

Stephani Hecht

Archangels Series

Book 5



Angel's Blood

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Angel's Blood
Archangel Series Book 5

By

Stephani Hecht

Dedication

*Michelle and Tammi, you helped me get here.
To Crofty and Chysmom for helping me name
Jordy and Odan.*

Chapter One

Incognito and Cam were usually two words you didn't hear in the same sentence.

That hadn't stopped Michael, Chief of Archangels, from doing it though. Earlier that day he found his nephew and issued an order. "One of our spies has been compromised and needs to be smuggled to safety. I need you to go to a neutral bar tonight, Cam, and you need to go incognito."

Cam had flashed his fangs and asked, "Just how am I supposed to do that, Chief? As far as I can tell I'm the only angel sporting a pair of these."

Michael had given him a not-my-damn-problem-figure-it-out-yourself shrug and said, "Keep your head down and mouth shut. I know both of those activities go against your nature, but I have confidence in you. Make sure you don't make eye contact with anybody either. Your unique eyes are a dead giveaway."

"Fuck you, Michael."

"Thanks, but you're not my type. That does

remind me of one last thing though. Leave the succubi alone."

Now as Cam sat in the dark dingy bar, he knew that last order was going to be a toughie. Since he was part incubus himself, his body craved sex like a heroin junkie craved their next fix. Being around all these succubi and the free sex they were offering was torture. The females were slinking around the bar looking for a male to scratch their itch and dear God he wanted to be that male.

Succubi didn't lose their beauty when they turned away from the angel life like other demons. Sure, there were some changes, they had a set of black wings, fangs and cat eyes now, but otherwise they were unblemished and pretty. Actually, they were more than pretty, each one could put a supermodel to shame. Their bodies seemed built for sex and nothing else. They always made sure to wear as little clothing as possible, too, showing off their best assets.

He pulled down the brim of his baseball hat even more and eyed one particular female demon. He'd been with the dark-haired succubus a couple of times before and she'd always been a feisty one. Damn, what he wouldn't give just to be able to take her to the back room for five minutes...wait, make that ten minutes. The fun he could have with her, a little suck followed by a lot of fuck. Unable to hold himself back anymore, he let out a

sharp whistle to get her attention. When she looked at him, he crooked his finger and smiled at her. She immediately started to walk over to him, her hips swaying sensually under the tiny scrap of fabric she called a skirt. See that was the nice things about succubi, you didn't have to waste times with fancy words, you could get right down to business. The average conversation went like this...

"You wanna?"

"Mmm...okay."

He couldn't count the times those words had led to him taking care of business in one of the bar's back rooms. It always ended the same way, him on the filthy ground with one or two female demons, just enough clothes removed to get things done. But then, sex was sex so he really couldn't complain. Much.

He was so lost in his lustful thoughts that he didn't realize he wasn't alone anymore until the seat opposite of him slid out and someone sat in it. When he got a gander at who it was, he almost fell out of his chair.

It was Amadeaha. The one angel he wanted. The one angel he knew he could never have.

At first Cam gapped at her because he was for sure he must be dreaming about her again. Then, once he realized he was friggin wide-awake, he gapped at her because he couldn't believe that she

was really there. Without meaning to, he inhaled deeply. Even with the rank demon stench that always hung in the bar, he could still detect lilacs. Amadeaha always smelled like that and how he loved it.

Her long, dark, wine red hair was back in a practical ponytail. The look made her intense, dark, green eyes appear even larger than usual. She was wearing a pair of blue jeans and a tight pink sweater that hugged her just-the-right-size breasts.

She seemed so out of place. The neutral bar was a hangout for rouges, demons and lowlife angels, not beautiful females like her. Her pure features stood out in strong contrast to the dirty floors, rough wooden tables and dingy walls. He might belong in a hellhole like this, but not her. Never her.

A thousand thoughts and questions snapped through his mind as he stared at her. First and foremost was, how in the hell did she get involved in the spy business? She was the niece of the justice angel's leader, Jehel. Since the angel warriors were at war with the justice angels, she should be the last one that Michael trusted.

She was also the only female angel that had been able to turn Cam's head since the demons had converted him. Cam inwardly groaned when he remembered the last time he had seen

Amadeaha. It'd been the day of the rebellion uprising and he'd been sick and out of his mind. He'd babbled some pretty damn embarrassing things to her that day. All of them true confessions of how he really felt about her, too. To top it all off, that had been in between fainting spells. He'd collapsed at her feet three or four times, depending on who was retelling the story in order to get a rise out of Cam.

She was looking at him expectantly so he knew that he should say something. His mind scrambled as he tried to think of something charming. Conversations with females had never been his forte even before he had become all big and scary. He knew he had to say something though, they just couldn't sit around the dirty table and stare at each other all day.

Finally he blurted, "I thought redheads weren't supposed to wear pink?" He inwardly cringed at his words. Yeah, that was just going to charm the boots right off her. She looked down at her sweater and brushed at it with her small hands before returning her gaze to him. He noticed she was trembling a bit and he had to resist the ridiculous urge to reach out and comfort her.

"I'm sorry," her voice was as soft and gentle as he remembered. "I'm not used to dressing in the way of humans."

"Really? How are you liking it?"

She gave a delicate shrug as her pink lips pursed into a small frown. "I find their clothes to be rather confining."

"Yeah, I hear bras can be a bitch." Ouch, that last comment was totally uncalled for, but oh well. He had a reputation for speaking first and thinking later so he might as well meet expectations.

She tilted her head to the side with a confused expression. "What's a bra?"

He nearly fell out of his chair for the second time that night. It wasn't the most sexy thing he'd ever heard a female say, it was just the pure innocence behind it. She wasn't trying to turn him on either, she was just being her natural self.

His gaze drifted, on its own accord, down to her breasts. The thought of those perfect things being bare under that tight fuzzy sweater made the grungy jeans he was wearing feel too tight. He shifted in his seat and tried his best to look bored and unaffected by her presence.

What he needed to do was get Amadeaha out of here and off his hands as soon as possible before he did or said something that they both would regret. What the hell was Michael thinking of in the first place, even putting him in the same room as a female angel, let alone this one? It was no big secret in their family that Cam had always had a weak spot for Amadeaha.

He could feel her still staring at him so he reluctantly raised his eyes to meet hers. As soon as their gazes locked, he knew he was in big trouble. His feelings for her hadn't dimmed over time, if anything, they had grown stronger. Shit, fuck, damn, he needed to put as much distance between him and her as possible.

* * * *

Dear Lord, how she loved his eyes. She always had even though she'd rarely seen them. He was ashamed of them so he always wore dark glasses or kept them focused on his feet, hiding them from view. But to her they were beautiful.

They were a deep, dark blue, with irises so large there was almost no white visible at all. The pupils were elongated and shaped like a felines. They were the eyes of a demon and she had no doubt that's why he hated them so much. She briefly wondered what he would think if he knew she saw them every night in her dreams.

What wonderfully wicked dreams they had been, too. She'd never been with a male, but that didn't mean she was completely naïve. She'd heard the other female justice angels when they whispered about their various exploits. So she had plenty of naughty fantasies and they had all been vivid and always about him. It occurred to her she

was gawking at him like some lovesick teenager so she decided to get down to business. She nervously licked her lips and said, "I need to speak to Michael as soon as possible."

He pulled his hat down over his eyes and looked around the room.

Even though it was covered, she knew exactly the way his hair looked. It was blond and he always wore it so it looked like someone had just run their fingers through it. Serel, one of her few justice angel friends, always called it the-just-had-sex style.

She realized he was trying to disguise who he was and she clasped her hands together nervously. He was Camael, leader of the empathes, a member of the Order and one of the most wanted angels in Heaven. How in the hell did he think he could hide who he was just by putting on some dirty clothes and a dumb hat? She'd picked him out of the crowd in just a matter of seconds. How long did he think it would take the justice angels or the demons? To make matters even worse, he was acting like he didn't have a care in the world. How dare he be so unaffected by her presence when she was ready to fall apart at the mere sight of him?

The only reason why she had volunteered to become a spy in the first place was because of him. The one thing that had kept her going in the past

few weeks after she'd been discovered, imprisoned and whipped had been thinking about Cam. To think that he could care so little about her stung. "Someone is bound to figure out who you are," she spat under her breath as anger replaced hurt.

He gave her a cocky grin. "The demons here know better than to mess with me. As for the justice angels, they don't scare me."

"I still don't understand why Michael didn't just have us meet at a safe house. It would have been more convenient."

"Because you refused to come alone. You insisted on having someone escort you. For all we know, you could have been leading Jehel himself right to our door."

"I brought Serel, she's my friend and she'd never betray me. In fact, she's the one who helped me escape." Amadeaha had never been one for violence, but she was about ready to smack him. Maybe that would knock his arrogant ass down a peg or two.

"I don't know Serel, therefore I don't trust her. Where is she now, by the way?"

"Once she got a look at you, she went back to Heaven."

"Which is precisely why we can't trust her. She's one of them."

"What about me? Do you trust me?" she asked

breathlessly. She hated that his opinion meant so much to her.

"Michael trusts you," he replied blandly.

Fine, if he wanted to cold and impersonal, than so could she. "I have some information and it is imperative that I get it him."

"That is why he sent me to fetch you. Although, it would have been a lot easier if you had just put a message in a droid."

She felt a fresh surge of anger at his blasé attitude. She'd lost everything to bring out this message and he was slumped in a chair acting like her mission was no big deal. Here she was with no home, no family and in extreme pain and he could care less, and what the hell did he mean by putting a message in a droid? "Just take me to your Chief. He should have been the one to come for me in the first place." She wanted to take those words back as soon as she said them. When was she going to stop letting her temper make her say stupid things?

Cam lifted his hat and fixed her with a pissed-off glare. "Surprise, cookie, Michael is a very busy boy. He just doesn't jump because you snap your little fingers. Your Uncle Jehel should have told you that."

"My uncle never made it a habit to talk with me a great deal. He doesn't have what you would call tender feelings toward me." She studied her

fingernails casually, trying to ignore how hard it was for her to admit that out loud. She blinked because something was in her eyes. It wasn't tears damn it, because she didn't cry over her family anymore. She decided to get the subject off her and onto someone else she was desperate for news about. "Although, he does talk of his missing son a great deal."

"Jehel doesn't have tender feelings for him either. Besides, he knows where Dina's at." Cam smiled, giving her a brief glimpse of his fangs. "If you want to know about your cousin, why don't you just come right out and ask me instead of beating around the bush?"

She didn't answer right away because she was staring at his mouth, mesmerized. The one time she had been blessed enough to be bitten by him had been a turning point in her life. He'd been sick and not really with it at the time and probably didn't remember one moment of it, but she sure did. Even though it had hurt some, all she recalled was the feeling of his arms around her, his soft lips touching her neck, the way his tongue caressed her flesh before he sunk his teeth in. She realized she was touching the area on her neck where he had bitten her and jerked her hand down. "Fine, I'll ask," she said briskly, ashamed and embarrassed that she'd allowed herself to get distracted by a hot set of fangs. "How's my

cousin?"

"Dina is doing real good. He has some anger issues, but after the way his father treated him, who wouldn't? He's real tight with my little brother Bear."

"How do your other brothers treat him? Dina is so small and meek, I worry about how he is around so many archangels."

For some reason that comment amused him. "All eight of us Lehor brothers like Dina just fine. You need to remember, you haven't seen your cousin in a couple years. He's changed, a lot."

"Can I... What I mean is, would you..." she stopped, unable to continue. Amadeaha hated asking anyone for favors because she had always been taught to do so showed weakness.

He avoided her eyes and instead, scanned the bar, on alert for danger. "Dina will want to see you. As soon as we figure out what we're going to do with you, I'll take you to him."

"Thank you." She took several deep breaths to calm her stomach because it felt like it had been dancing ever since she had entered the bar and it all wasn't because of Cam. She couldn't help but feel all the emotions swirling around her. It wasn't the demons or angels that were overloading her either. It was the humans.

Before tonight, she had only been to Earth on a couple of occasions. She'd heard humans were the

hardest emotions to tamper down and now she was experiencing it firsthand. She swallowed down several mouthfuls of bitter saliva and ground her teeth together. The last thing she wanted to do was vomit all over Cam's lap. Somehow she didn't think that would impress him much. He reached over the table and grabbed her hand. As soon as he touched her, the anxiety disappeared. He lightly feathered the pad of his thumb several times over the inside of her wrist. Each stroke made her heart thump a little harder in her chest.

"I should have realized sooner the vibes would be getting to you," his soft caring voice was completely at odds with his earlier sarcastic one. "I can absorb some of it to help you. Is this better?"

"Yes, thank you."

He gave a small smile. "What's the use of being the leader of the empaths if I can't help one of them out now and again?"

He still rubbed her wrist and it made her entire body tingle. She wondered what it would feel like to have him stroke other parts of her body. She quickly looked down when she felt her cheeks getting hot, afraid if he saw her blushing he would know what she was thinking.

"I'm a justice angel, not an empath."

"If you say so," he said in an unconvinced tone.

"The feelings of nausea and anxiety will eventually go away. It's always hard for empaths when they first come to Earth. That's why we usually gradually introduce them to it."

"I'm not an empath," she repeated. He let go of her wrist and she had to stop herself from lunging over the table and grabbing his hand back.

"That's what Dina kept saying." He leaned forward and eyed her. "Let me ask you one question. Were you and Dina good at the whole justice angel thing?"

"We were terrible at it," she admitted as she let her shoulders slump in a defeated way.

"That's because you're not justice angels, you're both empaths. Your daddies just didn't want to have angel warriors in their family, so they didn't let Michael train you."

"Ha!" she declared triumphantly. "Now I know you're wrong. My older brother Haniel was an archangel before he was injured."

He let out an impatient sigh. "Then maybe your father didn't want two in the family. I really don't know why he did it, but he did. You're an empath. I recognize one of my followers when I scan them."

She pulled back, feeling a little violated. "You scanned me?"

"I scan everybody. Trust comes hard for me."

Amadeaha shouldn't have been surprised by

that admission. Cam had spent a month in Hell as a captive. That's where the demons transformed him from an angel to the halfling he was now. Before and after they had tortured him brutally.

A small female demon slinked over to their table and sat down in the chair closest to Cam. She gave Amadeaha her winged back while she leaned forward and put her hand on Cam's thigh. Amadeaha felt a surge of jealousy rip through her body, it was quickly followed by anger when he made no move to put some distance between himself and the succubus.

The demon leaned close to Cam's face and laughed. "So I was right, it is the Empath King." She ran her hand even higher up his leg. "I would recognize this body anywhere."

The dark-haired female was dressed, if what little she wore counted as being dressed, in a tight blue leather getup. Her short skirt barely covered her butt, while the top cut so low Amadeaha half expected her to pop out of it at any moment. The succubus didn't get bonus points in Amadeaha's book by looking spectacular in the clothes either. She looked down at her sweater and jeans and suddenly felt like someone's dowdy old mother.

Cam gave the succubus a slight shake of his head. "Not today, I'm here on business."

"Are you sure? I have one of my sisters with me today. I bet you remember her. She looks a lot like

me, but is a little bigger here." The demoness cupped her breasts. "The three of us had so much fun together last time."

Amadeaha almost gasped out loud at that one. Surely, he hadn't had sex with both of the sisters at the same time. Was that even possible? She'd read about such things in those erotica books some of the other female justice angels had smuggled in for her, but it really wasn't done. Or was it? She shot a questioning look over at Cam only to see him squirming uncomfortably in his chair while he avoided her eyes. Horrified, she blurted, "You and your sister were both with him at the same time?"

The succubus shifted her blue eyes toward Amadeaha, they were cat-like, identical to Cam's. He just pulled his hat so that it completely hid his peepers while he slouched back in the chair with a groan. The silence at the table was so heavy, Amadeaha started to squirm. She felt like a first class idiot.

The demon finally turned around in her chair, so all of her attention was centered on Amadeaha. "Well look at this. The Empath King has himself some little virgin angel. Isn't that sweet?"

"Leave her alone," Cam growled. "She doesn't even know what we're really talking about."

For the second time that evening, she wanted to smack him. "I do too. You had a threesome with

two females. I've just never met anybody who's done that before."

The demon gave her a genuine smile. "Well, sweetie, if you want details I would be more than happy to fill you in."

Cam shot upright in the seat. "No, she doesn't want details. Keep your mouth shut."

The demon twisted in the chair so she faced him. "But I have some news you might want to hear. I saw your brother Derel."

This time Amadeaha did gasp out loud. Cam's brother, Derel, had been missing for three months. Cam and Michael had been looking for him nonstop and, up until now, they hadn't found out a single thing. Amadeaha's back started to hurt all over again. She'd been looking for information on Derel's whereabouts and had pushed too far. She'd slipped up and Jehel and her father, Kyian, had discovered she was a spy.

Cam looked at the demon earnestly. "Please, you have to tell me everything you know. I'll pay you whatever you want."

The demon's face softened. "Not all of the demons have aligned with the justice angels. There are just as many who would like to see the angel warriors win this war. Besides, I like and admire you, Empath King. I can't take money from you."

Cam still didn't look relieved, if anything, he

looked more upset. "That's the only way I can pay you. I won't do it any other way."

"I don't ask for sex and blood either. I'll give you this information freely." She looked around the bar to make sure no one was listening before she said, "I saw him two days ago at some slave traders market."

"Where? Who?"

She shook her head. "It doesn't matter. He was being sold."

Cam cursed softly. "Then tell me the location of the slave traders building. I'll make him tell me who he sold my brother to."

"It won't do any good. The traders move constantly from place to place so archangels such as you can't find them." She put her hand on his leg again, and this time it was a comforting gesture rather than a sexual one. "I just thought you would find some comfort in the knowledge your brother lives."

"Thank you, someday I will find a way to repay this favor," he replied softly.

Amadeaha just bet he would find a way to repay her. The succubus continued to paw him and that jerk was making no move to stop her. Deciding she had seen enough, she got up from her chair and started to leave. Quick as lightning, his hand shot and snagged her by the wrist. He pulled her back into her chair so fast she barely

had enough time to swallow the yelp of pain when her back slammed into it.

Sit down, shut up and try to make yourself as inconspicuous as possible. He ordered in her head, reminding her he was one of the few angels who had telepathic abilities. *We already have some demons in here suspicious of you as it is. It's not every day that a beautiful female angel walks into some crappy dingy bar.*

She squeezed her eyes shut and tried to send out her own mental, *Shut up and stop ordering me around.* But since she wasn't telepathic, she didn't get her message out very far. She sat there furious until a thought hit her. Cam had said she was beautiful. Well, he really didn't say it, he thought it in her head, but it still counted in her book. She tried hard not to look too pleased with herself as she continued to watch the conversation.

"Give me the address," he ordered the demon. "Even if Derel isn't still there, I might be able to find something out by going over the place."

The demon wrote it down on a piece of paper. When she was done, she looked over at Amadeaha and let out a long sigh. "I guess the Empath King won't be playing with us anymore."

"Huh?" Cam sounded distracted and didn't even look up from the paper she had handed him.

"Now that you have a pretty female angel, you won't need us anymore."

Cam's head snapped up. "She's nothing to me."

Amadeaha tried not to let that remark sting, but it did. Of course, she meant nothing to him. Her Uncle Jehel was not only the leader of the justice angels, but he Cam's biggest enemy. He was the one who set Cam up and helped the demons capture him and take him to Hell. Her uncle was also the one who had declared war on Cam and all the angel warriors and hunted them down like they were some common criminals. So she wasn't surprised he had no feelings for her. Hurt yes, but then she would get over it. Really, she would.

A male demon came over and clasped Cam on the shoulder. The demon had on a pair of cowboy boots, jeans, and a tee shirt. His head and dark body were covered with bony spikes that almost resembled a porcupine. Amadeaha was shocked to see Cam smile at the demon and shake his hand. The two then started to talk in the demon language, acting like they were lifelong buds.

"Mangus has been a close friend of the Empath King for years," the succubus supplied. Cam was so engrossed with talking with the male demon he didn't seem to be hearing the female's conversation.

When Amadeaha could only shake her head in disbelief, the succubus clucked her tongue.

"You seem surprised an angel could make friends with a demon. It happens all the time.

We're not all bad, some of us have good qualities. Remember, we were angels once, too."

Amadeaha looked deep into the other female's eyes and saw something she never thought she would see in a demon, a caring soul. She'd always been taught all demons were cold and not capable of compassion. Yet this female demon demonstrated she did have a heart when she told Cam about his brother. Amadeaha never stopped to consider that maybe demons could be something more than monsters before now. "I'm sorry, I never thought of it that way," Amadeaha admitted. "I guess it was shortsighted of me."

"I was a healer before I became this." The female demon pointed to her scant clothing to indicate her status. "I can sense you're injured. Is there anything I can do to help?"

Amadeaha smiled at her kindness. It was the first time anyone had shown her any in weeks. Who would have thought a demon would be the one to give it to her? "Thank you, but no. I'll be fine."

"Is there any specific reason why you're not telling the Empath King that you're hurt?"

Amadeaha shot a worried glance at Cam, but he was still talking to his demon pal. "He has enough to worry about without adding me to his list."

The demon tapped her long red nails on the

table. "Funny, I had the impression you were already at the top of his list."

Cam turned and snapped, "We got to go. Now." He grabbed Amadeaha by the wrist and practically dragged him behind her as he left the bar.

She barely had time to wave to her new friend as they were leaving. "What's the rush?" she asked between pants. She was having to run to keep up with his long strides.

He pointed back toward the bar and where a group of justice angels entered through the same door that they had left just seconds ago. He approached a vehicle and opened the door for her.

She took one look at the confined space and started to panic. When she was a child, her cousin Azreal had once locked her in a trunk. Ever since then, she'd hated closed in areas with a passion and that was exactly what the car seemed to be to her. "I can't," she said weakly. "Can't we just flash out of here?"

He made a displeased sound in the back of his throat. "No, we can't. In case you forgot, the justice council has blanketed Earth. None of the angel warriors have been able to flash since the war began. We've been having to make do with human transportation."

He put his hand in the small of her back and gave a gentle push. She pushed him back hard and

started to walk, no check that run, in the opposite direction. He pulled her back and slammed her against his chest. His arm was like a steel band, pressing against her injured back. She started to slap at him, partly out of pain and partly out of panic.

"Shhh...sweetie, you need to calm down for me," he soothed as he brought his forehead down to hers.

As soon as their heads met, the anxiety and fear washed away. She knew it was because he was using his skills as an empath to ease away her anxiety, but there was something more to it. There had to be, or was that just wishful thinking on her part?

His lips were only inches from hers and, each time he took a breath, she could feel it fluttering softly against her cheek. His breath was sweet, like the human candy that Haniel used to sneak in to her and Dina. The sugary smell mingled with his masculine scent, making for an odd mix. Actually, the combination reminded Amadeaha a lot of his personality, very hard and warrior like, with a hint of sweetness hidden underneath that only a few got to see.

It wasn't until her breasts brushed up against his chest that she realized she was swaying into him. He was tall, but then so was she so she barely had to tip her head back so their faces remained

close. She was surprised to find her hands were gripping his biceps, although she didn't move them. His blue eyes registered shock and then, what she was pretty sure was desire.

"You're playing with fire," he warned her in a low voice. The double meaning of his words weren't lost on either one of them. Not only was he part of the Order, he was the one who controlled the element of fire.

"I like fire," even though she spoke her words in a sultry whisper, she felt her face blushing. She wasn't used to flirting because she'd never done it before. Well...never before with anyone but him.

He lowered his head with a small moan and she knew he was going to kiss her. Not some ordinary kiss either, this was going to be one of those knock-ya-outta-your-socks kisses she'd heard other females whisper about. She licked her lips in anticipation and closed her eyes.

A shout from across the parking lot interrupted them. Amadeaha let out a disappointed sigh as Cam raised his head to see who it was. When he cursed in several different languages, she knew it wasn't good. She looked over and saw the justice angels had spotted them and were running in their direction.

Before she could argue about getting in the car, he threw her in, then slammed the door shut. He ran to the other side and got in the driver's side

door. Reaching over, he pulled on her seatbelt before turning on the ignition. The justice angels spread out, blocking the exit, and raised their guns.

"Hang on," Cam said. "It might get a little froggy here for bit."

Before she could ask him what that phrase meant, he gunned the car and headed straight for the justice angels. They retaliated by shooting at the car. Amadeaha let out a surprised yelp before she ducked her head down. "They're shooting at us." She knew she was being Captain Obvious, but her fear was making her stupid.

"Really?" he shot back sarcastically. "I hadn't noticed. Thanks for pointing that out to me." He spun the car around sharply.

She grabbed at the dashboard while trying to stay upright, all the time telling her stomach to mind itself. He drove at the justice angels again and this time, they dove to the side. Once they were down, he pulled out onto the street and took off fast, leaving them behind.

As the bar had faded away in the dark, she sat up and tried hard not to look too impressed. "You must be used to having angels and demons shooting at you all the time."

"As a matter of fact, I am." He turned and gave her a grim look. "Except this time they weren't shooting at me. They were shooting at you."

Chapter Two

He looked away from the road long enough to pin her with a glare. “Just what is it that you know that has the justice dicks this worked up?”

“What makes you think they were shooting at me?” She gripped the dashboard so tightly her fingers were turning white.

Cam was willing to bet she was going to leave indentations in the hard plastic before they were done. He gave her his best *duh* look, the one he usually reserved for Bear and Dina. “Because they were aiming at you. That little message of yours must be pretty damn big for them to call all this attention to themselves.”

“Maybe my father or uncle sent them for me because they want me to come back home,” she said lamely.

The little red-haired liar was holding out on him. He thought about trying to scan her head for the information, but dismissed the idea. For some insane reason, he felt like it would be wrong to

butt into her thoughts. Which was crazy because he had never felt that way about anyone before. Since when had he developed scruples?

"Like you said yourself earlier, I don't think your Uncle Jehel would have sent them because he has tender feelings for you," he said carefully. He was shocked to find he didn't want to hurt her feelings. "From what I've seen with the way he treated Dina, Jehel's not capable of love."

When she didn't answer, he stole a glance out of the corner of his eye at her. Her head was bent down and she was fiddling with her fingers. When he heard her let out a sniff, he started to inwardly curse himself. Why was it he always made females cry? "Look, I'm sorry," he blundered.

She lifted her head and he saw that, once again, he had underestimated her. She wasn't crying at all, quite the damn opposite. She was laughing her ass off. Granted it was hysterical insane laughter, but at least it wasn't tears. He never did know how to handle it when someone cried, now crazy was a different story. He could handle crazy any day.

"My car is all shot to hell up and you're laughing?" Actually, it was Michael's car, but he didn't think that point was important now.

She brushed back a hunk of hair that had escaped from the ponytail. Then took several deep

breaths as she appeared to be trying to get a grip on herself. He couldn't fight back his own grin. Gotta love a girl who could laugh right after being shot at.

"I'm sorry about your car." Her smile defied her words. "I just can't believe this is happening to me of all angels. All the other females used to make fun of me because I'm such a boring, old, prude."

He gave her a double take. "You, boring and old? Never. Now as to being a prude, well, that just remains to be seen."

She blushed and he couldn't help but love it. It made him want to pull the car off the road and take her in the backseat to teach her a lesson or two in making out. He wouldn't stop until she was blushing all over, not just in her little pixie face.

"I'm not a prude," she argued. "I read books."

"I see. What kind of books, *Spying for Dummies*?"

"No, I read erotica books."

He almost drove off the road. He was silent for a minute before a thought occurred to him. "If you read those books, then how is it you had no idea what a bra was?" The guilty look she shot him spoke volumes. She'd been lying to him earlier in the bar. He shook his head. She was playing games and she had no idea how dangerous they

were. "Do you always flirt like that with males?" Because if she did, then he was going to find those males and rip them apart.

"No, just you. In fact, you're only the second one who has ever kissed me." She tilted her head to the side. "You do remember kissing me, right?"

Of course he did. It had been right after he had told her that whenever he was with another female, he imagined it was her. How could he not remember the way her soft lips felt against his, the way her body molded into his arms as she accepted his embrace and didn't ask for anything in return? There was no way he could ever forget it, even though he tried his best to. God, that kiss had been one of the best things to happen in his fucked up life. He'd be damned if he admitted it to her though. "No," he lied. "And who the hell was the other male that kissed you?"

"That's none of your business. We're talking about you and me and our kiss. You're sure you don't remember? It was right after you fed from me. You bit me."

He remembered biting her, too. She had come to him because he'd been in desperate need for blood. Somehow she'd known and she had found him. Then she'd embraced him and offered herself up, without any hesitation. It was the most precious gift anyone had ever given him.

Her body had felt so right against his, her skin

on her neck was so soft and satiny. Damn, she'd tasted so good, sweet and untainted. He still woke up at nights with that taste lingering in his mouth. Some days it was those memories alone that kept the nightmares at bay. He also recalled how she gasped in pain when he sunk his fangs in her. That was something that he had never forgiven himself for.

But he could never tell any of this to her because then that would mean he would have to admit there was a connection between the two of them and that was the last thing she needed. He was part demon, part monster, and he cared too much for her to saddle her with him for the rest of her immortal life. No, even though it felt like he was ripping out his own heart, he could never let her know how much she meant to him. It was better for her that way.

So he kept his mouth shut and didn't say anything to her. She let out a frustrated sigh before she turned to look out the window. It wasn't until he pulled to a stop in front of an old factory that she turned to him again.

"Where are we?"

He turned off the car and slipped the keys in his pocket. "This is where the slave traders supposedly had Derel. The place is deserted now, but I still need to go in for a look. Stay put and I'll be back in five minutes."

He doubted it would even take that long. Cam could already tell that the place had been abandoned days ago. His only hope was they left something behind. Even a scrap piece of paper would do. Then maybe he would be able to use his psychic abilities to get a reading off it.

She gave him a stubborn look. "I want to go with you."

"You'll just slow me down. There's nothing to be afraid of. The demons are long gone."

"I'm not afraid of demons. I've been trained to fight."

He started feeling his pockets to make sure he had his favorite toys available, just in case there was trouble. "That's nice to know."

"I'm serious, I've trained with some of the best. I was the best fighter in my class."

"Yippie skippie for you, you're still staying in the car." Cam got out before she could argue any further. He slammed the car door and went inside the factory, leaving her arguing ass behind.

As soon as Cam entered the crumbling, graffiti-covered building, the leftover feelings of fear and humiliation from the slaves hit him so hard he almost fell to his knees. Even though the captives were no longer there, their despair continued to linger and his empath feelers almost went into overload. He thought of the proud angel warriors that had been here and the way they were sold

like cattle. It made him furious. It was even more devastating that one of them had been his brother.

Derel was the only healer in the family. Healers by nature, were more gentle and peaceful than archangels. You could easily spot any healer in a group because they were all usually tall and thin, a marked contrast to archangel's muscular build. That had never held Derel back though, he was just as cocky and scrappy as any one of the brothers. Derel had never backed down in a fight or a mission before. That had been his downfall.

He had volunteered to go help out an angel team trapped inside a safe house surrounded by demons. The team had made it to safety, but not before Derel sacrificed himself. He'd let the demons capture him so the others could escape. Apparently, the demons were now selling him off to the highest bidder. If anyone of them found out he was Cam's brother and Michael's nephew, it would be very bad for everyone. There was no doubt the demons would try to use Derel as a pawn.

"I know you're still live," Cam whispered to the empty room. "I would feel it if they destroyed you."

He picked up various pieces of trash, trying to gleam any little bit of information he could get from it. But he felt nothing. He threw an empty pop can to the side and growled in frustration. As

the can clattered against a wall, he heard a slight sound off to his left and his senses came on high alert. There were demons nearby and they were getting close, too damn close. He pulled his tonfa out, spun them around once and got ready.

* * * *

Amadeaha planned to slug Cam for leaving her alone. As soon as he had left the car, the feelings of anxiety and nausea returned. Great, just great, what was she going to do? Drag him with her just so she would feel halfway decent? She could just hear her father's and uncle's mocking laughter because she couldn't even hack it on Earth.

To take her mind off the confining space in the car, and due to curiosity, she poked around. Finding his leftover candy in the glove box, she ate it, hoping it would settle her queasy stomach while looking at his CD collection. She knew what a CD was, but never listened to one herself. Her father had never allowed any form of human entertainment. Once in a while she snuck and listened to Haniel's iPod, but that was it. The only reason she could speak slang was because of the pirated books and being around other angels who spoke it.

Finished eating his candy, she made up her mind. If he thought she would sit around and wait

for him while he did his business, he had another thing coming. Sick and tired of every male in her life thinking she should just sit around, look demure and keep her mouth shut pushed aside her queasiness. Not in Heaven and under her father's iron rule, she wasn't going to play those games anymore. Cam was going to learn she was her own female, not another groupie who fainted at his feet. Amadeaha got out of the car, slammed the door shut and headed for the factory.

Entering the building, she knew she made a huge mistake. Not only blinded because it was so dark, her empath skills kicked into overdrive. She swayed on her feet as her body broke out in a cold sweat. Scuffling and grunting drilled her ears and told her demons fought with Cam.

Before tonight in the bar, she'd never encountered a demon let alone fought one, but refused to let that stop her. That was her Cam and she wasn't about to let him down. Okay, maybe she fudged a bit when claiming she had training in fighting as she had none, nada, zip. Her father had forbidden even her brother Haniel from giving her lessons. But how hard could it be?

Her eyes adjusted to the darkness enough to make out the fight. Cam was in the center of a group of demons and they attacked relentlessly. Amadeaha gagged as the smell of decaying flesh hit her nostrils, she heard demons smelled like

death. Nothing prepared her for this. The demons here were different than the ones at the bar. More dangerous and evil looking, the things weren't just ugly, they were horrifying. They resembled black snakes with arms and legs, their green eyes burned through the darkness and they were letting out loud hissing sounds from their distorted mouths. Each of them brandished wicked looking knives.

Amadeaha ducked behind a corner and peered around. Her stomach fluttered again, but this time it wasn't due empathizing too much. It was because watching Cam fight was the biggest turn on in her immortal life. Yeah, she'd snuck out to the archangel training fields before. What female angel hadn't? And yeah, she would stand with the others and listen to them ohh and ahh over how sexy the males were. Up until now, Amadeaha hadn't understood their fascination with sweaty archangels. But then Cam wasn't just any archangel. He was power, sex and muscle all rolled up in a nice package. Thinking back to the heavy metal music she listened to on the iPod, the way Cam fought reminded her of it. Hard and without any apologies.

He attacked the demons with a cold efficiency that let her know there was no doubt in his mind he would win this fight. He didn't even bother to pull his sword out, fighting with his bladed tonfa

instead. The weapons seemed to be an extension of his arms, almost like he had been born with them in his hands.

Amadeaha saw his massive muscles rippling under his clothes and couldn't help but wonder what it would feel like to run her hands over his bare back as he laid on top of her. Her teeth clamped on her bottom lip to hold back a moan, she wondered what sex with him would be like. Would he be soft and tender, or hard and powerful like he was now?

What was wrong with her? Here poor Cam was getting attacked and all she could think about was having sex with him. Amadeaha couldn't help it though. She had read of a female's loins burning and she was pretty sure that was what she was feeling now.

Something ticked the back of her neck. It felt like a bug or maybe someone left a window open. She impatiently shooed at it with her hand, never turning around from the show Cam was giving.

Cam grabbed one of the demons by the head and gave it a quick twist. There was a loud crack and then the monster slid to the ground. There were still plenty more for him to fight.

Amadeaha knew she should be grossed out, but the fact he just dispatched a demon with his bare hands made her want him even more. Yep, it was official, she was tramp.

That bug was back, tickling her neck. She brushed it away again.

Amadeaha licked her lips and watched her male continue to fight. And he was her male. He just didn't know it yet. She'd felt his fear when she mentioned the kiss earlier and his need and desire. He wanted her as much as she wanted him. She just had to figure out a way to make him do something about it. The way he kept insisting on pushing her away was frustrating. If he didn't stop, she was going to —

A gentle tap on her shoulder drew her attention. Her blood ran cold. That tickle toyed with her neck again. No, it hadn't been a bug or the wind. Amadeaha closed her eyes, praying that maybe, just maybe it was another angel who wandered in and decided to watch the fight. She choked back a scream. The decay smell now came from behind her. A demon was back there and it wanted her attention. The tap came again, harder and more demanding. She did what any brave warrior would do, shook her head and refused to turn around. Maybe if she didn't look at it, the demon would get bored and go away. Yeah, right and maybe pigs have grown wings and learned how to fly.

A deep gravelly voice demanded, "Turn around and face your destruction, little angel."

"Nuh, uh." Amadeaha shook her head again.

Two clawed hands grabbed her by her arms and spun her around. When she found herself eye to glowing green eye with one of those snake demons, her knees almost gave out. She let out a little squeak of fear and the demon peeled its black lips back into a sinister smile, showing its yellowed, razor sharp fangs. The demon raised one scaled arm and released its long dark claws.

