the trio.

"He saw the gun and jumped in front of me. Those bullets were meant for me." Michael realized he was babbling, but he couldn't stop himself.

"They were infused with holy water," Raphael said grimly. "His demon DNA must be reacting to it."

Those words had barely registered in Michael's mind when Cam passed out. The Chief struggled as he tried to keep Cam off the floor. Damn, the



kid was heavy, they would have to cut down his food allowance. Amadeaha darted out from under the table, but instead of running, she went to Cam.

"What's wrong with him?" She started to reach out to him, but stopped and pulled her hand back at the last second.

"He's just weak from using his powers too much," Michael lied smoothly. There was no way that he was about to tell a justice angel that holy water did this. The less the council knew about his nephew's weaknesses the better.

She was smarter than he gave her credit for though. "No, it wasn't until he got shot that he started to act hurt. It's the bullets, isn't it?"

Raphael cut into the conversation. "All that doesn't matter now. We need to get Cam out of here. There is no way we can fight now. Not while dragging his unconscious body around."

"What do you suggest?" Michael asked. "Even if we did get him out of here, the council has probably already blanketed the area so we can't flash out."

Amadeaha nodded. "He's right. It's standard procedure to close everything down as soon as the sanctity of the chambers are compromised. Of course, we never actually had to do it before today." She gave them an annoyed look.

Cam opened his eyes, they were glassy and unfocused. He let out a little giggle. "My brain

feels tingly.”

Michael let out a relieved breath. “Good, you’re awake.”

Cam gave him a goofy smile. “Of course I am. All this yelling woke me up.” He pushed away from Michael. “I’m hungry, let’s go get a pizza.”

Cam started to walk toward the double door, completely oblivious to the battle. Michael grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and dragged him back before he got himself hurt. Cam stumbled side to side, then reached out and used Raphael’s shoulder to steady himself.

“Whoa,” he said with complete seriousness. “Someone turned the floor into a moonwalk. Now why would they go and do that? That’s just not safe.”

Damn, the holy water had made him as high as a kite. It probably would have been better for them all if he had stayed unconscious. Of course with Cam, nothing was ever easy. Michael turned to Raphael for help, but the healer was too busy giving Cam an amused smile because the empath was trying to catch flies that only he could see.

“Where’s the Crystal Ring?” Michael asked Amadeaha.

In order to blanket an area the council had to call on the Crystal Ring. They were a group of mystical angels, who chanted around a cluster of crystals, calling on the power of the crystals to

dampen the angel's powers of flashing.

Amadeaha pressed her lips together. Michael could see an array of emotions flash over her face as thought it out. She looked over at Cam and her features softened. Finally, she nodded her head and pointed out a small door in the back.

"Follow me, I'll take you to them."

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"Ana, get your butt away from that window," Appolion ordered.

Even though her back was to him, she tilted her head in that certain way that told him he was in trouble for bossing her around. From the chuckles that he heard from the brothers, they knew it, too. Ramiel was being kind and unlocking the chain that was anchoring him to the wall. The jackass had even thought to bring Appolion's long sword to him. Somehow, the group of numbskulls managed to retrieve his and Ana's weapons as well as Uriel's crew. As soon as he was free, Appolion grabbed Ana by the waist and hauled her away from the window.

"I just want to see what's going on," she protested.

"You need to keep back. There's a full-scale angel war taking place and both sides have archers. The last thing I need it you to get hit by an

arrow."

"You are so bossy." Even as she rebuked him, she brushed her fingers through his hair.

"Said the pot to the kettle," he drawled as he pulled her close and kissed her. She instantly melted against him and sighed into his mouth. He deepened the kiss just so her brothers knew he wasn't about to be intimidated by them.

After a few seconds, Ramiel cleared his throat in a loud sarcastic way and said, "Yeah that's something I really needed to see, my sister sucking face with the Destroyer."

Megan giggled. "I think they're so romantic."

Derel snorted. "First Bear and Tiffany and now these two. I'm beginning to feel a little left out here."

"I'll be your friend, Derel," Heather drew her words out slowly and added a little lilt to them.

Derel shuffled his feet, obviously ill at ease. "Sorry, sweetie. You're a little too young for me."

Heather appeared both crestfallen and pissed as she muttered something about sending mixed signals.

Nathaniel gave them all a particularly nasty look. "We don't have time for this crap. We've got to get out of here and it's not going to be easy. We can't even use Appolion's powers because he's hurt."

Appolion lifted his hand and shot off an energy

bolt. It hit Nathaniel and knocked him flat on his smart ass. Appolion smiled at the angel's stunned expression. He had just given him a love tap, too. Served the bastard right after the way he'd been treating Cam. "Guess I'm not too injured." Appolion couldn't resist smirking.

"Damn," Mael sounded impressed. "I think I like Ana's mate."

Ramiel grabbed Derel and pushed him toward Appolion. "Hurry up and heal the Dickstroyer. We need his powers at full strength so we can use him to get out of here. Megan, you help him so it will speed things up a little."

Appolion shook his head. "No, help Panda Bear first. He's hurt more than me."

Ramiel gave him an admiring grin. "Don't worry about Bear. Our family always takes care of its own. But I guess you'll learn that for yourself since you're one of us now. Besides, I think Tiffany's got it covered."

What Appolion saw going on between the two was not healing. They were on the bed and, every time Tif tried to place her hands on Bear to start the healing chants, he would reach out and give her a quick kiss. She smacked his hands away and gave him a mock stern look. He pulled her into his lap so he could nuzzle the side of her neck. Her giggles, in no way, discouraged his frisky behavior.

Ramiel gave a disgusted look. "They're so sweet it's sickening."

"Just be glad that you can't read minds," Appolion responded. "Tiffany's brain is like an open door. The last thing I need to know is how cute Bear looks when he eats cereal in the morning."

Ramiel smiled briefly before he asked Ana, "Could you come over here for a sec? I need to talk to you about something."

\* \* \* \*

She nodded her head and went with him. By the stone cold serious expression on his face, he had something major on his mind. He opened his mouth to begin, then stopped and gave her a shocked once over as if he was finally noticed what she had on. Ana felt her cheeks burn in embarrassment.

"What the hell are you wearing?" his voice raised a little in outrage.

She instantly crossed her arms over her chest, tried to hide her offending cleavage and said tartly, "Oh I don't know, I was bored so I decided to dress up like a hooker. God, you can be so dense sometimes. Obviously I didn't pick this getup out. Since when have I dressed like this?"

"Well excuse me for jumping to conclusions,

but you're not acting like our Ana anymore," he shot back. "The sister I know would never go around slobbering all over some male and leaving her panties in weird, very public places.

"That male has a name, Appolion. Is this what you dragged me over here for? Because I don't need a lecture from you."

Ramiel just sighed and closed his eyes for a second before he took off his coat and threw it over her shoulders.

She staggered a bit under its heavy weight as she pulled it close to her and waited for him to speak.

"No, that's not what I wanted," he shifted his weight nervously.

"Well then what is it?"

He paused and she resisted the urge to yell at him, so he would just spit it out. "I think Bear is losing his mind," he finally said.

"Because he likes Tiffany? Come on, Ramiel, give her half a chance. She's not too bad once you get to know her."

"No, it's not that." He glanced over at the others to make sure no one could hear them. "You heard him, he said he talked to Mom last night. Last time I checked on Mom she was in no condition to chat with anyone physically, let alone mentally."

Ana took a deep shaky breath as her mind

digested what Ramiel had just said. Had she heard this a month ago, or even a week ago, she would have thought Bear was going crazy, too. That was before she had seen everything he was capable of. She believed Bear really had seen their mother.

"I saw you two off to the side talking after his little announcement. Did he happen to mention what she said?" she asked.

Ramiel acted aggravated at her question. "What the hell does that matter? We both know he was hallucinating."

"Damn it, Ramiel. What did she tell him? I need to know."

"I don't know. Something about how we need to leave her and Dad behind because they are ascending to the upper realms of Heaven as soon as we are safe."

Ana felt torn, part of her was devastated her parents would be leaving, yet another part of her was glad that they would finally be free from their catatonic bodies. "We need to listen to Bear, he's telling the truth."

That really pissed Ramiel off. "I think you've both have lost your minds. There is no way I'm leaving Mom and Dad behind."

"There are some things I need to tell you about Bear," she said calmly. "He can do a whole lot more than just read minds."

She then spilled everything and, by the time she



was done, Ramiel looked scared to death. The door to the cell burst open and a dozen justice angels came piling in. Ramiel handed over her sai and she spun the two small swords around as she prepared for the attack. Appolion ran over to her and stood next to Ramiel, both of them with their swords at the ready.

\* \* \* \*

Michael, Raphael and Cam followed Amadeaha down the hallway. The sound of the battle grew dimmer with each step.

"Is he singing?" Raphael asked as he directed an unbelieving look at Cam.

"No, he's reciting poetry." Michael shifted his hold on Cam. The kid was walking on his own, but doing a piss poor job at it, so Michael had to assist him quite a bit.

"Poetry? Are you sure? This is Cam that we are talking about."

Amadeaha's lips curled into a smile. "It's Emily Dickinson. She's one of my favorites."

Cam giggled like a teenage boy. "Did you just hear that, Michael? Amadeaha said, *dick*."

"Yeah, I heard. I'm laughing so hard I peed my pants."

Cam got a shocked expression on his face and his gaze went down to the Chief's jeans. "Oh no.

You pee-peed your pants? How embarrassing."

"Yes, it's a real tragedy."

Amadeaha stopped at a door. "It's in here. The guards are posted inside. They don't want any on the outside lest someone figure out that something important is inside."

Michael directed Cam to a wall. "Amadeaha, I need you to stay out here with Cam and babysit him if you don't mind. The last thing I need is for him to wander off."

"I wanna fight, too," Cam whined.

"Fine, wise guy, go ahead and blast open the door."

Cam raised his hand, but nothing came out. He gave his palm a perplexed look and then started to blow on it like he was trying to start a campfire. He leaned more heavily on the wall and pouted. Michael wished he had a camera, just so he could taunt Cam with the pictures later on.

"Fine, I'll stay out here with her." Cam gave Amadeaha a lopsided grin. "You're pretty. I like your hair."

"Yes, I heard you had a thing for redheads," she said stiffly as she pulled away from him.

He leaned down and sniffed her real loudly. "You smell like lilacs. I love that smell."

"Cam, focus," Michael barked. "Are you going to be all right being alone with her?"

Cam looked indignant. "Of course I am. I

wouldn't defile her with my touch. She's too sweet and pure."

Those words tore a hole in Michael's heart. Cam really did think that he wasn't worth a damn. Amadeaha's eyes filled with tears as the words seemed to affect her, too.

She grabbed the empath's hand and brought it to her cheek. "You're wrong. See?" she whispered. "Your touch didn't make me dirty at all."

Cam rubbed her face with the pad of his thumb. "Whenever I'm with them, I pretend it's you. It's the only thing that keeps me sane."

He crumpled into an undignified pile at her feet as he passed out again. She let out a little gasp and knelt down by him. Amadeaha slapped him lightly on both cheeks, but he didn't move a muscle.

"Don't worry about him." Raphael grunted. "He'll be fine. We just need to you to make sure that he doesn't try to rabbit while we're gone."

She nodded, her eyes never left Cam. She had such a tender look on her face that Michael felt compelled to say, "If you want, Amadeaha, you can go with us when we leave Heaven."

She shook her head. "I can't leave. My family, my life is here. My loyalty is to them and the council."

"Then why are you helping us now?"

She bent her head. "I just don't want to see

anyone get hurt. If you and your army leave then the fighting will stop. I know you think my father and Jehel are bad, but you're wrong. They're only trying to do what is best for all of us."

Michael knew from the determined tone of her voice that there would be no way of changing her mind. He turned away from her and nodded to Raphael. The healer kicked in the door. Michael raised his sword to meet the attacking slashes of the guards. Metal screeched against metal as his sword met the justice archangel's blades. Damn, there were so many of them and it was only him and Raphael playing for the good guys.

They could not fail either. Both the attacking armies of angel warriors were counting on him. If they could not break Crystal Ring then everybody would be trapped.

## Chapter Six

“Ouch! That hurt you big, fat, dumb, dork.” Appolion turned just in time to see Jules follow her insult up with a roundhouse kick to the side of some poor justice angel’s head. Appolion just shook his head in disbelief while Nathaniel grunted in approval. In the Lehor family book, lame insults followed by acts of violence must be a good thing.

*Michael just contacted me. Bear sent out to the entire group. He and Raphael are trying to penetrate the Crystal Ring. If they can do that, we can flash out of here, even in the no flash zones.*

Appolion hoped that they would hurry the hell up. Even though the group had been able to fight their way out of the room, the hallway still was not the ideal place to have a fight. The justice angels were able to surround them and were beginning to box them in. Already Jules, the Lehor twins and Mael were wounded and bleeding. Bear had already been hurt from his earlier beating,

although that in no way slowed the kid down. He was right in the mix of things. Appolion could not help but admire him.

The justice angels on both sides advanced even further and the situation got more sticky to say the least. Appolion knew he could let lose a real blast and finish everything right then and there, but he still didn't trust his powers enough. Besides, he wasn't quite ready to use them against another angel. Guns and swords were one thing, but using his Destroyer powers in a battle against anything other than demons was too close to being like his father for his comfort.

It was the punch to Ana's jaw that finally did it. Just seeing her hurt was enough to make him mad enough not to care about turning dark side. Appolion threw up his hand and sent out a sonic boom down the narrow hallway. After it had passed, every justice angel in its path was knocked out cold. He spun around and shot one off at the justice angels that were behind them. They tried to scamper away, but they weren't fast enough. Soon the only conscious ones were his crew. They all stood there and gaped at him with their mouths open. It was deadly quiet.

Nathaniel finally broke it with an eloquent, "What the fuck did you just do?"

Appolion got real uncomfortable under the scrutiny. "Sorry?"

"Don't be sorry," Ana said as she laid her head on his shoulder. "You just saved all of us."

Derel reached down and scanned one of the fallen justice angels. "They're not really injured, just out for the count."

Nathaniel gave such a dirty look that Appolion was half tempted to zap his ass again. "Why didn't you do that before any of us got hurt?" he demanded.

"Because I can't just go throwing my powers around," Appolion snapped. "Someone innocent could get hurt."

Ramiel let out a low whistle. "Ray did say your gifts were a lot stronger than hers or Cam's, but damn."

Appolion grabbed Ana's hand and skirted around the bodies. Once they hit the streets, Appolion drew back in surprise. This wasn't just some small battle, this was a frigging war and it was taking place right smack dab in the middle of Heaven.

Archangel fought archangel, their swords swung widely and the blades covered in blood. Healers from both sides shot off a barrage of arrows, leaving behind scores of wounded. Shifters were in various animal forms and attacked one another, the sounds of howls and cat screams tore through the air. Enforcers fought with justice angels, they used their fists and different small hand-to-hand combat weapons.

Appolion's healer nose instantly picked up the intermingled scents of blood and sweat.

A sandy haired healer looked up from the bow he was arming and said, "How nice of you to join us, guys."

"Shut up, Daniel," Ramiel replied good-naturedly. "How are we doing?"

Daniel gave a disgusted look. "Please, against these justice archangels. There's a reason Michael didn't select them as angel warriors, they're a bunch of losers."

Appolion looked over the numerous injured angel warriors. "They seem to be doing a pretty damn good job. Why are you calling them losers?"

Daniel shot off an arrow and nodded in satisfaction when it hit its target. "The justice archangels tend to be a very bitter bunch. They feel slighted by Michael because he passed them over. They've just been waiting for this war so they could finally do something about it."

"But isn't Michael still their leader? I thought he was the Chief of both the archangels and the angel warriors."

"He is, which makes what the justice archangels are doing all the more messed up. They are going against every vow they've ever taken. Dirty rotten bastards."

"Can you do that thingy with your hand again?" Tiffany asked Appolion as she loaded her



own bow.

Appolion shook his head. "There are too many angel warriors in the way, I would hit them, too. Besides, the more I use my powers, the more erratic and unpredictable they become." What he needed was Abdiel. As the Control, his brother would be able to keep his gifts in check if they did get out of hand. But Abdiel was at the council chambers fighting his own battle.

"The war has spilled out onto all the streets," Daniel informed them as they all ducked for cover when the justice angels sent a slew of arrows their way. "It's in the entire central city of Heaven. All the civilians are holed up in their homes."

Ramiel gave a wicked grin. "Well you know us Lehor brothers. We just love a good fight." Ramiel whistled and jerked his head and all the brothers automatically followed him, except for Derel who stayed behind with the row of archers. Ana started to go, but Appolion stopped her.

"Stay back here behind the archers," he ordered.

She gave him an annoyed glare. "Why, because you think I'm some dainty female?"

He looked pointedly at her chest. "Because there is no way I'm letting you go out there in that getup. Your boobs are about ready to pop out. The last thing we need is for you to show the justice angels your rack."

That comment cracked up the brothers. Their laughter turned to groans though, when she quipped. "You weren't complaining about my cleavage earlier."

He pulled Ramiel's coat tighter around her. "Damn it, female. I wish, that just once, you would listen to me. You drive me crazy."

She smiled coyly at him. "You like it and you know it. Fine, go play with my brothers. I'll be good. This time."

Appolion went with the other males right into the heart of the battle. A justice archangel charged him and Appolion brought up his sword to meet him. Another one attacked his back. Nathaniel ran over and joined him, evening out the odds. Appolion couldn't help but admire Nathaniel's skills. He may be a jackass, but he sure could handle himself in a fight.

It seemed to Appolion the angel warriors were winning, but almost every single one of them was injured in some way or another. Appolion hoped Michael broke up the Crystal Ring soon because he did know how much longer they could keep up fighting in these conditions. What in the hell was taking so long?

\* \* \* \*

Michael stared hard at the Crystal Ring and tried

to figure out how in God's name he was going to destroy the damned thing. He and Raphael had easily been able to cut down all the guards that protected it. They were poorly trained and lacked even the most basic of skills. Even with just the two of them, it had only taken a matter of minutes to deal with them. The mystical angels had tried to protect the Crystal Ring, too. But they were chanters not warriors, so they had been even easier to beat than the justice angels.

Once they had finally reached the crystals, that were pyramided on the gold pedestal, Michael had tried to touch them and got bitch slapped with reality. Not only could he not knock down the pedestal, he had burned the snot out of his hands in the process.

Raphael asked, "Any suggestions, Chief?"

As a matter of fact, he did have a suggestion. It was so crazy you would have thought Cam had cooked it up. Michael patted his pockets until he found his weapon of choice for the job. He pulled out a hand grenade and showed it to Raphael.

Raphael was so shocked he actually jumped a little. "You've got to be kidding me?"

"I'm as serious as a heart attack."

"No, Michael, you can't blow up the place."

Michael pulled the pin on the grenade.

"Damn it, Michael, don't do it."

Michael threw the grenade and yelled, "Run!"

Raphael obeyed, but not before he griped, "Why do I always let you drag me into this type of crap?"

They barely made it out and grabbed Cam and Amadeaha before the explosion obliterated the room.

\* \* \* \*

Bear yelled over the battle, "Michael did it."

Ramiel looked as relived as Appolion felt and ordered to the warriors around him, "Everybody, flash out now."

The order quickly traveled through the ranks of angel warriors, good guy shifters and enforcers. One by one, they quickly disappeared as they retreated, making sure to take their wounded with them. Ramiel grabbed Appolion's shoulder and flashed them out of Heaven. Which was a good thing because, as usual, Appolion had no idea where he was going. They ended up inside what appeared to be a huge living room. Appolion was glad to see that Ana was already there.

Tiffany let out a loud cry as she spun around in a circle. "Where's Bear?"

Bear flashed in as if answering her question. He had their ugly cat in his arms. Tiffany ran up and hugged him.

"I just went back to the house to grab Hairball

real quick," he explained. The brothers all snickered at him. He saluted them with his middle finger before Tiffany wrapped her arms around his neck and brought him down for a kiss.

Appolion looked around the house and saw that besides the Lehor family, Tiffany's girlfriends, Uriel and Dina they were the only ones there. The living room had a large sectional in it and all hardwood floors. A set of stairs led up to what he assumed were some bedrooms. The furnishings and the décor looked expensive, he was finding that was pretty standard in the angel world. They did like their bling. "Where are we?" he asked.

"It's one of Uncle Mike's safe house," Ana explained.

Michael flashed in with Cam and Raphael. Cam leaned heavily on his uncle and his eyes were only half open. As soon as he saw the rest of his family, he let out a slobbery raspberry.

"Hey, Bear," he slurred. "You got any honey?"

Nathaniel glowered, "What's wrong with you now?"

Cam stumbled over to him. "Oh no, everyone look out, seems like I've gone and pissed Nathaniel off yet again. Nothing new there. Why don't you just get it over with and say what's really been on your mind?"

Nathaniel's face tightened. "What's that

supposed to mean?"

"I know the truth Nathaniel. You've hated me for three years now."

Appolion waited for Michael to come in and break up the two, but the Chief just stayed put. He must have decided it was time that the brothers got all their crap out in the open. Even Ana stood back and let them go at it.

Nathaniel looked equal parts, angry, perplexed and guilty. "I don't hate you. Where did you get a crazy idea like that?"

Cam pointed at Nathaniel's head. "You think it all the time. I've tried to block it out, but you're so full of anger that I can't." Cam gave a sad sigh and put his hand on his brother's arm. "Don't worry though, Nathaniel, I love you enough for both of us. I'll never stop, no matter what."

"Cam, shut up," Nathaniel snapped as he shrugged off Cam's touch. "You're babbling like an idiot."

Cam let that mean comment go by unchecked. He pulled out the piece of paper that he'd got from the bar and shoved it into Nathaniel's hand. Nathaniel barely gave it a second glance.

"I got this for you. I just wish I had more." Cam's face crumpled a little before he recovered and rubbed his eyes with the heel of his hand. "I didn't mean to hurt her, Nathaniel. I would give my life just to take it back."

Nathaniel's face was as hard as granite. He ignored his brother and addressed Michael. "Get him into bed. He's making an ass out of himself."

Michael took Cam's arm. He asked Nathaniel, "Don't you even want to know what he gave you?"

"Did he write *I will not bite my brother's mate one hundred times*?" Nathaniel sneered.

"No, it's a letter from your mate, Belora. He paid an arm and a leg for some demon to smuggle it out."

That finally shut Nathaniel up. He glanced down at the letter, a stunned look on his face.

\* \* \* \*

Nathaniel sat on the floor in the farthest corner of the room and read Belora's letter for the twentieth time. He knew that he should feel grateful to Cam that he had got it for him, but he still felt the same bitter resentment toward his brother that he had ever since he'd heard Cam had hurt Belora.

God, he missed her so bad he had a constant pain in his chest. It had almost been better when he thought Belora was destroyed. Now he knew that she was alive and being held captive. He had never felt so useless in his entire immortal life. His mind was forever thinking of new ways she might be suffering and there was not a damn thing he

could do to help her.

Gabi had arrived with Abdiel, Ray and Atar and she was talking to Raphael in low worried tones. They all had their panties in a bunch because Cam was refusing to let anyone heal him. Nathaniel felt himself get even more pissed. He was really sick of his brother's temper tantrums. As far as he was concerned, Cam could lay up there and bleed all over the freaking place, maybe then he wouldn't be all high and mighty anymore.

Nathaniel slipped out of the room unnoticed and stole up the stairs to the room Cam was in. What he needed was a good ass whipping. Just because he was the Empath King didn't mean that he should be able to get away with this shit. This whole, walking on eggshells thing, so not to upset Cam, was getting old.

He found Cam wasn't alone. A small female was stretched out on the bed next to him, her hands all over his body. Cam slept completely unaware of her attention. She glanced over at Nathaniel, but didn't even have the good graces to look guilty at all. She tossed back her long white blonde hair and Nathaniel caught a flash of her pointed ear. "Who the hell are you?" Nathaniel asked.

She continued to molest Cam as she replied, "I'm Nix, Nathaniel."

So this was the oracle Ana had told them about.



Leave it to Cam to get mixed up with some mystical, horny, half-breed angel. Yeah, he sure knew how to pick 'em. She leaned down and blew in Cam's ear, apparently not caring one bit she almost showed Nathaniel her entire chest region.

Cam rolled away from her and mumbled, "Not now, Nix, I feel like crap."

Nix let out an actual purr as she rubbed her hand up Cam's thigh. "Wake up, Empath King." She reached up and gave a non-so-gentle tug of his hair. "Nix needs attending to."

Cam groaned, "Just leave me alone for five more minutes and I promise to do that thing with my tongue you like so..."

The rest of his words were lost as he fell back asleep. Nix gave him a nudge before she sighed and got up. The oracle went over to Nathaniel, her hips swayed sensually with each step. He resisted the urge to squirm under her intense stare. The way her violet eyes bore into him made him feel like she had looked into his soul and read his darkest secrets. *Duh, she's an oracle, that's probably exactly what she did.*

"He's just using you," he snapped. Maybe if he insulted her enough, then she would leave.

"You don't know much about my clan, the Powers." She tilted her head to the side and gave him a small smile. "The only time a Power feels any emotion is while they are having sex. Since

they, unlike angels, can have as many sexual partners as they want, they tend to have a very lusty appetite. So you see, Nathaniel, I am using your brother, not the other way around."

"I thought you were part angel, too."

