

Stephani Hecht

Archangels Series

Book 6

A muscular man with short brown hair and striking blue eyes is the central figure. He is shirtless, showing his well-defined chest and arms. His hands are raised behind his head, and a sword with a blue hilt is embedded in his back. The background is a dramatic, fiery orange and red sky. In the lower-left corner, a dark silhouette of a city skyline is visible, with a small black cat perched on one of the buildings.

Angelic Redemption

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Angelic Redemption: Archangel Series Book 6

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ISBN: 978-1-55487-221-3

Cover art by Martine Jardin

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Published by eXtasy Books

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Angelic Redemption
Archangel Series Book 6

By

Stephani Hecht

Dedication

To Great-Grandma-Golden Girl.

Chapter One

It's amazing how things can always get worse. Just when you thought life couldn't possibly get any shittier, it always managed to take a nosedive. As Cam donned a cloak to disguise who he was from the various demons and rogue angels milling around the slave compound, he pondered just how bad things had got in the span of ten minutes.

For the past few months his brother, Derel, had been held captive by a slaver. His owner, Santar had quickly realized Derel had powerful gifts and made sure to keep the angel under heavy guard at all times. Something had obviously gone very wrong though because now the angel was in a gladiator pit fighting for his life.

Derel was an angel warrior, but he was also a healer. Since injured healers couldn't heal, they were taught to fight with long distance weapons, like bows and arrows. Thinner in build than archangels, they were trained from birth to stand back unless absolutely necessary. They sure as hell were never taught hand-to-hand combat, which was what Derel would need if he was ever going

to survive the battle ahead.

Cam, his other six brothers, their sister Ana and several other dozen angel warriors had come to break Derel and his mate, Heather, out and bring them home. Cam just hoped they'd made it in time.

"You go save Derel," Michael ordered. As Chief of the angel warriors, he held rank over even Cam, leader of the empath angels. "I'll go rescue Heather."

Cam nodded and motioned for Appolion, Ramiel and Bear to join him. They mingled with the crowd walking into the stadium. Cam pulled down the hood of the disguise, which was rank with the demon stench of its previous owner, hoping to hide his features. Even though he was part incubus and had cat-like eyes and fangs, his Lehor blue eyes and blond hair would still give him away to any demon that looked close.

The crowd in the stadium let out a collective gasp before they started chanting, "Derel! Derel! Derel!"

"Looks like he's got a fan base," Bear observed with a sneer. The baby of the family, his blond hair was dyed green today and the errant spikes of it poked out from under his hood. "Disgusting, bloodthirsty bastards. Make sure you fry all of them, Cam."

Feeling sadistic, Cam smiled. The urge to start

throwing his flame was so strong his hands were starting to feel twitchy. He was going to fry some demons and rogues all right, starting with the fucker who'd taken Derel in the first place.

"Let's do this," Cam declared as they rounded the corner and entered the stands.

* * * *

Derel collapsed to his knees, holding his shredded stomach. The blood from his wound soaked through his shirt and started to drip through his fingers. The droplets mixed in with the dirt, forming dark muddy patches beneath him. The demons continued to snarl at him and make threatening moves. He tried to lift his sword arm to defend himself, but the loss of blood left him too weak to do anything but just sit there and wait for the end to come.

He had done a pretty damn good job at fighting the assassins at first, if he did say so himself. But it had been a losing battle from the start because he'd been outnumbered, since it had just been him and young teen who was half elf, half angel fighting against at least a half dozen demon assassins. At first, the kid, Jordy, had tried to protect Derel, trying to use his elf agility and grace to their advantage. However, it had been Derel that had protected the kid once he had been

quickly and viciously wounded by the demons. Even now, Derel was shielding the young angel from the demons with his own body. Concerned, Derel reached behind him and touched Jordy's prone body. He could hear him moaning, other than that, the kid didn't move. At least he was alive, but not for much longer if the demons had their way.

Derel started to laugh and he knew it sounded manic and hysterical. His brothers were coming to rescue him, but they were wasting their efforts on what would soon be a corpse. *Ironic. Pure fucking ironic!* Derel's biggest regret wasn't the fact that he was about to die, it was that he had been unable to protect Heather.

The demon assassins started mocking the two wounded angels. Taunting and toying with their prey like a cat with a mouse. Derel finally got sick of their little show and shot a nice lougie in their direction. With one last burst of energy, he tried to lunge at them only to end up on his ass when he legs gave out from under him. So weak from blood loss, he couldn't even stand to piss if he wanted to let alone fight.

"Just get it over with you assholes," he growled to the demons. Not wanting to see the death blow coming, he closed his eyes and waited. Then a loud cheer from the crowd made him open them again.

Four robed figures had jumped from the stands into the center of the ring and they stood there silent, shielding the two injured angels from the demons. Derel caught a glimpse of the robed figures footwear and smiled to himself. Two of them were wearing battered tennis shoes and he knew of only two idiots stupid enough to go into battle without combat boots, Bear and Appolion.

Opening his mind up to the rescuer's telepathic signature, Derel knew instantly the other two were Cam and Ramiel. The crowd and the demons froze with baited breath as they all waited to see what the four were going to do. Unlike Derel, they still had no idea who the disguised figures were or why they were there. Derel could hear the questions swirling around the demon's minds. Were they there to attack the angels? Were they going to fight the assassins? Who were they?

As one, the four rescuers whipped off their robes and tossed them to the side. As soon as the crowd saw who the angels were, they all got to their feet and roared. Cam immediately shot off a fireball and incinerated the nearest demon assassin. Appolion shot off his own bolt of energy and took out another. Bear ran over to Derel, using his daggers to slash at the demons that separated them.

"Holy crap on a bagel, they worked you over good," Bear choked, his voice trembling as he

touched the deep wounds.

"Heather?" Derel let his baby brother gather him up in his arms and help him to his feet.

"Michael, Nathaniel and the twins went to go get her, don't worry. Ana's here, too, we all came for you."

Derel gestured weakly with his head. "Don't leave the kid behind. He really tried hard and he's one of us so long as you ignore the pointy ears. I promised not to leave him."

"Don't worry, nobody is going to be left behind. Why do you think Michael brought so many of us? He's going to free everyone."

Appolion, Ramiel and Cam had finished off the demon assassins, showing no mercy in the process. Derel took some grim satisfaction in that. His only regret was his owner, Santar wasn't there to meet the same fate. Appolion ran over and threw Jordy over his shoulder, fireman style. Several guards were coming their way, pulling swords and other various weapons out on the way. Cam took care of that that by shooting several fireballs at the stands. The crowd shrieked and stampeded as the arena burst into flames. The group blended into the panicked crowd and easily made it out of the arena. Bear started to take Derel out of the compound, but the healer struggled as he felt the overpowering urge to protect his mate.

"I'm not leaving without Heather," he argued.

"I already told you, Nathaniel and the others are getting her right now," Bear talked slowly and calmly, like he was trying to sooth a child.

"I'm not leaving without her," Derel countered, emphatic.

Bear impatiently brushed the sweat off his brow, leaving behind a streak of Derel's blood. "In case you haven't noticed dork, you're injured. We need to get you out of here and to a healer fast."

Derel decided to plead his case with a higher authority and leaned over until he fell into Cam's arms, streaking him with blood, too. Cam had no choice but to catch him or else Derel would have fallen to the ground and been trampled by the crowd.

Derel grabbed Cam's shirt with both hands. "I mean it, I'm not leaving without her." He knew he sounded half delusional and he probably was. He didn't care though. He just needed to be able to see Heather with his own eyes, to hold her in his arms, to know she was safe. Cam closed his eyes and cursed, and Derel knew he had won. Although Cam bitched the entire way.

"You're getting blood on me while I'm hauling your ungrateful ass all over hell and back. I should have left you in that arena. Do I even get a thank you? Hell no, everyone just expects ol' Cam to come running whenever they snap their fingers."

Derel tuned him out and frantically scanned the

crowd, looking for Heather's familiar brown hair and snapping brown eyes. When he finally spotted her in the chaos, he almost cried in relief. She was standing next to Ana and the two females were fighting a pair of guards. Someone had managed to get Heather a new whip and she was using it with ruthless efficiency. If he hadn't been so injured, it may have been a turn on. Okay, it *was* a turn on, injured or not. As soon as she saw Derel, she fought her way to his side, her eyes filling with tears when she saw the injuries.

"Oh my God," she stammered in a shaky voice. "What did they do to you?"

"I'll be okay." Derel closed his eyes and savored the feeling of her fingertips brushing against his face as he drank in her scent. The stab wounds and slashes on his body throbbed in time to his heart, he could feel his strength drain out with his blood and his hold on consciousness was wavering, but it was all worth it. She was alive, that's all that mattered. "Did those bastards touch you?"

"I'm fine, I was able to fight them off until help came. You should have seen Michael, he was seriously angry. He tore those guards apart all by himself."

A battle cry that was louder than the rest drew all of their attention. Belora and her guards had entered the fray. Derel watched in horror as Nathaniel stopped dead in his tracks at the sight of

his missing mate. Finally seeing the female he'd once loved and now knew had betrayed him, Nathaniel seemed paralyzed with emotion. Derel choked back a sob of his own as he thought about the pain his brother must be going through. To know that your mate was really an evil monster must be torture.

Nathaniel yelled something at her, but the sound was lost in the roar of the battle. Her lips moved as she answered him and what she said must have been a doozie because Nathaniel lowered his sword and a devastated look passed over his face. One of her guards took advantage of Nathaniel's weak moment and cut the archangel down at the back his knees. Belora stood over her fallen mate, her sword raised above her head.

Cam raised his Glock, but he froze. Derel felt his gut clench in horror and shock. He'd been in countless battles with both Cam and Nathaniel and he had never seen one of them hesitate. Now he had seen both of them do it in the span of five seconds.

Belora brought her sword down on Nathaniel and Derel could hear Ana screaming in protest. Cam still hadn't moved. He just continued to stand there with the gun in his hand, unable to fire off the bullet that should have ended Nathaniel's mate's life. In the end, it was Michael that finally brought up his own Glock and shot Belora in the

head. The last image Derel had before he passed out was of a red spray of blood.

Chapter Two

“**B**abies always smell so good after a bath,” Dina declared as he gave Ariel’s poofy blonde hair a kiss before switching the subject. “I heard that you had a bit of a confrontation with some healers?”

“It was nothing really.” Amadeaha squirmed a bit under her cousin’s approving stare.

They had just picked the baby up from Cliona’s and were making their way back to Amadeaha’s quarters for the evening, and she was hoping watching the young angel would help take her mind off the fact her mate, Cam, was off on a dangerous mission. It was always hard for her when he went off to fight. To make matters worse this time, the two of them had a huge fight right before he’d left and they hadn’t settled the matter.

“Nothing?” Dina echoed, bringing her back into the current conversation. “You really impressed the empaths that witnessed it. They have been running around the compound bragging about

how their Lady took out Thomas for harassing Jules. Are you going to tell me what's going on with her?"

Amadeaha hesitated, not wanting to betray Jules' confidence. There was no way she could tell Dina Jules had fallen in love with Thomas any more than she could tell him how Jules had gone down on him in the backseat of his car. Or that poor Jules had gagged when Thomas had gotten overexcited and jerked her head down. She couldn't even tell Dina the worst part, that the very next day Thomas had dumped Jules and picked up with a female healer. So instead she said, "It's difficult, Dina."

He accepted this with a nod of his head. "I did notice Thomas and his friends waited until Ray and I had left to start in on Jules. Damn cowards."

For the millionth time since Cam left, Amadeaha looked down at her cell phone. "You're sure that it would tell me if I missed a call?"

With a heavy sigh, he shifted Ariel on his hip. "Yes it would. Didn't Cam include the instructions for that thing when he gave it to you?"

"Yes, but they were boring so I stopped reading them."

Dina said something to her, but it came out all muffled because as soon as he opened his mouth, Ariel thought it would be fun to stick her pudgy hands in. He pulled them out and tried again.

"Don't worry, Cam will forgive you for hitting him."

"How do you know?"

"Because he's always forgiven me."

That simple statement struck at Amadeaha's heart. She hadn't forgotten what the others had told her about Dina's past mental illness. She just hadn't had the courage to bring it up with him before now. "You hit him?" her voice was small and timid.

"Yeah, I did...a few times. He knew I was going through a real rough time though and refused to give up on me even after I attacked him. That's the way he is, always putting everyone else's problems first. It's like he is trying to make up for what he thinks he did wrong in the past."

Amadeaha stopped and fully looked at her cousin. With his dyed black hair, ear plugs, piercings, tattoos and all dark clothing, it would be easy not to see the wisdom hiding under all those layers of Punk armor. "You're so much smarter than anyone ever gives you credit for, Dina. You know that?"

Never one to take a compliment, he blushed. "No, I'm just good at observing things. You should stop beating yourself up about that argument anyways, you were right."

"Right to hit him?" Cocking a brow at him, she let him see her confusion. Dina was the one who'd

chastised her in the first place for having a public argument with the leader of the empaths. In his opinion, Amadeaha should show Cam more respect. While Amadeaha agreed with him to a certain extent, that didn't mean she was going to let Cam walk all over her either.

"No, right about him needing to talk about his past. I think it would help him if he did."

Amadeaha was pleased that at least one angel agreed with her. "So are you going to tell him that?"

"Hell no."

They rounded a corner and almost tripped on a young angel curled up against the wall, a book in his lap. Even though Amadeaha had never met him before, she instantly recognized it was Cam's cousin, Dominic. Cam mentioned that the kid was a dead ringer for Michael and Amadeaha could see he hadn't been kidding. Dominic had the same dark blond hair, brown eyes and strong jaw as the Chief. Although he didn't have the same cocky attitude or arrogant swagger of his famous uncle, if anything, the young angel looked terrified of drawing too much attention to himself. He pressed up tighter to the wall and looked down at his battered tennis shoes. Amadeaha noticed that all his clothes looked worse for wear. The blue jeans were ripped and not in a fashionable way while his shirt was so faded it was impossible to

tell what the original color may have been.

"What are you doing out here so late?" she asked. This kid should be in bed or at the very least sacked out in front of a TV. He sure as heck shouldn't be hiding out in a cold, lonely hallway. Then she noticed Dominic had a bruise forming on his right cheek and all her worst fears were confirmed. Dina sucked in his breath as his eyes honed in on the same mark.

Dear God, someone was using this kid as a punching bag. She didn't need to see the bruise to know that. The defeated way he carried himself screamed it. She had seen it countless times on Dina while they were growing up. Instantly, she felt an irresistible urge to protect the young angel.

Dominic scrambled to his feet, his eyes wide with fear. "I'm sorry. I didn't know that I was doing anything wrong. I'll go back to my quarters right away."

Amadeaha put a hand on his arm and pretended not to notice how he flinched. "That's okay. You just startled me is all. Dina and I were just going back to my quarters to watch a bad B-movie. Why don't you come with us?"

Dominic hesitated, longing briefly visiting his face before he hid it. "I don't know."

"We were going to make pizza," Dina added. "I make a mean pepperoni."

Dominic gave one last look down the corridor

to where his quarters were. "I guess it would be okay. My mom is sleeping, so she shouldn't need me."

Amadeaha had to work hard to hide her anger. By the sounds of it, not only was Dominic being abused by his mother, but he was playing the role of her caretaker as well. She wondered who took care of him. Was there anyone there when he got hurt, had a nightmare or was afraid? Amadeaha had the sudden urge to take him and keep him hidden away from his mom. "You know, if you ever need anything," she told him in a soothing voice, "I'm here for you. I'll understand."

The teen looked doubtful. "It's not what you think."

"Still—" she stopped short when Dina let out a loud gasp and grabbed her arm. Surprised she looked over, expecting him to tell her not to push the teen too hard, but instead the empath had a distant glazed look in his eyes. "Dina?"

Dina cocked his head to the side and his brow creased in confusion. Taking a deep sniff, he acted like he was testing the air for something. "Do you feel that?"

Alarmed at his odd behavior, Amadeaha looked around, but only saw the empty hallway. "Feel what?"

"There's something nearby, something bad." He shivered violently and clutched Ariel tighter.

"I haven't felt evil this strong since..." Breaking off, he shook his head like he was trying to push away some memory.

Amadeaha touched his arm and she was shocked to feel him trembling. "You're just imagining things. We're in the middle of the compound that's guarded not only with angel warriors, but protection shields. There's no way that any demon could get through."

Dominic shook his head and his brown eyes filled with fear. "I feel it, too. There's something bad coming."

Dina let out a little whimper and Ariel started to cry, her little face becoming bright red and her blue eyes filling with fear. His knees began to buckle and Amadeaha reached out and grabbed the baby from him before he dropped her.

"Don't you feel it?" he spat between gritted teeth. Grabbing his head between his hands, he let out a groan of pain.

Amadeaha sent out her own empath feelers, but felt nothing. That didn't comfort her at all though. The way Dina was reacting was convincing enough for her. She held the baby tight to her pounding chest as she looked around the hallway for help. It was deserted because of the late hour and the four of them were all alone. She stared to breathe in faster, inhaling the scent of baby soap mixed with her own sweat.

Dear God, this baby was so small and helpless and all she had to protect her was them and a teenager. Amadeaha knew that there was no way she would be of help to anyone in a fight. As for Dina, well Dina was just a small helpless kid himself. Amadeaha had known him his entire life and she had never seen him lift a finger to defend himself, let alone anyone else.

Taking charge, Dina pushed himself from the wall and grabbed her with one hand and nudged Dominic with the other. "We need to run," he barked in a hard commanding voice. "Rachael will know what to do."

Amadeaha wasn't about to argue, especially since another voice was suddenly screaming in her head. It was a female's voice and that of a child's.

Listen to him, you must run now or else you will be destroyed. The evil one, Moloch, is already here.