“Aren’t you a beautiful thing?” the demon cooed.

That was the second time that someone had given her that compliment tonight. Lucky her. It leaned down and tried to cram its forked tongue down her throat. Amadeaha pushed herself away from it and ran toward Cam, letting out small sharp screams in between steps. Yeah, she was some brave warrior. One look at a demon and she was running to an archangel for saving. She really didn’t give a damn though. It was better than her other option, staying rooted in place and peeing her pants.

Amadeaha ran so hard that she couldn’t stop when she got to Cam and plowed into him. They both tumbled to the ground. He grunted and she didn’t know if was because she knocked the wind out of him or because she shocked him. His arms wrapped around her at the last minute as he protected her somewhat with his body from the cold hard floor.

"Fuck," he snapped in her ear. "Didn't I tell you to stay in the car?"

"I wanted to help you," she panted. All the running and screaming stole her breath.

"How are you planning on helping me? Are you going to scare the demons away with your shrieking?"

Amadeaha wasn't sure, but could have sworn one of the demons snickered behind them. She tried to scramble off Cam and her knee somehow ended up in his stomach. When he grunted, she jumped to another spot, this time landing on his groin. She leaped off him and he rolled up in a fetal position, groaning. Now she was sure she heard the demons laughing.

"Are you trying to kill me?" Cam asked between clenched teeth.

Amadeaha didn't have time to formulate a response to that before a demon grabbed him by the back of his shirt and threw him across the room. She winced when Cam slammed into the wall. There was no way that didn't hurt. The demon then turned around and fixed its attention on her.

"Run!" Cam yelled as he staggered to his feet. Another demon came up behind him and cold cocked him on the back of his head.

Amadeaha gasped as he crumpled to the ground. Several more demons jumped into the

fray and she lost sight of him. Without a weapon, she picked up a brick from the ground and threw it at the demon still snarling at her. She missed by a mile.

The demon started to charge.

Amadeaha backpedaled as fast as possible. She tried hard to keep on a brave face and put her fists up. Although she had no clue as to what to do with them, she hoped the demon didn't know that.

Before the demon could reach her, it was blown off its feet by a fireball. Cam had managed to extract himself from the demon pile and must have seen she was in trouble. Amadeaha saw him use his powers before, she was just never this close to a direct hit. She stared down at what was left of the demon. It wasn't much, just a black smoldering pile of ash.

"Get under that table and keep your head down," he barked as his blue eyes fixed her with a hard stare.

Since he sounded really angry with her, she wasn't about to argue. Amadeaha scrambled under the table and peeked out. It wasn't lost on her that the only other time she had been in a battle, she'd hid under a table then, too. Cam was shooting off fire and it made the lighting a lot better so she could see all the action.

Unfortunately for the demons, they had just

realized who it was they were fighting. They all backed up and held up their hands in a placating gesture. They made to flash away and couldn't. Realizing this, they started to whimper in panic.

"No, you won't be leaving the party just yet boys," Cam said with a sinister smile. "I'm just beginning to have fun."

Shocked, Amadeaha realized it was Cam that prevented the demons from flashing. She thought that Michael and Abdiel were the only archangels able to do that.

"Please, Empath King," one of the demons croaked out in a distorted voice. "Have mercy on us. We were angels once, too."

"You should have remembered that before you turned your backs on who you were and what we stand for."

Seeing they weren't going to be able to talk their way out, the demons attacked him again. He brought up his hands and shot off fireballs, vaporizing the demons, until there was only one left. Cam grabbed it by the throat and pinned it up against the wall. "If you want to live, then you will talk to me, demon," he said in a calm voice. "Where is the slave trader that was here a couple of days ago?"

"I don't know. We were just left here in case anyone like you came snooping around," the demon's admission came out in short gasps

because of the tight grip Cam kept on its throat.

"If I was looking for an angel who might have been sold, where would I start? It would be a healer."

"A rogue angel name Santar bought a large group. He runs a gladiator ring and he's always looking for healers to repair any of his injured warriors."

Amadeaha dug her fingers into the table leg. She heard tales of demons and rogues who made captives fight for entertainment, but never really believed it was true. It was sickening to think of anyone being forced to do that just to survive. It was so barbaric.

Cam let the demon down. "Fine, get out of here."

The demon flashed away before he could change his mind. Cam walked over, limping slightly, to the table where she was and bent over so she could see his face. The demons had knocked off his baseball hat and his spiked messy blond hair was exposed. She couldn't help but admire how cute he looked, even though he appeared seriously ticked off at her. She gasped when she realized he bled from the back of his head.

"Someone's been a naughty angel." He pointed an accusing finger at her. "I specifically told you to stay in the car."

Amadeaha scooted out from under the table and stood up quickly. She instantly regretted the action because it brought on a wave of dizziness. "I didn't want to. I thought you might need help."

"Oh yeah, because you have those mad fighting skills." He gifted her with a condescending snicker. "You lied to me, you couldn't fight your way out of a paper bag."

"You're hurt."

"Thanks to you. You're a walking disaster. I think Michael sent me to get you as some punishment, although I have no clue what I did to piss him off so much."

The dizziness wouldn't go away. The whole factory began to spin around in slow lazy circles. She really wanted it to stop, if only long enough for her to tell him to bug off, but it just got worse. Please God, she did not want to faint in front of him. That would be just her crappy luck.

He gave her a suspicious look. "Are you okay? You look pale?"

She decided it was time to ask for help. "No, could you please catch me?"

* * * *

Making it just in time to catch her in his arms as she fainted, he held her tight as panic build up in him. Shit, what was he supposed to do now? He

wanted to get rid of her, not become her frigging nursemaid. Cam wondered briefly how much trouble he would get in if he just left her here and ran like hell. Then he looked down into her face and knew there was no way he could ever do that. He would rather cut off his sword arm than see any harm come to her. With a resigned sigh, he scooped her up and carried her out to the car.

Tender, Cam held her close to his chest, afraid of breaking her even worse. Damn she was so light and fragile. Seeing the fight must have been too much for her. She was too innocent and delicate to be exposed to his viciousness. It probably overloaded her system.

Once he got her in the car, he picked up his phone. He was halfway through dialing Derel's number before he remembered his brother wasn't there anymore. He cursed softly at himself. Swallowing back the lump in his throat, he called his healer friend, Brad, instead.

Once he made arrangements with Brad to meet him, Cam started the car and pulled away from the factory. He decided to go to the private apartment he had in Detroit instead of the compound. The last thing he needed was his family knowing Amadeaha was with him. He loved them all, but damn, they could be the nosiest bunch of angels in all of Heaven, Earth and Hell.

The drive there seemed to take forever. He kept casting worried glances her way. She never moved let alone woke up. He tried to call Michael several times, but of course good ol' Uncle Mike wasn't answering. He finally threw the phone down before shooting a dirty look at the red-haired hurricane that blew into his life. He shook his head when he remembered how she boasted she was the best in her class in combat skills.

"You're such a little liar," he muttered to her, not caring she was out of it and unable to hear him. "You're freaking pants must be on fire."

He was relieved to see his healer friend already waiting for him when they arrived. Since Brad had been on a mission in Pontiac, he was hours closer then he normally would have been if at the compound. Brad got off his motorcycle, took off his helmet and ran a hand through his dark hair. His brown eyes widened in shock when he saw who Cam was carrying.

"Holy shit on a bagel. Is that who I think it is?" he exclaimed.

Cam just ignored his comment and made his way up the stairs. He used the small apartment as a place to get away when the compound became too confining. Very few angels even knew about it.

Cam took her immediately to his room, all the while muttering curses. He heard Brad's mocking laughter behind him and decided to ignore it for

now. There would be plenty of time to kick his friend's ass later after he managed to get himself out of this damn mess. "I think I broke her," Cam admitted as he put her on his bed.

Brad narrowed his brown eyes and gave a slight shake of his head. "I don't think that's it, but I need to scan her up close and not from across the room to be sure." He took a couple of steps forward before he stopped and gave an amused smirk. "That means you got to let me touch her, Cam."

Cam realized he was guarding her with his body and the closer Brad came, the tighter he held her. Crap, she was practically in his lap. He jumped up and tried to act casual. Judging by the look on Brad's face, he didn't fool the healer for one minute.

Brad kneeled by the side of the bed and closed his eyes while he scanned her. After a few minutes, he opened them and cursed softly. "Help me roll her over."

Once they had her on her stomach, Brad gently lifted up her shirt. Bandages hid her entire back. The healer pulled them away. Welts and open wounds covered her from neck to ass. Someone had whipped her and then left her to suffer instead of healing her.

Cam heard someone groan and realized that it was him. The entire night she must have been in

such terrible pain and had not even muttered one complaint. How long was she like this? If he ever got his hands on the bastards who did this to her, there wouldn't be enough pieces left to bury them.

"These wounds are several days old." Brad touched the area lightly. "She didn't say anything about it to you?"

"No, she even tried to fight some demons with me." He ran his hands through his hair as he paced the room. Anger ripped through him so strongly, he released his demon half out long enough to let out a low snarl. "Why wouldn't she tell me? Tell me you can fix her?"

Brad cocked a brow, but didn't remark on Cam's loss of control. "Of course I can heal her. Not that I mind helping, but why didn't you call Bear? His mate is a healer."

"You were closer. Plus, you talk less than Tiffany," Cam tried, not wanting to admit he was hiding from his family.

Brad gave him a sly smile. "I think you just want to keep her to yourself."

"Maybe you don't talk less than Tiffany."

Brad gave him an incredulous look. "Do you actually think you can keep this from your family?"

"Yes, if you keep your mouth shut."

"I'll do it, but I'm not looking forward to facing the wrath of Ana when she finds out I'm helping

you keep secrets.”

“You’re afraid of my sister?”

“Damn straight.” He placed his hands, palms down, on Amadeaha. “Now get out of here, so I can heal her. It’s hard to concentrate with you glowering at me.”

Cam backed out of the room even though the urge to stay and watch over Amadeaha was strong. He grabbed an ice bag for his head, limped over to the couch, turned on the hockey game in an attempt to get lost in it. It was impossible, he kept getting up and going to the door before he would force himself to go back to the couch.

Finally, after what seemed forever, Brad came out.

Cam jumped up. “How is she?”

“Good as new.” Brad leaned against the wall. “I compelled her to sleep. The rest should help with the last of the adjustments her body needs to make to be on Earth.”

“Thanks, I owe you.”

Brad just shrugged off his gratitude. “Now go sit down so I can heal your wounds.”

“Don’t bother, I’m fine.”

Brad studied him for a few moments. “Is that because you want the pain or because you want me the hell out of here so you can be alone with her?”

Cam shifted the ice bag in his hands as he

avoided Brad's knowing glare. There had been numerous times in the past when he had purposely gotten wounded in battles. He craved physical pain to dull the emotional pain. It helped him keep his sanity during bad times. But that wasn't the reason why he didn't want Brad to heal him tonight. It was because he wanted to be alone with Amadeaha. Cam knew he should be the one that was leaving. Amadeaha would be safer with Brad. But Michael had given him this mission and Cam wasn't about to desert it.

"How did you get hurt?" Brad asked.

"I was following a lead about Derel."

That caught Brad's attention. The healer pushed himself from the wall and arched a brow. "What did you find out?"

If anyone outside of the family felt the cut of Derel's capture, it was Brad. Over the past few years, the two healers had become close as they'd fought side-by-side in the trenches. You rarely saw one without the other. Because of that, Cam told him everything he'd learned.

When he was done, Brad offered, "I could ask my sister if she knows anything. She's a succubus after all, so maybe she has some inside information."

"When's the last time you talked with her?"

"It's been years," Brad admitted reluctantly. "But still, we're family so that should count for

something.”

“Not always, Ana’s mate, Appolion, his father was a demon and he tried to kill him several times over.” Cam shook his head. “No, thanks for the offer, but it would be too dangerous. Don’t worry, I’m not going to rest until I get Derel back.”

Brad reluctantly nodded his head and Cam walked him to the door. Once the healer left, Cam went to the bedroom and peered in at Amadeaha. She was still lying on her stomach and her red hair was curled around her pale face. One hand cupped under her cheek and her pink lips were slightly parted. Even from across the room, he could smell her, lilacs. He breathed in deeply, savoring the smell. He would never get his fill of her scent.

Unable to help himself, Cam walked toward the bed and sat down on the edge. He knew he shouldn’t even be near her, but he still couldn’t leave. And he sure as hell shouldn’t be reaching out and lightly touching her cheek. Her skin was so soft and silky. She was everything he wasn’t, pure and innocent, and he knew he had no business even looking at her much less touching her. So then why did he find himself stroking her hair?

It wasn’t until he buried his face in the red locks that he realized he wasn’t sitting on the edge anymore. He was fully on the bed and damned if

he wasn't stretched out next to her. He started to pull away until she mumbled in her sleep and snuggled against his chest.

Even though Cam had been with countless females in the past few years, he never cuddled with one before. Dear God, he never imagined that it would feel this good to hold someone. The warmth from her body seemed to sooth him from the inside out and her soft curves molded perfectly into him. It was like the fates made her specifically for him.

"Like the fates would curse any angel to spend an eternity with me," he muttered to himself.

But it's not like a few moments of spooning action would hurt anyone. She was sound asleep and he'd be good and keep his urges at bay. Cam just wanted to hold her for a few moments. It wasn't like he asked for much in life. He wrapped his arms around her and closed his eyes. Before he knew it, he fell into a deep sleep.

* * * *

Once he got back to the compound, Brad went immediately to the male dormitory and gathered up some extra weapons. Even though Cam didn't want him to go ask questions, he refused to listen to the empath leader. If there was any way Brad could help Derel, he would. Even if it meant

talking to his demon sister.

He slung his bow over his shoulder, walked out into the hallway and almost ran over a small dark-haired female empath blocking his way. He let out a groan as soon as he saw who it was. It was Heather, one of Bear's little friends. She had the hots for Derel for as long as Brad could remember. Crap, she more than the hots for him, she was head over heels in love with the idiot. Her devotion to Derel was equal parts amusing and annoying.

Heather's hair was pulled into two braids and she wore a pair of tight, black, leather pants hung low on her thin hips. Her matching, long sleeved, top was cropped, exposing a taunt belly. Tiny feet were encased high-heeled boots and she had purple nail polish on her long nails. Her weapon, a whip, was coiled up tight and attached to her hip.

She gave his bow a speculative look. "Where are you going?"

"Nowhere special," he replied a little too quickly.

Her brown eyes narrowed. "It's not very angelic of you to lie, Brad. If you're going to look for Derel I want to come."

He walked away from her. "No."

She ran behind him, her short legs having to work double time to keep up with his longer ones.

"Please, you know you shouldn't go alone. Michael always says you should have backup."

He stopped and gave her a purposeful once-over. "I don't think he had a teeny bopper in mind when he mentioned backup." Although, looking at her in the outfit, maybe having her around wouldn't be so hard on him after all. She may be annoying at times, but she sure was filled out in all the nice places. He wondered why Derel had been rebuffing her all this time. Brad gave her curves another appreciative gaze and decided if Derel didn't claim this female soon, then he might just snatch her away from him.

Heather tilted her chin up. "I can fight just as well as you. I'm an angel warrior, too."

He decided to try reasoning. "Look your, Lordship, Cam, specifically told me not to do what I'm about to do. If you go with me, you could get into a lot of trouble."

"I don't care." Her bottom lip trembled. "I know Derel doesn't even know I exist, but he means a lot to me. I miss him so much, I'll do anything to get him back."

Brad closed his eyes and let out a sigh. He could never resist a female's pleading. It was always his downfall. Besides, he was just going to ask his sister some questions. How dangerous could that be? With any luck, they would be there and back before anyone even noticed they were

gone. "Fine," he said. "But stay in the back and keep your mouth shut."

Heather beamed at him before she nodded her head and followed him out of the compound.

* * * *

Cam woke up the instant Amadeaha started to thrash around and mutter in her sleep. His angel was having a nightmare and he knew from personal experience how bad that was. Unable to watch her suffer, even for a second, he reached out and placed his fingers on her temples. Using his empath skills, he slowly eased the troubles from her mind. Instead of sleeping on though, she woke up with a small gasp. Her bright green eyes open and locked with his.

He stopped, frozen by shock, as she seemed to stare right into his soul. He realized their faces were inches apart and their bodies were even closer. He could feel her breasts rising and falling with each breath she took.

Cam was aware he was completely on top of her now. He was also aware of every single one of her soft curves. His cock hardened in response and he knew she had to feel it. But it didn't seem to scare her one bit. She continued to look up at him with wonder and a bit of shyness. A slight pink flush spread over her cheeks. He almost

smiled when he realized he loved it when she blushed like that. "I'm sorry." He started to pull away and get up. "I accidentally fell asleep. I didn't mean to grope you or anything."

She grabbed him by the arm and pulled him back down. "Would you stay with me until I go back asleep?"

Cam's stomach did a little schoolboy-like flip flop. Was she completely off her rocker? "I don't think that would be a good idea."

"Why?"

He flashed his fangs at her. "I'm part incubus. Nice females like you, don't hang around with me." He expected her to react to his words with fear, that wasn't what he got.

Her eyes burned with anger. "Don't talk about yourself that way."

"It's true."

"You may have incubus blood in you, but that doesn't mean you're not an angel warrior through and through. You would never try to hurt me."

She had him there. He could never harm her. Cam decided one night of cuddling wouldn't hurt. After all, he was only doing it to help her. *Liar, liar, now whose pants are on fire?* mocked his inner Jiminy Cricket. Still, after tonight, he was going to hand her off to Michael and, if she was lucky, he would never see her again. So maybe it would be all right to let them both have this little

indulgence.

He allowed himself to relax as he went on his side and pulled her to his chest, her face toward his. She let out a content sigh and he smiled against her head. What he wouldn't do to have this every night. He rubbed his hand on her back as he remembered the whip marks that had been there. "Was is your uncle who whipped you?"

Her breath hitched. "No."

"Then was it your father?"

"No, it wasn't him either."

He continued to rub her back, shocked he was able to demonstrate any tenderness anymore. He always thought that part of him died down in Hell. "Who hurt you, Amadeaha?"

She sighed. "Do we have to talk about that now? I'm enjoying this too much to ruin it by thinking of unpleasant things."

Cam was enjoying it, too, but there was no way in hell he would admit it. "Why didn't your brother, Haniel, stop them from harming you?"

"He left a few months before the war broke out."

Cam tried real hard to put a lid on his anger and failed. "How could he leave you alone? He had to know you were in danger."

"He didn't know I was spying for Michael," she defended. "I never told him because he would stop me from helping you guys."

"Still, he should have never left you behind with your father and uncle."

"He didn't have a choice. Jehel was getting ready to arrest him because Haniel was refusing to break his allegiance to Michael. Even though he was no longer able to fight as an angel warrior, he never could betray his Chief."

"Jehel was really going to arrest him for that?" Cam couldn't help but wonder what happened to the other angel warriors who stayed up in Heaven. There had been some that were unwilling or unable to leave for various reasons.

"Heaven hasn't been the same since the war began," she whispered. "It's not the happy utopia it once was. I would feel so much anger and hatred there that it would sometimes overwhelm me. There have been vile recompressions against those who have gone against the council. Jehel has vowed to destroy all traces of Michael and all those who are loyal to him. Do you know the council destroyed all of Michael's homes?"

"No, I didn't. Did they go after my parent's home, too?" It had been on the outskirts of Heaven and his family had lived in it ever since Ana was born.

Her body stiffened under his arms a bit. "Are you sure that you want to know?"

"Yes."

"My cousin and some of his friends burned it

down. It was right after the war started."

Cam closed his eyes. The loss hit him hard. That had been his mother's rooms they destroyed, his father's handiwork was in the wooden banisters, molding and furniture. Reese had carved Cam a set of horses and Cam still had them hidden in the back of his closet at that house. Those horses had been the last gift Reese had ever given him.

Now it was Amadeaha that reached over and rubbed his temples. "I'm so sorry."

He attempted a smile, but failed miserably. "That's okay, it's not like you were the one who did it."

"Cam, why don't you hate me?"

"Why would I hate you?"

"With everything that my uncle and father have done to you, I would think that you would despise all of us."

"I could never hate you." Cam winced as soon as he said those words.

She let out another happy sigh and snuggled deeper into him. "I could never hate you either."

If only that were true. "You don't know me."

"Yes I do, I know you in here." She took his hand and placed it on her chest, right above her heart.

Cam was so touched by her words he was unable to respond, struck dumb by a female for the first time in his life. She gave him a soft peck

on his cheek before she closed her eyes and fell back asleep. He stayed awake for hours, listening to her breathing and marveling at the pure beauty he knew would never be his.

Chapter Three

Amadeaha woke up to the sound of music coming from the living room. She looked over at Cam, but he continued to sleep. Deciding it would be up to her to find out what the sound was, she wiggled out from under his heavy arm and went exploring.

She found the source sitting on the table by the couch. It was his cell phone. She never used one before, but saw some of the other angels using them in Heaven before. She gingerly picked it up and flipped it open. "Hi?" she tried.

There was a pause on the other end, then a female voice said coldly, "Who is this?"

Amadeaha felt an unwelcome wave of jealousy surge over her. "Who is this?"

"Not that it's any succubus business, but this is his sister. Dig him out of whatever hole he's in and tell him to get his ass on the phone."

Amadeaha was both a little amused and

annoyed about being confused for a succubus. "Ana, it's me Amadeaha."

There was another long pause before Ana asked, "Are you with Cam?"

"Well, he's in the other room sleeping right now, but we are in the same building if that's what you mean."

"Where are you guys?" The anger was gone from Ana's voice, replaced by what Amadeaha could of sworn was excitement.

Amadeaha looked around the room. She'd been out of it when Cam had brought her there the night before, but she was pretty sure it was an apartment. It was small, only a living room, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. It was cozy though, the carpet was dark to match the couch and kitchen chairs. A big television took up most of the living room. There were some pictures on the walls in black frames. She didn't know squat about human sports, but she was willing to bet it was all hockey posters. She knew that was Cam's favorite thing to watch. "It's a human dwelling and I think it's his."

She heard Ana let out a squeal before she started a muffled conversation with someone on the other end. When she came back on the line, it was with another question, "Ramiel wants to know if Cam really is sleeping?"

Amadeaha glanced down at the phone in

confusion. "Well, I haven't smacked his face to see if he was faking or anything, but I'm pretty sure he was snoozing."

"Interesting, Cam never lets his guard down enough to sleep around anyone but us. He must really trust you."

Amadeaha started to shake her head and then remembered Ana couldn't see her over the phone. "I don't know. He acts like he can't wait to get rid of me."

Ana gave a small laugh. "That's because he's a coward that's afraid of falling for you. The problem is the little dork is too stupid to realize he's already done so."

There was some more muffled conversation before Ana shouted, "No, Ramiel, I'm not telling her that Cam has dreams about her. Sheez, that would embarrass him."

Amadeaha decided not to point out to Ana she'd just told her by yelling it out like that. There was the sound of a scuffle, a loud *thunk*, then a male got on.

"Hi, Amadeaha, this is Nathaniel," said a singsong voice. "I'll be more than happy to tell you how to get Cammie's attention."

"If I have to dress up like those succubi, then you can forget it. I don't have one of their outfits, and even if I did, I don't have the body to fill it out."

"Sweetie, you could be wearing one of his old tee shirts and Cam would find it sexy. In fact, why don't you go put one on? He would like seeing it on you."

She scoffed at him, "He would not."

"Trust me, darling, he would."

There was another scuffle and a different voice came on. "It's me, Bear. What you need to do is get Cam to bite you." There was a chorus of disapproval in the background. "Oh, quit being so uptight guys. One bite and he's done for."

Another scuffle, another voice, this time it was Ana again. "Wait a sec, I'm putting you on speaker."

"What's speaker?"

"You forget, Ana, she doesn't know anything about Earth stuff," said Bear, his voice loud and clear.

Great now she could hear them all talking at the same time and they obviously could hear her, too.

"She's just as stupid as Dina was when he first left Heaven."

"She's not stupid, dumbass. She's just naïve," one of the brothers shot off.

"Well, if she stayed all night with Cam, then I bet that she isn't so naïve anymore," another added.

Amadeaha felt the need to defend Cam. "He's been very honorable. He hasn't even kissed me."

She decided to leave out the part about him snuggling up to her in bed. There was a stunned silence on the other end. Amadeaha cleared her throat nervously. "Why don't I go wake him up and tell him that you're all on the phone?"

The collective force of, "No!" was so loud she almost dropped the phone.

She was torn between wanting to laugh at the situation and wanting to run out the door and put as much distance as possible between herself and the crazy family. She decided to stay, but only because they belonged to Cam and they were kind of amusing.

"You can't tell Cam that we even had this conversation," Nathaniel ordered.

"Why not?"

"Because he hates it when we get into his business."

Imagine that? Cam didn't want his brothers and sister interfering with his life, Amadeaha thought sarcastically. "Now why would that bother him?" she said out loud, making sure that very same sarcasm carried over.

"Look, do you still care about Cam?" Ana asked.

Amadeaha almost choked. Like she would admit something like that to his brothers. "You still have me on speaker."

"Well, do you?" Ana persisted.

"Speaker," she gritted out behind clenched teeth. No wonder Cam hid out in this apartment. It must have been the only way he ever got any peace.

"Don't worry about my brothers. They're all plugging their ears so they can't hear a thing."

"Yeah, go ahead. We can't hear a thing," Bear piped in.

"Dumbass," Ramiel hissed. "Now she knows that we heard that we couldn't hear, so now she knows that we can hear."

"Huh?"

"Oh shut up all of you," Ana snapped at her brothers before she resumed with the interrogation. "You never answered me, Amadeaha. Do you have feelings for Cam?"

Amadeaha felt her cheeks burning. "You know I do, Ana."

"Are you willing to give up everything back in Heaven for him?"

"I already have."

"Then what are you waiting for? Go get 'em, tiger."

"I already told you, he doesn't want me."

"You know Cam isn't the only psychic in the family, right?"

"Of course I do."

"I'm going to let you in on a little secret. You're on his mind all the time. I know because he yearns

for you so much I can feel his pain, even though he tries to block it from me. He's pushing you away because he doesn't think he's good enough for you."

Shocked by Ana's words, Amadeaha stammered, "He is good enough."

"Then you need to be strong enough to fight for both of your sakes. Can you do that?"

Amadeaha only paused for a second. "Yes, I can." She realized that was true, too. Before the war, she wouldn't have been, but she'd grown a lot and now she was ready for anything that came her way. Even him. Especially him.

"He's going to try to push you away. He'll probably try to scare you into leaving him alone," Ana warned.

"I won't let him," Amadeaha replied firmly.

"He loves you, don't forget that."

The connection was broken as Ana hung up so Amadeaha couldn't have argued even if she'd wanted to. Amadeaha settled down on the couch and thought. Maybe she did have a shot at this after all. But did she have the guts to put herself out there for rejection? She had been shunned by her father all of her life, could her heart stand for it to happen again?

She got up and peeked in on Cam. Still sleeping, he was on his side with his knees tucked up to his chest. She remembered the tender way

he had held her the night before. She felt the sadness in him because of Derel, yet Cam still had taken the time to make sure that she was comforted.

Amadeaha allowed herself to feel some small measure of hope. Ana had been telling the truth. Cam did still like her. She would do what Ana had suggested, fight for both of them by refusing to take no for an answer. If Cam rejected her, well...she just wouldn't allow herself to think about that possibility.

She only regretted that she hadn't been able to find out where Derel was being kept before her cover was blown. She would have liked to give Cam that. She could sense the sadness over Derel's loss, not only coming from Cam, but from all his family. Even though Cam's brothers and sister were so crazy that they made Amadeaha's head spin she still liked them all a lot.

* * * *

Derel looked down at the dirty floor and tried to be as invisible as possible. So far, that tactic had worked very well in keeping him alive during his captivity. He was in the middle of a row of ten angels, all slaves like him, and they were chained together, their hands shackled behind them. All patiently waiting to meet their new master.

He swallowed a mouthful of bitter saliva. The motion made his neck rub up against his slave collar. The thick leather band had a metal loop in the front. Essentially, it was a dog collar. He hated it, but didn't dare take it off. If a slave removed their collar, the punishment was death.

Derel looked down at the floor, swallowed again. He was itching for a good fight. What he wanted more than anything was to jump to his feet and start pounding on the bastards who put the damn chains and Fido collar on him. But he learned the first day they captured him that all that action earned him was a long hard beat down. So he kept his head down and his mouth shut.

The meek thing was just an act. He was an angel warrior and a Lehor brother, and he wasn't about to be beaten down like some stray dog in the street. He still had his pride. He was just biding his time until his brothers came and got him. If they didn't, he would figure out a way to escape himself. Then he would go beat all their asses for not rescuing him.

It was really nothing short of a miracle that someone hadn't already recognized him. There were wanted posters of him all over, each and every one of them promising a hefty bounty. But then, there weren't that many individuals looking at his posters. They were too busy gawking at Cam's because he was the Empath King or their

oldest brother's Ramiel's because he was one of Michael's top ranking generals. Nobody wanted to waste their time caring about a measly healer like himself. That was the story of his life, always the bridesmaid and never the fucking bride. It had helped out in situation though, so maybe living in his brothers' shadows wasn't always a bad thing.

Derel was drawn out of his pity party when a group of rogue angels marched into the room, their boots making a marching tempo that would have made a drill team proud. In the center, there was a male built like brick house. His dark hair was shaved close to his skull and he had gray emotionless eyes, which consistently scanned the room. Derel didn't need a formal introduction to tell him this was the son of a bitch that had bought all of them. The leader started to walk slowly down the line of slaves, viewing his new purchases.

Since Derel didn't want to think about how he was being sized up like a prize pig at market, he decided to distract his thoughts elsewhere. He brought his nose down to his shirt and sniffed. They hadn't offered him a shower since his capture and he smelled nice and ripe. God, what he wouldn't give for a nice hot scrub followed by a haircut. The front of his hair was hanging in his eyes and it was bugging him.

He slowly began to realize a set of feet had

stopped in front of him and the boots weren't moving on. Even though he didn't dare glance up, he knew the slave trader was staring down at him because he could feel his eyes boring into the top of his head like twin lasers. Derel held his breath in anticipation, the slaver was showing way too much interest in him. *Roh, Roh, Rhaggy*, this was not good.

"Look at me, slave," the brick house commanded.

Derel did so, but he made sure to do it through his dirty blond bangs. He was hoping maybe they would shield his trademark Lehor blue eyes enough so the rogue wouldn't recognize them. When the leader smirked, Derel knew he was busted. He was still planning on playing dumb though. No sense in handing the asshole anything for free.

The leader grabbed him roughly by the face so he could get a better look. "How long have you been a slave and what's your name?" he asked in short clipped tones.

"Three months." By now the entire room was looking over at them as a deadly silence filled the area. Everyone was craning their necks to catch a glimpse at the poor slave that was about to get his ass handed to him. Derel gave the slaver a cocky smile and said, "My name is Bob, by the way."

One of the guards came up and cuffed him on

the back of the head. "You'll address your master properly, slave."

The only reason Derel didn't topple forward and fall on his face was because he was chained to the other slaves. That ticked him off enough to blurt, "The only one I'll call master is the leader of the healers, Raphael. I only willingly bow down to him and Michael." Which probably wasn't the smartest thing for a slave who was trying not to call attention to himself to do.

The guard went to strike him again, but the leader reached up and stayed his arm. "No, an injured healer cannot heal. If you keep on beating him, he'll be useless to me."

The guard backed down. "I'm sorry, Santar, I just don't like seeing this piece of garbage treating you with such disrespect."

"Oh, but this one isn't just another piece of angel warrior garbage. He's a true treasure. This slave here is a Lehor brother, the only healer out of the bunch."

"I thought he said his name was Bob. There's no Bob in the Lehor family."

Santar closed his eyes and worked his jaw together before snapping at the guard, "You're an idiot."

Derel started to nod his head in agreement before he caught the look the slave next to him was giving. It was a female archangel, she looked

the part of archangel, too. Her body was still toned and muscular, even after months of captivity. Her hair was blonde, or at least Derel thought it was blonde. It was kind of hard to tell because it was as dirty as his. Since neither one of them dared talk out loud, she communicated with her facial expressions and large brown eyes.

You stupid fool, quit provoking him, was the rough translation that he got from the nasty glare she sent over his way.

I'm trying to be good, honest. It's just so hard not to take the bait these morons, he looked-talked back at her.

Santar cleared his throat and Derel turned his attention back to the slaver. Santar's mouth formed a cold smile. "Cut the bullshit. I know it's you, Derel."

Fuck! So much for playing dumb.

The guard's eyes widened. "The bounty on his head is enormous. When you turn him in, you'll make a nice profit."

"I have no plans on turning him over to the justice angels. I could care less about them, the angel warriors or their stupid war. I'm keeping this one all for myself. His family possesses very unique gifts and I happen to know Derel here has inherited some of them. He'll be very valuable to our organization."

Now it was Derel's turn to clench his jaws

together, but it was so he didn't laugh right in the slavers face. Derel didn't have any mad skills like Cam, Bear or Ana. He was a nobody. Sure, once in a while he could pick up a whisper of a psychic thought, but that was it. If Santar thought he was going to be able to use Derel for some super-angel, then he was betting on the wrong brother. Derel was the loser in the family. For some reason, Santar's expectations made Derel mad. "Idle rumors, there's no truth to them."

Santar laughed. "Do you have any idea who I am?"

"A worthless pile of crap?" Derel cringed as soon as he let those words slip out. His famous Lehor temper had gotten the better of him.

Santar snapped his fingers at a guard, then pointed to a female archangel shackled next to Derel, the same one that had been communicating with him earlier. The guard backhanded her, the loud smack reverberated through the room.

"What the hell?" Derel yelled outraged.

That only earned the poor female another blow, this one coming directly from Santar. Derel lunged at him, only to have the chains pull him short. Derel looked back over at the female and tried to let her know how sorry he was by giving her a sympathetic gaze.

"Look at me, Derel," Santar demanded in low, clipped tones.

Derel did, but made no attempt to hide his hatred and anger for the slaver. He was shocked when he felt the female sneak her hand over and grab his. She gave it a gentle squeeze, letting him know she didn't blame him.

Santar's voice took on a deadly calm tone, "Every time you mouth off to me, disobey me or cause any trouble whatsoever, another slave will take your punishment. I know you Lehor brothers very well. You all have a very serious hero complex. You'd never want another hurt for your sakes."

"Look, sir," he almost choked on the word of respect, "I'm just a healer. I have no special skills, I'm not like my brothers."

Santar shook his head. "Don't lie to me, Derel. Before I became a rogue, I used to work at the angel school. I watched you all through your training. I noticed how you could heal so much easier than all the rest. I also noticed you'd pull back every time because you were afraid of showing just how easy it was for you. Not even Raphael caught on you were doing everything half ass, but I did."

Derel gapped at the slaver. He'd never held back in school. It had just been easier for him to catch on than everybody else. His brain tumbled with thoughts he'd never dared entertain before. Maybe it had been too easy for him and he'd

known it deep down all this time. He still argued, "With all due respect, sir, I'm just your everyday normal angel."

Santar grabbed the female, unchained her and held up her arm. He slowly dragged the blade of a knife over it, cutting it deeply and drawing out a slow ribbon of blood.

The female whimpered in pain and every one of them cut into Derel's conscious. She locked eyes with Derel and shook her head, telling him that he didn't have to cooperate on her account. Derel let out a growl of frustration. Even with her permission, there was no way that he could let her be abused because of him. Santar had him by the short and curlies. Even though Derel didn't want to, he was going to have to play ball with this prick. "Leave her alone," he yelled. "Your fight is with me, not her. You don't need to hurt her on my account."

Santar made another cut. "Why don't you heal her then?"

Derel tilted his head back toward his hands that were still shackled behind him. "You're going to have to unchain me so I can lay hands on her."

Santar shook his head. "No, I think that you are so powerful you don't have to touch anyone to heal them. Do it from where you are."

"I told you already, I'm just a healer. Now undo my hands so I can help her."

“No.”

Derel was trapped and both of them knew it. There was no way that he could leave a fellow angel warrior suffering. He let out another grunt of frustration and glowered at the rogue. Finally, when he couldn't stand hearing the female angel crying anymore, he decided he would try to give Santar what he wanted. If nothing just to prove him wrong.

Derel focused his eyes on the wound and channeled his energy into it as he started to mumble the healing chants under his breath. All healers were able to send themselves out of their own bodies and into another angel's injured ones. They just had to be touching their patient in order to do it. Derel had never tried to heal without making contact before. It was only out of sheer desperation he was trying now. He closed his mind off to everything around him and focused only on her and her injuries. A faint buzzing started up in his head and a cold sweat broke out all over, right before he felt himself leave his body and enter hers. Once there, he didn't take any time to pause and wonder how in the hell he just managed to do what he just did. He made quick work at fixing her injuries from the inside out before he allowed himself to go back to his own physical form.