She gave a slight nod. "Yes that is true, however, the Power side of me is stronger. You should be thankful I come to Cam. At least, he doesn't have to go to a succubus for his needs."

Nathaniel couldn't believe his ears. "How about he just keeps it zipped up period?"

"Your really are stupid," she said tartly. "Have you ever looked really closely at him? His eyes, fangs and new behavior? The blood used to poison your brother was from an incubus."

Nathaniel felt a wave of revulsion run through his body. "Are you trying to tell me that Cam is a sex demon?"

"Part," her eyes flashed with anger as if she sensed his disgust toward Cam, "he's mostly still your brother. Although you do not wish to believe it. It's easier for you to deal with your hatred if you think that your Cam is dead."

Nathaniel gave her a steely glare. "The brother I knew *is* dead. He was destroyed in Hell."

Nix whipped out a small dagger and held it overhand style. "Fine, then you wouldn't mind it if I cut his heart open right now."

"You wouldn't dare. You're just saying that to

fuck with my mind."

Her lips curled up in a cold malicious smile. Those strange violet eyes burned with evil, while at the same time they still remained lifeless. She wasn't kidding, the Power part of her was strong. All the horror stories he had ever heard about the Powers flashed through his mind. Rumors of how they would destroy anyone that crossed them in even the slightest way, it did not matter if it were friend or foe. It was said mothers destroyed their own children, males their own mates. There were even tales the Powers ate the flesh of their victims.

Nathaniel felt a shiver go through his body and that had never happened to him before in all the years he had fought demons. He realized the bitch was quite capable of doing what she threatened. If for no other reason, then just to prove her point. He rasped, "No, don't hurt him, please."

She kept the dagger raised. "You called him an abomination yourself earlier. Just think, you would finally have vengeance for your mate."

Since Nathaniel did not know the exact repercussions for attacking an oracle, he moved to put his body between her and Cam. He held up his palm in a placating gesture and fought to keep his voice calm. He was stunned to see that his hand shook. "I didn't mean it earlier when I called him an abomination. I was just angry."

She gave him a sharp look. "So if he is not your

brother and he is not an abomination, then what is he?"

That comment hit him like a sucker punch. He hated her and her damn questions at that point. "I don't know."

She waved her hand and a damp, stone wall shimmered into view.

He saw writing on it. It was his name, along with Ana's and the rest of the brothers. The letters were shaky and looked like they were fashioned out of blood. He asked, "What kind of game are you playing now, oracle?"

"No game, just a piece of Cam's past. While he was held captive, he would use his own blood and write all of your names every night on his cell wall."

"Why would he do that?"

"Because he didn't want to forget you. The memories of his family and their love were all that held him from giving in and turning demon."

He focused on the first name on the list, *Nathaniel*. He raised his trembling hand to touch it. The wall disappeared as quickly as it had come.

"He never forgot you, Nathaniel. Unlike you, who forgot him."

Nathaniel shook his head confused. Damn, stupid, oracle, why did she have to speak in riddles? "How could I forget him? He's right here in the room with us."

She rolled her eyes. "You forgot that Cam was your brother. He is still the same, he just has changed some. Deep inside, he is still the small child who followed you wherever you went in Heaven."

Nathaniel smiled to himself as he remembered how Cam had done that. God, it had used to annoy the hell out of him, too. Cam was always at his heels, tagging along, even when Nathaniel told him to go away.

Nix shrugged and raised the dagger again. "Oh well, it's not like you care about him anymore."

Nathaniel jumped to the side, so even more or his body was between Cam and the oracle. "Damn it, I do care." He did, too. He still loved his brother with all his heart. Nathaniel let out an anguished cry as he fell to his knees as that revelation ripped through him. How he'd treated Cam had nothing to do with Belora, it never had. It was because he'd been a sick coward. By keeping Cam at an emotional distance, he had been avoiding dealing with what the demons had done to his brother. He still remembered the way Cam had looked when they had first got him back. Even though he was no healer, he saw for himself the horrible injuries Cam had suffered. He could only imagine what else they must have done to him.

Nix lowered her arm. "If you wish it, Nathaniel, I could take you back in time and you could see

for yourself how your brother suffered during his captivity," she said as if she read his mind.

Nathaniel shook his head. "He doesn't want us to know. He's too ashamed."

"Fine, one day you will be ready to see. When that time comes all you have to do is speak my name and I will come to you." She looked over at Cam and gave another regretful sigh because he was still out for the count. "Too bad, he's not feeling well. He is, by far, my favorite. He's a very special angel. I only wish he were really mine."

Nathaniel fought hard to keep the shock off his face. "Are you in love with him?"

She pursed her lips together and thought for a moment. "If I were capable of feeling love, then perhaps I would be."

"Yet, you were only two steps away from slicing him open."

She fingered her pointed ear. "Yes, I sometimes find that I need to work on my social skills. My clan is a ruthless, heartless bunch and I often find myself thinking like them."

She glided across the room and leaned over to give Cam a kiss on the cheek. Nathaniel barely heard her whisper, "It is going to be hard for me to give you up when the time comes. But alas, I am not your destiny."

She fidgeted with her pointed ear again. "I must go talk with Michael. There is much danger

ahead for the angel warriors. Keep your family close to you, Nathaniel. Remember, there are some words and actions that can never be taken back."

She left the room, shutting the door quietly behind her, leaving him alone with Cam. Nathaniel sat on the edge of the bed and looked at Cam, really, really looked at him for the first time in three years. He saw the many changes in Cam, but he also saw what had stayed the same.

Cam still liked to sleep on his right side, with his knees tucked up, just like when he had been little. He styled his hair the same way he had ever since he came to live on Earth, partly spiked, partly messed. He still wore an earring in his left ear. Even with the fangs and freaky eyes, he was still-Cam.

*Hey, Bear. Got any honey?*

They had always teased Bear by saying that to him when they had all been kids and Cam had said it to him today. No, he hadn't changed that much, not where it really mattered.

Nathaniel swallowed hard against the lump of self-hatred that built up in his throat. Derel was right, he was a dick. What was worse, even after the way he had been heaping abuse on Cam, his brother still loved him.

He reached over and rubbed Cam's shoulder. "I'm so sorry about the way I've been treating you. I'm even more sorry I wasn't there to stop

them from taking you. I should have protected you better."

Cam frowned in his sleep and squirmed away from Nathaniel's touch. He muttered something that Nathaniel couldn't understand and started to thrash around even more. His frown deepened until his face was flush with fear. The mutters grew faster.

Nathaniel gave Cam's shoulder a gentle shake, "Cam, wake up buddy, you're having a nightmare."

Cam moved so fast that Nathaniel was thrown on his ass for the second time that day. Cam jumped off the bed and crouched in a corner, his eyes were unfocused and his gaze darted back and forth as he took in a horrifying scene that only he could see. He let out an anguished whimper.

"No, please, don't take me back to Mammon. I'll do whatever you want, just don't let him mind fuck me again." Cam curled up in a ball and rocked on the balls of his feet. "It hurts so bad when he does that."

"Nobody is ever going to take you back to that bastard demon, I promise."

Cam didn't seem to hear a word Nathaniel said. He was neck deep in his Hell flashback and that was all he appeared to see, hear and feel. Nathaniel hesitated, not quite sure of the best way to handle this. He knew if he made the wrong



move or even spoke too loudly it might set Cam off even worse.

What Cam needed was his Bearcurity blanket or Ana. But Bear was being healed and Ana was clear across the house with Appolion. Nathaniel carefully inched his way closer to Cam. "You're not in Hell anymore, little brother," he said in the most soothing voice he could muster. "You're safe, you're just hurt and sick. You need to let us help you."

Cam looked up sharply and bared his fangs. "Liar, you're going to drag me down to that room so Mammon can rape my brain again."

Nathaniel had almost reached him. "It's me Nathaniel, Cammie. I've got your back."

"Is that really you, Nathaniel?" Cam paused, his voice small and pleading.

"Yes, it's me."

Cam tucked his head into his chest and started to rock back and forth again. "I just want to go home."

Nathaniel had finally inched close enough to touch him. Before he could, however, Cam flashed out of the room. Nathaniel found himself grasping at the empty space his brother had left behind. Crap, Cam was God knows where and he was out of his mind. He was a freaking sitting duck for both the justice angels and the demons.

The door crashed open and Michael charged

through it, Ana and Appolion hot on his heels. They must have sensed Cam's fear and come to help him. Nathaniel raked his hands through his hair and fought the urge to punch something. He had let Cam down, again.

"What happened?" Ana asked with an accusing glare.

"I didn't mean to do anything, I swear," he replied. She looked like she didn't believe him and he didn't blame her. It wasn't like he had been real lovey dovey lately.

Michael grabbed Nathaniel by the front of the shirt and slammed him into the wall. "Where did Cam go?"

Nathaniel shook his head. "I don't know. He was having a nightmare and I tried to talk him down. He just said he wanted to go home."

"Shit," Michael growled out. "He flashed back to his old house in Detroit. The one that he used to share with Gabi and Abdiel."

Ana let out an alarmed cry. "The place is going to be crawling with justice angels. We have to go get him before they do."

Nathaniel volunteered, "I'll go get him."

Michael gave a sarcastic laugh. "News flash, jackass. You're the last angel he would trust right now."

Nathaniel almost choked on that hard kernel of truth. Yeah, he was the last one Cam would turn

to for help. He had let his little brother down, big time. He sighed in pain and pleaded, "You go to him, Michael, he trusts you. Just bring him back, please. I need to let him know that I didn't mean it."

Michael flashed away. Ana cocked a brow at him and crossed her arms. Nathaniel knew that look well. He was in for it and he deserved every bit of it. He looked down at his feet, too ashamed to even meet her eyes.

"We are all he has, Nathaniel," she spoke quietly, but her words still held a hard edge.

He nodded, his gaze still locked on his combat boots. "I know, Ana."

"He never asked for all this to happen to him."

Nathaniel knew that she meant more than Cam's captivity and torture. Cam had never made it a big secret that he did not want to be a member of the Order or the empath leader. Cam would like nothing better than to be the way he had been before all this crap had happened to him three years ago. A simple dorky empath, with no cares or responsibility. That was the way it should be to, Cam was still very young in angel years. He had been forced to grow up too hard and too fast.

Ana placed her hand on his arm so he would finally look at her.

He reluctantly did so and the sadness in her eyes almost made him lose it and bawl like some

baby.

"Don't make me choose between the two of you," she pleaded. "Things can't keep going on this way, Nathaniel, it's tearing our family apart."

He pulled her into a hug and, for the first time since he had heard of Belora he allowed himself to take comfort in the familiar comfort of her arms. He realized then that he had been shutting out not only Cam, but his entire family. God, he had been a first class idiot. "I'll find a way to make this up to him," he promised. "I didn't mean to set him off today. Someone finally made me realize that I had been acting like an ass."

Ana looked up at him, a confused expression on her face. "Who?"

"Nix."

"The oracle whore that keeps smacking Bear's butt?"

Nathaniel chuckled softly, even though his heart was still breaking, "You should see what she was doing to Cam when I found her in here."

"I can only imagine." She rubbed his cheek with her hand in a very motherly fashion. "I'll go to Cam, myself. Michael may need help persuading him to come back."

"Thanks, Ana."

Appolion cleared his throat. "If it's any consolation, you weren't the reason that Cam had the flashback. It was something a lot meaner than

you."

Nathaniel felt his heart jackhammer in his chest. What now? "Well, don't keep me in suspense. What is it?"

"You know that super demon that my brothers made before they were destroyed? The one from the prophesy?"

"Yeah, the one the Order will have to defeat in order to save the world?"

Appolion looked grim. "It doesn't like the fact that the whole Order is finally together. It's awakened and it's now calling out to us again. Like it did three years ago."

"Is that what scrambled Cam's mind the other day?" Nathaniel asked.

"Yes, and I think it's awake for good now."

Ana's face paled. "How do you know?"

Appolion shrugged with a casualness Nathaniel knew he really didn't feel. "Because it's been whispering in the back of my mind, too."

## **Chapter Seven**

**A**na and Appolion found Cam in a field, kitty corner to his old house. He was on the ground as he struggled to get away from Michael. Ana shot a worried glance toward the house. Although it appeared to be empty, she had no doubt Jehel had ordered surveillance on it. They had to get Cam out of there quick, before they were spotted.

"Appolion shield him so that nobody will see him," she pleaded.

He shook his head. "I've been trying. He's throwing his own powers around so much though that he's just rebounding my shields. I can't do it."

Ana let out a frustrated cry as she threw herself on the ground next to her brother. "Cam, it's me, Ana. You're safe now, Appolion, Michael and I are here with you."

Her words did not seem to penetrate his nightmare world. He continued to fight with Michael. After several minutes, Cam somehow managed to wriggle free. He backhanded the

Chief so hard Michael flew back several feet. Cam stumbled toward the house awfully fast for someone as sick as he was. Appolion tried to go after him, but Cam spun around and shot off a fireball him. Appolion had to dive to the side to avoid it. As he rolled to his feet, his gaze darted from Cam to the house.

"Shit, we better do something fast," he growled. "I'm picking up at least four justice angels inside the house."

Ana started to run forward, but Michael grabbed her and jerked her back. He shook his head and said, "We need to be careful. He doesn't know what he's doing when he gets like this. He's hurt both me and Raphael in the past."

She hated her uncle at that moment. "Cam would never hurt me. You're wrong."

"That's a risk I'm not willing to take." He tightened his grip on her. "If Cam were to injure you, he would never forgive himself."

Ana was stunned when the last angel in the world that she thought would come to help them suddenly showed up. Amadeaha flashed into the field a few feet from Cam. His head whipped to the left as he picked up her scent and he instantly changed directions and headed for her. Ana stopped dead and watched the other female take slow steady steps toward Cam. The wind blew across the grass, picked up Amadeaha's long

white gown and plastered it to her slender legs.

"Amadeaha," Michael called out in a steady voice. "Get away from him. He's not well."

Her eyes finally left Cam and she seemed surprised they weren't the only two angels there. She shook her head. "No, he needs me."

Cam collapsed at the justice female's feet. She sank to her knees so she was face to face with Cam before she reached out and lightly stroked his hair. Ana's heart jumped as she waited to see how Cam would react. She half expected her brother to turn and attack the female.

But he didn't. He closed his eyes, tilted his head and it appeared he was almost drinking in her touch.

"You're safe now, Cam," she whispered so low that Ana had to strain to hear her. But then the conversation was meant for Cam only.

"No I'm not," he argued. "I'm back in Hell and they're going to hurt me again."

She continued to stroke his hair. "Look around. What do you see?"

"You."

She smiled softly. "Besides me, silly. Look up, don't you see the blue sky and the beautiful, warm sun?"

"Yes."

"Here touch." She brought down his hand and brushed it across the ground. "Doesn't the grass



feel soft and wet? They don't have sun and grass in Hell do they?"

"No," he said in a small confused voice that Ana had not heard in a long time. "I know I'm there though."

"You're wrong." She lifted her face into the breeze. "Your free and out in the open. Feel the breeze blowing across us. Can't you smell the fresh air?"

He buried his nose in her neck and murmured, "I smell you, Amadeaha."

She laughed so softly that it was almost a sigh. "Why are you always smelling me?"

"Because that's all I can do besides dream about you," even as he said that, his arms wrapped around her tenderly. "You're telling me the truth, aren't you? I was just dreaming that I was back there again."

Ana breathed out a sigh of relief, Cam was coming out of it. She felt like going over and giving Amadeaha a hug of her own. Her relief was short lived when she caught a predatory glint in Cam's eyes. He licked his lips and his gaze was fixated on the justice angel's neck. Ana let out a quick breath, Cam was going to bite Amadeaha. Oh this was so not good. Amadeaha must have sensed it too, because she looked at him sharply. However, she did not recoil in horror, instead she swept back her dark red hair and exposed her

white slender neck to him.

Cam shook his head as if he were trying to clear the cobwebs. His face was a myriad of expressions, Ana knew he fought with his inner demon. "I don't want to hurt you," he groaned, his gaze never left the temptation she offered him.

"It is all right, that is why I came to you. My heart felt you calling out your distress." She gently pulled his head closer to her throat.

Cam trembled so badly Ana could see him, even though she was across the field. He opened his mouth, exposed his fangs and moved to bite her. At the last moment, he stopped himself and paused, his lips inches away from her flesh. Time seemed to stand still, the only sound was the occasional bird chirping and the sound of rushing traffic. Amadeaha whispered something in Cam's ear only he could hear. That seemed to be the last coaxing he needed. He moaned loudly before he leaned in and sank his fangs in her.

Her body jerked in response and her eyes glazed over in pain. Cam went to pull away, but she placed her hand on the back of his head and held him in place. Her fingers continued to lightly play throughout his hair. She murmured soft words of comfort to him even though Ana could see the small flashes of discomfort that flitted across her face.

"Why is it hurting her?" Ana asked Appolion in

a low voice. "I thought the Bliss was supposed to make it pleasurable."

"I think he's so sick that it has weakened that special feature," Appolion responded, his gaze never leaving the pair. "You don't think that she is tricking us, do you? Didn't you say she was related to Jehel?"

Ana looked over at Amadeaha and saw the love on the other female's face. "I don't think so. I believe she's telling the truth. She and Cam have some deep connection. Kind of like you and I have. I'm certain I would know if you were in distress."

"Of course you would," he pointed out. "You're physic."

"Being telepathic has nothing to do with it. It's true love."

Michael let Ana go and sat down on the ground. The relief on his face was almost palatable. In fact, Ana was surprised to see her uncle was sweating and shaking from head to toe. He scrubbed his face with his hands before he ran them roughly through his dark blond hair.

"He's okay now, Michael," Ana felt compelled to comfort him.

"I just hate to see him that way," Michael said in choked voice. "I feel so helpless because I know he is hurting and there's nothing I can do to help him."

Ana had to pick her jaw off the ground at that revelation. Michael never was one to show any emotions and now he was spilling his guts like nobody's business. The bond between him and Cam must be a lot stronger than she thought.

She reached over and gave her uncle a hug. It was the first time either one of them had ever made loving gesture to one another. She was pleased when he hugged her back. She had been angry at him for so long for never revealing he was their uncle, until just recently, that she had never given any thought to how lonely he must have been himself.

Cam lifted his head from Amadeaha and he stared down at her, his eyes full of wonder and tenderness. He softly ran his hands over her face, as if he were trying to burn every curve and feature into his mind. Without warning, he lightly touched his lips to hers. It wasn't an overtly sexual kiss, rather it was tender. Ana knew she should look away, but it was impossible. For the first time in what seemed like forever, she saw a slight ray of hope for her brother and it was in the form of this female justice angel.

Cam slowly pulled away from her and then his eyes rolled back in his head before he passed out. Amadeaha laid his head on her lap and she stroked his head as she gazed down at him. Michael, Ana and Appolion finally approached

the pair.

"Is he going to be okay?" Amadeaha asked, her green eyes flickering with concern.

"Yes, he will," Appolion replied. "He's just sleeping it off now. Thanks to you, he can finally heal like he should."

"Thank you," Ana said as tears threatened to spill out of her eyes.

"You said that you knew he needed you, how?" Michael asked.

Amadeaha gave a delicate shrug. "I just felt him needing me, I flashed to him, not even knowing where I would end up. I just knew I was going to him. It was the least I could do. Especially given what I have just learned."

"What do you mean?" Michael knelt down on the ground so he was face level with her. Appolion went to the other side of her and started to heal her bite wound with low gentle chants.

"After you all left, I snuck into my father's study and listened in on his conversation with my uncle. Jehel has been working with demons generals, more specially, Mamon and Appolion's father. I didn't want to believe that it was true. Jehel is the leader of the council. He's supposed to be battling evil, not sleeping in the same bed as it. But I know it's true because I heard it for myself."

Michael nodded. "We knew that already. I'm sorry that you had to find out yourself though."

Amadeaha let out a sob. "They were laughing because they had helped set up the trap that got Cam captured and taken to Hell. They think it is particularly funny the blood used to poison him was incubus. The bastards enjoy watching a Lehor dirty himself by having to satisfy his overwhelming sexual needs with whatever female he can find. For them it is the ultimate revenge."

Ana was so angry she had to resist the urge to run over to the house just so she could have a bit of revenge herself by beating the snot out of some justice angels. "What did our family ever do to Jehel and your father?"

"They didn't say."

"It's because Jehel had a thing for Lehor," Michael volunteered. "He was a little miffed when your mother chose your father for her mate. Jehel never quite got over it. He transferred that hatred to Lehor's sons."

Ana gave him a sharp look as a revelation hit her. "That's what you fought about all those years ago, wasn't it. You wanted her to become Jehel's mate and when she defied you and chose my father instead, you stopped talking."

Michael nodded his head, his face full of regret. "I came to her the day of her mating ceremony and told her she was a fool for choosing love over power. I was young and stupid at the time. I didn't see Jehel for what he really was. Once I did

finally realize how wrong I had been, Lehor still refused to speak to me. At the time I thought it was because she was still angry at me, now I know I was wrong."

Ana's heart broke for the loss of a brother and sister's love. "What was it then? Why did she still shut you out of her life?"

"By then she had given birth to you, Cam and Bear. I think she was afraid if I were around her children too much I would realize the special gifts you all had. When I first came to scan you as I do with all newborns, she hid your powers from me. But she must have realized she could not keep the charade on forever if I were to become a frequent visitor to your house."

Amadeaha hesitated, then said, "I'm afraid I have grave news about Lehor."

Ana gave her a gentle smile. "We already know. She and my father have gone on to the upper realms of Heaven."

Her lips parted and she tilted her head to the side. "I guess I shouldn't be surprised that you already knew that. Not with the wonderful gifts your family possess. I had to find out the old fashioned way. I went to check on them after the battle and found them gone. There was no trace of them anywhere. I realized immediately they must have decided to ascend."

Ana found herself liking this justice angel more

and more. "Why did you go to check on them?"

"I wanted to make sure that nobody hurt my Cam's parents." She blushed and ducked her head. "I mean, I didn't want anyone to harm your parents in retaliation for the rebellion."

*Her Cam?* Amadeaha really did care for Cam and it just wasn't because he was the leader of the empathths and one of the most powerful angels. With every gentle stroke the female gave her brother, Ana felt more and more hope build up within her. Amadeaha could be the thing that finally brought their Cam fully back to them.

Ana pleaded with her, "Come back with us. I promise we'll take care of you."

Amadeaha shook her head sadly. "I'm sorry. I can't do that."

Ana felt a fireball of anger snap through her. "Why? Because of how he looks? It's not his fault that the demons changed him."

Amadeaha didn't cower, instead she threw back her own annoyed look. "How shallow do you think I am? It has nothing to do with that. It's because of me, of my family."

"If it's just because Jehel is you uncle, then you can stop worrying. We already have taken in Dina and he's Jehel's son."

"I'm very happy that Dina is safe with you. His father treated him horribly. But that still doesn't mean I can ever face Cam again."



Ana was feeling desperate and it showed in her voice, "Cam doesn't care who your family is. I know my brother, he would never hold that against you."

Tears started to slip down Amadeaha's cheeks. "It would matter to me. My family betrayed him several times over. I'm not even worthy enough to clean his boots."

"Amadeaha please, he needs you."

She snorted. "That's a good one. Like someone as strong and powerful as Cam would need me. There is one thing I could do for him however."

"What?" Ana asked glumly. She wanted to continue trying to persuade her to change her mind, but could see by the determined look on the justice angel's face that it would be useless.

Amadeaha turned and bowed her head to Michael. "I swear my allegiance to you, Michael, Chief of the archangels. I am offering to be your eyes and ears in Heaven. I can go places in there most other angels don't have access to. Whatever I see and hear, I will tell you."

"Is she offering to spy for him?" Appolion asked Ana.

Now it was Appolion that got the annoyed look. Amadeaha snapped, "*She* has a name and yes, I am offering to spy for Michael."

Appolion clenched his jaw before saying, "Why should we trust you? You have no reason to help

us.”

Amadeaha gave Cam an adoring look. “I’m not doing it for any of you, I’m doing it for him. I would never betray Cam.”

Ana feared for the justice angel’s safety, if Jehel ever found out that she was working for the angel warriors it would not matter to him that they were related. She decided to try and reason with the Chief. “Michael, you can’t let her do this. It’s too dangerous.”

Michael thought for a moment, then said, “I don’t see how we can turn this opportunity down, Ana.”

“But, Michael —”

He put up a hand to stop her. “I know the dangers involved, but we all are facing dangerous times. This isn’t a tea party, it’s a war.”

“Michael —”

“Ana, that’s my final answer. I’m speaking as your Chief now, not your uncle.”

“Listen to Michael,” Amadeaha said. “I just have one small request.”

Ana put her hand over the other females. “I will give you anything.”

Amadeaha gave a shy smile. “Can I just hold him a few more minutes?”

Ana nodded and they all sat in silence for a long, long time as Amadeaha held the unconscious Cam in her arms.

\* \* \* \*

Bear sat up in the bed with a start. "Cam."

Tiffany placed her hands on his chest and gently pushed him back down. "It's okay, Michael and Ana went after him."

Bear searched with his mind and found out Tif was right. Michael and Ana were with Cam now and whatever had upset Cam was now gone. He let out a deep breath and tried to calm down his pounding heart. He realized Tif had not moved her hands from his body and that she was very close to him. She had that certain look in her eyes that told him she wanted some special attention. He felt his body harden in response.

"Why is it every time you heal me you find the sudden urge to molest me?" he teased.