* * * *

Moloch paraded right through the Great Michael's compound like he owned the place and every angel within it. The demon smiled to himself, if everything went as planned tonight, then pretty soon he would own the place. He was going to enjoy seeing the Chief and his angel warriors grovel in the mud. Those pathetic fools thought that their precious Order of Four was actually going to protect them. Moloch laughed to himself.

If they only knew how wrong they were.

Appolion, Rachael, Cam and Abdiel. Every one of the Order had a weakness and Moloch knew them all and planned to use them to his advantage. Tonight he was going to strike the first blow by taking away something most precious to them. The daughter of the Destroyer. The demon knew by taking the infant he would not only devastate the moral of the Order, but he would also gain a powerful weapon. The Destroyer's daughter had the blood of two powerful families running through her veins and she was going to be very gifted someday.

A group of angels walked by and Moloch put his hand on one of the Hounds to calm it. There was no way that the angels would see them, Moloch had made sure to shield their presence from view. But the last thing he needed was for one of the Hounds to attack and blow their cover. He hated having to work with the canine demons. They were idiots on their best days, but, it couldn't be avoided for now. The Hounds were some of the most skilled killers out there and that was what Moloch needed.

If not for the canine demons, Moloch wouldn't have to shield himself at all. Even though he was a demon, he looked like any other angel. His skin was unmarked and his dark hair didn't have a pair of horns coming out of the top like most of his

colleagues from Hell. The only odd thing about him were his eyes, they were a deep maroon.

He was still touching one of the Hounds and it took offense and snapped at him. Moloch cuffed it hard on the back of the head and hissed, "Mind your manners or else I'll destroy you from the inside out."

The Hound lowered its furless black head before it tucked its spiked tail between its legs. It believed his threat as well it should. Moloch never made a threat he couldn't carry out. Great and powerful, he could do things most other demons could never dream of. Take the smelly doggy demons for example. Moloch was the only one, besides Lucifer himself, that could control the Hounds and that was because the canine demons feared him and his dark magic.

Intent on getting to the center of the angel compound where he could cause the most damage, he continued to navigate the long twisting hallways of the underground bunker. Fools, did they think hiding in the earth like some scared rabbits would actually protect them from him? Michael was growing weak and careless and that would be his final downfall.

Moloch walked by an open door and barely glanced at the small female angel inside the small room. He went a couple of more steps before he stopped dead in his tracks. The angel was singing

and she was horrible. He backed up so he could look at the vocal abomination. One look instantly told him who she was, Rachael. Not only was she one of the Order of Four, but she was the twin sister of the Destroyer. She had a pair of ear buds in and she continued to mutilate the song while she danced.

He let out a growl, she was butchering one of his favorite songs. He was going to tear off that angel bitch's head for that. Baring his teeth, he drew a small dagger and approached her.

Then her scent hit him and made him stop dead in his tracks as sure as someone had hit him. She smelled fresh, clean and crisp, like the air after a rainstorm. Normally, Moloch would hate anything that smelled so nice, but for some strange reason, now it turned him on.

His gaze drifted down to her legs. Since she was wearing only a short nightgown, the limbs were out in all their glory. They were smooth and muscular in all the right places. Moloch got hard as he imagined how they would feel wrapped around him, squeezing him as he took her.

The nightshirt was tight around her full breasts and he could barely make out the dark outlines of her nipples. She was a petite thing, but she had more than enough curves to make up for that. Her ass was nicely curved, just the right size for spanking. He would love to do that, too. Tie her

up and whip her until those deep blue eyes of hers filled with tears as she begged for mercy. His gaze lingered at her mouth, the things he would love to make those full pink lips do.

Mesmerized, he started to reach out and touch her dark curly hair. For some fucked up reason, he had to see if it felt as silky as it looked. He stopped himself at the last minute. With a muttered curse, he reminded himself that he was here to take the child of the Destroyer, not screw his sister. But he wasn't about to forget about Miss Rachael. Moloch intended to have her all to himself, he would just have to get her at a later date.

Caressing his hard cock through his jeans, he leaned forward and whispered in her ear, although he made sure to shield his voice so that she couldn't hear it, "You're mine bitch, you just don't know it yet."

With one last deep breath, he walked out of her room with his Hounds toward the center of the compound. Once there, he raised his hand and released an energy bolt. An explosion rocked through the compound and parts of it started to collapse. Screams and cries sounded from all sides of him and Moloch smiled, drinking in the pain and panic.

* * * *

The force of the explosion threw Dina, Dominic and Amadeaha forward. She twisted her body so she landed on her back, shielding the baby from the fall. Dina sprang to his feet and helped her up. Worried, she looked around for Dominic. He may be a teenager, but that didn't mean he still didn't need someone to watch over him. He had a small cut on his chin, but was otherwise unhurt. Raising a shaking hand, he pointed at something over her shoulder. She glanced behind them and was horrified to see the hallway was caved in, cutting off their escape path.

Dina gestured to a double set of doors. "We're going to have to cut through the gym." He pulled out a dagger and kicked open the doors. "Get a move on, we don't have much time."

Amadeaha gapped at his weapon and the hard lines of his face, the small meek Dina she had always known was gone. In his place was an angel warrior who seemed to know how to handle himself. A dark aura of danger surrounded him that would have made any demon or angel wary of tangling with him. The transformation left her feeling unbalanced. "You should be really careful," she stammered stupidly, staring at the sharp, gleaming edge of his blade. "You could cut yourself."

"I'll make sure not to run with it."

It took her a few seconds to realize that he was

kidding. Okay, maybe there was some of her Dina still left in there after all. They ran across the gym to another set of double doors. He pushed on them, but they refused to budge. He tried several more times before he snarled a curse and hit them in frustration. Whipping off his black hoodie, he handed it to her.

"Wrap this around Ariel, so she won't see the demons."

"How do you know that they are coming this way?" she asked in a shaky voice, even as she obeyed him. Ariel squirmed in protest, obviously not wanting to miss anything.

"Because he can sense the Dark Ones' movements," Dominic answered for him. "Give me a weapon and I'll help you fight."

Dina shook his head. "Not going to happen. You're young so you're still too vulnerable. Stay back out of the way."

"I'm not some infant. Let me help you."

Dina growled in the back of his throat and Amadeaha was shocked at how animalistic it sounded. "Damn it, kid. I don't have time for this. If I let you get hurt, Cam will have my ass on a platter."

Another explosion rocked through the air, this one much closer. They staggered, but managed to keep on their feet. The lights started to buzz and flicker rapidly, reminding Amadeaha of a macabre

disco. In the distance, she could hear shrieks and screams. A gut-churning fear coursed through her body as she waited for the impending attack.

She smelled them before she felt them.

A small male demon stood in the middle of a pack of Hounds from Hell. The only reason she knew the male was a demon was because of the evil that rolled off him. Otherwise he would have passed for any other angel in the compound. He smiled at them and the sinister intent behind it caused her to shiver in fear.

Dina nudge her back and then she felt him slip a gun in her hand. Instinctively she wrapped her hand around the cool, heavy grip and slipped her finger over the trigger. She used the other arm to hold Ariel tight to her chest and moved slightly to the side so her body was between Dominic and the demons. Somehow, she knew they were there to take the baby. She didn't know how she knew, but she did. A strong protective urge ran through her. *Not going to happen!* She would die before she let them get Ariel.

The demon shifted his maroon gaze toward Dina. "You? I thought I destroyed you years ago."

Dina's lips curled into a half smile. "You did. But I didn't like the dark place, so I came back."

A look of admiration came over the demon's face. "You're a Death Walker then. I'm impressed. It's a shame that I'll have to destroy you again."

"I'm sure that you're crying in your milk about it. Now, let's stop talking and get this over with."

Amadeaha let out a small scream when the pack of Hounds launched in their direction. Dina threw himself in front of her, Dominic and the baby and took them on. Instinctively, she curled up into a ball so that her body was protecting the baby all the while wondering how she could protect the children and help Dina at the same time. A Hound let out a sharp yelp and she dared to look up to see why. What she saw both amazed her and broke her heart.

The rumors had been right. Dina was a killing machine. He wielded his blade with brutal efficiency at the snarling Hounds. The lights were starting to flicker even worse, giving her snapshots of the battle. Each one was more horrifying than the last. Dina's eyes were cold and dead as he fought and he had a frigid smile on his face. Horrified, she realized he enjoyed the fighting because he relished in causing the demons pain. He had a sadistic streak that she'd never seen him display before.

He sliced one of the Hounds across the throat and blood sprayed across him, soaking his clothes. The demon staggered a few steps and some of the blood came flying at Amadeaha. Quickly, she ducked her head so it wouldn't catch her face, flinching when she felt the warm liquid hit her

skin. Demon's blood was poisonous to angels, but only if it got into their body. Since she didn't have any open wounds on her body she was fine, but the thought of it being on her was revolting. Dominic gagged when some of it came his way, but otherwise didn't seem to suffer any ill effects.

Dina stabbed the one Hound that was left standing and it turned on him and bit his leg in retaliation. With a scream of pain, he took out a gun and shot it in the head. The dog demon yelped before it collapsed on the ground, dead. Dina fell on the floor next to it, clutching his injured leg and hissing in pain. Amadeaha looked around for the small male demon, but she didn't see him anywhere. It was as if he vanished into thin air.

Dina lay on the floor and moaned. "We've got a problem here. When that Hound bit me some of the blood got into me." Eyes rolling in the back of his head, he arched his back as he let out a loud scream of agony.

Amadeaha let out a muffled cry of her own, holding back only because of the baby and Dominic. She knew they had to get help for him quick. Demon's blood always affected empathes the worst. If Dina didn't get the antidote quick, he would go crazy or catatonic.

She started to run to him, the baby still clutched to her chest. The small demon suddenly appeared

between them. An evil chuckle rumbled from the male as he flexed his fingers in anticipation. The evil coming off him was so strong that Amadeaha found herself paralyzed in fear. Her feet were cemented to the ground and refusing to obey her brain's command *to run, run, run*. He leaned forward so their faces were only inches apart and she could smell the stench of decay on his breath. It was so strong that she could almost taste it.

He smiled, then whispered, "Boo."

Amadeaha held Ariel closer to her and screamed. Even though she knew it was the last thing a true angel warrior would do. She couldn't help herself. This small male was the most terrifying thing that she'd ever encountered. Then gathering up her last bit of strength, she forced herself to put on what she hoped was a brave face. "Who are you?" she asked even though she didn't doubt what Ariel had already revealed about the demon. She was just hoping to stall for time so help could arrive.

"I'm your worst nightmare come to life." Leaning in, the demon sniffed. "I can smell the Empath King scent all over you. It's going to be so precious seeing him cry over your broken body."

"Cam, will eat you for breakfast and spit out the bones," she snarled, tilting her head up in defiance. Still holding Ariel with one hand, she kept the other concealed behind her back to hide

the gun.

"Leave her alone," Dominic yelled.

Amadeaha almost groaned when the demon shifted his attention to the young angel.

"Oh, this just keeps getting better and better. I can destroy another kin of Michael's."

"You'll have to get through me first, fucker!" Amadeaha yelled.

"Language, language, language," Moloch chided in a condescending manner. "What would all the empaths think if they heard their Lady talk that way?"

The same childlike voice Amadeaha heard earlier came back.

Shoot him in the head, now.

Amadeaha knew the voice was Ariel's and, after everything she had seen in the past few years, she didn't even question the fact that a baby was talking to her telepathically. In fact, she obeyed the infant. The baby's urging finally gave her the courage to move. Amadeaha was reminded that she wasn't weak and untrained anymore. Thanks to Cam and Ray, she was prepared to face anything. Even this demented piece of crap. "Lucky for me, demon. You're not going to live long enough to tell anyone about it." Amadeaha brought up the gun and shot the demon full in the face.

It didn't destroy him like it should have. Instead the demon staggered back several steps.

With a roar of rage, he threw up a hand, shot off a bolt of energy and the walls shook from another explosion. He disappeared right before the ceiling caved in on top of Dominic, the baby, Dina and her.

Her last thought was, *Cam, I love you. I always have and I always will.*

Chapter Three

Cam sat in the back of the van with Nathaniel as it raced back to the compound. The vehicle had been converted into an ambulance of sorts and Appolion was working hard at trying to heal the injured archangel. They could have really used another healer, but there were so many wounded, Appolion was having to do it alone. Derel was being taken care of in another van and he was doing much better. Nathaniel, on the other hand, was only getting worse.

“What’s wrong with Nathaniel?” Ana asked. She’d somehow managed to squeeze herself into the crowded space and was brushing her hand through her injured brother’s hair. Her eyes were red and swollen from crying and her blonde hair hung in disarray around her face.

Appolion slowly shook his head as he gave his mate a sympathetic look. “I don’t know. It’s like he’s been poisoned with something I’ve never seen before.”

"That's crazy," Cam said, only vaguely aware that Michael was talking on his phone in the front passenger seat. "The only poison that affects angels is demon's blood."

Appolion shrugged. "What can I say, I calls it likes I sees them—this is poison."

Michael turned around, his expression was grim. "The compound's been attacked."

The van filled with dead space as they all took it in. Finally, Ana asked in a shaky voice, "How bad?"

"Bad, it's collapsed from some type of explosion. There's several angels buried alive." Michael took a deep breath. "There is no easy way to say this. Ariel, Ray, Dina, Dominic and Amadeaha are all missing. It's believed that they were still inside when the compound went down."

Frantic with fear, Cam instantly whipped out his own phone and tried to call Amadeaha himself. The call immediately went into voice mail, showing that it wasn't on or working. Cam turned it off and buried his face in his hands as he remembered some of the last words that he had said to her. They'd been so hateful and mean and they may of have been the last things that she ever heard from him.

He should have called and apologized, but he'd been so mad at her. At first because he had thought that she had been wrong, then because he

had known that she had been right. She probably thought that he was no better than her father and Jehel.

Then a thought hit him like a ton of bricks and he paused in his self-recrimination. Somehow he should have felt something was wrong. He was a psychic. So were Appolion, Ana, Bear and Michael. Yet none of them had known what was going on back home. Something was seriously fucked up. "Why didn't we know?" he asked Michael.

The Chief looked as upset and perplexed as Cam. "Something powerful must have been blocking us. It must have been damn strong to sever the connection between Ray and Appolion, too."

Ana was softly crying into Nathaniel's chest.

Appolion cursed and tried to stand up in the van, hitting his head on the ceiling. He punched the side of it in frustration before yelling, "We can't even flash to them to help because of those damn justice dicks making Earth a no flash zone. How far away are we from the compound?"

"Five minutes," Michael responded.

"Tell the driver to go faster." Appolion's eyes got dark and his face stormy. The air in the van got thick from the vibration of his powers building up. They didn't call Appolion *The Destroyer* for nothing. "If those demons hurt my daughter, sister

or Dina, I'll tear them apart myself."

Ana suddenly gasped and sat up. "Appolion, it's Ariel. She's talking to me now." Ana closed her eyes and was silent for a few moments while everyone waited with baited breath. The only sound was the squeaking of the vehicle's shocks as they went over bumps. "She says that she's with Amadeaha, Dominic and Dina. They're trapped in the gym and Dina's hurt. She's saying a mean doggy bit him and now he's sick."

Michael was already calling his contact at the compound so the searchers would start digging in the right area.

Ana continued, "Oh my God, Ariel's saying that the evil one was there to take her away from us. Dina fought the dogs and Amadeaha shot the evil one in the face and they went away."

"The evil one?" The anger was still in Appolion's voice, but he seemed more under control than before.

"I think she's talking about the super demon." Cam felt like he was about ready to lose it like Appolion had earlier. Amadeaha had faced the most evil demon ever known and he had not been there to help her.

"Moloch." Ana reached out for Appolion's hand and he took before giving it a squeeze. "Ariel says his name is Moloch."

"At least we know they're alive," even though

he was speaking to the entire group, Michael never took his concerned gaze off Cam. "I've lined up another compound for us in case something like this happened. So all is not lost." By the unconvinced tone of the Chief's tone, Cam wondered if he really believed his words.

After a couple more long minutes they finally got to the compound. Cam jumped out of the back of the van and was horrified at the mass chaos that greeted him. Never in his worst nightmares could he have imagined it this bad.

The compound had caved in completely on itself. Several groups were frantically digging, trying to get to the trapped victims. Already, the injured were piling up. Healers were scrambling around, frantically trying to keep up. Cam could imagine how overwhelmed they were going to feel once they found out his team had brought back even more injured from their mission.

Several small fires had broken out amongst the rubble and the air was thick and heavy with smoke. The flames cast an eerie light over the dark night. All around him, Cam could hear angels crying and screaming out the names of their lost loved ones. Cam's heightened demon senses, also, picked up other scents, blood, despair and death.

Ray was sitting on the ground, her arms around herself, a forlorn expression on her face. Michael went over to her and wrapped his coat over her

shoulders before he started talking in her ear. Cam was shocked to see how pale and shaken up Ray appeared to be. He had never seen her this spooked. All of the members of the Order had a strong mental link and he could feel her distress and it saddened him.

He pushed that all aside and ran toward where the gym used to be. There was a large group of warriors digging frantically. He was touched, but not shocked to see that most of them were empaths. A younger, dark-haired male was directing them all.

"Remember guys, it's our Lady that's down there. We can't let our Lord Cam down, we have to keep digging."

Cam jumped in and started to help. Later he would make a point of going up to each and every empath that was there and personally thanking them. But first he had to get his mate back because he couldn't live without her. Funny thing was, for the first time, that little weakness didn't scare him anymore. Not even after seeing what had happened with Nathaniel and Belora.

* * * *

Amadeaha let out a long groan as she came to. While she was pretty certain her eyes were open, she couldn't be for sure. There was no light at all

and the darkness was like a thick, suffocating blanket. She tried to move only to find her right leg was pinned under something.