He opened his eyes and sighed with relief. A

small part of him had been afraid that he wouldn't make it back to his body. The last thing he wanted was to be trapped in that state. After the relief was gone, shock and horror took its place. Santar had been right, he did have skills and now there was no way that he was ever going to willingly let Derel go free. Derel realized the entire room was staring at him like he had grown a spiked demon tail. Then the whispers started.

"He healed it with his mind."

"I've never seen a healer do that without laying hands on their patient."

"He's a freak like his brothers."

Santar addressed the guard, "Take him to a private cell. I don't want him mixing with the other slaves. The Lehor brothers are notorious for causing trouble and that's the last thing we need."

The guard unshackled Derel from the rest and the group, grabbed him roughly by the slave collar and hauled him forward. Derel stumbled a couple of steps before he regained his footing, still so numb from what had happened to be exactly graceful. As soon as they were out of sight of Santar, the guard jerked him again, making sure Derel slammed into the hard brick wall when he lost his footing. Derel didn't dare say anything, but the entire time he was being led to his cell, he did make a point of memorizing every detail of the guards face. Just so he could make sure he was

beating the shit out of the right asshole later when he got free.

Once the guard shoved him inside and shut the door behind him, it took Derel several minutes to recover. He was shocked to see he hadn't been put in a cell, but an actual room. With a real frigging bed. There was even a bathroom off to the side. Derel stood there, just waiting for them to realize they had made a mistake and come back for him. Slowly it dawned on him that he was actually going to stay.

For the first time in months, he let himself relax. There were no guards nearby, waiting to hit him. No other slaves were going to attack him in his sleep. The silence was almost deafening, he was so used to sounds of yelling, screams and crying.

Derel edged his way to the bathroom and peered in. What he saw inside made him almost weep, it was a shower. There were even clean clothes folded and waiting for him.

Even though the stubborn part of him wanted to resist the offerings of his new captors, he wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth. He took the longest, hottest shower of his immortal life. They even gave him a razor so he could shave. Of course it was electric, couldn't take any hostages with that. His hair was still a little longer than usual, but he could get used to it.

Once done showering, he climbed into the bed

and almost had an orgasm as he settled back. Derel hadn't slept in a bed since captured. He forgot how nice and warm they were, so much better than the hard ground. The crisp sheets felt so cool against his newly clean skin.

His mind drifted to the other things missed from back home, Ana, his brothers, his little niece, Ariel. Before long, his thoughts centered on the one he missed the most, a certain dark-haired empath. He wasn't quite certain when his feelings of annoyance turned into something else for Heather, but damn if they hadn't.

Derel never let on how he really felt about her and continued to pretend to ignore her, even though his ears always strained to pick her sweet voice out of a crowd. When she sat close to him, he never let on how he enjoyed the feeling of her tiny body pressed against his. She never knew he breathed in deep, just so he could inhale the musky smell of the perfume she wore all the time.

"I liked her and I never even had the balls to tell her," he mumbled. Now he might never have the chance. Derel wished his psychic skills were as strong as Cam's and Bear's, maybe then he would be able to call out to them. All he was ever able to do was pick up random thoughts. He'd never initiated a mental link with anybody. Still it couldn't hurt to try. He hadn't thought he would have been able to heal like he did earlier and he

proved himself wrong on that one. He closed his eyes and focused all his thoughts on Cam. *Cam, if you're out there I really need you to come fetch me. I'm ready to come home now.*

Nothing. All he got in response was the same black void that he always encountered whenever he tried to talk on the Psychic Friends Network. Derel wasn't surprised his little message didn't get out. Now he could heal almost anybody, but he still was a loser when it came to everything else. He closed his eyes and let himself fall asleep.

* * * *

Cam sat up in the bed as a telepathic voice rudely jerked him from his sleep. He shook the sleep fog away and tried hard to focus on whoever called him. It sounded like Derel. No, it *was* Derel, he would know his voice anywhere.

He frantically tried to reach back to his brother, but he only met up with a vast empty space. He rubbed his eyes in frustration, maybe he had been dreaming. He instantly shook his head at that thought. It had been too real to be a dream. Cam smiled to himself as he allowed himself to accept it was really Derel. Now he knew his brother was not only alive, but trying to reach out to him.

He quickly touched minds with both Ana and his brothers to share the news. They were as

happy as he was. Finally, there was hope. If Derel had reached out once, then maybe he would do it again and tell them where he was. Then Cam could go get him and bring him back home with them where he belonged.

Cam heard someone banging around in his kitchen and started grinning all over again, despite himself. Freaking Amadeaha was in his apartment and she was in his kitchen. The mere idea of that made him as giddy as a human high school boy who had just gotten his first hickey.

Then he stopped himself. He was going to be giving her up so he had no business getting excited over her. Maybe if this had all happen before his transformation, but not now.

He rolled out of bed, showered, then brushed his teeth, lest he scare her away with his morning breath. Done, he went out to the kitchen, still limping thanks to his injured ankle, to find her. What he saw made him stop dead in his tracks and look around for a hurricane. She had every bit of his candy stash out and opened and she was munching off it while she tore through his cupboards. Several open bags of chips lay open and gutted, their contents spilling onto the countertops. Judging by the empty cans, she had washed her nutritious meal down with several different flavors of soda. The toaster was jammed with some sticky substance that he highly

suspected was marshmallows.

Both the television in his living room and the small one on his kitchen counter were on and turned up loud. She had them on two different channels, one on a cooking show, the other on a repeat of Survivor. She was standing on tiptoe, looking through his cupboards. "What are you looking for?" he asked. "The number to FEMA?"

"Your manna," she said as she continued to strain in order to look on his top shelves. "I can't find it anywhere."

"That's because I don't eat it. I only eat human food."

She looked at him like he had grown another head. "All angels eat manna."

"Angel warriors usually switch to human food once they start living on Earth. It helps us blend in better with humans. Besides, their food is way better."

"I don't know how to eat people food," she argued as she twisted the hem of the tee shirt she was wearing.

He noticed it was one of his and he got an insane surge of satisfaction to see her in something he owned. He eyed the open bags. "You seem to doing just fine to me."

"That's because its candy, that's the only thing I've ever tasted."

He pointed to the rest of the junk food. "Hate to

break it to you, but that's not candy."

She continued to fiddle with the shirt. "I know, I just saw it and couldn't resist. If I see something that I want, I just take it."

"Oh really?" he couldn't resist goading. "Since when?"

"Since now." She narrowed her eyes.

Her gaze was so hungry he suddenly felt like a bag of chips. He took a step back and she matched him. Cam spied his cell phone sitting on the counter next to her and frowned. He didn't remember leaving it there. He picked it up and slipped it into his pocket. "Sit down and I'll make you something to eat."

"I was trying to surprise you and have food ready for you." She gave a small smile and held out a coffee mug to him. "At least I was able to do this."

When he looked at it confused, her smile faded.

Amadeaha stammered, "It's blood. I saw it in the refrigerator and I just assumed it was for you. I know you're still hurt and, since there's no healer here, you really should drink it."

He set down the mug. There was no way in hell that he was going to feed in front of her, although he did need it. For some reason, angel's blood healed him whenever he was injured. "Thanks, I'll get to it later." She took a couple more steps forward so she stood way too close and yet not

close enough.

"You can drink it in front of me, Cam. You never have to be embarrassed around me. I like you just the way you are."

He ran his tongue down his left fang self-consciously. "You keep saying that, but you don't know me enough to understand what you're talking about."

"I know enough." She ran her fingers lightly down his arm. "I was watching you sleep earlier."

That stunned Cam. Ever since his little stint in Hell, he'd always instantly woken up whenever someone walked in on him while he was sleeping. He stared down at her fingers, which were still on his arm. If he were smart, he would pull away from her right now. But then, he had never been accused of being smart.

When he kept up with the dumb silence, she continued, "While I was looking at you, I decided something."

"What was that?" He couldn't resist leaning forward a little so he could smell her better.

"I've waited long enough for you." Her green eyes searched his face. "I'm not letting you push me away, ever."

That got his attention. His head snapped up as waves of fear, excitement and shock fired through him. She must have lost her mind. Yeah, that was it, one of the demons must have hit her over the

skull or something. He decided he would have to scare her away from him for her own good.

He wrapped his arm around her waist and slammed her body into his. Then he did what he had been dying to do since he saw her the night before, he kissed her. He made sure that it wasn't a sweet, gentle kiss either. He wanted to show her how hot and bothered he really was for her. Once she realized that his inner sex demon was on high alert, then she would go running for the hills.

He underestimated her, again. She twined her arms around his neck and met his passion and then some. Her little tongue darted into his mouth before it started to stoke his fangs in slow lazy passes. No one had ever kissed him like that before. It was almost like she was trying to tell him his differences didn't matter, that they even turned her on a bit.

He tore his mouth away and looked down at her in shock. Both of them were panting and her eyes were halfclosed in a dreamy way. He could see his scare tactic hadn't been very convincing. If anything, she was pressed up even closer to him. Of course, he wasn't helping matters any, his arms were still hooked around her waist.

She reached over and pushed the coffee mug away. "I don't want to see you drinking this."

Good, she was finally coming to her senses. He started to smile, but it faded as soon as she tilted

her head to the side and pulled back her hair. Her exposed long white neck was only inches from his mouth. He could see her pulse fluttering and that made him so hungry he could almost smell her blood. Nearly blind with blood lust, he bared his fangs and dipped his head down to taste the sweet nectar she so willingly offering. He stopped himself right before he bit her. What the hell was he thinking? What the hell was *she* thinking?

He shoved himself away from her and retreated to the counter across the kitchen. His hands encountered some scattered chip bags and they made a loud crinkling noise. Cam jerked his hands back and tried to act casual. Like it was everyday he had a female chasing him around his own apartment. She didn't appear daunted at all, she just approached him again, a small smile playing on her mouth. He found himself staring at those lips, wanting to taste them again. Before he knew it, she pressed up against him.

She reached up and lightly feathered his lips with her mouth. "From now on, you only feed from me. I want to be the one who takes care of you."

"You don't know what you're saying." Even as he argued, he eyed her neck up hungrily. "The last time I bit you, I hurt you."

She smiled at him. "So you do remember?"

He realized he had lost all control of the

situation and that both amused and scared the hell out of him. "Yes, I still remember it every night in my dreams. Does that make you feel better?" He started to move away again.

She put her hands around his neck. "Why are you running away from me?"

"I'm not."

"You could have fooled me. Now are you going to bite me or not?"

"I can't bite you. My saliva carries the Bliss, it'll make you feel aroused."

She leaned up and whispered in his ear, "Surprise Cam, I already am aroused. If you only knew the things I would like you to do to me."

His knees almost buckled. "Now I know why your dad kept you away from everybody else. You have a wicked little mind."

"Only with you. I could never admit these things to anyone else." She tilted her head again and waited for him to make a move.

Dear Lord, he knew that he shouldn't take what she offered, but he wasn't strong enough to resist the temptation. Cam brought his mouth down, but he didn't bite her just yet. He wanted to make sure she enjoyed it this time. He slowly licked and kissed his way up her throat, all the while gently stoking her back with his hands. She let out a happy little sigh and sagged even further into him. Finally, when he could stand no more, he gently

sank his fangs into her tender skin.

Someone whimpered and he wasn't sure if it was her or him. Her blood tricked down his throat and he never tasted anything better. It was spicy, sweet and all her. He knew nothing would ever compare to it again. For the first time since the demons transformed him, he felt a sense of peace settle over him. He sucked in another mouthful of blood as he buried her hands in her hair and drew her even closer to him. Cam could feel his wounds healing up and a surge of energy jolted him as Amadeaha's life force started to course through his veins.

Feeding had always made him horny and this was no exception. His body came awake and he pressed himself against her, wanting to feel the heat of her body. He was shocked when she hooked one of her legs around him and pushed her hips against his. The Bliss must be working overtime on her, too. Amadeaha clutched him tightly to her and her breathing became faster and ragged.

Cam pulled his mouth away from her throat and looked at her face. Her eyes were glazed with passion and her lips were swollen from their earlier kiss. She groaned in protest when he started to move back and she grabbed at his shirt with both of her hands.

"No," she argued breathlessly. "I want more."

Damn it, but so did he. Cam was so hard that he hurt, he'd never wanted to be with someone so bad. But he wasn't about to expose her to his unnatural desires. He started to move back again and she let out a cry of distress.

He knew then he couldn't leave her in this condition. The Bliss had put her in such a state of arousal, she was both scared and confused. He had to find a way to relieve it for her. He picked her up and carried her to the couch. She kissed him the entire way, her soft lips brushing against his cheek, jaw, eyes. He never felt so cared for and adored before. It was like coming home after being lost for too long.

Cam laid her down on the couch and stretched out over top of her. He was fighting every instinct that was screaming at him to mark her. When a male angel found his mate, they made love and the male would place his hand on a part of the female's body and leave behind his family symbol. It looked like an intricate tattoo and the female had it for the rest of her immortal life because that's how long angel mates stayed together. He wasn't ready to do that to her, though. She didn't deserve a demon like him for a mate. He was planning on taking things as far as he could however.

Cam captured her mouth in a fierce kiss, his tongue plunging in to mimic the mating ritual he

desperately wished his body could do. He slid his hand under her shirt and brushed his knuckles along the bottom of her breasts. Holy crap, she hadn't been lying when she said she wasn't wearing a bra. Unable to resist the temptation offered to him, he cupped one breast in his hand. He gave a small chuckle when she let out a gasp of surprise against his mouth.

"I had no idea that it would feel like this," Amadeaha moaned.

"That's just the beginning of what I want to show you." He looked down at her. "That is if you want me to."

She gave him a shy smile. "Yes please."

Cam kissed the tip of her nose before he pushed her shirt up so her breasts were exposed. He looked down at her in wonder because her body was pure perfection. She had a firm stomach and her breasts were full without being too large. He took one of her nipples in his mouth and rolled his tongue over it. Amadeaha acted as if he shot her with an electric bolt, her body arched up as she pulled at his hair. Her leg was pressed up against his throbbing erection and he couldn't resist rubbing it against her some. That was all the pleasure that he was going to allow himself, this was all for her.

Cam unzipped her pants and started to tug them off. He was delighted when she didn't stop

him, she even lifted her hips so he could slid them off easier. She started to undo his pants and he stopped her. If she got him out of his jeans, then all bets would be off and he needed to stay in control. He captured both of her wrists with one of his hands and stretched her arms above her head. It made her breasts thrust out more and his breath caught in his chest at the sight.

She struggled to get her hands free. "Please," Amadeaha moaned. "I want to touch you, too. It's not fair that I'm getting all the attention."

He nipped at her earlobe. "Ah, female, you have no idea how much I'm enjoying this. I could spend all day memorizing your body with my hands and mouth." It was true, too. Cam had been with countless females before and not one of them could hold a candle to her. It wasn't because they all had been demons and she was an angel either. It was because she was the best thing ever created and no one would ever be able to compare to her perfection.

Some blood trickled from the bite mark and he ran his tongue up her neck, drinking it up. Just that small taste of blood made his groin jerk in response. This time, he was sure the whimper came from his throat.

Cam returned his attention back to her breasts because he was finding out fast they were his favorite part of her. He could have spent all

afternoon there. As soon as he took her nipple in his mouth again, her body bucked up. He reached between her legs and started to caress her through her silk panties. When she let out a loud cry, he jerked his head up. "If it's too much too soon I'll stop."

She rolled her head from side to side. "No, it's wonderful. If you stop I think I'll die."

That was all the invitation he needed. He slipped his hand inside her panties and started to stoke her. Cam groaned when he felt how wet she was. She wanted this as much as he did. She was slick and ready to take him into her body. It took every ounce of his willpower to resist taking off his pants and doing just that. The desire to mark her was so strong his hand started to tingle.

He slid one of his fingers inside of her. Damn, she was so hot and tight. He closed his eyes and just savored the feeling of her. She started to gyrate her hips and he responded by moving his finger slowly in and out of her. He looked down at her face, drinking in her beautiful features. He was enjoying watching her passion, it was so pure and innocent, yet carnal at the same time.

Just as she was about to climax, he bit into her again. He wanted to drink from her while she came. He wasn't prepared for her emotions to wash over into him. Even though she hadn't touched him at all, he came with her. Right in his

pants like some kind of oversexed kid.

Cam buried his face in the crook of her neck so she wouldn't see how freaking embarrassed he was. What was happening to him? He was always the one in control. This never happened to him before. Even when he was a scrawny virgin.

Amadeaha whispered in his ear, "I love you."

Cam scrambled off her so fast he landed on his ass on the carpet. One look at her face told him she was telling the truth. How could she love him? Didn't she realize what he really was? She was too good for a slime bucket like him. He glanced up at her and realized he needed to get the hell out of the room before he did something stupid like admit he loved her, too. He scrambled to his feet and started to leave, but he didn't want to just walk out on her. He tried to make some excuse to her, but all that came out was a grunt. She gave him a confused look as he turned away from her, went into his bedroom and shut the door before he could make an even bigger ass out of himself.

Chapter Four

"Michael, it's about freaking time you answered," Cam spat into his cell.

"Oh, I hadn't realized that I missed any calls from you," Michael's voice drawled.

Cam let loose some sarcastic laughter. "Funny, you're just having a field day with this, aren't you?"

"Ummm...yeah, pretty much."

Cam fell back on his bed and ran his hand through his wet hair. He just finished taking the coldest shower in history and it did nothing to tame his desire. He turned his head to the side and smelled lilacs. Crap, he'd forgotten Amadeaha had slept there last night. "I need your help here, Chief," he admitted. "I don't think I can handle this assignment."

"Where's she at now?" Michael asked.

"In the living room."

"Where are you?"

"I'm in my bedroom." Cam realized he was

clutching a pillow close to him and he tossed it aside with disgust.

"So you're hiding from her then?" There was no mistaking the amusement in his uncle's voice.

"Screw you, Michael. Why are you doing this to me?"

"Because it's so much damn fun. After all the grief you've caused me over the years, it's nice to see you on the receiving end for once."

"You need to come here and take her off my hands."

"I'm too busy right now. Besides, she specifically asked for you."

Now why didn't that shock Cam? "She did?"

"Yes, she refused to meet with anyone but you. So I'm sorry," the Chief's tone didn't sound sorry though, "but you're stuck with her."

"What if I hurt her?" Cam went up to the door and pressed his ear against it, but heard nothing.

"As long as you keep your hands to yourself and don't bite her, everything will be just fine."

Cam didn't respond, but his silence spoke volumes.

"Oh God," Michael groused

Cam noticed there was no real gusto behind his annoyance.

"You bit her didn't you?"

"Just once. No wait, maybe it was twice." Cam stopped to think. "It was only twice, I'm pretty

sure of it. But it didn't hurt her. She liked it, a lot."

"Whoa there, dude, that's just a little T.M.I." Michael took on a Bear like tone to match his immature words. "Next you're going to tell me you went all the way and marked her."

"I didn't mark her, yet." Cam winced as soon as that last word slipped out.

Michael grabbed onto it like a hungry dog latching onto a bone. "Yet? So you have plans for her?"

"Come on, Uncle Mike. We both know that can never happen."

"Why?"

Cam leaned his head against the door. "Because of what I am."

"She doesn't care about all that," Michael said softly. "I've seen the way she looks at you. She has real feelings for you."

Cam closed his eyes. "That's what I'm afraid of."

"Give her a chance. Give both of you a chance."

"Have you and Amadeaha been eating crazy pie or something?" he asked incredulously. "I'm a half-breed. I don't even know if it is legal for me to be with her."

"Since when do you give a shit about following rules?"

Cam gave a weak laugh. "You really should have sent someone else to get her."

"You are the only one she trusts."

"Then I was right. She is crazy."

Now it was Michael who laughed. "Which makes her perfect for you."

* * * *

Redressed, Amadeaha sat on the couch, her knees tucked up near her chin. Well that had gone much better than she had expected. Not only had she gotten him to kiss her, he had bitten her. She felt a warm flush crawl across her face. He did a lot of other things, too. Things she sincerely hoped he would do again soon. She got up and ran to the bathroom mirror so she could look at the bite mark. She touched the spot on her neck that he used. He fed off of her twice, but used the same spot both times, so she only had one set of puncture marks.

Her body still felt the warm after effects of the orgasms that he gave her. Now that he'd awakened that part of her, she found she wanted to experience even more. Amadeaha wondered briefly if that made her a tramp, than decided it didn't because she didn't want to do those things with all males, just him.

Ana had been right about everything, Cam had tried to scare her, he had tried to fight it, but in the end, he gave in because he did have feelings for

her. She wasn't sure at first that he did, but the last time he bit her, he let his guard down and she felt his emotions. He loved her as much as she loved him. He just wasn't ready to admit it.

That part she could understand. Right after the war had broken out, Michael offered to take her away from her father, but she'd been too afraid to leave everything that she ever knew behind. Then she become a spy and learned she had an inner strength she never knew existed. She also decided if she ever had the chance to be with Cam again, she would never pass it up. Amadeaha might make a lot of mistakes, but she rarely made the same one twice.

Cam came out of his bedroom and started to clean up her mess, all the while refusing to meet her eyes. Ana was right, he was a coward. Amadeaha ducked her head down so he wouldn't see her satisfied smile as she started to help him.

"What the hell were you trying to do?" he asked as he picked up the toaster.

"I heard that toasted marshmallows were good."

He gave her a droll look as he threw the ruined appliance in the trash. "That's *roasted*, not toasted. If you have a craving for a smore, I'll take you camping."

She didn't understand half of what he just said, but she wasn't going to give him the satisfaction of

knowing it. "I heard you talking on the phone. Was it Michael?"

He nodded. "He wants to see you. I'm supposed to take you to the compound now."

Amadeaha was bummed their time alone was ending. She didn't want to leave the cozy apartment. A small part of her dreaded having to face the other angel warriors. How were they going to react to having Jehel's niece living with them? They cleaned the rest of the mess in silence. She started for the bedroom to get her sweater. As soon as she was within arm's reach of him, he snagged out and held her by the waist.

"I'm sorry about bailing on you earlier," he murmured into her ear.

"Just make sure that it doesn't happen next time."

"Don't you see? There can't be a next time. You need to run away from me as fast as you can."

She nervously licked her lips. "I'll only run if you promise to chase me. I had a dream like that once. I was running through a forest and you were chasing me."

He gave her a hard look. "That's what monsters do."

She put her finger over his mouth to shut him up. "I was running and you were chasing me, but in a good way. I knew that when you caught me you were going to toy with me in a deliciously fun

way.”

He swallowed hard, his eyes growing dark with desire. “Did I ever catch you?”

“Yes, you did and we had so much fun.”

Cam let out a demon-sounding growl before he pinned her to the counter. He cupped the back of her head with one hand and brought her in for a scorching kiss.

After he let her up for air, she held onto him tightly, just in case he decided to run away again. She didn’t have to worry though, he was holding her just as firmly. She knew she won a small battle.

“I don’t get it,” he said, his voice laced with awe.

“What don’t you get?” She buried her nose in his chest and enjoyed his dark, spicy scent.

“Why do you want a freak like me?”

“You’re not a freak to me, you’re just my Cam.”

He looked like she had just hit him on the side of his head with a brick. “I haven’t been *just Cam* for years.”

“Tell me about it. Everyone just sees me as Jehel’s niece. I don’t think most people in Heaven even know my name.”

“I’ve always known your name.” He grinned.

Her heart gave a little gallop. It wasn’t very often she saw a true smile on him. “Do we really have to leave?” It wasn’t a true question, she knew

better than anyone how important it was that she get her information back to Michael. Lives depended on it.

He gave her a squeeze. "Yes, we do. Let's get started, we'll stop and get you something to eat on the way."

* * * *

Cam sat across from her at the restaurant and watched her big green eyes as her gaze darted all over the place, taking everything in. It was fun watching her experience so many things for the first time. It felt good to be the one who introduced her to them.

"Humans are so interesting." She was staring at a couple of businessmen chatting it up on their phones. "I don't think I could ever get sick of watching them."

Cam decided to bring up the subject that they both avoided. "Who whipped you?"

Her smile faded from her face and she looked down at the table. "Does it really matter?"

"Yes it does," he snapped. His anger wasn't directed at her, it was at the bastards that hurt her. "They need to pay for what they did."

"It was my cousin, Azreal." She continued to stare down. "Jehel ordered him to do it once they found out I was spying for Michael."

"Michael should have never put you in that position."

"He didn't ask me to do it, I volunteered."

He was shocked to find he was holding her hand over the table. He didn't even remember reaching out for it. "Why did you do that?"

Her eyes looked up at him and they were shiny with tears. "Because it was the right thing to do. I know what my father and uncle did to the angel warriors, what they did to you. Someone had to do something to help stop them. I was actually pretty good at it. That is until they caught me asking too many questions."

"That's when he whipped you?" He rubbed the pad of his thumb on the inside of her wrist.

She nodded her head. "The entire time he was doing it, I was thinking that it was finally my turn."

"Your turn for what?"

"Every female in my family has mysteriously disappeared. Both Dina's mom and mine vanished when we were both real young. Even Azreal's mom and she was my dad and Jehel's sister. I know deep in my heart they were all destroyed and I thought that my turn had finally come."

"How did you get away?"

"Azreal left for a few minutes and my friend Serel snuck in and untied me." She wiped away a tear that had started to slip down her cheek. "If

they find out it was her, they'll destroy her for sure."

"Why didn't she come with you?"

"She's terrified of the angel warriors. Her mother raised her on tales about how brutal archangels were. I tried to tell her it wasn't true, but I couldn't convince her otherwise."

He wasn't too shocked by that. Even before the war, there had been a fissure between the angel warriors and the justice angels. Cam gently squeezed her hand. "No one is ever going to hurt you again. I won't let them." *Now where did that promise come from? Remember, you're not keeping her.*

The waitress came up and set down some bread in front of them. Maybe it was all the talk about whipping or it could have been because she brought up the way Jehel betrayed him. Whatever the reason, that damn bread brought back a whole slew of memories for him. Even though he tried to fight it, he could not help but remember.

He had been in Hell for weeks and they hadn't fed him once. The starvation wouldn't kill him since he was immortal, but the hunger pains were unbearable. The demons were using that against him, too.

Persephone was one of Satan's wives. She was also the one in charge of torture. The bitch was damned good at her job. That particular day, she had Cam standing in the middle of the room, chains on both wrists, while she held a piece of bread in front of his mouth. Every

time he got close enough to take a bite, she pulled it away.

Cam finally got desperate. This time when she brought the bread up to him, he ignored it. Instead, he ran his tongue along the outside edge of her hand. Nice and slow so she got the point. Her black eyes widened in surprise, but she made no move to strike him for his behavior.

"I'll fuck you for it," he mouthed so the guards didn't hear him. He knew he was taking a risk, but he also knew she was interested in him sexually. There was no mistaking the hungry way she eyed him up.

It wasn't exactly the best pickup line he ever used, but it wasn't like he was trying to pickup Princess Di here. Persephone was a full-fledged demon, with horns and claws to prove it. Her skin was a dusky shade of red and she had long black hair. While she did have a killer body, she was still a minion from Hell. But desperate times called for desperate measures.

He watched her expression shift from shock, to anger, then to desire. She never took her gaze off him as she commanded the guards harshly, "Leave us."

The biggest guard balked. "It's unwise to leave any of us alone with him, Persephone. He's already almost escaped from us once. He nearly destroyed one of my guards in the process."

Persephone jerked a set of chains that were always wrapped around Cam. They were separate from the ones holding him to the floor of the torture chamber. "The Chains of Confinement are keeping his powers

contained. He's no danger to any of us."

The demon remained unconvinced. "Even without his gifts, he's still dangerous."

Cam resisted the urge to tell the guard to go take a flying leap and focused his gaze on the demoness. He deliberately let his gaze trail up and down her body. He took in her black leather fuck-me boots and her ripped black dress. She certainly did fill it out nicely. Maybe this wouldn't be so bad after all. He made a point of licking his lips and that was the last little bit of incentive she needed.

"Out, now," she snapped.

The guard shrugged his misshapen shoulders and motioned to the others. Before he left, the demon gave Cam a disgusted look. As soon as they shut the door behind them, she was on him. She grabbed a handful of his hair and brought his head down to hers. The entire time she crammed her tongue down his throat, he eyed the piece of bread. She had set it down on one of the nearby tables and it was so damn close it mocked him. As soon as she let him up for air, he tilted his head pointedly at the bread.

"You'll get it when we're done," she purred.

"No, I get paid up front or no deal," he winced at those words. They were the exact same ones he heard the working girls use in the streets of Detroit.

"Half now, and then half when I'm happy."

He nodded and she tore the lump in half and shoved it in his mouth all at once. He choked on it at first. Eventually, he worked some saliva into the hard

staleness and managed to chew it. Even though it tasted like mildew and Styrofoam, he still shook with relief.

The entire time he tried to eat the crappy bread, she walked around him slowly. Her dark eyes scanned every inch of her purchase. She paused at his back long enough to lick some of the blood off it. He was bleeding pretty badly from her latest whipping and that was obviously a turn on for the sadistic bitch.

When she pressed her breasts to his back, he had a brief worry about ruining her nice Goth dress with his blood. But it must not be a worry to her, so what the hell? Persephone snaked her arms around him and started to rub him through his jeans. He wanted it not to affect him, but his body betrayed him once again and he got hard. A small part of him was nervous, too, his wrists were still chained and she had his most prized possession in her clawed hand. Of course, she did have plans for it so maybe she wouldn't Bobbit it just yet.

She unzipped him and reached in for some skin on skin contact. Cam **He let out a sigh** sucked in a big breath and stared to choke on the crap bread again. He finally managed to swallow the last little lump just as she brought her mouth down on his shoulder.

"Ouch, that freaking hurt." The witch had just bit him and hard, too.

Note to self, never have sex with a demon that specializes in torture. Unless you are into that kind of stuff, which he was not. She racked her claws across his already injured back. He hissed in pain and fought against the chains.

"Let me free so we can get this over with," he growled at her.

"How do I know you won't attack me if I let you go?"

"Because we made a deal and I always keep my word."

She shook her head. "I want you to swear on your honor as an angel warrior."

He gapped at her. "You want me to swear an angel warrior oath that I will be an obedient dog and only fuck you?"

She arched a brow at him before looking at the other half of bread still on the table. Cam let out a sigh and recited a vow that he would be a good little angel and not tear her apart with his bare hands. The entire time he was silently calling both of them every name in the book.

He was glad he was never going to leave Hell ever again, then his family would never have to see how low he had sunk. Maybe Persephone would do them all a favor and destroy him when she done using him. She reached up and unlocked the chains, making sure to keep the Chains of Confinement on. It was obvious that, even with the vow, she still didn't trust him. Smart move there, horn head.

Once his arms were released, she didn't even give him time to work out the kinks. She threw her body into his and started to kiss him again. He winced when his back slammed into the nearby wall and the jagged stones cut into his flesh. She put her nose in the crook of

his neck and inhaled.

"You smell so good."

That one was a news flash to him. Since he had been spending the better part of a month stewing in a cell, Cam was pretty sure his signature scent was now BO and ass. Of course, he didn't smell like decaying flesh, so his stank must be a step up for her. She ran her hand down his bare chest.

"Your skin is so beautiful and unblemished."

Yeah, yeah, yeah and he had beautiful eyes to see her with and beautiful ears to hear her with. He was getting a little sick of the whole Red Riding Hood dialog. All he wanted to do was get this out of the way, grab his shitty bread and get back to his cell so he could lick his wounds.

He tried to take control of the situation by pulling Persephone into his arms and feeling her up a bit, but she had other plans. Before he knew it, they were naked and rolling around on the filthy floor, his blood smeared over both of them. She flipped him over onto his back and straddled him. He caught the sadistic look on her face and knew he was in deep shit. Cam learned a valuable lesson that day.

Never, ever make a deal with a demon.

She subjected him to every humiliating act her twisted mind was capable of thinking up and then some. He had been right when he had used the words, obedient dog earlier because that was the level that he was brought down to. By the time she finished with him, he felt like a worthless piece of crap.

Afterward, he pulled his jeans back on and sat on the ground, his head between his hands. "What have I done?" he whispered to himself.

He should have been able to hold out. He was an angel warrior and was supposed to be strong. But he failed and, in his moment of weakness, had not only shamed himself, but all his warrior brethren. What would Michael, his brothers and Abdiel say when they found out what he did? Crap, he'd rather stay in this pit forever than to face them after this.

The guards came in to drag his sorry ass out and Persephone made a big point of shoving the rest of the bread in his front pocket. The demons snickered at him and, for the first time since he could remember, he didn't have a smartass comment to fire back. He was too sick to his stomach to even think straight. Persephone never even glanced his way as he was led out. She was too busy arranging her tools for her next victim.

Once they got to the door of his cell, one of the guards grabbed him by the throat and pinned him to the wall. "I've got some chocolate if you are willing to pay the price, angel whore."

Cam started to roll his eyes before he realized that the sick fuck was serious. He was so stunned that all he managed to squawk out was, "No." Cam cringed when the demon leaned in to lick his face. He struggled to get away, but the constant beatings and hunger left him too weak to do much. So he decided to use the only weapon he had left, his sarcasm. "Dude," he drawled slowly.

"Just because you are a maggot from Hell doesn't mean that you have to forget what a toothbrush and toothpaste are."

The guard threw him down on the ground.

Cam rolled up in a ball as the demon and his buddy took turns kicking him. Cam took the beating in stride because he hoped that by provoking them into it, they would quit coming on to him.

It worked, once they were done using him as a soccer ball, they threw him in the cell and left him alone. He could still smell Persephone's demon stench clinging to him. He knew that, even if he took a thousand hot showers, he would never feel clean again.

"Cam...Cam...Cam!"

Cam looked up from the table and into Amadeaha's concerned gaze. "What?"

"You kind of drifted off there for a bit." She looked down at the bread and her brow wrinkled up as understanding came over her face. "Oh."

She knew. Of course, she knew, what had he expected? As soon as a demon informant had told Jehel about Cam's bread trade, the lead justice angel had made sure everyone knew. He hated the entire Lehor family and it had given him great satisfaction that Cam had fallen so low. Cam immediately went on the defensive. "It's not what you think it is."

She arched a brow at him. "So all angel warriors go pale at the sight of bread then?"

"I'm watching my carbs."

She gave a slow nod of her head. "I watched a special about that this morning while you were sleeping. In fact, I learned a lot from TV. Carbs evil, getting a car with bad credit and zero down, good."

"I need to get out of here," he said in as nasty of a tone as he could.

She wasn't daunted. "Relax, Cam, the humans are looking." Gracefully, she slid out of her side of the booth and moved over to his. Reaching out, she grabbed his hand before saying softly, "You need to talk about it."

"I never discuss that topic. My family knows better than to even ask."

She stroked his fingers. "They're wrong to do that. How can you get over it unless you face it?"

He tried to be angry and found he couldn't. Sure, he was frustrated and confused as hell, but he couldn't find it in him to be mad at her. He noticed she had moved even closer to him so her body pressed up against his.

"I was right." He sighed. "You are crazy. With everything you know about me, how can you even stand to touch me?"

"I'll let you on a little secret. I like touching you. I plan on doing it whenever I can." The entire time she said those wanton words, she gave away her inexperience by blushing. She grabbed the bread

and tore of a small piece. "Now, open your mouth for me."

"What are you doing?" He gave a nervous laugh. Demons and justice angels didn't scare him half as much as this red-haired menace.

"I'm going to feed you." She leaned in closer, her soft breasts brushing against his arm. "When I'm done, that vicious demon bitch is going to be a distant memory."

"I love it when you talk dirty," he tried to be flippant, but his voice came out hoarse. Amadeaha's lips found their way to his neck and he shivered. Her tongue slipped out and made a slow, lazy circle on his skin. The anxiety from the flashback faded away as desire replaced it.

"Do you like it when I do that?" she asked. When he nodded, she smiled and continued, "Good, because every time you take a bite, I'm going to give you a reward like that. Now, open your mouth."

As soon as he did, she slipped a small piece of bread in. She blew in his ear before she nibbled in the lobe. After that he needed no prompting, he opened his mouth as soon as she held up her hand. "You do realize you're teasing a sex demon?" he gasped. She was working on what he suspected would be an impressive hickey on his neck.

"You're not a demon. You're perfect," she

argued before going back to work.

"This could never work between us." Those words sounded weak even to his own ears.

"Why? I've already told you that I love your fangs and eyes. They turn me on." She blushed again, but still kept kissing him.

"There are plenty of other reasons." There were, too, he just couldn't think of them right then.

"Give me one."

He scrambled his brain until he finally plucked an adequate one out of his sex-fazed brain. "I'm a cover hog."

"I'll wear flannel jamies then."

The thought of her in fuzzy PJs totally turned him on. She held up another piece of bread and her own lips were parted a bit. That sight shredded the last bit of his self-control. Cam groaned and captured her mouth in a deep kiss. She returned his passion, her little tongue darting in to lick his fangs. Grabbing one of her legs, he pulled it over his lap so she was even closer to him.