She made a face. "You wish. Don't flatter yourself, Bear."

"Ouch." He tried his best to look insulted. "Here I was, getting ready to give you a kiss to show you my gratitude, too."

She giggled in that sweet little way that always drove him crazy and held out her hand. "You may kiss me here then, servant."

With a growl, he pulled at the offered hand until she was off balance. When she tumbled into him, he wrapped his arms around her and gave

her a proper kiss. She let out a happy little sigh and let him take over. He slanted his lips over hers and slipped his tongue inside her mouth, slowly exploring and stroking.

She moved her body over his, so that he could have better access and the friction of her movement against his erection almost drove him over the edge. He had been holding himself back. Afraid that if he took things too far, he would lose control and go all the way and mark her. Not that he didn't want to, but he wanted to make sure that she was ready. In the meantime, blue balls didn't even begin to explain it.

She pulled away from him and got up. Bear covered his eyes with his arm and tried to get himself under control with thoughts of nuns, puppies, kittens and grandmothers. After a few seconds, he felt her get back on him. He uncovered his eyes to see what game she was playing now and what he saw almost made him swallow his tongue.

She wore nothing but a, barely there, black bra and matching thong panties. His gaze traveled, to her full breasts that were straining to pop out, down to her flat stomach, then to her sexy little hips. He brought his gaze back up to her face. Her lips were wet and swollen from his kisses, her eyes soft and loving. Her honeyed brown hair was down and messed up in a perfectly sexy way.

"What are you doing, Tif?" He wanted her so bad that it hurt and that made his voice sound harsher than he intended.

Her big brown eyes went wide with embarrassment. "Oh my God, I thought you wanted to...you know. I'll just go get dressed now and we can forget this ever happened."

She started to get up, but he grabbed her by her soft bare hips and held her still. "Don't you dare go anywhere. Of course I want to do this." He lifted his hips so she could feel how much he really did want it. "I just want to make sure that you know what you're getting into."

She gave him a saucy look. "Yeah, I'm going to be stuck with you and your weirdness for the rest of time."

He laughed as he started to trail his fingers over her bare ass, his favorite part on her body. "It's more than just that, Tif. My family is a huge target. By taking you as a mate, I'll put you in even more danger. I don't want to do this unless you are sure."

She licked her lips and slowly unzipped his pants. "I'm sure, Bear. No other male could even begin to compare to you. I love you and I want you to be all mine, forever."

Well damn, who could argue with that logic?

He rolled them over so that he was on top and proceeded to explore every single inch of her tight

body with his teeth, lips, tongue and hands. Although he'd only had sex before with one succubus, that didn't mean he did not know his way around a female's body. There had been plenty of older and wiser female angels who thought it would be fun to show the youngest Lehor brother just how far angels could go without the male marking the female. He had been a good student, too.

When he reached the areas with undergarments on them, he simply removed them until she had nothing on at all. He continued to run his hands over her sweaty naked flesh until she panted and let out loud moans. She tugged at his clothes.

"Not fair," she whispered. "I want to touch you."

Yeah, he wanted her to touch him, too. But, if she did there wasn't going to be any mating going on because he was going to bust a nut before it even began. So he reluctantly shook his head and started to work his way back down her body. He hesitated only a second once he reached her wet, hot core before he brought his mouth to her. He moaned at the taste of his Tiffany, she was as sweet as he had always imagined she would be.

She let out a shocked gasped as she arched her back and pulled hard at his hair. He reached out mentally and touched her mind just enough so he would know exactly what she liked the best. He

followed those directions until he had worked several orgasms from her quivering body.

Unable to wait any longer he pulled away and fumbled out of his clothes. As soon as he got rid of them, he returned to her and eased himself over her body. He grabbed one of her legs and wrapped it around his waist and entered her in one hard thrust.

He stopped and closed his eyes as he fought for control. But Tif would have none of that. She wiggled under him and her nails started to scratch his back as she urged him on. He gave up the fight and started to make love to her at a fast urgent pace.

As soon as he felt his hand started to tingle and grow warm, he placed it firmly on her right ass cheek. Now that he had started to mark her, nothing was going to stop him. She was his and heaven help anyone that came between them. As his hand started to cool down, he heard her scream his name as she came. He let himself join her. He threw back his head and groaned as he released himself inside her.

When the fireworks were finally over, he rolled off of her. Pulling her into his arms, he kissed the top of her head before playing idly with her hair. Holy moley, he had done it. Tif was his forever. He ducked his head so she wouldn't see the satisfied smile on his face.

"I love you, Bear," she murmured sleepily.

"I love you , too, hon."

"Do you think anyone knows what we were doing in here?"

Since she had been yelling so loud, he was pretty damn certain the whole house had known what they were doing. He did a big angel no-no and lied to save her from any embarrassment. "Don't worry, nobody knows a thing."

She looked up at him. "Just so you know, Bear, I don't have any regrets at all. I've been wanting this ever since I first met you."

He kissed the tip of her nose. "Same here, Tif."

It was true, too, he didn't regret making her his mate. He was worried, though. His entire family had one big target on their backs and now she was part of it. He squeezed her tightly. He would just have to be extremely protective of her because the mere thought of her being hurt scared the crap out of him.

Before he fell back asleep, he reached his mind out and touched each member of his family. Only after he was sure that every one of them was safe did he allow himself to relax. He threw one leg over Tiffany, so she was even closer, and drifted off, the smell of her filling his senses.



## Chapter Eight

Once they got back to the house, Appolion sat on the couch and closed his eyes, listening to the bustle around him. It still felt a little strange to be around so many angels at one, but what was even stranger was how quickly he was becoming used to it.

Cam was back in his room as he continued to sleep off his poisoning. Nathaniel was right by his side and refused to leave. Appolion was glad to see the archangel finally decided to stop acting like a total dick and treat Cam right.

Appolion felt someone staring at him so he slanted his eyes opened just enough to see who it was. Abdiel's son, Atar, stood there and gaped at him like he was an exhibit at the Detroit Zoo. The small angel held a toy truck in his hands and he shifted it back and forth nervously as he competed in his one sided staring contest.

Appolion opened his eyes all the way and smiled. "Is there something you wanted?"

Atar impatiently pushed a dark lock of hair out of his blue eyes and asked, "Mommy says you are my uncle. Is that true?"

Appolion nodded his head and that was all the invitation that Atar needed. Before Appolion could even blink, the child started to climb onto his lap. Appolion winced several times, because it seemed that the kid was all elbows and knees. Atar finally settled into a comfortable position, but not before he clunked Appolion on the side of his head with the metal truck twice. "Where's your mommy, Atar?" Appolion looked frantically around for Gabi or Abdiel. He wasn't good with kids and he wanted to get his nephew off his hands before he did or said something that scared the kid.

Atar's eyes got so wide Appolion was sure they were going to pop out of his head. "You know my name?"

"Of course I do." Appolion replied absently, still looking for his brother.

Atar reached up with his small hand and pulled at Appolion's chin so that he had his uncle's full attention. "I like you."

Appolion was touched, strange how a child's approval could do that. "Thanks, I like you, too."

Atar gave him a toothy grin before he demanded, "Color with me."

Appolion nodded and Atar scrambled off his lap, just as painfully as he had gotten on and ran

to get his coloring book and crayons. Once he got back, they both sat on the floor in front of the coffee table and worked on coloring in horsies. Atar was quick to point out whenever Appolion would color outside the lines.

"It's more fun that way," Appolion argued, to which Atar gave him an annoyed look that was identical to the ones Gabi shot off.

Gabi flew down the stairs, her eyes frantically scanning the house. Once she saw that Atar was with Appolion, she brought her hand to her throat in a relieved gesture.

"Atar, you scared mommy," she breathed. "I was looking for you everywhere."

"I was coloring with my Uncle Polion," he replied, not glancing up from his picture.

She gave them an amused smile. "I can see that. You need to come with Mommy now. I need to go find your Uncle Raphael."

Atar's bottom lip drooped. "I wanna stay here."

Appolion could see the hesitation in Gabi's eyes so he offered, "It's okay. I don't mind."

Atar resumed coloring because as far as he was concerned, the matter was resolved.

Gabi still hesitated though. "Are you sure, Appolion? He can be a handful at times."

"He's no trouble. You should have seen Ray at his age." He ruffled Atar's hair. "One day when she was five, she threw our cat in one of the

ceremonial fountains, just to see if it knew how to swim."

Atar giggled. "Did it swim?"

"Yeah, but not before it yowled so loudly it woke up half of Heaven."

Gabi crossed her arms. "That's about enough of that story. You'll give Atar ideas."

Gabi did have a point there. Atar shot off a mischievous glance at Hairball. The cat slept on in Heather's arms, completely oblivious to the fact that an unwanted bath was now in its future.

Gabi pointed a finger at them before she left. "You two behave yourselves. I'll be back soon."

Appolion continued to color with Atar as the room filled up more and more. Cam came down with Nathaniel and the two of them flopped down on the couch behind them. Some of the other brothers, Uriel and Dina started playing cards. Megan, Heather and Jules were huddled in the corner talking quietly to each other.

When Bear came down the stairs with Tiffany all conversation stopped. Appolion instantly sensed that Bear had finally marked the female and every other male in the room knew, too. Bear gave a slight shake of his head to his brothers and they all got the message and kept their traps shut.

As soon as Tiffany's friends saw the pair they moved as a herd and ushered Tif out of there. Bear came over and collapsed on the couch next to

Cam. The brothers all watched the females go with a sense of defeat because they knew the Lehor family was now stuck with, not only Tif, but the rest of her crew.

All of the sudden, Megan's voice cut through the air, "Oh, Bear's mark is a kitty cat. How cute."

The Lehor brothers all looked thoroughly insulted.

Appolion chuckled. "You guys have a pudgy tat as your family symbol?"

Cam made a disgusted sound. "No, it's a tiger. It's a mean looking fucker, too."

"It's snarling and standing over a long sword, all warrior like," Nathaniel added.

Atar chimed in, "Uncle Cam just said the F-word. Now you have to put a quarter in the swear jar."

"Oh man, not again," Cam grouched. "I've put so much money in that jar that I should own it by now."

Atar rolled his eyes in a very grown up fashion. "Stop saying them naughty words."

"Camael." Gabi had come back into the room and she had her hands on her hips. "You better not be cussing around my son again."

"Sorry Gabi." Cam reached into his pocket and handed Atar a dollar. Atar took it without giving any change.

"Is everything ready?" Ramiel asked her.

When Gabi nodded, the brothers got up and started to move all the furniture back so that the center of the room was clear. Appolion just watched them since he didn't have a damn clue as to what they were doing. His confusion grew when Ana, Abdiel and Ray came in followed by Michael. Tif and her girls came out, too, and took position on one side of the room.

Atar asked Gabi, "Did I do a good job keeping Uncle Pollion busy?"

She kissed him on the top of the head. "You did a wonderful job, sweetie." Ana walked up and took the purple crayon out of Appolion's hand. "You might want to lose this. I've never heard of an archangel taking his vows with a crayon before."

Oh crap, they wanted to do the naming ceremony. What would they all say when they realized that he did not have the first clue how one even went? He knew he was supposed to recite some vow, but he had no idea as to what the words might be or what he was supposed to do before or after he said them. Everyone was finally going to know that he was no archangel. He was some poser.

Michael was standing at the front of the room and he held Appolion's sword in both hands, the blade sideways. The brothers all pulled out their own swords and pointed them down. The entire

room got dead silent and they all looked at him expectantly.

Appolion gulped down the panic ball of vomit that was in the back of his throat and thought frantically for a way out of this mess. Maybe he could say that he had to pee, then he could climb out of the bathroom window. Before he could make good with his internal threat, Cam reached down and hauled him to his feet.

*Relax, this is going to be fun,* Cam's voice mocked in his head.

*I don't have a freaking clue about what to do,* Appolion admitted to him.

*Don't worry. It'll come to you. Remember, the words are burned into your heart from birth. You'll do just fine.*

Appolion turned just long enough to give Cam a very dorky panicked look. *You can tell me what to say right? You just send it mentally and I can say it out loud.*

Cam sighed out loud before sending, *Fine, if you get stuck I'll help you out. But trust me, you won't need it.*

Appolion slowly walked to the front of the room and bowed before Michael.

The Chief held the sword above Appolion's head and asked, "Do you accept this sword?"

Since it was already his own damn sword, that was an easy question. "With great honor."

The brothers all pounded their blades onto the

wood floors with a hard bang. Appolion flinched as he thought about the scratches that they were sure to leave behind. Michael lowered his sword and Appolion instinctively knew that he was supposed to kiss it. He did, symbolizing that the sword was his most treasured possession.

“Do you accept the title of archangel?” Michael said next.

Appolion wondered for a second if any angel in history had ever had the balls to answer *no* to that one. Wouldn’t that be a shocking moment? Would everybody just pack up their sword and go home with a collective, *Bummer*? He regained focus and replied, “With great honor.”

When Michael lowered the sword a second time, Appolion was relieved that he, again, knew what to do. He wrapped his hand tightly around the blade until he drew blood. It trickled down onto the newly scratched wood floor. He was secretly proud of himself that he didn’t yelp in pain because his hand hurt like a mother scratcher. All of the sudden a flood of words came tumbling out of his mouth.

“I swear a blood oath to always protect the human race and my fellow angel brethren from Lucifer and his followers. I will always put their needs before my own and willingly sacrifice myself if necessary. I vow never to use my powers for evil and always remember the ones who have



fallen before me.”

Appolion breathed out as relief flooded his body. Cam had been right, when the time came he knew what to say. He barely resisted the urge to do a little victory dance. This was a serious moment after all.

“Rise, archangel Appolion and be accepted by your brothers,” Michael instructed as he handed Appolion his sword.

Appolion did and the brothers all raised their swords in response. As Appolion raised his, he stole a glance at Ana out of the corner of his eye. She was smiling at him with love in her eyes.

\* \* \* \*

It was late when everybody finally settled down and started to go asleep. Even though there were plenty of beds upstairs, everybody crashed in the big living room. Appolion had Ana in one arm curled into his side and Ray in the other. Bear sat against a wall, Tiffany snuggled in his lap. The Tif Crew surrounded them, curled up on the floor like a litter of kittens. Dina was mixed in with them. The brothers had found various spots on the floor. Uriel and Raphael had both left right after the naming ceremony. Uriel was going on some secret mission for Michael while Raphael was checking up on the worst of the wounded from the battle.

Michael and Cam were in the other room, still awake and on their cell phones as they talked to their followers and issued orders. Man, Appolion did not envy Cam right now. As soon as he would hang up from one call, his cell would ring again as yet another empath called with a problem.

Appolion noticed that Abdiel was still awake. His brother had Atar on his lap and his mate, Gabi, snuggled into his side.

"What's going to happen now?" Appolion whispered to Abdiel.

"Michael wants to regroup once things cool down a bit." Abdiel played with Gabi's dark hair as he talked. "Once they do, he plans to set up a compound. He thinks that there is safety in numbers and that we can better coordinate the war that way."

"I'm sorry I got you all in this mess. If you all hadn't broke me out of prison, there would have never been a war."

"It's not your fault, little brother. This war was coming one way or another."

Appolion gave him a small smile of gratitude before growing serious again. "You do know that this war is going to spill over into Hell? The various demon clans are going to align themselves with us or the justice angels, depending on what side best suits their needs."

"Michael thought as much. He wants us to be

ready for attacks from all sides, angel and demon alike." Abdiel kissed his sleeping son. "The Chief has appointed me to be his top general."

"Cool?" Appolion made the comment a question because he wasn't quite sure that his brother was pleased with new job.

Abdiel nodded his head. "Yeah, it's cool. I want you to be my second."

"Me? Why? I don't know the first thing about leading others."

Abdiel gave him a sharp look. "You need to start learning to give yourself a little credit. I'm picking you because you're a good warrior and you're damn smart. Not very many angels would have survived out in the world all alone like you did for so long. Our youth could learn a lot from you."

Appolion was so stunned by his brother's speech that he couldn't talk.

Abdiel chuckled softly. "No smartass comeback? I'm shocked."

"I'm thinking," Appolion said numbly.

"Thinking about my offer of a smartass comeback?"

"Both."

They sat in silence for a few moments before Appolion found the right words. "Of course I'll be your second, Abdiel. You're my brother and I love you and Ray. I'll follow you anywhere."

Abdiel seemed relieved. "You don't know how long I've waited to hear those words. I love you, too, Appolion."

Appolion rolled his eyes. "Okay, can we stop this now? This is becoming a total chick flick moment."

"I think it's sweet," Ray mumbled against his side.

Appolion nudged her. "How long have you been awake?"

She didn't open her eyes. "Since you two first started talking. I'm a light sleeper."

Appolion exchanged an amused look with Abdiel and said, "No, you're nosey is what you are."

"Shut up."

Cam came running into the room. He slapped on the light and everybody started to wake up.

"One of the safe houses is under attack," he announced. "They're surrounded by both demons and justice angels."

Abdiel got up and started to bark orders, "Appolion, I need you and the Lehor brothers to get your weapons and flash there right now. Gabi, stay here with Atar."

"We should leave some of us behind in case they attack here, too," Appolion suggested. "They would love to get Atar and Gabi just because they belong to you."

Abdiel nodded. "Okay, Ana I need you, Bear and the Tiffany crew to stay and fortify the house. Keep Dina with you."

Ana nodded and grabbed Appolion's sword. She handed it to him with a kiss. "Don't go do something stupid like getting hurt," she ordered.

Appolion kissed her back and nodded to the brothers. They flashed out of the cozy living room and landed into a new kind of hell.

## Chapter Nine

**B**y the time they got there it was all over. It hadn't been a battle, it had been a bloody massacre. The small band of angel warriors had been caught unprepared, some of them had been cut down in their beds as they had slept. The justice angels and demons had shown no mercy. They had destroyed every last one, leaving no survivors.

The only way to kill an angel was to destroy them, leave them in so many pieces that no healer would ever be able to put them back together. Kind of like Humpty Dumpty. That's what the dirty bastards did, too, they came in and just fucking decimated the poor angels.

Derel reached down and scanned the one body that was mainly intact. After a few seconds, he bolted for the window and leaned out. Appolion could hear him vomiting. Once the healer was finished, he ducked his head back in and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Something ate his heart out." He shook and his voice was thin and reedy.

Ramiel gave him a horrified look. "What?"

Derel choked, "Something fucking ate his heart out. The cuts weren't made with a knife, they were made with teeth."

Appolion looked down at the various body parts and almost joined Derel at the window. He was right, something had fed off these angels. Not only were they riddled with teeth marks, but great hunks of flesh were missing.

Nathaniel asked him, "What kind of demon does that?"

Appolion shook his head. "None, not even Hounds from Hell cause this kind of injuries. It's something I've never seen before."

Michael let out a loud curse, "Those idiots have called the Powers in."

Appolion started to feel sick all over again. "Aren't they those killing machines you were telling me about? The ones that have no remorse or pity."

"That would be the ones," Cam growled. "The Powers don't separate the good guys from the bad guys either. They'll attack anything that comes in their way, just for shits and giggles."

Appolion looked at the carnage again and couldn't believe that the council would let something this evil loose. "Will they attack

humans?"

Michael gazed down at his fallen warriors and it seemed like he got a bit choked up. "The Powers generally ignore humans because they think man is beneath them, but if a human gets in the way, they will kill them."

Rachael ran her fingers down the wall and shuddered. "The evil still lurks here. I can feel the building screaming from it."

Appolion wasn't going to argue that one. He, too, could feel the evil. The air stank of it. He opened his mouth to state his agreement, but before he could get a word out, a small voice slammed into his head.

*Uncle Pollion, help me.*

*Atar, tell me what's going on.* Appolion tried to keep his mental voice calm, even though his heart was hammering.

There was no response. He tried frantically to reach Ana, but all he was met with was a cold silence. Something was blocking him from reaching her and it felt demonic.

"We need to get back to our safe house, now!" Appolion yelled at the others. "It's under attack."

Abdiel's face drained of all color and he flashed out of there without a word, the others followed. They landed in the living room and all hell was breaking loose. Appolion was appalled to see that there were demons inside the house. He knew that



there had been protective chants said over it so the demons shouldn't have been able to penetrate them. Yet, there they were pretty as you please, fighting side by side with the justice angels.

He fought his way over to Ana. She battled a justice angel and he was proud to see that she was kicking his ass. Her sai moved so fast they were just a blur. The twin daggers left a bloody trail behind every time she struck the justice angel. He finally staggered back several steps and she finished him off with a hard kick to the chest. He slammed into the wall and flashed back to Heaven.

"Why in the hell didn't you guys flash out of here as soon as they attacked?" Appolion yelled over the roar of the battle.

"We can't find Atar." A demon started to charge them and she whipped out her gun and shot it in the face. "Gabi thinks he got scared and hid somewhere. Everybody refused to leave without him, even Tiffany's friends and Dina."

Appolion felt a surge of gratitude go through him. They could have very easily left Gabi, Ana and Atar behind, but they had chosen to stay and fight. He silently vowed to himself that if they ever got out of this mess, he would never call the Tif Crew airheads anymore.

He grabbed Abdiel by the arm and then had to duck when his brother acted on instinct and

swung at him with his sword. But then, judging by the frantic look on Abdiel's face, his brother wasn't in his right mind. Gabi looked just as upset as she tried to make her way through the enemy while screaming her son's name hysterically.

"You need to calm down," Appolion ordered his brother.

"I can't find him anywhere," Abdiel's voice had an edge to it, like he was about to lose it.

"Just reach out with your mind and call to him. You're telepathic, too," Appolion reminded him.

"Something's blocking it."

"He's your son, the bond between you two is strong enough to overcome it," Appolion urged.

Gabi grabbed at the back of Abdiel's shirt with both hands and gave him a slight shake. She had a cut on her cheek that bled, her dark hair was down and in disarray. "Please, Abdiel, try again. I know you can do it. I believe in you."

Abdiel closed his eyes and concentrated. As soon as he opened them, Appolion knew he had been successful. He took off, full tilt, toward the stairs. Appolion followed and covered his back. Gabi and Ana helped him and, between the three of them, they were able to help Abdiel get through the enemy.

He ran into one of the bedrooms and skidded to a halt so fast Appolion ran into his back. Atar was sitting on the bed and judging from the dust

bunnies in his hair, he had been hiding under the bed. He clutched Hairball tightly in his fat baby arms and his big blue eyes were filled with tears. Eurynome stood over him, a gun pointed at his head.

"You make even the slightest move and I'll blow this brat's head off," the demon snarled. "I'll make it so that not even his mommy, the healer queen, can fix him."

"Please don't," Gabi begged with a sob. "He's your grandson. Surely that must mean something to you."

Eurynome laughed at her, showing off his jagged teeth. "Like I would care for anything that Abdiel bred. I'm not capable of tender feelings, my sons should have told you that."

"Is this what you're reduced to, Dad?" Appolion asked in a scathing tone. "Hiding behind the young now?"

His father cocked back the gun. "I've been doing some thinking. Since both you and I are Destroyers, just maybe that trait will be passed down to Abdiel's son. Since Abdiel destroyed Forcas and Douma, I figure he owes me a son."

Abdiel yelled, "If you so much as touch one hair on his head, I will hunt you down and tear you apart piece by piece. There won't be a hole big enough for you to hide in."

Eurynome made a tsking noise, "What makes

you think you would be able to get him back, when you were never able to get back Appolion and Rachael?"

"He did get us back," Appolion argued, even as his mind scrambled for a way to get Atar away to safety.

"Not before I was able to have my fun with you, Appolion. It must just drive Abdiel insane, knowing that you suffered all those years while he was nice, safe and cozy up in Heaven."

Appolion ignored that last comment and decided to try a bargain. "If you let Atar go, I'll take his place. It's what you wanted from the beginning. We don't even know if Atar has any special skills. You already know I'm a Destroyer, I'm a sure thing."

He heard Ana give out a cry of protest behind him, but he didn't dare take his gaze off his nephew long enough to turn and give her a reassuring look. He dropped his sword, then held up both his hands to show that he was unarmed. He started to move closer to Atar. He moved in mere inches, afraid to move too fast or too much, lest he spook the demon.

"I'll be the son that you always wanted," he continued, once he saw he had his father's interest piqued. "You were right about the angels all along. They imprisoned me and were going to execute me. I would love to have my revenge

against them. We could take both Heaven and Hell down with our combined powers.”

He only prayed that if his father really did manage to take him back down to Hell, Ana would know he'd lied. He would never betray Michael, but he had to make his father believe so, if only for a minute. The demon did appear to buy it, too, at first. But then Eurynome roared and brought the gun back up.

“Liar,” he snarled. “I know you better than that, Appolion. You would never betray Abdiel, you're too much of a bleeding heart.”

Appolion was close enough though. He dove at the bed and wrapped Atar in his arms. He heard the gun go off a second before he felt the bullet graze his thigh. He landed on the other side of the bed, twisting his body so that Atar and Hairball were not crushed.

Atar whispered in his ear, “I knew you would come for me, Uncle Pollion.”

He gave the kid a reassuring squeeze even as he tensed up his body and waited for his punishment. Whenever he had pissed off dear old Dad, he was struck with one of his energy bolts. Eurynome did not disappoint, with an angry roar he fired one off. Before it could strike Appolion however, Abdiel raised his hand and threw off a shield.

The demon spun around with lightning speed

and fired off another one. It hit Gabi and slammed her into the wall. She landed in a heap on the ground and didn't move. Abdiel ran to her and gave her a gentle shake, but she still did not stir. Atar started to cry.

