

Stephani Hecht



HAVE

YOURSELF

A HOLLY HELL

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Have a Harpy Holiday
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Have a Harpy Holiday

By

Stephani Hecht

Dedication

*To Grandma Bucholz. I miss and think of you
often.*

Chapter One

Along, keening wail woke Cadean up. Normally, since she was a harpy, she thrived on tears and sadness. As a justice demon, she was bred to feed on sorrow and fear. This was different though because the one crying was her only friend, Lilith, and that stupid succubus was getting on her nerves since it was only six in the morning.

Cadean pulled the pillow over her head and tried to go back to sleep. It was no use, Lilith's sobs penetrated the thick down. With a groan, the harpy sat up and squinted against the garish décor of Lilith's spare room. To be fair to the small bedroom, the succubus's entire apartment was done in whore chic. There wasn't a square inch that wasn't covered in deep red satin or something sparkly. Good Lucifer, even the walls were covered in the crap.

Cadean rolled out from under the silk comforter and stumbled to the door. She was clad only in a black tank top and undies, but she was too crabby to feel modest at the moment. Still half

asleep, she teetered to the side and banged her right wing into the door on her way out to the living room. A couple raven feathers broke off and drifted to the plush, crimson carpet.

“Oops,” she mumbled. She sloppily rubbed her face and yelled, “You better be dying, Lilith. If not, then you soon will be for waking me up.”

Lilith’s wails only got louder. Cadean rolled her eyes as she entered the living room and caught sight of friend. She was curled up in a ball on her leather couch, her face hidden in her hands. Cadean snorted when Lilith’s fingers parted long enough for her to peek out, in order to see if she had a proper audience to her angst. The harpy kicked the couch in frustration and instantly regretted that action because she was barefoot.

“Damn it, as soon as this stops hurting, I’m going to rip your wings off and use them to gag you with,” Cadean threatened as she took deep breaths to ease the pain.

Lilith sat up dramatically, her bottom lip quivered ever so slightly. “You deserve it, Cadean. How can you be mean to me at my darkest hour?”

As far as looks went, Lilith was everything that Cadean was not. She had golden spun locks to Cadean’s dull dark hair. The succubus had bright green eyes with exotic cat-like pupils where the harpy had green eyes, too, but hers were the color of mold. Lilith’s body was full of curves and

sexual promises while Cadean's was muscular and more geared for fighting. Her flawless, honey touched skin was the complete opposite of Cadean's pale ghoulish complexion.

Crud, Lilith's wings were even prettier, they were long and leathery and moved with wave-like grace. They looked elegant, sexy and went with everything in her closet. Cadean was stuck with shorter bird-like ones that fluttered, sputtered and looked bad with anything other than leather. Right now the feathers were all rumpled and sticking up all over the place. She ran a hand through her hair and grimaced, the wings seemed to match her bed head.

"Why are you so upset?" Cadean asked as she tried to smooth her cowlicks. "Did someone criticize your outfit?"

Lilith looked down at her tight red bustier and matching leather pants in shock. "Why, is there something wrong with my clothes?"

"Besides the fact they are small enough to fit a toddler? No." Cadean sighed as she plopped down on the couch next to the other female. "Why are you crying?"

"The Empath King has taken a mate," Lilith wailed before she started to cry full out again.

The succubus had an unhealthy fixation for the leader of the empaths for several years now. It didn't matter to the little demon that Cam AKA

The Empath King happened to be an archangel and was the nephew of none other than Michael. Nor did it matter the only time Cam had shown any interest in her was when they'd been having sex. Part of Cadean wanted to shake Lilith for her stupidity, while the other part wanted to hug her in sympathy. It looked like the succubus had really had her heart broke this time.

"What did you expect, honey?" Even though Lilith annoyed Cadean, it still killed her to see her friend suffer. "He's an angel."

"He's part incubus," Lilith pointed out. Big tears ran down her pink cheeks and her perfectly pert nose was red.

"He's not like that by his own choice." Every other demon, she and Lilith included, had been born angels. They had only become demon when they'd turned their backs on their angel ways and embraced their dark side. Cadean had come to regret that decision and she often wondered if Lilith did, too. "Cam was poisoned and partially transformed. He never forgot his loyalty to the angel warriors. Demons and angels don't belong together."

"But I would have been so good to him. I would have taken care of him, fed him and made sure he was happy all the time."

Cadean worked hard not to roll her eyes. She just bet Lilith would have made sure he was

happy all the time. "He's not a Webkinz, Lil. You just don't take a male, demon or angel, and tuck him on the shelf to bring down and play with from time to time."

"But he likes it when I play with him." Her lips started to quiver again.

"That's funny." Cadean tilted her head to the side thoughtfully. "I could have sworn he tried to kill you last time he saw you."

Lilith shooed the sentence aside with a flip of her hands. "Technicalities, that used to be foreplay for us. That was before he went off and found himself some stupid angel to fall in love with." Lilith dissolved into sobs once more and threw herself into Cadean's chest.

Of crap and crackers, the whole comfort thing was so out of her league. She was a demon for cripe's sake, not a self-help guru. Still, she had to attempt something for Lil's sake. "There, there," she tired as she awkwardly patted the area between the succubus' wings.

"Where? Where?" Lilith's question was muffled because her face was still buried in Cadean.

The harpy paused, not sure how to answer. "I don't know, it's just something I've heard humans say to each other when one of them feels sad. To tell you the truth, it never made a bit of sense to me."

They both burst out laughing, Lilith's bad

mood broken. That was the good thing about the succubus. She may get sad or angry quick, but she was just a quick to get happy again.

Cadean squinted at something draped between in her friend's cleavage. "Are those Mardi Gras beads?"

"Yup." Lilith beamed, showing off her white fangs as she spun the green beads with one finger. "Aren't they pretty?"

"I don't want to know what you did to get those, do I?"

"I showed a demon assassin my boobies." The succubus gave a delicate shrug. Since she was a sex demon, little things like public nudity didn't faze her.

"It's not Mardi Gras," Cadean reminded her. Her head started to pound.

"No, it's Christmas and I thought these would look pretty on the tree."

"We're demons," Cadean reminded her. "Demons don't celebrate Christmas."

"Why is that, you suppose?" Lilith asked in that blonde way of hers.

"Demon." Cadean held up one hand, palm up. "Christmas." She held the other hand up the same way and acted like she was balancing something. "You know, they just never seemed to go together."

"But why? Most demons I know love to get

presents.”

“Only if they come wrapped with bows made out of entrails.”

“They love cards.”

“If the messages are written in blood.”

“They love to sing and dance.” Lilith’s voice had a whine to it now.

“Yes, over the bodies of their victims.”

“Tell me again why I took you in?”

Cadean sighed, suddenly depressed. “Because, unlike me, when you got exiled from Hell, you at least had assets here in the human world. Me, I only had the clothes on my back.”

“Maybe if you went and told Lucifer you had a bout of madness. I mean it wouldn’t be too far from the truth. As far as I know, you’re the only justice demon who lets their victims go instead of collecting the bounty on them.”

“I got sick of all the killing,” Cadean confessed softly. “Is that so wrong?”

“Yes, if you are a bounty hunter for Hell. You are never to show any mercy, let alone show you have a soft spot for sob stories.”

Well, Lilith had her there, every word of what she’d said was true and it was why Cadean was, not only exiled, but grounded. Meaning she couldn’t flash anywhere, lost her ability to have prophetic dreams, had no funds, was ostracized by all her friends and no contact with her demon

father. The only one who had remained true to her was Lilith. "You got exiled, too," Cadean pointed out.

"Yes, but I got in trouble for sleeping with ones of Persephone's favorite guards." Persephone was one of the highest-ranking demons in Hell. "I'm still evil to my gooey-center core."

Cadean snorted. "Yes, you're so evil, wanting to celebrate Christmas."

Lilith stuck her tongue out playfully before she pulled a business card from her cleavage. "I almost forgot, I met a demon tonight who is looking for a free-lance bounty hunter."

"I don't know." Cadean looked at the card doubtfully.

"No killing involved," Lilith rushed out. "I already asked. Mangus wants this one back alive and unhurt. In fact, he was adamant about it. I tried to get more details out of him, but that demon can clam up like nobody's business when he wants to."

Lilith held the card out and Cadean paused for several seconds before she snatched it from her. If she started working free-lance cases, then maybe she could make enough money to move into a place of her own. One that didn't look like the champagne room of a strip club. "I guess it wouldn't hurt to go talk to him."

Lilith beamed and clapped her hands together.

“Goodie, that means you will have money to buy me a Christmas present.”

* * * *

Emmanuel sat at a table in the darkest corner of the room and tried to make himself as inconspicuous as possible. Since he was in a neutral bar and the places were supposed to be safe ground for demons, angel warriors and rogue angels alike, he should be okay. But the key operative word was *should*. Since he was a former justice angel and they were at war with the angel warriors, all bets would be off if any of them recognized him.

Since Michael and his followers had left Heaven at the beginning of the conflict, they had no idea of the latest gossip, so none of them would know that the once mighty and high-ranking Emmanuel had been tossed out of Heaven on his angel ass.

He pulled the hood of his black sweatshirt over his face even more and kept his gaze directed at the rough wood table. It was scuffed and had deep gouges in it from claw marks, daggers and god knows what else. It was worn down, like the rest of the place, but it was clean which was a step up from most other neutral bars. The joints were usually run by demons and they didn't seem to abide by any health code standards.

All around him, various demon breeds and rogue angels sat nursing drinks or making clandestine black-market transactions. There were a few succubi slinking around, trying to trade sex for blood. Although the bar sold angel blood, the sex demons preferred to get it straight from the source. One of them, with long dark hair, made her way over to him and leaned over the table, her breasts almost escaping from her low-cut black top.

"You look like the Unabomber in that getup." She smiled warmly, her dimples popping out on her slightly plump cheeks.

The angel looked down at his outfit. She did have a point. With his grungy jeans, beat-up army jacket and black hoodie, he did kind of resemble the old FBI poster. "I was trying not to draw attention to myself," he tried. In truth, he didn't own many other clothing and his options had been limited.

"I'm sure the trunk of your car just holds a treasure trove of fashion," the demon quipped as she took the chair next to him and signaled to a waitress with red skin and horns. "I assume you're still living out of the Jeep I gave you?"

"Yes, Aunt Docian." The waitress came over and set a plate of chicken wings in front of him. Emmanuel's stomach clenched at the sight of the food. It had been forever since he had a decent

meal. It was all he could do not to fall upon the meal like a starved animal.

"You don't have to call me that." Docian looked over her shoulder self-consciously. "I know you're probably not too proud to have a demon for an aunt."

"I've spent the past month sleeping in the back of a car, I have no money, no job, no home and I haven't had a shower in who knows how long." He gave a dry chuckle that was forced. "If anyone should be ashamed of our relation, it's you."

"Come home with me," she urged. She hesitantly put her hands on his arm and, when he didn't pull away, she held on even tighter. "I have a spare room and you can stay forever if you want."

Emmanuel looked down at the food as he debated. He hated to put his aunt out. The last thing she needed was to be associated with a loser like him. The only reason he'd taken the Jeep was because he was trapped on Earth and couldn't even flash around at will. Still, a shower would be nice and so would a bed. "What would your demon friends say about you living with a former justice angel?"

"I don't give a damn," she replied fiercely, her bright blue eyes were wet with unshed tears. A brief look of fear went over her face. "Unless you're embarrassed to live with me. I would

understand."

He leaned over and gave her a kiss on her cheek. "I'm not embarrassed of you. I never have been." Which was true. Although, until his exile, he hadn't seen his aunt since she turned demon a couple of centuries ago, he'd never forgot the close bond they once shared in Heaven. "I love you just the same as I always have."

The corner of her mouth twitched as she fought a frown. "I wish your mother felt the same way."

"Yeah well, Mom and Dad are ashamed of both of us now so we can comfort each other," he replied dryly. Unable to resist any longer, he dug into the food.

"I set up the meeting with Mangus for you," Docian said. Mangus was the demon owner of the bar and his aunt's *special* friend. "He may have work for you, but he wants to talk to you first."

"What kind of job is it?" He licked the sauce off his fingers before he picked up another wing and bit into it.

She rolled her eyes and handed him a napkin. "He's looking for bounty hunters."

Emmanuel stiffened, the wing halfway to his mouth, usually when demons put a bounty on someone they didn't want the target brought back alive. "I can't kill an innocent."

"You won't have to. In fact, Mangus is quiet adamant that he wants this one brought back

alive.”

“So he can kill or torture them himself?”

Docian shook her head. “Mangus isn’t like that. He’s not your typical demon, he’s more like me. He has regrets, too, and wishes to make amends. That’s why he’s helped the angel warriors so much in the past. Do you know the justice angels destroyed his last bar because he was aiding Michael?”

The mention of the Chief of Archangels brought a wince from Emmanuel. One of the main reasons he’d been banished from Heaven had been because he refused to publicly break his allegiance with Michael.

Michael was technically the leader of both the angel warriors and the archangels, but at the beginning of the civil war, the archangels that served the justice council publicly broken their blood vows to their former leader. All of them with the exception of a few, like Emmanuel.

Now because of his honor, he was stuck in limbo. The justice angels despised him for not turning his back on Michael and the angel warriors would never trust him because he was a justice angel. He still didn’t regret his decision though, he had made those vows and he was damned if he would ever break them.

His aunt had fallen silent and she studied him closely, those cat-like eyes of hers seeing way too

much. "Every time Michael's name is spoke, you look so sad. Have you ever tried to contact him?"

He kept his gaze directed at his half-empty plate. "There's no way I could go to him. Justice angels have harmed him and his family so much and my presence would only serve to remind him of that. I won't do that to the Chief."

Docian leaned against his arm and gave him a small hug. "That's okay, you can live with your old auntie and keep her company."

Emmanuel snorted. Even though she was older than him by several centuries, she was immortal so she didn't look a day over twenty-five. Docian was beautiful, even by succubi or angel standards. "You're just having pity on me and we both know it."

"No, it's because I love you." She pulled back so she could look earnestly into his eyes. "You believe me, don't you? Demons can still love just as much as angels."

Wow, that statement really tugged at his heart. Did she really believe he thought that little of her? "Of course I believe you, I love you, too."

She beamed at him, showing a bit of fang before she motioned for the waitress to bring him more food. "Eat up, you have a half hour before your meeting with Mangus."

Chapter Two

A half hour later, Emmanuel found himself sitting across the desk from Auntie's friend in a small office. Mangus was a true demon through and through as far as looks went. Dark skin was covered with spikes, making him look like a porcupine and he had huge claws at the ends of his fingers. Completing his spawn from Hell look were a pair of jeans, a Harley Davidson tee shirt and a large gold hoop on one side of his squashed nose.

"Your aunt speaks highly of you." Mangus smiled wide.

Emmanuel tried not to wince at the sight of all the demon's razor sharp teeth. "She has good things to say about you, too." The angel sniffed the air, expecting to encounter the same decay stench that oozed from all demons, only to find nothing. That was interesting. The waitress hadn't smelled foul earlier either. Maybe only the bad demons stank. Emmanuel pulled back, surprised.

Since when had he been differentiating good demons from bad ones? Docian was one thing, but to not see all demons as the enemy was a whole new experience for him.

"Your aunt has good taste, which is why I'm willing to give you a chance on this job," Mangus said. "I normally wouldn't even bother with a virgin bounty hunter."

"Thank you."

"It's not a guarantee." The demon leaned forward on the table and narrowed his yellow eyes. "You're not going to be the only hunter I'm sending out."

A rock formed in the pit of his stomach. "Who else will there be?" The last thing he needed or wanted was competition. Since he'd been living in his car and meals were scarce, he was far from his top fighting form. As if on cue, there was a knock on the door.

"She's here now." The demon looked up at the clock on the wall. "She's five minutes late, just like always, too."

The door opened and the most beautiful and angriest creature Emmanuel had ever met walked in. Dressed head to toe, in black leather, the female demon's body was a work of art, muscular and curvy in all the right areas, from her sensual hips to her taut stomach and her full breasts. Because of her wings, she wore a bustier top and her creamy,

white shoulders were open for admiration. His mouth watered as he imagined how the succulent looking flesh would taste under his tongue.

Her dark green eyes were as exotic as she was, the iris surrounded by a thin black line and unlike anything he'd seen before. Even her hair was perfection, dark, silky and long enough for him to wrap around his hand as he took her. Damn, her wings were enough to give him a hard-on. The long raven feathers fit her perfectly and they added to her unique sexuality.

"Why the hell are you talking to the Unabomber?" she asked Mangus as way of greeting. The demon curled her red lips in disgust and sniffed the air delicately with her perfect button nose.

Okay, so maybe he hadn't made as good a first impression on her as she had on him. Emmanuel became aware of how much of a bum he looked like in his grungy clothes and scraggily hair. He brought up his shirt and smelled it before warm heat came over his cheeks. It might be a good idea to make use of his aunt's shower after all.

Still, her cold attitude did remind him of something. This sexy demon was the competition and he couldn't allow her sweet body to distract him. It was time to put her in her place and show her that just because he was an angel didn't mean he was going to play fair.

"Hey, Mangus," Emmanuel shot off in his best cocky tone. "You didn't tell me you were inviting a succubus." He knew damn well the female was a harpy, but he also knew mistaking her for a sex demon was going to really ruffle her feathers.

The female grabbed the hilt of a dagger at her hip, but didn't draw it out. "Hey, Mangus, you didn't tell me that you were inviting a wannabe archangel."

The sound of her thick husky voice, made Emmanuel's cock jump to attention despite the fact she just insulted him.

Mangus gave an aggravated sigh. "Sit down and shut up, both of you before I shoot you myself and find someone else to take this bounty. Cadean, I want you to meet Emmanuel. Emmanuel, meet Cadean, one of Lucifer's former bounty hunters."

"I was his top bounty hunter," she fired back, her eyes flashing with anger. "So you should know that I'm the last one who you should ask to an angel meet and greet."

"He's my Docian's nephew so play nice with him."

Cadean plopped down in the chair next to the archangel and gave him another onceover. What she saw must not have pleased her because she let out a low hiss. "I'm surprised Docian would claim anything this pitiful. I saw a stray mongrel on my

way here that looked better off than this sorry piece of angel."

Because he knew it would piss her off even more, Emmanuel laughed right in her face. "So does that mean if I'm a bad little angel, you're going to smack me with a rolled up newspaper? I just might like that."

"No, but I will rub your nose into the ground."

"Please do, I like it when it's rough."

"Pig."

"Shrew."

"Oaf."

"Snob."

She let out an outraged gasp. "I am not a snob."

Now it was his turn to curl a lip. "Please, the minute you saw me you looked down that pert little nose of yours."

"I swear I'm getting out my gun!" Mangus roared. They both fell silent, although they did shoot daggers at each other. Mangus slid two files across his desk to the pair.

Emmanuel opened his and saw a grainy photograph on the top. It was of a young looking demon who was barely out of his angel state. In fact, it appeared the kid was passing himself off as a human. He had a red baseball hat on, no doubt to cover a set of horns and wore a pair of dark glasses. Only the trained eye would be able to detect the slight muscular changes to his body or

the slight dusking of his skin tone.

"That's my nephew, Andras, or Andy as we call him. He's gone AWOL and I need him back."

"So why don't you just give him a call and tell him to get his ass home?" Emmanuel asked. Cadean and Mangus laughed at his question.

"You haven't dealt with that many demons, have you?" Cadean shook her head.

"No, I dealt mainly with naughty angel warriors."

"So you were an enforcer then?"

"No," Emmanuel hedged, trying to explain the difference between justice angels and enforcers. "Justice angels are like the FBI where enforcers are like the State Police."

"It sounds like there are way too many chefs in the kitchen to me." Cadean huffed.

Emmanuel silently agreed with her. In his opinion, the twisted politics of Heaven had been one of the major contributors to the war. "So let's get back to Andy, why wouldn't the little ankle biter listen to his uncle?"

"Andy is a breed of demon that is the exact opposite of an empath angel, he's an angst demon. While the angels sooth ill feelings, angst demons feed and amplify them. Usually they are content to stay in Hell since there are plenty of bad vibes there to keep them full, it's unusual to see one so young running around Earth." She pinned Magus

with a knowing glare. "So what set off Andy?"

"Look at the next set of photos," Mangus advised in a tight voice.

Emmanuel flipped through the pile, his heart thumping harder and harder with each one. They showed the inside of a human dwelling, but there was nothing humane about the carnage. A couple lay butchered in a kitchen and he couldn't even tell if they had been angel, demon or human because of the savagery visited on them.

"That what was left of my sister and her mate after a group of demon assassins got done with them."

The demon cranked his hands into fists so tight Emmanuel could hear the bones cracking. "I'm sorry," the angel said, even though he knew how little words meant.

"Was Andy there when it happened?" Cadean continued to study the photos, anger burned in her eyes.

"Yes, he barely managed to get out alive and it set him off on a frenzy. He's out of control, feeding not only on his own anger, but seeking it out wherever he can. My sister left Hell a couple of years back and she and her mate were raising Andy on Earth so that's where he's hunting for dark emotions."

"Is he dangerous to humans?" Emmanuel hated to ask, but the question had to be answered, even

though he had served as a justice angel, he still felt a need to protect mankind.

"Not in the physical sense," Mangus hedged. "While he would never become violent with anyone, the humans are going to feel more anger and hate while they are around him. We need to get him reigned in as quick as possible, both for his safety and for everyone around him."

"The last time an irate angst demon spent time amongst the human race, the Detroit riots started." Cadean slapped the pictures down and heaved a sigh. "You know what the protocol is to handle this situation. Demons can't afford this exposure, in fact we need secrecy more than angels. If humans find out we truly exist, then they are going to start hunting us down again."

Emmanuel remembered the dark time, centuries ago when humans had tracked down and massacred demons. Ever since that time, demons had cloaked themselves from human eyes and kept low. The irony was, sometimes the biggest monsters were the weakest ones.

"I know what needs to be done and it's not going to happen," Mangus spat angrily. "This is my kin we're talking about. I'm willing to pay one hundred thousand dollars to whoever brings him back to me, unharmed."

Emmanuel sucked in his breath as he felt Cadean stiffen up next to him. With that amount

of money, he could get back on his feet again and actually make a new start here on Earth. "I'll do it," the angel blurted.

Cadean let out a very unladylike snort. "What makes you think you can do anything, angel? From what little you've said, I can figure out that you have no clue about demons, Earth or anything related to either one."

So true, but he'd die before he admitted it to her. "I have connections." Okay, maybe he didn't, but he was pretty sure Aunt Docian did and he wasn't too proud to ask for them.

She smirked at him. "I'll bet you do. They're probably tucked away with your soap and water."

God, how he'd love to wipe that arrogant look off her face. A kiss outta do the trick. He ran his finger over his bottom lip as he imagined how sweet her mouth would taste, how soft her body would feel under his, how good it would be to touch her naked flesh. "If you're so worried about me being clean, why don't you give me a sponge bath, poppet?"

With a high-pitched snarl, she drew a dagger and launched it at him. It embedded itself with a solid *thunk* just inches from his cock. The males both stared at it in horror for several breaths before Cadean sprang to her feet, wrenched the weapon loose and pointed in at him. She leaned in so she was inches from his face and he almost

groaned in pleasure. Jasmine. This demon smelled like jasmine and he'd never smelled anything so sweet.

"You have gone too far."

She was so angry that she was panting and each breath she heaved, caused her breasts to push against her top. Despite the fact she held a weapon to his throat, Emmanuel gave silent applause to her chest.

"Nobody, but nobody calls me *poppett*."

"My mistake." He gave her a lazy smile. "Next time I'll call you kitten."

With a roar of frustration she pushed away from him and stalked out of the room, on the way out she called, "Don't worry, Mangus. I'll get your nephew back and in one piece. As for your other bounty hunter, I'm not making any promises."

Emmanuel rubbed at his throat as he watched that delectable backside disappear from view. For the first time since the start of the angel war, he actually felt something and it was thanks to a certain little harpy. All of the sudden he was looking forward to this job and it wasn't just for the huge payout.

Docian came into the office, her mouth half-opened in surprise. "What got Cadean so pissed off? A slug demon tried talking to her on her way out and she about ripped his heart out."

"He didn't hurt her, did he?" Emmanuel asked

sharply.

"I wouldn't worry, Cadean can handle herself fine." Docian cocked a brow at him. "There was a reason she used to be Lucifer's top bounty hunter."

"What happened? Why is she no longer working for him and how in the hell did she end up here?"

"Nobody knows for sure." She went behind Mangus's chair and wrapped her arms around the demon's shoulders. "One day she just showed up on Earth, without any means of survival and unable to even flash anywhere."

"Just like me," he mused.

"I don't like that look on your face," Docian observed. "You look like a cat who found a little birdie it wants."

No not a bird, but something with wings. "I need to find out everything I can about demons and how to track one down on Earth."

"I know of someone perfect."

"Great." He stood up and sniffed at his shirt again. "First though, I need a shower."

* * * *

Cadean walked into the apartment, taking great satisfaction in slamming the door behind her even though it did little to extinguish the fires of her

anger. She took shallow breaths so she didn't inhale more of the stench rolling off the slime that covered her from head to toe.

She blamed that stupid angel for this. If he hadn't pissed her off so much then she wouldn't have lashed out when the slug demon had smacked her on the ass as she walked by. And if she hadn't lashed out at the slug demon, he wouldn't have retaliated by slimming her with his noxious snot.

"What is that rank stank?" Lilith walked out of the kitchen. The demon was wearing bright red oven mitts, a Santa hat and holding a baking sheet full of hot cookies. They were cut into the shapes of gingerbread men, trees and reindeer.

"Are those Christmas cookies?" Cadean was barely able to get her question out because the thick fluid was starting to dry around her face. *Now isn't that a yummy prospect? The angel is so going to pay for this.*

Lilith held them up with pride. "Yes, they are. I'm just getting ready to frost them. You can help, but you have to shower first. I don't want any icky, gooey getting on Santa."

Cadean made her way toward the bathroom, moving stiffer with each step as the crud covering her grew harder and harder. "We're demons, Lil. We don't celebrate Christmas."

"But the cookies are so yummy. They'll cheer

you up.”

Cadean paused, turned and smiled sweetly at her. “Do you have any angel shaped ones?”

Lil held one up with a flourish.

Never breaking eye contact, the harpy walked over, took it, bit the head off and placed the cookie back on the sheet. “I need to borrow one of your outfits,” she said around a mouthful of cookie. Lil was right, they did taste yummy.

“Why, are you planning on giving another angel head?” She laughed at her own joke.

“No, I’m going to that demon nightclub, Inferno.”

“You are actually going out for a good time? Someone call Guinness.”

Cadean snatched another cookie off the sheet before she started to shuffle her way toward the bathroom again. “It’s not for pleasure, Lil. I have a bounty and I need to get it before some arrogant, pompous, jackass archangel beats me to it.”