Then a voice cut into their game.

"Oh...My...God..."

Bear was standing there with a shit-eating grin on his face and a devilish glint in his eyes. Cam noted he had dressed up for the occasion by sporting a pair of ripped jeans and a black rock tee shirt, and he had the tips of his blond hair dyed

red. He held the hand of his mate, Tiffany. She was dressed in a green plaid skirt with a matching sweater. Her brown hair was pulled back in a preppy ponytail.

Tif giggled and pointed to her mouth. "Uhm, Cam you got a little something on your face, right here."

Amadeaha looked at Cam. "I don't see anything."

Cam gave Tif and his brother a filthy look. "She means you. She just thinks she's so funny."

Bear and Tif slid into the empty side of the booth. Cam sighed because it looked like they were planning on staying. He should have known his family would be all in his business as usual. It was times like these he wished he were an only child.

Cam saw Bear was honing in on the bite mark on Amadeaha's neck. "Why are you here, Care Bear?"

"Ana's worried about you because we haven't heard from you in a couple of days." Bear was still staring at Amadeaha, a half smile on his arrogant face.

"Bear can find Cam anywhere," Tif proclaimed to Amadeaha proudly. You would have thought Bear had found the cure for cancer by the tone in her voice. "My mate has super awesome psychic skills. He's the best."

"It comes in handy when we get separated at the amusement park," Bear added, with mock seriousness.

Tif looked confused, a common expression for her. "What are you talking about? We've never been to an amusement park." Tif glared at them and her face turned angry when the brothers burst into laughter. She balled her tiny hands into fists. "Can't you be serious just for once, Bear? Gosh, sometimes I hate you." She got up with a huff and announced, "I'm going to the bathroom." She looked back at Amadeaha, and when she saw the other female was still sitting, said, "Hello! You're supposed to go with me."

Amadeaha looked over at Cam and murmured real low, "What is she talking about?"

Bear responded in a loud stage whisper, "Females go to the bathroom in packs. It's a chick thing."

Amadeaha clung to Cam's arm like he was her lifeline. "But I don't have to go."

Cam knew he shouldn't be enjoying this so much, but she was so damn cute when she had that panicked look on her face. He gently pried her fingers off his arm and gave her a little pat before shoving her off the bench. "It'll be fun." He grinned at her.

She left, but not before she shot him a, I- will- kill- you- once- we- are- alone look. Bear gave Tif's

rump a goodbye smack. She smiled back at him, showing that she didn't hate him after all.

Once the females were out of earshot, Bear gave a wicked grin. "I just love Tif's ass. I could play the bongo drums on it all night long."

"Nice to know, thank you for sharing." The last thing he wanted to discuss was the ins and outs of his baby brother's sex life.

"Now I know why we haven't heard from you." Bear reached over and stole his cola. "You've been busy with a certain redhead."

Bear's innocent act didn't fool Cam for one second. A shocking revelation came to him. "You little lying punk. You guys already knew she was with me, didn't you?"

Bear smiled around the straw. "Kinda."

"When did you intruders find out?"

"This morning, Ana called your cell and Amadeaha answered. We all talked to her for a while."

Cam leaned his head on the back of the booth with a groan. He could only imagine what that conversation must have been like. "It's not what you think. I'm doing a favor for Michael. She's a spy and he needed me to smuggle her out."

"I see." Bear nodded his head. "Is the second part of the mission to dry hump her right in the middle of a restaurant full of humans?"

Cam's gut clenched. He had forgotten about the

humans. All he had been thinking about was her. Oopsie daisy. "Do you think they saw us?"

"I'm pretty sure a six-foot five-inch dude sucking face with some female caught their interest," Bear shot off sarcastically. "Does Uncle Mike know that you bit your assignment, too?"

"Shut up, Bear. Whatever you do, don't tell the rest of the sibs about the bites."

But it was already too late. Bear had his cell out and that shit-eating grin back on his face. Cam groaned and, for the second time that day, wished he were an only child.

Chapter Five

“Wake up, slave, Santar needs to see you.”
Derel resisted the urge to slug the owner of the hand shaking his shoulder and rolled out of bed, his slumber rudely interrupted. Even though he immediately started to follow, the guard still found it necessary to connect a chain to his slave collar and lead him around like a dog on a leash. Every couple of steps, the guard would yank on the chain and Derel would stumble before regaining his balance.

To pass the time, Derel tried to decide in which order he would kick his brother's asses for not coming to get him sooner. He would start with Ramiel because he was the eldest, and as such, the one most responsible for family rescues. Then he would work his way down oldest to youngest, saving Bear and Cam for last.

Your bothers wouldn't have to wait around for a rescue like you, a nasty voice chanted in his head. They would have found a way to free themselves a long

time ago. They're not some weak, helpless healer like you.

Santar came running up the hallway, his clothing streaked with blood, a harried look on his face. Derel scanned him and found no injuries so he sent his senses out further. The pain of numerous injured beings came rebounding back at him. It was so strong he had to hold the wall for a second to steady himself.

"Hurry," Santar panted. "We don't have much time."

Derel silently agreed with him for even as they spoke he could feel the life force ebbing out of some of the injured. "Where are they?"

Santar took him to a large infirmary. Scores of injured angels, rogues and demons lay on cots or the floor. Healers were running around, helter skelter, without any organization, slipping on the blood-coated floor. Screams of pain filled the air, mixing in with moans and curses. The air reeked of puss, blood and fear.

"What happened?" Derel asked, even as he knelt and started to look over a nearby female slave.

"One of my gladiator training compounds was attacked by a pack of Hounds from Hell," Santar snarled. "There were so many of them my gladiators and guards didn't stand a chance."

Derel gently touched the bite and claw marks

on the female. "Why would the demons attack you? Usually they leave slave traders alone."

"They know I have you."

Derel paused, his hand hovering over the injured angel, his heart thudding in his chest. "I highly doubt that, you must have done something else to piss them off. You do have such a winning personality."

Santar looked like he was going to hit him, but he stopped at the last second. "A new demon has entered the hunting game. He seems to be going exclusively after you and your brothers. It appears to have the ability to control and order Hounds around. One of the guards told me he was specifically asking about you. He knows I have you and he's going to try to take you away. Lucky for you, I'm not about to let that happen, I'll fight the bastard down to my last guard."

Even though his stomach was doing flips at the thought of some demon asking about him by name, Derel still pasted a cocky grin on his face. "Damn, you must have paid a lot for me. I'm so honored, I just feel giddy inside."

Santar didn't seem amused. He snarled and jerked at Derel's chain-leash in one quick vicious movement. The healer fell to his knees as he gagged for breath. He waited for more blows to follow, but the slaver held back. Derel knew he didn't want to risk really hurting his prized healer.

Santar said, "Your gifts are what are priceless to me. You'll cooperate with me, or else. There are ways of making you do what I want that won't cause you physical harm. You have no idea of what I am capable of."

"Look, sir." Derel swallowed several times to get his breath back. "I'm just going to disappoint you. My powers are nothing like Cam's."

Santar ignored his statement and gestured toward the room. "Fix this."

"This is mass chaos," Derel protested. "What do expect me to do?"

The slave master ignored his question and walked out, leaving Derel alone in the middle of the huge cluster fuck. Derel felt his Lehor temper rise and resisted the urge to tell them all to get bent. Why should he go out of his way to help them? They enslaved him, took him away from his family and stole his dignity. What would they do to him that they already hadn't if he refused to play their games? He struggled to his feet and turned to tell one of the guards to take him back to his room.

Before he could get a word out, the guard spoke, "Your beef is with Santar, not the injured. Most of these angels are slaves, just like you. Don't let them suffer just because you want to prove a point."

Derel clamped his teeth together to keep from

firing off a comment. Even a nice generic, *Go fuck yourself*, would do. Of course, the last time he had said something smart to a guard, he got his ass handed to him. But then, if he were beat to hell, he wouldn't have to heal.

The guard laughed. "Go ahead and say it. You know you want to."

"Say what?"

"You want to tell me to go fuck myself. I know how you and your brothers work, you don't like taking crap from anybody"

"No offense, rogue, but if I were to tell you what I really thought of you, then you and a couple of your buddies would introduce me to the floor." Derel flinched as the guard raised his hand. Damn it, he hated himself for showing a weakness. He never used to jump whenever someone moved too quickly around him. His imprisonment had changed him in many ways.

The rogue didn't hit him. Instead, he unhooked the chain attached to the slave collar and threw it aside. Derel dared to glance at him out of the corner of his eye. The guard was one he didn't recognize, he had shaggy brown hair that was past his collar and shaggy. His face seemed rough and weathered, like the rogue had seen too much. His hazel eyes still had a hint of amusement in them.

He gave Derel a cocky smile. "I always did admire that Lehor brother gumption."

"That's just so flattering. How do you know us?"

"I went to school with your brother Ramiel. My name is Lashier. I just go by Lash."

Derel pulled at the collar for it chaffed at his neck lately. "Lash sounds like the name of a character from a Japanese cartoon."

Lash cocked his head to the side thoughtfully. "I've never thought of it that way. You're right though. Let's go, Santar's going to be pissed if you don't get this mess cleaned up."

Lash took off and Derel followed him, arguing the entire way. "I don't know what you think I could do. You need someone with leadership skills, like Raphael, to organize this mess. I know I keep repeating myself, but I really am just a healer."

Lash stopped so fast Derel ran into the back of him. The rogue spun around and said angrily, "You need to get your head out of your ass and give yourself some credit. Angels are going to listen to you just because you come from one of the most ancient and powerful lines. You're the nephew of the Chief Archangel, Michael. That's even before you throw in your incredible healing skills. Everybody knows you brought back Jehel's son after he was destroyed."

Derel didn't say anything because he was too stunned that the truth was out. He didn't think

that anyone outside of the family knew about that one. In fact, the family didn't even talk about it. But then they really didn't know the whole story. They all thought that it was Bear who had help him do it. After all, he had been touching Derel when it happened. Only Derel knew the whole truth. It had been him, and him alone, who had gone into that dark abyss and snagged Dina back.

Derel decided it would be useless to deny it to Lash. "You don't understand, Dina was never the same after I brought him back. He went through a period of time where he was psychotic. We had to lock him up, just to keep him from hurting himself. It was only after several sessions with Cam that he was finally able to snap out of it. There are still times when he loses it. Plus, I almost got trapped on the other side when I couldn't find my way back. I won't go there again."

Lash put a hand on his shoulder. "I'm not asking you to bring anybody back. I just need you to lead."

Derel was shocked to see compassion in the guard's eyes. Lash was the first of the guards to talk to him like he was something more than a piece of meat. Derel wondered how the rogue even ended up in this job. Lash actually seemed to have a conscience. Derel thought for several seconds before he sighed and nodded his head. "Take me to whoever is supposedly in charge of

this mess."

* * * *

She was going to kill him. No wait, she was going to beat him, then kill him. Amadeaha kept shooting Cam glares from across the car until he finally threw up his hands.

"What's your problem? Before my brother and Tif showed up, you were all over me and now you're acting like I killed your puppy. What did Tiffany tell you in the bathroom?"

"She told me about Dina."

A flurry of expressions went over his face, panic, guilt, then downright worry. "What exactly did airhead say?"

The urge to kill him intensified ten-fold. "You mean there is more than just one thing you haven't told me about my cousin?"

He looked like a kid with his hand stuck in the cookie jar. "Kind of."

That was the final straw. They were a stop sign and she got out of the car and slammed the door behind her. If she didn't put some distance between the two of them soon, she was going to do something stupid, like throw him out of the moving car. She heard his door slam as he got out and followed her. She whipped around to confront him, brushing away a strand of hair the

wind blew into her eyes. Bear stopped his car behind them and raised his hands up in silent question. Wonderful, now she had an audience, just what she needed.

"Get your ass back in the car," Cam sounded exasperated with her, but she could have cared less.

"Go take a leap off the nearest bridge, you piss ant."

"Damn, you're a vicious little thing when you're angry."

"You have no idea," she yelled at him. "Dina is all that I've ever had. Then I find out he's been sick and I wasn't there for him."

"Calm down and tell me exactly what Tiffany said to you." He turned to pin a glare at Tiffany who was sitting in the passenger seat of Bear's car. She was busy fixing her makeup in the mirror and didn't seem fazed by his anger.

"She said maybe now I'm here Dina would feel even better. When I asked her what she was talking about she got real nervous and wouldn't say anything else. You better tell me what is going on."

Cam sighed and looked down at the road. "I was going to tell you, I just wanted to wait until you saw Dina first. I thought if maybe you saw with your own eyes that he's okay now, it might make it easier to hear what he went through."

Her heart started to hammer in her chest and her throat grew dry. "Tell me everything, please. Don't hold anything back."

"What have they been saying about him in Heaven?"

She gave a nervous laugh. "Stupid rumors that he was brought back from the dead and he's now a ruthless killer. They're all lies. I've known Dina since the day he was born. He doesn't fight any better than me."

"Those rumors are true, Amadeaha. Dina was destroyed, if it wasn't for Derel and Bear he still would be."

She realized she was gasping for breath and swallowed hard to regain control of her emotions. "How was he destroyed?"

"Jehel let some demon play with him for fun. The demon scrambled the poor kid's insides, Derel said he had never seen anything like it before. It used some healers shield on him after. Any normal healer that came in contact with him after wasn't able to detect Dina was slowly dying from his injuries because the demon had them hidden. He was too ashamed to tell us until it was too late."

She spun away and pressed her hands to her stomach. Dina had suffered and she hadn't been there for him. She was all he had and she let him down. "What happened to him after Derel

brought him back?" she whispered.

Cam seemed to weigh his words. "He was a little off for a while."

"I want the truth, all of it, Cam."

Cam cursed under his breath before saying, "It wasn't natural, him being jerked back from the other realm. It had some real nasty side effects. One of them was he went crazy for a while."

She choked back a cry. "He was all alone. I should have left when he did."

Cam put his hands on her shoulders. "Dina has never been alone. He has Bear, Tif, her crew and us. My whole family has taken him in. Before he took Megan as a mate, he didn't even live in the male dorm, he stayed at Ana's and Appolion's. We care for Dina and have always made sure he's known it."

"Dina has a mate? Why didn't I know anything about it?"

"He just marked her recently. You'll like Megan once you get by the airhead part of her."

She felt a tear slip down her cheek. "You don't understand. We made a vow to protect each other and I let him down. Dina's the only one who has ever loved me."

Cam grabbed her by the arms and looked down into her face. "He isn't the only one. I love you. I always have."

They both stood there in the street, shocked into

a stunned silence by his sudden admission. For some insane reason, she was crying even harder. "Don't say something that you don't mean just because you feel sorry for me," the words were so hard to say, they came out a mere whisper.

He tightened his grip in her arms. "I do mean it. God help you, but I do."

Amadeaha yearned to look into his eyes to see if he was serious, but he was wearing his usual dark glasses. All she saw was her own reflection. She shook her head. "If you love me, then why are you so eager to get rid of me?"

"Because when I'm around you all I want to do is take you and make you mine. Like right now, all I want to do is throw you in the backseat of that car and screw you in seven different ways."

"There's that many ways to do it?"

Cam jerked her closer to him.

There was no mistaking the hardness she felt against her stomach. Oh yeah, he was turned on all right.

"There's many more ways than that and I would love nothing more than to be the one to teach them to you. It wouldn't be from some erotica book either, it would be all hands on."

She shivered as that fantasy came to her head. "So why don't you? I promise I would be a very good student."

"You deserve more than some female demon's

sloppy seconds."

"That's not what I think when I see you." She closed her eyes and opened up her mind. "This is what I think." She brought up an image from one of her naughtiest dreams. They were in a bed, tangled up in red silk sheets. He was on top of her and was moving in and out of her in a slow rhythm. Her hands were stroking his muscular back as she let out soft cries of pleasure.

"Holy hell," he declared, bringing her back to the real world. "You're going to kill me if you keep this up."

"Kiss me," she demanded. She expected him to refuse, but was pleasantly surprised when he complied. He was so gentle about it. Not at all like his kiss earlier in his apartment. His tongue made slow sensual movements in her mouth. She arched into his strong body, wanting to feel every inch of it.

A car honked its horn and they both jumped away from each other, startled. A male human had pulled up behind Bear's car and he obviously wasn't pleased that the road was blocked. The man laid on his horn again and made an impatient gesture with his hand.

Tif got out of her car and slammed the door. "Gosh, what a rude human." She flounced off, flashing an angry look at the man. He stopped beating on his horn and gave Tif a dazed stare. His

gaze followed her as she made her way across the street. There was no mistaking the lustful look he was shooting the angel.

Bear got out and leaned his elbows on the roof of his car. "Where are you going, Tif?"

She pointed to a nearby building. "To the gas station."

Bear let out an impatient sound. "What for?"

She turned around and gave him a devilish grin. "I'm getting a Slushie."

Bear let out a little whoop of delight. "Hot damn!"

As soon as Tif disappeared inside the store, the human started to honk his horn again. Bear's head snapped over and he gave the man a glare that would have made most humans shake in their boots. There was a loud bang as something exploded in the man's car and smacked him in the face.

"What was that?" Amadeaha asked, fighting back a giggle.

Cam groaned. "It was the idiot's air bag. Damn it, Bear. Human's are hands off."

Bear gave an innocent look. "I never touched him."

When Amadeaha finally gave in and laughed, Cam shook his head at her. "Don't encourage him."

By the time Bear, Cam and Amadeaha got the

cars parked and made their way into the gas station, Tif was already at the back counter. She was at a big machine, holding a cup under a spout. Bear went up behind her and started to nuzzle her neck. Cam snorted before he went into the corner to take a phone call.

Amadeaha looked around the store. There were all kinds of human food and drink on display, most of which she had no clue as to what they were. She reached out to touch another machine a couple of feet away from Tiffany's.

"Don't touch it," Bear warned. "It's hot, you'll get burned."

"What is it?" she asked, pulling back her hand.

"Coffee." He poured a cup and handed it to her. Cam waved him over so Bear flashed her a smile and left.

Amadeaha drifted over to Tif. "Why was Bear so excited you were getting a Slushie? Does he like the taste of them that much?"

Tif gave a half laugh. "He doesn't drink them. It's what I do with the Slushie that makes him so happy."

Amadeaha looked down at the red drink, hoping the answer would be there. But all she saw was a lumpy liquid. "What do you do with it?"

Tif leaned in and whispered in Amadeaha's ear.

The entire time the small healer was revealing her secret, Amadeaha's face got redder and redder

until she was sure that it was the color of drink. She looked at the healer in shock. "He likes that?" she asked so loud that Cam and Bear turned to glance at them.

Tif gave Bear a heated look. "It makes him putty in my hands."

To prove her point, Tif wrapped her mouth around the straw and took in a long drink. Her gaze never broke away from her mate. Bear got a dopey look on his face and he licked his lips. Cam had to hit him in the arm to get his attention.

A thought came to Amadeaha. "Does that work on all males, or just Bear?"

Tif gave a shrug. "I've only been with Bear, so I really don't know. I don't see why it wouldn't though." She filled another cup with the frozen drink and handed it to Amadeaha. "Why don't you try it on Cam and see for yourself?"

"I couldn't...what I mean is, I wouldn't know where to start?" Amadeaha stammered.

"It's not rocket science." Tif walked over to Bear, grabbed him by the front of the shirt and led him out to their car.

Cam shook his head at the pair before he went to the front and paid. When he came back, he cocked his head to the side when he noticed she was holding one cup in each hand. "Thirsty?"

"No, your brother and his mate just seemed to think that I was."

She tried to copy Tif and take a slow, sexy drink of her Slushie, only to have it dribble from her mouth and go all down the front of her shirt. Cam stepped forward to help, just as she coughed up the rest of it, spraying him on the face. "Cold," she choked, mortified she had given him a shower. So much for being too hot to trot.

He grabbed some napkins. But instead of cleaning himself off, he started to wipe the mess off her face. "Yes, those things are cold."

She sat down her drinks, grabbed the napkins from him and stared to clean him off. God, he must think she was a mess. First, she got him shot at, then she botched up her first demon fight in the warehouse, then she fainted at his feet, now she drenched him in her spit.

He stilled her hand. "You do make life more interesting. I like it that way though."

She gasped when she realized that he'd been reading her thoughts. "Stop that," she ordered.

"Sorry, sometimes I can't help it."

A horrifying thought occurred to her. "Have you been hearing everything I've been thinking?"

He gave her a lazy smile. "No, but judging by the worried look on your face, they must have been some interesting thoughts."

They gathered up their purchases and made their way to the car. Amadeaha looked over at Bear's car and saw no sign on him, although the

windows were steamed up. She got into Cam's car and waited until he got into his side before she gave him a questioning look.

He took off his glasses so she could see him roll his eyes. "We're going to have to wait a while for them to finish."

She bit back a giggle. "Are they..."

"Yes, they never seem to get enough of each other. It's so sweet it makes me want to puke."

They sat in silence for several minutes and Amadeaha thought about what Tif had told her. She wondered if it were true. Could she really make Cam putty in her hands? He always seemed so in control of everything. The idea she could make him lose control even for a minute was so farfetched. Still, she couldn't help but wonder if she could do it. Before she lost her courage, she leaned over and whispered in his ear, "I want to taste you." When he went to kiss her, she put her fingers on his lips and stopped him. "Not there." She reached down and stroked him through his jeans. "Here, I want to taste this." She started to fumble with his fly and he reached down to help her. She felt a small thrill of victory when she realized he was shaking.

"I shouldn't be letting you do this," he rasped.

"Then why are you helping me get your pants open?"

"Because you're taking too damn long to do it

on your own."

Amadeaha finally freed his cock and looked down at it as she gently stroked it. It was the first time she saw a male member. Holy smokes, were they all as big as him? She gave it a tentative squeeze and was rewarded by a groan from him. She smiled to herself, he was putty in her hands. How cool was that? She ran her fingertips up and down, marveling that it felt so soft and hot at the same time.

Before she lost her courage, she leaned down and took him onto her mouth. Cam threw his head back and groaned. His hips jacked up and she tasted a bit of salt at his tip. She pulled back and licked at it before she took him back in her mouth. She had never done this before, but she caught on quick, using his moans and gasps as a guide.

Halfway through, she remembered the Slushie. She broke away from him long enough to take a drink. She held it in her mouth for a few seconds before she swallowed, just like Tif had told her to. Once she was sure her mouth was nice and cold, she wrapped her lips around him again. He jerked as soon as she touched him and hissed in pleasure.

"Oh sweet fuck," he yelled. "You're killing me."

He threaded his fingers through her hair and she kept sucking and licking him. The salty taste mixed with the lingering sweetness from the

drink. She looked up at his face, he was lying back against the headrest and his eyes were closed. The normal hard lines of his face were relaxed and he really seemed to enjoy himself.

"Sweetie," he panted. "You're going to have to stop. I'm about ready to come."

Amadeaha didn't care. She wanted him to come. When he tried to pull her away, she dug her fingers in his thighs and kept at it. She didn't stop until he let out one last yell as he found his release.

* * * *

Cam looked down at Amadeaha as she swallowed his seed. Her eyes were closed and the dark lashes almost seemed to reach her slightly pink cheeks. She gave him one last slow lick before she sat up. She threw him a saucy look, but there was no mistaking the tremor in her hands. She might be enjoying exploring her new sexuality, but is still scared her a bit. He found that so sweet and appealing. He'd never known a female that was naughty and nice. Just well...naughty and more naughty. She was so refreshing.

Amadeaha grabbed the cup and took a drink.

He couldn't help but watch the way her lips wrapped around the straw, just like they had been wrapped around him a few seconds ago. "Whatever possessed you to do that?"

She fiddled with the straw. "Tif said it would make you putty in my hands and I wanted to see if it was true."

"I need to keep you away from her?"

"Why? Didn't you like it? Did I do something wrong?"

Did she do something wrong? Hell no, that had been the best blowjob of his life. Her inexperience had been a pro, not a con. The hesitant way she took him had him not knowing what she was going to do next to him the entire time because apparently she herself hadn't known what she was going to do next. She had winged it the entire time and Cam loved that so much more than the practiced jobs he had been given before.

She gave him a sly smile. "Maybe I should try it again."

"We need to get back on the road."

She looked over her shoulder at Bear's car. "I don't think your brother is quite ready to leave yet. His windows are still pretty steamed."

Cam noticed the windows on his own car were, too. She scooted closer to him and slid her hand down. His pants were still undone and she reached in and grabbed his cock again. Cam realized that this was the first time in a while he wasn't the one taking the lead in a sexual encounter. Damn, his little virgin of an angel had him almost to his knees. He was pretty sure he

would do almost anything she wanted right about now. Damn Slushies.

His cell phone rang and he saw on the caller ID it was Michael. Since he didn't feel like taking a break. He pushed the *fuck you* button on the side of his phone and sent his uncle into voice mail. Uncle Mike would understand, he was the one who told Cam to give this a chance after all. He tossed the phone on the dash and hauled her even closer to him. "I should take you into the backseat and teach you turnabout is fair play," he threatened before kissing her.

Amadeaha tore her lips away. "I don't know if we'll fit back there. We're bigger than Bear and Tiffany."

His phone rang again, he hit the *fuck you* again. "I'll make you fit. First, I'll strip off your pants, then I'll slide those sexy little panties off you. Once I got you good and naked, I take your legs and put them over my shoulders so I taste that area of you I've been dying to sample since I first laid eyes on you."

"Then what?" her voice was quivery.

Cam kissed his way up her throat until he reached her earlobe. Unable to resist, he nipped at it. He sucked away the droplet of blood and she arched against him as she let out a long, slow moan.

"Then I'll suck, bite, lick and kiss you until

you're screaming. Your orgasm will be so hot, your creamy thighs will tighten up around my head and your hands will be pulling my hair."

She squeezed his cock again. "Don't tell me, show me."

"If I get you into the backseat and do that, how do you know that I'm going to stop?"

She looked him dead in the eyes. "What makes you think that I would want you to?"

Cam felt an almost animalistic need to take her at that moment. He wasn't for sure if it was the angel part of him calling out for his mate or the incubus part of him calling out for sex. He just knew that once he got her in the back of the car, he wasn't going to stop until he had all of her. "Get back there," he ordered harshly.

Amadeaha didn't hesitate a second. She scampered into the back of the car with a dexterity and grace she certainly hadn't displayed in the demon battle the night before. Once there, she settled back and crooked her finger at him. The sight of her leaning back and ready for him shattered what little resolve he had left. *Mine*. The single word beat into his skull and he knew there was no arguing with it. He had just started to make his way to her when Michael's telepathic voice broke through.

Answer your damn phone, Cam.

Cam paused, halfway between the two front

seats and let out a frustrated growl. His cell started that damn ringing again and he knew he couldn't ignore it anymore. He gave her an apologetic look as he answered it with a growl. "What?"

Michael didn't take the time to act offended, instead he started giving out orders in a clipped voice, "You need to get Amadeaha back here as soon as possible. There's been a bounty placed on her head and it's almost as big as yours. That means it'll be more than justice angels on her tail, now the demons will be joining the game."

Cam wasn't surprised Jehel would do something like that, he'd put a bounty out on his own son, Dina, right after the war started. It still pissed Cam off Amadeaha had a bigger target on her. "Don't worry, I'll get her back and in one piece. Nothing is going to touch her."

"I know you'll protect her," Michael replied. "I just wanted to warn you so you knew things have gone even more into the crapper. Once you get her back to the compound, find her someplace to stay and keep her there. I have to leave to do some things, but it shouldn't take me long. I'll meet you both once I'm finished."

"Consider it done." Cam ended the call and took a deep breath. He zipped up his pants and refused to meet her eyes.

"So I take it we have to go?" Amadeaha asked.

Cam gave a slow nod as the ramifications of what he had almost done hit him. He'd almost taken her virginity in the backseat of a damn car. What kind of male was he? She deserved to have her first time be sweet and romantic. Not some hard quickie in the parking lot of a gas station. He was used to that type of sex, that was all that he had ever known. But not her, she was too good for that. She was too good for *him*. He helped her up and, once she was buckled back in, muttered, "I'm sorry for what almost happened."

"I'm sorry that it didn't happen," she countered.

"Are you crazy? I almost took advantage of you and stole your virginity in a freaking car."

She crossed her arms and rolled her eyes. "Oh, I see how it is. Mr. Empath King is so hot that the little justice angel just can't help but throw herself at him. Please, you're good, but you're not that good."

He gapped at her. "Excuse me?"

"I did what I did because I wanted to, *me*. Not because of your magical hands, or your infamous charm, or because of your damn Bliss. I have my own desires, my own needs, too, you know."

"But, I—" he started, but she gave him the hand.

"Oh, just shut up. I'm going to take a nap until we get to the compound, so leave me alone." She

gave him one more hard look before closing her eyes. "Another thing, next time you make a promise, you better go through with it, I don't climb into the backseat for just anybody."

Cam sat in stunned silence, only coming out of it when Bear impatiently tapped on his horn. He couldn't believe it, but that red-haired vixen had just put him in his place. She'd done more than that, she had all but spanked him and put him in the corner. Damned if he hadn't enjoyed every second of it, too.

* * * *

Amadeaha followed Cam through the compound, trying her best not to look impressed. It was hard though, she'd expected something big, but this was huge. An entire city was carved out in the earth.

Several stores dotted the side of the small street. Children of various ages darted in and out of them, their laughter and yells filling the air. There was a large cafeteria in the heart of the compound filled with angel warriors. Cam pointed out a large doorway and told her it led to the angel school. Just because they were at war didn't mean the warriors didn't still train and educate their young. Several smaller hallways led to different dorms and living quarters.

This was a lot nicer than she expected. The warriors made a new home for themselves. When she asked Cam how they managed to build it, he just shrugged and muttered about the miracles of Michael.

He led her to a large gym and she stopped short behind him, shocked yet again. *Oh my God, they are using slave labor.* A small group of angels were down on their hands and knees and they were scrubbing the floor with, what appeared to be, their own toothbrushes.

A dark-haired male muttered, "Fuck!" when Cam walked in. Cam's sister, Ana, stood over them, an aggravated look on her face.

She whipped her head up so sharply a piece of her blonde hair came loose from its bun. "We do not use slave labor," she snapped. "These nimrods are doing this because they're in trouble."

Amadeaha took a step back, the last thing she expected was venom like this. "I didn't say anything."

Ana put her hand on her hip and tilted her head to the side. "You were thinking it. You broadcast your thoughts loud enough to wake the dead."

Amadeaha looked at Cam for help, but he was too busy staring down the toothbrush bearers to be of any help to her. "Sorry?"

Ana's face softened. "No, I'm the one who

should be sorry. It's just been a really rough couple of days with Cam being gone. It's not easy being him. I've had to deal with empaths whining, crying and complaining all day and night. Then these jackasses have to go and make things even more fun by starting a fight with some healers."

A blonde female looked up from the ground. She had a real pretty purple shiner on her right eye. "They started it."

Cam shifted around so he could weigh her down with his incredulous glare. "That's the defense you're going to go with, Jules? *They started it*. You sound like one of the children from the school."

The male with black hair opened his mouth.

Cam held up a hand and stopped him by snapping, "Not a word out of you. This is the second fight you've gotten into this week alone."

Jules smirked at him, her brown eyes dancing. "Not to disagree with you, my Lordship..."

Cam rubbed his head and interrupted sarcastically, "Yeah, wouldn't want to start doing that."

The female continued, undaunted, "...but he's been in three fights, not two. Appolion says that if he gets into any more fights, he's going to have to join the Sharks or the Jets and start dance rumbling."

The male was glaring at Jules like he wanted to

strangle her.

Cam just shook his head, indicating the empath was to behave himself.

The male sighed in acceptance before he pointed a soapy finger at Amadeaha and gave a questioning glance.

Cam smiled. "Sure, go say hello to her. She's missed you, too."

The male was dressed head-to-toe in black. His hair was dyed so black it almost looked blue in places. Dear Lord, it was blue in places. He had large plugs in both ears and his eyebrow was pierced. He was halfway to her before she finally recognized him. "Dina," her voice was slightly shaky. "Is that really you?"

Then her cousin did something he had never done in all the centuries Amadeaha had known him. He pulled her into a hug and held on for dear life. She hugged him back, squeezing so tight he probably couldn't even breathe. Although, judging by the all the new muscles she felt, he could handle it.

"I was so worried about you, Deaha," he whispered in her ear, using the nickname only he called her by.

Amadeaha could merely nod her head. She remembered the way Dina looked when she last saw him. His hair had been a mousy brown and he was a tiny scared thing. If another male had

come up and said, *Boo* Dina would jump in fear. Now he walked and carried himself with the confidence of a warrior. He was also showing affection, something his father would have beaten him for.

She met Cam's eyes over Dina's shoulder and mouthed, *Thank you*. She only hoped he knew it was for more than bringing her to see Dina. It was for watching over her cousin and making sure he got better in more ways than one.

Jules cleared her throat before formally addressing Cam, "I'm sorry for interrupting, my Lordship, but Heather still hasn't returned from the mission you sent her on and I'm starting to get a little worried."

Cam's brow furrowed in confusion. "I never sent her on any mission. What are you talking about?"

With a nervous look on her face, Jules no doubt realized she just got her friend busted. "Heather came to me yesterday and said you were sending her out. She went with Brad."

"Son of a bitch." Cam ran his hands through his hair. "I told him not to go."

Ana was starting to look nervous, too. "Told him not to go where?"

"Brad went to his sister to see if she knew anything about a slave trader that might have Derel."

Dina explained to Amadeaha, "Brad's sister is a succubus."

Cam started pacing, his face sharp with fury. "I told him not to go because he couldn't trust his sister. I mean, *Hello*, she's a demon and all." He stopped and issued an order to the toothbrush brigade, "Go get your weapons together, we leave in ten minutes."

Ana started for the door. "I'll go tell Appolion. He'll get together some archangels to join you."

Cam grabbed Dina by the arm before he could leave with the other empaths. "I need you to find Amadeaha some living quarters. It's imperative she sees Michael as soon as possible."

Dina shook his head, "The Chief isn't back yet."

"Of, freaking, course. I forgot he was on some damn road trip."

Dina held his hands up in a whacha-gonna-do gesture. "I can find Amadeaha someplace to stay though. I think I know of something."

"Good, stay with her until I get back." Cam stormed out of the gym without so much as a backward glance.

As she watched him go, Amadeaha felt a little let down. He could of at least given her a wave. She instantly felt guilty for thinking that way. He was going on an important mission, not out to buy manna. Dina grabbed her by the hand and started to lead her down a hallway. The sound of

pounding footsteps made both of them stop and turn around.

Cam hadn't forgotten her after all. He embraced her and gave her a long kiss. She wrapped her arms around his neck and let herself get lost in it, even though her baby cousin was standing right next to her. Holy cow, the things Cam could do with his tongue. He slowly explored every inch of the inside of her mouth, stopping only to nip on her bottom lip from time to time. The entire time, he was caressing the bite mark on her neck with his fingers. Almost as if he were reliving the feeding in his mind.

She peeked at Dina and saw he had suddenly become very interested in a spot on the wall. Urged on by the small bit of privacy, she slipped her hands under Cam's jacket so the only thing separating her from his skin was his tee shirt. She ran her hands up his chest, exploring the hard planes, feeling his warmth seep into her fingers.

He cupped her bottom with both hands and pulled her even closer.

Since he upped the ante, she decided that she would, too. She pushed up his shirt just enough to slide her hands underneath it so she could really touch him.

"This is another reason why it could never work out between us," he whispered hotly in her ear. "My work hours suck, I'm always having to

run off at all times of the night.”

The soft nibbles he was giving her earlobe argued with his words. He scraped one fang up the length of her neck and she shivered as goose bumps rose on her arms. She fanned both hands over his bare chest and he sucked in his breath.

“I should teach you a lesson and lift your top, too,” he spoke low.

She giggled when he tugged at her shirt. “My cousin is right here.”

Cam looked over at Dina. “He’s too busy becoming acquainted with the wall to see anything.”

“He can still hear every frigging thing,” Dina called, never turning around. “It’s beginning to get a little awkward here.”

A tall male came down the hall toward them. He had the same blond hair and blue eyes as Cam although he styled his hair in a more clean cut way. Amadeaha only had to scramble in her brain for a few minutes to remember this brother’s name, Nathaniel. She’d always made it point to learn everything she could about Cam’s family.

Nathaniel whistled, then said, “Break it up lover boy. It’s time to head out.” He turned to her and gave a devilish grin. “Hi, Amadeaha. Cammie has spoken so highly of you. When we get some time, I would love to sit down and tell you all the things he said. I’ll even tell you what he mumbles

in his sleep about you."

"That," Cam tilted his head toward his brother, "is another reason. My family is nuts. There's no way I'd ever subject you to that."

Nathaniel just continued to smile.