"You can't protect them all," Eurynome said with a smirk.

Appolion realized that he was right, too. So long as both he and Abdiel's family were there, Abdiel would be trying to keep all of them safe and he wouldn't think as a warrior. Appolion wrapped Atar tighter into his chest and started to run as fast as he could across the room. He didn't exactly move with the grace of a ballet dancer either, thanks to the gunshot wound. He jumped side to side as his dad fire off several energy bolts his way. Appolion finally reached his brother and handed over Atar and Hairball. He locked gazes with Abdiel and his brothers eyes widened as he figured out what Appolion planned to do.

"Don't, I'm not going to leave you," Abdiel argued.

Appolion nodded his head. "You need to protect them. I can take care of myself."

Abdiel's continued protests were cut short when Appolion wrapped his arms around him, Gabi, Atar and Hairball and flashed all of them out of there. Appolion's head spun a bit from the exertion of flashing so many bodies at once. It

didn't help matters any when his dad hit him square in the back with an energy bolt. He skidded across the floor and came to a stop at Ana's feet. Shit, he had forgotten she was still there. "Get out of here," he told her as he struggled to his feet.

Big surprise, she shook her head. "No, we're a team."

The demon tried to hit her with an energy bolt, but she ready. She rolled to the side and took cover behind the bed. Appolion spun on his heel and shot his own energy force at Eurynome. The demon staggered back several steps before he recovered. Eurynome looked stunned, Appolion had never struck out at his father before.

Appolion took advantage of his father's hesitation and fired another bolt at the wall, blowing a hole in the side. He then ran and tackled the demon so they both tumbled out into the open sky. He couldn't risk the battle continuing inside the house, with their combined powers they could very well bring the whole building down on everyone.

They rolled in the air as they still fought with one another. Since he did not have the advantage of claws like his father, Appolion flipped open a set of retractable blades that were strapped to his wrists and used those. All too soon they landed on the hard ground and, since it was Appolion's

lucky day, his dad landed on top of him. The demon pinned him down and then stabbed at the gunshot wound in his thigh with a claw. Appolion let out a very ladylike yell of pain.

Ana leaned out of the hole and shot several times at Eurynome. The demon roared and jumped off Appolion. As soon as he was free, Appolion rolled to his feet and released an energy ball at his dad. It hit the demon and threw him backward.

"Hurts, doesn't it?" Appolion asked his voice laced with sarcasm.

Before the battle could go on any further, several beings flashed around the yard. Appolion and Eurynome both stopped and looked around as fear overrode their need to destroy one another. Appolion didn't need to be told these were the Powers, the pure evil that rolled from the figures screamed that fact to him. They all had long, white, blond hair, and the same pointed ears as Nix. Every one of them wore long gray cloaks that swept the ground and completely covered their bodies. The Powers made no noise, no battle cries issued from their mouths. They just stood there in an eerie silence. A female shifted her violet eyes toward them and Appolion felt a shiver go up his back. Their eyes were as cold and expressionless as their faces. One male stood at the front, showing he was the leader. An evil smile slowly



formed on his lips as he surveyed the battling demons and angels.

Michael's urgent voice suddenly filled his head as the Chief issued orders to the whole group. *It's the Powers, everybody flash out of here now.*

Appolion staggered under the evil psychic scent that the Powers were giving off. Fuck, they were twice as potent as any demon that he had ever felt. He felt Bear's own sharp cry of distress before Cam was able to flash him to safety. Appolion looked up where Ana had been and took in a deep breath of relief when he saw she had flashed away, too.

He let it out in disgust when she flashed right next to him. He should have known that she wouldn't make things easy on him. The Powers started to make their way toward the house.

"Everybody made it out." She pointedly ignored the glare he sent her way. "They went to the new compound."

"You should have gone with them," he growled at her as he darted a worried look at his dad. The father was too preoccupied at the moment to be bothered with them anymore. All the demons seemed even more terrified than the angels of the Powers.

Appolion decided that now would be a good time to get Ana to safety. As it was, there were only a handful of demons and justice angels left.

He grabbed her by the arm and tried to flash both of them out of there.

Nothing happened.

He looked down, half expecting to see an angel harness on his wrist, but it was bare. She tried to flash the out of there, too, it didn't work for her either. Appolion looked around and realized that they were the only two angel warriors left. They were surrounded by three different types of enemies, too. So he did what he had always done best. He wrapped her tight in his arms and shielded them from view.

Eurynome let out an angry roar as soon as they vanished and that was the last mistake he ever made. The noise attracted the attention of the Powers and they moved as one and attacked the demons without any mercy. Eurynome tried to use his skills as a Destroyer to stop the Powers, but he was weakened from the battle with Appolion and no match for them.

Appolion pressed Ana tight against the building and hoped that he would be able to shield them long enough. The Powers methodically destroyed what demons and justice angels were left. He noticed that the poor saps were unable to flash away to safety as well. Only the Powers had the ability to do that.

Appolion held Ana's shuddering body against his as the screams of agony ripped through the air.

She was an empath, so he knew that her body drank in all the fear and pain that the justice angels felt. She tried to look up, but he placed his hand on the back of her head and refused to let her. "You don't need to see this," he wasn't surprised his voice quivered.

Those things were killing machines. The angels and demons didn't stand a chance. Appolion watched as his own father was slowly tortured and destroyed. Even if he had wanted to, there was nothing he could do to save him.

He lost track of time. Even after it was all over and the Powers left, he still sat there. His body was paralyzed, his mind numb, by everything that had just happened. It wasn't until Ana's cell phone kept going off that he finally came out of his haze. She didn't move to answer it, instead she stayed buried in his chest. He pulled it out of her pocket and flipped it open.

It was Michael. "Are you two okay?"

Appolion tried to talk, but his mouth was so dry he had to swallow several times. He finally managed to rasp, "What the fuck, Mike?"

"The council must have reconstructed the Crystal Ring. Nice guys that they are, they didn't even care they stranded some of their own."

So it was his lucky day. He and Ana had missed escaping by seconds. Now they were stuck.

"No you aren't stuck." Even though he was

miles away, Michael was still able to read his mind. "Just get a car and take Ana to a hotel. Cam and I are on our way. It'll just take a while because we have to travel like humans."

Appolion nodded his head, even though the Chief couldn't see. But the shock had rendered him temporarily stupid. Car...travel like a human...yeah, he could do the human thing. He had lived as one for centuries after all. He gripped the phone tightly. "Those things, they're bad. Worse than anything I ever met in Hell. The things I just saw them do."

Michael's voice turned soft and soothing. "I know, Appolion. You need to get Ana and you out of there before one of you overload."

Appolion glanced down at Ana and realized that Michael was right. She was too damn quiet. She had even stopped shaking, just slumped against his chest, her eyes slightly closed. He kissed the top of her head and was relieved when she stirred a bit and snuggled deeper into him, but that was all she did. He needed to get her away from here pronto. "Okay, I'll call you once we're settled," he told Michael. He hesitated then asked, "How's Bear?"

"He had another seizure as soon as the Powers showed up. Don't worry about him though. Raphael and Cam have already pulled him out of it."

Appolion was worried about him. He was worried about all of them. After what he had just seen, he knew that they were against something that they might not be able to defeat. Even if they combined the gifts of the Order.

He picked Ana up, cradled her to his chest and started to make his way through the carnage. Just to reassure himself that she was fine, he scanned her body for injuries. What he found shocked him so much he almost dropped her.

*Oops!*

## Chapter Ten

**A**ppolion left Ana in the car while he went in and got the hotel room. When he went back out, she still stared vacantly through the window and didn't even acknowledge him. He gently shook her shoulder to get her attention. She tilted her head slightly in his direction before she started to tremble violently.

"I'm cold," she said in a small voice.

"Come on, babe, let's get you to bed," he spoke in a soft gentle tone as he slowly urged her out of the car.

"I'm cold, I'm cold, I'm cold," she chanted over and over as he walked her to the room.

They walked by a human couple and, since he wasn't shielding them, the man and woman turned to look at her. He gave them an angry scowl and they diverted their eyes. When he heard their hushed whispers as they walked away, he really got annoyed. "So she's cold, what's the big deal?" he yelled back.

Once he got her to the room, he took off their clothes, save for their undergarments, and stepped into the shower with her. He turned on the water full blast and made sure it was hot. He put her right under the spray of water and she still didn't respond. He really started to get worried about her now. He had seen other angels act like this when they were captives in Hell. It had always been an empath and it had always been right before they had gone catatonic. Ana was overloading and if he didn't snap her out of it soon, he would lose her forever.

He pulled her close and murmured in her ear. "Come on, babe, you need to come back to me. I was going to wait to tell you, but I guess now is the best time. We're going to have a baby. A girl. I've already seen what she is going to look like. She's going to have your blonde hair and blue eyes. God, Ana, she's going to be so beautiful."

Her breathing quickened, but her eyes were still glazed. He pressed on. "She's going to need you, Ana. I need you. Come back for both of us."

Her arms went around him and that was all the encouragement he needed to continue, "That's it, Ana, I know you can fight this. Think of us. Think of your brothers. They would be so lost without you."

"But, I'm cold," she said in a small voice.

Seeing that she was close to coming out of it, he

maneuvered her so that the water hit her in the face. That was the last thing needed to snap her out of her state. She coughed several times and he let out a small relieved laugh. He pulled her close to his chest and squeezed her so tight that he was sure that he almost broke her. She pushed at him as she continued to choke on the water.

\* \* \* \*

"Appolion, what in Sam's Hell are you doing?" she gasped.

He shrugged as he wiped some wet strands of hair out of her face. "You said you were cold, so I thought a nice hot shower would warm you up."

"Most angels would just settle for a cup of hot chocolate and a blanket. Isn't this a bit extreme?"

He looked at her dryly. "It worked, didn't it?"

She went to let out an exasperated sigh, but it ended up being a sputter because water went down her throat. "You're such an ass."

He smiled down at her, but the smile never reached his eyes.

She reached up and cupped his cheek. "Are you going to be all right?" she asked. "You just saw your father—"

He put his fingers over her lips. "My dad has been dead to me for centuries. As far as I'm concerned, he almost got what he deserved."



"Almost?"

"Nobody, not even him, deserves to be destroyed in such a way."

He twisted them around so he was directly under the showerhead. He closed his eyes and let the water run over his face. She couldn't help but admire how nice he looked with wet underwear sticking to his body. She stepped into him and started to nuzzle his neck, drinking in the water.

He moaned his appreciation before he said, "We need to talk."

She thought about rubbing up against him so that he would change his mind and take her right there, but decided that she would hold back and discuss whatever it was he wanted to talk about. She would be good, for now. Although she wasn't entirely good, she danced her fingers lightly across his waistband. "Okay, I'm listening."

He grabbed her hand and stilled it. "I wasn't bluffing earlier, you're really pregnant," he said bluntly.

Her heart skipped a beat and she looked up, half expected to see a kidding look on his face. She gulped when she saw he was dead serious. She instantly feared for her unborn child. It would be related to both of the families of the Order. As a result of that, it could be a very powerful and gifted angel. Both sides of the angel factions would want to control it.

She put her hand over her stomach in a protective gesture. It would be a token of her and Appolion's love. A new beginning when there had been so many endings. She felt a small smile drift across her lips. "Will it really be a female?"

"Yes."

"I feel sorry for her already."

He gave her a crooked grin. "Why is that?"

"Between you and her uncles, she is never going to have a boyfriend. You guys will probably lock her up in her bedroom and take turns guarding the door."

He gently touched the hand that was on her belly. "Are you okay with this?"

"I'm fine, scared to death, but fine." She started to toy with the waistband of his underwear again. "I'm still cold though."

His gaze narrowed in concern. "I'm sorry, let's get you in bed under the covers. That should help."

"That's not exactly what I had in mind." She lowered her hand and cupped his cock, it grew under her touch. "Although the bed did play a part in my plan."

"We shouldn't," he argued, but his eyes were closed in pleasure. "You need your rest after everything you've been through."

"I need to forget what we saw today and making love to you will let me do that." She

slipped her hand inside his underwear and caressed him. "Besides, we can't have all this water go to waste. I'm suddenly feeling very dirty and I need help to get clean."

He gave her that smile, the one which showed off his dimples. "We'll we can't have that, now can we?"

It was difficult to pull down his underwear because it stuck to his body, but she managed. He had better luck with her bra, it only took a flick of his wrist to undo the clasp. When he slipped off her panties, he dropped to his knees before her get them past her ankles. Once he'd tossed them aside, he stayed there. His hot breath fanned her stomach.

"Do you know how much I treasure you?" He looked up at her, droplets of water clung to his eyelashes and made them look darker. They stood out in sharp contrast to his intense blue eyes, which were raw with emotion.

Ana felt her heart thud at the love she saw there. She still couldn't believe he wanted her of all angels. "I treasure you, too." She ran a hand through his hair.

"I thought I'd lost you forever." He leaned his forehead against her stomach and a shudder went through his strong body. "Ana, if you were gone, I couldn't exist." He pulled back and kissed her flesh. "You are my everything."

Before she could respond, he brought his mouth to her core. A hoarse sob slipped past her lips as her body swayed. Gods, the things he could do with his tongue. It lightly danced along her clit before he speared it inside her. She brought her hands to his shoulders to support herself as she arched back, her breasts thrust forward. The water continued to beat against her front and added to the erotic sensations that rippled over her body.

"Your cream tastes so good," he growled. "It's sweet and fiery, just like your personality. I could eat you all day, you're better than any manna created. Fuck, Ana, do you have any idea what you do to me?"

His harsh language made her wetter for him. While it should have insulted her, instead it made her so turned on she almost came at the words. Her high-pitched wail filled the shower stall when he speared his tongue inside her again.

"I know you're about to come," his voice was tight with need. "Your juices are coating my mouth and your flesh is quivering under my lips." He flicked his tongue over her clit. "Come for me, angel. Scream my name."

"Appolion!" She grabbed two handfuls of his hair as he worked her body in a long intense orgasm. He expertly used his mouth until every last bit of pleasure was wrenched from her body. "Make love to me, please."

He stood up and nipped her lightly on the ear. "Not yet, kitten. You're dirty, remember?"

He turned her around so her back was to him before he gently washed her from head to toe. The soap made his touch smooth and before long she panted with desire again. Even though she could feel his hard cock pressed against her, he made no move to relieve his own desire.

"Tell me, Ana," he rumbled into her ear. "All those years you were looking for me, did you ever lie awake and touch yourself as you thought about me?"

"Maybe," she hedged as her cheeks burned. In truth, she'd spent every night doing that.

He took her hand and gently guided it between her legs. "Show me. I want to see your pretty fingers bringing yourself pleasure." When she hesitated, he chuckled. "Shy? I never thought I'd see the day, you acted bashful."

He put his fingers over hers and started to guide her movements. After a few minutes, her trepidation faded and, when he moved his hand away, she continued to toy with herself.

"You never answered my question," he admonished as he reached around and cupped both her breasts.

"Every time." She moaned as he feathered his thumbs over the taunt peaks of her nipples. "Every time I went to bed, I did it."

His cock jerked against her. "Would it shock you if I told you I did it, too? I would think about your beautiful blonde hair and how it would look wrapped around my body and I'd have to jerk off just so I could sleep."

Another orgasm rocked through her. What was it with dirty talk that made her putty in his hands? She laid the back of her head against his sturdy chest as she cried out in pleasure. "I need you inside me, Appolion."

He reached over and turned off the water. "In the bed. I want your soft body underneath mine when I take you."

Appolion dried her off before he carried her to the bed and gently placed her on her back. She opened her arms to him and he settled himself over her, his hips between her thighs. The tip of his erection pushed at his entrance and it was all she could do not to thrust up at it.

"Please, Appolion." He answered her wants, with a deep surge of his hips. They moaned together as his thickness filled her completely. He pulled back before he started to move in her in a slow sensual rhythm. Ana wrapped her legs around him as she ran her hands up and down the hard planes of his back. Each time he moved, the muscles rippled beneath her touch.

He still continued to talk to her, but it was in the demon purr, so she didn't understand a word

of it. It didn't matter though because it was still the most erotic thing she ever heard. She dug her fingernails in his back and he responded by increasing his pace. The pleasure built up until she couldn't hold back any longer, with a gasp, she let herself get lost in a mind shattering orgasm.

"I love you so much," Appolion switched back to English as he released his seed inside her. She held him tight, until he was sated, a please smile on her lips.

"I love you, too, Appolion."

\* \* \* \*

Appolion sat with his back against the headboard and played with Ana's hair as he savored their time alone together. Right after they finished making love, he compelled her to sleep so she could fully recover from her brush with the Powers. Even though he was tired himself, he stayed awake. He didn't want to miss their last moments of privacy and he could feel the rescue party getting closer. He was so in tune to the coming visitors, he knew Michael and the others were there even before there was a soft knock on the door. He slowly scooted out from under Ana and pulled on his pants and shirt, then went to answer it. Cam almost bowled him over in his haste to get to his sister, Abdiel and Michael were

with him.

Abdiel grabbed him by the front of his shirt and pulled him close. "Damn it, Appolion, are you okay? As soon as I made sure Gabi was all right, I tried to flash back to you, but the council had already blanketed Earth. Don't ever pull a stunt like that again."

Appolion awkwardly patted his arm. "I'm doing fine. I'm still shot in the leg, but I've had a lot worse."

"What in the hell were you thinking? We're supposed to be sticking together from now on."

"You had to protect Gabi and Atar and you couldn't do that while worrying about me."

"Appolion, you're my family, too. I couldn't stand to lose you or Rachael again." Abdiel ducked his head and hid his dark eyes, obviously a little embarrassed by his admission.

Appolion sat on the bed next to Ana. "I can take care of myself, Abdiel. I've been doing it since I was nine."

Abdiel pushed a lock of his dark hair out of his eyes with an impatient gesture. "Yeah, thanks to Dad."

Appolion let out a slow huff of air. "About him, there's something you should probably know."

"We already know that he's been destroyed. Rachael saw it in a vision."

"Oh crap," Appolion gulped. "Is she doing



okay?"

"She's managing just fine. She just wants you back with us."

Cam was still beside the bed as he ran his hands over Ana's shoulder. "Was she hurt at all?"

"Not physically," Appolion hedged.

"I could feel she was in pain. Don't bullshit me, Appolion."

"Her empath mind had some trouble handling all the vibes the Powers emitted. She was a little out of it for a while."

"Why isn't she waking up?" he asked.

Appolion pulled up the blanket so that it covered her arm. "I compelled her to sleep. She needs her rest, especially now in her condition."

Cam gave him a sharp glare. "That better not mean what I think it does. Tell me you are referring to the fact that she overloaded and not that you two did something stupid."

"Define stupid for me."

"Oh, I don't know. Like you knocking her up."

Appolion met his friend's stare and refused to back down. He was one of the few angels that weren't intimidated by the empath leader. "Back off, Cam, I'm not in the mood for this right now."

"I can't believe that you were so reckless," Cam hissed in an angry hushed tone. "Once the council gets wind of the fact our two families have bred a child, they're going to hunt it down like nobody's

business."

"Lay off of him," Abdiel cut in. "It's too late to do anything about it now."

Michael shook his head. "I'm afraid Cam is right about this one. This could not have come at a worse time. Jehel will do anything to get his hands on this child and he'll destroy anything that comes in his path."

"And I'll destroy anything that tries to touch my mate or our future daughter," Appolion snarled. "Since I'm the one that does carry the title of Destroyer, I think I can hold my own in that battle. Don't worry about us, Michael, I can protect my own."

\* \* \* \*

Ana woke up slowly and realized she was no longer in the hotel, but in a car. Although it was still dark outside, the early sun was starting to take the edges away from the night and she was able to make out who was in the vehicle with her.

She was in Appolion's lap and he idly stroked her back as he talked to Abdiel, whom was with them in the back seat. Michael was driving and Cam was in the passenger seat. Since he hadn't said a word, Ana knew her brother was pissed off about something. Since she felt too lazy at the moment to probe his mind to find out what it was,

she just yawned and snuggled deeper into Appolion's chest and waited. Sooner or later Cam would start bitching and then she would know what was eating at him.

The dork proved her right when he turned in his seat and grumbled, "I still can't believe you let this happen, Appolion. We're going to have to keep Ana under heavy guard at all times now, especially once she starts to get bigger. Both of you should have known better."

Ana kicked the back of Cam's seat as hard as she could. He lurched forward, braced his hands on the dashboard before he turned and gave her an annoyed look. She kicked his seat again, even harder. She glowered at him. "You need to remember who raised who here, Cammie. I was the one who dried your big fat girlie tears when you were little and you fell and scrapped your knees. Now you think you can dictate my entire life just because you are the empath leader. Get over it."

"Get over it yourself, Ana. Like you said, I'm the leader of the empaths and since you are one of my followers, everything you do effects me. That includes breeding a new super angel."

"That's your niece you're talking about, Cam."

He rolled his head to side, so he could look at her out of the corner of his eye and started to dole out the sarcasm. "Gee, thanks for the little biology

lesson there, professor. Here I thought the kid was going to be my new grandmother."

Appolion muttered, "You're such a dick."

Before Cam could respond to that, Michael turned right on a dirt road. He stopped the car at a gate. A pair of archangels slipped out from the shadows and came out to meet the car. Ana wasn't surprised to see that they were both armed to the teeth. As soon as the guards saw Michael, they waved them in.

A set of doors opened in the side of a hill and Michael drove the car into a huge underground garage. He parked the car and they all got out. Cam apparently wasn't done being pissed.

"Don't go anywhere," he ordered her. "We need to decide how we are going to handle this."

She raised her head haughtily. "As far as I'm concerned, there is no *we* at all. This is my child and what I do about isn't any of your damn business. All I want is one normal thing in my life. Is that too much to ask for?"

"Yes it is," he said coldly. "There can be nothing normal whenever it involves our family."

Ana was appalled to feel tears well up in her eyes. Oh crap, she had never been one to cry and now she was about to bawl. It must be the whole pregnancy thing at work. Unfortunately, Appolion saw the tears and took offense. He hauled off and clocked Cam across the jaw. Cam staggered back

several steps before he recovered and tried to lunge at Appolion. Michael caught him by the waist and dragged him back.

"Enough," the Chief barked. "Normally, I wouldn't have a problem with you two beating the crap out of each other, just so you could prove who had the biggest dick. But I can't have you jackasses going and throwing your powers at each other. There are too many angels around and somebody innocent might get hurt."

Appolion shifted his dark blue eyes toward Michael. "Fine, I promise not to zap him. Can I still beat the crap out of him?"

"No, neither one of you is famous for holding your tempers. Sooner or later one, or both, of you will lose control of your anger and then we'll end up with the whole compound crashing in on us." The next words were meant for Cam alone, "Don't make the same mistake I did. You need Ana, don't let something like this tear you apart. Some mean hurtful things said cannot be taken back."

\* \* \* \*

Cam closed his eyes and let what Michael said sink in. His uncle was right, he had said some nasty things to both Ana and Appolion. Okay, so maybe they hadn't been so smart, but who could blame them for wanting some happiness. He

heard Ana let out a sniff and he winced. Gawd, he hated it when his sister cried. You could shoot him, stab him, bite him, but nothing hurt him more than the thought of Ana sad. He slowly walked over to her and motioned to her stomach. "Do you mind?" he asked softly.

She nodded.

He placed his hand on her, closed his eyes and went into a trance. He wasn't a healer so he did not go into the healer trance, instead he did something that no other angel could do. He reached out and touched the unborn angel's mind. He let out a surprised gasp and smiled when he felt his future niece reach back out to him. He could hear a soft giggle in his head and knew that it was her. *Hello, little one.* He sent out. He wasn't expecting a response, so when he got one he was stunned.

*Hello Uncle. My name is Ariel. I can't wait to meet you in person.* Her voice was a strange mixture of child and adult's. *You made Mommy sad, don't do that again.*

*Okay, Ariel, I'll apologize.*

*It's not hers or Daddy's fault. I would have found a way to come no matter what. It's my time.*

There was so much more that he wanted to ask her, but he could feel her mental connection start to drift away. Before she left completely, he felt her softly kiss his cheek. Her psychic touch was so

pure and gentle he had to resist the urge to call her back to him.

Cam opened his eyes and said, "Wow." He realized that he was already gone. He was so in love with his niece, he was ready to go out and buy her a pony. Yeah, he was in trouble, but in a good way.

Ana smiled at him. The look she gave him was equal parts, wonderment, happiness and shocked.

"What?" He glanced down as he felt a blush go over his face. He couldn't remember the last time he had actually blushed. It had been before...well, it was better not to go there right now.

"The way you sounded just now." She gently cupped his cheek. "You haven't sounded that happy in a long time."

"She reached out and touched my mind, Ana. She's going to be wonderful, she already is."

Abdiel arched his brow at him. "Are you trying to tell us that she is already psychic and she isn't even out of the womb yet?"

Cam nodded his head. "I wouldn't expect anything less, the power of both of our families is strong enough when they are alone. Now they've been combined, there are no limitations."

Abdiel grinned and said to Appolion, "I would love to see what she does the first time you try to put her in time out."

Cam couldn't help but see the humor in the

situation, too. The thought of a little mini-Ana twisting the Destroyer around her finger was too freaking funny. Come to think of it, the little female would probably have all of her uncles running around in circles, too. Cam couldn't wait either. For the first time in years he was actually looking forward to something.