Chapter Three

Emmanuel buried his hands further in his coat as he walked through the Detroit streets leading back to Mangus's bar. After a shower, haircut, nap and fresh change of clothes, he should have felt better, but if anything, he was further down in the dumps. All around him people were bustling down the snow-covered sidewalk lining Campus Martious. The humans were all happy, jolly and full of good cheer. *Gag!*

It wasn't the snow and the cold that was putting him in a rank mood. It wasn't the crowds or the busy traffic either. It was all the Christmas spirit. It reminded him that he was going to spend yet another year alone during the Holidays. The only upside was this year, he would be doing his solo celebrating as a free angel.

A free angel who didn't have a dime to his name, a home to call his own or even any prospects. Ho, frigging ho, ho. He despised the holly, despised the mistletoe, despised the

presents and the bows. He couldn't even drown his troubles away with some eggnog because booze made angels sick.

Emmanuel passed by one of the Santa bell ringers and eyed the black kettle. The meager amount of coins that were collecting in the bottom would be the most money he held in his hand since his ass was exiled to this miserable place. Would he go to Hell if he snatched the loot and ran?

He gave a slight shake of his head and buried his hands deeper in his coat. No, he wasn't ready to sink that low, yet. Becoming a bounty hunter for demons was one thing, stealing from Santa was something else.

Emmanuel curled his lip at the multi-colored lights sparkling from the store windows and briefly lost his footing on a patch of ice. He silently added winter weather to his *despise* list. The first thing he was going to do once he collected the bounty money was go someplace nice and warm.

He ducked down a deserted alley and made his way to a door that always remained unseen to human eyes. Opening it, he walked into Mangus's bar and looked around for his aunt who had promised his contact would be there ready to meet.

As he dodged a pair of fighting demon assassins, Emmanuel hoped that whomever his

aunt got knew their stuff. It didn't take a genius to figure out he was in way over his head when it came to hunting a demon on Earth. Docian was tending bar, spotted him and motioned him over. As soon as he got within earshot, she leaned over the bar so their faces were inches apart.

"He's waiting for you over there." She pointed at a nearby table.

Emmanuel looked over and felt his jaw drop open. Was she kidding? "The Empath King?" Emmanuel whispered furiously in Docian's ear, "Is this how you keep things quiet? By inviting one of the highest-ranking angel warriors to a meeting? You know I'm trying to fly under the radar here."

"You said you wanted to talk with someone who knows angel warriors and demons inside and out and he's the best one for the job." She gave a small wave at the table that had over two hundred pounds of warrior sitting at it before turning to give her nephew a frown. "Go talk to him, I promise he won't bite."

He gave a weak chuckle to her equally weak joke. Since the Empath King was half incubus, he was a known blood drinker. Still, he was one of the good guys. Shit, Cam was more than that, he was one of the best. He and his family had sacrificed much in the name of good. For that and that alone, Emmanuel decided to do something he

hadn't done with an angel in a long time. He decided to trust the empath leader.

Cam had changed little in the past few years since Emmanuel had last seen him. The empath still wore his blond hair spiky and slightly messy. He was in the black leather that all the angel warriors favored, a long sword strapped to his back and a set of Glockes in holsters at his sides. The same dark glasses he'd always worn to hide his cat-like blue eyes were still in place. Even with them on, Emmanuel could feel the empath's gaze drilling into him. Lest he look like a wussy, he made his way across the bar and sat opposite the angel.

Cam smiled widely, showing off his fangs. "Emmanuel, it's been so long since I've seen you. How's my good buddy, Jehel doing?"

At the mention of the justice council leader, and his former boss's name, Emmanuel's gut clenched. "The last time I talked to him was right before he arrested your sister and brother at the start of the war. So it's been a while since I've seen him."

"Really. What kept you two apart?"

"A cell door and some chains. He imprisoned me when I wouldn't help him betray Michael. In fact, before your other brothers sprung your sister out, I was in the cell next to Ana and her mate. Next time you see her, you may want to warn her that the walls of the jail cells aren't as thick as

she'd like to think." Emmanuel did an internal wince. Yeah, that was smooth, great way to make nice with an archangel who has a reputation of being borderline psychotic.

Thankfully Cam didn't take offense as he grinned before he gave a visible shudder. "Dude, letting on that you heard Ana and Appolion doing the deed is not the way to my heart. So how long did Jehel keep you locked up and how did you end up here?"

"I was imprisoned up until a few months ago when he finally exiled me and a few others to Earth. He figured since we embraced Michael and his humans so much, then we could live with them."

"So what happened to these other angels who were given the boot?"

Emmanuel shrugged. "They're trying to survive, just like me."

"How's that turning out for them?"

"Not so well. One was attacked by Hounds from Hell and killed, another turned demon and I haven't heard from the rest in weeks."

"Why didn't you guys come to us in the first place? The location of our compound is no big secret."

"Like you guys would welcome the sight of a group of justice archangels marching up to your front door," Emmanuel scoffed. "We just got out

of one set of chains, we had no desire to find ourselves in another."

Cam seemed to consider his words. "I guess you have a point there. I won't lie to you, there are a lot of bitter feelings toward you guys. I probably wouldn't have even considered talking to you today if it hadn't been for Docian asking me to. She and Mangus are good friends of mine and I'd do anything for them."

"Thank you. I'm going to need all the help I can get on this bounty."

"I know you are, Docian already filled me in a bit about it." Cam shook his head and let out a sigh. "An AWOL angst demon, just what we all fucking need. Look, because of Mangus, I'm going to give you a chance to pull this little shit in unharmed. But if things get out of hand, I'm going to have to step in with some angel warriors. Things are already a big enough mess without some demon throwing around piss bombs to make things even more froggy."

"Huh?" Emmanuel only understood around half of what the empath just said.

Cam whipped off his glasses and rubbed his weird eyes. "Just find the kid, before we're forced to step in and do something more drastic. It would kill Mangus if Andy was destroyed and I owe Mangus big time."

"Fine, tell me where would be the first place an

angst demon would go?"

"Young angels and demons are just like their human peers. I would check places they hang out at. I know my brother and his friends like to go to angel nightclubs, check out some that cater to demon clientele. There would be all kinds of emotions flying around for Andy to glom on."

"Okay, are there any of those clubs in Detroit?" Finally, something he could run with.

"There are three of them near here." Cam rattled off their addresses and Emmanuel jotted them down, excitement coursing through him now that he knew the hunt was finally on. He couldn't wait to see Cadean's face when he managed to bring in the bounty before her.

"Thanks." He tucked the addresses into the inner pocket of the new black leather jacket Docian bought him. "I don't suppose you have anything else can you tell me?"

"You're going to need to arm up on ammo that's infused with holy water."

Emmanuel looked up sharply. "We were always told that was a false rumor Michael made up to make the council look bad."

"No, the truth is the holy water works against demon as a poison like demon blood is bad for us. I have plenty of ammo in my car I'll be happy to give you. Speaking of demon's blood, do you have any antidote on you?"

Emmanuel shook his head, still stunned the council had lied yet again to their archangels. "I was pretty much tossed out with just the clothes on my back and my long sword."

"Shit, you must have really pissed them off." Cam clucked his tongue in disgust. "I'll give you some antidote, too. The last thing you want is to get sicker than shit if you get infected."

"Thank you, all things considered, your generosity is more than I expected." He averted his gaze so Cam wouldn't see the raw emotion ripping through him. After being spit on and looked down on by so many of his former peers, it was nice having an archangel treat him like an equal again.

"My sister used to be a justice angel and so was my mate, Amadeaha. That makes me have a soft spot for Jehel's castoffs."

Emmanuel gave a dry chuckle. He'd heard Cam was a smartass and the angel was living up to his reputation. "What would be the best way to bring Andy down for the count, but not permanently hurt him?"

"Shoot him with one of bullets I'm giving you."

Emmanuel gaped at him.

Cam sighed in exasperation and continued, "It may hurt like hell, but the demon won't be up to fighting you for a while. You can sure as hell bet the harpy won't hesitate to use whatever she has

to take him in. So long as you get him to a healer before too long, he'll be okay in the end. Just make sure it's not a head shot."

The thought of Cadean wielding a gun should not have been a turn on, but damned if it wasn't. "Won't a gunshot hurt Andy though?"

"Well, yeah." Cam looked at him like he was an idiot. "It always hurts to get shot, but the alternative is to let the kid go and we can't have that now, can we?"

"I guess not."

"See, I knew you see things my way in the end." Cam flashed those fangs again.

Emmanuel couldn't help but grin back.

Something had been nagging him though. "I got one question about the whole demon nightclub thing?"

"Why the angel warriors don't blow one up whenever we find one since it would be a great way to take out a butt-load of demons at once?"

"Well, yeah."

"You aunt is a demon, does that make her bad?"

"Of course not," Emmanuel said sharply. His aunt was the only one who had ever given a damn about him. His angel parent's wouldn't spit on him if he'd been on fire.

"How about Mangus?"

"No." Despite the fact, the demon bartender

had threatened to shoot Emmanuel and Cadean, he still was a damn fine male. The way the demon gazed at Docian with love said that.

"So it only took you a few weeks to figure out something that some angel warriors never realize." Cam leaned back in his chair and shot him an admiring look. "There are some demons who are good."

"Just like there are some angels who are bad," Emmanuel countered, with an edge of bitterness.

Cam studied him closely. "Why don't you just come back to the compound with me? Michael would welcome you."

An image of Cadean popped into his head. If he were to go with Cam and live at the angel home, he might never see her again. For some odd reason, that made his stomach drop.

"I need to do this. Besides, I'm just getting reacquainted with my aunt."

Cam gave him a knowing glare. "Are you sure it's not a certain harpy you want to get acquainted with?"

Crap, Emmanuel had forgotten the Empath Leader could read minds.

Cam let out a low whistle. "Dude, I've met Cadean before, she is hard core mean. That female will eat your liver as pâté on crackers."

"I know, but for some reason, that just makes her all the more interesting to me."

Cam leaned forward. "You can't get serious about her. Demons and angels don't make for good mates."

"I know." Emmanuel still couldn't help but wonder how it would feel to hold the female in his arms.

"Look, this has been fun, but I have to get back to the compound. Uncle Mike hates it when I stay away too long, it makes him cranky." He got up and held out his hand.

Emmanuel stood up and shook it. "Thank you, if you ever need me or my sword, just let me know."

Cam chuckled. "Better watch what you're offering there, pal. With the way this war is going, we may just be calling on you. Wait right here and I'll bring in that stuff I promised you before I take off."

As Emmanuel watched the empath leader leave, the sense of loneliness he expected to come over him was strangely absent. All that consumed his thoughts was when and if he was going to get to see Cadean again. He rubbed his jaw absently as he wondered why this demon had managed to capture his attention the way no angel ever had. Could it be after all these centuries of looking for a mate, he'd finally found her and it was a demon?

He gave an internal shake of his head. No, he was just lonely and the banter he'd shared with

her had been entertaining. That's all. Besides, Cadean had made it clear, in no uncertain terms she hated him with a passion.

Chapter Four

Emmanuel noticed right away Inferno was nothing like Mangus's bar. While his place consisted of wood floor, scared tables, pool tables and greasy food, this joint had a lighted dance floor, black walls and red glossy tables. Actually, it had two dance floors. There was a set of stairs leading to an open bridge, forming yet another area for demon to gyrate and move to the heavy metal music that was blaring. It was certainly a step up in the class department.

As far as he could see, there were only a handful of angels in there and they were paired with demons. By the way one particular archangel was tonguing a raven-haired succubus ear, they were close to their companions, too. The angels gave him quick looks before they dismissed him and returned to their friends. Emmanuel accepted their snub in stride because truthfully he couldn't give a damn about other angels right now. He had two targets he was hunting. One very naughty

angst demon and one very sexy harpy. That's when he saw target number two.

Cadean was dancing alone in the middle of the dance floor and the way she moved should have been illegal. Damn, so should the tiny scraps of fabric she was passing off as clothes. He licked his lips as he watched the way the red leather skirt cupped her ass as she gyrated. The fabric stretched taut over the twin globes of flesh, leaving nothing to the imagination. She was wearing another one of the bustier tops, also red. It had a black corset tie in the back. The ends of the ribbon trailed down almost to the end of the skirt and his fingers itched to grab and pull. Completing the look was a pair of fishnet stockings and stiletto heels. As his gaze traveled up those incredible legs, a groan slipped past his lips. Dear fuck, she had a red garter on with a black dagger tucked into it.

Her wings were tucked into her back, but they still added to her rich exotic mix, making her all the more sensual. Cadean had left her raven hair down and it moved around her face as she moved to the music. A growl rumbled low in his chest when he noticed that several other males were watching the harpy with just as much interest as he was.

Mine! The thought flashed in his mind like the crack of a bullet and he no longer tried to deny it.

He wanted this female demon like he had never wanted another female before. It didn't matter to him that she wasn't an angel anymore, it didn't matter to him that she'd cut his throat if she knew what he was thinking, it didn't matter that their being together was forbidden by both of their cultures. All that mattered was he had known beyond a shadow of a doubt, he'd found his mate.

He had already taken a half dozen steps before he realized he was walking across the floor to her. The look on his face must have been intense because the crowd parted to let him through. He hardly noticed, his attention was focused on Cadean and the show she was giving. Still caught up in her dance, she shifted her hips to the right and he caught a glimpse of creamy white flesh when her top rode up on her stomach.

His pants grew tight and his mouth watered as he thought about how that silky looking skin would feel under his tongue, how sweet she would taste. "I am in so much trouble," he whispered to himself, yet he continued to move toward her.

* * * *

Cadean became aware of a sudden shifting of emotions in the nightclub. While the vibes in there had always been intense, for some reason it was

suddenly off the scale. She scanned the crowd and quickly spotted what was the source. The hottest archangel she'd ever seen was walking across the dance floor like he owned the damn place and every damn demon in it, too. With dark brown eyes that could melt a female into a puddle and dark hair that begged to be touched, he had every female in the room panting over him.

For some reason, he wasn't dressed in all black leather like archangels tended to be, instead he wore a pair of worn jeans that were neither too tight or too loose, and she had a sudden desire for him to turn around to see how they fitted his ass. The dark tee shirt he wore emphasized his broad chest and left his muscular arms exposed. Even though his clothes were casual, he still had his long sword strapped on his back, showing he was archangel.

So caught up in her ogling, it took Cadean several moments to realize he was looking back at her and damned if he wasn't coming her way. She licked her lips when she saw the intense way his eyes were set. If she didn't know better, she would have thought he was looking at her with desire.

"Yeah, right," she muttered to herself. "You're no Lilith. Like some god like him would look at you and your scrawny chicken wings."

But there was no denying the need smoldering off him as he got closer and closer. She squinted,

something was familiar about him, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it until he got right in front of her and drawled, "Fancy seeing you here, lemon drop."

Cadean's heart seized in shock. Even though she'd only met him once, she'd know that voice anywhere. "Emmanuel?" Oh sweet Hell, the angel was much better looking now than he had been at the neutral bar. Too good looking. Her stomach did a flip-flop as she felt desire shoot throughout her body. Catching her breath, Cadean tried to steel herself against that emotion. The last thing she needed was to become distracted by a hot bod and lose focus of the bounty.

"Dance with me," he commanded softly.

"Why should I do that?" How was it that she managed to miss how good looking he was earlier? Even though he'd been unkempt there was no way she should have overlooked his high cheekbones, square jaw line, and long eyelashes. Most females would kill to have lashes like that.

Emmanuel's full lips curled into a sensual smile. "Because we're starting to attract attention, so I think we better act like we're here to have a good time." When she hesitated, he cocked a brow at her. "Are you scared to touch me? Worried that you may like it too much?"

A slightly hysterical laugh burst from her. "Afraid of an archangel? You wish."

Emmanuel reached out with one arm, hooked Cadean around the waist and hauled her to his chest. The breath left her body in a *woosh*. “There are many things I’m wishing for, my little harpy,” he said against her ear. When his lips brushed against her skin, her knees went weak. “Dance with me.”

What harm could come from one little dance? And he was right, they were starting to attract attention. If they had any hopes of blending into the crowd, then they had better start acting like everyone else. Unfortunately, demons had a nasty habit of dancing well—nasty. A wave of heat covered her face at the thought of rubbing against him like some of the other females were with their male companions.

“You’re crazy if you think I’ll dance with you. We’re being watched. The last thing I want is for my name to be associated with yours.”

Emmanuel didn’t seem to have any of the same qualms. He grabbed one handful of her ass and forced her to slightly straddle his leg. “Are you ashamed to be seen with an exiled justice angel?”

“No.” A shiver went through her treacherous body as his breath fanned over her bare shoulder. “I don’t want to be seen dancing with any angel, period.”

He swiveled his hips and her body was so flush with his, it moved with him. The music playing

wasn't too fast, yet it wasn't a slow song either. So he was able to set a sensual pace. "I hate to break it to you, sugarplum, but your body is telling me something else."

Cadean was horrified to realize her hands had somehow found their way to his shoulders and she was matching his moves with some swivels of her own hips. She tried to pull away and he tightened his grip in her waist. "One dance, Cadean. I think your reputation can withstand that."

The way he said her name almost made her moan with desire. He seemed to savor every syllable, every letter like it was a fine meal. He leaned even closer into her, his warm spicy scent filling her senses. When her breasts pushed even harder against his chest, her nipples strained against her top as if they were begging to be touched. Cadean swallowed hard, her mouth suddenly dry. She knew she should push him away and get as far away from him as she could, yet she couldn't seem to bring herself to do it. "How about your reputation?"

For some insane reason, when he dipped her back, she allowed it, arching her back and letting her head tilt toward the floor. "Would you believe me if I said I could give a damn?"

The harpy whipped upright, anger overriding her desire. "Likely story, no self-respecting angel

would be seen with a demon like me. Now let go of my ass."

His hand slid down until it was touching the back of her thigh, thanks to Lilith's super short skirt, he made contact with her flesh. "I'm sorry," he whispered against her ear, his lips briefly touching her. "Would you rather I touch you here." Shocked, Cadean felt his fingers graze up until they were inches from her pussy. She got wet as she found herself wishing wildly that he would keep going until he was relieving the ach that was building up there.

"N-n-no," she stammered out. What was happening to her? She used to be feared by most of the demons in Hell and now she was reduced to a blabbering idiot and all because of one wretched archangel.

"Liar," the angel challenged, a wicked gleam in his eyes. "I think you want me as bad as I want you. Tell me something," his fingers inched up, so they were under the hem of the mini-skirt, "if I touched you, would I find you all wet for me?"

"No." She shook her head. Oh gods, she was going to come right here in the middle of the crowded dance floor and he hadn't even touched her yet. He rained soft kisses down her bare should, his tongue briefly coming out to taste her flesh.

"Why have we been fighting?" Emmanuel

asked. "We could be working together to get the bounty."

It felt as if someone had dumped a bucket of cold water on her. Cadean hissed before hauling off and punching him in the jaw. "You son of a bitch!"

Being the archangel he was, Emmanuel didn't stumble back, but he did let her go. "What the fuck?"

"Oh, the precious angel said a naughty word, someone get the bar of soap out."

"Why did you hit me?" He rubbed at his face with his knuckles. She waited for him to retaliate, but he didn't. What a shame, she was itching for a good fight.

"You think you are just going to come in and seduce the stupid demon and trick her into letting you catch the bounty and get all the cash." She let out a low growl, causing a few of the other dancers to step away warily. A surge of satisfaction went through her. Maybe she did have some of her badass left after all.

"It's not like that." He shot a dark look at the crowd and even more dancers hotfooted it out of there.

"Yeah, right. I wasn't born yesterday. I know how your kind looks at us. Female demons are nothing more than a good time to archangels."

Anger flared in his eyes. "I'm not like that. You

haven't even given me a chance."

"Like I haven't heard that before," she scoffed. She had too, so why did it hurt so much that *this* angel had said it? She'd just met him, so who cared what he said. But damned if she did and that just made her more pissy. How dare he be so hot and sexy?

"Just stay out of my way," Cadean ordered. "I swear on Lucifer, if you keep me away from that hundred grand, I'll gut you and feed you to the Hounds from Hell."

The angel gave a hard laugh. "I'm an idiot for thinking that you're different from the rest. Fine, if you want to play that way, then by all means, game on. If you get between me and the hundred grand, I'll throw your fine little ass into the Detroit River."

"I'd love to see you try. You so much as touch me and—" she pulled up short. On the bridge overlooking the dance floor was a young demon. He was smaller than most of the other patrons in the bar, his baggy blue jeans almost falling off his thin frame. A set of horns were barely visible under his curly, sandy brown hair, and there was a slight dusky tone to his skin, making him look pale. A human would never have picked up the coloring as anything more than a sickly pallor, but a trained hunter like Cadean saw it as a demon early in transition.

Andy!

A triumphant thrill went through her until she realized Emmanuel had followed her gaze and he'd spotted Andy too. They both remained rooted in place, each waiting on the other to make the first move. Then they both shot off in opposite directions as if a starting pistol had fired. Emmanuel went up one side of the stairs, Cadean the other side.

She'd made it halfway up before she felt a wave a panic hit her. *I am not going to succeed at this bounty or anything else in life. Instead I'm going to be stuck living in Lilith's apartment. Oh gods, I can't stand the thought of living in that red covered, brothel looking, sex pad for another month let alone the rest of my immortal life.* Cadean stopped, halfway mid step, as doubt plagued her for the first time during a mission. She darted a glance over at Emmanuel. The archangel was stopped, too, almost as if he'd been frozen in place, he was gripping the banister so tight his knuckles were white. Something was definitely spooking him, too.

She scanned the crowd, desperate to find the source of danger. There was none, only the faces of the other demons who had come to enjoy themselves. *I'm so exposed. Because of this napkin-sized dress I couldn't bring all my weapons and now they are going to bring me down because of it.* She didn't know who *they* were, all she did know was

they were there to kill her and Emmanuel. A whimper slipped through her lips at the thought of anyone hurting the angel. Icy cold tendrils of fear shot threw her, making her body break out in a cold sweat as her heart hammered so hard inside her chest, she almost expected it to rip itself out. She looked over at him again.

He gave a slight shake of his head before her glanced her way and mouthed, *Fight it!*

Confusion briefly took center stage over fear. Fight what? As if answering her unspoken question, he pointed up at the small demon. Andy was staring back at her, a sinister smile on his lips. He breathed in deep, his amber eyes briefly closing, acting as if the fear coming from her was a fine meal.

Andy. That little shit was throwing his bad vibes out. Cadean fought hard against the emotions playing havoc on her as she staggered up a couple more steps. The crowd around her must have been getting the same *Andy* treatment because they started to talk more loudly and shift around nervously. A flurry of movement caught her attention. A group of demon assassins were on the bridge, making their way toward the young demon.

A curse slipped from her as she recognized the markings on their red leather uniforms. They were soldiers under Beelzebub's rule. Beelzebub was

one of Lucifer's top generals. What in the hell could make him interested in one orphaned demon? She whistled to get Emmanuel's attention before tilting her head in the direction of the soldiers. Even though she wasn't sure she trusted the annoying, arrogant, sexy-as-sin archangel, he was her best bet at the moment. Emmanuel gave an almost imperceptible nod before he pulled a large dagger out of a shoulder holster under his coat. Cadean could see he had a shitload of weapons tucked there and she was relieved that at least one of them was prepared for battle.

Andy's head snapped to the left, and his eyes grew wide as he noticed, for the first time, the approaching demons. He let out burst of words that may have been demon or English since the loud music drowned them out. At the same time, the soldiers noticed Cadean and Emmanuel. The way their lips curled to show off their crooked fangs told Cadean they recognized her and probably knew why she was there.

The leader barked off an order and two of the soldiers separated from the group and started to haul ass her way. Another pair broke off and went down the other staircase toward Emmanuel. The rest of them continued to make a beeline to Andy. Cadean's heart beat in time to the heavy rock music as she levied the danger of the situation. There was no doubt in her mind these demons

would kill the teen as soon as look at him. They weren't called *demon assassins* for nothing. An image of Mangus and the forlorn look on his face as he asked for them to bring his nephew in alive flashed in her mind. She had to make sure those demons didn't get a hold of the kid, for Mangus's sake.

"Andy!" she yelled, knowing he probably would never be able to hear her. "Run!"

The demons on Emmanuel's side had already reached him. The archangel was taking them both on with an ease that impressed her. Even outnumbered, he managed to quickly disarm one attacker. He sliced upward with the blade, leaving behind a bloody thread on the demon's stomach, before bringing the weapon around to deflect a blow by the other opponent's short sword.

A scream was her only warning before a stampede of demons started for the doors. It was as if someone had yelled, *Fire* and they were all running for their lives. She looked up at Andy, knowing he was to blame for the sudden wave of panic, which had caused the riot. There was an almost apologetic look in his eyes, before he melted into the crowd. The loud music abruptly cut out, leaving only the sounds of screaming, footsteps, and bodies hitting bodies. She looked over in the direction her attackers were coming from just in time to see them get overtaken by the

crowd.

The demons tried to get back up, only to be pushed down again and again. A pool of blood started to form under them, as more feet marched over them. Cadean winced when a huge slug demon stepped on one of the soldier's heads, squashing it like a grape.

The stampede was making its way down the stairs and she held on for dear life to the railing so it didn't overtake her. The last thing she wanted was to end up like those two demon assassins. A deep wave of horror went through her as she thought how horrible it would be to die in this slutty outfit of Lilith's.

"Cadean! We need to get out of here!" Emmanuel shouted over the din. She nodded in agreement. It was time to retreat. Even though she hated to do it when her bounty was so close to being caught, she wasn't suicidal. Their gazes locked as they made a silent vow to get out...together.

Two loud gunshots rang out from Emmanuel's direction and he crumpled to the ground before the stampede engulfed him. Cadean switched directions, desperate to get to him. Nobody was going to hurt him but her, damn it.

The stampede took her down before she could get two steps down. Several pairs of hands shoved her and she tumbled down the stairs, landing in

an undignified pile at the bottom. Once there, she tucked in her wings, rolled into a ball and covered her head with her hands in hopes of protecting herself. Her ankle throbbed and she dimly hoped she'd just sprained it. An image of the demon assassin's squashed head danced through her mind as she prayed to whatever god would listen that the same thing didn't happen to her.

She winced as boots, high-heels, and hoofs walked on her and kicked her. Worry for Emmanuel dimmed the pain. She hadn't seen him since he'd been shot. Her stomach clenched as she wondered if he was under another crowd of panicked demons. What if he was unconscious and unable to protect himself as she was doing? She may hate the egotistical bastard, but that didn't mean she wanted to see any harm come to him.

Blessedly, the crowd eventually dissipated and the club emptied out. A few more demons kicked her head on the way out making her see stars, but that was much better than being squashed. For several seconds she didn't move afraid to leave her protective position. The silence was heavy and stark in contrast to the roar of screams and yells that had filled the air just moments before. Cadean cautiously lifted her arms, looked up and gasped as she saw the destruction. The once elegant and highly polished nightclub was now decimated.

Tables were overturned, glass was all over the floor, and several bodies lie crumbled about. A few of the fallen demons twitched or moaned, but most were still. While Cadean felt for them, there was only one that she was desperate to find. Somewhere in that pile was her angel.