When Amadeaha noticed he starred at Cam's chest, she realized her hands were still up his shirt. She gasped and pulled them out, her face burning. She hid it in Cam's body and wished a hole would open up in the floor and swallow her up. She'd never been so mortified in her entire life. Now Cam's brothers probably thought she was some tramp or groupie. Maybe if she just stayed real still and didn't look up, Nathaniel would forget what he saw.

"I've got to go." Cam kissed the top of her head.

Amadeaha pulled away and tilted her face up. The worry written on his face tugged at her heart. She was reminded of his position in the angel warrior world. As a leader, each loss must weigh heavily on him. She put on a brave smile and stood on tiptoe so she could kiss him on the cheek. "You go and bring them back. I'll be waiting for you." She spoke the next words directly in his ear, "I meant what I said earlier, I do love you. So make sure you don't let anything happen to yourself." She was happy when her declaration didn't make him run away again. He just gave a

half chuckle and said, "I was right, you have been eating crazy pie."

Amadeaha took a deep breath before speaking the one question she was terrified to ask, "Are you really going to come back for me?" She looked down at her feet, too ashamed to even meet his eyes. She hated that she had just shown him her biggest weakness. Her fear of being left behind. First her mother had done it, then Haniel when he was hurt and even Dina had left. Amadeaha wouldn't be able to stand it if Cam deserted her, too. Cam reached down and tilted her chin up with his fingertips.

"I'll come back just for you," he whispered.

"So then you don't want to get rid of me anymore?"

"I never really did."

He left with his brother, but not before he turned around one last time to look at her. She stood there, staring at the empty hallway until Dina cleared his throat.

"Don't worry about him," he tried to reassure her. "He always manages to kick anything's ass that comes in his way. Come on, I'll show you to your quarters." Dina led her further down the hallway before stopping at a door. He was just opening it when the one across the hallway was thrown open and two more of Cam's brothers came out. They both stood there with their jaws

hanging open once they spotted her.

They were the twins and, although she couldn't tell them apart, she did know their names, Joe and Case. They both wore their blond hair collar length in the back, but longer in the front so their bangs hung in their blue eyes. They had identical swords strapped to their backs.

"You're such a cheater," one of them accused.

Dina gave an innocent look that didn't fool Amadeaha for one second. "Hey, I don't know what you're talking about. I'm just finding my cousin an empty room."

The other twin scoffed, "Which happens to be right across the hall from Cam's."

Dina shrugged. "I can't help that. It's just a coincidence." Both brothers flipped him off. Dina asked slyly, "What's it up to?"

"Two thousand," the twin that answered finally had the good graces to wave at her.

She waved back. "What are you talking about?"

All of the sudden, Dina got real nervous. He pushed her into her room. "Nothing, bye guys." He shut the door and Amadeaha started to slowly wander around her new quarters. There was a small kitchen set off to the side of a living room. A bedroom and bath were down the hall. The carpet was a cream color to match the walls. It was already furnished and it looked like the cupboards were even stocked.

"It's one of the smaller quarters, but I didn't think that you needed much," Dina explained.

She smiled at him. "It's perfect. Is Cam's room really across the hall."

"Yeah, he, Michael and Raphael all have their own private quarters. They're the only single males that do. Unless you're mated, you live in the male dormitory."

She tilted her head to the side. "If Cam has private quarters then why were Case and Joe just leaving there?"

"All of his brothers kind of crashed his place and never left. That's the way their family is."

She caught the small wishful look that passed over his face and she understood it. It would be nice to have a family that cared enough to trample on your privacy. She went up to him and ran her fingers through his hair, pretending she was trying to straighten it, even though both of them knew she just needed to touch him to comfort herself. "I heard you lived with Ana and Appolion for while." She stopped long enough to look into his gray eyes. "Were they good to you?"

"Yeah, even now Ana nags me all the time and Appolion's always dragging me off for training sessions." Dina gave her a lopsided grin. "But they're cool. They act like they really like me. Even their little girl, Ariel acts happy to see me."

She gave up on trying to tame his hair and

dropped her hands. "Of course they like you. What about your mate, Megan?"

He smiled and she could see the love in his eyes. "She's the best thing that's ever happened to me. Even when I'm going through hard times, she sticks by me. We live with Heather and Jules. It's kind of neat living with three girls."

Amadeaha looked around her quarters and suddenly the enormity of what was happening slammed into her. She was away from Heaven for the first time in her life and she was going to be living all alone. In some bunker to boot and her only lifeline was gone. She already missed Cam and was scared to be without him. She felt like some selfish child, but she couldn't help herself. Her worries must have shown on her face because Dina gave her a hug.

"Why don't I sleep on your couch tonight?" he suggested. "Megan is going with Cam on the mission so it's not like anyone is going to miss me back at my place."

"You don't mind?" she asked timidly. She was pleased some things hadn't changed with her cousin. He still had the uncanny ability to know when she needed some comforting.

"Heck no, I'll even bring over a pizza."

"Thank you." She let out a bent up breath as relief washed over her.

"I really hope things work out with you and

Cam."

That comment was a surprise, Dina had never shown any interest in her love life before. "Why would you want that?"

"Because if you were his, then he would make sure nobody ever hurt you again."

She gave him a small kiss on the cheek. "Dina?"

"Yeah?"

"What's pizza?"

Chapter Six

Derel stood over the stainless steel sink, trying in vain to wash the last little bit of blood off his hands. Some of it had seeped into the sides of his nails and it was refusing to come out. He envied human healers at times like this. They got to wear gloves. Angels didn't have that luxury, they needed to make direct contact with their patients in order to heal. Well, all the healers but him. But he found out real quick when he tried earlier today, that type of healing took too much of his energy. As it was, he was already swaying on his feet from fatigue.

Lash had been right, the other angels had listened to him. As soon as Derel started issuing orders, they scrambled to follow them. It wasn't just the healers either. The empaths had followed his directions, too, and gone off to sooth the minds of the injured until the healers could get to them.

Lash came up to him and leaned against the wall, his arms crossed and a cocky grin on his face.

"I knew you could do it."

Derel snorted. "It's not like I had a choice in the matter. Someone had to do something."

"Can I ask you a favor?"

Derel almost laughed at that one, but held it back in at the last moment. "I'm a slave, remember? You don't have to ask me, you just order."

"I'm a rogue, by definition, I don't follow norms. Now, are you going to do me a favor or not?"

Derel turned off the water and dried his hands. "Sure, I live to please."

Lash led him around the cots. "I know you have a fairy living at your compound."

Since Cliona's existence was considered general information, Derel didn't bother to deny it. "Yeah, so?"

"Have you ever healed her?"

"Nothing really worth mentioning. Just a small wound from battle training."

"So you've dealt with other species besides angels?"

Derel was really too tired for this confusing conversation. "What are you getting at?"

In response, Lash pulled back a curtain, revealing a cot, which had been set aside from the others. Lying down on it was a male Derel had never seen before. Even though he wasn't

standing, Derel could tell he was as tall as his archangel brothers, although his build was thinner. His long blond hair was matted with blood and damned if there weren't a pair of pointed ears poking out. As soon as Derel and Lash got closer, the male slid open his lids to reveal a pair of unnatural green eyes. He was obviously something different, but he wasn't a fairy. His face was long and the angular where Cliona's was more rounded and full.

"What is he?" Derel breathed out even as he scanned the male, trying to figure out the answer himself.

"Odan here is an elf," Lash supplied. "Can you help him?"

Derel looked at Lash to make sure the rogue wasn't kidding him. An elf? As far as Derel knew, they were just a myth. One glance at Lash's face was enough to tell him that he was as serious as a heart attack. Derel couldn't believe it, first fairies and now elves. What next? He was half tempted to look around just to make sure there wasn't a leprechaun running around shrieking about his lost cereal and pot of gold. "Yes, I think I might be able to heal him." Derel approached the male.

The elf peeled back his lips and hissed a warning. "You brought a slave to heal me, Lash," Odan snarled. "What the hell were you thinking?"

Derel balled his fists up at his sides. This was

just too much. Here he was trying to help the jerk and he was acting all uppity. He finally lost his temper. "Fine, have it your way," Derel snapped. "You can go back to your tree where you bake cookies and die for all I care."

That got a rise out of the elf. He struggled to a sitting position as his face grew stormy. "That's awfully big words coming for a guy whose species spends every Christmas with trees up their asses."

"It sure beats working in Santa's workshop, being his bitch."

Odan laughed. "I like this one, Lash. He's got fight in him."

"You don't know how relieved I am that I was able to impress you. Now I can die happy. Can we get this healing over so I can go back to my room and get some sleep?"

Odan held his arms out. "Well, I would never want to be accused of denying an angel the pleasure of healing something as great as me."

Lash rolled his eyes. "Just get it over with so I don't have to listen to you two morons go back and forth."

As soon as Derel put his hands on the elf, the male grabbed his hand and looked up with awe on his face. "You are related to the great Michael."

"Yeah, he's my uncle," Derel said uncomfortably.

"Did you know my people raised him?"

Derel shook his head, there was a lot they didn't know about their Uncle Mike. The Chief wasn't exactly the type to share personal info, even with family. He went to lay hands on the male again, but the elf persisted. "Your uncle is widely known amongst my kind." Odan grabbed his wrist again. "You posses the same gifts as your uncle. Why do you try to deny it so much?"

For some reason, Derel confessed his darkest thoughts to this strange creature. "These gifts have been a curse to my family. My mother was mentally destroyed because of them. My brother Cam was captured, tortured and poisoned. My youngest brother, Bear, still sometimes suffers from seizures because his gifts overwhelm him. Now I have some power hungry slave master who seeks to use me for his own good, and all because of these so-called powers. They're not a blessing at all."

Odan gave him a grave look. "You need to learn to accept your gifts and how to use them. You'll need them to fight against the one that attacked us."

"Who was it?"

The elf winced in pain. "He looked like a young angel that had just achieved adulthood, but he was demon. The evil that ran off him was strong. He's the most powerful creature I have ever run across and I have lived for almost as long as

Michael. This demon was able to control Hounds for Hell. Only one with strong psychic skills could do that."

Derel's gut got real tight. The ancient prophesy had foretold that a powerful demon would come forth to destroy Heaven and Earth. Could this be the one? And if so, why was it hunting him down? He wasn't part of the Order. He was just a healer. *Sure you're just a healer. Just a healer that can heal with your mind and you happen to be related to the greatest of all archangels.*

He decided he would put those worries aside for right now. The elf was bleeding all over the place. Derel placed his hands on the male's chest, closed his eyes and mended the elf from the inside out. By the time he was done, he was beyond tired. It hadn't been easy to teach himself a new anatomy. The elf was whole again though so it had been worth all the work.

Before they had time to exchange any more pleasantries, Santar walked over. Since Derel was still crouched down next to the cot, he had to look up to see the slave master. Santar grabbed Derel by the arm and hauled him to his feet.

"You did a good job." He had a cruel smile on his face that didn't quite reach his flint eyes. "I'm thinking you deserve a reward."

Somehow Derel didn't think Santar had a pony in mind. The slave master dragged him from the

infirmary back to his room.

* * * *

Lash and the elf watched as the Lehor healer was manhandled. As soon as Lash looked back down at his friend, he knew that he was up shit's creek. Odan had a troubled look on his face. "No," Lash barked.

The elf wasn't ready to listen to reason. "I can't sit by and let one of Michael's kin be treated like that."

"Relative," Lash corrected. "We don't say *kin* in the human world, it sounds too formal and stuffy. You don't live in the elf world anymore and you have to stop talking like them or else you'll never fit in. You need to keep a low profile. Yammering on about the great Michael and his little whelps won't help."

Odan sat up, anger flashing through his eyes. "I might be an outlaw, but I can't stand to see any other creature mistreated. I feel helpless watching all these angel's suffer, maybe if I could help one of them, I might feel better about myself."

"Why do we have to mess everything up?" Lash asked. "This is a good thing we got going here. The pay is good, we have a place to sleep, plenty of food."

"And we have the blood of your fellow angels

on our hands. You might act like you don't care about that, but I know you, Lash. It's eating you up inside."

"Look, if I wanted someone to be my conscience I would hire a cricket. I don't need some damn elf telling me what's right and what's wrong."

The elf switched tactics. "How much do you think Michael would be willing to pay you for the safe return of one of his nephews? He would probably pay ten times more than the bounty."

Lash cursed under his breath. If there was one thing that could sway him, it was cold hard cash and his friend knew it. "Fine, I'll think about it," he finally conceded begrudgingly.

* * * *

Santar stopped so abruptly at the door Derel tripped and fell into the wall. Santar laughed at his clumsiness before asking, "You know, I was wondering something?"

Derel pulled the collar away from his aching neck. "What's that?"

"Your brother Cam is so powerful. It would be real easy for him to find you. So why hasn't he bothered to come for you?"

"Don't worry, my brothers are searching for me. When they do come, there'll be hell to pay."

Santar's lips curved up into a mocking grin.

"You know what I think? I think that your family doesn't miss you at all. You're not an archangel like your older brothers, nor are you a telepathic empath like your younger ones. In their eyes, you are just the little weak healer in the middle. A nobody who only becomes useful when someone gets an ouchie. Maybe if you had told them how special you really were. But you kept that all to yourself. Now you're gone and nobody gives a damn."

Every one of those words struck a point with Derel, but he wasn't going to give Santar the satisfaction of knowing it. "You don't know how my family works. We always stick together, no matter what."

"Really?" Santar made a big show of looking around. "Then where are they?"

Derel ducked his head and refused to say anything. Truth be told, he had nothing to say. He wasn't about to admit to Santar he'd been thinking the same thing to himself.

"Your gift is inside," the slave master said in clipped tones. "You can thank me later."

Before Derel could ask him what he meant, Santar shoved him inside, then slammed the door behind him. One look around told him that there was no pony. He raked his eyes around the space until they finally settled on what had to be his gift. On the bed was a small lump, Derel wasn't for

sure, but he thought it was a female angel and he could already tell she was injured. Damn it, he was too weak to heal anybody else. What was Santar thinking?

Still, it wasn't like he could just stand by while an angel needed healing. He would just do a quick see, then hand her over to another healer. He started to make his way over, opening up all his senses so he could scan for injuries. The first thing Derel smelled was the blood, then another scent took over – musky perfume. He looked at the tiny ball of angel lying on his bed and shook his head. It couldn't be.

He ran to the bed, rolled the female over and gasped. It was Heather, the last one he ever expected to see here. Her clothing was ripped and bloodied and her dark hair was loose from its usual pigtails and lay in disarray. A slave collar, identical to the one he wore, was clasped around her slender neck. Her eyes were closed and she was unconscious. Bite marks were all over her body and they weren't from hounds. They were succubi bites.

"What the hell happened to you, sweetie?" he whispered. Her breathing was rapid and shallow. Derel knew it wasn't because of her injuries. She was overloading. Whenever an empath got close to too much evil, they were in danger of their minds breaking from all the negative energy.

That's what had happened to Derel's parents. He remembered how agonizing it had been to visit his mother and father at the infirmary all those years. They'd just been empty hollow shells that suffered in a silent hell until they finally journeyed to the upper realms of Heaven.

Derel couldn't let the same thing happen to Heather. Sitting on the bed, he pulled her up onto his lap, close to his chest. He brushed the hair away from her pale, bruised face and kissed her on the forehead. His hands were shaking. The healer broke out in a sweat as the panic nearly overwhelmed him.

The thing was, he didn't know how to stop her from slipping away. As far as he knew, nobody had ever been able to bring back an empath that was this far gone. Derel went into a trance and healed all of Heather's injuries, but she still didn't come around. If anything, her breathing was even more shallow and her life force weaker. Out of sheer desperation, he started babbling to her.

"Remember the party Ana and Appolion threw last Christmas? You were dancing with your friends to, *Jingle Bell Rock*. You didn't know that I was watching you, but I was. You had that cute little Santa skirt on, the one trimmed with white fur. Every time you moved a certain way, I got a wonderful view of your legs. I decided then that was your best feature. Your legs seem to go on for

miles.”

He looked into her small pixie face and his heart dropped. She still wasn't responding. Since Derel had nothing else to offer, he kept going. “I spent that entire party trying to work up the courage to get you under the mistletoe. I was too much of a chicken though. I know you've always said that you liked me, but I never really believed it. Every female that has ever shown any interest in me was only pretending so she could get closer to one of my brothers. No female has ever liked me, just for being me.”

She admonished him, *You're so stupid. I've always liked you, Derel. Not any of your brothers.*

He jumped at the sound of her voice. Her eyes remained closed and her breathing still labored. There was no way she could have spoke. Slowly a realization hit him, they had been talking in each other's minds. That was impossible though. He'd never been able to initiate a telepathic link and he knew she had no psychic abilities of her own. Unless Santar and the elf had been right all along. Maybe he did have even more gifts than he imagined possible.

He opened up his mind even more and, since it worked before, he kept talking aloud, “Heather, honey, can you really hear me?”

Yes, it's so dark. Your voice is all that's holding me here.

"What happened?" When he heard her soft cry of distress in his head, he decided to switch topics quickly. "Why don't you open your eyes for me, sweetie? I would love nothing more than to see those beautiful browns of yours."

Do you really think my eyes are beautiful?

"Are you kidding? I think everything about you is perfect."

Then why did you say I was too young for you? You've always acted like I was bothering you.

He pulled her more fully onto his lap and started stroking her back tenderly. "I've always been infatuated with you. I was just too much of an idiot to admit it. Who am I kidding? It's more than infatuation. That's why I need you to come back to me. I can't survive without you." When she didn't answer right away, he started to panic. He almost laughed in relief when her eyelids fluttered open.

"It took you long enough to realize that," Heather croaked in a raspy voice. Then she closed her eyes and went back to sleep. But this time it was a healing rest, not a catatonic one.

Derel rained kisses over her face, all the while whispering little nonsense words to her. To reassure himself, he scanned her body again. Just to make sure he hadn't missed any injuries earlier. What he found, made his heart thud in his chest. At her neck was a wound that had been healed

months ago. No other healer would have been able to detect it, much less be able to tell who had healed it. But thanks to his damned gifts, he could do both.

Cam had bit her.

His fucking brother had taken her in his arms and fed off her. Of all the females at his disposal, he had to pick the only one who meant anything to Derel. To make matters worse, it was Appolion who healed her. His own sister's mate. So Ana had known about it, too.

He let out an angry growl as he bolted from the bed so he could put as much distance between him and Heather as possible. He'd been right all along. She only pretended to like him so she could get closer to Cam. He was an idiot.

Damn Cam, damn Ana, and damn his whole family. Santar was right, if they'd cared for him at all, they would have found him long ago. Even before he had been captured, the only time they ever called him for help had been when they needed someone healed. *Derel, heal my girlfriend. Derel, heal my arm. Derel, heal my cat.* They never saw him as anything more than a supernatural form of Doc Baker.

He let out a yell as he lost control of his anger and really let the rage loose for the first time since captured. The angel heard the mirror in the bathroom shatter and he knew it was because his

newfound abilities were surging out of control, but he had no power to stop them even though using them like this drained his body. He tried to rein them in, but the energy continued to surge out of him in a rush. The room started to spin and sway, right before he pitched forward toward the cold tile.

* * * *

Lehor let out a cry of distress. Watching her son, Derel, in the scrying mirror, she saw everything. Even now she could see him, alone and unconscious on the ground. What's more, she could sense the pain that he was feeling. "You have to let me go to him," she begged.

"No." A tall female came over to gaze into the mirror herself. She had long raven hair, sharp green eyes and carried herself in a haughty regal way Lehor could never master on her best day. "You know the rules. Once you ascend to the upper realms of Heaven, it is forbidden to go back."

"But I know right where he is. If you won't let me go to him, then at least let me go to my other sons so I can tell them where to find him." Lehor pulled at the angel harness around her slender wrist. "All you have to do is take this off. I'll only be gone for a few minutes."

The dark-haired female's brow wrinkled with disapproval. "The reason why you have to wear that is because of your past refusal to follow the rules. You keep insisting on going to your children. They need to learn how to stand on their own two feet."

"Not all of us are like you, Iofiel," Lehor spat, anger surging through her. "I can't just abandon my children like you did with Gabrielle and Raphael."

Iofiel bristled. "Sometimes one must choose duty over family."

Lehor spun on her, her fists balled up at her sides. "There will never be a time where I put my children last. They are my world." Lehor turned back to the mirror, but all she saw was herself. Her long blonde hair was a mess, tumbling down her shoulders, and her light blue eyes were filled with tears. The vision of Derel was gone. "Bring it back, you stupid bitch."

Another female came gliding in. Her curly mass of golden hair was tied back by a ruby encrusted clip, showing off her long slender neck. The top of her flowing white gown was cut dangerously low and her hips swayed sensually as she walked. She was not pure angel, but a mixture of angel and Power. She even had the pointed ears and violet eyes to prove it. The mixed female was also the most powerful oracle in existence. "Ooh," she

purred. "Looks like we have a cat fight."

"Be quiet, Nix," Iofiel snapped. "This is no concern of yours."

Lehor went to the oracle and placed a hand on her arm. "Please, Nix, I need you to go to Cam and let him know where Derel is."

Nix sighed sadly. "I'm sorry, but I can't do that. They're not allowing me to go to your sons."

Lehor pulled back her hand and let out an angry hiss. "You don't seem to have a problem going to one of my boys when you have an itch that needs to be scratched."

Nix gave a saucy smile. "True, your sons sure do know how to show a girl a good time. They were all so delicious, too. Well, all of them except Nathaniel and the little one, Bear. They just won't betray their mates. Pity, too, I would have liked to bag me the whole set."

Lehor let out a low growl and went after the oracle. Iofiel pulled her back at the last minute. Lehor continued to struggle, her anger taking over all her good sense. She was going to pull Nix's hair out by the roots, right before she kicked her ass. "You whore, stay away from my boys."

"Stop," Iofiel commanded loudly. "This isn't accomplishing anything."

Lehor pulled away from Iofiel, but instead of going at Nix, she threw herself in front of the mirror. Even though it was now empty, it was the

closest connection she had to Derel. She laid her head on the golden frame and started to sob.

"Don't cry, Lehor," Nix said softly. "If it was allowed, I would go tell Cam where Derel is, I swear it to you. They won't let me."

Lehor didn't even bother to ask the oracle who *they* were because she knew Nix would give the same answer that she always did, *They are just that, them.*

"I'm so worried about my family, Nix. They're in trouble and there's nothing I can do for them." Lehor stayed in front of the mirror for hours, waiting for any vision to come forth. But the mirror remained dark and empty. Much like her hopes.

* * * *

Cam curled up in the passenger seat of the car and pretended to sleep in hopes that would stop Nathaniel from asking any questions. He could sense his brother darting glances in his direction from time to time and he could almost hear the whir from the wheels turning in Nathaniel's head.

"So, you and Amadeaha, huh?" Nathaniel finally asked, apparently not buying the whole possum act.

"It's not what you think." Cam replied, not opening his eyes.

"So, then I was just imagining things when I saw her feeling you up in a very public hallway?"

Cam finally cracked his lids, but only so he could shoot a dirty look across the dark car at Nathaniel. "That's not what I meant and you know it."

"You're an idiot, Cam."

Cam sat up straighter and arched a brow. "Come again?"

"You have a female who is crazy about you and you just want to throw that all away because of who you think you are."

"Who I think I am?" Cam bared his fangs. "I don't think, I know. There's no way that I can take an angel as a mate."

Nathaniel shot him a condescending glare. "Didn't Mom tell you before it's rude to flash your fangs?"

"Nathaniel, I don't—"

"For once in your life, you need to shut up and listen. You've had a wonderful gift handed to you and you're about ready to just toss it back. Don't you think I would give up everything I have for just one day with Belora?"

That took all the wind out of Cam's sails. "It's not the same."

"Does she love you?"

"She says she does."

"And do you love her?"

Cam hesitated for several seconds before growling, "Yes, I do."

"Then it's not different. She knows who you are and she doesn't care. Why do you think she made you promise to come back for her?"

"You heard that?"

"Yes, and I heard the tone in your voice when you said it, too. If you push her away you're going to regret it for the rest of your days."

Cam glanced out of the corner of his eyes at his brother. The lights from the oncoming cars were casting a soft glow into their car, the light causing harsh angles to form on Nathaniel's face. Cam took a deep breath and finally admitted his biggest fear. "What if I get too attached to her and she's taken away from me?"

"That's a risk that you are going to have to take. I just know it sure beats the hell out of running away and never knowing what might have been."

Chapter Seven

Michael stopped in front of the battered door at the dive hotel and tried to gather up the guts to knock. He was half tempted to turn away and forget all about the phone call he'd gotten an hour ago and the individual who had made it. The only reason he didn't was because he reminded himself as the Chief he was responsible for *all* angels in their times of need. It was just he never dreamed in million years that this angel in particular would turn to him for anything.

Amiteil. His sister. The only one who hated him more than Lehor. A dry chuckle worked its way loose from his throat. He was one of the most respected and feared archangels and his own siblings couldn't stand the sight of him. What did that say about his true nature?

Still, Amiteil's hatred of him was partially mutual. Conniving, cold and heartless, the bitch had always thought of herself first and Michael witnessed her do things in the past that turned his

stomach in disgust. And he'd fought demons since the fall of Lucifer. Part of him still wanted to tell the angel to take a long hike off a short pier. So what if she needed help? She had never been there for Ana, the boys or Lehor. One thing held him back. She had a son, and Michael wasn't going to let another one of his nephews down.

He still couldn't believe his sister had fallen so low. She was once an elder many empaths had looked to for guidance and council. She enjoyed great power and prestige in Heaven. The mansion she owned was one of the biggest and almost in the heart of Heaven's main city.

Now she was exiled and having to make her way in the human world. When she informed Michael over the phone of her current status, he had been stunned. He assumed she would always stay in Heaven and never step one toe in the human world. It wasn't a secret she had no love for her mortal brothers.

She obviously hadn't been fairing too well on Earth either. Her new home was in one of the worst neighborhoods Michael had seen on Earth and he'd seen a few doozies in his time. A couple of human hookers walked by him and one of them smiled at him before running her hands up her body suggestively. When Michael turned away from the show, she started to call him all sorts of names, none of them flattering.

He took a deep breath, then rapped on the cheap hollow metal door, making sure to avoid the smear of human fluids someone had deposited there. When Amiteil answered, Michael was hard pressed to keep his face neutral. His sister had really let herself go.

Not that he ever had any tender feelings towards Amiteil. All those years ago, when both of his sisters cut him off, Michael never missed Amiteil. Lehor yes, but never Amiteil. To put it delicately, Amiteil was bitch on her good days and a crazy bitch on the rest. It was still a shock to see her in her current condition though.

Her blonde hair was free from the bun he always remembered her wearing, it hung in dirty hunks around her pale face. Her brown eyes were so wide and slightly unfocused they were almost feral. One good wiff said that she hadn't seen the inside of a shower in days. She wore baggy sweatpants and a dirty tee shirt.

Michael gazed passed her into the room, looking for her son, Dominic. He had a frantic need to make sure the kid was okay and in one piece. Judging by the way Amiteil looked, she wasn't exactly a candidate for *Mother of the Year*. Michael had only seen the youth a few times because Amiteil always kept her son hidden away. She never wanted him to have anything to do with the angel warriors. Michael let out a sigh of relief

when he finally spied the male in the corner.

The young angel would have been fifteen or sixteen if he human and, even though angels aged slower than humans, Dominic would still have the maturity level of a teenager. The kid appeared to be trying to make himself as small as possible. He kept his head down, his dark blond hair covering his face. At least it seemed he kept himself clean, although his jeans and button up shirt had seen better days. He had a magazine in his hands and was pretending to read it. His big brown eyes shifted briefly toward Michael before he snapped them back down.

Amiteil's lips curled up in a false smile. "I knew you would come when I called you, Michael."

She went to hug him, but Michael held up his hands to stop her. "Save it, Amiteil, we both know you aren't any happier to see me than I am to see you. So cut the bullshit and just tell me what is it you want?"

She lowered her arms and her face took on her usual haughty look. "Thanks to you and Cam, I have been banished from Heaven. The council threw me out with nothing. I need some money in order to support myself in this retched human world."

"You must be really desperate if you're coming to me."

Michael looked over at Dominic again and was

struck at how much he reminded him of Cam. Cam before Michael had failed him. Before the demons destroyed the innocence in him. A protective urge came over Michael and it wasn't because Dominic was an archangel and he was his Chief. It was because Dominic was his blood and he wasn't going to let any of his nephews be hurt again. Ever. By anybody.

Amiteil's shrill voice cut in, "Are you going to help me or not?"

Michael hesitated, trying to think of the best way to go about this. What he really wanted to do was take Dominic and leave his bitch of a sister behind, but Michael knew that wasn't going to fly. He touched the kid's mind briefly and realized Dominic was afraid of Amiteil, but fiercely protective of her, too. There was no way the kid would leave his mother behind. On the other hand, Michael knew there was no way he was leaving this crappy hotel without the kid.

"I'll help you, but only if you agree to a couple of conditions," Michael finally conceded.

Her eyes narrowed and her lips pursed. "What?"

"You have to come back and live at the compound and you have to let Dominic go to the angel warrior training center."

Her face turned bright red and her hands balled up into fists. "My son is not one of your warriors."

"Yes he is, and it's time he trained as such. I should have never let you have your way this long and kept him out of training. One other thing, he lives at my quarters. Someone needs to look out for him, and it seems to me you're doing a piss poor job at it. I'm only asking you to come for his sake. Whether you like it or not, he comes with me now."

Her mouth opened and closed several times before she spat. "I should have known you would try and take him away. He looks and acts just like you."

The way she said those last words hit Michael like a slap in the face. By the tone in her voice, he could have sworn she despised her own son. He could only imagine how it must have hurt Dominic to hear his mother say such. Dominic didn't betray any emotions though. He just continued to look down, acting as if they had no effect on him, but his thin shoulders drooped even lower.

Michael thought about all the love and happiness that Ana and the boys always shared when they were together and he knew Dominic was starving for even a little piece of that. If it was the last thing Michael ever did, he was going to give it to the kid. He turned his back on his sister and ruffled his nephew's hair. "How about it Dominic? You want to come with me and go to

school with other young angels like yourself? I know Cam and all your other cousins would be real happy to see you."

"They don't even know me," Dominic whispered so low Michael had to strain to hear him.

"That doesn't matter to them. You're family, that's enough. Ana is going to like you a lot, I can already tell."

Dominic gave his mother another terrified glance before he gave his head an almost invisible nod. Before the kid could change his mind, or have it changed for him, Michael helped him to his feet and took him out of the roach infested room. He was so relieved to get the kid out of the dump he didn't even mind that Amiteil came, too.

* * * *

Amadeaha dried her hair off with a towel and wrapped herself up in a robe. Even with the bathroom door shut, she could still hear the television blaring. The sound of melodramatic music and Spanish words was too loud to be muffled by anything. She rolled her eyes as she tightened the sash of her robe. For some insane reason, her cousin was seriously addicted to Spanish soap operas and he insisted on watching them constantly.

Dina and his soaps had pretty much been the only company she had over the past couple of days. Cam still hadn't returned, nor had his brothers. Michael hadn't come back either. Ana stopped over every day with dinner, she even brought over some of her clothes for Amadeaha to wear. But she was busy with her daughter and her own duties to do much visiting.

A giggle came from the living room and Amadeaha cocked her head to the side, confused. That certainly hadn't come from the TV. It was too feminine to have been Dina either. Curious, she crept out of the bathroom and tiptoed over to the couch because that was where the sounds were originating. Now a lot more noises coming from it, leaving her no doubt something interesting was a happening. There were some moans and some soft whispers, although she couldn't make out the exact words due to the loud soaps.

She peered over the top of the couch and clasped her hand over her mouth to stifle the gasp. Dina wasn't alone. Some female was on top of him and they were making out like two teenagers. Dina's hand was up the female's skirt and, whatever he was doing up there must have been good because she was letting out little whimpers in between the kisses.

Amadeaha decided to leave before she was noticed. She slowly backed up and, being the

super-stealth spy that she was, banged into the coffee table, nice and loud.

The female let out a small scream and Dina sat up so quick he sent her flying to the ground.

The looks of their faces were so comical Amadeaha had to bite the inside of her cheek to keep from laughing out loud. "Sorry," she finally managed to get out. "I didn't know you had company, Dina."

The female scrambled to her feet and Amadeaha was a bit surprised by her appearance. She had expected her cousin to hook up with some Goth chick, not a little cheerleader. The female's strawberry blonde hair was pulled back into a set of braids that looked more milkmaid than battle-hardened warrior. She was wearing a blue tee shirt with a pleated jean skirt, a tiny bit of her tummy peeked out over the top and Amadeaha caught a glimpse of Dina's mating mark, a hawk in flight.

Dina let out a guilty laugh. "Ah, hi, Amadeaha. This is Megan."

Megan's cheeks were beet red. "I'm so sorry. Honestly, I'm not some tramp. I only do this with Dina." She visibly cringed and her blue eyes got wide. "Not that often though. What I mean is...well you see...I was gone on a mission...I really missed him...and...and...and...oh, damn."

Oh my word, Amadeaha thought, she is actually

worried about making a bad impression with me. She must really love Dina a lot then.

Amadeaha decided to put the poor female out of her misery. "That's all right, Megan. It's nice to finally meet you. Dina talks nonstop about you."

Megan gave out a pleased smile as she traced a circle in the carpet with the toe of her tennis shoe. "Does he really? What does he say?"

Before Amadeaha could reveal anything embarrassing, Dina tugged on Megan's hand and said, "Come on, let's go."

"Go where?" Megan gave him a blank look.

"To the movies." He wiggled his eyebrows at her slyly.

She giggled in a sexy way. "Oh, I like it when we go to the movies. Do you think Bear and Tif will want to go again, too?"

Dina flushed and shot a sideways glance at Amadeaha. "We can call them and see," he murmured.

They ran to the door and pulled it open only to find Cam standing on the other side. Before Amadeaha could stifle it, a gasp of pleasure escaped her lips. She missed him so much and a small part of her had been afraid he would never come back to her, despite his promise. She grabbed at the lapels of her robe as a warm tingle went through her body.

He had obviously showered because his hair

was wet and slicked back. The archangel wasn't dressed in his fighting leathers, instead he had on a pair of worn blue jeans and a black tee shirt. Even from across the room, she could smell his spicy scent. Her only disappointment was he was hiding his sexy eyes behind a pair of dark glasses.

His head turned in the direction of the TV and broke the awkward silence. "You're still watching those crappy soaps, Dina?"

Dina grunted in Spanish, "Es Jefe bueno de mierda." *It's good shit, Boss.*

Cam responded in kind, "Usted es un idiota. Usted sabe ese derecho?" *You're an idiot. You know that, right?*

Dina shot off a cocky grin, showing he wasn't insulted by the comment, "Si."

Megan looked back and forth between Amadeaha and Cam, a knowing smile on her face, before she hopped a little on the balls of her feet. "Let's leave these two alone so they can talk." She giggled and dragged Dina away, using the front of his shirt to pull him. He barely had time to wave goodbye. As soon as the couple left, the awkward silence returned.

"I can't have kids," Cam finally blurted.

"Huh?" she asked, confused at the oddball direction the conversation suddenly headed in.

"Raphael said since I'm part demon I can't father any children." He still was outside the

doorway even though they were starting to attract attention from other angels passing by. "That's another reason why it would never work between us."

It was common knowledge that demons were sterile. It was part of the price they had to pay for turning against their vows. It never occurred to her Cam would suffer from the same curse. That didn't matter to her though. She'd give up anything for him. Amadeaha walked up to him and cupped his face between her hands and gave him a gentle kiss. "I don't care about that. Come inside with me."

"If I come in, I'm never leaving you," he responded in a harsh voice. "If you were smart, you would slam that door in my face right now and run in the opposite direction."

She gave him another kiss, and this time it wasn't gentle. She put all her love, hopes and desire behind it. When she pulled back, they were both gasping for breath. "Come inside with me," she repeated.

"You better be sure, because this is your last chance."

Amadeaha grabbed him by arm and pulled him in. She was pleased when he didn't offer any resistance. Instead, he cupped the back of her head with one hand and captured her mouth. The gawkers in the hallway now stopped to see the

show so she walked backward until she could kick the doorway shut.

Desperate to see his eyes, Amadeaha ripped off his sunglasses and tossed them to the side before she started to tug at his shirt. He broke off the kiss to help her. Once he had it off, she ran her lips and tongue over his bare chest, wanting to taste and know every inch of him. She felt a little triumphant surge go through her body when she heard him let out a hiss of pleasure. It still gave her a heady sense of power to know she could affect him that way.

"Why me?" he asked as he raised a hand to stroke her hair.

She noticed that it was shaking.

"You could have any male that you want."

She swirled her tongue in slow circles over his muscular pecs, licking away the fine salty sheen of perspiration there. "I don't want them, I want you. It's always been you that I wanted." Her robe had come loose a bit and he reached into the opening and cupped her breast, gently feathering his thumb over her nipple. Even though he had already given her pleasure before, she still wasn't prepared for the sensations that rocked through her body. She gripped his arms so tightly her nails left little white crescents in his tan, muscular arms. As usual, her curiosity got the better of her. "Is it always this good?"