"I'm sorry I was such an ass earlier." He shuffled his feet nervously. He wouldn't blame Ana one bit if she did not accept his apology.

But Ana forgave him, like she always had. "I'll just put you on diaper duty for a couple of days and we'll call it even."

He darted a quick glance up to Appolion. "How about you? Are we cool?" Cam tried to act unaffected as he waited for Appolion's answer, but it was hard. Although Cam would never admit it out loud, he valued Appolion's friendship more than anything. Appolion was the only one that truly understood what he had been through.

"We're cool." Appolion gave him a devilish grin. "Should we hug now?"

Cam rolled his eyes. "God no."

"We could go discuss our feelings over flavored coffee."

Cam pretended to be annoyed, even though he was secretly glad that they were back to bullshit terms. "You've been hanging out with Tiffany too long."



"Speaking of Tif. How's Bear doing?"

Michael waved his hand toward a hallway. "He's doing fine. You can go check on him on the way to the infirmary. We need to get your leg fixed."

Michael led them through the huge maze of hallways. The place resembled a small city and was as big as one, too. Even though he had already been in the compound a half dozen times, Cam still had no clue where he was going.

"How long have you been keeping this place a secret?" Appolion asked the Chief.

"I commissioned it the day we got Cam back from Hell," Michael called back. "I knew then that this day was coming and I wanted to be ready."

"How big is it?" Ana's eyes were huge as she took in the large eating hall they had just passed.

"Several miles. I wanted to make sure that there was room enough for all of us."

"What happens if the justice angels find out the location?" Appolion started to limp more with each step. Cam knew better than to try and offer to help him out.

"I have a couple more locations ready."

Appolion's jaw dropped. "How in the hell did you manage to do all that?"

"Magic."

Cam looked to see if the Chief was serious, but Michael's face was neutral and revealed nothing.

Michael opened a door and the sound of Smashmouth's *All Star* came pouring out. Bear was sat at a computer, his head bopped to the beat while he typed furiously at the keyboard. Jules and Heather were in the middle of the floor dancing with a small group of angels. Dina was watching them, dumfounded. Actually, his eyes bugged out of his head so much that he looked like a fat kid let loose in a candy store.

Cam groaned to himself, why did it have to be empath's that were acting like idiots? He looked over to see Michael's reaction and was relieved to see the Chief seemed amused at the whole situation. Bear finally noticed them and he reached over and turned down the music.

Cam gave him a tight smile. "Nice little party you have going here, Pooh Bear."

Bear gave a guilty look. "It's not really a party. We don't even have pizza."

"Oh, don't hold back on my account, please."

Ana pushed at Cam so she could get by. "How are you doing, Bear? I heard about your last seizure."

"Oh I'm just dandy." Bear gave a sour look. "Besides being put under house arrest by Michael and Cam."

Cam ground his fangs together as he tried hard to hold onto his temper. He so didn't feel like revisiting this argument right now. "We've

already discussed this. Until your new gifts stabilize it's safer to keep you away from any negative energy."

Bear turned back to the computer, but not before Cam heard him mutter under his breath, "Yeah, because you're just full of feel good vibes there, bud."

Dina looked stunned that Bear would actually talk to his leader that way. Cam couldn't wait to see how the kid reacted the first time he saw Bear take a swing at him. He would probably piss his pants. Although, the young angel looked like he was about to do that act right then because he had just noticed Cam was looking at him.

He gulped loudly and started to squirm. "I'm sorry, my Lordship," he stammered. "Did I do something wrong?"

"No," Cam spoke softly so he didn't intimidate Dina even more. "You do need to come with me though."

Bear gave Cam a dirty look. "What for? I've already said that he is my responsibility."

"I know you did, but I still have to scan him. Just to be on the safe side."

Bear opened his mouth to protest, but Dina got up and shrugged his shoulders. "It's okay I understand," he said. "Don't worry about it, Bear, your brother is just doing his job."

Bear grabbed a pink cell phone and handed it

over to the justice angel. "Tif forgot this so you can take it with you. If you need me at all just call, I'm on her speed dial."

Dina looked down at the phone and blushed. "I don't know how to use one of these. My dad never let me go to Earth very often."

"Just ask Cam, he'll show you how to use it."

Cam put his hand on Dina's shoulder. "Yeah, I will. Don't worry, kid, I'll make sure it's not so bad."

"How deep in my mind are you going to go?"

Cam hesitated before saying, "As deep as I have to."

"I hear that it can be very painful when someone does that." Dina looked down at his hands.

Cam gave his shoulder another squeeze. "Only if the angel that is probing doesn't know what they are doing. I'll be careful and go slow. If I sense that you're in any discomfort, I promise to stop right away."

Dina finally raised his eyes. "I heard when the demons ripped into your mind in Hell, it hurt real bad. Was that because they didn't do it right?"

Cam caught Bear tensing up out of the corner of his eye. Nobody ever dared to bring up this topic with Cam. They all knew that he hated to talk about that time in his life. But Cam was surprised to find he wasn't angry at all with Dina. The kid

was just scared about his own future and trying to make sense of all the shit that was being thrown at him.

Cam locked eyes with Dina and was pleased when the younger angel didn't look away, although the kid did look awfully pale. "No, it hurt because they wanted it to. Now come on, let's get this over with."

Bear nagged, "You bring him right back when you're done with him."

Cam let out an aggravated sigh, "God, Bear, protective much?"

Michael chuckled, "We'll bring back your buddy, Bear. Now party on, but make sure you keep monitoring the computer for emails. We still have some pockets of angel warriors unaccounted for."

Dina started to follow them out of the room, but he stumbled a bit and Cam reached out to steady him. Jeeze, the kid seemed really be nervous. He had even started to sweat a little. They went back out into the hallway where Appolion and Abdiel waited. Appolion looked over at Dina and got a perplexed expression on his face. He gave a slight shake of his head before he pushed himself off the wall that he had been leaning on.

"Are you feeling okay?" he asked Dina.

The young angel shrugged. "Never felt better."

Appolion continued to grill. "You sure you

weren't hurt in the battle or anything?"

Cam gave him an annoyed look. "Yeah, Appolion, because Dina here just loves to walk around with gaping battle wounds. He's just a little tense right now."

Appolion still looked doubtful. "I guess you're right. I just must be a little off right now."

They walked for a few minutes before Dina suddenly gasped and fell to his hands and knees. A thick glob of blood trickled from his lips before it hit the ground with a quick succession of smacks. Appolion cursed and limped over to him.

"Shit kid, why didn't you tell us?"

Cam stood there feeling helpless. "What the hell is happening?"

Appolion helped Dina lay back. Cam was horrified to see Dina's shirt was soaked with blood and the angel was turning ashen. It looked like something was attacking him from the inside out. Appolion motioned to Ana and she knelt beside Dina and started to stroke his hair and mummer words of comfort.

Appolion looked grim. "I've never seen this with an angel before, only demons. It's a healers' shielding chant. A damn good one, too."

Cam exchanged confused glances with Michael. "I have no idea what you are talking about."

"A demon healer hid Dina's injuries so an angel healer wouldn't be able to detect them. By doing

so, it delayed me, or any other healer for that matter, from finding out that Dina's badly hurt."

The empath in Cam could feel Dina's life force start to weaken. "How long has he been like this?"

Appolion ran his hands lightly over the justice angel. "Weeks, maybe even months."

Cam and Abdiel lifted him up and they ran toward the infirmary. As soon as they got there, they put him on the nearest cot. Megan ran up and let out a gasp.

"What did you do to him?" she demanded angrily.

"We didn't do anything to him," Cam responded, too scared to get annoyed with her accusation. "Get Gabi and Raphael."

Megan nodded and ran off. She returned a few seconds later with the healer brother and sister. Megan started to brush back the injured angel's hair.

"I called Bear, he's on his way," she soothed. "Don't worry, Gabi and Raphael will make you better."

Cam's stomach did a strange flip as he realized that there might not be anything that the healers could do. Dina's life energy was growing fainter by the second. He hoped he held on long enough for Bear to get there. He knelt down and grabbed the kid's hand.

"Why didn't you tell us that you were hurt?" he

asked gently. If they had only known sooner, then they might have been able to heal him in time.

Dina smiled sadly. "I was afraid that if you knew the truth about me you would send me back. That maybe you wouldn't want me once you realized my own father used me to bargain with demons."

"How did he do that?" Megan asked tenderly. "What did you have the demons wanted?"

"Blood," Cam answered grimly. He should have destroyed Jehel back at the council chamber while he had the chance.

Dina stared at the ceiling, more blood started to trickle out of his nose. "Yeah, he traded my blood and...other things."

Cam exchanged knowing looks with Appolion. They both knew what the *other things* were. Damn, Jehel was more twisted than Cam had given him credit for. What kind of sick fuck does that to his only son?

Dina let out a weak laugh. "He's disappointed in me for not sharing his views. I guess he's a lot like Appolion's dad that way, huh?"

Gabi came out of her trance and Cam knew just by looking into her green eyes that it wasn't good. "Something ripped his whole insides up. I've never seen anything like it before."

"Tell me what happened," Cam urged.

Dina took in a labored breath. "This last demon



I had never seen before. It didn't even look like a normal demon, it looked like just any other angel. He was around my age and had dark hair, but his eyes were blood red. I couldn't even look at them because they were filled with such evil. In fact, his entire body reeked of evil. It was so bad my mind couldn't handle it and I started to overload. But he somehow managed to make me snap out of it and come back to reality."

"It seems like that would have been one of the few times overloading would have been a blessing," Ana whispered, tears started to slip down her cheeks.

Dina continued, his voice now so weak Cam had to struggle to hear, "That demon freak came over to me and put his hand on my chest and said some weird words. All of the sudden my whole body felt like it was on fire. I thought for sure that thing was going to destroy me right then and there, but it didn't. Instead, once it was finished, the demon put a healer's shield on me and left."

Cam asked, "Dina, where was your dad this entire time?"

Dina's words were now coming out labored and one at a time as he struggled to talk, "He was right there because it was all his idea. He caught me trying to run away and he sentenced me to death for it. He wanted me to suffer first though. He wanted me to know that I was slowly dying

for days. He knew I would be too ashamed to ask for help."

Cam could only begin to imagine the terror Dina had gone through. How had the kid manage to go on with that kind of thing hanging over his head? Crap, he had done more than managed to go on, he had gone against his father and helped out the angel warriors.

Bear entered in time to hear Dina's confession. He choked, "Don't let him die, Cammie."

Cam couldn't think of anything to say because he didn't have the heart to lie to his brother. Dina's death sentence was being carried out right before Cam's eyes and he was helpless to stop it.

Dina grabbed Cam's hand. "Quick, scan me before I go. There are some things I overheard and saw in Heaven that might help you."

Cam hated to do it, but Dina was right. He was dying and there was some information that he had that might be valuable to the angel warriors. He reluctantly closed his eyes and went into Dina's mind. He went slowly because he didn't want to hurt the poor kid. After several moments he opened his eyes, surprised by more than one thing he had found. He was dismayed to see Dina had deteriorated even further, he wasn't even conscious anymore. Gabi, Raphael, Derel, Tiffany, Megan and even Appolion were chanting around him, but it wasn't working.

"He's not a justice angel," Cam whispered.

"Come again?" Ana asked.

"He's an empath, he's always been one. Jehel refused to let Michael scan him at birth. He's one of my followers, my responsibility."

Ana gave him a sharp look. "There's no way that you could have known that."

Cam felt the self-loathing build up. "I should have, Ana. I could have protected him. Now he's dying and there is nothing I can do."

The healers all came out of their trances and the looks on their faces said it all. There was nothing that they could do to save him. Bear grabbed Derel by the front of his shirt and shook him.

"Try again," he pleaded.

Derel gave him a sad look, "Bear, we tried, there's nothing more that we can do."

Dina let out a gasp as his last breath rattled through his body. Bear gave a strangled sob and he shook Derel again.

"One last time, please. He's been through so much, he deserves a second chance."

Derel gave out a sigh and went back over and started to chant over Dina again, even though the only thing that was left of the kid was a shell. He had already passed from this world.

Just when it looked like Derel was about to give up again, Bear put his hands on his brother and what happened next was the most knock you out

your socks, shocking thing that Cam had ever seen.

## Chapter Eleven

*Eight months later*

Appolion walked through the compound as he rubbed his eyes like Atar did when he was sleepy. That was because he was tired, damn tired. The sword on his back felt like it weighed a million pounds and there wasn't an area on his body that didn't ache. He and Abdiel had just got back from their latest mission and it had been at a familiar place, too, Flint. While he had been there he had heard some crappy news.

His human friend, Jean was in trouble and needed him. A newspaper article Appolion had seen said there had been in a car accident and Jean's oldest daughter and son-in-law had been killed. Jean and her youngest daughter had been in the car as well, but they survived. But Jean's only remaining girl was in the hospital hurt badly. The paper said she was probably going to die, too.

So sleep would have to wait. He was going

back to Flint so he could heal the woman. It was the least he could do for Jean. To make things even more fun, none of the angel warriors could flash anywhere. Even though the justice angels and demons didn't seem to share the same problem. So Appolion had to drive everywhere he went, which ate up even more nighty-nite time. Since it was now the middle of winter and there was a nice snowstorm going on, the Michigan roads were shot to hell, too.

He found Ana in the gym and what he saw there made him smile, despite his bad mood. Ana and Cam stood in the center as two male angels ran laps around the gigantic room. Ana's hands were on her hips and her head was tilted in that certain way that showed she was ticked. She had on a pair of jean bib overalls that were stretched to the max over her pregnant belly and her blonde hair was in a pair of braids.

"Keep going boys," Cam called to the pair of runners. "Don't stop until you puke."

Appolion winced. Both of the in-the-doghouse, angels were empaths and Cam once told him that it hurt like hell whenever they vomited. Boy, those two must have really pissed Cam off. The smaller one stumbled to a stop.

Cam shook his head. "Oh no you don't, Dina. Keep on running. No pukie, no stoppie."

Appolion laughed and asked, "What did they

do put your panties in such a bunch?"

Cam let out a tired sigh. "They snuck out of the compound and went on an unscheduled field trip."

Ana crossed her arms over her chest. "Give them a break. They probably get sick of being cooped up in here all the time. It's not like anyone from Heaven would recognize Dina anymore."

Appolion silently agreed with her. Since he had come to live with them, Dina had gone through an Ambush Makeover, Goth style. He'd dyed his hair an unnatural shade of black that mimicked the only color of clothing he now wore. He had plugs in both of his earlobes and rumor had it he had just acquired a new tattoo. The dark look matched his mood sometimes, too. Appolion thought back to those days that had followed right after Dina had come back from the dead and winced. The kid's mind had shattered and it had taken both Cam and Bear to put it back together.

Appolion still couldn't believe Dina was alive. By all rights, he had been destroyed. What Derel had done to bring him back was nothing short of a miracle. Derel had displayed skills that not even Gabi and Raphael had. Appolion strongly suspected it was because of the Lehor blood that ran through the healer's veins, although the entire family seemed to avoid the topic like the plague.

Cam let out a frustrated growl. "I might not

have been angry at them for sneaking off if they had kept a low profile. But no, they had to go and make asses out of themselves. It wasn't just in front of other angels either, some humans noticed them, too."

Appolion bit his tongue so he wouldn't bust a gut at the sight of Cam's predicament. "Come on, you have to tell me what they were doing."

"They went to the movies with Tif and Megan and they didn't exactly watch the picture. I heard from reliable sources they were getting real frisky with the females."

Appolion wasn't shocked to hear Tif and Bear were going at it. Hell, the two of them got busy so often you would have thought they invented sex. But the whole Megan and Dina thing was new. He made that circle motion thing individuals do to indicate he wanted Cam to elaborate a bit more.

Cam rolled his eyes. "Apparently, Megan and Dina are an item now." He switched to a high-pitched squealing voice. "Because Dina is so cute and so sad and needs to be cheered up."

Ana thumped her finger hard in Cam's chest. "So what is the girls' punishment? It's not fair only my boys get into trouble."

Appolion smiled at the protective way she had said, *my boys*. As far as she was concerned, Dina was just another one of her brothers now. He pulled her close so her back was pressed into his



chest and rubbed her large belly. All three of them winced when they heard Dina and Bear both lose it at the same time and hurl.

Cam waved a hand at the pair. "Tif and Megan's punishment is they're the ones that have to clean up that mess."

Bear and Dina started to crack up like a couple of loons. They were sweaty, out of breath and neither one seemed able to stand upright. Dina groaned and held his stomach.

"That is so not fair, Bear," he bitched. "You tricked me into eating that crappy food before we even started. What the hell was that anyhow?"

Bear shot off a wicked smile. "That was Rachael's cooking."

Cam gave his brother an incredulous look. "Now that's a cruel punishment. I wouldn't even be that mean."

Bear groaned as he held his own stomach. "Can we go now?"

"No, I want you to run until you do it again."

Bear gaped at him. "You're not serious?"

"I'm very serious, you two fucked up big time." He clapped his hands together. "Up and at 'em you two."

Dina and Bear struggled upright and started the laps again, although this time Appolion noticed they moved a lot slower. Ana marched over to Cam, her eyes bright with fury. Well, she

really didn't march. She was at the stage of her pregnancy where she waddled. Appolion thought it was so damn cute. She hated it.

"You are being so mean to them," she snapped.

"My empath warriors need to always obey my orders Ana. It doesn't matter if they're my brothers or not." He looked over at Appolion. "I have to go out on a mission. Can you keep an eye on Dumb and Dumber?"

Before Appolion even had a chance to agree, much less argue, Cam walked out of the room. Well wasn't that just dandy? He needed to get to the hospital so he could heal Jean's daughter and he was stuck babysitting a couple of empaths.

Ana's voice broke into his thoughts. "I'm going with you."

He looked down at her confused. "What are you talking about?"

"I just read your mind and I know you are planning on going to help Jean's daughter and I'm tagging along. Jean's my friend, too."

He pointed to her stomach. "No way, you could go into labor at any time. You heard Gabi when she said that, unlike humans, female angels have no real set length of pregnancy. We can't risk it."

Ana rolled her eyes. "Please, all we're doing is going to help out a human. How dangerous could that be?"

She did have a point. It wasn't like there were

going to be justice angels or demons at the hospital. They could care less about humans or their suffering. That gave him an idea. Appolion could take all of them, get Jean's daughter healed and be back before anyone even knew that they were gone.

"Hey, Lavern and Shirley," he called out to the empaths, whom were hunched over and puking again. "Get cleaned up. We're going on a road trip."

\* \* \* \*

"I still don't see why we couldn't have used the parking garage," Bear grumbled for the tenth time and blew on his hands to warm them. "It's freaking cold."

"Because it would be too easy to trap us inside of one." Even as he spoke, Appolion still scanned the area for danger. Appolion felt downright naked without his sword. Because they would be intermingling with humans, he had been forced to leave it behind in the car along with some of their other, more bulky weapons. Although all three had little surprises tucked into their pockets. Just in case.

The snow came down hard and it was pretty damn cold, although Appolion would never give Bear the satisfaction of admitting it out loud. Dina

just buried his hands deeper in his pockets and kept his trap shut. That was because Dina never complained about anything, Jehel beat that urge out of him. Appolion could have dragged Dina's ass all the way to the Antarctic and ol' Dina would just go along without a peep.

Appolion stopped short at a telephone pole. The justice council had plastered the area with wanted posters. They were enchanted, so only demons and angels could see them. Appolion saw one of himself and he shook his head in disgust, although there was a small part of him that was impressed with the price of his bounty. Osama had nothing on him.

Dina stared at one that had his own picture on it. The Goth empath said slowly, "It says that they will pay the bounty for me, even if I am destroyed in the process. They just have to bring enough of me back for proof. My dad is one sadistic bastard."

Appolion felt for the kid, he knew firsthand what it felt like to have your own father hand you a death sentence. "I'm sorry, Jehel is a real jerk for putting a bounty on you."

Dina shrugged and walked away. "That's not what I'm upset about. Did you see my picture? Dad just had to use the dorkiest one of me."

"It's not the picture," Bear drawled. "You always look dorky."

Dina just laughed off the insult as they reached the entrance of the hospital. Appolion let out a low growl when he saw Ana outside. Despite the strict orders he had given her when they had dropped her off a few minutes ago.

"I told you to wait inside," Appolion said as he grabbed her arm and led her through the doors.

"After the third nurse came up to me and asked me if I was in labor, I decided to leave before they admitted me."

"Let's go." Appolion glared at Bear and Dina. "I want you two to stick close and stay out of trouble."

When they both just gave him dumb looks, he prompted, "Understood?"

They both nodded their heads and muttered, "Yes, sir."

They quickly found Jean's daughter's room. The human was in a chair slumped over, asleep. Her daughter lay on the bed, in a coma and hooked up to various machines. The only sound in the room was the occasional beep, click or hiss from the instruments. He went up to Jean and gently shook her. She came awake with a start.

"Appolion, you shouldn't have come here," Jean exclaimed.

Well, that certainly wasn't the welcome he had expected to receive. "I heard about your daughters and your son-in-law, of course I would come."

"Ah, Appolion," Ana interrupted. "She just used your real name."

Appolion felt real confused now. How in the hell did Jean know his name when she should be calling him Brian? He scanned Jean, just as he had done when he had first met her, just to reassure himself. Yup, all human there. So how did she know about him?

"Close your mouth, Appolion," Jean chided softly. "I've known who you were from the very beginning."

"But how?"

"Michael asked her to watch over you," Cam said from the doorway. He passed a pissed off look at the group of angels. "I can't freaking leave any of you alone for even five minutes."

Ana sat down in a chair. Truth be told, she fell ungracefully into it. But Appolion valued his own life too much to comment out loud about that. When pregnant Ana got mad, she was scarier than any assassin demon that Hell could create.

"Shut up, Cam," she snapped.

Appolion was still stuck on the whole Michael issue though. "So you mean to tell me that the Chief knew I was in Flint before Ana even found me?"

"We both did," Cam admitted in a flippant tone.

Ana fixed him with a steely glare. "You knew

where he was and you didn't bother to tell me?"

Cam shrugged. "You were having so much fun hunting him, we didn't want to spoil it. Besides, I had a sneaky suspicion he would only come in willingly with you."

Jean got up and went to stand toe-to-toe with Cam. She did not seem the least bit intimidated with the empath leader's size. Cam, for his part, did seem scared of the small human.

"Michael promised me that my family would be protected," Jean spat angrily. "I agreed to help him and what do I get in return? One of my daughters is dead and my other daughter, Cliona, is dying."

Appolion put a placating hand on her shoulder. "I can heal Cliona. It'll only take a few minutes and I'll have her completely better."

Cam smirked at him. "That might be a little harder than you think there, bud. Why don't you scan her and you'll see what I'm talking about."

Appolion placed his hands on her and closed his eyes. He was shocked when he saw the young female's body structure. It was unlike anything he had ever encountered before. She was not human, yet she sure as hell wasn't angel either. He opened his eyes and shook his head, confused. He gazed down at the tiny petite female. Her long, dark, hair was full of deep red streaks, almost like she dyed them, though Appolion detected nothing

artificial about it. Her cheekbones were very high and arched and sprinkled with light freckles. He peered even closer and saw her ears were even more pointed than Nix's.

"What kind of game is this?" he asked. "What is she?"

"She's a fairy," Cam responded. "Well, part fairy. Since Jean is her mother, she's part human, too."

Bear scoffed, "Bullshit, there's no such thing as fairies. Everybody knows that."

Jean spun on him, hand on hip. "I've heard there is no such thing as angels either. But we all know that's not true."

Bear looked over at Dina and the other angel shrugged his shoulders to show that all this was news to him, too. Both of them ducked their heads down as they tried to peer at the space between the bed and Cliona's back. Jean went over and smacked them both on the back of their skulls.

"Quit looking for her wings," she ordered.

"So fairies are like angels then?" Bear rubbed his head. "It's just a myth about them having wings, too?"

Jean gave a tired sigh. "No, she has them. She can call them out at will like all fairies."

"You mean she just thinks about it and, poof." Dina mimicked the sound with his hands. "Her wings pop out?"



"What color are they?" Bear asked.

Cam silenced them both with a slice of his hand. "Can you heal her, Appolion?"

Appolion thought about it a minute. He would have to go in and learn a whole new anatomy before he could even start. He was never one to back down from a challenge though. He nodded. "It's going to take a while."

"Work fast, we don't have time. The council is just gunning to get a hold of a fairy. They think if they could use a captive to barter with, the fairies will agree to enter this war as their allies. That's why they attacked Jean and her family. There wasn't a car accident was there, Jean?"

The human shook her head. "No, they ambushed us while we were leaving a restaurant. Morosa's husband tried to fight them, but there were just too many. He was a brave man. He knew all along what my daughters were and it never mattered any to him. He loved Morosa too much to let her being a fairy get in the way of their happiness."

"I'm so sorry," Ana said softly.

Jean suddenly looked so old and defeated. "I still don't understand why they came after my girls. They are not full-blooded and the council must know how the fairies feel about humans."

Cam ran his hands through his hair in a very Michael liked gesture. "Jehel is getting desperate.

Once this war started, the fairies went into seclusion. No one knows where they are. When he couldn't get his hands on a full-blooded one, he must have decided your girls would suffice. Little does he know what the fairy clan did to their father."

"What did they do to him?" Appolion asked, casting a nervous glance over at Jean. The human had started to quietly cry.