The harpy got up, wincing in pain as she put weight in her injured ankle. All the while she scanned for the fallen Emmanuel. She finally spotted him across the dance floor. He struggled to his feet before he collapsed onto his ass again. His dark shirt was wet with something, she sniffed the air with her demon nose and picked up the telltale sweet scent of angel's blood mixed in with the spicy aroma of demon blood. Her stomach flipped as she realized the bullets must have hit him and not in a good spot. His face was a mass of cuts and bruises and she could only imagine how bad his back looked after having a whole nightclub of demons do the River Dance on it. Hers was on fire from the beating it took.

"Are you okay?" she asked stupidly. *No, he's not okay, Einstein. He's been shot at least once, probably twice.*

"I'm fine," he slurred, his eyes rolling back before he gave a shake of his head to fight it. "Just peachy."

"No, you're not. From the way you're acting, those bullets had demon's blood in them. Even

you have to know that's poison to your kind. Since you're archangel it won't kill you, but you need to get some antidote before you become sick or pass out on me. The last thing I need is to have to lug your heavy ass around." Cadean reached out for him, but he pulled back and gave her a glare.

"I said I'm fine. Why don't you go get you fucking bounty and stop worrying about the stupid angel?" Even though his words still came out a slobbery mess, she was able to decipher every hurtful one.

Grrrreeeat....the demon's blood had given him the attitude of a teenage girl. Anger and hurt visited her as his accusation hit her like a fist. "Fine, you can lie there and bleed out for all I care." The demon spun on her heels and started toward the doors, which had been ripped off their hinges during the frenzy. Andy was long gone, but if she hurried she might be able to pick up his trail. Then a rattling cough made her stop. She looked just in time to see Emmanuel crumple to the floor again, this time he didn't get back up. She remembered the way they had looked at each other before the shit hit the fan and how they had made a silent vow to not leave the other behind.

"Shit," Cadean hissed, there was no way her heart would allow her to leave him, vow or no vow. Damn it, she had grown soft toward the stupid angel and what happened to him mattered

to her. Damn. Shit. Fuck. This was one complication she didn't need. She stomped back over to his side and knelt down. Assessing the damage, she had to swallow a mouthful of bile as soon as she got a good look at him. The injury was bad, real bad. He was the color of Andy and slipping in and out of consciousness. The dark spot on his shirt was larger and there was a puddle of blood on the ground under him. It was obvious the demon's blood was the least of his worries. The gunshot wounds were a lot more serious than she'd originally thought. Cadean wasn't a healer, but she could sense his life force was weak.

Guilt weighed on her when she remembered that the last thing he did before the shots went off was look over at her. Emmanuel's face had shown concern. Not for himself, but for her. He'd let his worry for her override his focus and he'd paid a terrible price for it.

She lightly tapped his cheeks. "Come on, you dumb angel, don't you dare do this to me. Docian and Mangus will flay me alive if you die on my watch." Cadean was shocked to find her voice was shaky and her hands were trembling. She almost whooped in delight when his eyelids fluttered open, until she realized they were glazed and unfocused.

"My pants," he slurred.

"They're fine." Leave it to an angel to be concerned about fashion at a time like this. "I don't think you got that much blood on them."

Another rattling cough racked through his body and she was horrified to see blood trickle out his mouth. Why she didn't know, in her life as a demon, Cadean had seen countless deaths and injuries and not one had bothered her until now. As soon as the angel got better she was so going to kick his ass for making her care.

"Hurts." His voice was soft, as if he were barely clinging on.

"I know it does. Don't worry, I'll get you help." The trouble was she didn't know where. If she approached an angel healer they would see her as a demon and attack before she had a chance to plead her case. As for the demon healer, none of them would dare risk Lucifer's wrath by aiding his ex-bounty hunter. The harpy smiled as the solution suddenly came to her. Docian. She would know somebody willing to help, Cadean just needed to make sure Emmanuel didn't bleed out before she got him to his aunt. She slipped his arm around her shoulders and struggled to get them both on their feet. Even with her demon strength, she still staggered a bit with his dead weight.

"What in the hell do they feed you guys in Heaven?"

"Manna," he mumbled. She jumped at his voice

since she'd thought he'd slipped back into unconsciousness.

"Of course, how stupid of me to think that you angels would stoop so low as to have a pizza now and then." She started to drag him toward the door, he made a lame attempt to help her, but only managed a few clumsy steps.

"My pants." His voice was hardly a whisper now, so light she barely heard it. Cadean could feel his blood soaking through his shirt onto her skin the warmth of it brought a chill of fear.

"I hate to break it to you, big guy, but your pants are the least of your troubles. If you could perhaps find it within yourself to bleed a bit less, that would be great." Emmanuel didn't hear her lame attempt at a joke because he had finally lost his slim hold on consciousness. Cadean staggered under the added weight before she was able to recover and make her way out the door.

There was a lone demon assassin leaning against the building, a stunned look on his face as he surveyed the damage. He must have come after all the excitement. His bright red eyes narrowed in hatred when he saw Emmanuel. A growl erupted low in his throat and the spikes covering his dark green skin stood on end.

"Where did you find that piece of garbage?" the demon asked, his forked tongue flashing out to taste the air, no doubt hoping for a hint of

Emmanuel's blood.

"Shut up and help me get him to my car," Cadean commanded, sharply.

"I wouldn't give that angel piss if he were dying for a drink."

In a flash, she pulled the Glock out of Emmanuel's holster and trained in on the surprised demon. "You'll help us and smile about it the entire time or I will fill you so full of holes, you're insides will become your outsides. We clear?"

The demon nodded like a fiend, his bat-like ears flopping. "Crystal clear." He moved quickly and took Emmauel's other arm.

The archangel lolled his head to the side and gave the demon a bleary gaze. "Hey, who are you?"

"Slivinus," the demon grunted. Some of Emmauel's blood was already smearing the front of his white tee shirt.

"Sally?"

"Slivinus."

"Linus?"

"Slivinus."

"Livvy?"

"Yeah, sure. Let's go with that."

"My pants."

Slivinus shot a questioning look at Cadean so she explained, "He's worried about getting blood

on them.”

The demon was askance. “How could he not get blood on them? The bastard is bleeding so much, you’ll be lucky if he doesn’t expire before he gets to a healer.”

Slivinus jumped when Cadean snarled at him. “Shut up, he’s obviously alert enough to hear you. He won’t die on me because he knows I’ll kill him if he does.”

“You’re one confusing harpy.” The demon shook his head.

More like she was one *confused* harpy. With each minute that went by the anxiety grew in her until she was ready to leap from her skin. For some reason it mattered to her that Emmanuel lived, it mattered a lot. And it wasn’t because she knew Mangus and Docian would have her hide if he didn’t. It was something deeper, something she wasn’t ready to face yet.

Between the two demons, they finally managed to get the archangel loaded in the vehicle. Cadean thanked *Livvy* before she hopped in the car and peeled off, rushing at a dangerous speed to Docian’s apartment.

“How you doing there, big guy?” She darted a glance over at the archangel. He was slumped to the side. No longer mumbling, he’d taken on a pale, clammy look. Even more blood was pooling on the floor mat and she could only imagine how

pissed off Lil was going to be since this was her car.

Cadean told herself not to worry. Angels and demons were immortal, which meant they were damned hard to kill. But, then there was so much blood. Anxiety clawed at her insides—he'd been injured because of her. Why had he made a rookie mistake by looking over at her? Sure, he didn't know squat about demons, but as a justice angel, he'd hunted dangerous rogues before, so he knew better than to ever take his eye away from his target.

She fumbled to get her cell phone, only to almost drop it because her hands were shaking so badly. As she punched in the numbers, she noticed dully she was leaving behind bloody fingerprints because she was covered in the stuff from carrying Emmanuel. Her ankle throbbed, but that came second to her worry over him.

As soon as Docian answered, Cadean started speaking, "This is Cadean, I have Emmanuel with me and he's hurt."

"What did you do to him?" Where anyone else may have shrieked the question, the succubus asked it in a dead calm that promised retribution.

Cadean gripped the phone so tight, it hurt. Why did everyone always assume the worst of her, even her fellow demons? "It wasn't me, I just scooped him off the ground for you when he was

stupid enough to get himself shot.”

“You better be telling me the truth, harpy.”

“Look, as much as I’m enjoying this chatty-chat crap, I’m almost to your place. If you would be so kind as to come out and help me drag him inside.” She snapped the phone closed before Docian could issue any more arguments.

Docian lived in a secluded house on the city outskirts, but Cadean found it easily enough even in the dark. By the time she pulled into the driveway, it had started to snow big, fluffy flakes again. Despite the frigid temperature, the succubus was outside waiting. She was already yanking the passenger side door open before Cadean could turn the engine off.

“Emmanuel, oh my baby. What happened to you?” Docian all but sobbed. She pulled him out of the car and struggled to get him to the door. Cadean ran around to help her. Her ankle throbbed more and more with each step, but she hardly noticed the pain because she was so focused on Emmanuel. She wasn’t the only one worried either. All the way to the house, Docian continued to murmur nonsense words to her nephew.

Cadean couldn’t help but wonder how it would be to have someone to care for her that much. Ever since her mother had died, she had pretty much been alone. While her father had never been

abusive, he'd never been accused of being loving either. A lump formed in her throat as she remembered how, when she'd been led out of Hell after being exiled, her father had turned his back on her, publicly denouncing her.

Between the two females, they managed to get the heavy archangel inside and into a small bedroom. As soon as he hit the bed, Emmanuel mumbled, "My pants, Aunt Docian."

Cadean was just about ready to explain the situation, when the succubus reached in his front pocket and pulled out a full-syringe. The harpy's stomach sank when she realized it was a dose of antidote for the demon blood poisoning him. Docian quickly injected the angel before she turned and pinned Cadean with a glare. Her eyes were so full of fury they nearly crackled flames.

"You let him suffer when he had the antidote on him?"

Cadean shook her head. "No, I—"

"Wasn't it enough that he was shot and bleeding? You needed him in pain from the poison too?" The succubus took a threatening step forward, and Cadean was shocked to find herself retreating back.

"Honest, I didn't know."

"All those rumors about you going soft are such bull. You are still the same heartless, cold bitch you've always been. I know what game you're

playing. You're hoping that if Emmanuel is out of commission then you'll be able to collect that bounty all for yourself. I'll bet you're the one who shot him."

That accusation hurt. Both because it simply wasn't true and second because she'd always counted Docian as one of her few allies. "If I was the one who shot him, then why would I bring him to you for help?"

Docian hissed and bared her fangs. "Because you knew if you let him die, I would flay the skin from your back. Now get the hell out of here before I decide to do just that." When Cadean gave a reluctant gaze over at the archangel, Docian hissed again. "Go, you've done enough damage already!"

Cadean spun and almost ran out of the house. She should have been angry. She should have felt the need for revenge. But instead, she felt something else. Her eyes prickled, her throat felt like there was a lump in it, and her stomach was clenched in a knot. She hadn't felt like this since she'd been booted out of Hell.

Was it possible, that she'd just had her feelings hurt?

Cadean shook her head and she slammed the door behind her. As soon as she stepped on the porch, her boot slipped as it hit a piece of ice. With a shriek, her feet went out from under her and she

fell, twisting her already injured ankle even worse. The harpy landed painfully on the wet, cold ground and she found herself looking up into the starry sky. Several snowflakes floated down into her eyes, almost as if Mother Nature was mocking her too.

Yes, she decided she had just had her feelings hurt and it wasn't because Docian had yelled at her, it had been *why*. Cadean would never have purposely hurt Emmanuel because she'd as soon cut off one of her wings. She could no longer deny her growing attraction to the archangel and it wasn't just the newer cleaned up version. From the moment she'd locked gazes with his mocking eyes in Mangus's office, she'd been drawn to him.

Stupid! Stupid! Stupid! Like an angel would ever be interested in anything other than a quick lay from a demon like me. She'd seen from Lil's tears what happened when a demon fell for an angel and here she was trotting down the same path. *Have I lost all my collective marbles?* Yet, she couldn't lie to herself and say the feelings weren't there. Not when she was fighting every instinct to go running back into the house to his side.

Cadean wanted to be the one to care for his wounds, to hold his hand, to brush back his hair and whisper words of comfort in his ear. Her, a demon bounty hunter with the reputation of a cold-calculated killer. Yes, a killer of demons who

were the worst kind of vile trash out there, but still a killer nonetheless.

She was so going to get her heart broke over this one.

This had to be the worst day in her life. Worse yet, she felt tears slipping from the corners of her eyes and soaking into her hair. She opened her mouth and screamed out her frustration, "Fuck!"

Chapter Five

Even before Cadean limped her way into Lilith's apartment, she could smell it. The offending thing filled the hallway with a rich pine scent, mingled with pinecones and bark sap. Still, pushing the door open to see a demon decorating a Christmas tree made Cadean pause to stare in disbelief. To add insult to injury, Lil had traded her Santa hat for a set of reindeer antlers.

Lilith paused to give her an equally astonished look, a bulb hanging from her hand. "Are you okay, Caddy?" Her voice cracked and was tight with concern.

"I'm fine." Cadean winced as she walked in. She'd kicked off her shoes as soon as she'd entered the building, yet each step she took caused more pain to shoot through her ankle. Since Lilith lived in the same building as humans, Cadean had worn a cloak to cover her wings, she took it off and Lilith let out a loud gasp as she dropped the ornament. It hit the floor with a *pop* and shattered

into dozens of red shards.

"I knew I smelled blood." The succubus ran over to her friend. "You're hurt!"

"Smell deeper and you will see it's angel's not demon's."

Lil's perfect nose wrinkled up. "You're right." Her eyes grew so wide they almost popped out of the sockets. "On no, you destroyed Docian's nephew."

"Why does everyone assume that I hurt Emmanuel?" Cadean felt wounded. Even her best friend had immediately jumped to the wrong conclusion.

"Emmanuel?" Lil echoed, tilting her head to the side thoughtfully.

"What?"

"The way you say his name. It's like you're making love to it with your mouth."

"Get your mind out of the gutter." Cadean breathed heavily. "It's not like that between us."

Lil paused and looked more closely at the harpy. "Your eyes are red. Like you been—crying." Disbelief mixed with outrage in the succubus' tone. "Did that stupid angel hurt your feelings or try something with you? Because if he so much as harmed one feather on your wings, I'll rip his guts out and feed them to him while their still warm."

"No, Emmanuel didn't do anything. He

couldn't because, thanks to me, he got shot and poisoned."

"Oh, is that all? I'm sure he felt just fine once you injected him with the antidote," Lil replied airily. "Unless the idiot was too stupid to carry it on him."

"No," Cadean sniffed. She would not going to cry again, damn it. "He was just with a demon too stupid to know that it was in his front pocket. So when I got him to Docian's, she thought I did it on purpose because we're both going after the same bounty."

"That bitch!" Lil exclaimed. "You may be ruthless, but you never fought dirty."

"No, she was right to yell at me. Emmanuel tried to tell me, but I was too stupid to figure it out. I let him down." She started to limp her way to the bathroom. She really could use a healer, but she was going to be denied even that small bit of comfort.

"Oh my God, you like him, don't you?"

Cadean paused at the doorway to her room, but didn't look at her friend. She couldn't stand for the succubus to see the despair that Cadean knew would be stamped in her eyes. "I told you earlier, Lil, demons and angels don't belong together."

She shambled into the bedroom and shut the door before the succubus could argue. Stripping off the ruined clothing, she went into the

bathroom and took a long scalding shower to wash off the blood and stench of demon fear from her body. The harpy stayed in there a long time before she got out and dressed in a tank top and pajama bottoms.

When she walked back in her room, she found Lil on her bed, waiting. There was a carton of ice cream and two spoons. "I called and ordered in some pizza, but I thought we could start with desert while we waited," the succubus announced.

A reluctant smile crept up on Cadean's lips. "What's all this?"

"A pity party complete with fattening food and bad movies. Now get up here and let Nursie Lil take care of you." Cadean obeyed, surprised when the succubus propped her injured ankle up and put an ice bag on it. "I'm not a real healer, but I'm as good as you're going to get."

"You're doing fine." Cadean settled back into the pillows. Lilith snuggled into her side and the harpy felt herself relax and actually snuggle back.

"Don't come home again covered in blood like that. You scared me."

Cadean pulled back, surprised. In all the centuries she'd know the succubus, she'd never heard her admit to fear. Not even in the heat of battle. "Next time I have an archangel bleed out on me, I'll try to remember that," she replied tartly.

Lil gave her arm a playful punch. "I'm serious.

You 're all I got in this world and it would destroy me to lose you."

"If I'm all you have, then that's pretty damn sad."

"Stop it."

"Okay, but only because you have ice cream." They slipped into a comfortable silence.

"You know what?" Lilith asked, finally breaking it. "I know demons are capable of love."

"Why's that?"

"Because I love you like a sister, Caddy and if anyone ever hurts your feelings like that again, I'm going to destroy them."

Cadean laid her head on Lil's shoulder. "I love you, too. Thank you for being there for me."

"Anytime."

* * * *

Emmanuel woke up and immediately sat up with a gasping lurch. "Cadean!"

"It's okay, honey. Lie back and let the healer finish," Docian's voice drifted through the haze to him.

Emmanuel slowly realized he wasn't in the ruined nightclub any longer. Somehow he had ended up back at his aunt's. Another demon was there with her, one he'd never seen before. It appeared to be a healer, although the chants it was

using were in demon talk and not the normal melodic ones the angels used. The demon reached out with a clawed hand and Emmanuel flinched.

"Don't worry," Docian soothed. "I couldn't bring you an angel healer, so I had to bring one of my own kind. He means you no harm."

Somewhat ashamed he'd reacted that way, Emmanuel relaxed and let the demon urge him back toward the pillows. It was a dark skinned male, with ratty orange hair and amber eyes that glowed eerily. Yet there was kindness in his gaze.

"What happened to Cadean?" he asked his aunt. He felt a sudden urge to go back to sleep, no doubt the dark demon was putting the compulsion on him to go into a healing slumber.

"She brought you here and then I kicked her out," Docian snarled.

"She took care of me?"

"Quite the opposite." By the tone of his aunt's voice, she wasn't pleased with the harpy.

Emmanuel wanted to argue her case. From the snapshot flashes he remembered since he'd been poisoned, Cadean had looked out for him. Hell, if she'd actually dragged his sorry ass out of the demon nightclub. She'd probably saved his life, but before he could say another word, the darkness of slumber overcame him and he knew no more.

* * * *

Cadean stood in front of Docian's house, her hand poised to knock. She asked herself for the hundredth time if she was being an idiot for even coming. The harpy knew that she wouldn't be welcome, but for the two days since she'd left him, she'd been unable to calm her worries about the archangel. When Lilith finally told her that she spotted Docian working at the bar, Cadean had seen her chance to check up on him.

Now that she was finally there, doubt made it hard to knock. What if Emmanuel was mad at her for not getting him the antidote? Did he think she'd done it purposefully too?

No, she decided, it would be better if she just left him alone. The demon pivoted around and took one step off the porch before the door suddenly swung open. She jerked back around only to find herself locking gazes with Emmanuel. His color was back and he looked as yummy as ever. Instead of his usual uniform of jeans, he'd swapped out for a pair of gray sweat pants and dark blue tee shirt.

Cadean searched his warm eyes to see if there was anger, but all she saw was a mixture of confusion and...happiness? Could it be he was glad to see her, even after everything that happened?

Cadean plastered a smile on her face, trying all the time to ignore the girl school pitter-pat her heart was doing. Damn, she was one step away from wearing a shirt with his name stamped on it. She could just see it now, *Emmanuel's property*.

"Cadean, what are you doing here?" he asked, somewhat cautiously.

"I just wanted to make sure you didn't do something stupid like croak on me. Mangus would probably dock my bounty if I let Docian's nephew die on my watch." She tried with every fiber of her being to make her voice sound flippant. There was no way she was going to fess up to actually worrying about him. He'd probably get grossed out then slam the door in her face.

The archangel gave her that crooked grin she loved so much as he stepped back. "Why don't you come in? I promise not to bite."

Oh, but I might like that, her inner perv chanted. Cadean told it to shut up as she stepped inside. "I can only stay a minute." Because if she stayed longer she might do something stupid like give into temptation and wrap her body around him as she ran her hands through his hair.

He shut the door and her heart went from a pitter-pat to an almost painful thud-thud. Suddenly aware that, for the first time, they were alone, a naughty thrill went through as she wondered which bedroom was his. He led her into

the kitchen and she had no choice but to follow him despite the fact he was leading her deeper inside the house. Cadean was surprised to see Docian, badass demon that she was, had her country style kitchen decorated with roosters. Somehow the image of Mangus sitting at the oak table, enjoying a cuppa didn't quite fit.

"I wanted to apologize for my aunt," Emmanuel said as he opened a cabinet and got two mugs out. "She shouldn't have treated you the way she did."

"It's okay."

"No, it's not. She just can be overprotective at times because she lost her son, James, and I'm pretty much all she has."

Docian had lost a son? That was news to Cadean. "She never told me." She gave a slight shake of her head.

"Yeah, that was when she turned demon. As soon as she his body, she renounced her vows to Michael. It just broke her spirit." He poured coffee in both of the mugs and held one out to her.

"Not all of us became demons by renouncing our vows." She took the mug from him as she caught his gaze. "When my parents moved to Hell, I was still a young child, so I had yet to take my archangel vows. I didn't become a demon until I was out of my teens. That was when I bowed down before Lucifer and pledged my loyalty to

him."

"You don't ever have to explain yourself to me, Cadean."

She took a step forward, closing the distance between them. "For some insane reason I want to. Why is that?"

"Probably the same reason I could think of nothing but you these past few days."

Cadean couldn't hide the surprised look that popped on her face. "Really?"

"Really." Emmanuel leaned closer and she drank in his scent. It was dark, spicy and all male. "Now go ahead and finish telling me your story. I would love to learn everything about you."

She tried hard to ignore the thrill that went through her at his words. "My mother was a harpy, but she was so loving and wanted only the best for me. My father, on the other hand, would have loved nothing better than to throw me out into the demon world in order to mold me into his evil image. Mother fought to protect me, and she did a damn good job at it, too. Then one day she went after a bounty. It was a demon assassin who was killing entire demon families. Kind of like what happened to Andy's family. My mother tracked him down and was close to finding him."

"What happened?" he reached out and stroked her hair and it felt so good she didn't pull back.

"He found her first and destroyed her." Cadean

closed her eyes as he stoked the side of her cheek. "That very same day I swore my loyalty to Lucifer and he made me a harpy so I could finish the job she started."

"Were you successful?"

"Yes." She opened her lids. "I found him and killed him slowly, and I enjoyed every minute of his pain, which is why an angel like you shouldn't even be talking to me let alone touching me the way you are." Determined, she set her mug on the counter and started to turn so she could walk away.

Emmanuel grabbed her around the shoulders, halted her retreat and captured her lips in a heated kiss. She put her hands on his chest to push him away, but quickly gave up that plan and swayed closer to him instead. As soon as she surrendered, he moaned into her mouth and she became putty in his hands. Desire coursed through Cadean as she grew wet between her thighs and her breasts ached to be touched.

She grabbed the front of his shirt and jerked him even closer as she began to kiss him back in earnest. Cadean slipped her tongue in to taste him before she nipped at his bottom lip. It was as if she had been starving for centuries and Emmanuel was the best meal she'd ever sampled.

Why had she been fighting this? She would take him to bed, rock his world and get him out of

her system for good. Then she would be able to focus on getting Andy and collecting her cash. Cadean pulled back long enough to yank his shirt up and off, so she could see that muscular chest. He lifted his arms to help her before he claimed her mouth once again.

"Please," she whispered against his lips.

"Please what?" he brushed his hands against the tops of her breasts and her nipples grew hard in anticipation. "I'll give you anything."

"Make love to me." *Make me feel wanted. Make me feel whole. Just for once in my miserable immortal life.*

"Only if you promise that I can taste, kiss and lick every part of you." Emmanuel trailed kisses down her jaw line and throat. "I want to learn every single inch of your beautiful body. That way it will be burned in my brain and I won't ever be able to forget it."

Cadean had to grip his arms so her knees didn't buckle underneath her. "When you put it that way, how can I refuse?"

"Not in here, let's go to my bedroom." He looked down at her and the desire in his eyes almost scorched her flesh. "When I take you, I want you lying on my bed with nothing covering you, but me and the sheets

Once she nodded in agreement, he took her by the hand and led her up the stairs. The only sound

was her high-heeled boots clicking on the hardwood floors. "What if Docian comes home?" she asked once they reached the top. "I'm not exactly her favorite demon."

"Don't worry." He guided her into the same small bedroom she'd taken him when he was injured. Walking backward, he paused at the foot of the bed to give her a devilish grin. "My aunt won't be home until the bar closes. That gives us hours to have some fun."

That thought brought a growl of satisfaction to her lips and as she decided not to let a good opportunity go unused. He let out a yelp of surprise when she planted her hands on his chest and gave him a push so that he tumbled back onto the bed. Now that she'd decided she was going to play, she wanted to take the lead, and before he had time to recover, she crawled up after him and straddled his hips.

* * * *

Emmanuel looked up at the harpy, taking in her raw beauty. Her raven hair was messed up like a sex vixen and her lips were swollen and red from kisses. *His kisses*. Those exotic eyes of hers were glazed with passion as she gazed down at him, her cheeks pink with arousal. Unable to resist, he grabbed her hips and thrust his cock up toward

her core. Even though she wore leather pants, he could still feel her heat and it nearly drove him over the edge.

“Kiss me, Cadean.” She immediately obeyed, leaning down, her hair cascading down and making an ebony curtain around them.

The smell of jasmine invaded his senses as he delved into her sweet tasting mouth. He sucked her tongue and she let out a little gasp, gyrating against him. Emmanuel inched his fingers up to the back of her leather bustier, the soft feathers from her wings tickling the back of his hands. He grabbed the zipper and slowly pulled down, giving her time to change her mind, but she didn’t and soon he had the top off and tossed to the side.

Her breasts were perfectly rounded and rosy tipped and his mouth watered to taste her nipples. However, she had other plans, leaving his mouth, she kissed him all the way down his body, his jaw, neck, chest, before she swirled her tongue around his navel and moved lower. She paused at the waist of his sweatpants giving him several teasing passes of her tongue. Finally, just when he was on the verge of losing control, she had mercy on him and pulled the pants down to his knees. His cock sprang free and she immediately wrapped her lips around him and sucked deeply. Emmanuel fisted his hands in the comforter and resisted the urge to thrust further into her hot mouth. The last thing he

wanted to do was ruin the moment by rushing things like some virgin teen. She ran her tongue up the tender underside of him, then swiped it around the crown before taking him in again.

"That's it sweetie," he urged. "Suck me just like that."

He let her work her magic on him for a few more blissful moments before he sat up and twisted them both to the side, so he ended up on top of her. Along the way, he kicked off his sweats so the only thing separating them was the leather of her pants. Her soft breasts were crushed against his chest, the pebble hard nipples teasing him. Cadean's gaze widened at the sudden shift of positions.