Her claustrophobia came back in full force once she realized they were buried and that she was trapped. Soft whimpers escalated to sharp yells as she tried frantically to pull her leg free. Amadeaha started to breathe in fast short breaths and she knew that she was going all weak and hyperventilating, but she couldn't stop herself.

She drew up short when she felt a small hand touching her cheek. Oh no, she had forgotten Ariel was there, too. The infant pressed her small body next to Amadeaha's thigh as she snuggled into her. The baby's gentle touch seemed to calm her fears. Maybe it was because of the baby's special gifts, more likely it was because Amadeaha knew that she had to be strong for the small angel. "Dominic," she gasped, suddenly remembering the young angel had been with her, too.

"I'm here," he replied with a cough.

"Are you okay?"

"Let me check." The sound of pats and clothes rustling reached her ears. "Yeah, I think I am."

"Dina," she called for her cousin in the darkness. When the building had collapsed on them he'd been several feet away. It would seem that she, the baby and Dominic had managed to survive because they were in some pocket in the

debris, but there was no guarantee that it was big enough to include the area her cousin had been in.

She was a little relieved when she heard a soft moan. But she knew they were on borrowed time. If they didn't get the antidote for him quickly, he would be too far gone for anyone to help. She shivered as she remembered some of the empath's she seen who had gone crazy from demon's blood. Every one of them had ended up in the infirmary, nothing left of them but a babbling shell. As far as she knew, not one empath had recovered from that state. Soft scrapping and rocks shifting on the ground told her he was crawling toward them, but by the sounds of his labored breathing it wasn't easy for him to do.

Amadeaha reached out blindly, trying to find her cousin, finally making contact with his arm. She took his cold clammy hand into hers and kissed it, then felt Ariel reach over and heard her give Dina her own wet kiss.

"It's going to be okay guys," Amadeaha soothed. She knew it was true, too, there was no way that her mate would let her down. "Cam will find us."

Ariel giggled, showing she had no doubt to that fact.

Amadeaha closed her eyes and waited and waited. To pass the time, she sang stupid angel nursery rhymes to Dina, Dominic and the baby.

Then she told Ariel and Dominic stories about the troubles she and Dina got into when they were children. Dina's moans gave way to incoherent mutters. A cold sweat broke out over her body and she felt the panic build up again, only this time it wasn't because of her claustrophobia, it was because she was worried the help wouldn't arrive in time for Dina. If he were to be lost to her forever, she didn't know if she could survive the heartbreak. Not when she'd just got him back in her life.

Then she heard a faint scrapping above her and her despair gave way to hope. She strained her ears even more and was able to pick out the sounds of voices, too. As the rescue crew got closer, debris started to sprinkle down on them. Amadeaha threw Dina's hoodie over the baby's head to shield her from the falling pebbles and dust.

A pinhole of light appeared and it grew until there was a small hole. Cam's face appeared in it. His spiky blond hair covered in gray ash. "Amadeaha, thank the gods. You're alive. Are you okay?" he shouted.

She blinked into the blinding light. "Yes, Dina's real bad though."

"You're covered in blood," his voice cracked some.

"It's not ours, it's from a demon Dina

destroyed."

Cam shifted his gaze toward Dominic. "How about you, kiddo. Are you doing fine?"

The teen nodded as he used one hand to shield his eyes. "I'm just sick of being trapped. Is my mom okay?"

"She's fine. Just sit tight, we'll have all of you out soon."

He disappeared from view and Amadeaha didn't want him to leave again until she had resolved things between them. She had nearly blown it once by almost dying, she'd be damned if it happened again. Amadeaha quickly shouted, "I'm so sorry, Cam."

He repared and gave her a perplexed look. "For what?"

"For our fight. I shouldn't have yelled at you like that." He smiled at her and she was warmed from head to toe with how loving it was.

"You don't have to apologize, Crazy Pie. I know I was being a jackass."

"Well, yes you were," she conceded. "But I should have still remembered that you were a leader and not caused a scene. I promise to try and act more proper from now on."

Cam reached his arm down toward her, she stretched hers up until their hands met. He laced his fingers through hers and said, "You can cause a scene whenever you want, sweetie. I never want

you to try to be something that you're not. You're perfect the way you are."

"Oh, one other thing. I kind of got into a brawl in the cafeteria with some healers."

He gave a slight shake of his head, like he was trying to make sure that something hadn't gotten stuck in his ear and interfered with his hearing. "You what?"

"They started it," she defended, knowing full well that she was echoing Jules earlier argument weeks ago when she and a group of empaths had got into a scuffle with healers. "I'm not scrubbing the floor with my toothbrush either. Those bastards deserved the beating we gave them."

"We?"

"Well..." she hedged, "some of your empaths might have helped me."

"Do you have any idea how dangerous you are?"

Amadeaha heard someone talking behind Cam, he pulled his hand away long enough to turn around, grab something and hand it down to her.

"Megan says you need to give this to Dina right away."

It was a dose of antidote. "Just tell me how to do it. I've never stabbed anyone with a needle before."

"I think the healers prefer to call it *injecting* and not *stabbing*, but yeah that's the gist of the idea."

"Smartass," she muttered, but the grin he gave told that he'd heard.

"Stick the needle in a spot you can reach. It should be enough to get him by until we can get you guys out of there."

Amadeaha rolled up the sleeve of Dina's shirt and *injected* him. Then she sat back and waited for Cam and his empath's to dig them out. As soon as the opening was big enough, she handed the baby up to a very relieved Ana. The next one out was Dina, then Dominic. Amadeaha's leg was still pinned so it took them a bit longer to get her out.

As soon as she was on the surface, Cam pulled her into a hug so hard it almost hurt. "Are you injured?" Pulling back, he ran his hands over her body, in a quick professional manner.

She shook her head and pulled him in for another hug, she needed to touch him, to know she was safe again. "My leg is a little banged up, but it will be fine." Amadeaha looked over his shoulder and saw Dina a few feet away on the ground. Megan was healing his leg while Ana smoothed back his hair and cooed comforting words in his ear. Appolion was on the either side of the empath, a comforting hand on Dina's shoulder. Ariel was fast asleep in Appolion's lap.

Amadeaha realized then, while there had been many horrible changes in Dina's life, there had been some wonderful ones as well. He now had

others who cared about him—a family. Sure she and Haniel had tried to fill that void before, but they had been struggling to survive themselves. “Dina doesn’t need me anymore,” she said, not sure if that made her sad or happy. Immediately, she felt selfish and mean for begrudging him his independence.

Cam cupped her face in his hands and looked down at her. “Of course Dina needs you. Don’t you know you were the only one from Heaven he ever talked about? He babbled nonstop about his wonderful cousin.”

Ana came up to them, grabbed Amadeaha and wrapped her in a tight embrace. “Thank you, for protecting my daughter,” she whispered in Amadeaha’s ear.

Then the brothers came up and gave her their own hugs. She found herself being slammed into first one hard chest and then another and another until she was finally returned to the familiar comfort of Cam’s arms. She noticed that, for all the happiness that they were displaying, there was a hint of sadness underneath it all.

“Is Derel okay?” she asked when she noticed the healer wasn’t amongst the group.

Cam gave her a ghost of a smile. “Yes, he’s a little banged up, but he’ll be fine.”

She looked around at all the brothers and noticed there was another one missing. “Where’s

Nathaniel?"

"He's hurt, bad. We don't know if he's going to make it."

She grabbed his hand and squeezed it to show her support. "What happened?"

"Belora attacked him and he didn't even try to fight back." Cam's face crumpled a bit before he regained his composure. "I had her right in my gun sights, but I froze. You were right, I freaked out as soon as I saw her. I should've listened to you."

Ramiel cleared his throat. "Michael destroyed Belora, but not before she struck Nathaniel down. Her blade was coated in some poison that we've never seen before. I don't suppose you overheard your father or uncle discussing some new weapon before you left Heaven?"

Amadeaha shook her head. "No, I never heard anything."

Ramiel nodded and pressed his lips together in a grim line. His blue eyes were bleak with sadness. "I'm going to the infirmary tent to check up on him. I'll take you there, Amadeaha, so you can get your leg healed. Coming, Cam?"

Cam looked around at the mess that surrounded them. "I need to stay here until we have everyone accounted for."

In other words, even though Amadeaha knew he wanted to go be with his brother, he couldn't. As leader of the empaths he was duty bound to

stay behind and make sure his followers were taken care of.

"Thank you for the offer, Ramiel. But my place is here with my mate." She rested her head on Cam's arm.

The brothers all grinned at her. She could have sworn she saw a bit of admiration on their faces, too.

"Now we know why Cammie's liked you all these years," Ramiel said. "You're every bit as stubborn as he is."

* * * *

It was hours before Cam was able to take a break. He went over to the tent, which been set up off to the side. It was serving as a combination rest area, feeding station and healing spot for the rescue crews.

Amadeaha was already there, sitting at one of the tables. It had been the only time Cam had seen her take a break during the entire rescue effort. Working with a passion for the empaths, she'd stopped only long enough to have her leg looked at and to wash the blood off the best she could with a damp cloth. Her face was dirty again, smudged by smoke, ash and the earth. The bright red, fiery hair, he loved so much was pulled back in a ponytail. The usual flashing locks were now

dull and listless. Her jeans and tee shirt were torn and covered in blood and mud.

She'd never looked more beautiful.

An empath brought her a bottle of water. She thanked him with a small smile. It widened once she realized Cam was there. His heart stopped for a second at that sight. Dear Lord, how he loved her and she actually loved him back. He wondered if she still would when she found out everything about him.

"When I was in Hell, I almost destroyed her," Cam stated as he sat down. He decided there was no need for a fancy speech. If she wanted him to talk about his time in captivity, then he would, but it wasn't going to be easy for him so he wasn't going to waste time with nice words.

"You mean Belora?" she asked in a hushed voice, like she was afraid if she spoke louder she would break the spell and he wouldn't be so talkative anymore.

"Yes, Belora. The demons had just got done changing me. It was painful, but not nearly as painful as what Mammon did to me after."

"He ripped into your mind."

It came out as a statement, not a question because she already knew this part. What she didn't know is what Cam had really been thinking, how he had felt during that time. His greatest fear was that when she found out, she

would never be able to look at him the same way again.

"It felt like every molecule in my head was burning up and exploding. The worst part was, I could feel all my happy memories slipping away at the same time. You know, the good stuff like my family and friends. I fought hard to keep those from leaving me, even though it made the pain ten times worse."

When he paused, she took his hand in hers. "Don't stop, I want to know it all."

Taking in a deep sigh to center himself, he continued, "By the time Mammon was done with my mind, I was more demon than angel. I was spitting and cursing in demon talk and barely remembered who I was anymore. That was when they threw me in Belora's cell. As soon as she got near me, I could hear and smell the blood rushing through her veins. Every instinct in me was telling me to attack her and the last little bit of the old me was fighting it. I tried to tell her to go away, but she refused." The pad of her thumb rubbed the back of his hand and it felt so good and comforting.

Amadeaha said softly, "For all we know, she could have been provoking you on purpose. Who knows how long she was collaborating with the demons."

"Or maybe she turned because the first angel

she'd seen in years attacked her. I wasn't gentle with her. I bit her hard."

"You stopped yourself though," she reminded him.

"Only because I realized that she was Nathaniel's mate. I don't know that I would have otherwise." She pulled hard at his hand so he would look at her. He almost smiled at the fierce determination in those green eyes.

"I know you, Cam, and you would never hurt anyone innocent. You only think that you could because you've listened to all those jerk angels who have questioned you in the past." She got up and settled into his lap.

Cam let her pull his head into her so that she could run her fingers through his hair. He closed his eyes and let himself enjoy the sensation of them on his scalp. Burying his face in her neck, he breathed in her lilac scent for a few seconds before he reluctantly pulled back. "We can go check up on Nathaniel now, everyone has been accounted for one way or another."

A sad look passed over her face. "How many did we lose?"

We lose. It wasn't lost on him how she now considered herself one of the angel warriors. "Three empaths, two healers and five archangels. The only good thing is that we didn't lose any civilians or children."

"Do you know how Rachael is doing?"

"From what I hear, she's good and pissed off. She doesn't like the fact that she didn't feel any demon presence until it was too late. Even though she would never admit it, I think she's scared."

"That's surprising, I didn't think Rachael was afraid of anything," she paused. "How about you? Are you afraid?"

"No," he lied. She looked like she doubted him as she nibbled on her bottom lip, so he decided to turn the tables on her. "How about you, Amadeaha? How are you handling all this?"

"I'll admit it's all a little unsettling at first. It's not every day a baby talks to me in my head. She has much better grammar than Bear by the way."

"Jar Jar Binx has better grammar than Bear," he replied wryly. "That's not saying much."

She leaned down and pressed her lips to his. With a groan he pulled her even closer, sweeping his tongue in to taste and tease. It was all too soon before it was over and he pulled back. After the kiss, Cam held her tightly to his chest for a few seconds before letting go. The sound of pounding footsteps made them both look up in alarm. It was Bear, his eyes were wild with panic and he was out of breath.

"You need to come real quick. Nathaniel is getting worse."

Cam and Amadeaha followed Bear back to the

infirmery tent at neck-breaking speed. When he gazed his brother, Cam wasn't prepared for what he saw. Even though he hadn't thought it possible, his brother had become even worse. Nathaniel was unconscious, but something was disturbing his rest. His eyes moved rapidly under his closed lids and his lips formed silent words. He was drenched in sweat and his wounds were refusing to close. The blood was quickly coming out of his broken body and staining his bed sheets a bright red.

The entire family was there, including Michael. The Chief looked stricken and at a complete loss as to what to do. Ana was sitting next to the bed with Appolion who had a comforting hand on her shoulder. Derel was on the other side, his eyes closed as he continued to try to heal Nathaniel. After several tense minutes, Derel came out of his trance and cursed.

"I can't figure it out," he growled as he kicked over a nearby chair. During his captivity, his blond hair had grown longer than its usual collar length and he impatiently ran his hand through it. "If I'm really this great superhealer that everyone thinks I am, then why can't I even help my own damn brother?"

He went to kick another chair, but pulled up short when Cliona walked into the path of his foot.

The fairy danced back and gave them all an

apologetic look. "I'm sorry," she blushed five different shades of red. "I just wanted to see if any of you needed anything. I..."

Stopping short, she suddenly jerked her head to the side, the red highlights of her long, dark hair glinting in the lantern light. Sniffing the air, she slowly walked over to Nathaniel, taking another inhale with each step. Cam exchanged baffled looks with Ana when the fairy got down on her knees, put her nose right into Nathaniel's chest and smelled his wounds.

"It can't be." Cliona leaned down and took another really good sniff.

Joe pulled gently at her arm, trying to get her away from the edge of the bed. "Uhm, Cliona... now really isn't the time to criticize Nathaniel's hygiene."

She smacked sharply at his hand and twisted away from him. "That's not what I'm talking about."

Joe gave the group a sheepish look, his long bangs hanging in his eyes. "I'm sure she means well."

But Cliona wasn't listening to him. She was too engrossed in Nathaniel's injuries. Cam started to grow a little pissed when the fairy actually dabbed a bit of Nathaniel's blood on her fingers and rubbed it between them.

"You picked a hell of a time to develop a blood

fixation," Cam growled in his most menacing voice. "Why don't you quit molesting him, Tinker Bell?" Cam wasn't surprised when Cliona didn't act the least bit affected by his angry tone. She was one of the few, well...beings that wasn't easily scared by him. As usual, it annoyed the hell out of him, too.

"I know what poison the wench used on Nathaniel. I just never thought I would see it in the angel world."

"What is it?" Michael asked sharply.

"It's called puthion. It's a very rare fairy poison used mainly by royalty. The fairies usually don't use it to kill though. Usually they consume it in very small doses to travel in the nether world. There they are able to view flashes of their loved ones lives. Events in other fairies lives, even though the traveler was never there themselves."

Cam glanced down at Nathaniel. "Kind of like Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*?"

She nodded. "Exactly, the only problem is Nathaniel has taken in way too much. We need to get him the antidote or else he will travel completely into the other realm and never be able to come back."

"Where are we going to get the antidote?" Ana was gripping Nathaniel's hand so tightly that her own fingers were turning white, almost as if she was hoping to anchor him to this world by her

touch. "The fairies are in hiding, they have been even before the war started. We'll never be able to find them in time."

Cliona's lips curled into a weak smile. "I know of an elder living in seclusion nearby. She used to tutor me in the fairy ways before she completely lost her mind. Winnow may be a loon, but she'll have the antidote and know how to properly use it. I'll have to leave now though because we don't have much time to waste."

"I'll take you," Michael instantly volunteered.

After they left, Cam looked down at Nathaniel and noticed the bleeding was getting even worse and his color was fading. He only hoped Cliona would make it back in time. Cam closed his eyes, and for the first time in years, he prayed.

Chapter Four

“I don’t fucking believe this,” Nathaniel mumbled as he looked down at his own prone body. He was the last one in the family that he thought would have an out-of-body experience. This freaky stuff was up Bear or Cam’s alley, not his. But yet here his ass was, staring at himself dying while his sister and brothers mourned him.

At first he tried to talk to them, he had even gotten right up to Ramiel’s ear and yelled good and loud. No one had heard a damn thing he said. Then Nathaniel had gotten pissed, so he tried to punch Ramiel right in his ignorant jaw, only to have his fist pass right through his brother’s body. But as soon as Nathaniel tried to touch Ramiel, things got even stranger if that was possible.

Suddenly Nathaniel was having an immortal lifetime’s worth of flashbacks go right before his eyes. The only thing was, the snapshots weren’t from his life, they were from Ramiel’s.

Nathaniel saw all the good and bad highlights

of his brother's life. From the time he went to angel warrior school, through his various archangel missions. He even saw the day that Ramiel had locked himself in a room and cried when the demons had captured Cam.