"They executed him as punishment for mating with a human," Jean sniffled. "They were so brutal about it, too. They tied him to a stake and every male in the fairy clan got to strike him with their sword. By the time they were done with him, I had only pieces to bury. They banished my girls for the rest of their immortal lives, even though they were both infants at the time."

Ana let out a soft gasp. "That's so terrible."

Jean wiped a tear away. "Now they are going to come and finish off my Cliona."

"That's why Michael sent me," Cam assured her. "I brought Case and Joe with me, they're outside guarding the door right now. As soon as Appolion can stabilize Cliona, we are getting you two to safety." Cam gave a dirty look at Ana, Dina, and Bear. "Of course, things are going to be a little more tricky now that I have to worry about you three, too. Crap Appolion, what the hell were you thinking?"

"We can take care of ourselves," Bear grumbled.

"Yeah sure," Cam shot back sarcastically. "You can distract them with your seizures while Ana bumps them with her belly. Dina here can just scare them by showing off all his body piercings."

"I never would have brought them had I known what was really going on," Appolion pointed out. "Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"Tell you what? That Michael sent a babysitter to watch over you and it was in the form of a female human. Yeah, that would have gone over like gangbusters."

"So Jean has known about Michael all this time?"

Jean made a disgusted sound. "Yes, he was the one who provided a safe haven for me and my girls after my husband was murdered. Because of that, I felt like I owed him. So when he came to me and asked me to look after one of his wayward archangels, I agreed right away. Now thanks to him, my daughter is gone."

Appolion let out a sigh. If there was anyone to blame it was him. Jean had been looking out for his sorry hide. She had been one of the few true friends he ever had and she paid an awful price for it. Jean came over and gave him a hug.

"Stop it right now," she chided. "I know that look. None of this is your fault. I was blessed to

meet you. I'm just saying things out of anger I really don't mean."

"Look, we can all play the blame game later, we don't have much time," Cam cut in impatiently. "Appolion, go heal the fairy, Bear, come with me, Ana, you keep being pregnant and Dina, you just sit there and brood like you always do."

Bear got up from the chair he had been sitting in. "If you're going to call me out into the hall just to bitch me out, you can forget it. I still got a stomachache from your last punishment."

Cam made a choking motion with his hands. "No, I need your help cleaning the human's mind. I'm sure they've already noticed there is something unique about Cliona, we can't have them walking around with that knowledge."

"I don't know how to scrub a human's brain."

"It's easy, I'll show you. Now let's go."

Bear just shrugged and followed his brother out of the room.

Dina took the chair that he had vacated. Unfortunately for him, it happened to be right next to Jean. He noticed the woman was giving him a shrewd look and he started to squirm. "What?" he asked defensively.

"You hide your hurt underneath all that dark clothing and looks," she said softly.

He rolled his eyes. "I didn't know that there were human empaths, too, I just thought that was

an angel thing."

"Quit being smart with me, angel. Certain human can be empaths, too. Lucky for you, I happen to be one of them."

"Yeah, it's my freaking lucky day," Dina muttered under his breath. That earned him another head smack.

"Since we are going to be here for a spell while Appolion heals my Cliona, we might as well talk about your problems. It'll make you feel better."

"You're crazy, lady, if you think I'm going to talk about my problems with you."

Appolion just turned away and shut out the rest of their argument because he already knew Dina was going to lose. Once Jean decided to take you on as one of her special cases you were done for.

He closed his eyes, went into a trance and started to heal the fairy's extensive injuries. They were bad, too. If she had been all human, she would have already succumbed to them. It was no easy job healing her. Before he dared to make any move, he cautiously went through her body and learned every bit of her internal anatomy. He was interested to see that in many aspects she was like an angel. There were also, surprisingly, many parts of her that were demon like, too.

Once he had learned all he could, he set out healing her. God, what he wouldn't give right

now for another healer to help out, but Cam hadn't thought to bring one. What he could really use is Derel. He could have Cliona healed in no time with his super-duper healer skills.

Once he was finally done, he came out of his trance and glanced at the clock as he worked the kinks out of his back. Damn, it had taken him almost two hours. Appolion disconnected the fairy from the various machines and IV's since she would no longer needed them. He gradually became aware of the conversation going on in the room. Old Dina was talking a mile a minute and, by the sounds of it, was pouring his Goth heart out to Jean.

"I mean, crap, he finally got his wish," he said to her. "Did he really have to put a bounty on my head? Damn, he already killed me once. If Derel hadn't of Lazeruthed my ass I wouldn't even be sitting here."

She put her arm around him and pulled him into a half hug. "You need to forget about him. It sounds to me like you have all the family you need now."

"That's true, Dina," Ana soothed. "You're one of us now. We all love you so much and not because Bear tell us to. We care for you because of who you are."

Dina gave a choked laugh. "In case you've forgotten, I'm the son of your sworn enemy."

Ana gave him a gentle smile. "When I look at you, I don't see that at all. What I see is the caring angel that sacrificed everything to help us. The one who has fought by our side so many times. Bear and I aren't the only ones that feel that way either, all my brothers have adopted you." Ana noticed Appolion watching them and she sent out, *You should have heard some of the things poor Dina told Jean. It makes me want to go and destroy Jehel with my bare hands.*

Appolion looked over at Jean's clenched hands. *You might have to stand in line for that one, sweetie. It looks like Jean wants a piece of him, too.*

"Where was your mama during all this?" Jean asked Dina.

Dina looked down at his scuffed shoes. "I don't know. She hasn't been around since I was a baby. I asked my dad one time what happened to her, but he warned me to never ask again so I didn't dare. It wasn't just my mom either. My cousin, Amadeaha, her mother had been MIA ever since I can remember, too."

Ana looked at Appolion sharply. *Do you think Jehel destroyed her?*

Appolion gave a slight nod of his head. *I would bet money on it. His mate must have been getting in his way, so he eliminated her.* "Are Cam and Bear still out messing with the human's minds?" Appolion asked out loud.

Dina nodded. "I guess there must have been a lot of them."

"You have no freaking idea," Bear said from the doorway. His eyes had dark rims around them and his voice sounded tired.

"We need to leave now," Cam ordered. "We've already wasted too much time here as it is. Joe, go and carry the fairy."

Joe picked up the still unconscious, Cliona. "Wow, is she ever light."

"Good, then you'll be able to run if we have to. I want everybody else to make it so the humans can't see them and I want you all to have your weapons out. Appolion, can you shield Jean and Cliona?"

"Sure I can." Appolion took Ana's hand. "But just for the record, if we do have to do any running, Ana isn't going to make it."

"Hey," she snapped indignantly.

"Sorry, babe, but it's true."

They quickly made their way back outside to where the Appolion had left the car. Cam's was parked right next to it. Just as Joe put Cliona in the backseat of Appolion's car, a dozen justice angels flashed in. Appolion cursed as he pushed Ana into the car, next to the fairy and Jean, then grabbed his sword from the backseat.

He spun around to face the justice angel's, but they made no move to attack. They just stood



there with smirks on their faces. Appolion felt his heart start to jackhammer when he realized that they were all honing in on Dina.

The tallest one, a blond with gray eyes, loudly sniffed the air. "Why, boys, I would recognize that stench anywhere. It's my long lost cousin, Dina."

Well, there went Ana's theory of nobody being able to recognize Dina out the window. It had taken all of three seconds.

Dina glared at the justice angel, the hatred blazing from his eyes. "Why don't you go off and give yourself a long, hard, dry, painful hand fuck, Azrael?"

Anger and surprised washed over Azrael's face before he replaced it with his mask. The other justice angels laughed in a mocking way at Dina. Dina's eyes got a dark, cold look in them.

"Looks like you wussy cousin learned how to talk trash," said one of the justice dicks.

Azrael chuckled before he sneered, "Why didn't you do all of a favor and stay dead, Dina? Now I'm going to have to go to the trouble of destroying you all over again."

Bear moved forward so he stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Dina. "You're going to have to go through me first."

Azrael spat at Bear's feet. "So the rumors were true. You and your brothers did decide to take in Dina. You know what they say about the Lehor

family? That they always have a soft spot for the garbage.”

One of the justice angels moved close to Dina. “We should take him back to his father. Jehel would just love to punish him for his betrayal.”

Dina moved so quick that nobody saw him, least of all the justice angel. The empath buried one of his daggers deep into the other male’s throat. The justice angel was only able to make small gurgling noises as his eyes flashed back and forth in panic.

Dina looked down at him with a wicked smile on his face. “You go back to Heaven and tell my father that I know what he really is.” He reached up and ripped down one of his wanted posters, then crammed it down the injured angel’s mouth. “Take this with you.”

Appolion watched the whole scene unfold in front of him, but he had a hard time believing it. Dina had turned into a stone cold killing machine. He was definitely going to have to sit the kid down for a real heart-to-heart. Now how was one supposed to start that conversation? *I’m really sorry your whole family keeps trying to destroy you there, kiddo. Don’t worry, be happy.* Sure, that was going to help him out big time.

One of the other justice angels lunged forward and flashed the injured angel out of the street. Bear kicked the rescuer in the face before he

brought up one of his guns and shot at the group of justice angels. He missed Azrael, but he did manage to wing one of the others. Dina threw his dagger and it hit another of the enemy right in the center of the chest, then brought out his own gun and clipped two more enemies.

Before Appolion could register all the action that was taking place, the justice angels all flashed out and left the angel warriors alone. The street was now empty and eerily quiet. Appolion looked down at his unused sword and noticed Cam do the same thing with his own weapon. Case and Joe started to laugh.

Case brushed his long blond bangs out of his eyes. "Isn't that a kick in the can? Our baby brother doesn't need us anymore. He and Dina just took out a dozen justice angels all by their little empath selves."

Cam pointed at his twin brothers. "Don't you two encourage them. They seem to find enough trouble on their own without your help."

Joe gave him a mock salute. "Aye, aye Empath King. Your wish is our freaking command."

"Son of a bitch!" Cam yelled.

"What?" Joe asked. "We were just kidding. You're being a little sensitive there, Cammie."

"It's not that jackass one and jackass two." Cam spun around as he looked for something. "The Powers are coming. We need to vacate

immediately.”

Appolion started to feel them approach, too. The evil that came off them was made his stomach clench up. Damn, he needed to get Ana out of here before she got hurt. There was no way that she could fight off an attack in her condition.

Bear lifted his face into the wind. “It’s too late. They’re already here.”

## Chapter Twelve

**B**ear started to slowly drift away from the group. Dina stayed by his side, every step of the way, showing his undying support for his friend.

"What are you two doing?" Cam snapped at them. "Get in the car right now."

Bear didn't stop. "Just trust me, Cammie. Running won't do any good. I already told you, it's too late."

As if to prove his point, numerous Powers flashed in at various points in the street. Appolion let out a low curse. Not only did they surround the car, but they separated Dina and Bear from the rest of the group. Appolion moved to place his body closer to the open door of the car. He could hear Cliona's breathing grow rapid and shallow. Jean whispered soothing words as she pulled her daughter's head onto her lap. Cam started to go to Bear before Appolion grabbed him and held him back.

"Let me fucking go," Cam snarled. "That's my brother they have."

"I know," Appolion said evenly, desperate to calm down his friend. Cam looked like he was one step from going completely postal. "We can't make any sudden moves though. Right now they aren't attacking."

It was true, the Powers just seemed interested in the angels. Much like one would be at the lion exhibit at the zoo. Or in this case, the bear exhibit. They all focused their attention on the young empath. The only movement was the falling snow as they continued to study Bear in complete silence. The leader finally stepped closer in a non-threatening way and saluted the empath. Bear returned the gesture.

"What the hell?" Cam stammered, completely echoing Appolion's own thoughts.

The leader finally spoke and it was to Bear only. "Why do you travel with such companions?" Although his voice had a slight lilt to it, there was also a deadly undertone to it as well. "We have been called to hunt down their kind, not befriend them."

Bear glanced back at the group and Appolion could see that the empath's light blue eyes had turned a shade of violet. All of the sudden, something Nix had predicted came back to him. She had said that eventually Bear would not just

take in too many vibes, but eventually he would be able to absorb them and use them to his advantage. Shit, the kid was mimicking the Powers.

When Bear responded, his voice had the same strange lilt to it. "These angels are under my protection. They are not to be harmed."

The leader looked at him sharply. "You look like a Power, you smell like a Power, yet you do not act like a Power. You should have already destroyed this enemy, so why should I heed anything that you say?"

Bear gave him a cold smile. "They are mine and I will do with them as I choose. If you wish to throw down the gauntlet then, by all means, do so. It has been so long since I have had a good battle. Just remember the victor gets all the spoils, that includes your warriors. When I defeat you, ancient one, and I will, I get to take them and do with them what I will."

Appolion had never heard Bear talk that eloquently before. The empath was even using big fifty-cent words. There wasn't one smartass comment in all of that speech, which Appolion was pretty sure was a first for Bear. The Power leader appeared to think over Bear's challenge.

"Then let us take the two that we came here for and we will leave the rest to you." The leader pointed to Dina and Ana. "The angel council ruler

wants his son back and he seeks the infant this female carries."

Bear let out a low hiss that seemed to be part snake and part tiger. Several of the Powers jumped back nervously. Since that was the first real emotion Appolion had seen any of them express before, he knew the kid had struck a cord. When a strong wind started to whip down the street and all of the streetlights exploded, one by one, they got downright antsy.

The leader tilted his head in acquiescing way. "Fine, I will leave these angel warriors alone, this time. Next time I will set my clan loose on them regardless of what you say or do."

Bear took two fingers and lightly touched his own lips and then pressed them against the leader's mouth. He then spoke some words in a language Appolion didn't understand. The Powers flashed out slowly, one by one. As soon as they were gone, Bear breathed in several times as his eyes slowly changed back to blue. "Dina," he called out. His voice had returned to normal.

"Yeah," the Goth empath replied back casually. In fact, he seemed to be the only one who wasn't stunned out of their knickers.

"Did I just touch another dude's lips?"

Dina grinned. "Yup."

"Oh, totally gross." Bear furiously wiped his tainted hand on his black jeans.



Appolion let go of Cam and the empath leader bolted over to Bear. Cam started to pat Bear's body as he searched for injuries. Bear danced away and smacked at his hands.

"Get off me," Bear snapped. "You get anymore touchy feely with me and you're going to owe me dinner and a movie."

"What the hell was that freaky thing you just did?" Cam demanded.

"I just absorbed his energy. Only this time, instead of it making me go into seizures, I used it to my advantage. You shouldn't be shocked after the way you have been harping on me all this time to do those stupid brain exercises that Michael gave me."

"None of those exercises should have taught you how to do what you just did." Cam's eyes narrowed suspiciously. He turned to look at Dina who suddenly got very interested in the snow on the street. "Dina, none of this seemed to surprise you. Now why is that?"

Dina shot an apologetic glance at Bear. "I might have seen him do it before."

Bear started to interrupt them, but Cam held up a finger to shut him up and ordered Dina, "Don't stop, you tell me everything, and remember I can tell when you are lying."

"The Tif crew and I have been helping Bear practice his copycat skills. That way he'd know

how to handle all of his powers and not have seizures anymore.”

Cam swore under his breath and glared at Bear. “Do you guys have any idea how dangerous that was?”

Dina nodded his head, now that Cam had gotten the kid to talk it seemed like he enjoyed being the one to deliver the news. “Oh yeah, one day Bear got an overload of Megan and it took forever for him to get back to normal. He was running around gossiping with everybody while he braided their hair. At first, it was really, really funny, but then it got kind of annoying because, well...Megan can be annoying all by herself even before you throw in a cloned version.”

Cam closed his eyes and his lips moved like he was counting to ten, again and again and again. All he managed to finally get out was, “I thought you liked Megan.”

“Oh, I do like Megan.” Dina gave a wicked smile. “Especially now that I’ve found so many interesting ways to shut her up.”

Appolion had to bite his lip in order to keep from laughing. Cam didn’t look amused at all, he looked like he was two steps from bopping Dina and Bear’s heads together. “Bear, did you every stop to consider that there might be a time when you can’t switch back? What would happen if you got stuck being a Power or, even worse, a

Megan?"

Bear broke in, "I'm sorry, Cam, but I'm sick of you treating me like I'm made of glass. You're not always going to be there to hold my dick for me whenever I have to piss."

Cam rubbed his temples like he had a major headache. "I'm just trying to protect you."

"You're not always going to be able to do that," Bear said softly. "You forget, I'm an angel warrior just like you. I'm not some youngling who needs mothering. In fact, I'm only a couple of years younger than you."

Joe cleared his throat. "You have to give him some credit, Cam. He and Dina did just take out a passel of justice angels all by themselves. If they were any of your other empathes, you'd be praising them instead of chewing them out."

Case added, "And Bear managed to save our skins by getting that Power dude to leave. What exactly did you say to him and why did he salute you?"

Bear shrugged. "I convinced him that I was a general of equal rank, that's why he saluted me back. Then I told him that I would make sure that you guys suffered. That thing with the lips was like a pinky swear."

Appolion all of the sudden found pinky swearing so much more appealing. "You made a promise to destroy us?"

"When I promised I was a Power, so it doesn't count," Bear said dismissively.

"Of course not," Appolion laid on the sarcasm. "How stupid of me."

"Look," Bear said impatiently. "I think we are all missing the big point here."

"Which is that?" Appolion asked.

"Those powers and justice angels knew we were going to be here. They came for Ana and Dina, not Cliona. Somebody inside the compound had to of tipped them off."

Cam gave Bear a look of equal parts respect and surprise. "Okay, you might have a small point there. Dina and Bear, get in my truck we can talk on the way back to the compound."

They started to walk away and Cam whistled so that they would stop, "By the way, that was a pretty impressive job you two did with the justice dicks. Although you might want to work on your anger management skills there, Dina."

"Yes, your Lordship." Dina's serious expression melted into a cocky grin. "Maybe I'll start meditating or get a zen garden." Before he could get in trouble for his smart mouth he trotted off toward the truck, Bear at his heels.

Cam started to rub his head again. "What did I do to ever deserve this?" he moaned.

Ana struggled to get out of the car, but fell right back in thanks to her girth. "I can answer that

one," she shouted.

Appolion sighed, "Let's get out of here before she really gets started. We need to tell Michael about the *mole* problem anyways."

\* \* \* \*

It wasn't until they were closer to the compound that Appolion was finally able to relax. Although he worked hard to hide it, those damn Powers gave him the willies, more so than any demon. Although Ana didn't seem to share his problem. She was in the passenger seat sound asleep. She was even doing that cute little snore thing of hers. Jean was also out of it in backseat. Joe was in the back with her, Cliona in his lap.

Appolion did not know what surprised him more. The fact that Joe and his twin were in separate cars and not glued to each other's hip, like they normally were, or the protective way Joe held the fairy. Joe had taken off his coat and it wrapped around her so she wouldn't get cold. His hand rubbed her back in slow circles. Appolion doubted that the archangel even realized he was doing it. The fairy, for her part, was still unconscious, but her slender arms were twined around his neck and her face was nuzzled into his chest.

Appolion pulled off onto the dirt road and the

guards let him through. As he was pulling into the compound, he heard Cliona start to wake up. She opened her big brown eyes and looked at Joe in shock. With a shriek, she tried to scramble off his lap, only to find the task impossible due to the fact that they were in a car.

“Unhand me you heathen,” she yelled.

Jean had woken up and she admonished her daughter. “Be nice, Cliona. These angels healed you and are going to shelter us.”

Cliona gave Jean a foul look. “You actually let some disgusting angel heal me? You know better.”

“Hey, that’s my mate that you are talking about and we almost got destroyed coming to help you,” Ana snapped, her cheeks flushed with anger. Her little Heidi braids did take some of her usual don’t-mess-me-or-else attitude away. She curled her upper lip at the fairy. “Oh, by the way, you’re welcome.”

Cliona ignored her. Appolion parked the car and they all got out, Ana needing Appolion’s help. Joe went to put his coat around Cliona’s shoulders again, but she smacked his hands away.

“I don’t need that angel,” she said coldly. She glared at Cam, Bear and Case when they all started to crack up.

Joe shrugged. “Fine by me. I could care less if you show you fairy ass off to the entire compound.”

Cliona looked down at the hospital gown she was wore and let out a gasp. She snagged the coat roughly from Joe's hand and covered up her exposed rear. The coat was so large and she so small, she struggled a bit before she managed to regain her haughty stance.

Michael came into the garage, looking tired and haggard. "Hi, Jean."

She stormed over to him and slapped him hard across the face. "You promised to protect us," she bit out.

Michael rubbed his cheek. "I know I did, Jean, and I'm sorry. Just so you know, I had four angel warriors that were watching you at all times."

"Then where were they when we needed them?"

Michael hesitated, then said, "They were destroyed trying to protect you."

Jean's face softened. "Oh, those poor dears. Did they have families?"

Michael ran his hands through his hair. "Yeah, they did. I just got back from notifying them."

"I'm sorry, Michael. It must be very difficult for you to have to do that."

Appolion wasn't shocked that even the Chief wasn't immune to Jean's mothering. "It is really hard. The bitch of it all is that it only gets harder every time I do it. I just wish this would all be over."

Appolion realized that the pressure of the war must really be getting to Michael. The Chief never showed any emotions, let alone talked about them. Come to think of it, Appolion could not even remember the last time he saw Michael even sit down to eat a meal let alone take a break. That went for all the leaders, even now Cam was off in the corner, talking to one of his empathes on his cell.

Jean took Michael's hand. "It sounds like you could use somebody to talk to. Come on, you can get me a cup of coffee."

Michael shook his head. "I can't, I have way too much to do."

"Everybody needs a break, even the great Michael." When he still hesitated, she tapped him lightly on the shoulder. "If you won't do it for yourself, then do it for an old lady. I could really use it right now."

Michael gave her a ghost of a smile. "You always did boss me around, human. Fine, but only for a few minutes."

Cliona's jaw dropped. "You can't leave me alone with them, Mother."

Jean looked back. "They all have names, dear, so you should probably make an effort to learn them because we're going to be staying for a while."

"You've got to be kidding me. I can't live in this



pit."

Michael said, "I made up a room just for you. I know fairies like to be surrounded by nature, so I brought in various plants and flowers. Joe can show you where it is."

Cliona watched them leave before she spun on her heel and stuck her nose up at Joe. "I can find my room on my own. I know about you archangels, all you think about is sex. The last thing I need is for you to try something funny with me."

Joe walked up closer to her so she had to tilt her head up so she could maintain eye contact. "Sex with you? No thanks, sweetie, you're such a stick I'd probably snap you in half."

Appolion muttered to Ana out of the side of his mouth, "I should probably go break this up."

"No way," Ana protested. She rummaged in her purse until she found a bag of candy and she hopped up on the hood of the car and made herself comfortable. "I'm enjoying watching Joe put this bitch in her place."

Bear and Dina scrambled up and sat on either side of her. She poured them each a handful of the candy. Appolion just sighed and turned his attention back to the bickering couple.

Cliona stood on her tiptoes in a vain effort to gain some height on Joe. "You are so crude."

Joe bent his head down so their lips were only

inches apart. "You didn't seem to think so when you were sleeping in my lap. In fact, you were so comfy you were purring like a kitten. Check that, make that a cat in heat."

"You wish."

His arm shot out and pulled her close to him. The fairy didn't fight his hold, quite the opposite. She swayed into him and her tiny hands gripped at his arms. Appolion almost laughed out loud at Cliona's sudden change in attitude. She obviously didn't think Joe was some heathen anymore.

"Dude," Dina whispered to Bear. "I think your brother is touching the fairy's ass."

Bear snickered. "Way to go, Joe."

Just as Joe was about to kiss Cliona, Cam yelled out from across the garage, "She's half human."

Joe cursed and jumped back from the fairy like she had burned him. Appolion let out a low groan. That was a real smooth way to handle that one, cue sarcasm.

Cliona's eyes got a dangerous glint. "What does me being half human have to do with anything?"

Joe shuffled his feet, his long bangs had fallen forward and covered his blue eyes. "Humans are off limits to angels."

Her face paled and all of the sudden Appolion remembered that her own father had been brutally executed for choosing a human mate. She said slowly, "Your kind acts like they are saving the

world when in fact they are the biggest snobs of all."

Joe shoved his hands in his pockets and gave a weak shrug. "We're supposed to protect humans, not mate with them."

Cliona crossed her arms over her chest. "Why not?"

Joe opened and closed his mouth several times before he looked at everybody else. "I dunno, why aren't we allowed to be with mortals?"

Cam walked over, flipping his cell phone shut. "Because Michael said so, that's why."

Cliona scoffed, "Well, isn't that a real intelligent answer. You must bet be the brains of the bunch."

"And you must be the Queen Bitch of the fairies."

Cliona ignored his statement. That seemed to be her defense mechanism whenever a conversation was not going her way. Instead she squinted her eyes at Cam and inched forward. "Oh my Goddess, you have fangs. Open up wider, I want to see them," the fairy demanded.

Appolion reached out and grabbed Ana's hand because it looked like she was about ready to throw her candy wrapper at Cliona.

Cam gave Cliona a dangerous look and said in a low snide voice, "Tell ya what, Tinker Bell, I'll show you my fangs if you show me your wings."

"Tinker Bell was a pixie not a fairy and I can't

show you my wings. We only bring them out for sacred ceremonies and in the presence of other fairies. No other species is allowed to see them.”

“And here you said that we were the snobs.”