"Why did you make me stop?" she asked as she licked her glistening lips.

"I am not going to come until you've found pleasure. I refuse to allow myself release until I've heard you scream my name at least twice. Your needs will always come before mine, and I'm going to start by worshiping every inch of your body."

A gasp of surprise passed through her mouth. "Every inch?"

"Every. Inch." Just so she knew what he meant he caressed her pussy with his fingers. She reacted as if he'd touched her with a hot iron, arching her body up, her hips rolling so she could

rub against his hand. "Are you wet for me, Cadean?" He popped open the button of her pants, but made no move to lower the zipper.

"Yes." She let out a long moan as she dug her fingernails into his back.

"Yes, what?" He ratcheted the zipper down a couple of teeth, then went no further.

"I'm wet."

"Wet for who?" Again, he just barely lowered the zipper. It was pure agony denying himself, but he was going to make her admit the truth.

"Wet for you." She lifted her hips in a silent plea.

"For who? Say my name."

"Emmanuel! I'm wet for Emmanuel. Now stop playing around before I cut your heart out with my dagger."

He chuckled as her mean streak showed through. God, he loved his little harpy. He finished lowering the zipper and slipped his fingers in to caress her slippery folds. "Fuck," he exclaimed, not caring it was very unangelic to curse. "You weren't kidding." He slid one finger inside her as he leaned down to take her nipple into his mouth.

She let out a hoarse sob and dug her fingernails even deeper into his flesh. The pain didn't even begin to compare to the one in his cock. He wanted nothing more than to strip off her tight

pants and bury himself to the hilt inside her, but he forced himself to remain in control. He had promised her two orgasms and damn it, he was an archangel who kept his word.

Emmanuel gave her breast a love bite, then used his tongue to ease away the sting. All the while, he kept pumping his finger in and out of her, using the heel of his hand to rub against her clit. She moved her hips up and down, riding it while her fluids filled his palm. He couldn't wait to taste her, but that would wait a bit. Right now he was enjoying her breasts too much

Cadean's hips moved faster and faster as she came closer to the brink. Finally, she reached her release and screamed his name, just as he'd predicted she would. He didn't even let her catch her breath before he started to work his way down, running his tongue over her sternum and then her belly. The flesh quivered under his touch as a fine sheen of sweat broke out over her body.

Once he got to her pants, he slowly inched them down, enjoying each succulent piece of skin revealed to him. Once he had her pants off, he knelt at her feet. "Spread your legs open for me, little demon. I want to see all of you." When she obeyed, revealing the pink flesh hidden to everyone but him, he sucked in a breath between his teeth. "Nice. Do realized how beautiful you are?"

Cadean shook her head. "Not beautiful, demon."

He licked up the center of her pussy. "You're my demon," he crooned before going in for another taste. "And you are the most beautiful female I've ever seen. Don't you realize ever since I first saw you that night in Manugus's office, all I could think about was you?"

She opened her mouth as if to argue the point, but instead let out a shriek of pleasure as he circled his tongue around her clit before sucking it. Emmanuel closed his eyes in pleasure as her essence rolled over his mouth. She tasted like sweet honey mixed with spices and he nearly came on the spot it was so good. Cadean was so primed from his earlier petting that it didn't take long for her to have her second orgasm. The archangel continued to lave and nip at her all the way through it, reluctant to leave. That was until she pleaded, "Please, I need you inside me now."

He gave her one last kiss before he moved up and settled himself between her thighs. Emmanuel planned on taking it slow, but all bets were off as soon as she wrapped those mile-high legs around his waist and thrust up to meet him halfway. With a groan of surrender, he plunged into her moist heat with one hard surge. Her body yielded to him, her channel tight around his cock.

"Yes, oh sweet Lucifer, just like that," she cried

as she tilted her pelvis up so he went even deeper inside of her. "Harder. Faster."

Emmanuel gave into her wishes, thrusting into her hard and fast. Sweat made their bodies slick and they let their hands wander all over and learn each other as he continued to make love to her. He waited until she found her release a third time before he let go and finally allowed himself to come. Her pussy milked his cock as his semen shot inside her in pulsating jets.

After it was over, he collapsed at her side, so he didn't crush her, then he tucked her to his chest. She stiffened. "What are you doing?"

"Cuddling." He caressed her hip and felt a twinge of sadness. When a male found his angel mate, he marked her the first time they made love. Intricate designs that resembled tattoos, they were of the male's family symbol. Emmanuel swallowed hard as he rubbed her unblemished flesh. By all rights, his mark should be there, a black panther curled up around a long sword. But because Cadean was a demon, that would never happen and it made Emmanuel want to roar to the Heavens about the unfairness of it all. Who cared that she was a demon? He could not think of a female of more worth than she. She started to wiggle away and he pulled her close again.

"My wings are going to get in your face," she argued.

"Good, I like the feel of them rubbing against me." He kissed her bare shoulder, smiling to himself when he saw gooseflesh rising in reaction. "Now relax and let me hold you."

"Why?" her voice was caustic as she remained ramrod stiff in his arms.

"Because it pleases me."

"Emmanuel, I'm a demon."

"Uh-huh, I was already aware of that."

"Angels may screw demons, but they don't cuddle with them."

He let out a displeased grunt. "What we did wasn't screwing and you're not just some demon, you're *my* demon."

She twisted around to look at him, her eyes that were usually full of anger were now full of worry and tenderness. "Don't be a fool. I can't be your anything, no matter how much you would like to be otherwise. You have no idea what I'm capable of, what I've done. I destroyed countless demons before I left Hell."

"Docian told me harpies are justice demons and that one of the reasons they retain their beauty is because, despite their vows to Lucifer, they help to protect others from harm."

"Other demons, not humans or other innocents like your kind does." Her voice was so despondent that it twisted his heart. "You need to face it, Emmanuel. There can never be anything

between us.”

Emmanuel decided to let her think she had won the argument. Even though he wanted nothing more than to declare his feelings for her right then and there, he didn’t want to scare her away. Capturing her mouth in a tender kiss, he was pleased when she melted against his chest. “Fine then, Cadean. Just give me this one night. That’s all I ask.”

With a sigh of surrender, she tilted her hips back so her ass was bumping against his growing erection. He reached around to cup her full breasts, rubbing his thumbs over her nipples. A small whimper came from her as she arched even more against him. “Yes,” she agreed in a breathy whisper. “I can give us this one night.”

Not wanting to give her the chance to change her mind, he thrust into her from behind. She let out a gasp of surprise as her body yielded to fit his cock, and the archangel started to move in and out of *his* demon. “Then I’ll have to make sure it’s one you’ll never forget.”

Chapter Six

Lilith finished clipping the last of the Christmas lights into place before standing back to admire her work. It had taken an hour, but now every window in her apartment was aglow with the colorful, twinkling bulbs. She couldn't wait to see Cadean's face when she came home and spotted them. For the past week, half the fun had been seeing her friend's humbug attitude. Lil was the only one who dared goad the harpy. But then, she was the only true friend Cadean had.

All of the decorating had left the demon feeling a bit puckish so she went to the fridge to get some angel's blood. As a succubus, she needed it to stay sane. If she were to deny herself too long, then she would become a demented, shrieking monster. Of course, there were some that already accused her of being just that, but they didn't count because most of them were saying it out of spite and were females. For some reason they always got mad at her when they found out their boyfriends had

played with her. As if it didn't take two to do the horizontal tango. She snorted as she yanked open the fridge and yanked out the bottle of pure angel O-negative.

She'd just brought it to her lips, when the front door burst open with a loud bang. Startled, she dropped it, the sound of breaking glass mixing with her scream. Before she had time to get her defenses up, a pair of demon assassins were on her, one on each arm, pinning her to the kitchen wall. She barred her fangs with a hiss and made to bite.

Before she could, a third demon came up and squeezed her throat then slammed her head back against the wall with a painful thud. For several seconds, Lil saw stars and she thought she was going to lose consciousness. Knowing that would make her helpless and at their mercy, she shook it off.

Anger and fear shot through her as she recognized the leader, Klausous—one of Beelzebub's top flunkies. He was tall, muscular and had black skin that was scaly looking. Although he had red eyes that seemed to burn as they looked back at her, everything else on his face looked human. He even had normal teeth and not fangs. She winced as he squeezed her throat even tighter. It felt like he had some sharp claws though. She tried to talk, but all that came out was

a high-pitched gasping sound.

"Do I have your attention, succubus?" the demon asked.

His voice was smooth and oily, but so full of evil a shudder slid down her spine. When she didn't answer right away, he slammed her into the wall again, crushing one of her wings in the process. The pain was so intense tears sprang to her eyes. Lil fought them, she had been taught since she had been old enough to walk never to give anyone the satisfaction of seeing her cry. The only one she'd ever let her guard down enough to do so was Cadean.

Klausous slammed her against the wall again. "I asked you a question, whore. Do I have your attention?"

"Yes." Her voice came out as a hoarse whisper and she vowed to make this bastard pay for it someday. Nobody, but nobody touched her when she didn't want them to and lived long to talk about it. She may be a sex demon, but that didn't mean she couldn't be a violent bitch if she wanted to be.

"Ah, Lilith, don't look at me like that." The demon clicked his tongue. "I can see the vengeance in your eyes. You will listen to me and you will do what I ask."

"I'm not doing shit for you." That earned her another slam into the wall. She bit back a scream

as her other wing bent in protest.

"You will do what I ask and you want to know why?"

The cold, calm way he asked the question sent a shock of fear through Lil. Klausous was confident he would get his way, which meant he was pretty damn sure he had the upper hand. "Is this where you threaten to kill me?" She made a big show of rolling her eyes. Hell would freeze over before she admitted she was afraid. "Like I haven't heard that before from demons a lot bigger and meaner than you." The succubus let out an exaggerated yawn. "Boring."

The demon let out an ear-piercing snarl as he got within inches of her face. "I will do worse than that, you bitch. I will throw you in a cell and watch you slowly waste away from lack of blood and sex. I know all about your kind, demon whore. You need to fuck as much as feed. Without it, you will die a slow painful death. Then when I get done with you, I'll come back and destroy your little harpy friend."

"Ha! I'd love to see you try to hurt Cadean. She'll hand your ass to you without even breaking a sweat."

The demon leaned even closer and Lilith worked hard to hold back a gag. Most demons smelled like decay, but big, black and ugly took the cake. He gave her that skin-crawling smile. "I

have several dozen demon assassins working under me, plus a pack of Hounds from Hell. How well do you think your fine-fathered friend would do against them?"

A cold sweat broke out over her flesh as her stomach knotted in fear. Demon assassins were bad enough, but Hounds were ten times worse. Former angel shifters trapped forever in their new demon beast form, they were heartless killers. Lilith choked back a sob. The last thing she was going to do was show this prick a moment of weakness. "If you hurt her, I'll rip you from the inside out."

"You're not in the position to make threats, Lilith. Now are you going to be a good little succubus and help me or not?"

She curled her lip and bared her fangs. "Fuck you." After centuries of living in Hell, she'd learned one thing. Never make a deal with a demon. Work with this prick or not, either way she was probably going to end up dead. At least Cadean would know Lilith didn't betray her. The hold on her neck became even more painful as the demon's claws tore into her tender flesh. She bit her lip to keep from crying out, drawing blood in the process.

"I know the harpy is hunting down a angst demon," Klausous revealed. "I also know she is close to you, so it would stand to reason she

would tell you what little she may know about his location. Share the information with me and I'll let you live."

Laughter bubbled over Lilith's blood covered lips. Maniacal and high-pitched it made the demons flanking Klausous exchange uneasy looks. One of them even let go of her arm and took a weary step back.

"Bullshit," she challenged, her voice raspy from the injuries. "We both know you're going to finish me off. I may be a sex demon, but I'm not an idiot."

Thin lips curled up into a cruel joke of a smile as the demon leered at her. "Then how about this? You tell me what I want and I'll make it a quick, easy death."

"Quick? Easy?" Her breaths came out as rattles as the air bubbled over her savaged vocal cords. "I heard that about you from the succubi who were dumb and desperate enough to screw you."

A growl was her only warning before the demon pulled back his free hand to clip her in the jaw. Lil took the punch in stride because the distraction allowed her to slip her hand behind her and inch out the small dagger tucked into the waistband of her skirt. While she didn't think for one second, she was going to get out of this alive, she wanted to take a piece of this bastard before she went. She palmed the weapon, taking cold

comfort in the familiar hilt.

"Have it your way," Klausous yelled, his spittle spraying her face. "Maybe finding your body cut into pieces will throw you harpy friend off her game."

Lil responded by lobbing a bloody lougie right in his face. "Shows how little you know. Cadean is never off her game. She will avenge me too. Remember that next time you walk down a dark street without your two buddies here protecting your sorry ass."

Grapping the front of her top, he jerked her close and put his mouth close to her ear. "Looks like you chose the long, hard, painful death. I was hoping for that." His hot breath violated her flesh and the rank scent assaulted her nostrils. Rotting meat and garlic, a mouth not even a mama could love. His tongue laved at her shoulder and she almost shrieked. Oh gawd, it was scaly. She so did not want to know what his cock looked like. She may be a succubus, but not even she was that desperate to take that thing for a test drive.

With a shriek, she jabbed the dagger up, burying in deep in Klausous's stomach. Hot demon blood spray onto her hand and Lilith hissed in appreciation. While not nearly as tasty as angel's blood, demon's blood was very satisfying to the palate. Especially if she was the one who shed it on the first place.

The demon hissed in pain as he let go of her throat. Lil crumpled to the ground, heaving coughs racking her body. Klausous retreated several steps, his gait unsteady. Half-mad with pain and half-mad with fear, Lil started in with that crazy laugh of hers again. Casting a jaded eye her way, the demon wrenched the dagger out of his stomach and threw it to the side. "That was a big mistake," he declared, darkly.

Then the three demons descended on the succubus with deadly intent.

* * * *

Cadean woke up to the smell of eggs, bacon and coffee. Stretching out, she slowly opened her eyes and smiled when she saw the now familiar features of Emmanuel's bedroom. So it hadn't been one big wet dream after all. She really had just spent the past evening having the best sex of her immortal life.

Then the smile slowly faded to be replaced by bone numbing fear. She had just spent the past evening having the best sex of her immortal life with an angel! An angel, who no doubt, was probably already regretting his mistake and looking for a way to get rid of her. Her earlier words to Lilith rang in her head, *Demons and angels don't belong together.*

With a curse, she reluctantly jumped out of the warm bed that carried Emmanuel's scent and started to gather up her scattered clothes, slipping them on as she went. She was down to her second boot, hopping on one foot, when he appeared in the door, a tray of food in his hands. He cocked one dark brow at her. "You weren't going to sneak away without so much as goodbye, were you?"

She waved a hand at the breaking dawn light filtering through the window. "The nights over, time to get back to work."

He set the tray down on the dresser before crossing his arms over his broad chest. Since he was back to his uniform of jeans and dark shirt, he was obviously planning on hunting for Andy too. "I never pegged you for a chicken, Cadean."

She turned on him, her cheeks burning with embarrassment and hurt. "I don't look like a chicken."

"I meant, I never thought I would see you running away from something. I thought you were braver than that."

Oh, so he wasn't making a snide comment over her wings, still the coward remark stung.

"I just thought it would be better for all of us for your aunt not to catch me in her favorite nephew's bed."

"She's hardly ever home." With a guarded expression, he picked a piece of bacon up from the

plate and walked over to her. He held it in front of her mouth and she was stunned to find her lips parting to take his offering. Even after she started to chew, he let his fingers caress them. It was all she could do not to slip her tongue out to lick his thumb.

Crap and crackers, that smoldering look of his should be outlawed. A gal could lose all her common sense once he directed it at her. Dark and full of sensual promise, it made her so wet that all she wanted to do was strip off both of their clothes and eat breakfast off his nude body.

A moan almost slipped out of her before she was able to tap it down. What she needed was a cold shower followed by an ice water bath. What in the hell had gotten into her? Last night, she and Emmanuel had made love in about every position and then a few made up just for the occasion. The archangel should be out of her system and yet she found herself wanting to touch him even more. She pulled back from him and retreated to the other side of the room, so she could put some space between them. She needed to think, and being in close proximity to him interfered.

"We need to get back to looking for Andy." Her hands were trembling so she hid them behind her back like some naughty child. "We've wasted enough time as it is."

"We?" He snagged another slice of bacon and

ate it. "So you've decided to take me up on my offer?"

"I figured it would be the best way for me to keep you out of my way while I looked out after you."

Annoyance flickered over his face. "This may come as a surprise to you, but I can take care of myself."

"Really? Why did you get shot in the club?" She cocked her head to the side in a sarcastic mocking way. "Oooooohhhh....right. It was because you looked away from your target to look at me. Only a wet behind the ears, newbie would make a mistake like that."

"True," he conceded with a nod, an arrogant grin on lips. "I do have one question for you. How was it you knew I was looking at you?" When she didn't answer, he walked forward so they were a mere breath away. "I'll tell you why, it was because you were looking at me. So that means *both* of us lost focus that night. I think we need to work together so I can keep an eye out for *you*."

Indignation quickly followed by fury shot threw her body. In all of her years as a bounty hunter, nobody had ever accused her of incompetence. Being a softie, yes. Not being true to Lucifer, sure. But never ever incompetent and that was what Emmanuel had basically just called her. A growl rumbled up from her chest as she

raised her fist to hit him.

Like a flash, his hand shot out and caught her wrist before she made contact. His own anger evident in his eyes, he said, "I let you get away with hitting me before, but never forget I'm archangel and I'm not about to let anyone make me their pussy."

Okay, that should not have turned her on as much as it did. Now she was pissed and horny. "Fine, you have the balls to play in the big kids' sandbox. Now let me go so I can go home and shower. I'll meet you in a few hours and we can start hunting for Andy. Together this time."

He slowly released her wrist, yet kept his body close to hers. "Fine, I have an idea where he may be."

"Where?" Despite her frustration, she was curious.

"While you were sleeping, I started searching the internet for places an angst demon like Andy could find all kinds of nummy-num bad vibes. Over on the East Side of the city there are some abandoned houses that are being used by drug addicts. With all those depressed and strung out humans it will be like a candy store to him."

Cadean was impressed, the archangel was learning fast. Maybe having him around wouldn't be a liability after all. "Sounds like a good idea."

"You don't have to look like you just admitted

to some embarrassing crime." He chuckled and moved away from her. She immediately missed his warm scent. "Archangels are more than muscles and swords. Once in a while we are known to use our brains, too."

"I didn't mean it that way."

"Sure you didn't," he sounded unconvinced.

Not wanting to see him hurt for one second, which showed how dick-crazy she'd become, she went over to him and ran her hand up his chest. "You know, I could take my shower here."

The heated, fuck-me look that came into his eyes would have made a Frost Demon turn to steam. "If you did, I would have to insist I take one with you. I mean it is so important to conserve water where you can."

She giggled. She actually, frigging giggled like some lovesick teen still in angel school. "I didn't know angels were going green."

A smile played on the corner of his lips as he wrapped and arm around her waist to bring her close to his hard body. "We all have to do our part to save the Earth."

He captured her answering laughter in his mouth as he kissed her with such a passion she was sure her wings were going to be singed. *Oh God, I am in so much trouble. When he finally leaves me, it is going to break my heart.* Pushing those troubling thoughts aside, she popped open the

button on his pants and let herself get lost in the passion.

Chapter Seven

They were closing in on him. Even though Andy couldn't hear them, he knew they were coming closer and closer to his hiding spot behind the pile of scrap wood. Wet splashing sounds echoed down the brick lined alley, and the only light coming in was from the one streetlamp that had survived being shattered by rocks.

There was no sound of footsteps. There were no shadows dancing on the wall. But Andy knew without a doubt they were closing in on him. He could smell them. The hot, stinky, cloying sent of decay saturated the air, all but screaming an announcement that demons were a coming and they were mean fuckers too.

The angst demon clutched the front of his jean jacket together in a futile attempt to keep out the cold winter air as he let anger wash over his body. The anger was directed at the demons stalking him, the two bounty hunters his uncle had sent after him, and, most of all, it was directed at his

father.

If not for his father and his damn con, then Andy's mother would still be alive. But no, his idiot dad had decided to lie to everyone that he had made an elixir that could undo the undoable. Turn demons back into their former angel state. Andy gave a silent snicker of disgust. When ol' Pop had first came up with the scheme and started searching for the highest bidder, Andy had thought there was nobody stupid enough to believe it. How wrong he'd been. Not only had they believed it, but they had been willing to kill for it. And now they were hunting Andy down because they thought he had the elixir in his possession. The young demon knew they would slaughter him too, just like they had his parents.

He should have gone to his Uncle Mangus immediately, but Andy had been a vortex of pain, anger, and despair and the only thing that could sooth an angst demon in a time like that was to be around others that were suffering too, be they human, demon, angel or hippopotamus. Then Andy had seen the two bounty hunters at the club and realized his uncle had put a bounty on him. He ordered his own nephew to be hunted down like a dog.

Obviously Mangus didn't trust Andy and wanted Andy neutralized, so Andy wasn't about to trust him either. Maybe Mangus had been the

one who sent the killers in the first place to take out his own sister and brother-in-law. Maybe he'd believed all the false promises and sought out the bogus elixir for himself. Maybe Andy was next on his list. It was no secret that most bounties were dead or alive orders.

Still, the pretty harpy back at the club had told him to run. So maybe she was on his side. *Yeah right, and maybe pigs have sprouted wings and were flying through the skies of Detroit.* Nobody was on his side, they hadn't been since that night he came home late and stumbled over his parent's ravaged bodies.

No, he was alone and he was going to have to start learning to fend for himself, starting with whoever was stalking him tonight. He shifted his weight to the balls of his feet and waited for his enemy to show themselves.

Finally, two demon assassins seemed to materialize from the shadows. Dark gray skin covered in black leather had worked well to conceal them in the night. They were both a huge bulk of muscles, sharp teeth and claws. One carried a broadsword, the other a heavy looking war hammer. The thin light glinted off the flat head of the deadly weapon. Andy gulped, he'd almost rather tangle with the sword than that thing.

"I don't see the little shit anywhere," the sword

demon grumbled around its buck-fangs. "I think you were blowing air out your ass."

"I'm certain I saw him dart down here," hammer demon snarled back. Andy soaked up the anger coming from both the demons, letting it fill his depleted stores.

"You are always seeing things that aren't there. You're as twitchy as a virginal female on her mating night."

Virginal female on her mating night? Was this jerk a throwback from medieval times? He sounded like he should be working at the Renaissance Festival. Andy gave a disgusted shake of his head as the anger he absorbed started to amplify, a buzzing sensation filled him, making him feel warm and full for the first time in days. Still he wanted more, so he let some of it leak out of him and back to the demons. Not much, just enough for them to get more edgy. He learned a long time ago to give out doses of anger in little bit and pieces, otherwise he couldn't control the results as easy. Kind of what happened at the club the other night. While he had meant to make the guards attack one another, he had sent the whole joint into a frenzy.

Oopsie. My bad.

Okay, controlled doses it was. Just enough to get the two demons presently stalking him worked up into a lather. The last thing Andy

needed was a riot on his hands if the humans got overwhelmed. That would draw so much attention from the demons hunting him that he might as well be stamping his ass with a sign that said, *Fucked up angst demon, right here! Danger! Danger!*

His suggestion, however subtle, did the trick though. One of the demons in the alley gave his partner's shoulder an angry shove. "I'm really getting sick of your attitude. Who are you to criticize the way I talk?"

The other demon hissed in protest before delivering a shove of his own. "Maybe, I'm sick of listening to you drone on and on for hours at a time. Your constant bitching is seriously beginning to piss me off."

Andy smiled to himself, despite the fact the cold was beginning to bite more into his body the longer he stayed crouched on the wet street. When was the last time he'd truly been warm? How long since he'd eaten a decent meal? Slept in a soft bed? A growl rumbled in his throat as he bared his small fangs. Baby fangs really because he was a kid after all. He should be worrying about school and shit like that. Not about whether he was going to live until Christmas.

The demons in the alley were now in a full-fledged battle with each other. The one swung his war hammer causing blood and gristle to splatter

the wall above Andy's head. Shudders of relief rocketed Andy's body as the dying demon's agony and despair washed through him. Despite his promise to himself to hold things in check, the young demon allowed his system to feed, amplify and then project all the negative emotions. The reward was almost immediate as the many humans in the surrounding dilapidated building began to feel the effects. More despair floated through air and Andy closed his eyes as he drank it all in. The cold, hunger and weariness immediately disappeared.

Screams broke out all around him as people started to get into fights and panic. Humans were so easy to manipulate and control. Despite his earlier vow to keep things under tabs, he couldn't resist letting more anger slip out.

A window crashed somewhere in the distances. Human voices yelled at one another. Yes, this was nice, so nice. Better than a home cooked meal. Thoughts of home and meals brought forth memories of his mother and that fueled the fire burning inside Andy. It was only fitting that the humans should feel a bit of the pain he was. Why had he been holding back? Let them know what true despair felt like.

Not caring who saw him now, Andy stood up, spread out his arms and thrust out his chest so he could soak up every bit of dark energy. The frenzy

among the humans built even more. A gunshot echoed off to his left. Another scream. The smell of smoke drifted through the snow-covered air as a fire broke out in a nearby building.

The one remaining demon spotted him and let out a roar before it charged. Andy let out a roar of his own, so rage high he didn't even care anymore that he didn't have weapon or even half the muscles of his attacker. The demon charged, its heavy footsteps pounding down the street. Andy laughed, already relishing the pain and agony he was about to feel. It didn't matter to him that it would probably be his own.

A burst of gunfire erupted just as the demon was reaching its hand out for Andy's throat. The angst demon reflexively ducked and covered his head with his hands as his attacker jerked around like a rag doll being shook. He met the demon's terror filled eyes for a second before they rolled back in his head and the assassin crumpled to the ground. Blood seeped from his wounds and mixed with the sleet, snow and muck.

Andy crashed hard from his high as he realized just how close he had come to death. The wicked sharp claws of the injured demon twinkled in the streetlight, mocking him for his stupidity. He looked around at the panicked humans running around the streets, tears streaming down their faces, their screams ripping into his conscious.

Fuck, I did this. People are going to get hurt and it's all going to be my fault.

"Andy!"

The teen whipped his head in the direction of the voice. It was the harpy who had been at the nightclub. Tonight she was wearing a long, black cloak to hide her wings, but he still recognized her by her milky white face, full red lips and dark hair. In her outstretched hand was a smoking gun. The male angel was by her side and he held a gun too. They had saved him, but why?

The angel was the one who had him most worried. The harpy was a demon and she would understand Andy's little slip up, whereas angels were all about honor and protecting humans. An explosion rocked a nearby building, making all three of them wince. The building across the street was now fully engulfed in flames and the firelight danced off the archangel's huge-ass sword. The teen gulped as he imagined it aiming for his neck.

"I'm sorry! I didn't mean to!" he shrieked, as he nervously twisted his hands together. How he wished he had a weapon but his mother had refused to ever let him carry so much as a penknife.