As soon as he got done reliving Ramiel's life, Nathaniel tried other members of his family. He viewed Ariel's birth through Ana's eyes, saw way too much of Tiffany's ass when he delved into Bear's past and discovered Joe just loved to stare at Cliona from across the compound.

Nathaniel *touched* everyone, but Cam. He even went so far as to hold his hand over his little brother's shoulder, wanting so bad to see why Cam was the way he was, but something held him back. Nathaniel desperately desired to know what happened to Cam that dark month in Hell. Maybe then he would better understand why Cam did and said the things that he did sometimes. Yet, Nathaniel still hesitated, knowing deep down that there would be no turning back and that his relationship with Cam would forever be changed.

"It's time to know, Nathaniel," a strong feminine voice said.

Nathaniel whipped his head around, shocked he wasn't alone in this weird place anymore. Nix was sitting on the bed, her legs crossed and her golden, curly tresses cascading on her bare shoulders. As usual she was dressed in angel-

whore. Her top was so low cut that there was nothing left to the imagination and the sides of her white flowing skirt slit so high he had a full view of her legs. For the first time he noticed how sexy those legs were, too.

"It's nice to see that you dressed up for my funeral," Nathaniel quipped, his gaze never leaving her thighs. If he was dying, why shouldn't he go out with a Nix bang? It's not like he was a mated male anymore and, from what he had found out about Belora, she'd hadn't been exactly monogamous while she had been alive.

Nix got up and walked slowly over to him, her hips swaying sensually under the gown.

Mesmerized, Nathaniel watched her, his mouth watering. Part angel, part Power, the oracle craved sex just so she could feel emotions. It had been so long since he'd enjoyed the taste of a female and now he knew that he'd been denying himself for no reason, he really was finding himself wanting a nibble or two. She slipped her arms around his neck and pressed her body tight against his, rubbing against his erection. The tips of her pointed ears poked out from under her hair and he couldn't resist giving one of them a slight love bite.

"Now is not the time for fun," she whispered. "I didn't come alone."

"You didn't?" Nathaniel asked as wrapped his

arms around her and cupped both of her ass cheeks, grinding her even harder into his cock. He silently thanked the gods that his out-of body dick worked as good as his in-body one.

Lehor flashed in, a couple of feet away from them. "No, she brought me."

Nathaniel quickly jumped away from Nix, marveling at the way his mother's sudden appearance could kill a boner. He tried to act casual so she wouldn't know he'd been feeling up the oracle. One look at Lehor's narrowed eyes told him he hadn't fooled her for one second. "Mom, are you here to accompany me to the upper realms of Heaven?" he asked quickly, hoping to distract her.

She shook her head and gave a slight frown. "I'm here to guide you through Cam's past."

Nathaniel was ashamed to admit he was afraid to go into Cam's real-life nightmares. "I don't know if that would be a good idea."

Lehor gave him a firm glare. "You need to know how your brother suffered."

Nathaniel looked over Cam. His brother was sitting in a chair by the bed, Amadeaha in his lap. Cam had no clue as to what was going on around him. Nathaniel knew that if he did, then he would be angrier than hell his past was threatening to come out into the open. Cam held all that crap real close to his chest. "If I'm dying then what good is

me knowing going to do?"

Nix gave him a half smile. It never reached her violet eyes, which remained as cold and emotionless as usual. "Who said that you are going to die? There is hope for you yet. Michael fights for your survival."

So that's where his uncle was. Nathaniel had been a little hurt when hadn't seen him in the mourning party. It was good to know Uncle Mike did care after all. Nix gave him a peck on the cheek before she flashed away, leaving him and Lehor alone.

Lehor reached out and grabbed his hand, just like she had done when he had been a child and afraid of the dark. Except now, he knew the dark was real and so were the monsters that dwelled within. Even though they weren't in their bodies, her touch still felt warm and soft.

"I'll be with you the entire time," she promised.

Nathaniel raised his palm over Cam again and, before he had time to change his mind, he reached out toward his brother. Nathaniel was instantly transported to a dank room that had dark stone walls. He gagged on the strong demon smell that suddenly assaulted his nose. Off in the distance, he could hear screams and cries for mercy from the numerous angels being held captive. He waited several seconds for his eyes to adjust to the darkness and he was gradually able to make out

the shapes of three demons that were just standing there waiting for something. All of them were assassins and they looked the part. Not one was under six and a half feet and they were a mass of muscles, horns and hate. He was relieved to see Lehor was still at his side, her glowing beauty a jolting contrast to the ugliness of their new surroundings. "How come I can smell this place?" he asked her. "None of the other visions were this real."

"Because you have the strongest connection to Cam. You've always felt most responsible for him." Her mouth formed a wistful smile. "Did you know that as children, you were always the first one to go to his aide whenever he was hurt or upset? You always sensed his distress, even before he had time to shed his first tear. Your mind could feel his turmoil, even before mine could."

Nathaniel looked over at her, confused. "Mom, I'm not a psychic."

Lehor arched an elegant brow. "Not a very strong one."

"Let's try, not one at all."

She locked gazes with him. "Son, all of my children have special gifts. Some are just more obvious than others. If you ever bothered to stop and open up your mind, you would be amazed at what you discovered. That's one of the reasons why you and your brothers are such good

archangels. You can sense what your enemy is going to do next in a battle because you can read their minds."

Nathaniel would have argued further, but the rough wooden door to the cell opened up and a couple more guards led Cam in. Nathaniel's heart lurched at the horrible condition his baby brother was in. Cam's dark blue eyes were wide and darting back and forth and a fine sheen of sweat dotted his forehead. He had on one of those goofy tee shirts he used to wear all the time. It was torn in numerous places and blood was streaked all down the front.

Cam had already gone through his transformation and Nathaniel could see the tips of his fangs. Cam's lips were slightly open, like he really wanted to close them, but he couldn't because he hadn't adjusted to his new canines yet. The empath was trying to put on a brave face, but Nathaniel knew him better than anyone and he knew his brother was afraid.

His hands were shackled in front of him and another set of chains were wrapped around him. Nathaniel recalled they were the Chains of Confinement and they rebounded Cam's powers back on him. He still tried to use his gifts anyway, probably out of sheer desperation. The empath flew back several feet as his own powers attacked him. He let out a loud cry as his body arched up

and down several times. Nathaniel felt a surge of pride when he shook it off and quickly scrambled to his feet.

Cam glared at each guard individually before growling, "Just get it over with already."

The demons attacked him all at once. Thanks to the shackles, the empath was defenseless against their brutal onslaught. Again and again, they punched him, never once letting up. Nathaniel tried closing his eyes against it, but that didn't help because the sounds of flesh hitting flesh and Cam's grunts of pain still came through. Opening his eyes, Nathaniel moaned when he saw his baby brother finally get beaten down to the ground. The demons then used their feet on him. One of them kicked Cam in the head and blood started to pour down his face. Nathaniel could hear him choking and sputtering on it as he inhaled some of it.

Lehor tightened her grip on his hand, her fingers squeezed his so hard it was almost painful. He glanced at her and saw she was crying big silent tears as she watched her son's torture. Realizing that it must be ten times harder for her to watch this, Nathaniel gave her a reassuring squeeze back. "This is too much for you to have to see," he said. "You should've had Nix bring me instead."

Lehor's lips quivered and she impatiently wiped the wetness away from her cheeks. "No, it's

the least I can do for him. He's my son, and I need to know how he suffered."

Another demon came in and the guards stopped their assault. This demon was even scarier than the others, if that was possible. With black skin that matched his black aurora, the demon gave off so much evil even Nathaniel could feel it and he was no empath. The newcomer was dressed in all royal garb, showing he was a high-ranking demon in Hell.

The dark demon grabbed Cam by the collar and roughly hauled him to his feet. "I just checked on the female I gave you, and all I found was a little nip on her neck. I'm very disappointed in you. I guess you need another lesson."

Without giving Cam a chance to answer him, the demon put a clawed hand on the angel's forehead. Cam let out a gut-churning scream and his eyes rolled back into his head. The demon kept this up for several minutes before he stopped and let out a long hiss. He cursed in demon speak before he slammed his hand into Cam's forehead once more. Cam started screaming again and Nathaniel felt his own eyes tearing up.

"Who is that and what is he doing to Cam?" he asked Lehor.

She shot the demon a hateful look. "His name is Mammon and he's one of the highest-ranking demons in Hell. He's going into Cam's mind and

trying to extract any information that he can about Michael and the angel warriors."

"Why is it hurting Cam so bad?"

"Because Cam is fighting to keep the information from them. He's trying to protect his family. Do you know who the female is Mammon spoke of?"

Nathaniel shook his head even though he had a sneaky suspicion.

Lehor let out a choked sob before continuing, "It's Belora. He fought so hard to keep that little tidbit from Mammon. Do you want to know what the real ironic thing is? Belora had already told them. She'd already started to turn."

Nathaniel got good and pissed. "If she had already turned, then why didn't you warn Cam when you came to him in his cell?"

"I didn't know it at the time. If I had, then I would have destroyed her myself."

"Because she betrayed Cam?"

"No," Lehor said, vehemently. "Because she betrayed you. Do you want to know why she turned?"

"No." The single word came out harsh and loud.

"Too bad, you need to know that it wasn't your fault. I'm not going to stand by and watch you spend the rest of your days blaming yourself for her misdeeds. Belora was already a champion in

the gladiator ring by this time. She discovered she liked hurting and destroying others. So much so, that when she finally won her freedom, she chose to stay in the lifestyle and become a slave master herself."

Nathaniel shook his head. "She was an angel warrior, she took vows. There's no way that she could have done that."

Lehor put her hands on his shoulders. "You need to make yourself really remember the way she was back when you were together. She always had a vicious streak."

He didn't want to admit it, but it was true. Often he'd been shocked at Belora's cruelty in battles. He had just always been willing to overlook it because he'd loved her so much. "I still don't understand how she could hate me. I always thought she loved me."

"She may have at one time, but her time in Hell just killed the little bit of goodness left in her. It didn't take the demons long to make her mad."

"I thought that was just an empath thing."

"In Hell there are demons who specialize in breaking archangels."

Cam let out another loud scream of agony, making Nathaniel wince. "Demons like Mammon."

Lehor glared over at the demon, her usual loving eyes glazed with hate and anger.

“Especially demons like Mammon.”

Mammon lowered his hand and Cam stopped screaming. The angel was clearly out of his mind, so tortured mentally he was broken. His eyes were rolled back into his head and his jaw was slack. He tried to talk, but all that came out was a run of gibberish words. Mammon snapped his fingers and a demon guard came over and pulled Cam roughly by the hair so his head tilted back. They poured angel's blood down Cam's throat. It was such a small amount that Cam's wounds didn't heal up like they usually did whenever he fed. It was enough to bring him around though. He took in several deep breaths as the life came back into his eyes.

“Please,” Cam whimpered softly. “Just destroy me and end all this.”

Those words brought a lump to the back of Nathaniel's throat. He noticed Cam's voice still sounded like it had in the good old days, before all this crap got thrown at him. Nathaniel had always assumed the transformation had been responsible for the hard edge that was in Cam's voice, but he now realized he had been wrong. It'd been the torture and abuse that had taken away his innocence and love for life.

The demon laughed at Cam's pleas. “I'll stop if you kiss my boots, angel.”

“Fuck off,” Cam said weakly. When the demon

raised his hand again, Cam quickly yelled, "Okay, okay, okay, I'll do it! Just don't mind rape me again."

Cam hesitated a second before slowly lowering his head. Nathaniel didn't have to be a telepath to know Cam was hating himself at that moment. He could see the self-loathing etched in his brother's eyes. When Cam's face was only inches from the demon's foot, Mammon delivered a quick kick. Cam was thrown back and blood started to spurt from his nose, mixing in with the stuff already running down the front of him. Then the demon stormed over to Cam and starting ripping into the angel's mind. Nathaniel let out an anguished sob when Cam began screaming again.

"I am going to find you, you fucker!" Nathaniel screamed at Mammon, even though the demon couldn't hear him. "When I do, I am going to slowly cut you piece by piece!" Nathaniel was suddenly jerked from the room and in another memory of Cam's.

* * * *

Cam heard the fairy disaster train before he actually saw it. Even at twenty paces away, he could still make out Cliona's voice yelling at someone. Everyone in the room looked as baffled as he felt. Except for Joe, who had a half smile

playing at his lips and a goofy dreamy look in his eyes. Cam decided he would have to sit Joe down and have a serious talk with him. Cliona was half fairy and half human, both of which were strictly off limits to angels. The last thing the family needed was for Joe to play taboo mambo and make things even worse for all of them.

Cliona finally came into view and she was dragging an unwilling female behind her. The blonde female was digging her pink Sketchers into the ground and fighting with every inch of her fairy body. All the workouts with Ray seemed to be paying off for Cliona though. She was making fair progress with her unwilling baggage. Once blondie realized she couldn't fight with her muscles, she decided to use another weapon. She opened her mouth and let out a loud ear-shattering scream.

Joe grabbed her by the back of her pink Hello Kitty sweatshirt and clapped a hand over her yap. The female twisted her blue jean covered legs and tried to stomp on his foot. He cursed as he dodged her feet and shot his brothers a dirty look when they started laughing at him. The blonde fairy finally seemed to realize she had an audience. She stopped struggling and her baby-blue gaze darted back and forth as she took in the crowd.

"If I let you go, will you stop yelling?" Joe asked. There was a hard edge to his voice, like he

was losing his patience.

She nodded her head and he slowly lowered his hand. As soon as she was free, the fairy started to cackle like a witch and doing a halfhearted waltz around the bed.

Cam shot a disbelieving look at Cliona, who was looking downright sheepish. This was supposed to be Nathaniel's only hope? "I thought you said that you were going to find an elder." Cam fought to keep the panic from his voice.

"She is an elder." Cliona hissed a warning at the blonde who was still laughing like the village idiot. "Fairies are immortal like angels."

"Fairies are biters, too," Rachael chimed in from the doorway. She was cradling her hand to her chest. "The winged bitch latched onto my hand and didn't let go until I gave her precious fairy ass a good swift kick."

If it weren't for the fact Nathaniel was still dying and the only one who could save him was crazier than a pop star at a barbershop, Cam might have laughed at Rachael's words. Cliona got right up into the fairy's face and stared her down until she quieted.

"You will heal the angel, Winnow," Cliona commanded in a hard voice.

Suddenly a more fitting name for the new fairy came to Cam's mind. In his head he christened her Wacky Winnow.

The blonde fairy shrugged one shoulder. "Why should I? Who cares about some smelly angel?"

"Shut up, Winnow," Cliona yelled. "Heal him, or I'll pin you down like a fly and rip off your wings."

Wacky Winnow seemed unimpressed with Cliona's threats. Instead she shot a sly look at Joe. "I know why you want to help the angels."

"You don't know shit about shit."

Cam was a little shocked by Cliona's profanity. While the rest of them tended to fling curse words around like they were going out of style since the war had broke out, he had never heard Cliona so much as utter a *damn* before now. Despite himself, he was starting to get interested. Whatever the other fairy knew must be good in order to get Cliona's panties this much in a bunch.

"You always did have a nasty temper." Winnow moved over to stand next to Nathaniel. She held her hand out and impatiently snapped her fingers until Michael handed her a bag. "How many times have I told you that would be your downfall, Cliona?"

"Can you help him?" Ana was still clutching Nathaniel's hand, her eyes narrowed in suspicion. Guess she wasn't any more happy to see her brother's only hope was certifiable any more than Cam was.

"Of course I can," Winnow snapped as she

peeled back Nathaniel's eyelids and peered intently down at him. "I'm the strongest healer among the fairies."

"That didn't save you from having your tush exiled," Cliona snapped nastily. "They kicked your loony self out centuries ago."

"What did they kick her out for?" Joe eyed up the blonde fairy warily, like he was half expecting her to start going ballistic again.

"Fairies don't like crazy." Cliona grinned.

Her smile disappeared when Winnow replied, "They also don't like it when one of their females goes and claims a male angel."

Everyone in the room instantly turned and looked at Joe. Joe just gave them a who-me look and shrugged his shoulders. Winnow seemed oblivious to them all. She just occupied herself by mixing together ingredients from various vials she pulled out of her bag.

Cam finally reached the end of his patience. "What the hell are you talking about? There's nothing going on between Joe and Cliona."

The guilty look his brother and Cliona exchanged told him just how stupid that comment was. Wacky Winnow started cackling again.

"If those two have been keeping away from each other, then how is it the male angel carries Cliona's scent all over him?"

Case leaned forward and sniffed his twin

loudly. "I don't smell anything. Just his usual funk."

Winnow snorted. "That's because only another female fairy would be able to detect it. It's our way of telling other females, *Back off, this one is mine.*"

"That's impossible," Cliona squeaked. "All we did was kiss and it was just that one time." As soon as that admission slipped out, Cliona slapped both hands over her mouth and shot a terrified look, first at Joe, then at Michael.

Cam closed his eyes and groaned. He couldn't believe that Joe could be so stupid. Well check that, yes, he believed Joe could be that stupid, Cam was just pissed Joe could be that reckless. Joe, for his part, didn't even bother to look one bit sorry. He just glanced over at Cam and waited to see what his reaction would be.

"What the hell are you thinking?" Cam fired off, not caring this really wasn't the time or place for this crap. After all the shit that had gone down in the past twenty-four hours, this was the last thing any of them needed. "She's half human."

"I don't answer to you, *baby brother.*" Joe laid a heavy emphasis on the title.

But Cam wasn't in the mood to be reminded of his place in the family hierarchy. "No, you'll just expect me to pick up the pieces once this fuck up gets out."

Joe's eyes took on a dangerous glint. "You

know what? I liked it better when you were scrawny and we could smack your ass around still."