Cam grabbed her behind and pulled her close to him. He bent one knee so she was riding the top of his leg. Since she was nude under the robe, her bare skin met his jeans. The feeling of the rough material rubbing against her, already aroused, sensitive flesh almost made her mindless with passion.

"It's never been this good," he whispered hotly in her ear. "Before you it had always just been sex. It was hard, fast and, at times, painful. It was just mindless, meaningless screwing, a way to control the demon part of me. I've never made real love to someone before."

He shifted her weight so she rocked against his thigh. She bit back a whimper as waves of desire rippled through her body. "So I guess that kind of makes us both virgins then."

He laughed softly. "No one's accused me of being a virgin in years."

She wanted to respond to that, she really did. But he had started rocking her again and her thoughts became muddled. He parted the top of the robe, even more, baring one of her breasts. Before she even had a chance to wonder what he was going to do, he took her into his mouth. He worked his tongue over her nipple before he gently nipped at it. Not hard enough to hurt, but enough to make her let out a surprised gasp. Cam went to pull away, but she grabbed his head and

pulled him back.

"Don't stop," she pleaded breathlessly. Amadeaha arched her back so he had even better access to her. She didn't even think about being embarrassed by her wanton behavior because the things he was doing with his mouth were making her lose control. He supported all her weight now. His strong capable hands holding her firmly to him, she never felt so safe before in all of her immortal life.

"We don't have to go all the way," his voice sounded strained. "I can give you pleasure without marking you."

"I don't want pleasure, I want you, Cam. Don't you see? I need you to mark me. I want to be a part of you forever."

He paused, his eyes looking deep into her face, for several seconds, before he finally nodded his head. Taking her by the hand, he led her into the bedroom. Once they got there, Cam didn't take her to the bed like she had expected. Instead, he stopped in front of the big mirror that was on the dresser.

"Look at yourself," he whispered, their gazes meeting in the reflection. "Watch me pleasure you."

He stood behind her and started to slowly untie the sash of her robe. The entire time he looked over her shoulder, watching her in the mirror. His

eyes were so intense with desire, she felt a shiver dance over her body. Cam slid the robe off her shoulders and let it fall to the floor so she was naked. She let out a little shudder as the cool air licked her sensitive flesh. His hands slowly slid up her body until they stopped at her breasts.

"The rumors were all true," she marveled.

"What rumors are those?"

"Your touch truly is a gift from the gods."

A satisfied smile played at the corner of his mouth before he used his fingers to gently play with her nipples. Amadeaha reached her arms up and wrapped them around his neck to support herself because her legs had suddenly become too weak to hold her. He scrapped the side of his fangs on her arm, but didn't sink them in.

When she let out a whimper, he asked. "I'm not scaring you, am I?"

"Never," she panted. "I want more."

"Good, because this is only the beginning of what I plan to do to you. I've been waiting for this for years."

She watched as his hand slowly drifted down until he was touching her center. When his fingers disappeared inside of her, she laid her head back on his shoulder and let out a long moan. He used his thumb to work her most sensitive spot, until she was letting out small cries of pleasure.

He slid his fingers out and trailed them up her

stomach, leaving behind a trail of her own moisture. His fangs grazed the side of her neck again, but he still didn't bite her. Instead, he kissed her there, soft butterfly touches. She spun on him and tugged at his waistband.

"Take these off," she commanded.

For once, Cam didn't argue with her. He made quick work of his jeans and tossed them aside. She looked down at his body in awe. She took her time to admire his muscular chest and tight abdomen her gaze dropped lower. He was so large and ready, for her. She wrapped her hand around his erection and gently squeezed. Amadeaha knew she'd done something right when he threw back his head and let out his own moan.

Encouraged by his response, she kept stroking him. The entire time, she continued to study his face. She loved it when he looked like this. So calm and relaxed, like he could let his guard down around her and really be himself. Amadeaha felt like she was seeing a part of him that no one else ever got to witness.

He stilled her hand and whispered, "Let's go to the bed."

She nodded her head and he laid her gently onto the soft mattress. He settled between her thighs, his hands braced on either side of her head. Reacting purely on instinct, she wrapped her legs around him. He started to press at her entrance.

She was so eager for him that she lifted her hips.

"There's no going back after this," he warned one last time.

"No going back ever," she responded firmly.

Right before Cam entered her, she could have sworn he said, "I love you, Amadeaha."

She let out a gasp as soon as his thickness filled her. Not out of pain, it didn't hurt the first time for female angels like it did for humans. It was out of wonder. It was almost as if she had been missing a piece of herself all this time and that she finally found it. She threw her arms around him and held him even closer as he pulled back and entered her again. Then he started to move in and out of her in a slow gentle rhythm.

"I never knew that it could be this beautiful," Cam marveled softly.

His thrusts grew more hard and urgent and she felt her own desire start to build up inside her. He took one hand and gripped her right shoulder blade. She could feel a slight burning and knew it was because he was marking her. Binding them together, forever. After a few minutes, the burning sensation went away and he moved his hand.

When his fangs grazed her neck for a third time, she couldn't stand it anymore. "Bite me."

He moaned. "I don't want you to think that's all you are to me."

"Please," she begged. "It feels so good when

you do."

"Crazy pie," he whispered, right before he sank his fangs into her.

As soon as he did, an orgasm rocked through her body. She squeezed her legs even tighter around him as she screamed out his name. The sensations ricocheted throughout her body for several minutes as he continued to feed off her and make love to her.

Cam pulled his mouth away as he came. As the last tendril of pleasure left her body, she felt him releasing himself inside her. She allowed herself a moment of smugness when she heard him whimpering. Her mighty warrior displaying a bit of weakness and all because of her.

This time she was certain she heard him when he said, "I love you so much."

"I love you, too, Cam."

He lifted his head so his sharp blue cat eyes looked directly into hers. She was shocked to see there was a little bit of fear in them. He swallowed nervously, then asked, "Do you have any regrets?"

Amadeaha reached up to stroke his cheek. "Never, this is what I have waited all my life for."

* * * *

Cam leaned down and kissed her on her forehead.

He breathed in deep, taking in the scent of lilacs. Her hair fanned out over the pillow, like waves of fire. Since fire was his element, his power, the irony wasn't lost on him.

He shifted off her and pulled her to his chest. Who said guys didn't like to spoon afterwards. He traced the Lehor tiger that was forever on her shoulder blade. It had bright orange and black strips and was standing over a long sword, its mouth open in a silent roar.

"Did you find your friends," she asked softly.

His heart tightened in regret. "No. We found where they'd been captured though. They broke Brad's bow and left it behind. That was a mistake on their part. As soon as I touched it, I was able to pick up the psychic vibes from it and see what happened to them."

She lightly stoked his hand. "Tell me about it."

"Brad's sister set him up, just like I feared she would. As soon as he entered the building, she and a bunch of other succubi attacked him and Heather. The problem is, that's where the trail ends. I wasn't able to pick up what happened to them after that."

"I'm sorry."

"Yeah, me, too." He buried his face in her hair. He could have stayed like that all day, snuggled up to her and talking. She had special way about her that calmed the demon inside of him. For the

first time since his transition, he felt completely one hundred percent at ease. Maybe it was her blood. He could still taste the sweetness in his mouth. Or perhaps it was the way she made love to him. He'd been with countless other females, but none had ever been so tender. It may have been because she loved him when he thought no one could. "What have you been hiding from me?" Cam asked her quietly

She stiffened. "What do you mean?"

"That message you've been so desperate to get to the Chief. You haven't trusted me enough to tell me what it is."

"It's not like I was trying to hide something because I didn't trust you."

"Sure, if you say so." Cam sighed with regret. "It doesn't matter now because Michael's on his way here and I'm going to find out anyway."

She turned and wrinkled her button nose in confusion. "How do you know that?"

He tapped his temple. "He called me on the secret spy phone. He's going to be here any minute so we better get dressed."

The troubled lovers had barely gotten their clothes on before Michael arrived. They all convened in the living room. Michael sat in a chair, Amadeaha and Cam sat next to each other on the couch. Michael gave them a knowing look.

"I figured that it wouldn't take you two long to

get together," he said.

Since all male angels instinctively know when a male marks a female, Cam wasn't about to give Michael bonus points for figuring out that one. He just rubbed the spot on Amadeaha's shoulder, which was covered by her shirt, and gave his uncle the classic *Duh* stare. "You look like hell, Michael," he commented.

He did, too. The Chief's brown eyes were sporting a set of bags that would have made a debutante shopper proud. His shaggy blond hair was messed like he had been in a fight, check that, a couple of fights. Michael never did wear the leathers his angel warriors did, opting instead for flannel and jeans. But even those were a mess. It looked like he slept in his clothes for a week.

"It's nothing that a hot shower and twelve hours of sleep wouldn't take care of. I had both personal and angel warrior problems to deal with," Michael replied dismissively.

The Chief took something out of his pocket and tossed it on the coffee table. It slid across before coming to a stop. Cam reached out and picked it up. It was a necklace. Or rather, it was an amulet that was on a long leather cord. It was in the shape of an open circle and fashioned from some white stone.

Michael looked at Amadeaha and asked quietly, "Is this what you were trying to tell me

about when you got caught?"

She nodded. "That's one of the things. How did you find out about them?"

Michael's lips curled into a sinister smile. "A little justice birdie told me. It took some persuasion on my part."

Amadeaha's eyes widened and her brows lifted a bit. "I'm surprised he told you anything. The justice angels have taken a blood oath that they will face being destroyed rather than let the angel warriors know about these."

Cam asked, "What in the hell are they?"

Amadeaha tucked a stray piece of hair behind her ear. "As you already know, the council has blanketed all of Earth, making it a no flash zone."

"Of course I know that. Do you know what a thorn that has been in my side? It's not easy having to rely on human transportation. Especially since this no flash thing seems not to have any effect on the justice angels and their demons. They can still flash around all they want."

Amadeaha grabbed the amulet from him and held it up between them. "It's because of these. They enable the user to flash at will."

"Well then finding one of these is a good thing. All we need to do is make our own now."

Michael and Amadeaha exchanged uneasy glances. "Not quite," she said, slowly. "The stone

that they are made from is only found in Heaven.”

“It’s so old and rare it doesn’t even have a name,” Michael added. “Not only that, each of the amulets have a detector inside. So even if we do manage to get our hands on some and use them, the justice council will know right away and be able to track us.”

Cam leaned back on the couch. “So in other words, we’re still royally fucked.”

“There is even more distressing news, I’m afraid.” Amadeaha gave him a nervous glance. “I found out something else. Something about your brothers Derel and Nathaniel.”

That got his attention real quick. “And you’re just waiting until now to tell me about it?”

Michael held up a hand. “Easy, Cam, she was just following orders. I tell all my spies they are to come only to me with any information.”

Cam tried to hold back his anger, she’d only been his mate all of thirty minutes after all. It’s not like she owed him anything. But he failed, she knew how important his family was to him and she hadn’t said a damn word to him.

She shot him a distressed look before she returned her attention to Michael. “I’m sure you have all noticed there are a high number of healers being captured?” When they both nodded, she continued. “That’s because there’s a real shortage of healers within the justice angel ranks right now.

Almost every one of them sided with Raphael and the angel warriors and they have left Heaven. My Uncle Jehel has commissioned slave traders to capture healers to fill in the gap."

Cam gaped at her. "Are you saying they're using slave labor in Heaven?"

"That's exactly what I'm saying. I snuck into the infirmary and saw it with myself. They even are making them wear slave collars."

"Did you see Derel?"

She got a hurt look on her face. "Of course not, I would have told you right away if I'd seen Derel, no matter what Michael's orders were. The slave trader that has him might not have sold him yet."

Cam asked Michael, "Does the name Santar mean anything to you? I heard that was the one who has Derel."

Michael cursed under his breath. "He's bad news. He was a real piece of work even before he turned rogue. If he finds out who Derel really is, it won't be good. He'll try to use him to gain more power."

"How do you figure?"

Michael pulled a face. "Come on, Cam, we all know there's more to Derel than meets the eye. And if I know Santar, it's not going to take him long to figure that out."

Cam went silent for a moment while he tried to digest everything until another thought came to

him. "Amadeaha, you said that what you had to say would affect Derel and Nathaniel. You haven't told us everything have you?"

Amadeaha nervously licked her lips and studied her hands. "One of the first orders from Michael I received was to always be on the lookout for any information about Belora."

That really didn't surprise Cam. Belora was Nathaniel's mate and she'd been captured years ago. The last time any of them saw her was when Cam was in Hell. It was a touchy subject, too, because Cam had been out of his mind and attacked her before he realized who she was and was able to control his demon side. Ever since then, the entire family had been looking for her. "What did you find out?" There was almost nothing that he wouldn't do to get Belora back for his brother.

Amadeaha continued to look at her hands. They were clenched so tightly together, her knuckles where white. All the anger Cam felt at her evaporated at the sight of her looking so lost and helpless. He reached out and covered them with his own hand before reassuring her, "You can tell me anything."

"When I started asking around about slave traders, her name came up," Amadeaha spoke so low he could barely hear her.

"As a slave?"

"No, supposedly she is the biggest slave dealer out there."

Cam shook his head in denial, even as he looked over at Michael. The Chief seemed just as stunned as he was.

Michael shifted forward and fixed Amadeaha with a concerned look. "You must be mistaken," the Chief said gently. "Belora's been a captive in Hell for years. There's no way she could be free and us not know about it."

Amadeaha bit her bottom lip. "I'm certain of it, Michael. According to my informant, she's been free for nearly five years."

Cam's mind reeled at this revelation. That would mean she was released right around the time he was in Hell himself. How could that be possible? And how was he going to tell all this to Nathaniel? It was going to destroy his brother. He'd never stopped loving Belora. "Angels mate for life," he said out loud. "Once they are mated the bond between them is so strong that it's impossible to live without the each other. That's why Nathaniel's been so lost all this time. How is it she could abandon him like that? It should have been physically impossible for her."

Michael ran his hand through his hair. "Unless she went rogue or worse, demon. That breaks any angel vows or bonds."

Cam rubbed two fingers over the bridge of his

nose. "How am I going to tell Nathaniel his mate is a slave dealer and a demon?"

"We do it together," Michael said. "It's not going to be easy, but he has the right to know the truth."

"Crap, this really sucks."

Amadeaha gave Cam a watery smile. "I'm so sorry I had to tell you all this."

Cam gave a little nod before he glanced over at Michael. "We have to tell Raphael about all this. As the leader of the healers he needs to know they are being sold as slaves."

Michael sighed. "We will, but not until after we talk to Nathaniel. Family always comes first, you taught me that."

They got up to leave. Before they could, Amadeaha reached out and grabbed Cam's hand. "I'm sorry, I really did want to tell you sooner."

Cam averted his gaze, still too hurt to go there yet. "I thought you trusted me."

"I do, I was just following orders. I promise, no more secrets, ever."

He slipped from her grasp and followed his uncle out.

* * * *

As soon as they were gone, Amadeaha threw herself down on the couch and let the wave of self-

pity and depression wash over her. She knew the news would break Cam's heart and she hated to be the one that gave it to him. To make matters worse, it was obvious she hurt him by not telling him sooner.

She couldn't count the times in the past few days she almost broke down and told him, but she always held back. At first it was because she vowed to Michael when she became a spy that all of her information would be relayed to him and him alone. But after awhile she realized that wasn't the only reason she'd not told Cam the truth about his brother's mate. It was because she knew the information would hurt Cam and she was too chicken to do it. In the end, it backfired on her because it was obvious it upset Cam even more she kept something from him.

There was a soft knock on the door and a female poked her head in. Without waiting for an invitation, she came into the room. Her raven locks were loose and they hung around her shoulders in a curly mass. She had dark, piercing blue eyes and she was as tiny as a flea and as thin as a minute.

"Hi, I'm, Rachael," she said brightly as she all but glided over to the couch.

Amadeaha instantly recognized the name. She was the member of the Order that controlled the air. Able to call forth lightning just by raising her

hand, Ray could cause a shift in the weather simply by willing it. She was also a very ferocious and skilled warrior. Something you would never have guessed by looking at her in her skintight leather pants and belly baring black shirt.

Another female followed her in. She had dark hair, too, but hers was streaked with deep red highlights. She was even smaller than Rachael and she moved just as lightly, like she'd never trip over a coffee table, trample an archangel or stumble during a battle. All of the sudden, Amadeaha felt like Godzilla.

The new female smiled at her. "I'm Cliona."

Of course, the fairy. In her moment of despair, gloom and feeling like a moose, the fates had deemed it necessary to send a fairy. The two females stood on either side of the couch and studied Amadeaha like she was an exhibit on display.

Rachael tilted her head to the side. "I can see why he's been watching you all these years. You're very beautiful."

Amadeaha snorted a very elegant snort.

"He didn't mark you yet did he?" Cliona asked. "If not, I would greatly appreciate if you held out until tomorrow night."

Amadeaha looked over at Rachael to see if she and the fairy were laughing at an inside joke. Nope, she seemed just as interested in the answer.

Amadeaha wearily asked, "Why would you care when we did the deed?"

"I took that time slot is why." The fairy tossed her hair over her shoulder. "The pots almost five thousand now."

A slow realization dawned on Amadeaha. No, surely they wouldn't have. They were a crazy bunch, but not that crazy. "Are you guys betting on when Cam and I will have sex?"

They both nodded, neither one having the good graces to look ashamed. "Who all bet on us?" she asked, outraged.

"Everybody." Cliona shrugged. "The brothers, Ana, Appolion, Dina..."

She continued to recite off a litany of names, but Amadeaha's brain had stopped at the mention of her cousin's name. That little Goth punk had actually bet on her sex life. She was so going to beat him with his own combat boots. She interrupted the fairy, "Is that why you stopped by? To see who won the Amadeaha-and-Cam-screw bet?"

Rachael giggled at her comment. "We're on the way to cafeteria for a cup of coffee and we wanted to see if you wanted to join us."

"I don't think that would be such a good idea."

Rachael put a hand on her hip. "Why not? Ana and Dina both told me you haven't stepped foot out of your quarters since you got here. You keep

this up and everybody's going to think Cam is keeping you locked up."

"If you think it's because people will be staring at you and whispering, you can stop worrying," Cliona added. "You'll be with a fairy..."

"...and an angel who was raised in Hell." Rachael pointed to herself.

"So," Cliona finished. "They'll be talking about all three of us."

Amadeaha laughed, suddenly put at ease. God help her, she even found herself beginning to like the two crazies. She stood up and squared her shoulders. "Fine, I love coffee and I have no clue as to how to make it so I'm game." As they started for the door, she asked, "By the way, who bet on us doing it today?"

Rachael thought for a second. "Ana, why?"

"Because as of a half hour ago, she won."

Chapter Eight

Derel slowly came awake, as something cold on his face brought him back to this world. He opened his eyes to find everything a hazy mess. Only after blinking several times was he able to bring everything back into focus. The first thing he saw was Heather.

He had been moved to the bed and she was wiping his forehead with a damp cloth. Her eyes were red like she had been crying and her face was pale. Her teeth were working her bottom lip, a habit that she displayed whenever she was nervous or scared. He knew this from all the minutes of stealth staring he participated in. He reached up and tucked a stray piece of her dark hair behind her ear. Then he remembered he was angry with her and he abruptly brought down his hand.

She smiled at him and her entire face lit up. "You're finally awake. I was really beginning to get worried about you."

"How long was I out?" He sat up and tried hard not to notice she was mere inches from him. He could even feel her hot breath on his neck each time she exhaled.

"A couple of days. At least I think it was a couple of days, it's kind of hard to keep track of time locked up in here." Heather reached over and grabbed a glass of orange juice from a tray. "Here, you need to drink this."

He took the glass and tried to digest what she had just told him. Derel couldn't believe he'd been unconscious for two days. The last thing he remembered was falling to the floor. Yet, he was now in the bed and someone had obviously been taking care of him. *She* had been taking care of him.

Heather reached up to touch him, but he pulled back. A hurt look flitted across her face and he did his best not to let it get to him. After a few moments of silence, her expression changed until her own anger was evident.

"So all those things you said to me when I was overloading were a lie?" she snapped.

"Yes, I was just doing it to get you to come out of it," he fibbed.

She stared hard at him for several minutes before she shook her head. "You know what? I think that everything that you said was the truth. You're lying now."

"Come again?"

"Whenever you lie, you shift your eyes down," she accused. "I know that because I've watched you almost as much as you pretended you weren't watching me."

He shrugged and tried his best to look bored and unaffected by her dead on observations. "Whatever."

She stuck her nose up. "Right back at ya, bud."

Unable to help himself, he blurted, "What do you think of my brother Cam?"

She seemed surprised by the sudden turn in the conversation. "He's a really good leader and a nice guy. Why?"

"I was just wondering why some female that has been running around for years acting like she liked one brother, let another brother suck on her neck." He had meant the words to come out flippant, but the anger came through.

Heather gasped and put her hand to her neck. "How did you know about that?"

"Does it really matter?" He got out of the bed and leaned up against the wall, putting some distance between the two of them. "Don't worry, I'll put a good word in for you."

She dropped her hand and her brow crinkled in a confused way. "What in the hell are you talking about?"

"I'll make sure that I say some nice things about

you to Cam. I know that's the only reason you acted like you were interested in me, so you could get closer to him. You're not the first female to play that game."

She screwed up her face like she tasted something sour. "You are such an idiot. Why can't you believe I would like you?"

He crossed his arms over his chest and gave her a teenage like *teesh*. "Because I know females like you. You only go for the big, bad, strong, archangel type. They never would even dream of being seen with a healer like me."

She *teeshed* him back. "You sound just like your brother, Bear."

Derel didn't even try to hide his confusion. "I need to rewind this conversation in my head because I don't remember saying *dude* or *freaking* even once."

"That's not what I meant, you dork. I was referring to the fact both of you morons think all females want archangels."

"That has always been my experience," he drawled.

With a growl, she threw the washcloth at him. It hit his chest, leaving behind a wet spot. "Do you want to know why I let your brother bite me?"

"Please, I'm just dying to know."

"Because of you. A couple of months ago, he, Appolion and I were following a lead about where

you might be. It was a trap and we got ambushed by some demon assassins. We managed to get away, but not before Cam was injured. He was hurt and bleeding and all I could think about was how upset you would be if you knew your brother was suffering. Not only that, I needed him healthy so he could keep looking for your sorry ass."

He was starting to feel like a heel, but not enough of one to stop himself from asking, "So when the Bliss took you over and you made out with him, that was all for me, too?"

"He never touched me that way. As soon as I moaned out your name, he scrambled away from me so fast that you would have thought Hounds from Hell were chasing him."

"So you're trying to tell me there was nothing sexual about it?"

"Of course not, you idiot. I've never wanted to be with anyone but you. Just because you were too much of a coward to do anything about it before now, don't blame me."

Ouch, that comment was so true it stung a little. She twisted her body on the bed so her back was to him. He touched her on the shoulder and she spun around, smacked his hand really hard, then gave him her back again. He realized he had been a complete ass. "I'm sorry, Heather. I'm not thinking straight because all this crap is really starting to get to me. I've just felt so alone and

forgotten." He winced as soon as he said that because he knew it sounded like he was having a one-man pity party.

"We've all been looking for you." She turned back and he was immediately touched by the tenderness in her big brown eyes. "Brad and I got really close too."

Brad? "What are you talking about?"

She started nibbling that bottom lip again. "Brad and I went to see his sister. He thought maybe she would know something about Santar."

She stopped talking and her face got deathly pale, if that was possible for an immortal. When she started shaking like leaf, he went into protective mode, and it wasn't because he was a healer. It was something deeper, almost primal. It was like Heather belonged to him and he would destroy anything or anyone that tried to harm her. He climbed onto the bed and sat down next to her.

"It's okay," he soothed as he started rubbing her upper arms. "Just go real slow and tell me what happened."

Her lips quivered and a single tear streamed down her cheek. "It was so awful. As soon as we got inside the room, a whole bunch of succubi attacked us. There were so many on Brad that I couldn't even see him. I could hear him though. He was screaming because they were biting him, again and again. They weren't nice bites like your

brother gives either. They were mean ones. I know because they got me a couple of times, too."

Ouch again. The last thing he needed was to be reminded that Cam had really nice bites, thank you very much. He decided to push that annoying thought aside for right now because he had enough to deal with by hearing about what Brad and Heather suffered.

He pulled her close to his chest and wrapped his arms around her. She melted into him, her small curves molding into his body perfectly. He savored the sweet feeling of her warmth, letting it comfort him as much as he hoped it was comforting her. "What was Brad's sister doing through all this?" he murmured into her silky hair.

"At first she just stood there, but when she realized the other demons were hurting her brother she tried to help him. They just attacked her, too."

Derel's body got cold from the inside out. "What happened next?"

She drew in a shaky breath. "After a while, Santar came in and broke it up and said that he wanted to buy both of us. The demons would only sell me though. For some reason, they refused to give Brad up. Even though Santar offered them a lot of money for him. They were dragging him away when I left and he wasn't moving."

Derel's heart sank. His friend had been

captured and all because he had been trying to help. He turned his face away so Heather wouldn't see the anger on it. Anger at the demons who had captured them, Brad for being an idiot and going to his sister, to his own brothers, for not coming to get him themselves.

Heather grabbed him by the chin and forced him back around. "You can't hide your emotions from me, Derel. You forget, I'm an empath, I can feel your anger and sadness. Talk to me."

He shocked himself by admitting, "This never would have happened to any of my other brothers. They never would have been captured like I was and made into a slave. Even if they had been, they would have found a way to escape by themselves by now. Santar is right, I am useless."

"How can you say that about yourself? You're the best healer in all of Heaven and Earth."

"No, I'm not."

"Derel, I know it was you and not Bear that brought Dina back. You want to know how I know? Bear told me so. There isn't another healer that could do that, not even Raphael himself."

Derel scoffed. "A whole hell of a lot good it's done me. I can't even free myself and now you're stuck, too, all because you tried to help me."

She wrapped her arms around his waist again and snuggled into his chest. "I can think of worse places to be stuck."

He took a deep breath. "I did mean all those things I said to you earlier."

"I know."

"And I do plan on making you mine."

"I know."

"And I'm going to kick Cam's ass for biting you."

She let out a sigh. "I know that, too."

He ran his hand up her back and was pleased to notice she trembled at his touch. "I want to wait until we get home."

"To beat up Cam?"

"No, to mate with you, I won't do it while we're wearing these." He pointed to his slave collar.

The intimate moment was interrupted when the door opened loudly. They both jumped to their feet and Derel shoved Heather behind him before turning to face whoever it was. He had learned quickly as a slave that unexpected visitors were never a good thing.

It was a female archangel and she was flanked by two male guards. What struck Derel first about her was the fact she had to be the meanest thing he ever saw, angel or demon. Her brown hair was pulled into a braid so tight not a single strand dared to stray. The female's muscular body was clothed in snug fitting leather, complete with combat boots. She had a sword strapped to her back and daggers hung at each hip. Even from

across the room, Derel's heightened healer senses told him she used her weapons often to hurt others because the stench of both blood and despair clung to the steel. Her dark eyes flashed with anger and her red lips were pressed tightly together. In short, she was one hardass bitch.

"Well, isn't this just cozy?" she sneered, her upper lip curling.

Lash came in after her, a worried look on his face. "Mistress, you know what Santar said. He doesn't want Lehor's son to be harmed in any way."

The female let out a dissatisfied hiss. "Santar is a fool. Don't worry, I have no plans to hurt his precious toy, just yet. I want to show him something."

She grabbed Derel by his collar and jerked him forward. Damn, she was strong. Tears came to his eyes and he saw stars as his air supply was briefly cut off. He shook it off and followed her lead. The last thing he was going to do was give this bitch the satisfaction of seeing him struggle.

Heather let out an angry hiss. "You fugly wench. Don't you dare hurt him."

The female gave Heather a dark look. "Watch it, you little gnat or else I will turn you over to the guards for their pleasure."

Derel growled, "Leave her out of this."

The female gave a mock pout. "Wookie, Lash,

they is in wuve."

Lash didn't laugh at her joke, he just kept darting nervous looks in Derel's direction. The female gave an aggravated sigh and tugged on Derel's collar again. Derel reacted on instinct and grabbed at her wrist to stop himself from choking. As soon as he touched her, several psychic pictures flashed through his mind. First, he saw the female in angel warrior school, then he saw her fighting demons as an archangel, then he saw her in Hell in chains.

It was Belora, Nathaniel's mate.

They locked eyes and, in that instance he knew she knew he knew. He also knew he was in a deep pile of shit because he knew.

"So you know," she said.

"Yep, I know."

What he didn't know was what the hell she was doing here and how she became a slave dealer. He wondered how long she'd been like this. Had she always been a bitch and Nathaniel just missed it, or was this a new side of her?

Belora dragged him out of the room, slamming the door shut behind them. Heather started pounding on the other side with what sounded like both her fists and feet. Belora gave it a kick of her own as a warning to Heather, but the female empath didn't heed it.

Heather yelled, "You hurt him in any way and I

will kick your ass myself."

Derel had no doubt that she would try to do just that. She may look like a little fluff, but he had seen her in battles. She could hold her own any day of the week. In fact, she was a damn scrappy fighter. That was one of the things that first drew him to her.

"Let's just get this over with," Derel drawled out in a bored tone to Belora, wanting to put as much distance between her and Heather as possible.

Belora led him to the infirmary. At first, Derel just assumed she wanted him to heal another angel who had been hurt in the gladiator ring. Instead, she stopped in front of a rogue angel and gave him an accusing look. Derel scanned the injured angel and found he was suffering from a huge burn in the center of his stomach. Only one thing could cause a wound like that.

Cam.

Derel smiled to himself. His brothers were looking for him and it looked like they were kicking the asses of anyone that came in their way. They hadn't forgotten him. For the first time in weeks, Derel felt hope.

"He's not going to find you," Belora hissed. "He can destroy all of my soldiers and he still won't find you."

"Then why did you bother to show me this?"

he asked.

"Because I wanted you to see for yourself what a monster Cam is. He completely destroyed one of my training centers."

"You know what I think?" Derel said mildly.

"What?"

"I think Nathaniel has crappy taste in females."

She growled in anger before backhanding him, splitting open his lip and sending him to the ground. Damn, she had a mean punch, stronger than even Nathaniel. She followed up with two quick kicks, one to his side, the other to his gut. There was a muffled snap made by his ribs breaking right before the wind left his body. He decided then he really didn't care for his brother's mate.

Knowing he was more vulnerable on the ground, Derel struggled to his knees. "So tell me, do you still have the Lehor Tiger on you or has it faded since you turned your back on Nathaniel and Michael?"

She grabbed the metal loop of his collar again and jerked his face up. As soon as he looked into her deranged eyes, he knew the answer to that one. "You're turning demon, aren't you?"

"I'm becoming more powerful," she argued.

"How could you do this to Nathaniel? I thought you loved him."

She clucked her tongue. "I never had any real

feelings for him. My father was planning on marrying me off to some weak angel civilian and I knew the only way to get out of it was to mate with another male. I was just using Nathaniel."

Disgust left a bitter taste in his mouth. "He's been mourning you all these years."

She gave him the fake pout again. "How pathetic. I never gave him a second thought."

"But he had letters from you. Ones you supposedly wrote while you were in Hell." Derel still couldn't wrap his mind around this whole fucking mess. He never heard of an angel not wanting to be with their mate before. It went completely against their nature.

"Oh, I wrote all those," she snickered. "With the price he paid for them, how could I resist?"

Derel thought about how Nathaniel had been a shell of himself for five years, the haunted look that often passed over his face. Each day he had been away from his mate, Derel had watched Nathaniel die inside more and more. And for what? A psychotic loser with Daddy issues. "You fucking bitch."

She gave a low animalistic roar before she started kicking him again. Since he knew fighting back would mean a death sentence not only for him, but Heather as well, he took it. Derel wrapped up in a tight ball and waited for it to be over. It wasn't the first beating he'd taken as a

slave, he just hoped it would be the last.

"Belora, what the hell are you doing?"

Derel recognized Santar's voice. He never thought he would be relieved to see the slave master, but he was. Santar pulled Belora off of Derel and threw her to the side. She quickly rolled to her feet and cursed out loud.

"We need to destroy him, Santar," she shrieked. "He knows who I am."

Santar gave her a filthy look. "The only reason he knows about you is because you chose to seek him out. I told you to keep away from him and you deliberately disobeyed me."

She grabbed one of the daggers at her hip, but didn't draw it. "Since when do I answer to you? We're equal partners in this venture."

Santar pointed to Derel. "This one belongs to me and I won't have your temper ruining my plans for him."

"You're a fool if you think you can control any of the Lehors. The only thing that you will accomplish is bringing the wrath of the Empath King on all of us even more."

"Oh please," Santar scoffed. "You really need to stop with the melodramatic statements. Derel here is going to do exactly what I want now."

Belora gave him a dubious look. "Why?"

"Because now I have his little female empath and he knows I'll punish her for any of his

disobedience."

"So that's why you are letting him keep her in his room?"

Santar's mouth curled into a lazy smile. "One of the reasons."

Belora raised a dark brow in confusion. "What's the other?"

Derel's blood ran cold because he had already realized the other reason. Judging by the way Lash cursed under his breath, the guard realized it, too. Derel hadn't thought that his situation could have gotten any worse, but it had big time.

Santar locked gazes with Derel as he answered, "Derel here is going to give me a child. Then I will have two slaves with the Lehor blood running through their veins."

Derel couldn't hold back any longer. "If you think I'm going to mate with Heather just so we can become your own personal baby factory, you're crazy."

"If you don't mate with her, then I'll take her away and sell her to the worst slave master I can find," Santar promised. "Or better yet, I'll throw her in the gladiator ring. How long do you think an empath like her would last against demon assassins?"

Derel looked down at his hands, defeated. He had no doubt Santar would do just that. Derel closed his eyes as he silently prayed for Heather's

forgiveness for getting her in this mess.

His silence seemed to please Santar. The slave master crooked his finger at Lash to beckon him closer. "Take him back to his room."

Lash grabbed Derel under his arms and Odan ran over to help. They half carried and half dragged Derel back to his room. The angel tried to help them out by walking some on his own, but the pain was too bad to do much except moan and bleed. As soon as the door opened, Heather was on them like white on rice.

"What did you do to him?" she yelled.

"It wasn't us." Lash cast an annoyed look at her.

They put him on the bed and Heather was instantly beside him, brushing her fingers through his blood-matted hair. Derel drank in the comfort she offered. It had been a long time since someone had given a damn about his owies.

"Well, someone hurt him," she snapped at Lash. "Was it that skank?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to a little more specific," Lash retorted sarcastically. "Last time I counted we had at least six skanks living at this compound."

The elf let out a tired sounding sigh before he interrupted conversation, "Now do you see what I was trying to tell you? We both know Belora is going to destroy this healer the first chance she

gets. There is no way we can sit by and let that happen to one of Michael's descendents."

Lash was less diplomatic. "Look, Derel, how much cash do you think your brothers would be willing to pay if I got you back to them?"

When Derel balked in answering, Heather spoke up, "I know his family, they'll pay anything to get him back."

"I'm not promising anything, but I might be willing to help out."

Odan cut in, "We will help you, kin of Michael."

Heather got a dangerous glint in her eye. "His name is, Derel. I'm sick of everyone referring to him as *Cam's brother* or *Michael's nephew* all the time. The next one that does it answers to me."

Odan smiled. "Fine we will help you, Derel, and your annoying female, too."

Lash threw up his hands. "I didn't say that I could do anything for sure. We might not even be able to do squat. Santar has this room under strong guard at all times. Not to mention the fact I don't know if whatever reward we get for him will be worth my troubles."

Heather gave him a disgusted look. "How about you do it because you have a sense of decency?"

For some reason, that comment really struck a nerve with the rogue. He curled his lip and

stormed out of the room, but not before tossing over his shoulder, "Just consider yourself lucky that I do have a sense of decency, female, or else I would have already turned him over to the justice angels or demons for the bounty on his head."

"What a jerk," Heather fumed after he left.

Derel could have thought of a least a dozen better names to call the rogue, but he decided it would be rude to use vulgar language. He shifted and grimaced, Heather noticed his discomfort and she rubbed him on the back. He shut his eyes and tried to focus on her touch instead of the pain shooting through his ribs and back.

"He needs a healer," she told the elf.

Odan nodded before leaving. Heather stopped running her hands over Derel so he opened his eyes to see why. She was gazing down at him, her face a mixture of concern, sadness and desire. At least he hoped it was desire because suddenly, hurt or not, he was sure feeling that way toward her.