"I know you didn't, kid," the angel soothed. The fact he was able to keep his act together was amazing considering all the shit Andy was tossing around. Yet, the warrior was a picture of cool,

calm and collected. The only hint he gave away that he was ill at ease was the slightest bit of sweat dotting his brow.

"Why can't they leave me alone?" Andy's question came out as a half-sob as the despair washed over him. The angel staggered a bit as the demon projected the emotion, but he still kept his kind, warm gaze focused on the teen. Andy darted a look over at the harpy, maybe the angel was just a diversion and she was going to be the one who came in for the kill.

But her face held only kindness and understanding. "I didn't mean to," he repeated to her, his voice a pathetic whimper. "Demons got hurt at that nightclub because I started that riot, didn't they?"

A flurry of emotions passed over the harpy's face. She reminded Andy of the porcelain dolls his mom used to order from those call-in shopping shows. For a second it seemed like she was going to lie and tell him everything was going to be okay, that he didn't harm anyone, but in the end she told him the truth. "Yes, some pretty serious injuries, but nobody was destroyed. So it's not too late to come home."

"Home?" Andy echoed as he clutched his head with his hands. His hat was knocked to the side and he clutched at his small horns as a growl rumbled low in his throat. "I have no home, those

fuckers ripped it apart."

"Then come with us," the angel urged as he sheathed his sword in the scabbard strapped to his back. "I'll find the ones who did that to your family and I'll make them pay."

"How? You're an angel, I know how your kind works. You will want to be merciful."

"No." The angel took another step forward and stretched out his hand. "I'll make them pay blood for blood. They will be shown no quarter. You have my word as an archangel."

"Why would you do that for me, a demon?" Andy lowered his hands and looked at the male.

"Because I know what it's like to watch a loved one die. I was on a mission with a good friend once and I saw him get butchered by some Hounds from Hell. I was not much older than you at the time and there was nothing I could do to help him."

"Did they blame you for not being able to save him?" Andy was shocked to feel his feet move forward one step. "Don't lie to me either, I'll be able to feel it if you do."

The angel paused a brief flicker of pain passed over his warrior face. "My father did. He's still ashamed of me. But everyone else understood. The Chief, Michael made sure I was better trained so something like that would never happen to me again."

"They killed my family for nothing," Andy railed. His eyes filled with tears and he blinked them away, not wanting to come off as a wimp in front of the archangel. "It was all a lie."

"What was a lie?" the harpy asked, sharply. A gust of wind picked up the ends of her cloak and fluttered it around her leather-clad legs.

"It doesn't work." When he caught the confused look that was shared among the bounty hunters, his grew angry at their game. "Don't act like you don't know about the elixir. That's the reason why everyone, including my Uncle Magus, are tracking me down like paparazzi."

The harpy shook her head so vigorously, it made the hood on her cloak fall down. "No, Mangus sent us after you because he cares for you and wants you brought back safely."

How he wanted to believe her, but a part of Andy still held doubts. After what he'd seen the past couple of days, he didn't know who to trust anymore. There had been some supposedly friendly faces among the attackers the night of his family's slaughter. It was no secret, either, that his father and uncle had never seen eye to eye.

"I can't..." he trailed off, as a new set of gut-churning fear emanated from the burning building. "Oh fuck, oh fuck, ohfuckohfuckohfuck!"

"What?" the angel asked him.

"There's some humans trapped inside that building. They're going to burn up and it's all my fault." Not waiting for a response from the bounty hunters, Andy started to haul ass to the building. There was no way he could let some people die just because he threw a demon temper tantrum. He heard the harpy let out a curse behind him, but he didn't slow down long enough to turn and look at her. All that mattered was getting to those trapped humans.

* * * *

"Shit!" Cadean growled as she watched the teen's retreating back. Just what she needed right now. A demon with a frigging conscious. "Get your little ass back here." But the brat didn't even spare her a glance as he continued his way to the burning building. At the doorway, he paused for a second as he peered into the flames. For one joyful second, Cadean thought he had finally seen reason and wasn't going to play Mr. Superhero. Of course, the teen proved her wrong by going into the building. The smoke soon enveloped his thin form, obscuring him from view.

She turned to share her outrage with Emmanuel only to see him start heading toward the building. "Are you freaking kidding me?" she shouted. "You may be immortal, but you're not

flame resistant. That building looks like it could come down any minute."

The dork flashed her a cocky smile. "Then Andy and I will have to hurry."

Fearful, she grabbed at his arm to stay him. "You don't have to do this."

"There are innocent humans in there and I'm an archangel." He gently pried away her fingers. "It kind of comes with the job title."

"No, don't go, please," Cadean begged even though she'd never begged for anything in all of her life. The thought of losing him had made her irrational and she didn't care.

"I have to." Emmanuel gave her an apologetic look. "Wait here, I'll be right back." He trotted off to the building.

"Like hell, I never have just stood by the sidelines and waited," she grumbled before she took off after him. If the stupid males wanted to play hero, she would just have to join them. "Why couldn't I fall for a big, mean assassin?" she muttered to herself. "No, stupid Cadean has to go for the noble archangel. Stupid, stupid, stupid." The demon truthfully didn't know if it were Emmanuel or herself that she was calling stupid though. After a seconds worth of thinking, she decided it was both of them.

She caught up to him just as he was reaching the door. The blistering heat baked her face as the

smoke clogged her lungs. A few coughs racked her body as she peered through the bright orange flames. On the outside it appeared the place was an abandoned home, scattered filthy mattresses, broken booze bottles and food wrappers showed that several humans were squatting inside.

"I thought I told you to stay back," Emmanuel yelled over the cracking flames.

"Stupid angel, do you honestly think I've ever stood around when there is dangerous fun to be had," she snapped as she walked past him to enter the door.

"I love it when you use pet names for me."

"Shut up and lets go save some humans." Once inside, she forced herself to ignore the heat, smoke and crackles and instead strained to hear anything that might resemble a human cry. Luckily when Lucifer had stripped her of her powers of premonition and flash travel he'd left her with her super sensitive hunter senses. Stronger than even other immortals, she could hone in on the smallest of sounds and pick them out. A smile curled over her lips as she detected a faint cry for help toward the back of the house. Success.

"This way," she ordered Emmanuel. Cadean didn't even bother to look to see if he was following, knowing instinctively he would be there to guard her back.

Andy burst out of a bedroom, a small female

adult in his arms. Although the human's eyes were closed, Cadean could see her chest move up and down, so she was breathing. The harpy was secretly glad the woman was out of it. Andy had left his ball cap behind and his horns, while small, were still visible under his curly hair. "There are two more still here," the small demon yelled, his voice almost lost in the sound of the staircase crashing.

"We've got them," Emmanuel shouted. "Get this one and we'll be right behind you." Andy nodded in agreement as he carried his load out the front door. There was another loud crash from the other room.

"We need to move before this whole house falls down on us." Cadean wearily eyed the flames that were getting bigger by the second.

"Agreed." Emmanuel coughed into his hand. "Let's get the humans and get the hell out of here."

Cadean led him in the direction of the cries, which were emanating from a closet. The archangel opened the door to reveal two human children cowering inside, one boy and one girl, they didn't look like they were past the age of seven years. They raised terrified, soot streaked faces in the direction of their rescuers, twin sets of blue eyes filled with tears and terror.

"Come on, sweetie." Emmanuel held his hand

out to the girl. "Let's get you out of here." The girl didn't need to be told twice as she scampered in his arms, her pink nightgown, ridding up on her chubby legs. Emmanuel patted her dirty, mouse brown hair in a comforting manner.

The male child launched himself at Cadean and the harpy instinctively wrapped her arms around him. He pressed his small body as close as possible to her and she gave him a kiss of the top of his head as she murmured words of comfort into his ear.

"I'm scared," he whispered in her ear.

"Don't worry, you'll be okay." She tightened her grip on the tiny body, suddenly feeling fiercely protective. "I promise no harm will come to you."

"My Mama is here too."

"My friend already got her. She's outside waiting for you."

They made it the door and Cadean desperately breathed in the cold, fresh air. After sucking down so much smoke, it was pure heaven. Emmanuel took in deep rasping breaths, his breath leaving poofs in the winter air. Off on the distance were the wails of fire, police and EMS.

"We need to get out of here." Cadean set the boy on the curb where his mother still lay slumped over. The harpy was pissed to find Andy was nowhere in sight. Little bugger must have run

off. That teen demon was proving to be more slippery than some of the hard-core criminals she'd hunted in the past.

"I hate to leave them alone." Emmanuel put the little girl by her brother before letting out a hacking cough.

"If we're here when the police come, they will want to ask us questions or worse." When he still looked doubtful, she let out a displeased sound. "What would happen if they decided to search you?" The unspoken expression on his face clearly said, *They would find a veritable armory of weapons in my pockets.* She continued, "And what would happen if they searched me?" Now his face read, *They would find a veritable armory of weapons and your wings.* There was no way for her to hide those uncloaked to the human eye as she presently was.

"Are you sure they'll be okay." Unease flickered in the angel's eyes and Cadean shared it despite herself.

"Sure, the police are," she cocked her head to judge the distance of the wailing echoes, "two minutes away."

Emmanuel's lips twitched at the corners. "Pretty neat trick you have there."

Cadean just shrugged off the praise even though she was secretly pleased she was able to impress him. All harpies had uncanny sense of direction and distances to aid them whenever they

flew.

"Let's go," she tried to make her voice sound clipped and all business. The harpy ruined the effect by placing a kiss on the human boy's head. "Take care of your mother and sister. The police will be here soon."

The little human nodded solemnly so Cadean and Emmanuel left. As they reached the corner, she couldn't resist the urge to look back at the boy one last time. Here she was, a demon bounty hunter, worried about a human despite the fact demons were supposed to hate mankind. Wasn't that just ironic? She jumped when Emmanuel touched her shoulder.

"Here." With a gentl tug of her arm, he led her around the corner. "We can stay for a bit more and watch out over the kids. Nobody will see us."

Cadean started to scoff that she wasn't worried, but she knew Emmanuel would see right through her. Instead, she gave him a grateful smile and turned to watch over the little humans. It felt good to know they were going to be okay and all thanks to her and Emmanuel. Maybe there was something to all this hero crap after all.

Chapter Eight

Cadean paused outside the door to her apartment. What in the hell was she thinking, bringing Emmanuel home? How was he going to react to Lilith? Would he be disgusted by the sex demon? Or worse, turned on? Damn, in her book disgust would be better. The last thing she wanted was to see her angel gazing at another female with his bedroom eyes. A surge of jealousy went through her at the thought of the archangel even thinking about another female.

God, she really needed to get a grip. Just because she had one night of hot monkey sex with Emmanuel did not mean she owned him. Still the thought of him even talking to Lil made Cadean's gut clench.

"You know," she spun around to face him, the key still out and pointed in her hand, "I think we should just go back to your place."

"Are you ashamed of me?" he asked in a guarded tone.

"No, I just don't want to burden you with my roomie. She can be a bit much to take sometimes." *Please forgive me, Lil.*

"I won't even notice her because I'll be too busy looking at you." Emmanuel traced her cheek with his finger before giving her a tender kiss. "Now let's get inside." He gave her another kiss, this one made her toes curl. "I want to take a shower." Yet another kiss, this one made her clench her thighs together as desire spiked through her.

"What if I want to take a shower, too?" she inquired playfully.

"You can only if you promise to take it with me." Emmanuel's mouth curled up in a sexy smile

"You just want me to wash your back and wash this, too." She cupped the erection straining against his pants so there was no mistaking what she meant. The archangel closed his eyes as he swallowed hard.

"By the fates, Cadean, I love you so much."

Both went still as the ramification of his words hit them. Cadean's heart pounded so loud in her chest it was a wonder he didn't hear it. "Angels don't fall in love with demons." She didn't know if she was telling herself or him that.

"This angel does." He earnest gaze searched her face.

"You may think you do now, but as soon as you find your true mate, you'll leave me." Cadean

directed her gaze to the ground so he wouldn't see the fear and hurt she knew was there.

He cupped her chin and forced her gaze back up. "I may not have marked you in the traditional sense, but that doesn't matter. You have marked my heart and it will never belong to any other female. You may not be an angel, but you are my true mate and there will never be another for me." The fierce expression on his face mixed with the confident tone of his voice left her no doubt that he believed every word he just said. The true question was did *she* dare believe them?

"You insane?" She slowly shook her head. "If we do this, neither side will ever accept us again. You will never be able to go back to Heaven. The angel warriors won't let you come live with them. My fellow demons will hunt us both down for our transgression. We will become pariahs."

Emmanuel captured her mouth in a scorching kiss. She could feel his desperation, hope and fear as his tongue traced the outline of her lips before sinking inside her mouth. By the time he pulled away, she was swaying on her feet. "I would gladly give all of that up for you, Cadean. I would do so and never look back so long as you were by my side. The question is, are you willing to do the same for me?"

She opened her mouth to say no. Cadean had every intention on putting him in his place once

and for all. It would be better if they parted ways and never looked back. But what came out was, "Yes, Emmanuel. I would leave everything behind for you."

A relieved smile crossed his face before he gave her another kiss. "You have just made me the happiest angel in history. I promise, you won't regret this."

"I just hope you don't grow to regret it."

"Never," he replied, his gaze fierce. "You are my mate and will be until the day I no longer exist." He gave her a heated look. "Now about that shower?"

"You do look like a very dirty archangel," she replied coyly. "I can't wait to see Lilith's face when I come in with you." Horror made her stomach drop. "Oh no, when she finds out about us she is never going to let me live it down. I was just telling her the other day that an angel and a demon could never be mates. She is going to raz me forever about this."

He chuckled. "I can't wait to meet her."

"Let's get this over with." Cadean shook her head and went to put the key into the lock. As soon as she touched the door, it swung open showing someone had left it ajar. Heart hammering, the hunter in Cadean came into high alert. There is no way Lil would have left the apartment unsecured and Cadean knew she sure

as hell hadn't done it.

With a nod of her head, she silently indicated to Emmanuel something was amiss, but she saw she didn't have to bring him up to speed. He already had his Glock out and pointed at the entrance. A shiver went up her spine as she took in the hard lines of his face, the coiled muscles waiting to spring into action and the way he handled himself like a true warrior. Angel or not, he had been a justice dealer like her and like her he was still a force to be reckoned with. Relieved that she wouldn't be going into whatever battle waited for her on the other side of the door alone, she wondered how she had ever underestimated him.

The harpy positioned herself on one side of the door and Emmanuel took the other. Very slowly, he pushed the door the rest of the way open and they both whipped their guns in to take on whoever was in there. The apartment was empty, but there was no doubt something bad had happened there.

Something worse than bad. The harpy in Cadean could still sense the evil lingering in the air. Lil's bawdy, tacky whorehouse had been trashed. The couch was overturned and a knife had been taken to the cushions so the stuffing leaked out in great puffs. All the mirrors had been ripped from the walls and shattered. Her knickknacks suffered the same fate, the porcelain

shards mixed in with the other debris that littered the floor. Everything was there, clothing, food, weapons, bedding. All of the succubus's life was tossed with malice onto the ground to be trampled on like she was nothing more than garbage. Worse was her Christmas tree, the one Lil had so lovingly decorated, it was on its side, every bulb and ornament ripped from the twisted limbs. The brightly colored broken pieces twinkled mockingly amongst the destruction. Cadean wanted to scream at the violation of her dear friend.

Rage turned to gut-churning fear when she saw blood smeared on the walls, splattered on the ceiling and pooled into the deep shag rug. A whimper tore from Cadean's throat as she frantically looked around for the succubus. "Lil?" the name came out as a whispered plea.

She took a hurried step forward, only to have Emmanuel reach out to stay her. "Easy, babe. For all we know they could still be here."

Even though she wanted to pull away from him and tear through the place, Cadean nodded her head. Damn the angel, but he was right. "Who did this?" she asked, too worried to be ashamed that her voice trembled.

"Demons." He sniffed the air. "I can smell their stink, although its faint so I think they're gone, but we can't take any chances."

Cadean tasted the air with her nose and found Emmanuel was right. There was the barely perceptible stench of death lingering. Side by side they made their way through each room, making sure that each nook and cranny was clear. Just when she thought they would never find Lil, she spotted a crumpled figure behind the huge bed in the master bedroom.

"Lil!" Cadean screamed as she ran to her friend. She no longer worried about being ambushed because she knew Emmanuel would protect her in this moment of weakness.

Once she reached Lil, Cadean turned her over and was horrified by what she saw. Someone or something had tore her precious, dear Lil apart. Her once beautiful face was now unrecognizable and several deep gashes covered her from throat to her toes. It looked like she had been ripped apart with claws and since it had been a demon attack she probably had been.

"No!" Cadean sobbed in denial as she tried desperately to staunch the flow of blood with her hands. It was useless, there were too many wounds that were bleeding the succubus dry.

Lilith's eyelids fluttered open, her normally intense green eyes were dull as the life force left her. "I knew you would come, Caddy." She smiled weakly. "He wanted to know about you, but I wouldn't tell him anything."

"Shhh..." Cadean soothed as she brushed back Lilith's hair, but the succubus had passed out again. The harpy turned to her mate and begged, "Please, we have to help her."

Emmanuel immediately came to her side, dropping to his knees. "You don't even have to ask, Cadean." Drawing a dagger from his jacket, he made a deep gash in his wrist and held the wound over Lil's lips. The blood trickled into the succubus's mouth, but from what Cadean could see, Lil wasn't drinking.

"It's not working," she declared, tears now falling freely down her cheeks.

"Don't worry, I won't let her die." Emmanuel used his free hand to awkwardly pull his cell phone out. He dialed it and there was a second before he spoke into the receiver, "Cam, this is Emmanuel. I need your help."

Chapter Nine

“**I**’ve never been to a demon’s house before,” Megan exclaimed as she shut the door to the car and gazed up at the tall apartment building.

Dina couldn’t help but smile at his mate as he shut his own door and went around the car to join her. His little healer was nearly dancing in her brown loafers she was so excited about getting a view of the dark side. The empath wasn’t surprised by her excitement, under the blonde hair and perky blue eyes lay a female who liked to live on the edge, often dragging him along for the ride. Megan may look like an innocent college coed, but she was more vixen then anyone ever suspected. Almost as if to prove his point, she turned and gave him a come-hither look.

“Do you think it will be a succubus that needs healing?”

Dina licked his lips as he ran a hand through his dyed black hair. Unlike his perky mate, he did look dark-side. Prone to wearing all black clothes

and with earplugs and numerous tattoos, he looked like an angel masquerading as a Punk rocker. "I don't know what type of demon is inside. All Cam said was someone called in a favor and needed a friend healed."

"But it could be a succubus." Her lips twitched into a sensual smile. "If it is maybe after I get done healing her she'll want to play."

The empath in Dina could sense her arousal and his cock stood at attention. Megan had never made it a secret that her biggest fantasy was to have a threesome. But for all her talk, he never thought she would have the guts to go through with it.

"Be good, Megan," he warned in a heated voice. He mentally gave himself the same order as he took her in, from the tight blue sweater covering her full breasts to the tight jeans hugging her fine ass. "We're here on an official mission."

The healer pouted. "Fine, I'll be good for now." She stuck her tongue out at him and started for the front entrance of the building.

As Dina watched that delectable backside, he couldn't help but chuckle at her actions. Most angels thought Megan was an airhead, but Dina knew better. Still waters ran deep. It was just sometimes he had to peer really, really hard into those still waters to see that deepness. Not that he would ever trade his mate away. She was the best

thing that had ever happened to him and he loved her so much it was a physical hurt sometimes.

By the time he caught up with her, she was already at the door of the apartment, hand poised to knock. Dina gave a slight shake of his head as he pushed her to the side and pulled out his Glock. Mission or not, he wasn't going to go into a demon's lair without being ready for anything. Megan rolled her eyes, but she allowed him his moment of protectiveness. Dina knocked on the door with three hard raps.

"Who's there?" a male voice asked cautiously from the other side.

"I came about the ad you put in the paper about the car for sale," Dina answered with the code phrase Cam had given him.

The door slowly opened to reveal a male archangel, his own gun out and ready. It took Dina a second to recognize him, but as soon as the empath did, he snarled and raised his Glock. "Emmanuel," Dina spat out the word like it was a foul taste in his mouth. "Is this another one of my father's head-fuck games?"

"Dina?" the archangel asked, a perplexed look on his face. Dina had changed a lot since he'd left Heaven and obviously nobody had sent Emmanuel the memo on that tidbit. The archangel's shocked gaze traveled up and down, taking in the empath's weapons and dark clothing.

"I had heard rumors that the council leader's son had boycotted to the angel warrior's side, but I never believed it."

Dina gave a harsh laugh. "Nice try. You aren't the first justice dick he's sent after me and you won't be the last."

"Dina," Megan said, timidly. He ignored her.

"Maybe I should send you home in pieces like I did the last justice angel he sent after me." Dina smiled wolfishly, making sure Emmanuel saw the dark half of him.

"Dina," Megan repeated, somewhat more forcefully. Again she was ignored.

"Your father didn't send me," Emmanuel protested. He holstered his gun and held his hands up in surrender. "In fact, Jehel exiled me a few months ago. Before that I was in prison since the beginning of the war. Dina, I never hurt you before and I wouldn't start now. I swear it to you on my honor as an archangel."

True, Emmanuel had never been amongst the justice archangels who had made Dina's life hell while he was growing up, but Dina still found it hard to trust anyone who used to work for his father. After all, Jehel had personally place a dead or alive bounty on Dina's head. "On your honor as an archangel?" he mocked. "From what I've seen, justice archangels have no honor so why should I believe you?"

"Hey, buddy I happen to agree with you on that." The archangel continued to hold his hands up in the surrender pose. "The justice angels have betrayed me at every turn, too. After seeing what they did to you, I can understand you hating all of us, but I'm asking you to put that to side for tonight to help my mate's friend."

"That's what I've been trying to tell you, Dina," Meagan interjected as she placed a hand on the empath's arm. As always, her touch comforted him and brought him back from the edge. "I can sense the demon's life force ebbing away and it will be too late if I don't get in there soon."

"I don't want you anywhere around him." Dina jerked his head in the archangel's direction.

"Stop being an idiot," Megan snapped as she brushed past the males into the apartment. "Do you honestly think Cam would send you here if he didn't believe Emmanuel was one of the good guys?"

See those still waters did run deep. Megan was right and Dina was male enough to admit it to himself, although he had no plans on admitting it to Emmanuel. He slowly lowered his gun, but made sure to keep the stone hard glare in his eyes. "Fine, I'll do it for my Lordship, Cam. But if any harm comes to my mate, I'll shoot first and ask questions later."

Emmanuel nodded. "Fair enough." He moved

aside to let Dina in. The empath let out a low whistle when he saw all the damage to the apartment.

"Somebody was pissed off," he remarked as he stepped over a broken lamp.

"We're pretty sure it was some other demons." Emmanuel took the lead, directing them to a long hallway.

"It was, three of them." Dina let his empath feelers go out to test the vibes still in the air. "They were pissed too."

The archangel tossed an admiring glance over his shoulder. "I forgot how handy it was to have an empath around."

Dina shrugged off the complement as looked over at a dent in the wall. It looked like someone had slammed a body into it, cracking the drywall. "I can also sense the fear of the demon who was attacked." He tried to hide the shudder that went through his body. It was always tough for an empath to come into contact with bad emotions and the air was saturated with them.

"I'm sure she was terrified. They nearly destroyed her." Emmanuel pushed open the door to a bedroom. "From what I hear, Lilith may be tough, but she had to know she was facing a death sentence."

"Lilith?" Megan pulled up short. "You didn't tell us it was her."

A dark look passed over the archangel's face. "Is that going to be a problem?"

"Oh, let's see." Dina started to tick off with his fingers. "She only tried to kill Cam, tried to kill his brother, Bear, then tried to kill Cam again." He shot the angel his best *Duh* face. "Yeah, it might be a problem there, pal."

"No, it won't be a problem," Megan countered as she shook her head. "I'm a healer and I can't stand by and let anyone suffer, even her."

Damn it. Dina knew that determined set of Megan's lips. There was no way he could talk her out of this. He would just have to do everything he could to make sure she was protected while she did her job. Uttering a curse under his breath, he reluctantly nodded his agreement.

They entered into a large bedroom that had a huge circular bed in the center. Having heard of Lilith's various sexual exploits, Dina wasn't surprised. He even started to snort in disgust until he spotted the small battered form in the center of it. Shit, Emmanuel hadn't been kidding, they had really worked Lilith up good. Megan didn't even hesitate, she rushed to the succubus side and placed hands on her so she could assess the demon's injuries.

Dina on the other hand was compelled to help another. Sitting by the bedside was another female. Dark and exotic with raven wings, he

knew she was a harpy, although he had never seen one in person before. The despair coming off her was so strong it almost overwhelmed him. Her eyes were red from crying and she was clutching Liltih's hand in a death's grip. She gave Megan a heartbreaking, beseeching look.

"Please, can you help her?" The agony coming from the harpy was so strong that Dina had to grip the wall for a second as it hit him.

"Of course, I'll help her," Megan assured with a soft smile. After giving the harpy's hand a comforting squeeze the angel closed her eyes and started to recite the healing chants in a high melodic voice. Emmanuel came to stand next to Dina and the empath found he could no longer feel any hatred toward the archangel. For him to have called for help for a demon just proved he was one of the good guys. No justice angel that Dina knew would ever dream of doing that.

"Who's the harpy?" Dina asked.

"That's my mate, Cadean." Emmanuel's gaze dared Dina to take offense. Dina cocked a brow in response.

"You fell in love with a demon?"

The archangel took a threatening step closer. "You got a problem with that?"

"Me? No." Now it was Dina who held his palms up in surrender. "Quite the opposite. I admire a guy who has the balls to go for what he

wants. You do know that the justice council and most of the demons are going to piss kittens over you mating her though?"

"Fuck them." The archangel's lips curled up in a cruel smile. "Anyone who threatens Cadean will have me to answer to."

Dina couldn't help but like the archangel. So much so, that he finally let his guard down enough to holster his own gun. "Let me go sooth some of Cedeane's sorrow."

Emmanuel nodded his consent and Dina walked over to the harpy and took a chair close to hers. Before he had a chance to speak, Cadean beat him to it. "Thank you for not turning your back on her like everyone else has."

Dina shifted uncomfortably because he had come close to doing just that. "That's Megan for you. She can never walk away from anyone who is hurt."

"Will she be able to help, Lilith?" The harpy wiped a tear from her cheek, her movements hard and jerky as if she resented crying openly.

"Megan is one of the best. She'll have Lilith healed in a matter of minutes." Actually, given the extent of the succubus's injuries, Dina was pretty certain it was going to take longer than that, but he didn't want to burden the harpy even more than she already was. "I'm an empath and I can sense your suffering, too. Let me help you."

"I don't deserve any comfort," she replied with a scowl. "Go help Lilith first."

"Everyone deserves comfort and Megan is taking care of Lilith."