Cam shot to his feet. "What's holding you back now?"

Before Joe could make a move on him, Cliona darted forward and clutched Cam's arm. "Please, don't punish him. It was all my doing."

Joe gave her a cocky grin. "No it wasn't."

Cliona kept her pleading gaze fixated on Cam. "Yes, it was."

"No, it wasn't."

"Yes, it was."

"No. It. Wasn't."

Cliona finally whipped around with a frustrated growl. "Joe, you stupid angel. Don't you see I am trying to get you out of trouble? I don't want to see you get busted over this."

Joe strode up to her and grabbed her gently by her upper arms. "I told you before, I don't give a damn what they say. I would give everything up for you."

A tear slipped down Cliona's cheek. "How can you act so casual about this, after what happened to my father?"

Cliona's father had been executed for marrying with her human mother. To make matters worse, his executioners had been his own family and friends. She probably was terrified the same thing

would happen to Joe if they got together. The sad thing was Cam couldn't guarantee it wouldn't. While Michael would never let any harm befall Joe from the angel side, their uncle would have no say in the way the fairies reacted.

Cliona ran out of the room and Joe followed after her. An oh-fuck silence followed in the wake of their departure. Cam glanced over at Case and saw from the guilty look on his face this situation had been going on for a long time and it was pretty serious.

"You need to talk to him," Cam ordered the twin.

Case gave slow shake of his head. "Don't you think that I've tried?"

"Keep trying."

"Quit bossing your family around and come help me hold your brother's head up," snapped Winnow impatiently.

Cam shot her an irritated glance, which seemed to have no affect on her. He moved to obey her, but not before letting out a loud aggravated sigh. Just so she knew he didn't appreciate her taking away his *boss* status. She placed several drops of an amber liquid down Nathaniel's mouth before saying a few words over him in the fairy language.

"What now?" Cam asked.

"Now we wait and hope that he has the will to come back."

Chapter Five

“Enough!” Nathaniel yelled at Lehor. “I can’t stand another minute of this.” He had just suffered through another one of Cam’s memories from Hell and he knew if he had to witness another one, he’d lose his sanity. Already he had seen his brother, whipped, beaten and degraded time and time again. Whenever he thought that it possibly could not get worse, it did. His throat hurt from holding back his yells of despair and his hands hurt from clenching them into fists as he fought to keep his emotions under control. It’d been hard to keep up a front for his mother. Even in his worst nightmares, he never imagined it’d actually been this bad.

Lehor grabbed him by the arm and they were instantly transported back to the present time. He breathed a sigh of relief when he found himself, once again, by his bedside. This time there was a strange blonde female he’d never seen before along with his family.

"There is one more thing you must see, Nathaniel," Lehor said.

Before he could ask what, she grabbed his hand and placed it on Amadeaha's shoulder. He stumbled forward and fell to his knees as he was thrust into her past. One look at the gold floors and ivory walls told him they were in Heaven. They were inside an angel dwelling and it was opulent, even by angel's standards. He was in the foray of the home at the foot of a marble staircase. A huge fountain was in the center of the area. In the middle of the pool was a statue of a male archangel with a hawk on his shoulder.

The double doors burst open and Amadeaha stumbled through them. Her green eyes were wide with fear and her face completely devoid of color. The long white gown she was wearing billowed in the air behind her, showing brief glimpses of her legs. Her flaming hair was loose and tumbling down her back.

The female made a beeline for the stairs, but only made it two steps before her father, Jehel, and cousin, Azreal, flashed in front of her, blocking her way. Letting out a cry of shock, she quickly recovered and put on a brave face. It was all show though, Nathaniel could see that she was shaking like a leaf and a small sheen of perspiration was dotting her forehead. Jehel snatched a necklace off her and held it up. It was a white circle shaped

stone on a black cord. Nathaniel recognized it as one of the amulets the justice angels wore so they could flash around at will while the angel warriors stayed grounded.

"You should have been smart and flashed away while you had the chance," the council leader chided his niece. "Now, what could have been so important in my house you would risk capture to steal? You had to of known we were on to you."

Her gaze slid slightly toward the stairs and Jehel got a knowing look on his face. He said, "I should have known you would do something stupid for the Empath King."

Amadeaha finally displayed some of the spunk Nathaniel had grown to admire in her. "Don't speak of him in such tones, you're not even fit enough to lick his boots."

Jehel backhanded her across the face. Amadeaha flew back and landed in a heap at the bottom of the stairs. Before she could recover, Azreal was on her, a short whip in his hand. Nathaniel watched as he used it on her, the horror in him building to a slow, burning anger. Her uncle and father stood by and didn't make a move to help her.

Nathaniel spun around and addressed Lehor. "Why do you find it necessary for me to see this?"

Lehor never broke her gaze from Amadeaha. "Just watch."

Nathaniel dismissed her by turning his back to her. He closed his eyes, unable to watch his brother's mate being hurt anymore. When the cracks of the whip finally stopped, he opened his eyes and dared himself to look at her. She had rolled up into a ball, to protect herself as much as possible, but the back of her dress was shredded and soaked in blood.

Jehel curled his lip up in a disgusted sneer at her. "You're a fool to waste your life over him. He's an incubus, their kind can't be with just one mate. He's probably with some female even as we speak, not even giving you a second thought."

"Don't you believe him, sweetie," Nathaniel whispered, though only he and Lehor could hear him. "Cam thought of you every second of every day."

The archangel glared at Jehel one last time before he ordered Lehor, "Take me back. I know now what I have do."

Lehor tilted her head in acceptance before she leaned in and gave Nathaniel a gentle kiss on the cheek. As soon as she pulled away, he felt himself being sucked from the past and thrown back into the present.

With a choking gasp, Nathaniel sat up in the infirmary cot. He took in several deep shuddering breaths as he felt his own body, just to assure himself he was back where he belonged. After he

had reassured himself that he was in the right realm, he looked around for Lehor, but she was gone. Then he looked around for Cam. Ever since he had witnessed his little brother's tortures, Nathaniel had the overwhelming urge to grab Cam and protect him like he should have all those years ago.

It was dark, so it took Nathaniel's eyes a few moments to adjust. As they did, he was slowly able to make out each of his family members. They were all sleeping, some on the ground, others in chairs. He spotted Cam in the closest seat.

The empath had Amadeaha in his lap. Her face was snuggled into his chest and he had one arm wrapped around her, protectively. She opened her eyes and let out a small gasp. Nathaniel shook his head and put a finger to his lips when she moved to shake Cam awake. She frowned, but came toward him when he beckoned her with his hand.

"That day you're father and Jehel busted you, what were you looking for?" he whispered, not wanting anyone else to wake up and overhear their conversation.

Her eyes widened in surprise, before she answered him. "Somehow my uncle was able to get his hands on the bow Derel had been carrying the day he was captured. I thought since I was unable to get Derel back for Cam, I could at least return his weapon."

Nathaniel was amazed at both her loyalty to Cam and the sheer stupidity of her actions. "Does Cam know it was Azreal that beat you?"

"Yes, he refused to drop the subject until I told him who hurt me."

"I know Cam, he'll destroy your cousin if he gets the chance now."

Her eyes shifted over to Dina. He was on a nearby cot, obviously sleeping off some sort of injury. His mate, Megan, was tucked into his chest and he was clutching the small female tightly, like he was desperately afraid that someone would come and take her away from him. Megan seemed accustomed to Dina's vise grip hold. Her hand was resting on his head, like she had been stroking his hair when she finally drifted off to sleep herself.

"I don't consider Azreal my cousin," she hissed out with venom. Her gaze had still not drifted away from Dina.

Nathaniel looked over at Dina himself as he wondered just what Azreal had done to the Goth empath to make Amadeaha so angry. Dina had never mentioned Azreal before, but that didn't mean shit. Dina never talked about his past. "What did he do to Dina?" Nathaniel felt his own protective instincts taking over. The whole Lehor bunch had adopted the empath.

"He made Dina's life pure hell. Dina lived

every day in fear of what Azreal was going to do to him. He ridiculed him, made him the butt of all of his vicious pranks and beat Dina all the time. Jehel just turned a blind eye toward it because he thought it would make Dina tougher."

"I knew Dina had it rough, but I had no idea. I never really thought about how bad it must have been for you two until today."

A heavy silence fell between them. "How did you know about my beating?" she finally asked.

"I saw it while I was out."

"You went snooping around into my past?" Her words held no real anger, there may have been even a slight amusement to them.

"I wasn't given the choice. My mom wanted me to see it so I would know."

"Know what?"

"That not all females are like Belora. That there is true love out there and those that would sacrifice everything for it." Even in the darkness, he could see a slight blush come to her cheeks.

"It's no big deal. I never did get Derel's weapon back."

"That's okay, it clashed with his shoes."

Amadeaha laughed and it was so pure and sweet that it tugged at his heart. No wonder Cam loved her so much. Nathaniel couldn't help but smile in response. The noise woke Cam up. He jumped up and darted to Nathaniel's side once he

realized he was awake.

As soon as he got close enough, Nathaniel grabbed him and pulled him into a crushing hug. Cam patted him awkwardly on the back before he finally untangled himself. Nathaniel felt a little bit like an ass when he saw the confused look Cam shot Amadeaha.

"You okay, Nathaniel?"

"I saw everything, Cammie. I know what those bastards did to you."

As soon as Nathaniel made his confession, Cam blanched. He was half afraid Cam was going to get up and walk away. That had always been what his brother had done in the past whenever someone had been stupid enough to bring up the captivity. But Cam stayed put, although he did reach out and grab Amadeaha's hand.

"I'm sorry," he croaked, he shifted his cat-like eyes to the ground. "You shouldn't have seen that."

"Are you crazy? I'm so proud of you."

Cam's gaze snapped back up. "Huh?"

"All these years you've always acted like I was some kind of hero to you. The truth is, you're the hero Cam."

"How can you say that? You must have seen some of the things I did. Crap, Nathaniel, I almost caved and turned demon."

"But you didn't. You stood up to the worst Hell

had to offer and you refused to forget who you were. You have nothing to be ashamed of."

The blonde female came over and rudely pushed the two of them away, completely ruining the tender, after-school, special moment. "Move out of the way, bossy angel, so I can see if your brother is better," she ordered.

"Obviously he is better, Wacky Winnow. He's up and talking. Why is it all fairies have a rude streak a mile wide?"

Before Nathaniel had a chance to fully digest the fact that there was yet another fairy in their mists, the entire family woke up and they all started to fuss over him. Nathaniel was grateful for the diversion they provided. He had been afraid Cam was going to probe into his mind and find he was hiding something. The deep-seated need for revenge. Right before he had come back, he had vowed to himself he was going to hunt down all the demons that had ever hurt his brother and make every one of them pay. As painfully as possible.

* * * *

Right after he was sure Nathaniel was going to be all right, Derel decided to look in on the young elf-angel who had been in the gladiator ring with him. He found the kid in the farthest corner of the

tent. Jordy's injuries had already been treated because Derel had made sure Tiffany had taken care of him. Right after he had made her pinky swear not to tell anyone there was a different breed amongst their ranks.

Derel had been banking on the fact all the other healers would be too busy with the wounded to notice there was something that did not quite belong with the others. So far it had worked, too. That was until he spotted Gabi sitting in a chair nearby Jordy.

Gabi was the sister of the leader of the healers, Raphael. Officially, she was second in command, although she rarely tossed her weight around. One look at her blazing green eyes told him that she already knew his secret and she wasn't pleased at all.

She was dressed in fighting black leathers, her crossbow slung on her back. Her long, raven hair was pulled back in the same braid she always wore when she was getting ready to fight. Usually it was demons she was tangling with, but Derel had the sneaking suspicion it was him she was getting ready to beat. "I can explain," he started, not even bothering to deny the truth.

"Please do. I would just love to know why you brought an elf into our compound."

"It's not what you think. He's half angel, too, and he's a good kid. Not only did he heal me

while I was still a slave, he tried to save my life in the gladiator ring."

Still unconvinced, she crossed her arms over her chest. "Does Michael know about this?"

"Nobody does, except Tiffany, Appolion and Heather."

"What were you thinking?"

"I don't know, Gabi. He's just a kid and he's all alone in the world. His mom is dead and he doesn't know where his father is. I just couldn't abandon him."

"Did it ever once occur to you to come to Raphael or me with this?"

Derel opened his mouth to answer, but she cut him off.

"No, you and your stupid Lehor stubbornness just decided to take matters into your own hands. We have a compound full of angel warriors on the edge who are just looking for someone to take their frustrations out on. This poor kid is going to make an easy target just because he is different."

"If anyone so much as breathes on Jordy, they will have me to answer to," Derel snarled. His anger wasn't directed at her, but rather at the threat to Jordy.

"Look, I love how you Lehors are always taking in strays. I was one of the first you guys took under your protection. You just need to understand that this one is going to cause

trouble."

"What would you have me do, Gabi? Leave him without a protector? Elf, angel or hippogriff, he's still just a kid.

Gabi's face softened. "I know, you still should have told me right away. I could have helped ease his introduction by bringing Raphael on board ahead of time."

"I was going to, honest. I haven't forgotten my blood oath to never keep anything from you." He was relieved when he saw Gabi accepted his explanation. She was more than a leader to him. She was like another sister to all of the Lehor brothers. It would have devastated Derel if this had driven them apart.

"Let me talk to him," she relented. She sat down on the bed next to Jordy and gently shook his shoulder. The young healer woke with a start, the aftereffects of being a slave, no doubt. Gabi kept her hand on him in a motherly fashion and gifted the youth with a small smile.

"It's all right, Jordy," Derel said. "This is Gabi and she just wants to talk to you."

"That's right," she added in soft soothing tones. "No harm will come to you here. I promise."

"No offense, angel lady, but I've heard that one before. It usually came right before a beating."

Jordy quickly ducked his head in the familiar submissive way Derel associated with being a

slave. It made his gut churn to see Jordy still doing it. Despite all his assurances, the kid obviously didn't feel any safer here than he did at the slave dwelling. The sad, yet understanding, look that passed over Gabi's face said she read the same thing.

"You know Derel, he would never hurt you, right?"

Jordy gave a reluctant shrug, trying hard to cover his fear. It was a lost cause though since he worked the blanket covering his lap so much Derel half expected him to wear a hole in the thing. Derel wasn't an empath, but he could tell the kid was scared half to death. Gabi let out a frustrated sigh.

"Will you please look at me, Jordy?"

As soon as the kid shifted his glance up, Gabi let out a gasp. He quickly ducked his head back down and she grabbed him by the chin and jerked his face back up. Derel was shocked at the rough way she was handling Jordy.

"Gabi, what is it?" he asked, even as he tried to think of a diplomatic way to get Jordy away from her.

"Who are you?" she almost yelled at the terrified young healer.

"Ouch, angel lady, you're kinda hurting me here." Jordy tried to turn away from her, but she kept a firm hold on him.

Derel didn't know what in the hell had twisted her knickers in such a wad, he just knew he had to get his new friend away from her before she ripped his face off. "Gabi, what's gotten into you?"

She ignored him, instead yelling, "Raphael, come over here now!"

At the mention of the healer angel's name, Jordy's face got pale. His mouth opened and closed several times while his gaze darted side to side. Perhaps he was looking out for Raphael, more likely he was looking for an escape route. Derel knew he sure as hell would have been if he had been in the same situation.

"What is it now?" Raphael grumbled as he came over.

Gabi jerked Jordy's face toward Raphael. "Look at him."

Raphael studied him for a few minutes. "Who the hell brought an elf into the compound?"

Gabi let out a hiss of exasperation. "No, not that. Look at his face."

Derel looked, too and what he saw made him suck his breath in as he wondered how in heck he hadn't noticed Jordy's familiar features before. Jordy had the same green eyes as Raphael, the kids were just tilted a bit at the corners. The young healer had the same raven black hair as Raphael. Crap, they were even wearing the same confused expression on their faces. In short, Jordy was a

little elf clone of Raphael. But that was impossible, it was common knowledge that Raphael and Gabi didn't have any relatives living in this realm.

Raphael must have noticed that he had a Mini-Me, too because he started grilling the kid. "What was your father's name?"

Derel groaned when Jordy gave the familiar answer of, *Dad*. Now wasn't the time for him to be evasive. Raphael moved forward so he was towering over Jordy.

"Do you know who I am, you little whelp?"

Jordy gulped. "Yeah, I've been hanging out with angels long enough to know the name *Raphael*. You're the leader of the healers."

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but you are an angel?"

"Part."

"And you are a healer?"

"Part."

"Then let's hope that *part* of you is smart enough to know the best thing for *all* of you is to answer me. Now, who was your father?"

Jordy hesitated for another second before blurting, "Gideon, his name is Gideon."

"Is this some kind of sick joke?" Raphael snapped. "Gideon's been dead for centuries."

Jordy finally got some backbone and shot him a defiant look. "No he hasn't. He's not dead now either. I'm going to find him."

Gabi had let go of the youth's cheeks, but continued to grip his thin arms. "Who was your mother?"

"Ummm...she was an elf."

Raphael rubbed the bridge of his nose with his fingers, like his head hurt, and let out sigh. "We already figured that part out. What was her name?"

"I don't remember her, she died when I was real young. My dad said her name was Fiaona."

Heather came up laced her fingers through Derel's. That gave him the courage to speak up, "Heather and I've talked it over and we want to take Jordy in. He may be an elf, but he's just as much an angel and he deserves to live among his own kind."

Raphael shook his head. "No, I cannot allow that."

Derel took a steadying breath before he declared, "Then you leave me no choice, Master. If you turn Jordy out into the human world, then my mate and I will go with him. I won't stand by and watch him be abandoned again."

Gabi started to say something, but Raphael silenced her with a motion of his hand. He fixed Derel with a hard glare. "You would give up your family and your life as an angel warrior for a youth you hardly know?"