Again she ignored him and she reached out to touch one of his fangs. He retaliated with a poke at the pointed tip of her ear. She yelped as she dodged his touch and tried to get at his fangs again. He let out a low demon growl at her and she jumped back and plastered herself to Joe. She tried to growl back, but it was a pathetic sounding compared to Cam’s.

Little footprints drew everybody’s attention from the argument. It was Atar and he looked like a kid on his way to see the circus. The small angel had obviously snuck out of bed because he was wearing a pair of Superman jamies and had only socks on his feet. He stopped dead in front of Cliona and gaped at her, his dark blue eyes blinked furiously. “Are you really a fairy?” he asked with a child’s bluntness.

Appolion held his breath while he waited to see what Cliona’s reaction would be. So help him, if she so much as even looked at Atar meanly, Appolion would throw her out on her fairy ass. Even if she was Jean’s daughter.

However, Appolion soon saw his worries were unfounded.

Cliona crouched down so that she was level

with Atar and gave him a dazzling smile. She reached out and smoothed down the young angel's dark hair, taming a cowlick. When she talked to Atar, her voice was sweet and full of kindness, "Yes, I am a fairy and what are you?"

Atar put his hands on his hips. "I am an angel warrior."

"Why, aren't you a handsome one, too?" she marveled. "What's your name?"

"My name is Atar." He puffed out his little chest. "My mommy is a princess and my daddy is the Dark Angel."

She put her hand on her mouth as she made a great show of being impressed. "Wow, I am honored to be in your presence. Would you be willing to show me my room, great warrior?"

"Of course."

Atar held out his hand and Cliona didn't hesitate once in taking it. She pivoted around and made the *L* on her forehead with her finger and thumb, the gesture directed completely at Joe and Cam. Then acting as if she had given the biggest and best cutdown in history, she turned around and walked out of the garage with her new little friend.

"Ouch," Cam said to Joe. "She's a real piece of work."

Joe just nodded his head and didn't say a word. He continued to gaze over at the door where the

fairy had left, a dumb look on his face. Appolion glanced over at Ana to see what she thought of the whole situation, but she was too busy opening up another pack of candy to notice anything that was going on around her.

A small male empath came up to Cam and started to tap his shoulder. Cam ignored him. The empath cleared his throat really loud and Cam continued to ignore him. When the short angel opened his mouth to talk, Cam put his finger over the other angel's lips in the *shush* manner.

"Not in the mood, Hagiel," Cam snapped.

Hagiel looked so distressed that Appolion felt compelled to help out. "Come on, Cam," he said lightly. "Your poor empath looks like he's going to bust a gut if you don't let him talk."

"He's just here to nag me," Cam complained. "Michael insisted that I hire somebody that wasn't family to help me out. Now every time I turn around, I have my little secretary here telling me what to do."

Appolion was impressed that, while Hagiel did look harried, he didn't look afraid of Cam. A big feat considering just how small and mousy the empath was. His bushy brown hair barely reached Cam's shoulder. Cam finally sighed and nodded his head to indicate Hagiel could talk.

"My Lordship, Gabrielle is looking for you. The lab needs more of your blood for the antibody.

Also, you remember Flocian?"

Cam sighed, "Of course I do, I've been looking for his parents ever since he was destroyed a couple of months ago."

"They've been found. I have them waiting for you in the common room. Do you want me to have someone else make the notification?"

Cam shook his head. "No, the least they deserve is to have me do it personally. I'll go do it now. Tell Gabi that I'll stop by the lab when I'm done there." Cam started to walk away, but he stopped and pointed at Appolion. "Don't say anything about the whole security leak to Michael yet. I have a few contacts of my own. Maybe we can resolve this whole thing without having to bother him. He looks wore out."

"What about you, Cam?" Ana asked, her voice laced with worry. "When was the last time that you slept, let alone ate?"

Cam was looking beat. He was getting that pasty sickly look that showed he hadn't taken blood recently. Appolion hated to see his friend like this. He hated it even worse that Cam would be too proud to take any help.

"I'll grab a bite while I'm at the lab." When Hagiel jumped, Cam rolled his eyes. "I meant food jackass, I'm not going to go vamp on one of the techs."

Appolion watched his friend walk away, his

shoulders slightly stooped. It was easy to forget that Cam was really young in angel years. Too damn young to have all this responsibility. Appolion just hoped that he could handle it all without breaking.

\* \* \* \*

Cam knew it was a bad idea to come this crappy motel room and it was an even worse idea to meet Lilith there. Especially since the Chief had made it clear in no uncertain terms that particular succubus was off limits. But damn, he needed some answers and she was the only one who could give them to him.

Just when he was about ready to give up and leave, she slinked into the room, shut the door and sat in the chair opposite him. She really was quite beautiful, in a demon slutty kind of way. Her long blonde hair was free and it swung gracefully over her bare creamy shoulders. Unlike other demons, succubi did not have their beautiful looks taken away from them. If Lilith didn't have fangs and a spectacular pair of black wings, she might have passed for an angel.

A bit a fear flashed through her feline green eyes before she masked it. No doubt, she wondered if he was still angry she had attacked Bear. Which was smart on her part, because he



was more than angry, he was pissed. He could smell the terror coming off her and that was a good thing as far as he was concerned. When he spoke, he was careful to keep his voice neutral so she didn't know where she stood. "You really hurt my brother badly."

She crossed her arms over her barely covered breasts. "Well you brother's little tart angel gave me one nasty headache when she shot me with that arrow. So as far as I'm concerned we're even."

"Far from it, sweetie." Despite his best efforts, his eyes drifted down to her long bare legs. He had always liked it better when she had worn skirts because it had made things so much easier for him.

Almost as if she could read his thoughts, her finger slowly trailed up and down her own thighs. Cam watched her movements for several seconds. Then he realized something, he was not turned on by this at all. In fact, he was bored by the whole thing. Now maybe if she was a red head and a justice angel, then things might be different. "I didn't come here for that," he drawled. "It's time that you answered a few questions for me."

She slithered onto his lap and wrapped her arms around his neck. "If you want me to help you, then you have to help me." She twisted her hips so that her ass ground into him. Her green cat eyes widened in surprise when she realized that

he wasn't hard.

He sighed and moved her back into her own chair. "I want to know who has been giving the council inside information," he said in clipped tones as he kept the conversation impersonal.

She giggled. "I'm not telling you anything until you pay the price."

"What do you want?"

She smiled wickedly. "Oh, I want lots of things from you, little puppy. Let's just start with a little of your blood."

Cam shook his head. He didn't want to take the risk of falling under the influence of her Bliss. Sure he had control now, but once you threw in a succubus aphrodisiac, he knew all bets would be off.

She made a displeased sound in the back of her throat. "What kind of Empath King are you? You should be willing to make sacrifices for your followers."

She did have a point. He needed to find out who the mole was fast, before somebody was destroyed. He let out a defeated sigh and held his wrist out to her. She ignored it and climbed back on his lap and licked his neck.

As soon as she bit him, the Bliss hit him like a sledgehammer. Even though he tried to think of every disgusting thing he possibly could, he grew hard. She immediately noticed and started to rub

him through his pants. He reached out to stop her hand, but instead found himself guiding her to a more pleasing rhythm. *You sick, sick bastard*, he yelled at himself in his head. *She almost killed your baby brother and now you're going to fuck her like it was nothing?*

She pulled back and licked her lips, before she slid down him and knelt between his legs. She started to let out actual purring sounds as she unzipped his pants and reached in to stroke his cock. He watched her with half closed eyes. She licked her lips and eyed him hungrily.

"I will answer all your questions, Empath King," she said huskily. "All you have to do in return is let me have full reign on your body for an hour."

Okay, he could whore himself out, it's not like he hadn't done it before. As soon as he nodded his agreement, she lowered her mouth, but before she could wrap it around him, he grabbed her by the hair and made her look at him. "You can give me head all you want darling, just don't bite me there or else all bets are off," he warned in a low voice.

"Don't worry, I would never dream of harming this," she grabbed him and squeezed gently. "It's way too precious to me."

So he let her go. Holy crikeys, he didn't think it was physically possible, but he could have sworn that her tongue was double jointed. He moved

around so that she could get to more of him and let his head fall back as he moaned. She took him out of her mouth long enough to blow on him and the sensation of her cool breath dancing across his skin almost made him lose it right then. He'd have to remember to come to a sex demon for this service every time in the future because they obviously knew their way around a dick.

Why had he been fighting this? Sure Nix might have been fun, but it was always all about her. She would come to his room at night and treat him like her personal cabaña boy, riding him until he was drained in more ways than one. There was no way in hell she would even consider giving him the special loving like Lilith was right now.

The demon ran the side of her fang up the entire length of him and he couldn't stop the groan that slipped out. She laughed as she took him deeper in her throat. When she reached out and started to gently massage his balls, he quit fighting to control himself and let go. He closed his eyes and gave over to the pleasure.

When he came, she didn't pull back, instead she drank everything in. Her slender throat worked as she swallowed. When he was done, she looked up him with a satisfied smile.

"Do I get a reward?" she asked slyly.

He just tilted his head to the side so his throat was exposed. She climbed up his lap and wrapped

her legs around his waist. After several experimental licks, she sank her fangs into his neck a second time. As soon as her Bliss entered him, he got hard again. He ripped away the tiny piece of fabric that she called panties and drove himself into her.

The entire time he used her body, she never stopped feeding off him. Although he could tell that she was getting off on the act because her sucks grew more fast and frenzied. This time it was her that came. She tore her mouth away as she threw her head back and screamed his name, some of his blood trickled down her chin.

He grabbed her by the back of her head and licked the blood off her. The small taste was enough to send him into his own blood frenzy. He stood them both up and bent her over a table and entered her from behind, at the same time he bit her on the back of her neck.

He couldn't hold back the whimper of relief that went through him as he swallowed the warm liquid. While demon's blood had never been as satisfying as angel's, he had been denying himself from feeding for so long that she tasted like the best meal he had ever had. She tilted her hips up, so that he went even deeper inside her and flared her black wings out as she panted loudly.

He moved his mouth to her ear and whispered, "You ever touch one of my brothers again and I'll

personally tear you apart and not in a way you like." It wasn't lost on him that the entire time he made this threat, he was still having sex with her.

She looked over her shoulder at him. "Then I would suggest that you don't cut me off in the future. I only did it so you would come to me."

He wrapped one arm around the front of her and grabbed her by the throat to hold her in place while he bit her again, this time on her right shoulder blade. Her body tightened up around him as she climaxed a second time. His own yell was muffled since he was still feeding off of her. It wasn't until he had completely emptied himself inside of her that he took his mouth away.

He buried his face in her hair as he let the high that always came after a feeding wash over him. He was just considering what way he was going to take her next when the sound of clapping jerked him out of his sex stupor. He swung his head to the side and saw a dark haired male sitting in a chair in the corner of the room, his legs crossed as he watched them casually. Cam yelped in surprise as he pulled his pants up.

Lilith did not seem to have any problem with the visitor, she just propped her chin in one hand and waved at the newcomer with the other. "Hi, Daddy."

Cam couldn't believe what he heard. "Your dad just watched us have sex?"

She snorted, "He's not my real father. We just all call him Daddy because he is the leader of the succubi."

Cam glared at the male demon. He was young and, if Cam went that way, very good looking. That didn't mean that he wasn't an ancient though. Demons were immortal just like angels. Michael was one of the oldest angels out there and he didn't look any older than Cam. The male demon gave him a cocky wink and Cam noticed, for the first time, that the male had the same cat like eyes of a succubus. The same eyes that Cam had. The only difference was that Cam's were blue, where Daddy's were deep amber.

The male smiled at him, showing off a set of fangs. "It is an honor to finally meet you, Empath King. I had heard that you were a stallion, but I had no idea."

"Do you always get your rocks off by watching others screwing?" Cam was more angry at himself than anything else. He had slipped up big time and had, literally, been caught with his pants down. Why hadn't he sensed the presence of the other male?

The demon stepped closer to him and said softly in his ear, "You didn't sense me because I am too much like you."

Cam snapped his fangs at him. "Get the fuck out of my mind."

"That's not so easy to do." The demon stroked Cam's cheek in a very sexual way. "You see, you and I are always in each other's mind."

Cam slapped his hand away and scrambled backward in an effort to put some distance between him and Daddy. He was beginning to feel like he did not have control of the situation and that feeling would bring back not only bad memories, but panic. He kept going until his back slammed hard into the wall. What he would do just to be able to flash out of there, but that wasn't a possibility anymore. "Keep your hands off of me," he rasped.

Daddy didn't seem fazed at all. "Pity, I heard you loved a good threesome."

"Not with you. You fucking touch me again and I'll beat you with your own limbs."

The demon moved so quick Cam didn't have time to react. He pinned his body even tighter up against the wall. Cam fought but found, to his horror, the demon was stronger than he was. A lot stronger. Cam felt his stomach flip over with dread as he realized just how serious this situation had become. Not only was he facing an enemy that was older and stronger than he was, he was outnumbered. He had no doubts if it came down to it, Lilith would take Daddy's side. Cam went to raise his hand to blast the demon, but Daddy grabbed his hands and held them down.



"No special magic tricks today, Empath King." The demon scrapped his fangs against Cam's neck. Cam's body instantly responded to the blatant sexual energy that hummed from the incubus. Great, leave it to him to get turned on by someone who was two steps away from destroying him. The demon ran his fang along Cam's neck again, this time he followed it up with a velvet sweep of his tongue. "I thought you came here for answers, archangel."

Cam nodded his head as he still struggled to get as much space between him and the demon. He had come for answers before he had gotten distracted. It was hard to focus, though. The incubus part of him screamed for him to give into temptation. Maybe if he played with the demon, he would give Cam some of the answers he'd come here seeking

His angel half did some internal bitch slap that brought him back into reality. Somehow he knew any sex with this male demon would come with strings attached. Strings which were just big enough for Cam to garrote himself with. "I told you, I'm not interested," Cam said, blandly. "Now get your fucking hands off me."

The demon asked, "If I let you go will you be a good little angel? Because I promise you will want to hear what I say."

Cam gave Daddy a bored look. "I'll do

anything just to stop you from feeling me up."

The demon held his hands up in mock surrender and Cam slipped from the wall and sat in the chair again. He tried to act as casual as possible, all the while he eyed his coat and long sword that he had thrown to the side earlier. If only he could get to it, then just maybe he could even up the odds some.

Daddy pulled up another chair so that they faced each other. "Why do you fight your demon urges so much, Empath King?"

That question annoyed Cam. "Because of who I am."

"And who is that? The good family boy? I know how your own brothers look at you and what they really think about you. Besides, if you really loved your family, then why are you fucking the very same succubus that almost destroyed your baby brother?"

That one hit home hard, but he was going to be damned if he was going to let the demon have the satisfaction of knowing that. "Bear will forgive me, he always does."

"So he says, but does he really forgive you or does he just say that to make you feel better? You can fool yourself all you want, you and I both know your family sees you for what you really are, a demon like me."

"I'm nothing like you."

The demon grinned at him. "Whose blood do you think they used to transform you in Hell?"

Cam shook his head in denial even as he ran his tongue alongside one of his own fangs. Daddy must have sensed he had scored a point because he leaned forward and kept up with the zingers. "Raphael and Appolion both already know that you are part incubus, they just don't know that you're mine. In fact, you could say you are the son I never had."

"I already have a father and he was a whole hell of a lot better than you."

The demon reached out and touched the bite mark on Cam's neck that still bled. He brought his fingers to his mouth and licked them. "Whose blood do you think is flowing through you veins now, mine or his?"

Cam brought his tongue to his fang once again. He knew the answer to that one, it was screamed at him every time he looked in the mirror. He shifted his eyes to the side so the demon wouldn't see the self-doubt there. Cam stood. "I'm getting out of here, this is really getting to be old."

The demon pushed him back down. "I wouldn't go anywhere if I were you. I'm just about to offer you what you desire most."

"What power?" Cam asked snidely. "In case you haven't noticed, demon, I already have that. I'm the leader of the empaths."

"I can give you what you really want." Daddy leaned forward and whispered the next part, "Freedom and peace."

## Chapter Thirteen

“I don’t know what you’re talking about?” Cam lied.

“Sure you do,” Daddy said in calm tones. “You’re killing yourself for Michael and those empaths and for what? Michael doesn’t appreciate you, all he does is set down guidelines and rules he knows are impossible for you to follow. What would he say if he knew that you just lost control and had a little fun with Lilith here?”

Cam didn’t answer that one out loud because he didn’t want to admit he’d be up Shit Creek. Michael had made it perfectly clear Lilith was off limits. But no, his dumb old stubborn self just couldn’t listen. Now Michael was going to know and Cam was going to have to face the disappointed looks, yet again.

The demon continued, “It’s only going to get worse for you. Since the leader of your council, Jehel, has allied himself with some of the demons, he has learned everything about your captivity in

Hell."

Cam eyed his sword again. "Are you ever going to get to a point, demon, or do I have to sit here and listen to you babble on all day?"

"The point is, he knows what you did there, Cam, and it's only a matter of time before all the angel warriors know, too. Your good friend Abdiel is going to find out that you whored yourself to his old flame just for a piece of bread."

Cam grounded his teeth together in an effort to keep his face neutral. That was one piece of info he never wanted Abdiel to know. He breathed in several times and calmed himself down. Must'nt show the demon that he was scoring a few points here and there. Cam attempted a smile. "Abdiel doesn't care about some female demon. He's moved on, he has a mate now."

"What about your sister, would she be so understanding?"

A wave of protective anger surged through Cam. "Leave Ana out of this."

"I really wish I could, but that's not possible. Soon everybody is going to know all your dirty little secrets and that includes your family and all of your followers. But I can take you from all that."

Cam decided to play the smartass card. "What, you going take me to Disney World?"

Daddy gave a small laugh. "No better. Come

with me and you'll never have another worry again. I know how you envy your brother Bear because he can go off, relax and have fun with his friends while you are forced to constantly work. Why shouldn't you have the freedoms that he has? You're young, too. You're not some ancient like Michael or Raphael."

Cam thought about what he said. It was true, he was tired all the time. Crap, he couldn't remember the last time he had slept for a whole night and it wasn't because of the nightmares. If someone wasn't pounding on his door, then it was somebody calling him in the phone.

He was well aware of the whispers behind his back. There were a lot of the angel warriors who didn't trust him because he was a half-breed. It didn't matter how many times he had proven himself in battle. That was never going to change.

The demon put his hand on Cam's knee. "In Hell you won't have any responsibilities, you can have all the fun you want. Just imagine it, nothing to do but play with whatever succubus you want at that time."

Cam was shocked because none of that tempted him at all. In fact, it sounded downright boring. He enjoyed leading the empath's. Sure there were times when it sucked, but there were more times when it was fulfilling. He brushed the demon's hand off his knee and yawned. "Thanks, but no

thanks. It would be a bitch to change the address on all my magazine subscriptions."

In an instant, Daddy's expression turned deadly. "You might want to rethink that one. This war is not going good for the angel warriors. It would be best for you to leave now, while you have the chance."

Lilith came over and ran her hands through the back of Cam's hair. "With us you will be more than just the leader of the empathths. You would be a god."

Cam pushed her gently away from him. "Not interested. The last time I was in Hell, the place really didn't impress me."

Daddy let out a low hiss. "I am only trying to protect you."

Cam rubbed his eye with his middle finger. "There is no way I am ever going back to Hell. You'll have to take me there in a body bag first."

The demon snarled at him, "Fine have it your way, Empath King." Daddy flashed out, taking Lilith with him.

Damn, they had rabbited before Cam had a chance to find out who the mole was. Although their exit was probably a good thing. He had been in over his head. Cam heaved a sigh of relief, that pickle was a lot easier to get out of than he thought it would be. Come to think of it, it was a little too easy. Damn it! He let out a groan even



before he heard the scratching at the door.

He peered through the window and saw that six Hounds from Hell waited for him. Their glowing, red, eyes protruded from their black hairless faces. One of them let out a loud snarl and, just to be a smartass even in doggy language, Cam snarled back. That sent them into a frenzy and they started to ram the door.

Why, oh why, couldn't the demons, just once, send poodles?

He put on his coat and pulled a Glock out. Yes, some bullets infused with holy water would make those canine demons wish that they had stayed in Hell's doghouse. Cam smiled to himself, nothing like a good fight to make him forget his troubles. Or at the very least it would give him something to pound his aggressions out on.

\* \* \* \*

Cam knocked on the door to Michael's quarters, making sure not to make so much noise that he disturbed the entire compound. The last thing he need was more witnesses to his appearance. It was bad enough having to face to knowing looks from the guards at the gate.

When Michael answered the door, Cam braced himself for a bawling out. But the Chief just ran his hands through his hair and stepped aside to let

him in. Cam sat down at the kitchen table.

Michael went over and started to make some coffee. "You look like hell," the Chief said.

Cam looked down at himself and silently agreed. His shirt was streaked with both his and Lilith's blood. Feeding while screwing always did make a mess. His leather pants were covered in mud from rolling on the ground during the fight with the Hounds. The only real injuries he had were from Lilith's bites, however. He hadn't given the Hounds the time to hurt him.

Michael continued to critique him. "You smell like hell, too."

Cam pulled up his ruined shirt and sniffed. The Chief did have a point there too. Cam reeked of burnt fur. "I zapped some doggy demons."

Michael set a mug down in front of him.

Cam wrapped his hands around it and savored the warmth that was coming off of it. When the Chief set another mug by it, Cam couldn't help but smile. It was angel's blood. Michael must keep some on hand in case Cam was ever there and needed it. It was a small gesture, but it still touched him nonetheless.

"Rough night out?" Michael asked quietly.

"It's not what you think. I was out on business."

Michael touched one of the bite marks. "I can see that."

"I needed some information and demons never give up anything for free," Cam said with so much bitterness that it elicited a raised brow from Michael.

"So did you just exchange your blood or was there more?" The Chief leaned in close and breathed deep. "I would know her scent anywhere. You were with Lilith."

"I needed to know things that only a high ranking demon would know and she seems to always know pretty much everything."

"Did you find out anything useful?"

Cam shrugged and let out a grunt. While he had not found out who the spy was in their mists, he had found out some interesting things. "I learned that I was part sex demon." He tried hard to not show how saying that out loud cut him deep. "The King of the succubi was there and I guess he was the blood donor for my transformation. Did you know anything about that?"

Michael sighed. "Come on, Cam, you had to of known all along that you were part incubus. You have all of the same physical characteristics. But I didn't know that they used the King's blood on you. I just always assumed it was Lilith's."

Cam didn't respond, he just stared down at his coffee. Scared shitless about how Michael was going to react to his bombshell. Cam hated to

admit it, but he admired his uncle so much that he almost idolized him. It was going to destroy him to see Michael's disappointed looks.

Michael finally broke the silence. "Why did you really come to see me? It had to be pretty damn important for you to come here before you even cleaned yourself up."

Cam gulped in some air and blurted out, "I think it would be better for everybody if I left for awhile."

"What would make you say something stupid like that?"

"Jehel knows some things about me, bad stuff." Cam gripped his cup tighter, hating that there was a hitch in his voice. "I did some really horrible things when I was in Hell and he's going to make sure everyone knows."

"Cam, slow down there buddy. It's going to be okay."

But Cam just rambled on, "I really didn't mean to do it, I was just so damn hungry and I was desperate." *Shut up you dork.* His inner self yelled. *You're only making it worse by acting like a blabbering idiot.*

Michael placed a comforting hand on Cam's arm. "Take a deep breath and tell me, slowly."

Cam rubbed the heel of his hand against his right eye because for some reason it had all of the sudden started to sting. "I had sex with a female

demon while I was captive."

Michael shrugged. "So what? You have sex with female demons all the time."

"This wasn't some succubus, Chief. It was a full fledged demon, full of horns and ugly."

"You said you were desperate. Everyone will understand that."

"It was Persephone," Cam confessed raggedly.

The stone dead silence that followed that announcement was telling. Persephone was more than Abdiel's old flame, she was one of Lucifer's wives. She was also the Chief punisher of Hell. She had destroyed countless angels and, it had been rumored, that she enjoyed every minute of it. She was feared and hated amongst the angel warriors because she had made them all suffer personal loses. What was even worse was that she used to be one of them, so it was seen as the ultimate betrayal. Cam couldn't have picked a worse demon to play with.

When Michael continued with the silence, Cam started to ramble again, "I'm so sorry, Michael. They never fed me and she was taunting me with some old piece of bread. Using it as part of her torture routine. I kind of let her know that I would be willing to make a trade for it."

Michael looked up sharply. "I thought Mammon was the only one that tortured you."

"Mammon did the mind, Persephone was in

charge of the body. I know that I should have been able to fight it. It's not like they could have starved me to death, I am immortal after all."

Michael was still stuck on the whole torture subject. "They both took turns working you over?"

"Yes," Cam said tightly. He hated having to rehash what had happened to him. He had hoped that he could come here and just confess his sins and be done with it.

Michael insisted on picking at the scab though. "What else did they do to you?"

Cam scowled, not even his own brothers dared ask him that one. "They made me do the Hokey Pokey for three days straight."

"Damn it, Cam. I'm trying to be serious."

"It was serious, Chief. They made me do it on roller skates."

Michael shook his head. "That's just like you. Whenever the topic hit too close to home for your liking, you start with the smartass comments."

"Well, I didn't come here to give you a play-by-play of my captivity. I just wanted to let you know what was going to be coming out on the grapevine." Cam got up. "It was a mistake for me to even come here."