There was such a long pause, Dina thought he'd angered the demon. A quick glance told him she was armed to the teeth and he prepared himself for an attack. In the end, though, she gave a curt nod.

Dina reached out and touched his fingertips to her temples. Cadean's body grew ridged and he could sense the tension coming from her spike, Dina's stomach lurched in time with it. A cold sweat broke out over his body as tremors rocked through him so hard he swayed in the chair. For the first time in years, he doubted his abilities. Damn, maybe he'd bitten off more than he could chew trying to sooth a demon. It was something he'd never tried before. Then just as he was about to tear his hands away, Dina sensed a wave of calm resonate between him and the harpy.

There were still some lingering emotions, but he knew he'd taken the edge off and judging by the soft smile curling the demon's lips, that was enough for now. Actually, she was really pretty now that she wasn't crying and Dina could see why Emmanuel could be drawn to her. Before he knew what he was doing, he was smiling back at her.

"Better?"

She nodded. "Much, thank you."

Emmanuel walked over and knelt beside his mate. He put a protective arm around her as he whispered some endearment in her ear. Dina glanced back and forth between the pair, taking note of their obvious differences. Then again, he and Megan were complete opposites too and Dina couldn't imagine living out his immortal days with anyone else. There was a deep cut in the archangel's wrist and Dina clucked his tongue when he realized the significance of it.

"You gave Lilith blood?"

"Emmanuel did it to save her life." Cadean bristled, her exotic eyes flashing with anger. Dina noticed for the first time the archangel looked a bit pasty.

"How much did you give her?" He glanced over at Megan for help, but she was still in a trance. "You don't look so good."

"I'm fine." The archangel teetered a bit on the balls of his feet.

"Dude, you faint and I am not catching your ass. I refuse to play knight in shining armor to your damsel in distress."

Cadean gasped and wrapped her arms around the archangel. "Why didn't you tell me?" she admonished. "The last thing I need is for you to pass out on me like you did the other night."

"You've fainted before?" Dina hooted with laughter. "You keep this up and we're going to have to put you in a corset and invest in smelling salts."

The corners of Emmanuel's lips kicked into a smile. "Who knew all those years a smartass lurked under the quiet justice angel we all knew."

"I'm not a justice angel, I'm an angel warrior," Dina corrected. He winced when his words came out more harsh than he'd intended.

"Goody gum drops for you." Cadean helped ease Emmanuel to a sitting position. The archangel leaned back against the wall and closed his eyes.

"How much blood did he give her?" Dina directed his question to the harpy since it looked like Emmanuel could use all the rest he could get.

"A lot." Cadean caressed the archangel's arm. "We needed it to keep Lilith alive until a healer got here. She usually keeps a stock in the refrigerator, but whoever did this took it with them."

Now Dina was feeling his own anger rise up and for Lilith of all beings. "You mean they took it so she couldn't be healed. That's cold." Dina racked this new problem around in his head. There was no doubt that the succubus would need more blood and soon, even with Megan's healing. Usually, Dina would direct the harpy to the black market to buy some, but he didn't want to risk it.

If information about the purchase got out, then the bastards that did this would know Lilith was alive and Dina didn't want to draw them here.

"She can use my blood next," Dina blurted. Cadean's eyebrows shot up and her mouth gaped in shock before she recovered and slapped it shut.

"You would do that? For a demon? Why?"

Dina snorted. "Because I can't have the Duchess Emmanuel here swooning on me."

"As soon as I get better, I am kicking your ass for that comment," Emmanuel said, never cracking his lids.

"Get in line and take a number," Dina drawled. "Like you're the first archangel to make that threat."

Chapter Ten

Emmanuel woke up with a kink in his neck and a knot in the small of his back. Groaning softly, he realized it was because he'd fallen asleep sitting on the floor with his back propped against the wall. Although he wasn't about to complain because Cadean was lying on her side, using his lap as a pillow. Long lashes fanned her cheeks and her chest rose and fell in a steady rhythm. A wave of pleasure went through him as he watched her sleep, she looked so damn tempting, that is was all he could do not to lifter her closer and taste that sweet mouth. But, he wasn't about to disturb her rest so he held back.

A whisper of movement made the archangel look over to the bed. The dark looking empath was on his knees by the bedside, his wrist pressed to Lilith's mouth. The succubus was drinking weakly, her lids heavy, showing her thin hold on consciousness. After a few seconds she pulled back.

"Thank you," she whispered.

"Whatever," the empath grunted.

"I'm serious," her voice grew stronger as she gripped at his wrist. "You could have turned around and left me to die once you found out who I was, yet you didn't. Why?"

Actually, that was something Emmanuel wouldn't mind knowing himself. He remembered Dina from the days before the war. An abused, scared kid who had mousy brown hair and walked around like a dog who had been kicked too many times, he never would have made eye contact with an archangel let alone talked to one. The Dina he saw before him now was completely different and it wasn't just the Goth clothes. The empath had a dark, hard edge to him. Truth be told, Emmanuel didn't know which one was better. It was just as hard to look at eyes filled with hate as it was to see ones full of fear.

"Just drink." Dina pressed his wrist back to Lilith's mouth.

She pushed it away. "No, I want to know. I know how close you are to Cam and his family. After everything I've done, why would you save me?"

Dina sighed. "Do we really have to get into this now?"

Lilith nodded. "Since I'm stuck in this bed for at least a few more hours, humor me. I'm bored."

"Fine." The empath went to pull his wrist back only to have Lilith bring it to her mouth and start dinking again. He cocked a pierced brow at her action, but continued, "Cam and his family saved my life. My dad hurt me. Bad. And well...let's just say I wouldn't be here today if not for them. Even though I was the son of their biggest enemy they still saved me and then they took me in and made sure I had a place to live." He shrugged. "I figured if they could do that despite who I was, I could save you despite all the stuff you've done in the past. It was a lesson I briefly forgot last night when I trained a gun on Emmanuel." The empath looked over at the archangel. "Sorry about that."

"Forgiven." Emmanuel shared a smile with the younger angel. "Where's Megan."

"She went to take a shower. I called Cam and told him we would be here a bit longer. We don't want to leave until we know for sure, Lilith is okay."

Lilith gave his wrist a kiss before she released it. "Admit it, you love me," she murmured, her lids growing heavy.

"Just don't try to kill us while we're here and I'll call us even." Dina chuckled.

Emmanuel laughed with him and Cadean began to stir. She sat up and rubbed her eyes before they widened in happiness at seeing Lilith awake.

"Lil! How are you feeling?" She hopped to her feet and rushed over to the bed, almost toppling Dina over in the process.

"Tired, hungry, horny. You and your hunky archangel want to help me with that last one?"

"Stop that!" Cadean darted a glance over at Emmanuel, her cheeks flaming with embarrassment.

"I can see why you were going through all the batteries in the house. Just seeing his fine ass makes me want to run for my favorite vibrator," Lilith shot back. Now it was Emmanuel who blushed and damn it, he wasn't a blusher. Succubi weren't known for censoring their language, but his aunt had never been that raunchy.

Like any good soldier he knew when it was time to retreat. He got to his feet and stretched. "I'm going to start cleaning the mess out there and then round up some breakfast."

"I'll help you," Cadean volunteered. Emmanuel waited for her to catch up so he could reach out and take her hand.

Once they were in the relative privacy of the hallway, he turned on her and wrapped one arm around her waist, the feathers from her wings tickling his arm. "We should probably check your room. You know, make sure there isn't too much damage there."

Her eyes widened in mock horror. "Oh, yes. We

can't have my room being damaged and not checked. It would be just careless of us."

Emmanuel couldn't wait any longer to kiss those damn lips of hers. Ever since they had known Lilith was out of danger, all he could think about was getting her alone and under him again. He slanted his mouth over hers, spearing his tongue inside so he could stoke hers in slow sensual movements. A little growl of pleasure rumbled past her lips as she gripped his hair to hold him close.

"Bedroom. Now," he snarled against her mouth.

"Yes, oh God, yes," she whimpered as she reached down to cup him through his pants. The angel's hips bucked on contact, pleasure shooting through his veins.

"We better get there soon before I rip off your top, so I can feast on those pretty nipples before I bend you over and bury myself, balls deep, into you." To drive his point home, he nipped at one of her engorged nipples, right through the fabric of her shirt. Teeth clamped down on her bottom lip as she fought to hold in a scream of pleasure.

"Don't hold it in, babe." He grabbed her ass and jerked her into his erection. Damn, he was so hard he could drill concrete. "Scream for me."

"What will your nice angel friends say?"

"Let them hear." Emmanuel nipped at her ear

making her jerk with passion. "In fact I want them to hear you screaming my name so they know who you belong to."

"You wish, archangel. That is not going to happen."

"Oh, baby that sounds like a challenge to me." He pulled back and smiled down at her. Her eyes were dark with desire, her lips parted and swollen from his kisses.

"More like a dare. I don't lose control of myself, ever and if you think you can make me do it just because you are a big, hunky warrior, then you are sadly mistaken." The entire time she taunted him, her lips were curled up in an impish smile. "Let's get to bed so I can prove that to you."

"What do I get if I win?" he asked as she took his hand and led him toward a door at the other side of the hall.

"You get to tie me up and have your way with me."

He almost stumbled at her words, his cock straining against his pants so tight it was a surprise he didn't pop a button. "And if you win?"

She turned around, a wicked glint in her eyes. "I get to tie you up." Cadean opened the door and led him into a smaller bedroom. Although it had suffered much the same damage as the rest of the apartment, the bed was still in one piece. Hot, fucking damn. Emmanuel shut the door behind

him and started unbuttoning his pants.

“Strip now, Cadean before I ruin your nice clothes by ripping them off your body.”

She obeyed reaching behind her to unzip her top and letting it fall to the floor, next off were her pants. As she leaned over to slide them down her full breasts swayed and he wanted so bad to taste them, his mouth watered. Emmanuel lost his clothes too, so they were soon both naked. Giving her a heated gaze, he reached down, wrapped a hand around his cock and started to slowly stroke himself.

“Touch your breasts,” he urged. “Show me what you like.”

With a moan, she did what he asked, her hands slowly trailing up her taunt stomach, to her ribcage before stopping at her breasts. When she pinched her pink nipples, they both groaned together. “Like that?” she asked, her voice husky. She rolled her nipples again with her fingers and his cock twitched in his hand at the erotic image before him.

“Fuck, female. Do you have any idea what you do to me?”

She sauntered over, her hips swaying sensually. “You sure do talk dirty for an angel.”

“That’s because all this angel can think about doing is spreading his mate’s thighs apart so I can taste that sweet honey building up in your pussy.”

She slid one hand, slowly down her body until she was caressing her slippery folds, one finger disappeared inside before she pulled it out and put it to his mouth. Eager for a taste, he sucked in the digit, licking it clean. "But I want to taste you too, Emmanuel," she declared in a whisper, "and ladies always get to go first."

A giggle bubbled from her as she dropped to her knees. His hard-assed bounty hunter was actually giggling. Emmanuel couldn't help but grin at the sound. Until her hot breath fanned his stomach right before her tongue darted out to circle his navel. Then amusement turned to ball tightening arousal.

She batted his hand away from his cock and took its place with both of her smaller ones. He watched as she licked the crest, sucking in a drop of pre-come before her lips parted to take all of him in.

"Oh, damn, just like that." He buried his hands in her raven hair. "Suck it hard."

Cadean obeyed, taking him deep into her throat. Seeing stars, Emmanuel closed his eyes and let the pleasure wash over him. She pulled back, his cock making a popping noise as it slipped out. Like a hungry kitten, she lapped at the tip with her pink tongue, one hand pumping his shaft while the other massaged his balls. When she licked the tender underside of his dick, Emmanuel knew he

had to take control of the situation or he was going to lose their little bet.

Grabbing her under her arms, he hauled her to her feet and tossed her onto the bed. Eyes bright with passion, she looked up at him, her tongue darting out to lick her lips nervously. He crawled on the bed and she scooted away from him.

"Oh, no you don't," he growled before reaching out and flipping her over on her stomach. "You played with the tiger babe and now the tiger wants a bite out of you."

"Emmanuel," she moaned, long and slow, her voice caressing his name.

The twin globes of her ass beckoned him and he ran his hands over the soft flesh. The juices from her pussy glistened and he couldn't wait to taste them any longer. With his tongue he made a slow path starting at her clit and running back along the crack of her rear, parting the halves so he could make a pass around the tight entrance.

"Please, Emmanuel," she begged as she thrust her ass back.

"Who do you belong too?" He pumped two fingers inside her pussy as he licked her ass again.

"You," she whimpered, her juices coating his hand. He licked up some of the syrup before returning to the tight ring again.

"I didn't hear you, Cadean," he admonished as he brought his hand down on one side of her rear,

the slapping sound resounding through the room.

"Please." A high-pitched wail came from her as he entered a third finger inside her, at the same time spanking her again with the other hand.

"Say my name." The rounded curves of her ass were pink and warm from his slaps, he licked away the sting before tapping her again with the palm of his hand.

"Emmanuel." The harpy bucked against his touch.

"Louder. Say it louder, Cadean, or I'll stop." With a twist of his wrist, he brushed his thumb over her engorged clit.

"Emmanuel!" She screamed so loud there was no doubt everyone heard her. Hell, the neighbors probably heard it.

Moving his hand, he positioned himself behind her and edged his cock to her entrance. "What do you want?"

"Damn it! You know what I want. Fuck me, Emmanuel!"

With a triumphant growl, he thrust into her hot pussy, so hard and deep, she had to grip the comforter to keep from falling off the bed. "Is this what you want, Cadean?" He started to pound into her.

"Yes. Just like that." Her words were punctuated by his thrusts.

"Mine," he snarled. "Your mine, Cadean. Say

it."

"I'm Emmanuel's and he's mine," she wailed and the muscles of her vagina gripped him like a tight fist as she climaxed.

The archangel threw back his head and groaned as he joined her, his cock releasing deep inside her. "I love you, Cadean. I will always love you." Hot jets of semen pumped inside her willing body as she made small mewling sounds of pleasure. After it was over, he still stayed inside her for a second as they caught their breath.

It wasn't until the last tingle of pleasure rippled through his body, that he got up and went to the bathroom. Emmanuel cleaned himself off before he went back out and tenderly cleaned her with a warm washcloth. Cadean watched him from under her long lashes, a satisfied smile on her lips.

"I love you, too," she told him after he was done.

It warmed his heart to hear those words. If he lived to the end of time, he would never grow tired of it. Giving one soft hip one last kiss, he got up and started to pull his clothes back on. Cadean propped herself up on one elbow and gave him a confused look, her hair was messed just enough to make her look damn cute.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"Lilith will be back to normal soon and I thought it would be better for her if her place was

cleaned up before that."

"You are too good to be true." She got up on her knees so she could reach out and wrap her arms around his waist. "Give me a second and I'll come out to help you."

"Take your time." He kissed the top of her head. "You're going to need your rest for tonight when I tie you to the bed and have my way with you."

"You wouldn't dare." A nervous lick of her lips betrayed her arousal. She may act like she wouldn't enjoy it, but they both knew she was going to love it all right.

"I thought I just taught you not to dare me, poppet."

Her lip curled up in a snarl, showing him a flash of her bounty hunter side. Despite the fact he'd just had her, he grew hard at the sight. "Always with the poppet." She brushed passed him and stormed out of the room. "If I didn't treasure your cock so much I swear I would throw another dagger at it."

Emmanuel laughed before he followed her.

Chapter Eleven

It took several hours for Cadean and Emmanuel to clean up the mess in Lil's apartment. Each time the harpy would find another one of Lilith's precious knick knacks or items crushed, a harsh rage would fill her. Her friend had been violated in almost every way and it made Cadean burn for revenge.

The only reason she had been able to hold herself back from loading up on weapons and hunting down the bastards responsible for this was because of the empath taking the burn off her anger and pain. She darted a glance at the Goth angel out of the corner of her eye. A couple of hours ago he'd joined her and Emmanuel and started to help them clean. If not for the fact that Lil was still hurting, Cadean would have laughed at the sheer irony of an angel cleaning up a sex demon's love nest.

The female angel was still in the bedroom doing whatever it was healers did. Cadean was grateful

for what the couple had done. When no other healer, demon or angel, had been willing to even be seen talking to Lilith, they had not only come to aid her, but they were staying to make sure there were no other complications.

"How did you meet your mate?" she asked the empath as he sorted through Lilith's collection of DVD's.

"As soon as I left Heaven, I fell in with her group of fiends. We stayed buddies for a little over half a year." He frowned at a deep gouge in one the DVD's before tossing it in a nearby garbage can. "Then one day we went to the movies with another couple. I just assumed we were hanging out like friends do until she made a pass at me during the show."

"What did you do?" Cadean smiled as she envisioned the preppy female making the moves on the empath.

"At first I didn't even realize that was what she was doing." He gave a lopsided smile. "Good thing for me, I caught on soon enough and we have been inseparable ever since."

"How did others react, you being with her? I mean with your father being the head of the justice council and all." Cadean looked down at her hands as she thought about how she would feel if angels stated to shun Emmanuel because of her. She could take disdain from others had been

taking it ever since the day her mother was killed. But to see Emmanuel being treated the same way would cut her deep.

"I don't care what others think," Emmanuel growled from across the room. A grimace twisted her lips. He would have to catch on to what she was hedging at.

The empath sighed as he set down the DVD's. He wiped his palms on his pants as he seemed to weigh his words carefully. "I'm not going to lie or sugarcoat things. There are some that have a real issue with us being together. I used to let it bother me a lot, too. I worried that maybe I was dragging her down and sullyng her reputation. Then one day I realized that if some assholes had a problem it, that was their problem and not mine. I love Megan and, having learned the hard way about how precious life is, I don't regret one moment I have with her. Every second counts, Cadean, so you shouldn't waste one second of it with regret."

Taken aback by his words, Cadean couldn't find a proper response. Every single thing he said struck a chord with her and she realized he was right. Life was way too precious to piss away. Emmanuel crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the wall.

"Wow, Dina you sure as hell are a lot more intuitive than your dad. It's almost enough to make me forget that you put a gun in my face." A

glint in Emmanuel's eyes told Cadean he was teasing.

The empath blushed slightly. "I'm an empath. It's my job to know how others are feeling."

Megan came out of the bedroom and cast her gaze around the living room. "It looks so much better. You would almost never know something happened here."

"How's Lilith doing?" Cadean asked.

"Great, she's awake and wants to talk to everyone, even Dina and me."

Dina got to his feet and ran a hand down her arm, his features soft with love and concern. "Have you got any rest, babe? You look tired."

"I'm fine." She gave a weary sigh. "It was just a big job, I could have used another healer."

"You did good, Michael and Raphael would be proud of you." The empath placed a tender kiss on her brow. The love was so evident in his eyes, it tugged at Cadean's heart. Emmanuel had shared with her some of the abuses the empath suffered in the past and it was good to see he'd found happiness.

"You know what? Homicidal history aside, Lilith isn't so bad. She's kind of fun to talk to." Megan grinned and wrinkled her nose.

"Let's go see what Lilith wants." Emmanuel rolled his eyes at the couple, but the corners of his lips twitched in amusement.

Eager to see her friend, Cadean rushed back to the room. Lilith was sitting on the bed, pillows propped around her, a remote in her hand. She turned off the TV and beamed at Cadean and the harpy smiled back. Megan had done a great job. Lil's beautiful face was once again unblemished and she had a healthy glow about her. Even though Cadean couldn't see the rest of her body under the piles of blankets and bedding, she knew those wounds were healed, too.

"You're better," Cadean exclaimed. Then she did something she'd never voluntarily did before. She ran up to the succubus and hugged her. Even though she'd always loved Lil like a sister, it had taken almost losing her to realize just how much she cared for the stupid succubus.

"Thanks to Megan and Dina." Lil pulled back and settled against the pillows. "Aren't they the cutest set of angels you've ever seen? I just want to put them up in my shelf and use them as bookends." Cadean could hear Emmanuel's choked laughter behind her.

"They are pretty fantastic, but I think Michael will be wanting his angel warrior back."

"I guess you're right." Lil let out a dramatic sigh. "Where did you get them in the first place? Last time I checked, angels didn't go around helping demons."

"Emmanuel called in a favor for me." Cadean

looked over her shoulder and smiled at the archangel. He was leaning against a wall, his hands in his pockets, the tight tee shirt he was wearing stretched tight over his muscles. When he grinned back at her, her heart did a flip-flop.

"Well it looks like I owe you one, archangel." Lil gave him wink. "Normally I would repay a hunky warrior like you in a very special way, but I don't want Cadean to bury one of her daggers in me. I guess I'll just have to settle for something boring like a gift card."

"Don't think anything of it." Emmanuel shrugged. "I know how important you are to my mate, and I would do anything for her."

"My mate?" Lil echoed, her fine brows raising. She pointed a finger at Cadean's chest. "Here you were, telling me angels and demons don't belong together."

"She's mine!" Emmanuel growled, his possessive glare raking over Cadean's body.

"Oh!" Lil's lips pursed in delighted surprise. "I'd forgot how possessive male archangels could be over females. Next thing you know, he's going to club you over the head and drag you around by your hair." Dina and Megan both snorted as they tried to smother their laughter.

"Be nice, Lil," Cadean warned. "He means a lot to me."

"Fine, I'll be good, but if he ever hurts you then

he'll find out how vicious a succubus can be." She shot a glare over to Emmanuel.

"Noted," Emmanuel responded in clipped tones. "Now are you going to tell us why you wanted to talk to us or are you just planning on snipping at me all day?"

"Fine, all work and no play. You archangels are so boring." She waved at Dina and Megan. "That's why I always liked empaths and healers so much better."

"Lil," Cadean prompted. The succubus rolled her eyes.

"It was Klausous who attacked me."

That name hit Cadean like a slap in the face. She pulled back stunned. "Why would one of Beelzebub's top generals want to hurt you?"

"Because I wouldn't help him stop you, Caddy. For some reason, that asshole is real interested in your bounty. He wants to get his hands on that little angst demon bad."

Confused, Cadean looked over to Emmanuel. The archangel's jaw was set and his eyes were sparking with anger. "So those demon assassins being at the nightclub were no fluke. Why would he want Andy?" she asked. Lil shrugged.

"I don't know after I told him *no*, he was too busy kicking my ass to share any more information."

"I think we weren't told the whole story when

Mangus gave us this bounty," Emmanuel said darkly.

"I think it's time we had a little chat with him." Cadean stood up, her own anger burning through her body.

"Agreed." He tilted his head toward the bed. "What about Lilith? Do you think it's a good idea leaving her alone? What if the demons come back?"

"Megan and I will watch her," Dina volunteered. "My mate may look like a little fluff, but she can hold her own in any battle. Don't worry. If anyone even comes nears Lilith, they'll have to tangle with me." He gave a flinty smile, his eyes cold. Having seen the same look in some of the demon assassins' eyes she'd know from her days in Hell, Cadean knew the angel wasn't just blowing smoke. Dina had a hard edge that screamed he would be a force to be reckoned with.

Good, she needed some hard allies and it looked like the empath was still willing to help, and she would be more than glad to use him. She locked gazes with Emmanuel and was pleased to see the same need for vengeance she felt mirrored in his eyes. "Let's go."

It took them less than a half hour to weapon up and drive the short distance to the neutral bar. Once there, they didn't waste time with

pleasantries. Marching through the bar, they made a direct beeline for Mangus's office.

"Where in the hell do you think you're going?" one of the bouncers asked, sharply. He was a rogue archangel that was built like a brick wall.

The bouncer moved forward to block their path, his arms crossed over his large chest. Before Cadean could do anything, Emmanuel let out a low growl as he swung his arm around and made contact with the rogue's jaw. The blow caused the bouncer to fly across the room and land in the middle of a table surrounded by a group of demons. They all stood up in shock as their drinks went all over the place when the table collapsed under the weight of the rogue.

"Impressive." Cadean arched a brow. "Remind me never to piss you off."

"Emmanuel what is going on?" Docian came from behind the bar, all the color gone from her shocked face.

"We need to speak to Mangus, now," Cadean demanded.

"So you two come in here and smash up the place?" His aunt turned on the harpy. "I thought I told you to stay away from my nephew. Look at what your influence as caused him to do."

"Don't talk to her that way," Emmanuel snarled. "If I ever hear you say one more harsh word to my Cadean, I will walk out of your life

and you will never see me again."

Docian's mouth opened and closed as she struggled to speak. "But...you don't mean that."

"Yes, I do." His face softened slightly. "I care for you, Docian and you may be the only family I have left, but Cadean is my mate and I won't have you treat her with anything less than respect."

"But she's a..." Docian trailed off.

"She's mine."

Cadean wondered just how many times, Emmanuel was going to have to repeat that phrase today.

"And he's mine," Cadean declared aloud, so the entire bar could hear. She moved forward to stand by his side proudly as the gasps of shock filled the air.

There was a long pause as Docian stared at them, her eyes wide as a deer stuck in headlights. Finally she blinked. "You never could do anything easy could you, Nephew?" she asked slowly. "I should have known that you would pick someone as pigheaded as her."

"Are you going to have a problem with this?" Emmanuel's voice was hard, his face expressionless, but Cadean wasn't fooled for a second. She knew how much his aunt meant to him.

"You never turned your back on me and I would never turn mine on you," Docian said

softly. She placed a loving hand on his shoulder. "If you want to go down this path then I will support you the entire way."

"Thanks, Aunt Docian." He gave her a brief hug and Cadean could see the relief in his eyes. "We really do need to speak to Mangus though, and it might get ugly."

"Then get your asses in here instead of trashing my place," a gravelly voice snapped from behind them. Cadean jumped and turned around, her hand on the butt of her gun. Magus stood in the doorway of his office, an annoyed expression darkening his features. When he saw the condition of his bouncer, his nostrils flared and he glared at Cadean.

"Hey, for once it wasn't me," she protested airily as she walked past him to get into the room. "You really ticked Emmanuel off and he didn't take it well."

Emmanuel followed her into the office and Mangus closed the door behind them. "Sit," the demon ordered.

"We would prefer to stand, thank you," Emmanuel snarled.

"Only an angel would be polite while he's basically telling you to fuck off," Mangus said to Cadean.

"We didn't come here to talk about angel etiquette," she snapped. "We want to know what

you've been holding back on us."

A look of alarm passed over the demons face before he recovered and replaced it with a cold mask. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Bullshit," Cadean retorted. "Klausous broke into Lilith's apartment and was asking about Andy."

"Shit, is she okay?"

"Now she is, but when we found her the bastard had almost destroyed her," Cadean bit out between clenched teeth.

"Why would a high-ranking general like him be interested in some teen demon?" Emmanuel demanded. "It's connected to his parent's deaths, isn't it?"

All of the sudden the demon seemed a hundred years older, his shoulders slumped and his eyes grew bleak. "Yes, it is. They thought my brother-in-law had something and when they didn't find it at his house, they must have assumed it's with Andy."

"What?" Some of the anger Cadean felt toward the demon faded when she saw how defeated he looked.