"It would kill me to do so, Master, but yes I

would."

There was a heavy silence as Raphael continued to stare Derel down. Derel gripped Heather's hand tighter, but he met his leader's eyes and refused to back down. Finally, Raphael's lips curled into a smile.

"That won't be necessary, dumbass."

Derel wasn't sure what shocked him more. The fact Raphael had smiled at his defiance or the fact he had just used a slang word like *dumbass*. Raphael was as old school as they came. He was usually so cold and formal it was a joke amongst the healers their leader had misplaced his personality some time during the stone ages.

Gabi grinned, too. "Gideon is our uncle. We've thought that he was dead for centuries now. We had no clue he was alive and had a son."

Derel's jaw dropped. "So are you trying to tell me Jordy is your cousin?"

When Gabi nodded her head, Jordy blurted, "No way!"

Raphael gave a half chuckle. "So even though I know you Lehors love to take in strays, I'm going to have to deny you this one. Jordy belongs with us."

Gabi reached up and gently unhooked Jordy's slave collar. He lifted his hand to stop her before he seemed to catch himself. He cringed a little when she slipped it off and tossed to the side.

Derel didn't blame him for his reaction, the penalty for a slave taking off their collar was death.

"You're not a slave anymore so you don't have to wear that thing," Derel soothed.

"No one will ever hurt you here," Gabi added.

Jordy nodded his head, but his eyes still said he didn't believe her. Gabi seemed to accept this and asked, "Would you like to come and live with me? I have a mate and a son, and we would all love to have you. I promise if you don't like it, you can leave at any time and go stay with Derel and Heather."

Jordy looked at Derel for confirmation so the healer nodded his head. "Heather and I will take you in any time you want. But I think you're going to like it at Gabi's. She's really nice."

Jordy rubbed his cheeks in a way that screamed he wanted to argue that one, but nodded. "Okay, I guess it can't be any worse than where we just came from."

Gabi wrapped her arms around him. Jordy appeared confused, but he let himself be pulled into her chest. Raphael stuffed his hands in his pockets and appeared at a complete loss as to what to do. It was no big secret Raphael sucked at the whole family thing.

Derel realized he was still wearing his own slave collar and Heather was wearing hers, too. In

all the excitement following the battle, they'd completely forgotten about the retched things. He raised his hand to take it off, then stopped himself as a wicked thought came to him. "Can I go now?" he nearly barked at Raphael.

As soon as Raphael nodded, Derel bolted from the tent, all the while keeping a firm grasp of Heather's hand. Now that he had a goal of sorts, he was damned if he was going to waste time making small talk.

Heather foiled his plans when she pulled to a stop. "Where are we going?"

He turned and made sure she saw him looking her up and down. "You'll just have to be patient and see."

Her brown eyes darkened with desire, showing him that although she might not know where he was taking her, she knew what he would be doing to her once they got there. "Aren't you going to at least give me a hint?"

He pulled her close and whispered in her ear, "I'm going to take you someplace private so I can strip you naked, starting with that damn slave collar and ending with your sweet little panties. Then I'm going to take them off with my teeth and lick every inch of your pussy until you're begging."

She started to tremble against him as she asked, "Begging for what?"

In response, he grabbed her by her ass and hauled her to him. She was still wearing those sweat pants so he got a good feel, too. He drew her even closer to him so his erection was pressing against her. "This," his voice was harsh with need.

A couple of female teenagers noticed them and one of them quipped, "Get a room already."

Giving the females a glare, Derel started to lead Heather out of the tent again, although it wasn't to a room. All those were buried under several thousand tons of debris. He did have a destination in mind, every male healer's wet dream come true. The back of an ambulance.

Derel let out a triumphant laugh when he spotted one parked just a few feet from the entrance. He helped her up inside the back before he hopped up and closed the doors. He wanted nothing more than to jump on her like some mad dog, but he was going to take this nice and slow. It was the first time that they made love as free individuals, not slaves.

First, he took the collar off her, tossing it to the side. He immediately turned his attention to her neck, running his tongue along it. Dear God, her skin was so silky and sweet tasting. It made him want to sample more. "Get naked," he commanded.

"Not, yet. I want to play with you some before," she responded with a moan.

Her fingers slid under his collar as she unbuckled it. As she took it off and the cool air touched his skin for the first time in months, Derel shivered. Then she started to rain kisses on his neck, much like he had with her.

"You made me wait a long time for you." She ran her tongue up the length of his throat before lightly nipping his earlobe. "Years."

"I know I did." He swallowed hard. "I was an idiot and I'm sorry."

"There were so many nights I laid awake and thought about doing something to you."

"What was that, sweetie?"

She dropped to her knees and put her hands on the waistband of his jeans. "I've always wondered what you tasted like. How it would feel to take you in my mouth and have total control over you." Heather looked up at him under her dark lashes, her eyes smoky with desire. Slowly, she popped the button of his pants, unzipped them and pulled out his cock.

"Fuck." It wasn't the most eloquent response, but it was all his sex-addled mind could come up with at the moment.

"Oh, I'm sure we'll be doing that, too." She giggled before she leaned forward and took him in her mouth.

The sight of those full, pink lips stretching to take him in was the most erotic thing he'd ever

seen. Suddenly feeling very weak in the knees, Derel grabbed onto the metal bar, which ran along the length of the ambulance's ceiling, with both hands for support. Damn, but he'd been an idiot for not claiming this female a long time ago.

Heather took her time, like she was savoring him. Slowly she would use her teeth, tongue, lips and hands to bring him to the brink, only to pull back as he was about to come. Again and again she played that wicked game with him until it was all Derel could do not to throw her on the cot, rip her clothes off and bury himself balls deep into her until she screamed his name.

But he held back because, even though it was him on the receiving end of pleasure, this was her time. Heather wanted to know that she could please him and he was going to let her take the lead in the encounter even though it was killing him. A sweat broke out over his body as he clenched his teeth so tight together his jaw popped.

Pulling back, she ran her tongue along the tender underside of him before she took him deep in her mouth. Then as she cupped his balls, Heather sucked in so hard her cheeks hallowed out. A deep groan of pleasure rumbled inside of his chest and Derel knew all bets were off. Shuddering, he threw back his head and released inside her hot mouth. Heather used one hand to

hold him in place as she drank him in.

"That's it, baby," he crooned. "Take it all."

A loud banging on the door made them both jump. Heather started to get up, but Derel put a gentle hand on her shoulder and shook his head. "Occupied," he yelled, making no move to do up his pants.

"We need to talk," Ramiel's voice came from the other side.

"Not now. Busy."

"I'm sorry, buddy, but it can't wait."

"I'm thinking it can," Derel bit out between gritted teeth. Heather was starting to caress his cock and it was growing hard again.

"One of our undercovers spotted Brad. He's at a neutral bar."

That was the only statement which could pull him away. Before he'd gone missing, Brad had been Derel's closest friend. The two had been so close they'd almost been brothers. He gave Heather an apologetic look before he left her and jumped out of the back of the ambulance. Ramiel lifted a brow when he noticed Derel zipping up his pants, but didn't say anything. Derel ignored his brother's knowing stare and demanded, "What in the hell would Brad be doing at a neutral bar?"

"Well, you know how ever since we'd heard he'd been captured we've been looking for him?" The way Ramiel averted his gaze when he said

that made Derel nervous.

"Yeah, but that still doesn't explain how he would end up in a place frequented by demons and rogues."

"Well, after Heather told us it was succubi who had Brad, we decided to expand our search some." Still not looking him in the face, Ramiel lightly hit the side of the ambulance.

"What's that supposed to mean? If your insinuating Brad would turn demon, you're out of you mind." Derel balled his hands into fists and seriously considered using them against his brother.

"Derel, it's no big secret most of the males taken by succubi are drained dry with the very rare exception of a few. I knew that if we found him alive after all this time, it would be because he..." Ramiel trailed off and ran his hands over his military-short blond hair.

The reality of what Ramiel was hinting at hit Derel like a punch to the gut. "Why don't you just spit it out?"

"There's no easy way to say this." Ramiel finally looked him in the eye and the raw pain there left Derel without a doubt that his brother was telling the truth. "Ahh crap...Derel. They say Brad's turned demon."

Chapter Six

“This place is really gross!”

Cam tried hard not to roll his eyes at Derel’s assessment of the neutral bar. What did he expect from a demon establishment? Tuxedo wearing waiters and a live jazz band?

“This is precisely why I didn’t let you come to one of these joints with me before tonight.” Cam sidestepped around a couple of demons who where in a fistfight...er, make that claw fight, and grabbed Derel by the arm and pulled him out of harm’s way.

Derel didn’t seem to notice. He was too busy giving a disgusted look at the dirty bar top, much like a human doctor probably glared at a fast food place. “It’s a good thing angels can’t get botulism, I’d have been treating your ass for it on a daily basis.”

Derel had treated him a lot back in his bar hopping days, but it had been for inflictions of different kinds. Neither one of them brought that

up. Cam was glad those days were behind him and he knew his family was, too. He had to squelch the guilt that made his gut tighten for a bit. The fact they had stood by him during his dark years spoke of how great all of them were and he would never forget them for that.

Derel leaned in and asked in a low voice, "So where do they go to...you know?"

"No, I don't know." Cam did know, but he was going to have some fun at Derel's expense. He had to lighten up the mood some. Ever since Derel had heard Brad might have turned demon, he was strung tighter than his bow.

Which was why the joke totally flew over his head. "Where did you go when you wanted to have fun with a succubus?"

"Why, you want me to go fetch you one? I don't think Heather would like it too much, but okay-dokay."

Derel shook his head disgustedly. "Why do I even bother?"

"Don't worry, you'll only have to put up with me long enough for us to shoot down the Brad-is-a-demon rumor and then I can have you back in the Wah-mubulance with Heather before you know it."

Derel stopped dead in his tracks and turned a very unhealthy shade of green. "Something tells me things aren't going to go that smoothly."

He pointed off to a table in the corner of the bar and, when Cam got a good eyeful of the action taking place there, his own stomach did a 360. It was Brad, or at least it was what had once been Brad. He was surrounded by three succubi, one on his lap and one on either side of him. The dark-haired male was feeding off the one straddling him while the others rubbed his arms and chest. While Brad was not having sex out in the open, he wasn't being shy either. His hands were exploring the female's anatomy while the one sitting on him was grinding her hips into him in a slow sexual rhythm.

Brad slowly lifted his gaze look at Cam and Derel, showing them he had known that they had been there all along. He slowly licked away the blood on his bottom lip before his mouth curled into a lazy smile, revealing a flash of fang. However, his amber cat eyes remained emotionless, showing nothing.

Incubus. That single word snapped through Cam's skull like a gunshot. Since Cam himself was part incubus, he should have smelled Brad the instant they entered the bar, obviously Brad had picked up his scent. Cam shook his head to himself, he probably had missed it because, even though Brad had been taken by succubi, this was the last thing he had expected to happen to his healer friend, despite Ramiel's suspicions.

Cam had done extensive research on the subject of all things incubus ever since he discovered he was one in the family. One of the things he had learned was there weren't too many males being turned into incubus. It seems the already existing incubus didn't like to share too much. But obviously an exception had been made in Brad's case.

Cam made his way to the table, keeping one hand on his gun and as much as his body between Derel and Brad as he could, just in case Brad didn't want to play nice. Once they sat down, Brad dismissed the females with a jerk of his head. One of them stopped and whispered something in his ear.

Brad never looked away from the brothers while he answered the succubus, "I know you do. I'll be there in a few minutes."

She leaned down and whispered something else.

Brad shook his head. "No, something tells me these two won't be coming along."

The succubus looked up and gave a sexy pout before cooing, "I like them though, Brad. They look like fun."

"They reek of female angel. These boys here are mated."

When she gave him a *so* look, he sighed, "Male angels like these two don't cheat on their mates."

She looked horrified that such a creature

existed. She gave them all one last pout before she slinked off.

Brad watched her, licking his lips, before he returned his attention to Derel and Cam. "So, I guess you guys figured out you can stop looking for me," he finally said.

"What happened?" Derel's voice was a strange mix of anger, guilt and disbelief.

"Does it matter how it happened? It happened and there's no going back."

There was really no arguing that one. Going demon was a definite one-way trip. It's just Cam had never thought in a million years it would have been this angel who had taken it. Brad had been as loyal as they came. He spotted Brad's demoness sister, sitting several tables over. Even though she appeared completely into the rogue rubbing his hands over her body, she kept darting nervous glances their way.

Brad noticed what Cam was looking at and shook his head. "Don't blame her, she isn't the one who made me what I am."

"No, she's just the one who led to your being captured in the first place," Derel shot back.

"She was...misguided at the time. She's seen the error in her ways. In her own way, she's as devoted to me as much as Ana is devoted to you brothers. Speaking of your brothers, don't think I haven't spotted them, too."

It was true, all of the Lehor brothers were at the bar. Each tucked away in their own hidey-hole, out of sight, but close enough to lend a hand or sword if it was needed. Even Bear was there and he usually skipped fieldtrips to neutral bars because they ran havoc on his empath feelers. But they all considered Brad a friend, or at least they all used to.

"I really don't think that you can compare our sisters. Somehow I don't see Ana taking us boys out for a night of whoring," Cam retorted blandly.

And speaking of whores. Lilith the succubus came up and slid into the booth next to Brad. As always, the female sex demon was dressed in tight red leather. Today it was a barely there skirt and halter top so her long black wings could be free. Her long blonde hair was unbound and tumbled over her creamy shoulders. Adding to her exotic look were her dark green, cat-like eyes and fangs.

Cam didn't even bother to stop his lip from curling up in disgust. Maybe he shouldn't be so hard on the succubus, it's not like she'd done much to him in the past. Just help turn him into a half demon, stalk him for years after, try to kill Bear, attack Tif and her crew, and don't forget her nasty little habit of trying to get him captured and taken back to Hell. That last one was the real kicker.

Although she had taken the edge off her sins by

fucking the ever living daylight out of him in between all of them. Cam hadn't enjoyed her in over a year and now that he looked at her with a fresh eye, she did nothing for him. She couldn't even begin to compete with Amadeaha, none of the females in here did.

"Long time no see, Empath King." She wrapped her arms around Brad and started licking his neck.

When she made to bite him, Brad put a hand to her chest and shoved her away. "Stop it, Lilith. You're just trying to piss Cam off while shocking his healer brother at the same time."

Lilith shot him a filthy look, but she instantly backed down. It looked like, while Brad may have the lowest seniority in the sex-demon world, he still was high on the totem pole. Things were getting more interesting by the second. Cam wondered if Brad had gotten his position because he was a male or if he had to fight for it with his new fangs and strength.

Lilith shocked Cam when she gave him a genuine grin. "How are things going for my little puppy and his female angel?"

Cam released a low growl. "What's it to you?"

She held her palms up. "I didn't mean to offend you. I'm trying to make peace."

"Excuse me if I doubt you. It wasn't too long ago that you sicced a pack of Hounds on me."

"I didn't do that, it was Daddy. I'm not all bad,

I did help Cadean and Emmanuel rescue that little angst demon at Christmas. I can be a good girl if I try really hard. Besides, there's someone else who interests me now." She shot Brad a coy look under her long lashes.

Derel pointed a finger at the demon duo. "So are you two an item now or something?"

Brad shrugged indifferently. "She's my frequent."

"What the hell is a frequent?"

It was Cam who answered. "It means that while they live together and share the same bed each night, they're free to screw whoever they want. They just frequently do it with each other."

Derel got a slight flush on his cheeks. "Oh."

"That doesn't mean I wouldn't mind another round with Dina and Megan." Lilith gave a sly smile that showed off her fangs. "How are my favorite empath and healer doing?"

"You had sex with them?" Derel asked once he'd picked up his jaw.

"Sure did, at the same time." Lilith seemed to delight in shocking Derel. "That Dina may look small, but he's an animal in the sack."

"No way."

"Way."

"I'm never going to be able to look at him the same way again," Derel muttered.

"But," Lilith was quick to clarify, "Brad is my

favorite and always my first choice."

"It's good to know you have standards there, Lilith." Derel had recovered from his embarrassment and was now fixing Lilith with a cool stare.

The casual observer would have thought nothing of it, but Cam knew Derel as well as he knew himself. Derel was pissed and he was ready to tear heads off. Starting with a certain blonde succubus.

Brad must have recognized it, too, because he quickly remarked, "Easy Derel, Lilith had nothing to do with me becoming demon either."

Derel ground his teeth together so tightly Cam could hear it over the din of the bar. "Then who did it? I know you, Brad. There's no way you would have willingly become...this."

Cam gave Derel a kick under the table, a little warning that he needed to calm his ass down. "It was Daddy, wasn't it?" Cam never took his eyes off Lilith, although the question was directed at Brad. "He's been looking for a *son* for years and he finally got what his little black heart desired."

"And it wasn't even Christmas," Brad drawled.

Lilith started to shift in her seat uncomfortably and that confused the shit out of Cam. He'd known Lilith for years and he'd never seen her act skittish.

Derel's face screwed up in disgust. "So you're

this demon's, pet?"

Brad leaned forward and there was no mistaking the predatory look in his amber demon eyes. "Sometimes pets turn on their masters."

Cam felt Derel tense next to him even as his own hand was reaching for the butt of his Glock. He didn't pull it yet, but he did make eye contact with Ramiel sitting a few tables over. Just so his older brother would know the situation was bordering on sticky.

It all made sense now. The way Brad was out in the bar and not hiding who he was anymore. The way the female demons were throwing themselves at him. Shit, even the way Lilith was shooting terrified, but admiring looks the incubus's way spoke volumes.

"You destroyed Daddy, didn't, you?" Cam spoke in slow even tones, even though his heart was beating wildly in his chest. Daddy was one dangerous demon. If Brad had been able to take him out, then their old healer friend had really moved up in the badass world.