Before he lost his courage, he cupped the back of her head and brought her down toward him. He meant it to be a sweet, gentle kiss, but as soon as he tasted her lips, he was a goner. *I really should have gotten her under the damn mistletoe at that party. This is even better than I ever imagined.*

She had changed into a pair of sweatpants and tee shirt and he could feel her small, but perfect,

breasts pressing against his chest through the thin fabric. She shifted to lie on top of him and he wrapped his arms around her slender body to bring her closer. Derel clenched in pain as soon as her weight settled on him. He let out a groan and tried to disguise it as a moan of pleasure, but Heather caught on right away.

She jerked up and started poking at his side. "She broke your ribs, didn't she?"

Derel jumped because she was hurting him even more with prodding. He grabbed her fingers and gently held them. "I'm fine, it's just a scratch. Come back here, I want more."

Odan chose that moment to come back and dragged a male behind him. As soon as Derel got a good gander at his supposed healer, he let out a low curse. The healer was young, a teen in angel years. Derel noticed right away this kid was no normal angel though. His short raven hair did nothing to hide a set of pointed ears and the kid's eyes were a deep green and slightly tilted up at the corners. He had on a slave collar, a pair of baggy jeans and a red shirt.

"What is he?" Heather whispered to Derel.

"He's a frigging elf," Derel spoke louder, not caring if they were overheard.

"He's half elf," Odan clarified. "His father was an angel."

"Of course, how stupid of me not to know that

right off the bat," Heather muttered.

Odan dismissed her with a bored look and turned to address the kid, "You must heal this angel at all costs, he is the kin of Michael."

When the healer gave a so-what shrug, Heather giggled. Odan looked like he was at his wits end. Derel was just in complete awe. He had no idea elves and angels could mate. As a healer, he couldn't help but be intrigued.

"I keep forgetting that you know nothing of our people's ways." Odan made it sound like the healer had committed some horrible taboo.

"You can't expect him to heal anybody. He's just a kid." Heather gave the healer a smile. "No offense."

Odan threw up his hands. "He's all you got right now. The other healers are too busy with the wounded." He gave the teen a reassuring pat before he walked out of the room, shutting the door behind him.

After the elf left, there was a heavy silence. Heather and Derel looked at the kid and waited for him to say something. The kid looked down at the ground and kept his mouth shut.

"What's your name?" Derel finally asked, trying to break the ice.

The youth mumbled something that might have been, "Jordy."

"What was your father's name?"

"Dad."

It appeared someone had taught this kid not to reveal too much about himself. This situation just kept getting more and more interesting. Derel decided to let him off the hook for now. Jordy shuffled forward a couple of feet and held up his hands before he stopped and let out a breath.

Derel exchanged knowing looks with Heather before asking, "Have you every healed anyone before?"

Jordy blushed and shuffled his feet. "No, I've never even been shown how to do it. All I do know is the angel part of me is a healer. I'm sorry."

"That's okay, I'll show you what to do. You can consider me your first homework assignment."

Jordy nibbled on his thumbnail nervously. Derel's brother, Bear did that, too, and it made him miss his family even more at that moment. Jordy took one timid step forward before he shook his head and retreated back to the wall. "I might mess up and hurt you even more."

"It'll be fine, I promise," Derel urged.

Jordy finally made his way across the room. After several minutes of instruction, the young healer got a handle on it and Derel's injuries were taken care of. It wasn't the best healing job Derel had ever seen, but it would do for now.

Jordy looked down at his hands, a happy look

on his face. "Cool beans, maybe now I won't be stuck on cleanup duty anymore."

Derel sat up. "I've been here for a while, how come I haven't seen you before?"

"Santar doesn't like me be around angels. So they make me work in areas that are empty. I guess I shouldn't complain too much. That female, Belora, wanted to toss me in the ring ever since my first day here. She wants to see how an elf would do against some demons."

"Yeah, the whole reason you had to heal me was because Belora introduced herself to me."

"The real kicker is I might do okay in a battle, but it would be because of my dad. He's an archangel and, while he couldn't teach me to heal, he did teach me how to fight."

"Where are your parents?" Heather quizzed in a gentle voice.

"My mom died years ago. They separated my dad and I when they captured us and I haven't seen or heard from him since." Jordy got a fierce look in his eyes. "He's alive though, I know it."

The kid went to the door and tried to open it, but it was locked. Jordy sighed before he sat down on the ground, his back against the wall. He started to nibble on his thumbnail again before he seemed to catch himself. He jerked his hand down and gave them a timid smile, like he was afraid they would be offended by his presence.

"Looks like you angels are stuck with me. Why don't you tell me what Heaven is like? As you can probably guess, I've never been there before."

Derel's family was notorious for taking in strays and, despite the situation he was in, he couldn't help but feel protective of the kid. He almost groaned out loud when he realized he didn't just have to get himself and Heather out of this mess, now he had to get Jordy out, too. Because there was no way he was going to leave this poor kid behind. "I'll tell you what," Derel replied. "I'll do even better than just tell you about Heaven. When this war is over, I'll take you there myself."

Jordy started to smile before he stopped and shook his head. "Belora and Santar told me the angels would never accept me because I'm mixed."

Heather let out an outraged gasp. "They're liars. Everyone is going to love you."

Jordy looked doubtful. "How do you know that?"

She stuck her nose up in the air. "Because Derel will beat up anyone who says one mean thing to you."

Jordy still didn't appear convinced, but he listened politely as Heather plunged into a complete run down of all the angel gossip she knew. Even though there was no way the poor kid

could follow most of what she was saying, since he didn't know any of the angels she was talking about, he still nodded his head in all the right places.

Derel wasn't listening because he was too busy trying to fight off a girlie panic attack. How in the hell was he going to get all three of them out when he hadn't been able to help just himself? Shit, fuck, damn. He was in deep and Heather and Jordy were counting on him.

Chapter Nine

Six weeks later

“**H**ere, Amadeaha, try this,” Ray said as she handed her a coiled whip.

Amadeaha took the weapon and felt the same thing she felt when she held the last dozen weapons, nothing except her inept warrior experience. Rachael told her that all empathes specialized in one weapon and that they all knew the instant they held that weapon for the first time it was the one for them. But except for a few clumsy mishandles, nothing special happened since they started.

Ray sighed in frustration before handing her a set of small swords. “You would have to be high maintenance.” She softened the comment with a sly grin, just to show Amadeaha she was kidding. “Maybe these will work. They’re called sai, Ana uses them. Here you wrap your hands around the hilt, like this.”

But Ray didn't have to go on with the instructions because Amadeaha's hands already knew what to do. The weapons fit into her palms like they were an extension of her body. She felt so at ease with the weapons, it was as if she had been born with them in her palms.

Just on a lark, she swung them around. They whistled through the air and the light caught the edge of one of the blades. For the first time in her life, Amadeaha didn't feel weak and helpless. She felt like she could take on any demon that was thrown at her. She couldn't hold back the satisfied smile. Damn she felt like the angel warrior Cam insisted she was.

"Wow," Cliona breathed. "Wait until Cam sees you with those. He's going to be shocked out of his combat boots."

"Especially since he has no clue I've doing all this extra training," Amadeaha replied, still spinning the blades around. She had wanted to surprise him with some newfound skills when he got back so she asked Ray to help her. Delighted, the other female angel spent hours in the gym with Amadeaha ever since. Cliona always joined them. It was to a point where the three of them spent almost all their free time together.

She hardly saw Cam at all during the day. She was finding out quickly that he was right about his job having crappy hours. Although he made

sure to come home every night. She felt a jolt of excitement dance through her body as she thought of all the wonderful sex he introduced her to. Some of the times, he would feed off her, but there were just as many times when he didn't.

She swung her weapons again and almost took Bear's head off as he walked into her line of fire. He ducked down and covered the top of his head with his hands. Amadeaha exchanged *oopsie* looks with Ray before all three of the females started giggling.

"I surrender," Bear quipped as he stood up. "I see you've found your weapon."

Amadeaha nodded her head. "Sorry about almost decapitating you."

Bear just shrugged it off. "I was going to go do some work at Cam's office and thought I'd see if you wanted to come."

Ray smiled at Bear. "You're always helping Cam out, it's like you're Aaron to Cam's Moses."

Bear blushed a bit. "I just pick up some loose ends for him is all."

"You do a lot more than that and you know it."

"Ever since this war started the slave traders have gone into overtime," Bear explained. "Even before Derel was captured, Michael, Cam and Raphael spent most of their free time locating compounds and freeing the slaves there. That's in addition to the regular angel warrior duty of

protecting humans. Cam just needs a hand sometimes with the little things. Ana helps, too."

Amadeaha and Bear left the gym and he led her to a large room that was serving as an office. Several desks were scattered around with computers on them. The empath's manning them hardly glanced up at Bear, although a few did nod their heads respectively at Amadeaha. Bear stopped at one of the desks and sat down before pulling a chair over for her.

"This is how Cam keeps track of all of his empath's. He had me compile a detailed list of all the ones here at the compound and the ones out on assignments."

Amadeaha was a little surprised Bear was showing her all this. Sure, she was Cam's mate, but she was also related to Jehel and had only recently come into their fold. Bear shot her a knowing look.

"I scanned your mind that day in the restaurant." He gave her a half smile. "I know you would never betray Cam."

She crossed her arms and fixed the little punk with a glare. "That's why you showed up that day, isn't it? To check up on me."

He shrugged and didn't seemed bothered by her ire. "Ana and Cam didn't know anything about it. Ramiel was worried about Cam getting hurt. In case you don't know, Cam hasn't had the

best taste in females in the past.”

A short bushy haired male came over. He gave Amadeaha a small bow before he addressed Bear, “We have a problem.”

“What’s new, Hagial?” Bear drawled. “You always have a problem.”

Hagial let out a frustrated sounded sigh. “When is the Lordship coming back?”

“Oh you know Cammie, all work and no play. Your guess is as good as mine. You should know that, you’ve been his assistant for years now.” Bear flashed a devilish grin at the harried empath. “So, you going to have to tell me what has you operating at a sphincter factor of eight?”

“We’ve lost contact with the team from Lansing.”

Bear’s smile instantly disappeared. “I’ll be right back, Amadeaha. Cam’s desk is over there. Why don’t you go through his mail while I’m gone?”

Amadeaha went over and sat down in the office chair. She inhaled deeply and could detect Cam’s scent. Which made her miss him all over again. She thought of some of the things the two of them did last night and her cheeks got a little warm. She couldn’t hold back the small smile that played at her lips.

She started sorting through his massive pile of mail. The love letters from the females went right into the garbage. The hate letters followed. Even

after that, the collection was still huge. After a half hour, Bear came back and pulled up a chair. "Is the team okay?" she asked.

"Yeah, they were out patrolling and got into it with some demon assassins. As soon as they managed to get out of that sticky situation, they contacted us."

He started helping her sort through the mess. "Haven't these empaths ever heard of email?" he grouched.

"Do you work this hard all the time?"

Bear ducked his head. "It's no big deal really. It's the least I can do for Cam. He's always on the go for us empaths."

"He's lucky to have you."

"No, Amadeaha, we're lucky to have him."

Amadeaha was amazed by Bear. He was so sweet and so giving. He was so dedicated and hardworking. He was...pulling a pair of edible panties from the center of the mail pile. He slipped them into his pocket and seemed to notice her shocked face for the first time.

"Oh, you didn't want to keep those for yourself, did you?" he asked.

Amadeaha held up a hand. "No, take them, they're all yours." As she eyed the empath, she wondered if Cam's siblings realized who the true sex fiend in the family was.

* * * *

Cam walked through the smoldering remains of yet another slave compound. Bits of broken glass crunched under his combat boots and the smell of burning wood and flesh stung his nostrils. The smoke burned his eyes and made it hard to see clearly. Not that he wanted to anyway. He had seen enough carnage in the past five years to last the rest of his immortal life.

Appolion came and stood next to him. The archangel said nothing, but he didn't have to. Appolion just lent support by his mere presence. Cam knew Appolion was hurting for their whole family. Not only was he Ana's mate, but he was one of the closest friends Cam had. In the words of Tif, *They were bestest friends.*

"How many slaves were we able to rescue?" Cam finally asked.

Appolion ran his hand through his dark hair as his sharp blue eyes scanned the damage. "A couple dozen. The guards left most of them behind when they evacuated. No sign of Heather, Brad or Derel though."

"How about her?"

"If you mean Belora, then there was no sign of her either."

That didn't surprise Cam, the female was good at hiding. She'd been doing it rather successfully

for years. He looked over the compound at Nathaniel. God, all this shit was killing his brother. When Cam and Michael had sat him down to tell him about Belora, Nathaniel hadn't said a damn word. He had just gotten up and left the room. He hadn't talked about it to anyone, not even Ana. The archangel had just withdrawn from the family.

"Ana's worried about Nathaniel," Appolion said.

"We all are." Cam gestured to the ruins. "He's the one that did most of this damage, not me."

"I don't blame him. I'd be devastated if Ana ever left me."

Cam thought about how he would feel if Amadeaha ever took off on him and suddenly felt a bit weak. Crap, she'd only been his for a short time, but he would be lost without her. The mere fact she had that much power over him left Cam feeling open and exposed.

"You've got to let down your guard sometime," Appolion said, reading Cam's mind.

"It's hard to trust anyone that's not family," Cam admitted.

"She's part of your family now. Ana taught me that. Amadeaha's sacrificed everything for you. She was denounced by her father, beaten and jailed all because she was trying to help your cause. I say that proves her worth right there."

Cam let himself smile a bit. Appolion did have a point there. "She is one of us. You should have seen her trying to fight a demon. She didn't have a clue as to how to do it, but that didn't stop her from jumping in and trying." Cam's cell started to ring. He flipped it open. "Yes?"

All he heard at first was some breathing, then a male voice asked, "Is this the Empath King?"

"If you mean is this Cam, then yes." He hated that nickname since most of the time it was used it was with disdain.

"I think we might be able to help each other out."

"Look," Cam snapped. "I'm a little busy right now and don't have time for games. So spit out what you want or I'm going to hang up on your ass."

"I know where your brother Derel is. My name is Lash and I work for Santar."

That comment got Cam's attention. He motioned with his hand and all of the Lehor brothers came over and stood around him. He was gripping the phone so tight, the edges bit into his skin. "What do you want?" he asked the caller.

"If I help you, I'm going to be out of a job and a home. I'm going to need to be compensated for that."

"Fine, if your information is good, I'll pay you whatever you want."

"I wouldn't even be calling you at all if it wasn't

for that nagging elf. I don't want any part of the angel warriors or the justice angels. I have no use for any of you."

Cam decided that Lash was certifiable. "How do I know that you're not bullshitting me?"

There was a pause and then Derel's voice came on. "Cam, is this really you?"

"Holy crap, Derel, where the hell are you?" As soon as Cam said Derel's name, all the brothers let out a collective breath.

"I don't know where exactly I'm at. They've moved me so much that I lost my bearings."

"We're going to get you back and those bastards are going to pay for ever touching you," Cam promised.

"They have Heather here, too."

"What about Brad? Have you seen him?"

"No, Heather said the succubi wouldn't sell him. So he must still be with them."

"This Lash, can we trust him?" Cam asked.

"I dunno, I guess. I would never buy a used car from him, but he seems to be pretty sincere about this. He could get in a lot of trouble if they found out about this phone call so he's already stuck his neck out."

"Fine, if we have to use him to get you back, so be it."

"I don't think that's going to be so easy, Cammie," Derel said dully. "Santar knows who I

am and he wants to keep me because of it. He has me in a separate room and under full guard at all time. He treats me like I'm his prized pet dog."

"What about Heather? Where are they keeping her?"

"She's in my room. Santar wants me to mate with her and make him a bundle of Lehor babies," Derel replied.

Cam wasn't sure that he heard that last one right. "Come again?"

"Santar is insisting I mate with Heather. He wants us to be breeders for him. I told you, he's treating me like a dog."

"That son of a bitch," Cam growled. "What does Heather say about all this?"

"I kinda haven't told her yet. I was hoping it wouldn't come down to that. Not that I wouldn't like to...you know, with her. She's really cute and everything. Especially when she wears those short skirts of hers. Heather has really nice legs. Not that I was checking her out before now or anything. Well, maybe I was checking her out a little, but who could blame me, those are some hot legs."

Derel may be the quietest of the Lehor brothers, but once you got him talking, watch, out. The healer had a tendency to go off topic, too. Usually it annoyed the hell out of Cam, now it made the empath smile. It felt so damn good to hear his

brother's voice again.

"Don't worry," Cam reassured. "We're coming to get you right now."

"Lash and I were talking and we think it would be better if you waited until this weekend."

"Why?" Cam asked. "You guys got hot plans for this week?"

"No, there is a huge gladiator event planned for this weekend. We both think it would be easier to sneak you guys in while the place is already packed."

"Are you going to be all right until then?"

"I've made it this long. Santar doesn't want me hurt because then I can't heal so I'll be fine. I just need to figure out what to do about this whole Heather breeding thing."

Cam gave a half laugh. "You might want to clue her in before you jump on her and try and get the deed done."

"I guess that would make for an awkward moment, huh? Look, speaking of mates, there's something I have to tell you about Nathaniel's"

Cam cast a nervous look over at Nathaniel. "We already know about that. How did you find out?"

"She kicked the side of my head in. Belora is one serious bitch. She was going to destroy me, but Santar stopped her."

"You won't have to worry about that crap happening to you much longer. We're going to get

you home."

"I'm not leaving without Heather," Derel's voice was adamant. "I've decided she's staying with me for good. By the way, you ever fucking bite her again and I'll extract your fangs with a pair of rusty pliers."

"Duly noted there, bud." Cam didn't add since Amadeaha was now in his life, he didn't have to go to outside sources for blood anymore. Derel would find that out when he came home.

"Okay, well I got to go now before we get caught. Lash says he'll call you back."

"Derel," Cam said quickly before his brother hung up. "I need you to open your mind back up to me."

"What do you mean? I never closed it off."

"Yeah, you did. Ever since you've been taken I've been trying to reach you. I think you put the shield up to protect yourself from the slave traders, but you blocked me off at the same time. You only let your guard down once and that was a few weeks ago when you reached out to me."

There was a pause on the other end. "You heard that?"

"Yes, I did. If you allow Bear, Ana and me in, then you won't feel so alone anymore."

Cam instantly felt the mental brick wall Derel built around himself evaporate and breathed in a sigh of relief as he felt his brother's familiar

psychic touch once more. "Good job, Derel." But he was talking to empty air because someone had hung up the phone.

* * * *

As soon as Amadeaha heard Cam was back, she went to their quarters looking for him. She found him there, walking around the rooms, looking for her. He gave her a crooked smile once their eyes met and her stomach did a little girlish flip-flop. "I heard that you were back," she said. "I was hanging out with Rachael and Cliona."

He didn't say anything, just crooked his finger at her. She came instantly to him and melted into his arms. As he rubbed her back, he stopped at the Lehor Tiger peeking out from under the thin straps of her tank top. He slowly traced it with his fingers and gave her a quizzical look.

"I want everyone to know who my mate is," she answered his unspoken question. When he pointed to the exposed bite mark on her neck, she continued in a determined voice, "I want them to know that I take care of my mate, too."

"And where exactly have you been showing off your love wounds?"

"I've been hanging out with Bear, Cliona and Ray." She tucked a piece of her stray hair behind her ear. "In fact, Ray has been teaching me to

fight.”

Cam raised a brow at her. “But I thought you already knew how to fight,” he teased lightly.

She smacked him in the chest. “You’re never going to let me live that down, are you? Maybe now I won’t give you your surprise.”

He rubbed his hands over her rump before gently nipping at her ear. “What surprise would that be?”

He acted slightly disappointed when she said, “I bought you some candy.” His disappointment was short lived when she added, “It’s somewhere on my body and you have to find it.”

Cam let out a little growl of pleasure as he gave her a hard kiss before whispering, “If you wanted to play hide-and-go-seek with your body, then I’m all game for that.”

He stripped off her top as he walked them both to the bedroom. She kicked off her own tennis shoes. Next off came the lacy black bra she had on underneath. Her nipples puckered as the cool air touched them. No candy there. That didn’t stop him from tasting that temptation though. She slapped him on the shoulder.

“That’s not the right place,” she informed him saucily.

Cam grabbed her hand and gave her wrist a little nip before he picked her up, then threw her on the bed. The empath part of Amadeaha felt his

desire spike up. Her heart pounded in response. Cam climbed up on the bed, stalking her like a cat chasing its prey. His blue eyes grew even darker than usual. He reached over, slowly unzipped her pants and peeled them off, his hands caressing her all the way down her legs. As soon as he spotted the candy necklace on her thigh as a garter, he gave her a wicked grin, showing her a flash of his fangs.

"I think this is the best gift anyone has ever given me."

The sincerity in his voice made her laugh. "You're easy to please," the words came out as a gasp because he stroked her inner thigh with his thumb.

Cam lowered his head and bit off one of the candy beads, pulling out the necklace slowly before letting it snap back into place. She let out a long slow moan as her hands shot down and tangled themselves in his hair. Then he sampled the candy again and again, his tongue tracing a lazy path up her leg before hooking the elastic strap and taking another nibble. Each movement made her breathe in deeply as shivers of desire coursed through her entire body.

"Are you using your powers to make your tongue so hot?" Amadeaha could have sworn he was leaving a path of fire on her skin.

He scraped one of his fangs against her before

he ate another bite of candy. "No, it's just me, no special tricks."

"Whatever you're doing, don't stop," the last word came out slow and drawn out because he managed to work his hand under her panties and he slid one finger inside her.

"I love the way you feel," he whispered against her flesh. "You're so hot and wet and it's all for me."

She was wearing only her underwear and he finally got rid of those so she was completely naked except for the candy necklace. Cam took one last bite before he licked his way up to her aching need. She leaned back on her elbows and watched him as he made love to her with his mouth. He looked up at her, those beautiful dark cat eyes staring right into her soul, before he shifted them back down as he got back to work.

"This tastes better than the candy," he murmured between nips and licks.

She opened her mouth to answer him, but a groan came out instead because he flicked his tongue over just the right spot. When he sucked on it gently, she closed her eyes and tilted her head back. His spiked hair tickled the inside of her thigh, bringing awake nerve endings she never knew she had.

"I don't know if I can stand anymore," she panted, even as she tugged at his shirt to pull him

closer.

That comment only made him increase the pace. He settled his large hands on both of her hips to hold her firmly in place. Finally, she felt a sweet release as she came. He didn't stop until she was completely done.

He got up on his knees and she scrambled up on hers so they faced each other. She tugged at his shirt and he lifted his arms so she could take it off. Once it was gone, Amadeaha ran her tongue up his muscular chest. Her hands slid down his hard stomach until she reached his erection. When she gently squeezed him through his jeans, he let out a hiss of pleasure. She gave his chest one last lick and added a little love bite of her own, before kissing her way up to his neck.

"We really need to get you out of these pants," she whispered in his ear.

He nodded his head like a little schoolboy trying to please somebody. Cam made quick work of stripping and got back on the bed with her. She was a little confused when he turned her around so her back was to him.

"Bend over," he commanded. His voice was hard, almost like a conqueror instead of a lover and it almost made her come again.

Amadeaha obeyed him, getting on her hands and knees. He grabbed her by the nape of her neck and pushed her down onto the mattress so her

rump was tilted up even more. Before she had time to wonder what he was doing, he plunged into her in one hard movement. She gasped as he went deeper into her than ever before. The way he positioned her made it so her body took in every inch of him. She looked over her shoulder at him. His eyes were closed and his lips slightly parted so just the tips of his fangs were visible.

He started to move in her, slowly at first, then faster as both of them felt the desire build up. Shivers of delight danced over her body as she arched her back, wanting even more of him. His sack brushed against her with each thrust and she let out small mewls of pleasure. Cam ran his hand over her back several times.

"You're back is so pure and unblemished," he marveled.

Amadeaha knew he was thinking about the succubi he had been with and the fact that they all had wings. She was insulted until he added, "You're so perfect. I can't believe that you're mine."

He grabbed her hip for leverage and thrust even harder into her. Amadeaha cried out in pleasure as he went so deep inside her that it was as if he consumed every inch of her. She balled the sheets up in her fists as another orgasm rocked through her. He moaned out her name as he came with her, his cock releasing hot jets of semen

inside her.

After it was over, Cam buried his face in the nape of her neck while they both caught their breath. Waves of pleasure continued to go through her and her heightened nerves delighted in the feeling of his cool breath brushing against her sweaty skin. He finally got off her and collapsed on his side of the bed, taking her with him.

Cam held her close to his chest while he stroked her hair. After a few minutes, his hand dropped and his breathing became even and steady. He had fallen asleep on her. Amadeaha slipped out from under his arm so she could look at him. His face was so peaceful and relaxed, and he looked so young. But then both of them were young in angel years. They had just been through too much in those years.

She thought back to the first time that she ever saw him. It was right after her brother Haniel had almost been destroyed. Amadeaha was crying over Haniel's bedside when Cam had come up and offered to help her. It had been before Cam's change and he'd been a small scrawny thing. But that hadn't mattered one whit to her because she fell in love with him right then and there.

She ran her fingers up and down his tanned arm as she thought about how much he changed in those five short years since they first met. She knew that small scrawny kid was still there

though. Cam just hid him behind the hardened warrior he now was.

"I love you, Cam. Not the archangel, or the empath leader, but you," she said softly as she leaned down to kiss his cheek.

He mumbled something in his sleep as he stirred a bit.

She grabbed the blankets, covered him up, then dressed again in her workout clothes. She took the candy necklace off and slipped it around his neck. Just as she was leaving the room, he woke up and pushed himself up on one elbow.

"Where are you going, Crazy Pie?" he asked sleepily.

"I'm supposed to be meeting Ray for another training session."

He gave her a cute, boyish smile and she noticed, not for the first time, he had one dimple that always showed up on his right cheek. "So are you guys best friends now?"

"As a matter of fact, we are. Ray was the one who came up with the whole candy necklace idea."

Cam's jaw dropped. "How would she know anything about that?"

Amadeaha laughed at his expression. "Ray reads, too. Now go back to sleep, you look beat."

"It was worth it. Did you hear that we talked to Derel?"

"Yes I did, Ana told me."

"Now we know where he's at and we can get him back."

Amadeaha sat next to him on the bed. "I never had any doubt you would, Cam."

"Now all I have to do is find Brad."

His face grew troubled again so she gave him another peck on the cheek. "If anyone can find him, it will be you."

He gave her another small smile before he drifted off to sleep again. She knew that he felt responsible for Brad's disappearance and hoped the healer was all right for Cam's sake. Because if anything happened to Brad, then Cam would never forgive himself.

Chapter Ten

Brad pushed himself up from the plush red-carpeted floor and got to his feet. The room spun a bit because he was so weak and dizzy. Wobbly as a newborn calf, he stumbled several steps before he caught himself by putting his hand on the wall. *The walls are red, too. Fancy that.* He looked around the room that had been his home for God knows how many weeks and snorted in disgust. He felt like he walked straight into a porn set. Hell, there was even a circular bed, with heavy satin sheets in the center of the room. All that was missing were the mirrors on the ceiling and the Jacuzzi in the shape of a giant champagne glass.

He tried walking again only to be brought up short once more, this time it wasn't from the weakness, it was from the gut churning pain. His body ached from all the bite marks and wounds the whippings left behind. That was on top of the scratch marks the succubi left on his back. Those demon bitches had drained him in every way

possible.

During his captivity, when they weren't beating the hell out of him, they were having sex with him. While the sex part might sound like fun at first, it soon became a torture in its own way as his body became too worn out to do more. Whenever he thought he was done for good, a succubus would bite him again. Then as soon as the Bliss hit him and he became aroused, despite himself, one of them would use his body as their own personal amusement park. He never heard of a male angel being sexed to death before, but he was pretty sure that was going to happen to him and soon.

The massive blood loss made him almost pass out and he tumbled to the ground, landing at the feet of a succubus. Brad stared at her spiked black hooker boots for several seconds before he looked up to her face. He closed his eyes and groaned when he saw that it was his sister, Ramiakle.

"Brad, are you okay?" she asked in a timid whisper.

He opened his eyes to tell her off and noticed for the first time the chain around her neck. It was heavy and securing her to the wall. Tears filled her amber eyes and her face was bruised and bloodied. Ramiakle's brown hair was messed up like someone had pulled it several times and, judging by her piss poor condition, someone had. Despite the fact she was the one that turned him

over to the demons in the first place, Brad's heart lurched at the sight of his baby sister's injuries. Demon or not, he still loved her. "What did they do to you?" he croaked. His throat was raw from screaming.

"They beat me because I tried to stop them from hurting you." She reached out a trembling hand to touch him.

"I wouldn't even be here if you hadn't of betrayed me." He pulled back from her and tried hard to ignore the look of hurt on her swollen face.

She started to cry. "I'm sorry, Brad. I was just so lonely and I missed you and Daniel."

Daniel was the youngest sibling in their family. Ever since their parents had been destroyed, it had just been the three of them. It devastated both him and Daniel when Ramiakle turned demon. It was an even harder blow when she became a succubus and started sleeping with every male angel she could find. "You shouldn't have broken your vows to Michael then," Brad retorted.

"I never meant for any of this to happen." She buried her face in her hands and started to sob full out.

Brad studied her closely, looking to see if they were crocodile tears. But he knew Ramiakle enough to know she wasn't putting on a show. Of course, he never thought she would have tipped off the other demons about their meeting either.

So maybe he wasn't the best judge of character anymore as far as his sister was concerned. "Don't cry." He attempted to pat her leg reassuringly, but missed because his vision was getting fuzzy again. "It's going to be okay."

"No, it's not. I've seen what they have been doing to you. I don't know how much longer you'll be able to last."

"You didn't see me while I was..." he trailed off, unable to finish. Dear God, he hoped she hadn't watched while he was having sex.

She shook her head back and forth real hard, making her tangled hair fly every which way. "No, I knew you wouldn't want me to see you doing those things so I closed my eyes real tight and plugged my ears."

It wasn't lost on him that she hadn't said, *I didn't watch you because it would be wrong. Yep, gotta love having a demon for a sister.* He still pulled himself across the floor until he was closer to her. That took up the last of his strength. Brad collapsed in her lap, knowing he was dying and thankful he had her so he didn't go while alone.

The only thing he was wearing were pants and she touched the wounds on his bare back and started to cry once more. He wanted to reassure her again, but was so weak, talking was too hard. Instead, he closed his eyes and started to count his breaths, wondering which one would be his last

one.

The door to the room opened and Brad heard footsteps coming in. He knew by the way Ramiakle gasped and clutched at his arms, it wasn't good though. That was enough to make him weakly lift his head to see who was coming.

"Daddy, please no," she begged.

Brad knew from his time in captivity there was an incubus in charge of all the succubi. He'd only seen the male demon once. He had dark hair and the same cat eyes and fangs as his female counterparts. Daddy didn't seem to have wings like the succubi though. The incubus gave a sinister smile down at the brother and sister. There were two succubi with Daddy, one on each arm. One was a brunette that had taken particular sadistic interest in Brad, the other he never saw before. She wore all red leather and had long blonde hair that reached her ass. Her bright green gaze darted between Daddy and Ramiakle nervously.

"Shhh...Ramiakle, I'm here to help your brother," Daddy spoke in a false soothing voice.

For some reason that seemed to scare Ramiakle even more. "No, please don't do this to him."

"You should be proud of your brother. No other male angel has survived the trial. Until you brought Brad, I thought the Empath King was the only one who could live up to my standards."

Ramiakle gave an anguished cry. "How can you say that he survived, Daddy? He's dying."

If Brad could talk, he would have agreed with her. Usually to destroy an angel you had to rip them into so many pieces that no healer could put them back together. While the succubi hadn't done that to him, they'd taken way too much blood from him and abused him for too long. Even his immortal body could not take much more without breaking.

Daddy reached down and stroked Ramiakle's cheek. "Don't worry, your brother isn't going to die. He's going to be reborn."

Ramiakle let out a keening wail that was so full of despair, it chilled Brad to the core. Daddy grabbed Brad and rolled him over on his back. Brad just lay there like a hunk of meat, unable to even lift one finger in his own defense.

"Renounce Michael and your vows to him and I'll let you live," Daddy promised.

Brad worked his mouth several times before he managed, "Fuck you," out. He'd rather be destroyed than break his angel warrior vows. There was no way he could ever turn his back on Michael.

Daddy snarled, "If you won't do it for your own life, then do it for your sister's." The demon pulled out a Glock and held it to Ramiakle's head. His sister didn't even flinch.

She tipped her jaw up defiantly and gave Brad a serene smile. "It's all right, Brad. I'm not afraid. You don't have to do this."

Daddy pushed the gun harder into Ramiakle's curly brown hair. "These bullets have holy water in them, angel. If I shoot her in the head, it will destroy her."

Brad knew there was no way he could let his sister be destroyed because of him. The only thing he loved more than Michael was his sister and brother. Daddy managed to find the only thing that could make Brad turn. Brad cursed himself for his weakness. Even though Ramiakle betrayed him, there was no way he could ever betray her. And that damn incubus knew it. "No," Brad managed to choke out. "Don't hurt her. I'll do it."

The dark-haired bitch succubus shook her head. "It won't work unless he really means it, Daddy. He has to be feeling hate and rage for the demon power to take hold."

The incubus gave a cold smile. "Ramiakle, why don't you tell your brother why you turned demon?"

She struggled harder against Daddy's hold. "No, please."

"Not in the mood to share, sweet? Fine, I'll tell him." Daddy lowered the gun. "Your darling little sister here was raped by three of Michael's precious archangels."

Brad looked at Ramiakle to see if the demon was telling him the truth. What he saw there, confirmed Daddy's words. Her face was a mask of shame and sorrow. She buried it in her hands and refused to meet his eyes.

Daddy continued, "You want to know the real zinger? Michael knew about it and did nothing."

"You're lying," Brad said.

Daddy released Ramiakle and came closer to Brad. "I can give you their names if you want. Then I could make you powerful enough to bring them to justice yourself."

"Who was it?"

"Azreal, Ezeikel and Themus."

Each name hit Brad like a blow. All of them were still living in Heaven and each of them were related to powerful members of the council. He knew then that was why Michael hadn't done anything. Ramiakle had left before the war had broken out. Even before then, there had been a tenuous peace between the council and the angel warriors. The Chief must not have had wanted to risk the peace over one female angel. His baby sister had been sacrificed for politics.

A bitter hatred rose up in Brad. Michael was willing to go to war when it was his own family in danger. How were they any more important than Ramiakle? Didn't she deserve the same devotion? She'd been an angel warrior, too.

Fuck Michael. If he wasn't willing to stand up for Brad and his family, then why should he die for his fucking vows? He would take what Daddy had to offer him. Ramiakle would be avenged. Brad took in a rattling breath and whispered, "I turn my back on my Chief, Michael, and my vows."

If the demon wanted a more eloquent speech than that, then he was SOL because Brad didn't have enough strength left in him. As it was, Brad felt as if a huge part of his soul was ripped away and a black void replaced it. He opened his eyes enough to see the dark-haired succubus go up to Daddy and bite him on the neck. The incubus let out a low moan as the female fed and he ran his hands slowly up and down her back sensuously. Even in his state, Brad felt the strong surge of sexuality that spiked through the room. After a few moments, the female turned from Daddy, came over to Brad and went down on her knees, straddling his chest.

"Stop this now," Ramiakle yelled as she lunged at the other succubus.

The blonde succubus grabbed Ramiakle and held her back. "It's too late to end this, sister," she soothed.

The brunette leaned down and gave Brad a kiss. As soon as her lips touched his, she spat out the mouthful of blood held in her cheeks. The blood

felt like acid on his tongue and he tried to spit it out, but she used her fingers to pinch his nostrils together so he swallowed just to breathe. Daddy's demon blood burned the entire way down Brad's throat, into his stomach, before he felt like it coursed a fiery path through his whole body.

Somehow, even through all the pain, his body found the strength to lurch up and he tried to crawl away from his tormentors. Daddy grabbed Brad by the seat of his pants and dragged him back. The demon flipped Brad over again and put his knee in his chest, pinning him to the ground.

"I wouldn't leave just yet," Daddy said with a smirk. "My girls took a lot of blood from you and we need to replace it."

This time, Daddy sliced his wrist open with a blade and put the open cut to Brad's mouth. Brad tried to buck the demon off as even more blood trickled down his throat, but Daddy wouldn't budge. Brad gagged before a fresh set of painful waves coursed through his body. Finally, Daddy got up and Brad rolled up into a fetal position.

"There is some angel's blood on the table over there," Daddy addressed Ramiakle. "You'll need it to aid him during the transformation."

At those words, the enormity of what was happening dawned on Brad. He wasn't just going to become demon, they were making him into one of them. Before Daddy, the only incubus Brad ever

saw was Cam. But then Cam wasn't even a full breed, he was half demon and half angel. Cam had been smart enough not to renounce Michael like Brad had just done.

The blonde succubus was still in the room, her sharp green eyes wide with terror. She started to leave, but Ramiakle grabbed her by the arm and begged, "Please, don't leave, Lilith. I don't know if I can take care of him by myself."