"An elixir that would revert demons back to their angel state." Mangus sat on the top of his desk and rubbed the spikes on the top of his head.

"Could something like that really exist?" Emmanuel's brow creased.

"No, Andy's father was a charlatan, even by demon standards. He was always looking for the next get-rich-quick scheme and when those didn't work, he started running cons. Stupid idiot," the demon snorted. "One of his cons caught up with him and my sister paid the ultimate price."

"Why didn't you just tell us all this in the beginning?" Emmanuel threw his hands up in disgust.

"How was I to know that you wouldn't believe the rumors and try to kill Andy yourselves?"

"Because you've known me forever, Mangus." Cadean was both hurt and insulted by his accusation. "I would never harm an innocent. That wasn't my game even at the height of my bounty hunter career for Lucifer." Mangus had the good graces to look down at the scuffed floor.

"I know, Cadean and I'm sorry for that. Ever since I saw my sister laying there savaged like that, I haven't been thinking right."

"Is that all of it?" Emmanuel pinned the demon with a hard glare. "There isn't anything else you're holding back?"

"No, I swear it to you." The demon looked back up and Cadean was stunned to see tears in his eyes. "Does this mean you won't look for Andy anymore? I need you both. I know your history, Cadean, you were the best hunter ever. And you too, Emmanuel. Docian says there wasn't a more

skilled justice angel in history. It wasn't a mistake I put you two on the job. Even though you were both down on your luck, it wasn't a charity case. I want Andy back so much and I know I need to send the best after him. Please, don't make him pay for my sins."

Emmanuel gave her a look that clearly said *Well?* Cadean sighed. "Of course we'll continue to look for him but we're doubling the bounty." Hey, she couldn't let Mangus off the hook completely. "And we will be taking half of it now, upfront for all the grief you've caused us."

The look of relief on the demon's face almost made her recant her new price. *Almost*. "Thank you, so much." Mangus stood up straighter and shook his head like he was trying to deny the fact he'd actually shown emotion.

"Whatever." Cadean rolled her eyes and acted blasé so he could save face. "Let's go hunting, Emmanuel."

Cadean noticed as they left the office and walked out of the bar, all the patrons cast them worried glances as they scrambled out of their way. It seemed that Emmanuel's punch and her past had given them quite the reputation. Good, maybe then more demons would think twice about working with Klausous. She was glad to leave the bar behind and step out into the fresh, crisp, winter air. Even in the secreted alley, she

could see the twinkle of the Christmas lights decorating the city.

"Lil, was so excited about Christmas and those jerks destroyed all her decorations," Cadean mused sadly.

Emmanuel stared at the lights for several seconds before a wry smile spread over his face. "Did you bring one of your cloaks with you?"

"Yes, why?" She asked, suspicious.

"I think it's time we did some Christmas shopping."

"Are you kidding?" she gaped at him.

"No, before now I wasn't in the Christmas spirit." He reached out to cup her cheek. "Now I can think of all kind of reasons to celebrate." Damn, the tender way he was gazing at her would make her agree to anything, even this.

"Remind me again why I love you?" she grunted.

Then he did just that by lowering his head to capture her lips in a gentle kiss.

Chapter Twelve

Dina was at the sink, finishing up the dinner dishes when Megan came up behind him and slid her hands around his waist. Since he knew Emmanuel and Cadean were out and Lilith was still in the bedroom, the empath allowed himself to relax and enjoy the warm, familiar smell of his mate as he inhaled her signature scent of cinnamon. She'd changed and a thrill went through him when he realized she was now wearing one of his favorite outfits, a skin-tight blue sweater and matching barely there skirt

"Feeling better after your nap?" he asked as he dried his hands off on a towel, all the while wondering if she would be daring enough to have sex here in Lilith's kitchen. He eyed up the table and fantasized about spreading her out there and eating her for desert.

"Yes," she purred in his ear as her fingers trailed down to his cock, lightly stoking it through the thick denim of his jeans. "I'm feeling much,

much, more perky."

"I can see that." The empath sucked in a breath when Megan gave his erection a gently squeeze. Obviously she would be up for a round of sex. He was disappointed when her hands left until she wrapped a scarf around his eyes and tied it into a knot. Blinded and intrigued he asked, "What are you doing?"

"I want to play a new game," she whispered in his ear before lightly nipping on his lobe. Dina jumped in response as he remembered how much sweet damage those teeth could do to other parts of his anatomy.

"If you're planning on tying me up, I hate to break it to you, but we've already done that before." Although, truth be told, he wouldn't mind a replay.

"No, this one is different, I promise." A sexy giggle floated through the air as her fingers interlaced with his and she tugged. "Come on." Eager to see what she had planned, he allowed himself to be led through the apartment

"Where are you taking me?" He tripped over something on the floor and let out a muttered curse.

"Trust me." She made a sharp turn and Dina could hear a door close and then the click of a lock being put in place. Megan let go of his hand and he reached out for her, wanting desperately to

keep in contact with her comforting, familiar heat. “No,” she admonished. “No touching allowed. Keep your hands down. That’s the rules, you break them and the game is over.”

“Megan—” he started only to be cut off when she slammed her body into his and pressed him against the wall. Dina let out a yelp, surprised at her strength, since he’d never seen that side of her before. Before he could dwell on that, her hot lips covered his and he suddenly didn’t give a damn anymore. Urgent, scorching and demanding, she almost devoured him like she was starving and he was her meal. The empath moaned into her mouth to show how much he appreciated her efforts. Wanting to feel the entire length of her body pressed against his, Dina went to wrap his arms around her waist, but remembered her no-touching rule at the last second and held back. It was hard though, every instinct in him was screaming for him to throw her on the floor and screw her hard. Megan always loved when he lost control like that. But rules were rules and if she wanted to play that way, by damn he would. Balling his hands into fists, he forced them to remain at his sides.

Returning her kiss with a hard need, he slipped his tongue in only to be confused when her mouth didn’t taste like it usually did. Every other time, he’d kissed her she’d always been sweet like

honey, now she tasted dark and kind of spicy. Come to think of it, she smelled different, too, like incense. Not at all like his Megan, but an awful lot like someone else he knew. Realization slowly dawning on him, he ran his tongue along her teeth. Bingo. Fangs.

“What the fuck?” he pulled back so quick his head banged against the wall. Heart hammering, he lifted the blindfold to confirm his suspicions.

Lilith’s mouth was inches from his own and it was her arms wrapped around his neck, not Megan’s. An impish grin played on lips, moist and swollen from his kisses, as she ran her tongue along them. Dina licked his own lips, still tasting the erotic flavor of her. The succubus was dressed in an outfit made for seduction. Deep red pants cupped her ass and curves, the leather so tight against her body it could have been a second skin. The swell of her breasts were wonderfully close to his face thanks to the way her red bustier top pushed them up. Black wings were tucked tight to her back.

“Megan?” his voice was slurred with passion and his cock was straining against his pants so hard it hurt.

For months now Megan had talked about finding a willing female demon to share in their bedtime activities. Until now, Dina had always thought that was all it was, talk. Both he and

Megan had been virgins when they mated. The thought of experiencing another lover's touch was a taboo desire they had both wanted but never dared try.

Until now.

"You've always said you wanted to share me with another female and now I've found one who wants it as much as we do." The healer wrapped her body around his side and started to nibble his neck. Her lips were inches from Lilith's. Dina tensed waiting for them to kiss, but nothing happened. Sick little pervert he was, he wanted nothing more in life right now than to see the two females making out.

"Can I move my hands yet?" he asked in a harsh tone. Maybe they just needed a little incentive to lock lips and he was pretty sure he was up to the task of giving it to them.

"I don't know." Megan ran her tongue up the length of his throat. "Do you want to do this?" Lilith scraped a fang against his jaw. The female's lips were so, so close and still they didn't kiss. It was all he could do not to growl in protest.

"Fuck, Megan, is there a guy in all of history that would say no to that question? Now let me move my hands, please."

"I don't know if I should let you." She ran her hands slowly down his body, her fingers found the zipper on his pants. Then tugged on the tab

playfully, but didn't unzip him. "All right, I guess you can move them now, Dina."

Praising all that was holy, he could finally touch, Dina raised his hands and used one palm to cup the back of Lilith's head the other Megan's. Gently he urged their faces together. "Kiss. Now."

Dark lashes fanned Megan's cheeks as she closed her eyes and pressed her lips to Lilith's. The succubus parted her mouth and deepened the kiss, her tongue darting out to lick and taste. Dina could feel the healer's body relax as she grew accustomed to another female's touch, a small whimper coming from her. Lilith took the lead, nipping, licking and sucking Megan's mouth.

"Damn, you two look so hot."

Lilith gave him a wicked grin. "Oh, sweet angel. You haven't seen anything yet."

Growling low in his throat, he leaned down, the succubus met him halfway, their mouth crashing together in a punishing kiss. The demon didn't hold back so he didn't either. Their tongues fought for dominance as they stroked, explored and tasted. The sight must have turned Megan on because Dina heard a soft moan come from her direction.

Needing to touch her, too, the empath reached out blindly for his mate. Her soft fingers grabbed his and she brought his hand to her lips and started to suck and lick the digits. Lilith broke the

kiss and Dina felt pure alpha pride to see her cheeks flush with desire.

"The entire time I was out of it I knew when it was your blood I was drinking," her words came out breathy. "It had such a sweet taste to it, but there was a dark edge to it too. I can't wait to have some more." Kissing a fiery path from the corner of his lips, to his jaw, down his neck, her lips finally settled above his jugular. Dina turned his face to Megan.

"Please, kiss me," he begged. The healer surrendered to his request, her small body pressing into his side as a soft sigh slipped from her parted lips an instant before they touch his. At that moment he felt a white lance of pain as Lilith bit into his throat, followed by tendrils of warm, sensual pleasure. He cried out against Megan's lips as the added stimulus made his body jackhammer with desire.

He'd heard before succubi had an aphrodisiac quality to their spit, called the Bliss, but he had no idea it was this potent. A fuzzy haze edged his vision and brain and he knew he would kill anyone who tried to stop him from fucking the two females. No longer the weak loser who had been abused all his life, Dina felt like the strong viral warrior he'd become. Lilith sucked at his neck in slow long draws taking in his blood and he mimicked the motion on Megan's tongue.

Sucking while he was sucked, Dina never dreamed it would feel this good.

Dina reached behind Megan and slid one hand up her skirt until he was caressing the smooth globes of her ass. Damn, he loved the fact his girl only wore thongs. Nudging the thin piece of fabric aside, he ran his fingers down further until they were caressing the slippery folds of her pussy.

Damn, she was so wet. More so than ever. The syrupy hot fluid coated his fingers as he pumped one of them inside her. With a gasp, Megan fisted her hands in his shirt and undulated her hips against his hand. On the other side of him, Lilith took her fangs out of his neck before running a lazy path over the puncture wounds left behind. She licked some leftover blood off her bottom lip, and Dina found himself mimicking the motion against his own mouth as he wondered what the succubus would taste like. Every square inch of her. Almost as if she could sense what he was thinking, the demon slowly ran her hands down her body, paying special attention to her breasts and the juncture of her thighs.

"Help me get your mate naked and I'll teach you all the tricks I know on how to please a female." Now her hands were wandering over Dina. Experienced fingers rubbed him through his pants and it was all he could do not to thrust forward into her touch.

Get private sex lesson from a succubus? Oh yeah that would most definitely be a good thing. Dina nodded dumbly, his brain too hazy to formulate words. Between the two of them they slowly peeled the clothes off the healer, revealing every inch of her delicious body. On the right side of her belly, right above her pelvis was his mark, a hawk in flight. Pride swelled through him he brushed the intricate design with the back of his hand before letting his touch drift the bottom of her perfect breasts. Tight pink nipples teased him and Dina couldn't resist leaning down to taste one. Megan burrowed her fingers in his hair and arched against his mouth. Pain mixed with passion as she pulled his hair so tight it hurt. The angel growled as he moved onto the next nipple, giving it equal attention as its twin. Damn, he could dine on her tits all night. Lilith gave him a tap on his ass bringing him back into focus.

"Not yet, empath. Come here." She held out her hand, Dina took it and let her lead him to the edge of the large circular bed. "Has anyone ever taught you the proper way to pleasure a female? What areas to touch? When to be hard and when to be soft? When to lick and when to suck?"

"No." He shook his head like some stupid malfunctioning bobble head. "I guess you could kind of say I've been winging it."

"Winging it?" She giggled and ruffled her

velvet like wings a bit. "I like that phrase. Megan, come and join us." The healer obeyed and Lilith put one arm around her waist. "I like you two. You're so damn cute I just want to take you home and feed you milk and cookies. Because of that, I'm going to do more than just fuck you. I'm going to show you the true art of making love. By the time I'm done teaching you, you both will know things most angels never master in their lives."

"That could take a while." Dina swallowed hard, his mouth dry. "Angels are immortal so they have a lot of time on their hands."

"Lucky for you, your newest buddy, Lil, is good at what she does." She rubbed her fingers against one of Megan's nipples and Dina's gut tightened in desire. "Are you ready for lesson one?" The empath nodded his head.

Again with the nod thing? You're being real slick here ace. Although to be fair to himself, most of his blood supply was presently down south.

A wicked grin spread over the demon's lips. "Get on the bed, Dina. Sit on your knees so Megan can lay her head in your lap."

The couple obeyed and Dina soon found himself looking down at Megan's blonde hair fanned over his lap. Her blue eyes stared back up at him, they were dark with desire and she licked her lips in anticipation. Thanks to the position they were in, Dina had a great view of her tight body

spread out before him. The milky white flesh was stark against the crimson comforter. It reminded him of the contrast between her and the demon. Innocence versus raw sexuality.

Lilith got on the other side of the bed and settled herself between Megan's thighs. With slow deliberate movements, she started to rub her fingers over every inch of the healer's body. Her ribcage, her stomach, her hips, the bottom swell of her breasts. When the succubus started to stroke the inside of her thigh, Dina sucked in a breath. Megan was panting, her cheeks pink with passion, eyes closed in rapture, she rolled her head back and forth the movement causing a delicious friction against Dina's cock.

"Tell me, Dina. Does your mate taste good here?" Lilith ran a long finger up Megan's pussy, making the healer shriek in pleasure.

"Yes." Dina swallowed hard as he watched the demon slip a finger inside his mate. Megan arched up and let out a moan. "She tastes like warm peaches."

"Really?" she cocked her head to the side in a curious manner as she continued to use her finger to fuck the other female.

"Why don't you taste her and see for yourself?"

Desire flashed through the succubus's cat-like eyes before she smile at him, showing a flash of fang. "I thought you'd never ask."

Licking her lips in anticipation, Lilith scooted down so she could replace her hands with her mouth. Letting out a scream of pleasure, Megan's lids snapped open and Dina found himself gazing into her beautiful passion filled eyes. The couple stayed that way, gazes locked as the succubus licked, sucked and teased.

Soft moans and gasps of pleasures from Megan told Dina just how much she was enjoying it. "I love you," she whispered to him.

"I love you, too," he replied reaching his hands down to caress her breasts. Rolling the nipples under his fingers, he pinched them between his thumbs and forefingers. She lurched up, a scream of pleasure ripping from her throat.

"Oh God, Dina, I'm going to come."

"That's okay, babe, let yourself go. I've got you." He looked down at Lilith and his cock jumped at the sight of her pink tongue darting in and out, Megan's cream covering her lips.

"Dina!" Megan shrieked as she clawed at his arms. Sweat made her skin slick as she gyrated her hips against Lilith. A shudder went through her body as she came, and Dina stroked her arms, hair and face all the way through. When it was over, her eyelids fluttered open and she gave a satisfied sigh.

"That was fantastic. No offense, but she really knows what she's doing."

Dina chuckled. "None taken."

"Dina." Lilith got to her knees and beckoned him with a crook of her finger. "Come to me, now it is time to take care of your pleasures. When I was ill, you cared for me by giving me your blood, now let me give back to you. Please?"

Like he was going to deny that request. After swallowing hard, he eased himself out from under Megan and crawled over to her. Once there, he went up on his knees too, so their faces were inches apart. Some of Megan's cream still lingered on the demon's lips and Dina couldn't resist licking it off, nice and slow. The sweet taste of peaches mingled with the salty tang of his blood, the angel moaned in delight.

Lilith parted her lips and Dina swept inside her mouth with his tongue. This time when he came into contact with her fangs, he didn't pull back. Instead, he stroked and sucked them, reveling in their differences.

It wasn't until he felt a tug as his pants were unzipped that he realized Megan had got up and was crouched down in front of him. The healer undid his pants and lowered them enough to free his cock, at the same time Lilith broke off the kiss to take off his tee shirt. As soon as she had it off, she tossed it aside and returned to his mouth, this time her tongue darting in to taste.

A hot moist heat enveloped his cock as Megan

took him in her mouth and started to suck him. "Fuck," Dina exclaimed in a whimper. Lilith giggled.

"For an angel, you sure do have a dirty mouth." She cupped his balls and gave them a generous squeeze at the same time Megan licked the crest of his cock. Dina threw his head back and hissed in pleasure.

"You have no idea, how dirty I can be, demon. Now take your clothes off for me."

Lilith got off the bed and slowly took off her top, displaying her full breasts. Unlike Megan who had pink nipples, the demon had deep red ones that reminded him of berries. The healer took him fully in her mouth again while using one hand to pump. Dina tore his gaze off Lilith because he loved nothing more than to watch his cock go in and out of Megan's mouth when she sucked him, her plump lips stretched wide to accommodate his girth.

"That's it, Megan. Just like that, take me deep," the empath urged as he fisted his hand in her long silky hair.

Lilith climbed on the bed, she'd lost all her clothes and her sexy curves were out there for Dina to take in. He licked his lips in anticipation, the way she was built, the way she moved, everything about her seemed to be custom made for sex. Fully expecting her to start kissing him

again, he was surprised when she crouched down next to Megan.

“What are you doing?” he asked in a guttural voice.

She looked up at him under dark lashes, her exotic eyes dark and stormy. “I told you, little puppy, this is all about you now.” Fangs flashed at him again before she bent over and joined Megan at his dick.

It was the most intense experience he’d ever had. Two mouths on him at once, sucking, licking, biting. Their soft hands were everywhere massaging his balls, rubbing his ass, caressing his thighs. Dina cupped the back of their heads with his palms and urged them on.

The females pulled back from time to time to give each other open mouthed passionate kisses before they would return to him. Their tongues were like a wicked, wet dream come to life. Megan looked up at him with those baby blue eyes of hers and he smiled down at her.

I love you, he mouthed.

His balls grew tight against his body and he threw back his head as an earth-shattering orgasm rifled through his body. One of the females, he didn’t know which, took him in her mouth and swallowed his cum as it shot from his body while the other pumped his cock. Dina roared as waves of pleasure ripped through his body.

Slowly, his breathing got regular and his mind became clear of his sex fog, then horror made his stomach tight. He had two females in bed with him, every males dream come true and he'd blown his wad just when things were starting to get good. *Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!*

"I'm sorry," he whispered, running a hand through his sweat-soaked hair.

Lilith got back on her knees and smiled at him. "Don't worry about it."

"But I just came and we hadn't—" she stopped him by putting a finger over his lips.

"Don't worry, puppy. I said I would take care of you and I always keep my promises."

Before he could argue any further, she moved like a cobra and sank her fangs in his shoulder. Dina yelped in surprise at first, then the Bliss took over and he moaned instead. The aphrodisiac entered his blood stream and started to course through his body, leaving behind a path of arousal. Megan wrapped her hands around his cock and he started to grow hard again under her touch.

"See?" Lilith's eyes glowed with hunger. "You will be able to go for hours."

Dina grinned wolfishly as he allowed the females to pull him down onto the bed.

Chapter Thirteen

“I can’t believe that you had to get the biggest tree in the lot,” Cadean grumbled good-naturedly as she slammed the car door shut and looked up at the humongous evergreen strapped to the top of Lilith’s vehicle.

Not looking one bit sorry or chastised, Emmanuel grinned at her, reminding her a bit of a naughty schoolboy. “Hey, if we’re going to get into all this ho-ho-ho bullshit, we might as well do it right. I still can’t believe you wouldn’t let me get the flocked one.”

“It would have made a huge mess and since Lil hates to vacuum I would have been stuck on clean up duty.”

“I would of done it,” he protested.

“No thank you.” She wrinkled her nose playfully at him. “I’ve seen the inside of your Jeep. You, sir are a slob.”

“Oh, you are so cruel.” He put his hand over his chest like she’d wounded him. “Now I’m

going to give you nothing but coal for Christmas.”

“Huh?” She wrinkled her brow at the unfamiliar phrase.

“Humans say that naughty children get coal in their stocking on Christmas Day.”

“Oh, well then I’m going to get it for sure, because I am such a naughty demon. You’ll have to spank me too.” She turned around and wiggled her backside at him and giggled when he growled in response.

Quick as a flash, he was around the car and had his arms around her, pulling her rear into his erection. “I may be a slob, but you’re a tease,” he rumbled into her ear.

Cadean smiled as she allowed herself to relax in his arms. Even though it was cold outside, she could have stayed this way forever. In the past few days her life had changed so much, all for the good too. She’d never imagined in a million years that she would find a happily ever after and that it would be an angel. Part of her still worried he would leave her someday because of her demon state, despite his promises. Suddenly she wished the elixir Mangus had told them about was real. Then she could be angel again and truly worthy of Emmanuel’s love.

“I wouldn’t change you for the world.” Emmanuel held her tighter. “So don’t even think that way.”

"How did you know what I was thinking? Last time I checked you weren't a psychic."

He spun her around so he could look in her eyes. "I can tell what's on your mind just by looking at your face. I love you, Cadean. You. The demon, the harpy, the bounty hunter, the beautiful caring female, all of it. I wouldn't change one thing about you."

"Deep down I know that." Cadean reached up and stroked his cheek. "I'm just so used to being betrayed by everyone around me that it's going to take a bit longer for me to get adjusted to everything between us."

"I understand." A sad look passed over his eyes. "Demons don't hold the market on betrayal. My parents turned their backs on me too."

"They're fools."

"Maybe they just couldn't put up with my slovenly ways either." A wry smile twitched at the corner of his mouth.

"Well lucky for you I was raised in Hell and demons have never been known for their tidiness. I guess I can live with one messy angel."

He laughed, the sad aura left him and Cadean was glad to have been the one to make it happen. "Come inside," he said as he rubbed the top of her arms. "I'll get Dina to help me carry in the tree. You can tell Lilith about our conversation with Mangus."

They loaded up on bags because they had bought much more than just a tree and made their way to Lilith's apartment. Even before they opened the door, Cadean could hear the muffled tones of rock music and the sound of Lil's giggles mixed in with...Megan's?

"Oh no," Cadean muttered under her breath. Only one thing made the succubus this happy. She'd gotten laid, but by who? The only other ones there had been Megan and Dina. Cadean paused as a shocking thought occurred to her. No? Surely a mated angel couple wouldn't. Or would they? When she continued to stand there dumbly as those thoughts tumbling in her head, Emmanuel reached around her and opened the door.

Lil and Megan were in the center of the living room dancing. Thank Lucifer they were both dressed but the healthy glow to the succubus's cheeks told Cadean that ol' Lil had been up to no good.

"Caddy!" Lil exclaimed as she spotted them. "You're home!"

"Yes, we're home," Cadean bit out between clenched teeth. "I see you're feeling much better."

"Oh, yes, Megan and Dina can really work magic when they want to." Lilith gave a wicked smile that wasn't lost on Cadean. Judging by the way Megan blushed the innuendo wasn't lost on her either. Fortunately, it was completely lost on

Emmanuel.

"I'll take these bags into the kitchen so we can unload the food," he said on his way through the living room. He didn't even spare the females a glance.

"How could you?" Cadean whispered angrily to the succubus.

"Stop being a prude," Lil whispered back

"Hey, where's Dina?" Emmanuel called from the kitchen. "I need his help."

"He's sleeping," Megan yelled back. She gave Cadean a sheepish shrug.

"Yes," Lilith added. "He's very, very, very tired."

"You're really asking for it," Cadean hissed to her friend.

"Don't get mad at her," Megan whispered too. "We wanted it just as much as she did." Lilith gave Cadean a triumphant smile.

Cadean gave the healer a disbelieving look. "But, you're angels."

"Just because we're angels doesn't mean we're naive. We've been wanting to try something like this for a long time."

Cadean covered her eyes with a hand. "I need a drink."

"Silly," Lilith giggled. "Alcohol makes demons and angels sick. I told you that a long time ago."

"I'll suffer through the vomiting if it will let me

forget your stunts for one night."

"Hey, Dina!" Emmanuel yelled as he went through the living room on his way back to the bedroom. "Get your lazy ass out of bed. I need your help."

"Oh, no." Cadean's eyes went wide as terror churned her stomach. "Please, tell me Dina is decent."

"Not even close," Megan replied.

"He's not dressed either," Lilith added. The two females dissolved into gales of laughter at the bad joke.

"Emmanuel, don't go back there!" Cadean shouted, but it was too late. She ran to the hall just in time to see him open the door. Whatever the archangel saw in there must have told him the whole story because his jaw dropped before he looked back at the living room, his eyes huge with shock.

"I tried to warn you." Cadean braced herself for his reaction. Would he yell at the angel couple? Go after Lilith? Be mad at her because she was friends with the succubus and she should have known better than to leave her alone with the pair?

"Dina took both of them on all by his little empath self?" Emmanuel asked, his gaze shooting back to the bedroom, then to the living room, then back to the bedroom.

"Yes."

Emmanuel snorted, then gave way to full laughter. "Way to go, Dina."

"So you're not going to yell at him?"

"No, but I may high-five him." He hooted.

"Why are all males the same?" she snapped although she wasn't truly angry. In fact, her lips quivered as she fought to hold her own chuckles in.

"Hey, lover boy," Emmanuel shouted into the room. "Get up and help me unload the car." He shielded his eyes. "Just put some clothes on first, please."

"Wow, that is some big tree," Dina proclaimed as soon as they got to the car.

"Yeah, so I've been told," Emmanuel drawled as he started to work the knots loose on the rope. It was ball-numbing freezing out so his fingers were numb and clumsy. "So, do the angel warriors celebrate Christmas?"

"Usually." Dina went to the other side of the car and started untying the knots there. "But with the way the war is going for our side, it's going to be kind of a downer this year."

"It's still kind of hard for me to believe that you were really an empath angel warrior all these years. I keep thinking of you as a justice angel."

The younger angel shrugged. "Well considering how much my dad hates Michael and his angel

warriors, the last thing he wanted was to have one in his family. So he hid my true rank from everyone, me included."

"It's still such a surprise."

"You're surprised?" Dina chuckled as he pulled a length of rope through a loop. He seemed to be having much better luck getting the tree free. "Imagine how shocked I was. I never dreamed I was an empath before Cam told me."

Emmanuel's hands stilled as a crazy idea occurred to him. "So as an empath, you're the exact opposite of an angst demon?"

"Yes, although I've never fought one."

"But, in theory, you should be able to counteract one, right?"