Brad grinned wolfishly, not even bothering to hide his fangs. "Don't worry, Cammie, nobody is crying over his sad carcass. I did the whole world a favor by ridding it of him."

Derel paled and gawked at his old buddy before stammering out, "But—"

Brad slammed his hand down on the table. "But

nothing. He held a gun to my sister's head and threatened her life. I couldn't let something like that go unanswered."

Lilith crossed her arms over her chest and added, "That was one of the reasons why Brad renounced his vows, because Daddy held a gun to Ramiakle."

Derel looked even more crestfallen, if that were possible, and Cam understood why. To become a demon by your own choice was one thing, but to do it because you were forced. Well...shit that just sucked. It sucked big time.

Brad shook his head. "I wasn't entirely forced. There were other extenuating circumstances."

"What could make you possibly want to be this?" Derel stammered.

"That's something you really don't need to bother yourself with." The hard edges on Brad's face softened a bit. "Don't look so down, guys. It could have been worse. I have a nice place to live. Okay, so it does look like a skin flick set, but I'm getting used to it. I even have a whole group of females who live to make me happy. It's every male's dream come true."

Even though Cam let out a small chuckle, Brad's words didn't fool him for an instant. There was no mistaking the sadness in his eyes. A succubus came up and set down a glass of blood next to Cam before she flashed Brad a smile. Cam

reached out for the glass. He had no plans to drink it, he just needed to do something with his hands. Lilith reached out and grabbed him by the wrist.

"Don't drink that," she commanded harshly.

"What is it?" Brad asked her, before he leaned down and smelled the blood.

Quick as a shot, he whipped his head up and growled at the succubus who had delivered the glass. She stood rooted in place, her mouth opening and closing in terror, before she spun on her heeled boots. Brad reached out and grabbed her by the throat before slamming her to the wall.

Derel grabbed the glass and sniffed it himself, he lowered it and fixed the succubus with his own murderous glare. "It's Power's blood," he informed Cam.

Powers were neither demons nor angels, although the council controlled them. Or at least they fancied they controlled them. Powers lived only to destroy. They had no redeeming quality about them. They were cold-hearted killing machines that not even a mother could love. Their blood was also a deadly poison to Cam.

"She's not from our clan." Lilith had taken out a dagger and was she was standing, protecting Brad's back. "One of Brad's girls never would have done something this stupid."

Derel opened his mouth to fire off what Cam was sure was another smartass remark, but a

demon tackled him down to the ground before he could get a word out. One minute he was there and the next he was gone. Cam moved forward to help, but another blur shot through the air and this one landed square on his chest, knocking him flat on his back.

It was the female succubus who had tried to poison him. Cam wondered fleetingly how she could have attacked him while Brad had her pinned to the wall, but when he caught a glimpse of Brad rolling on the ground with a demon assassin several feet away, he had his answer.

The succubus bit Cam on the shoulder before he felt her being jerked off him. He found himself looking up into the face of Ramiel. His brother hauled him up to his feet and Cam could see all the Lehor brothers had joined in the fight. Brad and his girls were fighting as well and it looked like they were on the good guys' side, too. Which went to show that not all demons were bad.

Bear was standing on one of the tables, the better to kick in the face of the demon he was fighting, while the Lehor twins were standing back to back, slicing with their swords. Nathaniel was tearing apart anything else coming their way and Mael had chosen to take on two demons because it was twice as much fun than just fighting one.

It had been so long since all the brothers had

got into one of their famous brawls Cam had forgot how much fun it was. He started to smile, but it faded as soon as he thought about what Ana was going to do when she found out. She hated it when her brothers fought, and when she heard they had been in a full blown bar fight, there was going to be hell to pay.

* * * *

They all ended up paying hell and then some. Ana was waiting for them at the gates of the new compound, her arms crossed over her chest and her head tilted in that certain way, which let them all know they were in a whole heap of trouble. They all got out of their respected vehicles and assumed the position. Straight line, heads down, asses ready to be chewed out.

Ramiel and Cam were standing together so she marched over to them first and demanded in tight tones, "What in the hell were you thinking?"

"They tried to assassinate Cam." Ramiel raised his blue eyes to meet hers.

"So you decided to destroy a bar and rip apart anything that came into your paths? We're supposed to be keeping a low profile, not calling attention to ourselves by starting our own version of Angel Fight Club."

Cam growled low in his throat and quickly

ducked his head down when Ana's sharp gaze snapped into his direction. He knew his little outburst had sounded more demon than angel. That was because ever since their fight, he had been feeling more *dark side*. One of the demons had caught him in the side with his sword so he'd lost a lot of blood and since Derel had been cut, too, there had been no healing done to anyone on the ride home.

Whenever Cam got hurt, his body craved blood. Not only to replace what he had lost, but to heal. So he was about ready to tear into the first thing that came into view. He'd purposely not ridden home in the same car as Bear or Derel because they both would have known instantly Cam was on the edge. But by the way both of them were looking at him now, he could tell that they had figured it out. What was worse, Ana knew, too, one gander at her concerned face told him that.

To add a capital S to this suckfest of a night, when the succubus had bit him, some of her Bliss had gotten into him. So not only was he cranky, but he was as horny as hell. Not a good combination for his fucked up DNA. He felt Ana reach out for him mentally the same time she reached her hand out to brush his shoulder. He shoved away both touches. "Don't," he barked harshly.

Ana reacted in typical Lehor fashion, she shoved him back. Her blue eyes blazed with anger and her lip curled in a snarl of her own. She was willowy and tall by female standards, but she still only came to his chest. That didn't intimidate her in the least. "You need to get inside the compound and get yourself together," she snapped.

"No," he shot back

She balled her hands into fists. "I'm not in the mood for your games tonight, Cam. In case you haven't noticed, I've had a bad couple of days."

Cam looked down at his combat boots. Of course she had. The super demon nearly kidnapped her baby and Nathaniel had almost died. The last thing she probably needed was him acting like a major dick. He struggled to get his demon half under control and managed, just barely. "I can't go in there, Ana Bana," he said to his feet. "I can't let her see me like this." He heard her small intake of air and he bit back a groan. Damn it, she felt sorry for him. It would have been better if she had been revolted by him or afraid of him. Anything but frigging pity.

The new compound was surrounded by trees and they seemed like a good place for him to get lost for a while. He turned toward them, tossing out behind him, "Screw you guys, I'm going for a walk."

Ana's voice drifted to him, "She's your mate

and she'll understand. You need her now more than ever. I know Amadeaha, she'd want you to come to her."

Cam spun back around and pointed a commanding finger at her. "Go back inside and leave me alone. Don't you dare breathe a word to her about this either. That's an order." He started back to the cover of the forest, confident Ana would do as he commanded. She may be his big sister, but he was still the leader of the empathes and that made him her boss. She had to do what he said, she had no choice in the matter.

* * * *

"I need to talk to you in private." Ana's pale concerned face instantly told Amadeaha that the situation was urgent and it concerned Cam.

Amadeaha left the table she'd been sharing with Rachael and Cliona and followed Ana into a corner. The new compound had been built by elves who had long since abandoned it. Michael had been keeping it as a backup in case they had need of it, which now they unfortunately did. Since it was constructed by elves and their way of living differed from the angels, there were many differences. One was it didn't have small individual quarters like the previous one, instead it housed several larger ones. They were almost

like individuals homes, complete with several bedrooms. The living quarters were all connected by hallways. In the center of the compound was a large gym and dining hall. The Lehors were all sharing a home, along with Abdiel's family and the Tif crew.

"He needs you," Ana said once they were alone.

Amadeaha felt the color drain from her own face at the same time her stomach dropped. "What happened?"

Ana's lips twisted into a wry smile. "The stupid idiots got into a brawl. Bear says Cam got stabbed. He doesn't look so good and he's acting edgy."

Amadeaha quickly scanned the room, but didn't see him anywhere. "Where is he?"

"He took off as soon as they got here. He didn't want to come into the compound."

Amadeaha's anxiety dissipated into a simmering incredulous anger. "You let him walk away from you even though you knew he was hurt?"

Ana had the good graces to look guilty. "He didn't give us much choice in the matter."

"Or maybe you just don't want to let him give you choice."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" an angry voice growled from behind her.

Amadeaha spun around and found herself

facing Mael. His shoulder length blond hair was pulled back by a leather tie and his blue eyes were hard with fury. He had the reputation as being the meanest of the Lehor brothers and the expression he was wearing was meeting expectations. Dark, hard and unforgiving, it would have made most demons shake in their boots. Unfortunately for him, she wasn't in the mood or impressed. "Would you let Bear go off all alone and wounded?" she challenged.

His jaw set in a hard line. "That's different."

"How? Last time I checked, they were both still your *younger* brothers."

"Cam is..." He stopped and ran his hands over his face.

The empath in her felt the anger give way to frustration. "He's what? Half demon, a monster?" She spun around, walked back to the main room, grabbed a sweatshirt off the back of a chair and pulled it on with short jerky motions. "I'm not leaving him out there."

"You can't go out there. He's not safe to be around when he's like this."

She stopped at his words and stared him down. Surprise of surprise, big, bad, Mael couldn't meet her eyes. She grabbed a fistful of his shirt and gave him a good jerk. "I'm going to forget you said that," she warned him. "But if I ever hear you talk about my mate that way again, demons are going

to be the least of your problems." She went over to Bear. The small empath was watching the whole scene with a half smile playing on his lips, until she gave her next order, "Tiffany said you can find Cam anywhere. I need you to take me to him now."

Bear shot a look over at Ana before mumbling, "Cam wouldn't want me to do that."

"Personally," Derel drawled. "I think that you need to be more afraid of Amadeaha than Cam. You better do what she wants, Care Bear."

Bear seemed to have an internal debate before he nodded his head. "Okay, follow me."

Chapter Seven

Cam stood with his back against a tree and looked up into the night sky. He'd gone a ways from the compound, but not so far that he still couldn't hear the muted conversations of the angels moving into their new home. The new angel warrior headquarters was only a few miles from their old one and still in the heart of the wilderness of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. While Michael would have liked to have gone further away for strategic purposes, it just wasn't feasible with all the wounded.

Cam was grateful that this new compound wasn't dug into the earth like the old one. It was set in the middle of the deep woods. Surrounded by miles of trees and forest, it was far away from human civilization. Despite its seclusion, it still had shields on it that made it invisible to the human eyes just in case some curious hiker got too close.

"You forgot to come and tell me that you were

back.”

At Amadeaha’s voice, Cam attempted a chuckle only to have it end in a groan. She was the last one he wanted to see right now, yet there she was. A pure beauty, wearing a pink sweatshirt and standing a few feet from him. Bear, that little traitor, must have brought her, because he was next to her looking as guilty as hell.

She confirmed this when she laid a gentle hand on the empath’s arm. “Thank you. You can go back to Tiffany now.”

“Yes, Bear, go back to Tiffany,” Cam said nastily as he closed his eyes and tried to act like none of this was bothering him. “Make sure you take Amadeaha with you.”

Bear’s voice shot back, “No, I don’t think so.”

Cam opened his eyes, surprised. It wasn’t the first time Bear had disobeyed him and it sure as hell probably wasn’t the last time. It was the tone in his brother’s voice, like the young empath had reached a breaking point. That he’d had enough and he wasn’t going to take anymore crap.

Bear gave her a crooked smile. “You were right about everything back there. Don’t let Miss Manners here push you away.”

As soon as the little shit left, Amadeaha started advancing. Cam wanted to push her away, but he just stood rooted in his spot, dumbly watching her approach. A tendril of her rich, red hair was

brushing against her cheek and as soon as she was close enough, he couldn't resist reaching over and caressing it away. "What are you doing here?" his voice sounded harsh, hard and he hated she had to hear it that way.

She grabbed his hand and ran her tongue along the palm, making his already alert body jerk to attention even more. "I'm here to take care of my mate."

He could hear the blood rushing through her veins and smell the desire pouring from her. He wanted so badly to throw her down on the ground and take her that he was trembling. The demon half of him was screaming for him to take what was his, to screw, to feed. He looked down at her slender neck and clenched his teeth together, lest he lose control and sink his fangs into the fluttering pulse he could see taunting him. "You need to get away from me," he warned. "I'm not my...what the fuck?"

His not so delicate declaration was due to the fact she'd started to give him soft, scorching kisses along his neck and jaw. He moaned loudly when her hand began caressing him through his pants. She stopped long enough to put a finger to her lips. "Shhh...you might want to keep it down or else we'll be overheard."

Cam shot a worried glance over at the compound, suddenly aware of how close they

were to others. Really he should stop this, he really, really should. "What if someone catches us?" All vixen, she looked at him from under her eyelashes, in that coy way of hers and continued to play with him. He let out a sharp breath when she gave him a not-too-gentle squeeze. Damn it, but that made him even more horny. She seemed to notice this and gave him a wicked smile. Okay, maybe he really didn't need to stop this quite yet.

"Personally," she mused as she ran her fingers up and down him, "I think sneaking around like this is fun. I think it's a thrill that someone can walk up on us at any minute."

"I think that you're becoming a bad influence on me." The word *bad* was long and drawn out because she had started to nip at his neck.

She tugged his shirt off and ran her hands over his bare chest.

He cringed when he noticed she was looking at the bite mark the succubus had left behind. "I got it during the fight." Dear God, let her believe him. He never wanted her to think any female could ever take her place. "I swear, I didn't touch her sexually. I haven't been with anyone since I've claimed you. I would never betray you that way."

She touched the wound, a light caress. "I know that. I trust you."

The problem was, he didn't trust himself at the moment. The Bliss was still pumping through him

and her presence wasn't helping his overactive libido at all. He was on the edge, more incubus than angel and he didn't want to take her while he was like that. "You need to go back inside," he rasped. "If I have sex with you now, I might hurt you by accident."

"I might like it."

Cam's cock jumped at that admission. "One of these days, I'm going to get sick of your disobedience and spank that fine ass of yours."

"I might like that, too."

She licked her way up his chest, swirling her tongue around his nipple. Even though he knew it was a mistake, he let her continue. Amadeaha's fingers and tongue seemed to be everywhere and he couldn't make himself push those sensations away.

She gasped when she saw the white bandage on his side.

"It's not that bad," he croaked. It wasn't either, after Nathaniel had slapped the dressing on it in the car, it'd stopped bleeding. For him, it was just a scratch. It was still nice to have her worrying about him.

"Here." She tilted her head to the side, offering herself up to him. "Let my blood heal you."

When she pressed herself against him, it was his undoing. The sensation of her fully clothed body rubbing against his naked chest, was one of

the most wonderful things he'd ever felt. Unable to hold back anymore, he bit into her with a speed and savageness that instantly shamed him. He started to pull back, but she clamped her hand on the back of his head. When she let out a long, slow moan he realized two things, she was enjoying this as much as he was and she was going to attract attention if she didn't stop being so loud. Then he swallowed his first mouthful of sweet tasting blood and didn't give a damn who heard. In fact, he let out a moan of his own.

Once he had drunk enough, he pulled his mouth away and whispered next to her skin, "Run."

She pulled back, shocked at his words. Then her eyes darkened with desire. That showed she understood. She knew he needed to chase her, needed to stalk her, needed to toy with her. Cam smiled at her and he knew it looked predatory, but the waves of desire coming off her only increased. Amadeaha let out an excited squeal and took off, her deep red hair streaking out behind her.

Cam gave her a few seconds head start before he went after her. Still more incubus than angel, he thrilled in the hunt. He chased her through the trees, almost catching her a few times, going so far as to pin her down under his hard body. Each time he deliberately let her go, wanting to prolong the hunt, he let her wiggle out from under him and

start running again. Finally he cornered her in the middle of a circle of trees. She whipped her head around, her hair swirling around her face, making for an exotic mix of color amongst the green and brown of the forest. Her eyes were wide with excitement and her mouth was open just a bit. Full breasts pressed against her pink top as she took in heaving breaths and Cam licked his lips in anticipation of tasting them. "Looks like I cornered me an angel," he crooned as he worked the buckle of his belt.

"Looks like you have." She wet her mouth.

Cam was mesmerized by the sight of her pink tongue. Ah, the wicked things she'd done to his cock with that thing. Just thinking about that had him rubbing his hand against his erection just so he could relieve some of the ache. "Now I have to decide," he took a step forward and popped open the button of his fly, "do I play with my prey or do I just step in and start devouring it?"

"Oh God." She stepped back and pressed her back against the trunk of a large tree.

Although she was trembling from head to toe, he knew it wasn't from fear, but rather desire. The incubus in him could sense her heart pounding, the way her breath quickened and the cream pooling between her thighs. "What should I do, Amadeaha?" He cocked his head to the side. "Play or devour?"

"Can't I have both?"

"Greedy little thing, aren't you?" He chuckled.

She looked up at him and the pure, raw sexual promise in her eyes almost drove him to his knees. "Only with you, Cam. You are my mate, my heart and I can never have enough of you. I love the angel in you, the demon half and everything in between. I have always loved you and I always will until the end of my days. Now come over here and fuck me before I have to take matters into my own hands."

Stunned by her uncharacteristic use of vulgarity, he took a step back before he recovered and gave her a growl of appreciation. In response, she gave him a siren's smile as she crooked her finger at him, beckoning him to come claim her. Moving with superangel speed, he tackled her to the ground, putting his hands out at the last minute so that he cushioned her fall. They ripped off her clothes and his pants, neither of them being too gentle about it. Once he had her naked, he reached down to caress her, only to find that she was more than ready for him. Good, because he was ready for her, too.

He stood them both up and grabbed her ass with both hands. Amadeaha, bless her heart, knew exactly what he had in mind. She wrapped her legs around his waist and slipped her arms around his neck. Cam pinned her against the

smooth trunk of a tree and entered her at the same time.