Michael hauled him back by painfully grabbing his arm. "No more holding out on me, Cam. I want the names of every demon that dealt with you."

"Why?" Cam snapped. "So you can grill them about other things I might have done. You don't need to bother. I told you the worst of it already."

"No, I want to know every filthy demon that so much as laid a slimy finger on you because I'm going to make sure they pay for it," Michael said hoarsely. "I'm going to hunt them down, one by one, and teach them that they don't touch my nephew without paying the price."

It slowly started to sink into Cam that Michael wasn't pissed at him. He was pissed *for* him. "You can't make this personal, Uncle Mike. You're Chief of all the archangels, not just me."

"Bullshit," Michael spat. "You're family and that makes it very personal."

"You're not disappointed in me?" Cam was shocked Michael was so accepting after his confession. He had fully expected the Chief to be disgusted with him. Cam was even more stunned when Michael pulled him into a very unchief like hug. Ana and his brothers had always been very affectionate, but he had never seen it in Michael.

After a few moments, Michael pulled away awkwardly and cleared his throat. "I'll never be ashamed of you Cam." Michael gave a weak smile. "Although you could have held out for some marble rye. You're worth more than a stale piece of plain bread."

Cam laughed at his joke. "We still need to

decide what to do once this gets out. Not everybody is going to be as understanding as you."

"Fuck them. Most of your followers are going to stay devoted to you no matter what. As to the others, their opinions don't count. If they say anything bad about you, they'll have me to deal with."

Cam swallowed hard, took a deep breath and fought for control. He was so relieved that he was close to tears. "Thanks, Uncle Mike, that means a lot to me."

Michael pushed Cam toward the bathroom. "Now, please, go take a shower. You reek like burned dog."

Cam spent a long time in the shower, letting the hot water wash away both the stench of the Hounds and demon sex. His mind wandered to Amadeaha, as it often did lately. A huge part of him felt like he had betrayed her in some way by messing with Lilith. Which was stupid because there was nothing between him and the justice angel.

*Liar, if there was nothing going on between you and her, then why are you dreaming about her every night?*

He shut off the shower and tried to push her out of his mind. It was no use wanting something that he could never have. Amadeaha probably had males lined up waiting for her. Normal males, not



part demons with bounties on their heads.

He reached out for his towel, but found that it wasn't where he had left it. With an aggravated sigh, he stepped out of the shower to look for it. He found it, on his Mother's lap. He grabbed it from her and wrapped it around his waist, lickity split. "Damn it, Mom. Can't I get any privacy today?"

She just arched one of her elegant brows at him and said nothing. Cam should have been shocked to see her, but he had learned long ago not to doubt his Mother's gifts. Her long blonde hair was pulled back into a tight ponytail and she wore a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt. Cam gestured toward her outfit. "So, is this how everybody dresses in the upper realms of Heaven?"

Her lips curved into a small smile. "No, I just prefer to be comfortable."

"What are you doing here?"

She rubbed her hands on her jeans. "So, you actually believe that you are seeing me this time. The last time I came to you, you screamed at me to get away because you thought I was a hallucination."

"I was in Hell then and I was having a very bad hair day." He looked around the bathroom. "Where are my clothes?"

She wrinkled her nose. "I got rid of them. They were covered in that whore's blood."

Cam winced and wondered just how much his mom knew about his nightlife. Judging by the look she was gave him, too much. He pulled the towel tighter around himself as he avoided her eyes. "Seriously, where are my clothes?"

She showed him her palms. "I zapped them away. Where do you think you inherited your magic hands from? I'm referring to the ones that can throw fire, not the ones the succubi whisper about."

So Mom knew a whole lot about his social life and she wasn't happy about it either. She pointed to the bedroom. "Get your butt in there now. We have to talk."

Cam obeyed her because she was his mother after all. But he did make a big show of rolling his eyes and sighing, just to prove how grown up he was.

She waved her hands and some clothes appeared in them. She handed them to him.

He took them, horrified. "I can't wear these," he protested, well aware of how petulant he sounded.

"Why not?"

"Because it's a pair of dress pants and a sweater. I'll look like a freaking banker."

She crossed her arms over her chest and tilted her head in a way that reminded him of Ana. "Too bad, so sad. Maybe you should have thought of

that before you went off with that female demon."

He couldn't help but chuckle a bit. "You're doing this to punish me, aren't you?"

She just shrugged one shoulder, but that was all he needed to know that he was right. Okay, he'd be a good son and go along with it. She turned her back and he quickly got dressed and sat down on the bed. "Okay, what is so important that you had to break the rules and come see me?" Cam was more worried about that then he let on. It was no big secret that once an angel had ascended to the upper realms of Heaven, they were forbidden to ever come back. Lehor would be in a world of trouble if anyone found out she were with him right now.

Lehor straightened the collar of his sweater. "Why are you off messing with that succubus anyhow? You could have your pick of any female in this compound."

"Who would want to be saddled with this?" He flashed his teeth at her.

She slapped him on the cheek and it wasn't a love tap either. "Quit baring your fangs. It's rude. Don't make the mistake of thinking that just because you are the leader of the empahs, you can get away with being a smartass with me."

Cam decided since the conversation wasn't going his way, he was going to end it. He walked out of the room, his mom hot on his heels. When

Michael saw her, he was so shocked he stood and gaped. Once he finally did start to say something, Lehor gave him the hand.

"Not now, Michael." She grabbed Cam by the ear and led him to a chair. "You sit down and listen to me right now."

Cam grabbed a pair of sunglasses and started to put them on, she slapped them out of his hands. "What the hell?" he asked. "I thought angels that came bearing messages were supposed to be calm and nice."

"I know you, Cam. You put those things on whenever you want to hide from somebody." She leaned in close and studied him so intently that he started to squirm. "You are not going to hide from me, ever."

"Sorry Mom," he mumbled, feeling like a four-year old child.

"We almost lost you today. You need to stop taking risks like that. If you won't do it for yourself, then do it for your little brother."

"What does Bear have to do with this?"

Her blue eyes shifted from Michael and then back to him. "The Fates made a small error."

Michael gave her a suspicious look. "There is no such thing as a *small error* with the Fates."

"When they made it so Bear was mentally connected with the members of the Order, they went a little too far with the bond between Bear

and Cam. Their life forces are also connected. If one is destroyed, the other will automatically die, too."

Cam stood so fast the chair hit the ground with a loud smack. "Are you saying that Bear and I are like E.T. and Elliot?"

Lehor gave a confused look. "I don't know who they are."

Michael supplied, "It's characters from a movie."

She gave an annoyed huff. "Well excuse me for not knowing that one. I was in a coma for a few years there."

Cam started to pace the room as his anxiety built. "You tell the Fates they have to cut this bond thing. I can manage my own emotions just fine, I don't need my Bearcurity blanket anymore."

Lehor sighed as a sad look washed over her face. "What has been done cannot be undone. Especially now, there are perilous times ahead."

Cam stopped pacing and he kicked the overturned chair in frustration. "You know what, Mom? I sick of hearing that. In case you haven't noticed, we already are smack dab in the middle of *perilous times*. You and Dad are gone, we're all banned from Heaven and I'm a freaking demon. I don't think it can get any worse than that."

"It's coming, Cammie," she said dully.

"What the super demon from the prophesy?"

News flash, we already know that one. Fuck, Mom, it talks to me almost every night when I go to sleep."

Lehor impatiently wiped a tear from her cheek. "It's more than just the demon. There is something coming that is much worse, the moon."

"Unless there is a werewolf involved, I don't see how the moon has to do with anything."

Lehor whispered so low he had to strain to hear her. "The moon could destroy the entire Order. It will be more powerful than even the Destroyer."

Cam let out a half-hysterical laugh. "Just once, I would love for someone to bring me a message that is not a freaking riddle."

A loud pound on the door made them all jump. Bear yelled from the other side, "Cam, Uncle Mike. You guys better come quick. Ana's having the baby."

Cam turned to ask Lehor if she was coming along, but she was gone.

## Chapter Fourteen

“**O**h my God,” Appolion breathed out in an awed voice. “She has such cute little fingers and toes. It’s like she’s a little miniature angel.”

Ana shared a smile with Gabi and Ray, the only other ones in the room. It was kind of fun watching Appolion make a fool of himself all over his daughter. He held the baby in his arms and looked at her with such love it tugged at Ana’s heart. The great Destroyer brought down by a pair of blue eyes and dimples.

“That’s because she is a miniature angel,” Rachael teased lightly.

Gabi went over and took one last look at the baby before asking, “Is it all right if I let your brothers in now? They’re tearing up the hallway outside with their pacing.”

Ana didn’t doubt that one for a second. She settled back onto the bed and said, “Sure, but have Cam come in alone first.”

Gabi nodded and ran off to do what Ana asked.

A few seconds later, there was a soft knock on the door before it opened and Cam walked in.

Cam came up to the bed and sat gently next to Ana. "How ya doing sis?"

"Tired and hungry, but Gabi says that's normal."

Appolion tried to hand off the baby to him, but Cam shook his head. "I might hurt her or drop her."

Appolion rolled his eyes. "Didn't you ever hold Atar when he was a baby?"

Gabi gave a small chuckle. "Nope, he was too terrified."

Appolion persisted until Cam had no choice but to take his niece. Cam did look terrified, until he gazed down at her. Ana knew from the way Cam's eyes drank in the baby's scrunched face, her fuzzy blonde hair and her plump lips, that he was lost forever.

He finally relaxed and nestled her close to his chest. "She's so beautiful," Cam marveled softly.

"We're glad you like her." Appolion put a hand on Cam's shoulder. "We want you to be her tutelary."

Ana bit her lip while she waited nervously for her brother's response. A tutelary was the angel equivalent to a godparent and then some. Cam would be expected to see to the baby's placement in the angel hierarchy and to make sure she had



the proper schooling. If, when Michael scanned her, she was deemed to be a future angel warrior, Cam would be solely responsible for her battle training.

A tutelary guided their charges through difficult times and ensured that they never strayed off the path of good. It was a huge responsibility. But Ana and Appolion had both agreed from the beginning that they wanted Cam to have the title.

Cam gave them a lopsided grin. "Are you serious? There are so many others that would be a much better choice."

Appolion looked down at his feet, Ana knew it was because he was bad at sharing his feelings with anyone but her. He finally admitted to Cam, "After Ana, you're my best friend."

"Do you realize how sad that is?" Cam asked dryly.

Appolion still studied his boots. "I'm serious, before I started talking with you, I was at the end of my rope. I was about ready to let the demons capture me, just so it would end. Then, after I met you, that all changed."

Ana was shocked to see Cam blush.

He kidded, "You're the second guy that has tried to come on to me today."

"You know what I mean, dumbass. I would be down and then you would tell me something about Abdiel or Rachael and it make it easier to go

on for a while longer."

Cam gave a half laugh. "I think it was the stories about my sister that cheered you up."

Appolion looked up long enough to give Ana a smile. "You're probably right there. What I'm trying to say is, you're one of the few angels that I trust and I would be honored if you accepted and became my daughter's tutelary."

Cam asked the baby, "What do you think, Ariel? Do we make a good team?" He pretended to listen for a second. "She says it's okay with her, so I guess I'll do it."

Appolion looked confused. "How did you know her name? We haven't told anyone yet."

"Oh she told me that herself months ago," Cam said dismissively.

Gabi threw her hands up and shot out, sarcastically, "Of course she did. How stupid of me not to think of that."

Cam didn't laugh at her comment, instead he was stared at something on the baby's leg. "Gabi, what's that?"

Gabi stepped closer and peered down at Ariel. "It's a little birthmark, why?"

"It kind of looks like a moon, huh?" Cam's voice was slightly strained, making Ana confused.

Apparently, Gabi shared the same feeling. "What's the big deal, Cam? It's just a little birthmark. It's not like it's dangerous to her health

or anything."

Cam gave a weak smile that did not satisfy Ana's growing anxiety at all. "Yeah, you're probably right."

"Cam," Ana gave him the warning tone that had always worked when he was little. "What's going on?"

"It's nothing. I'm just an old worried uncle that's all."

Ana gave him a stern glare. "Is there something that you're not telling us?"

Cam gave her one of his trademark grins. "Oh, there's plenty that I'm not telling you. Us leaders have to keep a few secrets under our belts, just to keep you all on your toes."

Gabi punched him lightly on the arm. "Like there are real fairies for instance? How long have you know about that one?"

"A couple of years. Our species doesn't mix much with theirs, so it hasn't been an issue before. Now with the war, everything is changing."

"Are there any other species you aren't telling us about?" Rachael asked eagerly.

"Yes." Cam sighed heavily. "And for the last time, there aren't any unicorns."

She cocked her head to the side, the movement made her curly masses fall over her shoulder. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, what is it with you and unicorns lately?"

She cast a nervous look over at Gabi. "I kind of promised to show one to Atar."

"You spoil him way too much," Gabi chided.

Rachael danced on her toes and let out a little squeal. "I know and now I have two of them to spoil. You should see some of the stuff I bought for Ariel."

Gabi shook her head as she opened the door and called out, "You boys can come in now."

The brothers and Abdiel filed in. Bear came in last, holding Tiffany's hand. Dina was with him, as usual. Dina slinked to the back of the room and tried to make himself as small as possible. While he was very comfortable and carefree around Bear and Cam, with any other males, it was a different story.

Ana worried about the Goth empath. He had been messed up before he died. Once Derel and Bear had brought him back, he was even worse. There were times that his moods were so dark, they made Cam look like a happy bunny. It was almost like Dina brought something back with him from the other side.

Ana decided Dina was going to her next project. She would do everything possible to make sure that he knew he was a part of their family and that none of them would ever hurt him like Jehel had. He was going to learn to see her as a big sister, whether he like it or not. "Dina, come over

here." She patted the bed.

He came over, shooting wary glances over at the males. The brothers, for their part, weren't even aware of him. They were too engrossed in looking at their new niece. When he finally did sit, it was on the very edge of the bed. Ana thought back to how easily he had hopped on the top of the car with her and Bear earlier and had to resist the urge to reach out and hug him.

She pointed at her brothers, they were huddled around Cam who was still holding the baby, "Look at them," she said softly so only Dina could hear. "They're all making idiots of themselves."

At that moment, Ariel let out a tiny yawn and all the brothers gave a collective, "Awww..." Dina and Ana shared a small laugh.

She tugged at his sleeve until he finally relented and scooted closer. She put one arm around him. "I meant what I said at the hospital," she told him. "We all consider you part of this loud, crazy, dysfunctional family now. I just hope that you realize that one day."

"I'm sorry." He fiddled with the zipper on his hoodie nervously. "It's just hard for me to trust anybody. Up until recently all I had was Amadeaha."

"I know, sweetie." She was pleasantly surprised when he laid his head on her shoulder.

He let out a tired sigh and confessed, "I'm

worried about my cousin. Amadeaha and I always looked out for each other. Now she has nobody. I wish she was here with us."

Ana looked over at Cam. "I wish she was here, too." Ana started to stroke his hair in the same motherly fashion she had used with Bear and Cam countless times in the past. She realized how lucky she and her brothers were. Even though they had lost both of their parents at least they had each other. Dina seemed starved for love. She continued to rub his head as she watched her brothers pass the baby around.

Appolion whispered to her, "Your little buddy has fallen asleep there."

Ana looked down and saw that Dina had, indeed, fallen asleep with his head on her. He was even leaving a nice puddle of drool on her shoulder as a thank you gift. She gave a little shrug, but that just made him dig in deeper as he continued to sleep on.

Appolion gave her a grin. "Looks like you have two kids now."

"I'm glad you said that."

He gave her a guarded look. "What's that suppose to mean?"

"I think we should take Dina in."

"What are you talking about? The whole family has taken him in?"

"No." She pointed a finger at herself and then

him. "You and I should take him in. He needs someone besides Bear to guide him. Cam could do it, but he doesn't have the time to spare like we do."

"I agree with you that the kid needs help, but am I the one that should really be giving it to him?"

She reached out and grabbed his hand. "You're the best one for him. He's just like you were at his age, all alone, no family, scared and just plain messed up."

"Thanks," he said dryly.

"You know what I mean. You'll understand what he is going through better than anybody."

Appolion seemed to cave. "I don't know, maybe. I've tried talking to him in the past and he has always shut me out."

Ana smiled because she knew she had won. "Then you just have to keep on trying until he trusts us enough to let us in."

Appolion sighed. "Fine, I'll have his stuff moved from the male dormitory to the spare room in our quarters. I don't know how happy he'll be about it though. Bear told me that he already tried to get Dina to move in with him and Tiffany and he refused."

"Dina doesn't have any choice in the matter." He didn't either. If he refused to listen to Ana, well then, she would just make Cam order him to

move.

The whole room fell silent as Michael entered the room, signaling that it was time for Ariel to be presented to the Chief. Ana took in a deep, nervous breath as her heart started to hammer in her chest. Although there was no ceremony or glitz and glamour when the Chief scanned a newborn, it did not mean that it was any less important than any other event in an angel's life. In fact, it was the most important moment that took place in their entire immortal lives. It would dictate who they were forever.

Appolion collected Ariel from Cam and handed her to Michael. The Chief took her in his arms and closed his eyes for several minutes. The whole room was thick with silent tension as they waited for the verdict. Michael finally opened his eyes and he gave them a soft smile. If Ana didn't know any better, she could have sworn that there was a little bit of pride on the Chief's face.

"She is archangel and is to be an angel warrior," he announced to the room.

The brothers all exchanged pleased grins with Appolion. Ana let out a small snort of disgust, at the display of archangel machoness. There was no shortage of egos in the room, that was for sure.

Michael continued to hold the baby as he asked, "Who will be the child's tutelary?"

Cam stepped forward. "That would be me."



Ana watched, with a happy heart, as Cam went on one knee and recited the vows. He even went so far as to cut his hand on a blade and taking a blood vow. That final act made the oath unbreakable. Just as Cam got up, the sound of arguing voices outside the room drew everybody's attention.

"Come on it will be fun, Cliona." Ana recognized the little voice as Atar's.

"No, I've changed my mind," the fairy argued back. "They'll think it's stupid."

Atar came in the room backward, both of his hands were wrapped around the fairy's wrists and he dragged her into the room. While Atar was only a child, he was an angel. That made him stronger than the petite female fairy. She stopped struggling once she seemed to realize that she was already in the middle of the room. She patted her hair nervously.

Ana and the rest of the room just stared at Cliona in stunned silence. She was dressed, head-to-toe, in buckskin. The skirt reached her knees and was fringed in several colorful beads while the top was sleeveless and cut low in the back. She had a pair of moccasins on that reached her knees, fur pom-poms dangled from the tops of them.

Her hair was done up in several elaborate braids and twists and she had even more beads scattered throughout it. Her cheeks were dusted

with a glittery powder and she had several intricate designs painted on her face with purple and pink paint.

"Hello, Pocahontas," Cam drawled slowly.

She shot him a filthy look. "You're one to talk. You look like you're about ready to host a children's show in that outfit."

Cam looked down at his sweater and dress slacks. "My mom made me wear this. What's your excuse?"

"Leave her alone, Cam," Joe interjected softly. "She looks beautiful."

Ana was dismayed to see Cliona look at Joe with adoring eyes. Her anxiety level took an even bigger spike when she saw Joe return the look. Oh, son of a bagel! Joe was falling for the fairy, hard, and that was not a good thing. She didn't want to see her brother suffer through the heartbreak of wanting something that he could not have.

"Cliona's wearing fairy ceremonial clothing," Michael informed them all, but he shot a warning look at Cam.

"Why?" Ana asked her.

Cliona hesitated, then blurted out so quickly that her words tumbled together, "I would like to do a welcoming song for the baby."

Another stunned silence followed her announcement. Her face grew bright red and she spun on her heel with a muttered, "Whatever,"

and started to leave the room.

Joe snagged her by the wrist and pulled her back. "Appolion and Ana would love for you to sing for the baby." He turned and gave his sister a pleading look. "Wouldn't you?"

Ana never could resist any of her brothers when they gave her the puppy dog eyes. She relented with a sigh, "I think that would be nice."

Michael let out a small cough and said, "Actually, what she is offering is a high honor. I don't think there is anybody outside of the fairy world that has ever seen it done."

Ana gave Cliona a confused look. "I thought you were banned from the fairy world. How did you even learn how to do the song?"

Cliona's small mouth curved into a sad smile. "They always made sure to send elders from time to time to teach my sister and me the ways of my father's people. Even though we're outcasts, we are still somewhat respected within our community because we're females."

Michael added, "In the fairy world, the females are the leaders."

"Wow," Rachael exclaimed. "I want to be a fairy."

Cliona blushed again. "I would rather be a female angel. At least you're trained to fight. The males of our species just want us to sit around and look pretty while they protect us."

"If you want to learn how to fight, then I'll be more than happy to teach you," Rachael offered. Cliona's big brown eyes sparkled with excitement as she nodded her head in agreement.

"Couldn't you get in trouble with the fairy elders for showing us this?" Michael asked.

Cliona shrugged. "What are they going to do, banish me? I don't care what they think."

Ana smiled to herself because, against her better judgment, Cliona was starting to worm her way into her heart. It must be the gumption that Cliona displayed. The fairy went to the center of the room and began to sing in a soft clear voice. Ana got goose bumps because she had never heard anyone sing so beautiful in her life. That included the angels that sang in Heaven. The fairy mimicked her song with graceful movements of her hands. Since she sang in a language Ana had never heard before, Cam translated for them.

"She prays to the Goddess that the baby has a good and fruitful life. That she will only know love from those around her and not hatred," he whispered, so that he did not interrupt her. "She asks that the Goddess provides guidance, so that Ariel will always stay on the path of light."

Several small objects started to fly around the room. At first, Ana thought that they were butterflies, until she looked closer. They were small winged creatures of various bright colors.

They flew in a small lazy circle around Ariel. Ana could have sworn she heard them giggling. Just as quickly as they had come, they disappeared.

Cliona finished her song and leaned down to kiss Ariel on the head. She spun around and stuck her tongue out at Cam. "Now those were pixies," she informed him, saucily.

Cam started to shoot off a smartass comment, but Michael threw a baseball at him. Cam caught it right before it hit him in the face. He gave the Chief an annoyed look.

"I told you, I like hockey not baseball." Cam went to throw it back, but Michael had already left the room.

Ana crooked her finger at the fairy. When she came closer, Ana smiled at her. "Thank you. That was so beautiful. I am honored that you would give such a precious gift to my daughter."

Cliona just inclined her head and grabbed Atar's hand. The two of them left the room. Everybody else eventually followed their example and filed out, one by one, until only Ana, Appolion and the baby were left.

Ana was exhausted so she lay back down of the bed. Appolion joined her, the baby slept between them. Little Ariel was pooped from the excitement of meeting her family. *You better get used to it, kiddo. We might be a loud bunch, but we always stick together, no matter what.* Since she had been

communicating mentally with her daughter the entire time Ariel was in the womb, Ana still automatically did it.

Appolion picked up her message and laughed. "I happen to like our family, even Dina and Tiffany."

They both fell silent and he studied her and the baby. He would reach out and stroke Ana's hair for a few moments, then brush his finger over the baby's brow. He did this for a while, alternating from one to the other. Ana just watched his face, enjoying the love that was written all over it.

"I'm so lucky," he finally whispered.

"We both are." She reached over and caressed his cheek.

"Do you know how much I love you, Ana?"

She smiled at him. "I have a pretty good idea. I love you, too, Appolion."

"Thank you for coming to get me. If it weren't for you, I would still be out there all alone."

She reached over and brushed the back of her fingers across his lips. "Appolion, don't you realize that you saved me as much as I saved you? Without you, I'm nothing."

He leaned over, being careful not to wake the baby, and kissed her. She savored the now familiar, feeling of his lips pressed against hers. He pulled back and gave the baby her own kiss, on the top of her fuzzy head. Ariel scrunched her

face a little, before continuing to sleep.

Ana closed her eyes and started to drift off to sleep herself. Each time she breathed in, she smelled the combined scents of the baby and Appolion. Her family. As long as she had them she could face whatever the future held.

\* \* \* \*

Beelzebub, chief general for Satan, walked up to the wooden doorway. He dismissed the two demon guards with a wave of his clawed hand and unlocked the door. He took a deep breath and tried to steady his nerves before he went in. Beelzebub was terrified of what dwelled within and he was never scared of anything, not even Satan himself.

The demon walked cautiously in the room and approached the lone occupant, all the time he made sure to keep one hand on the hilt of his sword. The creature that lived in the room did not even turn around. It continued to sit in the wooden chair and read its book.

The creature was actually small by demon standards. It did not look like a demon either. It looked like a small male angel, with red eyes and dark brown hair. Until you got closer to it. That was when the evil hit you. The darkness emanated from the creature like a heavy smog that

threatened to suffocate anyone that got too near it.

"It's time, master," Beelzebub was careful to keep his voice submissive.

The creature let out a cold smile. "Yes it is. The child has been born."

"Correct," Bub nodded his head, confirming what the creature already knew. "It was born yesterday and it is a female."

"Of course it's a female. Did I not already tell you it would be months ago? You should never doubt me, demon general."

The creature made the comment casually, but Bub still felt the threat that was carried within it. He couldn't help but let out a slight shiver of fear. "The Order will protect the child with their lives." He was sickened to hear that his voice was meek.

The creature laughed. "Let them, that is what I am counting on. No matter what, I need you to bring me the Destroyer's daughter. She is our destiny and the downfall of Michael and his precious Order."



## **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.