"Sure." Having freed the tree on his side, Dina moved around the car to work on Emmanuel's half.

The archangel's mind raced with the possibilities. Every time they had got close to capturing Andy, the little brat had used his powers to muck everything up. If they could convince Dina to go with them, he might just be able to calm the kid down long enough for them to convince him to go home. "I know you've already done so much for us, but I was wondering if you would be willing to help us out one more time."

The empath narrowed his eyes suspiciously. "How?"

Emmanuel quickly gave him an overview of what happened at the nightclub and the abandoned house. When he was finished, Dina nodded slowly and asked, "So you are thinking of using me to counteract his bad mojo?"

"Yes, if you're willing."

"Are you sure you can even find him again?"

"Tomorrow is Christmas Eve. I think that will make him lonely for his old home. Even though his family is dead, I'm betting he will still want to be where they all used to be happy together."

"You may be on to something there," the empath mused as he undid the last knot and started to roll up the rope. "Okay, count Megan and me in. It's not like I need to get back for any family dinners on my end. I'd just as soon shove the stuffing up my father's ass and bake him than some turkey."

"What exactly did Jehel do to make you hate him so much?"

At first Emmanuel didn't think the empath was going to answer. The younger angel even actually took a step back as if his question had hit him like a physical blow. The empath shoved his hands into his pockets and looked down at his black combat boots. He let out deep sigh, producing a white plumb of fog in the cold air.

"He gave me to a demon, one that specializes in torture. Once the thing was done having fun with

me, it put some kind of shield on me so no angel healer would know how bad I was hurt. Since angels are immortal and it's much harder to kill us, I wouldn't die right away. That would have been too easy in my dad's eyes. He really wanted me to suffer." A feral glint came to his gray eyes. "For weeks I walked around, knowing that each second brought me closer to death. Stupid ass I was at that time, I was too scared to ask for help. Even after the war broke out and Michael's nephews took me in, I was still too dense to ask for help. They didn't realize anything was wrong with me until I dropped dead at their feet."

"Oh my god." Emmanuel's gut churned as he thought about the terror and betrayal the poor empath must have felt. The archangel's dad may have been a bastard, but he had never tried to kill him. "What happened? I mean, obviously they saved you somehow. You're here now."

"Michael is the most powerful archangel ever and his nephews have many of his gifts. One of them used his talent to bring me back to life." Dina grinned manically and Emmanuel shivered at the mad edge to it. "It kind of messed me up though. One of the side effects was I had to spend a few months in a rubber room because I lost my mind."

"Did you see something after you died, that made you that way?"

"Let's just put it this way. I found out the hard way that all angels don't ascend to the upper realms of Heaven when they die. There is another place we go. Someplace dark and cold." He swallowed hard and a shudder went through his body. "It's worse than I ever imagined Hell to be." Now it was Emmanuel who shuddered.

"There must have been a mistake somewhere. Surely the fates wouldn't subject us to a place like that after we die? Not after faithfully serving for years."

"There was no mistake." Dina shook his head and the dead-heart certain set of his eyes, made Emmanuel's stomach roll. "There were other angels there. I could hear them screaming. I ran around trying to help them, but it was so dark—" he broke off and took a shaky breath. "It was so dark, I couldn't find them. That's when I heard it."

"Heard what?"

"Hundreds of tiny little feet scuttling across the floor. *Clack, clack, clack*. It was all around me, getting closer and closer. I knew they were coming for me and I couldn't even run because they had circled me and were closing in."

"Then what happened?" Emmanuel almost didn't want to know the answer to the question. Crap, Dina's past was one big nightmare come to life. No wonder the empath had issues that would make Dr. Phil scream in terror.

"All of the sudden Michael's healer nephew, Derel, was there. He put his hands on my shoulders, closed his eyes and I felt this huge lurch as he pulled me the hell out of there."

They both grew silent and Emmanuel let the ramifications of what Dina just told him hit hard. Could it possibly be true that most angels would end up in that place? And if so why? What could they have possibly done to deserve such a fate?

"Did you tell anyone about the dark place?" Emmanuel crammed his hands in his pockets and leaned against the car as various emotions slammed through his body, anger, fear, hurt, to name a few.

"No." Dina toed a pile of snow with his foot. "At first I thought maybe that it was somewhere that only bad angels were sent to. I mean, after all, the whole reason I was killed was because I had been given a death sentence. Then as time passed, I realized that even if my dad thought I was some terrible angel, the fates had to of known I was basically good at heart, so why would they still send me there. The only logical answer would be because all angels end up there."

"What did the other angel warriors say when you told them?"

"How could I tell them that for all their years of service their reward was going to be betrayal by those they served?" Dina spun around to look at

him and Emmanuel saw the same anger and hurt on the empath's face that he was feeling. The archangel thought about all the angels who were even now suffering in that place and he wanted to roar with rage.

"Couldn't Michael do something?" Emmanuel asked, grasping for straws, anything to make this not true.

"Michael may be the greatest archangel ever, but he's still just an angel. Whoever subjected us to this fate is bigger than even him. I love and respect the Chief Archangel too much to tell him that it's all for nothing. It would kill him to know that he had warrior's souls suffering and there was nothing he could do to help them."

"But his nephew, the one who got you out. Doesn't he know?"

Dina shrugged. "Either he wasn't there long enough to take a good look around or he's keeping it close to his chest like me. I think the justice council knows, though."

Now why was that the only part of the story that didn't shock Emmanuel? "What makes you think that?"

"Right after he sentenced me to death, my dad said," Dina switched tones, mimicking the justice leaders uptight voice perfectly, "*Where you're going there will be no running away.*"

"But you're okay now?"

"Yes, most days I am." The empath grinned and Emmanuel was relieved to see it was an easy carefree one, completely unlike his earlier one. "But if I start foaming at the mouth and howling at the moon, you can just lock me up. The good thing about all this is I am the perfect empath to help you with your *Andy* problem."

"Why's that?"

"Because Andy won't be able to bring me down with dark thoughts. I live with them every day, so I am an expert at tampering them down."

That should have made Emmanuel feel confident about the upcoming mission, instead it made him sad. He made a silent vow to himself that someday, somehow he would find a way to make the council leader, Jehel pay for what he'd done to his son and countless others.

Chapter Fourteen

They parked a mile from Andy's house and walked the rest of the way. The teen's former family home was deep in a secluded area of woods, miles away from the populated city. Most demons that chose to live separately from their kind lived as far away from humans as possible to reduce the risk of exposure. While it made good sense if you were trying to live off the grid, it did make things more difficult for a hunting mission like they were on tonight.

All around were trees, rocks, weeds, and other places that would be a perfect hiding place for Klausous and his demon assassins. While Emmanuel was hoping his group was the only one counting on Andy coming here, he wasn't betting on it. From what Lilith and Cadean had told him about this Klausous, he sounded like a damned good tracker. Emmanuel just needed to make sure that he was a better hunter than the demon.

Thankfully, Emmanuel was pretty confident in

his rescue party. Each and every one of them were highly trained seasoned warriors and they looked it. Cadean was dressed in all black leather and she was armed with a short sword. Lilith was in leather, too though hers was red. On her wrists was a set of retractable blades. Of course, Dina was in all black and for once his mate matched him. She wore a tight bodysuit that had made the empath smile wickedly when she had first put it on. The healer was armed with a cross bow and Dina had a pair of daggers in his hands.

Emmanuel and Dina were the only ones that opted to not go the leather route. They wore jeans, tee shirts and combat boots. The archangel had his long sword out and ready as he continually scanned the area for attack. Dina was taking point, leading the group. Since empaths could sense demons before any other angels, it was always standard battle practice to hunt in this formation. Emmanuel just made sure he was close behind the younger angel so he could protect his back. Dina suddenly pulled up short and held up a hand.

"There's a demon in the house," he spoke in a low voice so as not to be overheard by any lurking enemies. While he could sense most demons there were some that had the ability to mask their presence from even empaths.

"How many?" Emmanuel could make out the shadow of the house in the dark, fifty yards ahead

of them in a clearing.

"One and he is pissed." He cocked his head to the side, like he was testing the air. "He's scared too. Really, really scared and sad."

"How can we be sure it's Andy?" Cadean asked.

"I've got an idea." Dina snapped his fingers together. "We can send Cadean in there. With that outfit on, she could make any teen male pant. As soon as I pick up horny we'll know for sure it's him."

"Or I could just pick you up and throw your ass in there," Emmanuel threw the sarcasm back at him. "If nobody attacks you, then we'll know the coast is clear."

"Just try it." White teeth gleamed in the dark as the empath smiled. "I may be small but I'm damned scrappy."

"Someone is coming out the front door," Cadean announced. "Look sharp."

The heavy wood door slowly inched open and a small figure stepped slowly outside. Even with limited visibility, Emmanuel recognized it was Andy.

"Why can't you leave me alone!" he screamed in their direction.

So much for sneaking up on him.

"It's me," Dina whispered. "He can sense me like I sense demons."

"Can you neutralize him from here?" Cadean asked.

"No, I need to be closer for it too work. Usually I need to put my hands on my subject for it to really take."

"Dina has really good hands," Lilith announced with a smile. She gave the empath a flirtatious wink as she smacked Megan on the ass.

"I gave up my nice cozy jail cell in Heaven for this?" Emmanuel ran a frustrated hand through his hair so he didn't wrap it around the succubus's neck. His anxiety jacked up higher when Dina holstered his weapons. "What in the hell do you think you're doing?"

"Winging it," the empath answered out of the corner of his mouth. He held up both his hands to show they were empty as he started to slowly walk toward the house. "Hey, Andy. We just want to help you," he called out.

"Bullshit!" the demon screamed back "You're just here to try and kill me."

"No, I swear to you. Look I know what it's like to be scared and alone. I've been there."

"Yeah right." The demon took a step back like he was about to flee. "You're just saying that."

"Go ahead, reach out and feel my vibes." Dina continued to walk slowly forward. "You'll find plenty of doom and gloom in there."

The angst demon cocked his head to the side,

much like the empath had done earlier. After a moment he gave a slight shake of his head. "I feel the bad stuff there, but there is something else about you. You're not like the others hunting me."

"It's because I'm an empath angel." At that announcement Andy took another step back and Emmanuel was sure they'd lost him. "Wait!" Dina yelled and surprisingly Andy obeyed.

"I'm not going to hurt you," the empath promised. "Your uncle is really worried about you and he sent us here to help. He's not mad and he knows none of this was your fault. Mangus just wants you home safe and sound with him. He loves you."

"I can't go back," Andy sobbed. "Not after all the bad things I did."

Dina took few more steps closer. He was only feet from the teen now. "Nobody blames you for that. We know you didn't mean it."

"Really?" Andy walked toward the empath now instead of away from him.

"Really." Dina held his hand out to the demon. "Come on, let me take you away from all this. You must be so sick of being cold and hungry."

Emmanuel waited with baited breath to see if Andy would take the empath's hand. No one in the group moved, afraid of spooking the demon and making him run away. Finally, after what seemed like a million years, the teen reached and

grabbed the angel's hand. Dina pulled him in for a hug and the kid collapsed against him as he dissolved into tears.

"I miss them so much," Andy sobbed.

"I know you do," Dina soothed as he patted the teen's back. He murmured some other soft words that Emmanuel couldn't hear as he continued to comfort the small demon, then he jerked his head to the group to indicate they could come over.

"I don't like this," Cadean said as she shook her head. "After all we've been through this was just too easy."

"I agree." Emmanuel nodded his head. "Everyone keep your weapons out and be ready." Suddenly the distance between them and Dina loomed large. Even though the empath had yet to indicate there were other demons, the archangel couldn't shake his gut feeling that something was wrong.

"Shit!" Dina's yell broke through the still night. "Andy, run to the house, now!" He pushed the angst demon toward the door, but a group of demon assassins flashed in and blocked their path. The pair changed directions and tried to run back to the archangel, but another group of demons flashed in and halted their retreat.

Megan screamed in protest, firing off her crossbow just as another group of demons flashed in. Her arrow caught one of the newcomers in the

chest and brought him down. Emmanuel cursed as he realized Dina and Andy were now separated from them and were completely trapped. The situation got from shitty to shittier as group after group of demons flashed in.

The small band of would be rescuers formed a tight circle as they held their weapons out. Emmanuel knew it was going to be a slaughter though. They were outnumbered at least ten to one. A dark demon separated himself from one of the packs and walked forward.

"Lilith, it's a surprise to see you here."

"Klausous," Lilith hissed adding a demon growl at the end of the word. "You should know it wouldn't be that easy to kill me."

"I don't know whether to annoyed or pissed. I do know I am disappointed in you. Instead of running and hiding like a smart girl would have done, you join up with this band of losers and now you're going to die with them." He leered at the sex demon. "On second thought, maybe I'll let you live. I've always wanted to take a succubus as a slave."

"Eww..." Lilith wrinkled her nose up in disgust. "I'll take death instead, thank you very much."

Emmanuel took a step forward. "Why don't we settle this archangel against demon? You and I fight one-on-one?" He heard Cadean let out a

growl of protest, but he ignored it. "There is no reason for a blood bath."

"You want a deal, how about this, archangel?" Klausous snapped. "You give me the angst demon and I let you and your friends live."

"Not going to happen. He stays with us," Emmanuel snarled.

"Then he will die with you, too. I can just as easily take the elixir from him alive or not."

"You're even dumber than you look," Emmanuel scoffed. "Do you honestly think there could be a magic potion to turn you back to an angel? It was a con. A scam. And you fell for it like some kind of idiot."

"You lie!" Klausous roared, his eyes glowing with fury.

"Why would I lie about that? You're going to kill us anyway?" Emmanuel knew it was true too, elixir or not, there was no way in hell the demon was going to let them survive this confrontation. He just hoped that maybe the demon had some sliver of compassion that would allow Andy to escape unharmed.

"Why don't I recognize you?" the demon curled up his lips, revealing yellow teeth. "I know just about all of the angel warriors, so why don't I know you?"

"Does it matter?" Emmanuel gripped the hilt of his sword tighter. "If you're going to kill me

wouldn't it be a waste of one of your few brain cells to remember me?"

"You're not a justice angel are you?" the mocking way the demon asked the question told Emmanuel he already damn well knew the answer. "My knowledge of angel politics may be a little rusty but aren't justice archangels the ones that couldn't cut it as angel warriors?"

The familiar flash of pain and rejection slammed into Emmanuel. Yes, the archangels that served the justice council had always been considered second best to the ones who served as angel warriors. It was a stigma that all the justice archangels carried heavily and it had been why so many had been willing to betray Michael.

"Emmanuel is a great warrior, irregardless of whatever title they slap on him" Cadean defended. "You are about to find that out the hard way, Klausous." The archangel smiled to himself, warmed that finally he had someone willing to stick up for him. It made him more determined to figure a way to get them all out of this mess alive.

"If I'm some second rate archangel then why won't you fight me?" Emmanuel jeered. "Let the others go and let's settle this warrior to warrior."

The demon pulled his sword from the scabbard on his back. The full moonlight glinted on the blade as the demon brought it to the ready position. "Nobody touches the archangel, he's

mine.” Emmanuel felt immense relief. While he didn’t relish the thought of dying, at least he knew Cadean would live. That was all that mattered.

The demon laughed. “As for the rest of his pathetic pack, rip them apart and feed upon their entrails.”

Emmanuel let out a roar of protest. “You harm any of them, and you will answer to me.”

“You’ll already be dead by then,” the demon promised as he charged.

Emmanuel ran and met him halfway, the pair coming together in a clash of steel, muscle and hatred. Metal screeched against metal as they parried and thrust. The demon was quick, striking at a frenzied pace that would have made many panic and become clumsy as they tried to block his thrusts. Emmanuel didn’t allow himself to fall into that trap. He made himself fight in a cold calculated manner, efficient, making sure every thrust, every blow, every strike counted.

Klausous swung his sword up, slicing the angel in the gut. Had Emmanuel not jumped back at the last possible second, it would have disemboweled him, as it was it left a deep wound from navel to clavicle. The angel forced himself not to dwell on the pain or the fact he could feel his shirt becoming saturated with blood. Instead he continued to meet the demon blow for blow.

Around him all hell was breaking loose as the

assassins descended on the small band of angels and demon. Emmanuel's crew was vastly outnumbered and yet they continued to fight with a bravery that made him proud. That didn't mean things still didn't suck though. Even with all his battle skills, as the battle raged on and on, the archangel could feel the fatigue starting to build up in him. His arms burned from the exertion of blocking the demon's strong strikes. The long sword felt like it weighed a million pounds and he knew that even if he did manage to defeat the demon, the rest of his assassins would just finish what he started.

Then an image of Lilith battered and bloodied came to his mind. If he didn't defeat Klausous he would do the same thing again to the succubus or, worse, to Cadean. The thought made a fresh wave of adrenaline surge through his body. Letting out a hoarse battle cry, the angel swung his sword sideways in a large arch. The blade seemed to glow as the meager night's light reflected off it. Klausous tried to block it, but he'd finally moved too slow. The sword struck him in the throat and sliced all the way through.

As the demon's body crumpled to the ground, Emmanuel allowed himself a moment of satisfaction, knowing that both Lilith and Andy had been vindicated. He quickly spun around, desperate to find Cadean. *Please, let her be alive. I*

can't live without her.

The harpy was several feet away from him, taking on five demons. There was a large gash on her forehead, but at least she was on her feet. Megan was next to her, crouched and shooting off her crossbow at a dizzying rate. It didn't matter, though. As soon as she took down one demon another would take its place. Lilith was fighting with her fangs and claws, but even she was becoming overwhelmed.

Dina was getting the worse of it. Still separated from the group, not only was he fighting alone, but he was trying to protect Andy, too. Time after time, the empath threw himself in front of the angst demon, taking blows that were meant for him. Emmanuel took a step forward to help him, but the sound of Cadean screaming sliced through the night.

Emmanuel stumbled in the direction he'd last seen her, but another group of demons attacked him and brought him to the ground. The archangel struck out with his sword, stabbing blindly into the mass of demon bodies. Fists seem to come in every direction as the assassins pounded on him. There were other blows, followed by a warm sticky sensation that told him he'd been stabbed.

Another blade sliced into his chest, the cold steel scraping against bone before it was twisted

and pulled out then thrust in again. There was a strange sensation of something busting inside him, followed by a blinding pain. *Fuck, a direct blow to my heart. That will take down even an immortal like me.* A dark fog crept into Emmanuel's vision as he felt his hold on consciousness fade. "Cadean," he moaned, knowing it would be the last word he said. Another blow caught him in the gut, ripping agony followed. The angel cried out in pain, but he was so weak, no sound came out.

He was dying. He was dying and he'd failed Cadean and the others. Emmanuel tried to fight back. A voice screamed inside his head to warrior up and hit back, but his arms refused to move. A cold numbness spread throughout his body and his vision went from hazy to blurry.

Off in the distance he could hear a battle roar. It sounded like it was coming from numerous sources, reminding him of the angel battalions he'd trained with as a youth. Flashes of bright, orange light illuminated the sky. Due to his impaired vision, Emmanuel couldn't be for sure what the source of it was. Muffled cries of panic and pain followed each bursts.

Cold air blew over his body and he realized it was because the pile of demons was no longer crushing him. Strong hands gently rolled him over and he found himself looking into the face of Cam, the empath leader. "Hang on, Emmanuel," he

ordered, his voice seemed like it was miles away. Emmanuel tried to respond, but found, like the rest of his body, his voice was kaput.

Now the bright orange light made sense. Cam had the ability to control fire and he must have been blasting the demons. Somehow, someway the empath leader had figured out they needed help. Emmanuel just hoped the cavalry hadn't arrived too late. Was Cadean okay? Emmanuel tried to scream her name again and again, but all that came out was a weak moan.

"Don't worry. You're mate is hurt, but she will live," Cam assured as he ripped Emmanuel's clothes open so he inspect his wounds. Whatever the empath leader saw must not have been good because he blanched. "I need a healer!"

Emmanuel weakly grabbed at Cam's arm, trying to communicate his desperate need to know about the others. Thankfully the angel understood. "Lilith and Megan were banged up, but they're still able to walk and, unfortunately, talk. Dina got the shit beat out of him, but he's had worse. Thanks to him, Andy came through unscathed."

"Emmanuel." The archangel almost wept as he heard Cadean's familiar voice. Suddenly she was by his side, her cool fingertips brushing back his hair. There was a bit of blood on her face from the cut, but otherwise she looked unharmed. Her hands flew over all his wounds and she sobbed at

each one, "No. No. Nonononono!"

"I need a fucking healer, now!" Cam screamed again.

"Don't die on me, angel," Cadean cried as she threw herself on Emmanuel's chest. He wanted so desperately to wrap his arms around her to offer some comfort, but he'd grown so weak he couldn't. A soothing darkness came over him and he found it impossible to resist its pull. Around him he could sense disembodied voices.

"Don't leave me."

"Come on, buddy. Stay with us."

"We can't save him, he's too far gone."

"You better do something. He's my mate and I can't live without him." Cadean claimed in front of all these angels. That made him feel a surge of joy as he slipped into unconsciousness and heard no more.

Chapter Fifteen

“Emmanuel. Emmanuel. It’s time to wake up. Come on, you stupid angel. Wake up so I can kick your ass for scaring me so much.”

Slowly, Emmanuel came awake, his mate’s husky voice bringing him out from under the heavy blanket of darkness surrounding him. No longer on the snow-covered ground, he realized he was on a warm bed and the pain had faded to a dull ache. He cracked his lids open, wanting so badly to see his demon.

“Cadean?”

“I’m right here.” Her face appeared over him. Even more pale than usual, her eyes were red like she’d been crying and her hair was a mess. Emmanuel reached out for her and this time his arms worked. She took his hand and held it to her face.

“Am I dead?” he asked even though he could feel the warm softness of her flesh. Dead angels didn’t feel, did they?

"No, you're very much alive." She sniffed and her eyes filled up with tears. "You didn't think you'd get away from me that easy did you? Although I am truly getting sick of you getting hurt. That makes it twice now you've done this to me. Between you and Lil I'm going to have to invest in some serious health insurance."

"Where am I?" He looked around and saw he was in an unfamiliar room. The maroon walls and warm oak trim didn't look like an infirmary. Add the small computer desk in the corner and pictures on the walls and it looked like a family home. Lilith was curled up and asleep in a nearby recliner.

"We're inside Andy's old house. Cam didn't want to move you too far, so he thought it would be best if everyone regrouped here."

Emmanuel strained his ears and could hear numerous voices and sounds.

"How many are here?"

"I think Dina put the number at shitload." She smiled. "As in, *Cam brought a shitload of angel warriors with him.*"

Emmanuel chuckled. "That sounds like something he would say. How is everyone?"

"Doing much better than you." She squeezed his hand tight. "You scared me so bad. Don't do it again."

"I told you I wouldn't leave you." He tugged on

her hand and pulled her down to his chest. "I love you."

"I love you too, angel." She hugged him tight. "You're mine forever too, mark or no mark."

"Forever," he echoed, kissing the top of her head. "Is Andy back with Mangus?"

"Yes, you should have seen it, Emmanuel. Mangus actually cried."

"No way?" Emmanuel chuckled. "I can't imagine him ever getting sentimental and tearing up. It must have been a scary sight."

"Stop." She sat up and playfully swatted his arm. "It was actually kind of sweet."

"Did you make sure to collect our money?" He struggled into a sitting position.

"You bet your sweet angel ass I did."

"Emmanuel, you're awake." Megan came running into the room, Dina in tow.

"I knew you were too stubborn to die," Dina declared a big grin on his face.

"More like he knew Cadean would kick his ass if he died on her," Lilith said as she came awake with a large yawn. She stretched her body before standing up and fluffing out her wings.

"Guess what day it is?" Megan bounced on the balls of her feet and clapped her hands. "It's Christmas."

The healer's excitement was so large it was contagious. Emmanuel couldn't fight back a grin.

Lilith jumped up and ran to the window. "Oh, Megan. It's even snowing outside. How perfect is that?" She turned back to the room and stuck her tongue out at the harpy. "Don't say the C-word around Caddy. She hates the holidays."

"Not anymore, Lil." Cadean stoked Emmanuel's cheek. The love in her eyes was so strong it tugged at his heart. "I just got the best Christmas present ever. I think I'm going to love the holidays from now on." Not caring they had an audience, Emmanuel brought her even closer so her could taste her lips.

Her mouth parted to accept him and he growled as he swirled his tongue inside before pulling back to nibble on her bottom lip. "I was thinking," he announced once she'd pulled back.

"I knew I could see smoke," Lilith teased and Dina and Megan laughed. Emmanuel ignored his favorite idiots and kept his attention on Cadean.

"You and I make a great team. I think we should go into business together."

"As what?" Her brow wrinkled in confusion.

"Well since the war broke out there are a lot of families that are separated like Mangus and Andy, both angel and demon. Maybe we could help some of them get back together."

"You mean still be bounty hunters, but we track down the missing instead of fugitives?" she cocked her head to the side as she considered the

idea.

"I happen to know there are several families searching for lost loved ones," Dina added. "I think you would have individuals clamoring for your help."

"As soon as we get back to the angel warrior compound, we'll put the word out." Megan did that bouncing thing again. "You guys are going to be so busy, I just know it."

"Come on." Dina tugged on his mate's hand. "Let's go tell Cam. Since he's the empath leader, I'll bet he knows of some angels that could use this."

"Bye." Meagan waved on their way out. "Merry Christmas!"

"I'm going to go see if one of these angel warriors want to have some fun before they go back home." Lilith gave her wings one more stretch before she, too, left.

Once they were alone again, Emmanuel gave Cadean another kiss. If he lived for a millennium, he would never get sick of the sensation of her soft lips pressed against his. "You're not the only one who got the Christmas wish of their dreams," he said as he stoked her cheek with the pad of his thumb. "You're the best thing that ever happened to me. I fell in love with you the second I met you in Mangus's office."

"Would that be before or after I threw the

dagger at your crotch?" she asked tartly. He laughed and gave her another kiss.

"Before. As soon as you walked through that door, I was a goner."

"I have a confession to make" She grabbed his hand and started to idly play with his fingers. "The moment I saw you sitting there, all scruffy and dirty, I was a goner, too."

"Come on in here with me." He pulled back the covers and she hopped in the bed. After he tucked them in, they both settled back against the pillows and watched the snow softly falling outside. Somewhere in the house, a group of angel warriors starting singing some goofy Christmas carol. A few days ago, Emmanuel would have wanted to punch them out for their saccharine sweet holiday spirit. Now he wouldn't have minded joining them.

Cadean giggled and started to sing the words with them.

"Look at you." Emmanuel smiled. "My little demon singing about a talking snowman."

"I can't help it." She wiggled against him and despite the fact, he was still weak from his injuries, his cock came to life. "I'm so happy right now."

"And you will be happy for the rest of your days," he vowed as he rubbed his erection against her. She let out a little purr as she thrust back

against him. Emmanuel rolled over so she was pinned underneath him. "Merry Christmas, Cadean."

"Merry Christmas, Emmanuel."

He smiled as he lowered his head to kiss her.

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.