Lilith darted a worried look at the door Daddy had just left by. "I don't know sister."

"Please, you're the only one I trust."

Lilith nibbled on her bottom lip with her right fang before she nodded her head and sat down on the ground next to Ramiakle. Brad lost track of time after that. The pain and blackouts made everything a blur. The only relief he had was when Lilith or Ramiakle would coo soft words in his ears or brush his sweaty brow with their cool fingertips. He found himself clutching both of their hands whenever he came to from a blackout, seeking any comfort he could.

Somewhere during that time, they forced the angel's blood down his throat. It should have revolted him, but instead it tasted better than manna. He grabbed at the cup whenever it was offered and gulped down the sweet liquid. Each swallow dimmed the fire within him somewhat. The relief would only be short-lived though,

before another pain-filled episode gripped him.

After what seemed like forever, he woke up from his last blackout and realized the pain was gone. Brad pushed himself up to his hands and knees and looked around the room. Every color and texture in the room seemed more sharp and in focus. The new stark contrast made him a bit dizzy for a few minutes until he got used to it. He could hear somebody nearby, the sounds of their heartbeat, breathing and the rushing of blood through their veins almost threatened to overwhelm his newly heightened senses.

He glanced around for the source. The only one there was Lilith. She sat in the corner, her knees to her chest, watching him with her weird cat eyes. Ramiakle was nowhere to be seen. Brad darted his tongue around his mouth and discovered his brand new fangs. His stomach lurched with dread as he stumbled to the bathroom.

He looked at himself in the mirror and let out a groan of despair. A demon stared back at him. Brad's brown eyes were now the same amber as Ramiakle's eyes. The iris was so large it almost took up the entire area, leaving only a bit of white visible. The amber was rimed in black and the pupils were elongated like a cat's. Brad opened his mouth so he could see his fangs.

Brad glanced down at his body and saw that, not only had all of his wounds healed up, but he

had a whole set of new muscles to boot. They stripped off his leathers during his transformation and he wore a pair of sweatpants now. He saw Lilith in the reflection of the mirror. Pressed up against the bathroom wall, she acted like she waited for something. Something that scared her.

"Where's my sister?" he asked. His words came out a little jumbled because of his new dental hardware.

"I sent her away." Lilith licked her lips nervously. "I knew you wouldn't want her here for the next part."

Brad started to ask her what in the hell she was talking about when her scent hit him. And it hit him like a ton of bricks. She smelled of incense, flowers and sex. He breathed deep as his body hardened in response. He spun away from the sink and was on her like a dog on a bone. Pinning her to the wall, Brad licked her slender neck. Fuck, she even tasted like sex. Her satiny smooth skin seemed to beg to be devoured. He thrust his hips forward so his aching cock pressed against her stomach as he continued to lap at her neck.

He stopped, his tongue still halfway between his lips. What in the hell? Why did it feel so natural to be grinding up against Lilith? Brad wanted to bite her so bad his fangs throbbed. He wanted to do more than just that. He wanted every inch of her and couldn't resist the urge to

feather a kiss on her throat. Drawn again and again to the fluttering pulse he could see just below her jaw line, he felt her tremble in his arms and knew it was from desire. It pulsated off of her. He scrapped the side of one of his fangs against her, but didn't have the guts to sink them in yet.

Lilith tilted her head to the side and urged him on, "Go ahead, bite me. We'll both like it."

Even though the last little bit of him that was sane screamed to bite her would be wrong, the rest of him urged for him to do it. So Brad bit her. He felt her skin pop beneath his fangs before her blood started to trickle down his throat. This time demon's blood didn't burn his insides. Instead, it tasted good. Not as sweet and satisfying as the angel's blood they fed him earlier, but still damn tasty.

"I want to fuck you so bad," as soon as Brad moaned out those words, he pulled back in horror.

Two days ago, he would have never even thought of saying something that crass to a female, even a demon one. Lilith didn't appear to take offense. She reached inside his pants and started stroke him with expert fingers. He braced his hands, one on either side of her head against the wall and let himself get lost in the sensations going through his cock. He realized because of his new heightened senses, the sex was going to be mind blowing. Maybe this whole demon thing

wasn't going to be too bad after all.

"Shhh..." she cooed in his ear. "I want you, too. I think I'm going to keep you."

Brad took one last look at his hateful image in the mirror before he threw Lilith on the ground and started to rip at her clothes. He didn't realize until much later that night that during the entire time he was having sex with Lilith, he never once thought about his broken vows or Michael.

Chapter Eleven

Amadeaha was sitting in on her very first tactical meeting and she was feeling completely floored. It wasn't because she had no experience when it came to battle plans or enemy movements. It wasn't even because she'd never taken part in a search and rescue. It was because of Cam and his crazy brothers.

When Cam first told her she would be going to the meeting, she expected there would be charts, maps and a room full of dead serious angels. She never imagined in her wildest dreams she would find a table of wiseasses. Sure, there was a map, but the idiots were using Skittles to mark their positions, with the exception of one piece, which was a Gummy Bear.

"Who is that supposed to be?" Amadeaha asked. Ramiel gave a devilish grin and Amadeaha noticed he had one dimple just like Cam.

"That's Bear of course."

Bear let out a disgusted snort. "And everyone

says I'm the weirdo in the family."

That started a tirade of cut downs and insults. They all were thrown good-naturedly and with such ease, Amadeaha could tell this behavior was second nature for all of them. The thing that amazed her the most, was her cousin Dina seemed to fit in with them. He sat right in the middle of all the brothers, trading smartass comments and laughs. Appolion's daughter, Ariel, was sitting in Dina's lap with her thumb in her mouth. The little angel seemed to adore Dina.

As soon as Nathaniel entered the room however, all the conversation came to a screeching halt. Nathaniel stopped and gave everyone an annoyed look. They all moved their gazes to the side, not wanting to make eye contact with the heartbroken angel.

"Would you guys stop doing that?" he said in an exasperated tone.

"Doing what?" Ana asked timidly.

"Walking on eggshells around me. It's driving me crazy."

"Well, you haven't even talked about it to any of us," Ana countered.

"What's there to talk about? Belora left me, it's over with and it's time we all got on with our lives. The main thing right now is getting Derel back."

"And Heather, too," Bear added. "Tif's been on

my ass like no one's business about that one."

"But, Nathaniel—" Ana began.

Nathaniel cut in, "Has it ever occurred to any of you that I don't want to talk about it? Divorce is unheard of in our world and here I am with a mate that's not only left me, but has turned into a slave trader."

There was a long awkward silence before Ana declared, "You don't need her anyway, she's a bitch."

Ana cringed when Ariel let out a bubbly laugh and chanted, "Bish, bish, bish."

The brothers did the worst thing possible that you can do when a child curses, they laughed. Ariel looked pleased with herself before she started singing the word out repeatedly. Dina tried to distract her by making her doll dance in front of her, but the small angel just kept up with her bawdy song.

"What is my daughter saying?" an annoyed voice asked.

Amadeaha twisted her head and saw Rachael, Abdiel and Appolion had come into the training room. While Amadeaha was glad to see Rachael, Abdiel and Appolion were a different story. With their dark hair, large builds and don't-mess-with-me attitude, they were a little more than scary. Abdiel's dark gaze scanned the group before coming to a stop on her. She let out a nervous gulp

even as his mouth curled into a smile.

"It's nice to see you again, Amadeaha. Ray and Cam have only good things to say about you."

Ray sat down in the empty chair next to Amadeaha while Appolion took the one next to Dina. The archangel ruffled Dina's hair before he held out his hands to take his daughter. Ariel refused to go, snuggling even deeper into Dina's chest. Appolion got an irritated look on his face, but Amadeaha could sense he wasn't really angry. Bear snickered and Appolion retaliated by picking up the Gummy Bear and biting its head off before he put it back on the map.

"What's that punk Dina got that I don't?" Appolion asked the toddler.

The brothers then proceeded to list all of Appolion's bad qualities, one by one for the next several minutes. They didn't stop until Michael came into the room and stood at the head of the table. Ariel let out an excited squeal at the sight of the Chief.

"Before we even start, let's get the worst of it out of the way," Michael said, by way of greeting. "Ray, you and Dina will be sitting this one out."

Rachael's deep blue eyes fixed into a hard glare. She crossed her fishnet-stockings-covered legs and started to tap one of her high-heeled boots against the floor. "Why is that, Chief?"

There was no respect in the word, *Chief*.

Amadeaha held her breath as she waited to see how Michael would react to her friend's insubordination. Case, seated on the other side of Ray, scooted his chair back some so he was out of the line of fire. Whether it was Ray's fire or Michael's, Amadeaha wasn't for sure.

"I need someone to stay behind and watch the compound. We still have a security leak somewhere."

Ray gave a slight shake of her head. "That's a lame excuse. We've had that leak ever since we came to this compound."

"Yes, and even though Bear, Cam and I have scanned every angel that is here, we still haven't been able to find out who it is. Until we do, I don't want to leave the compound unprotected."

"Any of your archangels could stand guard duty. Why does it have to be Dina and me?"

Michael closed his eyes for a second before he continued, "Because the only ones that I really trust are sitting at this table. I want someone from my inner circle here at all times."

That took the wind out of Ray's argument. She looked down at the ground and didn't say anything. The way she continued to tap one long red nail on the table indicated she was still pissed. The Chief cocked a brow at the action, but let it go. He shifted his gaze over at Dina. "How about you?" he asked the empath. "Is this going to be a

problem for you?"

Dina shook his head. "I consider it an honor that you trust me, Chief."

"Good, it's nice to know at least one of you is willing to listen to me." Michael looked at the map that was unrolled on the table. His eyes locked in on the Skittles before he gave an aggravated look at Ramiel. Amadeaha thought for sure that since Ramiel was one of his top generals, Michael was going to call him out for his horseplay, instead the Chief just sighed. "Is this the inside of slave center?"

Cam nodded and pointed to an area on the map. "This is where they are supposedly keeping Derel and Heather."

"How did we even get this?" Michael asked.

"I drew it from information Lash gave me over the phone. Some of it is from visuals that Derel sent me. So it should be pretty accurate."

"Can we trust this Lash character?"

Dina answered, "No, but as long as we keep paying him, he'll work for us instead of against us. He used to serve under my father before the war so I've known him for years."

Amadeaha supplied the rest, "He left right after the war broke out. From what I heard, he wanted nothing to do with the hostilities between the angel warriors and the justice angels."

"We'll have to use him," Cam said. "He's the

only insider we have."

Michael turned his attention to Nathaniel. "I'm going to be real honest with you, I'm not so sure you going on this mission is a good idea."

Nathaniel stiffened. "Why would you say that?"

"We all know Belora is going to be there. I don't know if your head is on right at this moment. How are you going to react to seeing her again after all this time?"

Amadeaha caught Cam fidgeting out of the corner of her eye. She knew Nathaniel wasn't going to be the only one that was going to be affected by Belora. She opened her mouth to talk and saw Dina shake his head at her. She decided to speak anyhow. "I don't think Cam should go either," she blurted.

Everyone at the table stopped and stared at her like she had suddenly grown a pair of demon horns. Amadeaha's stomach flipped at all the unwanted attention, but she ignored it. She would do anything to keep Cam safe, even this.

"Have you been eating crazy pie again?" Cam finally snapped.

"You have a history with Belora, too," Amadeaha pointed out.

"I only saw her once."

Amadeaha ignored his warning glare and continued, "You attacked her while you were both

in Hell. Then when you got back, you and Nathaniel had problems for years because of it. I'm afraid if she attacks you that you'll hesitate or something."

"You don't know what you're talking about."

His jaw ticked and she felt the anger rolling off him in waves. Amadeaha felt her own fury rising. "I know avoiding what happened to you in Hell is not going to help you any."

Ana said softly, "Look, Amadeaha, I know you're only trying to help, but Cam doesn't like to talk about that."

"Tough," Amadeaha shot back. "He needs to talk about it. He's only hurting himself by not doing it and you guys have helped him by letting him shut you out."

Cam shot to his feet and grabbed her by the arm. He walked her over to the side of the gym where they could have some privacy. She took one look at his face and knew that she was in for it. She didn't give a damn though, because she was ticked off, too.

"This isn't the time for this," Cam hissed at her.

"You're about to go into battle and walk straight into your past," she shot back. "As soon as you see that witch, your guilt is going to come back to haunt you."

"I can handle it."

"What if you can't and something goes terribly

wrong because of it?"

His eyes got a dangerous glint to them. "This conversation is over."

"No, it's not. I'm not going to let you bully your way out of this."

"What do expect? That you could just hold my hand, whisper a few sweet words to me and then I'd be ready to spill all my secrets to you? You're just like all the other females who have tried to use my dick to control me."

Before she even realized what she was doing, Amadeaha slapped him across the face as hard as she could. The echo bounced off the training room walls as every angel turned to look at her in shock. She looked over at Dina and saw the pure terror on her cousin's face. Appolion had a grip on Dina's arm to prevent him from coming to Amadeaha's aid.

"Looks like you got your way," she whispered so only Cam heard. "You don't have to talk about your past. I'm not going to let you avoid it forever though. No matter what mean hurtful things you say."

He raised his hand and she flinched before she realized he was only raising it to run his hand through his hair. He noticed her reaction and that seemed to piss him off even more. She felt foolish because she knew Cam would never hit her, it had just been a natural reaction after so many years of

abuse from her dad and uncle.

"Go back to your quarters and stay put," he said coldly. "I need to go on the mission now and I can't waste time worrying about you."

That comment hurt her all the way to her toes, but she was going to be damned if she'd let him have the satisfaction of knowing that. She raised her head proudly and walked out of the room, aware that every set of eyes followed her. She had taken only a few steps down the hallway when she heard someone coming after her. She spun around hoping that it was Cam, but it was Dina.

"Are you a complete idiot?"

She was stunned. She'd expected Dina to be on her side as he'd always been her biggest supporter. "What's your problem?" she spat, her anger now directed at her traitor of a cousin.

"You just hit the leader of the empath's in front of a room full of his followers. If Michael wanted to, he could exile you for that."

"What's the big deal? From what I've heard his brothers hit him all the time." She gave him the hand and started to walk away.

Dina grabbed her by the shoulder and made her stop and look at him. "You don't get it, do you? By becoming Cam's mate, you have become very important in the empath world. You're now their Lady and they expect you to behave a certain way."

Amadeaha was struck dumb. She never thought of that because she never saw Cam as being anyone else but Cam. She tended to forget he had an image to protect due to his important status in the angel hierarchy. Even though he had been a total and complete jackass earlier, she shouldn't have made their fight public. As his mate, she needed to make things right.

She ran back to the training room and threw open the door. All that met her was an empty room. He had already left for the mission.

* * * *

Just one more day and then his brothers would be here to take him home. Derel kept repeating those words to himself during the long hours he was forced to put in the infirmary. The preliminary battles were taking place for the gladiator wars and they were already overwhelmed by the number of wounded. He dreaded the overflow they would be getting once the weekend got there and the event went into full swing. But if everything went as planned, he and Heather would already be long gone.

Derel was finally able to get away and he went back to his room. He barely suppressed a groan when he saw Santar leaning against the door, waiting for him. The slave master didn't look

pleased either. His gray eyes were dark with anger and his jaw clenched.

"You're really testing my patience, healer," Santar said slowly as he pushed himself away from the door and straightened up to confront Derel.

Derel barely held in the, *well, too damn bad*. Instead, he shifted his eyes down and pretended to be a good obedient slave.

Santar pointed to the room. "Why haven't you mated with the female I sent you?"

He didn't say anything. What could he say? That he wanted to mate with Heather, but he was damned if he was going to do it while they were still slaves? Derel wondered what the slave trader would say if he knew every night Derel made sure that, even though he and Heather shared the same bed, he slept on top of the covers. Not that it did a damn bit of good. Every morning Derel still woke up to find himself spooning Heather. The real kicker was somehow in his sleep he still managed to slip his hand under her top so he cupped one of her breasts. Thank God, he always woke up before she did so Heather didn't know about his nocturnal fondling.

"Don't you like her?" Santar asked.

"I like her just fine," Derel replied.

"If you do, then why haven't you taken her yet? Maybe I should just send her to the gladiator ring

and find another female for you that might be more to your liking."

"No," he said sharply. His heart thumped with worry, they could do whatever they wanted to him just so long as they left Heather alone. "Don't hurt her."

Santar gave a knowing smile. "You have one more night. If she's not marked by the morning, then she goes."

The slave trader opened the door and shoved Derel inside before slamming it closed. Derel leaned up against it as he heard the lock click into place. *Crap*, his brothers weren't coming until tomorrow. There was no way he could put this off anymore. How was he going to explain all this to Heather?

Her voice drifted from the bathroom, "Derel, is that you?"

"Yeah." He cringed when he noticed there was a tremor in his voice.

"Come in."

He made his way over to the bathroom, but stopped short at the closed door. "What are you doing in there?"

"Taking a bath."

His knees almost gave out. "Come again?"

"I'm. Taking. A. Bath," she enunciated each word slowly, like she was talking to a half-wit, but there was an undertone of a giggle, too.

The sound of splashing had Derel bringing up an image of her nude, wet, pink body. "A bath, as in naked?"

This time she didn't attempt to hide her laughter. "That's usually how I bathe. Now quite being a dork and come in already. It's not like you don't know what my boobs look like. You've been groping them almost every night."

Busted! "So you knew about that?"

"Yes, and you weren't the only one that enjoyed it."

He chuckled despite his nervousness. "If I come in, can I wash your back?"

"That would be nice," she purred. "Even though Santar has kept me locked in this room all day, I've still felt all the anxiety from the hurt angels and my back is in knots."

Well he couldn't have her suffering, could he? That would be just so wrong. He let himself into the bathroom. The room was dim, illuminated by several candles scattered throughout. The flickering flames cast dancing shadows against the wall.

Heather was taking a bubble bath and those damn bubbles were covering way too much. He'd really hoped to catch a glimpse of her breasts, but only the top of them was visible. Her dark hair was piled on top of her head, several loose damp tendrils caressed her face and shoulders. She

crooked her finger at him and Derel obediently complied. At the tub, he went down on his knees and took the offered washcloth.

She shifted forward so he could get to her back and he finally got a full view of her breasts. They were just like her, small and perfect. He licked his lips as the sudden urge to suck her nipples hit him. Even as he watched, they got hard, like she knew what he was thinking and it turned her on. His suspicions were confirmed when he looked up into her eyes and saw them smoky with desire.

"I thought you were going to wash my back," her voice was as husky as a succubus.

"I was thinking maybe I would wash all of you." He dipped the washcloth in the water, letting his fingers brush deliberately on her thigh. Even though the water was hot, she shivered in response, her lips parting just a bit. He knew then, even if Santar hadn't delivered his ultimatum, there was no way he wasn't going to make love to her right now.

He lost the washcloth and soaped up his hands instead. Reaching in front of her, he cupped her breasts, letting his thumbs brush over her pink nipples. She let out a gasp of surprise as she arched her back like a little kitten. He kissed the back of her neck, one of her tendrils of hair tickling his nose.

He stilled as a sudden thought came to him.

Why did Heather pick now to invite him into bath? And where in the hell had she gotten bubbles and candles? "Are you trying to seduce me?"

A blush spread over her cheeks, betraying her. "What would make you think that?"

He grabbed her gently by the chin and made her look him in the eyes. "Did Santar say something to you?"

She nibbled on her bottom lip before confessing. "He said if I don't get you into my bed, then he'll take me away from you."

"Look, you don't have to do this. We'll figure something out."

She grabbed his hand and brought it back to her breast. "It may come as a shock to you, but I do want this. So much so that I ache all the time."

"I just hate that we have to do this and you have no choice in the matter."

She shrugged. "I'd already decided years ago you were the one for me, Derel. I don't give a damn where we are so long as I get to be with you. I just want to know one thing. If you had a choice, would you still want to mark me?"

"Of course I would, I'm just mad that it has to be now. You don't deserve a slave's bed. This should be more special for you," he argued. He got up and ran his hands through his hair in frustration.

Heather stood, revealing all of her curves for his approval. And he did approve. His mouth went dry as he watched the rivulets of water caress areas of her he so wanted to touch. She stepped out of the tub and gave him a seductive, yet timid smile. He stood rooted in place, mesmerized by her beautiful curves. The candlelight softly glowed off her tan skin and brought out warm highlights in her hair. She wrapped her arms around him and kissed him, making his clothes wet in the process, but he didn't give a damn.

She kept her soft lips against his as she said, "As long as it's with you, Derel. That's all that ever mattered to me."

She led him over to the edge of the bed. Once there, she started to kiss him again, timidly at first, then faster and more urgent. Derel wanted nothing more than to strip all of his clothes off then and there, but he hesitated and glanced at the closed door. For all he knew Santar could come through it at any minute. Shit, the slave master could be watching them even now.

He lowered her to the bed and lay on top of her. Only after the covers were over both of them, did he start to take off his clothes. It was awkward and unromantic to say the least, but he wasn't about to take chances. He managed to both pull her hair and bonk her on the head while he was taking off

his top, proving that he was Mr. Rico Suave. Heather gave him a confused annoyed look.

"This would be much easier without a blanket," she said.

"I'm shy."

She gave him a disbelieving look before she glanced over at the door. Understanding slowly came over her face. Her brown eyes grew wide. "Do you think they're watching us?" she whispered as if whispering would hide their nakedness.

"I don't know, but I don't want to take the chance."

Heather cursed softly before she clumsily helped him relive him of his clothes. Somehow, between the two of them, they managed. But not without more bumps and mishaps. By the time they were done, she was giggling uncontrollably. Derel buried his face in her hair so she wouldn't see how humiliated he was.

"This isn't how I imagined this moment," he confessed.

She stopped laughing and stroked her hand up his spine. "How did you imagine it?"

She continued to run her hand up his back and it felt so damn good. "I always pictured you and I would be in a nice room and that you would be in that Snow White Costume I heard so much about."

One of the most retold Lehor family stories had been about the time Bear was attacked by a succubus and Tif and her crew came to his rescue. Since it was at a costume party, they all been dressed up in sexy little get ups. Heather's was Snow White.

She gave him a saucy look. "If I'd know all this time that was all it would have taken to get you into the sack, I would have put the stupid costume on years ago."

She brought him down for another kiss, pulling back long enough to lightly tug in his bottom lip before darting her tongue in to stroke the inside of his mouth. Derel started making slow lazy circles on her firm stomach with his fingers. He was a little pleased with himself when she took in a shuddering breath. It was nice to know he wasn't messing this completely up. She shifted her hips slightly in a silent invitation and he answered it. He lowered his hand until he was touching her center. He softly feathered his thumb over her clit.

Heather took in a sharp breath and gripped his shoulders, her nails biting into his flesh. "What are you doing?" she asked breathlessly.

He stroked her again, this time letting his finger slip inside her for a second. "I want you hot and ready when I take you."

"I am ready," she moaned. "Oh, Derel, that feels so good."

"Babe, you have no clue as to how good I can make you feel."

To prove his point, he leaned down and took one of her nipples into his mouth. Derel swirled his tongue around the hard nub before he took it between his teeth and sucked. Heather arched against him as she grabbed two handfuls of his hair to anchor him to her. The blanket slipped off them and he found he didn't care about their modesty anymore because he was more interested in the little pants of pleasure she was letting out.

He continued to stoke her pussy, the fluid starting to build up under his hand with her arousal. He slipped one finger inside of her, then two. She let out a long moan and Derel smiled to himself. He loved the fact that for once he was the one in control of a situation.

That all ended when Heather reached down and grabbed his cock with one of her small hands. Her fingers moved tentatively at first, then stronger and more sure once she started to get braver. His elbows buckled a little as his self-control slipped. All righty then, he would share having control with her.

"It's so soft," she said with wonder in her voice. She ran a finger over the tip of it and wiped away the drops of liquid collected there. Bringing her finger to her mouth, she sucked it clean. "Interesting, I never thought it would taste that

way.”

That little comment drove him over the edge. He grabbed one of her legs and hooked it around his waist, before plunging into her moist heat. Her small body accepted his invasion, then tightened around him. Derel ground his teeth together as he tried to get a grip on himself. He wanted this to be special for her not some fast letdown. She grabbed his hand and placed it palm down on the right lower part of her stomach.

“I want you to mark me here,” her order came out breathlessly. “Now, Derel, make love to me like you mean it.”

She arched her hips at the same time she tightened her leg around his waist. Derel decided he had been fooling himself when he thought there was any way he could hold back with her. He started to move in her, strong and fast, just like they both wanted.

His hand grew hot on her stomach and Derel knew that was because he was marking her as his. Some deep hidden primal alpha part of him was satisfied in knowing any male who came in contact with Heather would know she belonged to him.

Her channel squeezed his cock as she came and that was enough to drive him to the end, too. He bit his lip to prevent himself from yelling out loud as he released himself in her. She wasn't as

worried about being quiet. She clawed his back and screamed his name.

"I love you," he whispered as the last tremors of pleasure rocked through his body.

He gazed into her face, looking for any signs of regret, but there were none. All he saw was the same satisfaction he felt. He got off her so he didn't crush her and looked at the Lehor Tiger now on her belly. He traced it with his finger before leaning down to give it a kiss.

"That was nice," she purred. "Promise me we'll do it a lot."

Derel laughed. "Okay, if you're going to force me. I guess I can suffer through it."

She yawned and rolled on her stomach. "Rub my back," she ordered, sleepily.

So he did. He kept doing it long after she drifted to sleep. All the while, praying his brothers would be able to free them.

Chapter Twelve

“Didn’t Cam tell you to stay in your quarters and not go out?” Rachael asked Amadeaha.

The two females were in the cafeteria sitting at a table with Dina and Jules. The place was deserted except for a table of empaths off to their right and a table on the other side that had a group of healers at it.

“Yes, Cam did tell her to stay put.” Dina shot Amadeaha a disapproving glare. “She just chose not to listen to him.”

“Shut up, Dina,” Amadeaha said wearily.

“Yeah, Dina, shut up,” Ray added as she got a sly grin on her face. “I like it that she doesn’t do every little thing Cam tells her to.” Ray then changed moods quicker than an heiress changes boyfriends and slumped in her chair in a dramatic fashion. “I’m so bored. It sucks being left behind. Even Ana got to go and she’s a mother now.”

“Who’s watching Ariel?” Amadeaha couldn’t help but smile at Ray’s little show.

"Cliona's watching her now." Dina finished the last of his soda and threw the can in a nearby recycling bin. "You and I have her tonight once I get done with my shift of guard duty."

"We do?" This was all news to Amadeaha. "Since when?"

"Since I told Ana we'd do it." He stood up. "You ready, Ray?"

"Lucky me, I get stuck on guard duty with Mr. Telemundo." Ray softened her cut down by lightly cuffing the back of Dina's head.

"I promise not to watch my soaps if you promise not to sing with the radio. I've never heard of a tone-deaf angel before, but you sure as hell are. You make my ears bleed with your shrieking."

Rachael got an offended look on her face. "I don't sing bad."

Dina nodded. "Yes, you do and you always sing the words wrong, too."

"Little punk, I don't know how Megan puts up with you." They both got up and left, exchanging good-natured barbs the entire way out.

Once Ray and Dina left, an awkward silence surrounded Amadeaha and Jules. This surprised Amadeaha because from what she had heard, Jules was a regular chatterbox. Something appeared to be bothering the female empath though. She kept nibbling on her bottom lip while

she stole glances at the table of healers. Amadeaha noticed Jules had shredded her Styrofoam cup into tiny pieces.

One of the healers made a loud gagging noise and the rest of his table burst into laughter. Jules grabbed the corner of the table so tight her knuckles went white, but other than that, gave no reaction. The healers started talking in loud stage whispers.

"I always knew she was a slut, but damn."

"You got her to do that after only one date, Thomas?"

"Yeah, but she did a piss poor job at it."

This made the table laugh even harder. Amadeaha noticed Jules trying to hold back tears that pooled in her blue eyes. Her bottom lip had even started to quiver as she ducked her head to hide her shame. Shame that was so strong Amadeaha barely had to use her empath skills to feel it. Amadeaha hesitated, not sure of what to do. She didn't want to overstep her bounds and create a scene, but she was really starting to get angry on behalf of Jules.

Then she remembered what Dina had told her earlier. She was now the Lady of the empaths and had a whole lot of responsibility with that title. Since Jules was an empath and under Cam's rule, didn't that make her Amadeaha's responsibility, too? She took another look at Jules's forlorn face

and that gave her the last bit of courage she needed.

Amadeaha shot to her feet and marched over to the hecklers. When she smacked the palms of her hands on the table, the healers looked a little shock, but they still kept the smirks on their faces. She straightened her spine and tried to look as important as Dina seemed to think she was. "Do we have a problem here boys?" she asked sweetly.

The one called Thomas said, "Nothing that concerns you."

"Oh, but it does concern me. Whenever I see one of my mate's empaths being mocked, it's as if you are mocking me." Amadeaha was stunned these brave words were coming out of her mouth, but she was too ticked off to censor herself anymore. This Thomas was one arrogant little jerk.

The healer balked a little. "You really don't know everything that's going on."

Amadeaha had a pretty good idea, but she didn't say so, instead she said, "How about I bring Cam in on this then? Perhaps you and my mate can discuss the situation together."

One of the other healers leaned forward and placed a restraining hand on Thomas. "No, that won't be necessary. I apologize." He looked over her shoulder. "We meant no disrespect to your Lady."

Turning around, she was stunned by what she

saw. The other empaths in the room were behind her, backing her up. They must have gotten up during her confrontation with the healers. They'd been there the entire time, supporting and protecting her. She was even more surprised by what she saw on their faces, respect.

Thomas's voice cut through the cafeteria. "I don't see how even an incubus like him would stand up for a whore like her though."

Amadeaha stiffened up, feeling like he had just slapped her across the face. *Oh no, he didn't!* She grabbed a tray from a nearby table and swung it around, hitting the asshole in the side of his head. Thanks to all the combat training, she dropped him like a ton of bricks. The healers all stood up, ready to fight. Her empaths didn't hesitate one second. They met them head on. One of the males shoved her behind him in a protective manner. She bumped into Jules.

The empath shook her head. "Now we're going to have to scrub the floor with our toothbrushes again."

Amadeaha ducked a flying chair. "I was defending you."

Jules smiled. "I know. Which is why I'll let you use one of mine. Don't tell Cam, but I have a whole stash set aside for whenever he punishes us."

Another chair went flying and she put her arms

around Amadeaha, shielding her from harm. Jules clucked her tongue. "Dina is going to be really pissed when he finds out that he missed a good fight."

* * * *

Derel worked hard in the infirmary all day, healing the angels that could be healed and setting aside the ones who had already been destroyed. Off in the distance, he could hear the roar of the crowd that watched the matches. Bloodthirsty bastards. Most of the angels he healed were young and inexperienced. They hadn't stood a chance against the demons they were pitted against.

Just as his shift was finishing up, Belora came in with her posse. As soon as he spotted her and her crew, Derel knew he was in deep shit. Once they made a beeline straight for him, he knew he was in really deep shit. He didn't even have to look at Belora's stormy expression or the guards' smirks. Two of them came over and hauled Derel up by his arms.

Derel decided to take a page out of Cam's book and play the cocky card. "If you wanted a date with me, darling, all you had to do was ask."

Belora curled her lip. "A little error is going to be made today."

"What, you actually are going to stop being a

bitch for five minutes?"

"No, you idiot, the wrong angel is going to put into the gladiator ring. Imagine how upset poor Santar is going to be when he comes back and finds out his prize lap dog was destroyed."

"I would really prefer if you went with the not being a bitch thing instead."

Belora turned to another set of guards off to the side. "In the room down the hall you'll find a female empath. Destroy her, but you can have some fun with her first if you wish."

Derel started to fight with the angels holding him. "You touch one hair on her head, you bastards, and I'll tear you apart."

The guards just laughed and started to drag him toward the gladiator ring. The sound of the crowd grew louder and louder with each step and so did the pounding of Derel's heart. It wasn't himself that he was scared for though, it was Heather. The thought of her helpless and alone with those bastards tore him apart. He closed his eyes and tried desperately to contact his brother telepathically.

Cam, are you there? Derel let out a small sigh of relief when his brother's voice came back strong and sure.

I'm here. We're getting ready to enter the slave compound right now.

I need you to promise you'll get Heather before you

come for me. No matter what, you have to get to her first.

Cam's response was quick, but sounded confused. *What's going on, Derel?*

Derel didn't have time to answer Cam before the guards threw him into the gladiator ring. He skidded several feet on his face across a dirt ground before he came to a stop. The crowd roared at his entrance, then quieted as it realized he had the build of a healer not of an archangel. Derel knew the crowd was expecting a quick kill to follow since most healers weren't trained to fight hand-to-hand combat. *Most healers.* He wasn't like other healers though. He'd been getting in fistfights with his brothers ever since old enough to stand. They never held back because he was smaller either. Not only that, but those same brothers had made sure Derel had extra weapons training, even more so since the war broke out. So while Derel had no doubt he was about to be destroyed, it wasn't going to be quick and easy like the crowd anticipated.

He scrambled to his feet and surveyed his surroundings, all the while preparing himself for an attack. He was the only one in the ring at the moment. He both saw and smelled the blood splattered around the ground and high stone walls. Those same walls had several smeared bloody handprints on them, like someone had been trying

to climb their way out of the ring. The smooth stones would have made that impossible. The poor bastards hadn't stood a chance.

Several weapons were scattered around the ring and he picked up a sword at his feet. Although his weapon of choice was a bow and arrow, he did know how to handle himself in a sword fight. His oldest brother, Ramiel, forced him to take lessons. At the time, it pissed Derel off because he never thought it would become useful. If he got out of this alive, he vowed that the first thing he would do is apologize to Ramiel.

The doors opened again and another angel was thrown in the ring. It was Jordy, the teenager who healed him the other day. He was holding a sword in his hand and his green eyes were wide with terror as he struggled to his feet. Derel was appalled Belora would put a kid in here to be slaughtered.

"Are we, like, supposed to fight each other?" Jordy stammered.

"I don't know," Derel replied. "I'm not going to attack you though."

"I won't attack you either."

Another set of doors opened up on the opposite side of the ring and five demon assassins rumbled out. They all had the same red dusky skin, and sported a pair of black horns on their heads. Nude except for a black loincloth around their waist,

their oiled bodies glistened in the stadium lights. They were all well above six-foot-five and every single bit of it hardened muscle. Each held a different weapon in their clawed hands, one had a whip, another a synch, yet another a kris.

Derel looked back at his only support, the scared-as-shit kid, and knew he was in big trouble. The crowd started to cheer on the demons. It started as a dull roar and escalated into an ear-shattering battle yell. In between the screams, Derel was able to pick out various things coming from the crowd.

"It's Derel, brother of the Empath King!"

"That's Michael's healer nephew!"

Derel rolled his eyes, he couldn't even get respect at his own execution. One of the demons let out a roar and they all started circling the pair of angels.

"What are you waiting for, mother fuckers?" Derel screamed at the demons. "Come and get us."

* * * *

Lash met the angel warriors at the door of the slave compound, a worried and harried expression on his face and air of cockiness around him. Cam took one look at the rogue and didn't like him. But then he was there to get Derel back,

not make buddies. The rogue handed them several battered cloaks that were of demon make.

"Put these on so you will not be recognized," he instructed.

Bear wrinkled his nose. "They reek of demon stank."

Lash shot back, "You'll just have to live with it. This place is crawling with demons and rogues alike that would love nothing better than to collect the bounty out on your puny ass."

Bear grinned and responded, his voice sounding exactly like Lash's, "I'm so scary because my name is Lash and I am some big, badass rogue."

Cam reached out and grabbed Bear back toward him. The last thing they needed was Bear to make the situation froggy by showing off his copycat skills. If they needed Bear to start mimicking other angels in order to sneak in, that was one thing, but to go around flaunting them was another. Bear's gifts were one of a kind and very powerful and sometimes Cam wondered if his little brother really appreciated that fact.

"Where's Derel?" Cam asked to distract Lash.

"Where's my money?" Lash countered.

Cam handed him a thick stack of bills. "Here, we are also looking for a female healer. She has brown hair and is real small."

"She's probably talking everyone's ears off,

too," Bear added.

Lash nodded. "I know exactly who you mean. I shouldn't be surprised that you'd want her, too, your brother marked her last night."

After his earlier conversation with Derel, Cam was only mildly surprised at this news. Although he was a bit dismayed that yet another one of the Tif Crew was a permanent fixture of the family.

Cam could hear the roar of the crowd getting louder and louder from what he assumed was the gladiator arena. The cheers organized themselves into a chant. After several seconds, he was finally able to make out what they were yelling.

"Derel! Derel! Derel!"

Lash's eyes widened in panic before a tick developed in his jaw. "That bitch! Santar is going to destroy her for this."

"What's going on?" Cam demanded.

"Your brother is in big trouble. We've run out of time."

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.