Normally, he would try and make this moment all nice and tender, but he knew that she didn't want that. It wasn't the empath part of him that told him that either. It was her, she bit him in the shoulder. His sweet little mate, who didn't have fangs even on her worst day, bit him. "You're a vicious little thing tonight," he panted out between thrusts.

"Sorry." Her body tightened around him as she had her first orgasm. "I won't do it again, just don't stop making love to me."

"Don't be sorry, and there is no way in hell I would ever stop this. I like it when you bite me."

So she did it again. Her tiny, blunt teeth never broke the skin, but she did do it hard enough to leave behind a mark. She started scratching his back at the same time, breaking the skin, but Cam didn't give a damn. In fact, the pain only heightened his pleasure. When her tight channel clenched around him as she came for a second time, he couldn't hold back any longer. As he released himself inside of her, the urge to yell was so strong he had to bite his lip to stop it. She just buried her face in his chest to stifle hers.

Once they were done, he let her legs slid down, but still held her in his arms. He trailed his fingers down her side, smiling to himself when she

shivered in response. He made a mental note to thank Bear in the morning for disobeying a direct order and bringing Amadeaha to him.

"I will always come for you, Cam," she promised. "Never again will you walk a lonely path. I will always be by your side."

* * * *

The early morning light had barely begun to seep into the trees. Amadeaha was sleeping on Cam's chest, making for the best blanket in all of his immortal life. She'd finally drifted off after several hours of making love to him, neither one of them being inclined to stop until they had tried out everything they'd always fantasized about. He idly stoked her spine as he thought back to the night before. Who knew that all it took to control the monster in him was a determined, red-haired female? He'd never felt this good in his entire life, even before his transformation, and it was thanks to her. Goose bumps broke out over her fair skin so he called forth a low flame in the palms of his hands and ran them over her body to warm her up. A little moan of appreciation came from her as she snuggled deeper into him. "We better get back," he murmured in her ear as he gently shook her awake.

She opened her eyes and gave him a sleepy smile. "Only if you promise to take me right to our bed."

He deliberately misunderstood her, loving being able to tease with her. "Well, if you want to take a nap, I wouldn't blame you. You didn't get much sleep last night."

She rolled her beautiful eyes at him before she slowly got off him. Horrified, he noticed she winced when she moved. He also noticed the numerous scrapes and grass stains on her body. Damn, he had been way too rough with her last night. "I'm sorry, Crazy Pie." He fingered a particularly nasty scratch on her right arm.

"Don't be," she replied fiercely. "That was one of the best nights of my life and I won't have you ruin it by feeling guilty about it today."

Warmed by her protectiveness, he felt his lips curl into a smile. His mate was the best female ever made. They slowly got each other dressed, letting their fingers caress each other from time to time, before they started walking back to the compound. After a bit of searching, they even were able to find his shirt.

As soon as they stepped inside, the smell hit Cam like a ton of bricks. Angel's blood. Stopping dead in his tracks, he tilted his head to the side and sniffed the air, testing the scent of it so he could put a mark on who might be hurt. After a

few sniffs, he was able to lock onto it and get some answers. There was someone bleeding nearby and it was family. He could tell both of these things thanks to the incubus part of him. Then the empath part of him took over and he could feel the despair and fear the injured angel was experiencing. Cam swallowed the bitter ball of vomit forming in the back of his mouth and followed the source.

"Cam?" Amadeaha asked before she stopped up short at the sight of some blood smeared on the clinical white wall. "Oh my God, who is it?"

"I don't know who," he admitted. "I just know it's someone from my family."

Cam followed both his nose and the blood trail down the corridor. In one place the blood was streaked all the way to down where the angel had collapsed before they were able to get back up. He touched one of the handprints. It was small, too small to be from any of his brothers. It wasn't from Ana either, by the scent of the blood, he knew that it was male.

"Dominic," Cam exclaimed.

How he had gotten hurt was the damn mystery. But they were going to have to wait to call in Scooby and his gang to solve this one because by the amount of blood Cam had already seen, Dominic didn't have much time.

They rounded the corner and finally found him.

The teen was on the ground, curled up into a tight ball, not moving. Cam was astonished at the amount of blood pooled on the white tile around the young angel. He kneeled down and gently rolled Dominic over. Someone had stabbed him, several times in the stomach and back.

Dominic opened his brown eyes and said in a perfectly calm voice, "I think that I might need some help this time."

Cam scooped him up in his arms. "That's okay, kid. I'm here now and everything is going to be okay."

In a blind panic, he ran back to his family's living quarters and burst through the doors, yelling, "I need Derel here now!"

But Derel was already there, along with Gabi and Appolion. They quickly cleared off the kitchen table and Cam set Dominic on it. Gabi's young cousin, Jordy was there as well. He paled at the sight of so much blood, but stayed to help situate Dominic.

Michael came tearing into the room, his eyes wild with worry. "What happened?"

Amadeaha turned on him. "You know what happened. His witch of a mother did this to him. You should have never left him alone with her."

A guilty, stricken look passed over the Chief's face. "I only left them for a couple of hours. Dominic was in bed already so I thought she

would leave him alone."

"It's...not...her...fault," Dominic rasped. "She...didn't...mean...it."

"You can make him better, right?" Jordy asked from the corner of the room. "I mean, angels are immortal like elves."

"It's not that simple," Cam said grimly. "Just the adults are immortal. Our youth are very vulnerable. That's why we keep them protected for so many years."

"But you guys were able to heal me up real easy."

"That's because your elf side took over when you were injured and protected you."

"So he could die?"

"No, we won't allow that," Gabi declared firmly.

Derel had already put the young angel into a healing sleep. The healer started singing the healing chants and Jordy went on the other side of the table and joined in. Michael turned away from the scene, his face marked with fury as he started for the door.

"Where are you going?" Amadeaha asked.

"I'm going to have a little chat with my sister."

Amadeaha gave a hard glare. "Make sure this never happens again."

Cam was only mildly surprised Amadeaha was talking to the Chief this way. He'd seen the look

on her face when they found Dominic. She'd bonded with the youth while they had been trapped and she obviously felt very overprotective of him.

After Michael left, Cam lost all track of time. The hours dragged into each other as he watched the healers struggle to save Dominic. Finally, after what seemed like forever, Derel opened his eyes and gave Cam a weak smile.

"We can move him to a bed now," Derel whispered. "He's going to be fine."

"It was close," Gabi added. "Too damn close."

"Well it's not going to happen again," Cam growled. "Because he stays with us from now on. I want somebody guarding his back at all times. If anybody ever hurts him again then they'll answer to me."

* * * *

Dominic slowly opened his eyes. When he didn't recognize where he was, he sat up with a start. The movement made his half healed wounds scream in protest and he let out a moan before he could stop himself.

"Careful, they still haven't finished patching you up yet," a voice said to his side.

Dominic turned and saw a male around his age sitting in a chair. The other angel had dark hair

and bright green eyes that were shaped a little weird. The most freaky thing about him where a pair of pointed ears were barely visible under his hair.

"I'm Jordy," the strange angel offered. "I'm supposed to be watching over you."

So that would explain his weird eyes and ears. Dominic remembered how his mother had gone on an all day when the young angel slash elf had come into the new compound.

"I can't believe that Michael would let an abomination like that amongst us angels," she'd spat out at least a hundred times.

"Nice to meet you, I'm Dominic," he responded automatically. Other than the two of them, the room was empty. Not that Dominic had expected his cousins to keep a vigil over him. They'd only met each other a couple of times before.

Jordy must have caught him looking around because he said hastily, "Your family just left. They said they would be right back and not to let you leave."

Dominic gave an indifferent shrug and regretted it because it caused pain to shoot down his arm. "They're really not close to me."

Jordy lifted one of his brows, the movement making him look even more elfish. "You could have fooled me. They've all been hovering over you like nobody's business."

"You don't have to lie to make me feel better."

"I'm serious, the females were even crying."

Dominic realized his mouth was open in shock and he snapped it shut. "What females?"

"Let me think, I've just met them myself." He started counting off on his fingers. "There was Ray, my cousin, Gabi, Amadeaha and some bossy blonde."

"That would be my cousin, Ana," Dominic supplied dumbly. He'd known she was overprotective of her brothers, but he'd never even imagined she would care enough to cry over him. "Where is everyone?"

"They all went looking for your mom. I guess she took off."

Dominic was ashamed when he felt a small bit of relief mixed in with his worry. It was his mother after all and it wasn't her fault she was a little touched in the head. When she had attacked him, she hadn't even realized that it was him. She'd thought he was someone else.

"Dominic, I didn't know that you had woke up," Cam said as he came into the room, followed by Derel.

Dominic held back a large cartoonish gulp at the sight of the Empath King. Out of all the brothers, he intimidated and impressed Dominic the most. Dominic hated that it had been him who had found him lying on the ground like some

weak girl. He almost would have bleed to death to avoid that humiliating scene.

Jordy looked a little green himself. "Sorry, I was just coming to get you."

"Relax, Jordy," Cam drawled. "You're almost as uptight as Raphael. I know you look like him, but please don't act like him."

"Stop it, Cam," Derel admonished. "You have Jordy so scared he's about ready to piss his pants."

"That's okay, I've always wondered what color elf pee was."

Jordy gave a half laugh and his shoulders relaxed some. "I keep checking all the closets, looking to see where you guys stashed your halos and wings."

Cam shared a chuckle with Derel before he ruffled the young healer's hair and quipped, "I think you're going to fit in just fine. You can go now. Gabi made you a lunch big enough to feed an entire angel battalion."

Jordy hopped to his feet, with an agility no other angel had. "Should I bring something back for Dominic?"

"Not yet." Derel got close to the injured angel and started probing his half healed wounds. "His body still wouldn't be able to handle it."

After Jordy had left, Dominic started feeling awkward all over again. He could only imagine what a dork his cousins thought he was. They

were all these brave angel warriors everyone always talked about and he was some scrawny wimp who couldn't even be healed without extra help.

He started to squirm even more when he noticed the sharp way Cam was staring at him with those cool cat eyes of his. His cousin's mouth was shut so Dominic couldn't see his fangs, but he bet they were wicked neat, too.

Cam finally broke the silence, "How are you feeling?"

Dominic gave a shrug, which hurt his arm again. "I'm sorry that I bothered all of you guys with this. I know you probably have enough problems of your own."

"Don't be sorry. If there is anyone who should be apologizing, it's all of us."

Dominic whipped his head up in surprise. "What did you guys do?"

"We should have protected you from the beginning. We knew Amiteil was harsh, we just never imagined it would come to this. I thought she was always overprotective of you though. I never imagined she was hurting you. If I had, I would have come and taken you in a long time ago."

Being the Mr. Smooth that he was, Dominic instantly came to his mother's defense, by blurting out all their darkest secrets, "It' not her fault. You

see, she sometimes hears voices in her head and they make her do things she normally wouldn't do." The look Derel and Cam exchanged made Dominic feel even more self-conscious.

When Cam spoke it was with a slightly wary tone. "What do you mean, by hearing voices her head?"

Great, could this day get any worse? "She sometimes talks to people that aren't there. I've noticed it's gotten more intense since we left Heaven and started living with the humans."

"How about you, Dominic? Are you hearing the voices?"

Dominic hedged, not wanting to admit he was on the verge of losing his mind, too. But something told him that if he lied, Cam would know. He finally confessed in a low voice, "Not as loud as Mom. It's mostly whispers in the back of my mind. Sometimes I can't even make out what they're really saying."

"Holy crap," Cam muttered under his breath.

Ashamed, Dominic looked down at his lap, devastated that he had just admitted this gem to the one angel in the world he wanted to impress the most. "Does this mean that I'm going to be like her?"

Cam sat down on the bed, his massive frame making the mattress sink. "You're not going crazy, kiddo. You're just a telepath like us."

"He's right," Derel added. "We all have Uncle Mike to thank for that."

Dominic felt a dumb numbness go over his body. *Me, telepathic? That just isn't possible. But then again that would explain the voices I hear all the time. Does this mean Mom has been one all along and, if so, why did it drive her crazy?* "But how is it you guys were able to handle it and my mom couldn't?" he asked out loud.

"I honestly don't know. It might be she was on the edge even before and coming here to Earth and having to deal with the human's emotions and thoughts were just too much for her to handle."

Dominic jumped a mile when Cam put his large hand on his shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze.

"I hate to do this, but we need to know exactly what happened last night."

Dominic, once again, directed his attention to his lap. The last thing he wanted the two warriors to see was the tears in his eyes. "She didn't mean to hurt me. She wasn't herself. She didn't even recognize me."

"What did she say to you?"

Dominic balked, if he told the truth it could well mean a death sentence for his mother. What she'd intended to do was considered that bad. He felt cornered and started to breathe a little too rapidly. Great, just frigging great, he was hyperventilating. That was sure going to impress

his cousins. Cam placed his fingertips on his temples. As soon as he touched him, Dominic felt the anxiety slowly seep out of his body and he calmed down.

"It's okay, we won't think any less of you, no matter what," Cam's voice was as reassuring as his touch.

Dominic gulped as his breathing returned to normal. "Can you promise not to tell anyone?" When Cam nodded, he confessed rapidly, "She thought I was Michael. It was him she wanted dead. If anyone finds out she tried to destroy the Chief, she's going to be banished or sentenced to death."

"I won't let that happen," Cam vowed.

Strangely, Dominic believed him. "Where is my mom? Jordy said you guys were going to get her."

Now it was Cam's turn to hesitate, he tugged at his hair before saying, "We don't know where she is. All of us have been looking for her, both in the compound and the surrounding areas and we haven't been able to find her."

Dominic instantly tried to get out of the bed, ignoring the burning pain ripping through his body. "I have to find her. If I'm not there, then who will take care of her?"

Cam gently pushed him back on the bed. "You don't have to do it all by yourself anymore. You have us now and angles are looking for even as we

“speak. Michael and all of my brothers are searching everywhere.”

Dominic shook his head back and forth frantically. It'd just been him and his mother for as long as he could remember. He never stopped long enough to even entertain the idea that someone else would lend a hand to help them and their pathetic lives. No, he had to find his mom on his own. Nobody understood her like he did, no one but him would know how to talk her down if she was still in one of her spells. He started to struggle against Cam, desperately needing to find Amiteil. His cousin tried to put his fingers back on his temples and Dominic slapped his hands away. “Let me go.”

“It's going to be okay,” Cam said in a slow voice.

He continued to fight. He felt some of his wounds pop open, the warm sticky feeling of blood followed. “Please, she needs me.”

“Derel,” Cam barked. “You're going to have to put him under.”

Derel came forward and murmured the chant that all the healers used whenever they wanted an angel to sleep.

Dominic tried to fight it, but it was a losing battle. He found himself slipping into a warm haze and finally succumbed, letting the Sandman wrap his cozy little sleep blanket around him.

The next time Dominic woke up the room was dark and he didn't see anyone else in there. Taking advantage of the opportunity, he slid out of the bed and grabbed clothes someone had left folded in a chair. He didn't care what Cam said, he was going to look for his mother. A wave of anger went through Dominic as he thought about the way Cam had ordered him around earlier.

He just marches into my life after all this time and thinks he can tell me what to do? Where was he all those years when I was getting the crap kicked out of me? Besides he's the leader of the empath's and I'm archangel so he can't tell me what to do.

He angrily shoved his feet into a pair of sneakers. They were nicer than any other pair he'd ever owned before. The clothes were high end and clean, too. With a grimace, he forced himself not to be too impressed because he wasn't going to be staying long enough to enjoy the luxuries of angel warriors. Before the day was out, he would probably be back in some crappy hotel with his mom.

Dominic stared doing a slow shuffle toward the door, cursing his young body for being so weak. If he had been an adult, he would have been totally healed a long time ago. He wrapped an arm around his stomach since that was what hurt the most and ignored the way the pain made his whole body break out in a sweat. He reached out

to open the door.

"So you're just going to sneak out without a word to anybody?"

Shocked, Dominic spun around and saw Amadeaha sitting in the same chair Jordy had been in earlier. It sunk into him just how busted he was. Since she was Cam's mate, she was bound to run right to him and tell him Dominic had disobeyed and tried to leave.

She crossed her arms over her chest and cocked her head to the side. "Let's just say that you manage to get out of this compound and past the guards at the gate. Where are you going to go to look for her?"

Her voice held no anger or contempt, only a soft understanding and that made him even more mad for some odd reason. "I'll figure it out. I don't need your help. We managed to get by just fine this long." He almost cringed at the amount of venom in his voice. He really didn't mean to sound so nasty.

"I see." She nodded. "Well, I would hate for you to go on an empty stomach. Why don't you at least eat something? You're way too thin."

Following the direction of her gaze, he eyed the food sitting on a nearby table hungrily. Now that he knew it was there, the enticing smells were reaching him and his mouthed watered. He couldn't remember the last time someone had

made him something to eat and actually served it to him. Usually he'd done all the cooking for his mom and him. Sometimes he even had to spoon feed Amiteil when she had been really bad. Still he hesitated, how could he be thinking of his stomach when his mom could be lost and needing him?

"Come on," Amadeaha urged. "Ana made it just for you. It looks really good. I promise not to leave while you're eating so you don't have to worry I'm going to go running to Cam to tell on you."

Dominic grimaced both from pain and because she had guessed his thoughts so easily. "I suppose it won't hurt for me to eat first," he relented as his empty tummy won out.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and she handed him a sandwich half. As he bit into it, he closed his eyes in pleasure. Amadeaha probably thought it was just a grilled cheese sandwich, but it was so much more than that. It wasn't burned and the cheese was so full and fluffy. It was probably the best human food he had ever tasted.

"Take it slow," she cautioned. "Derel didn't want you eating anything yet. It was only after Ana threatened him with the frying pan that he gave in."

Despite himself, Dominic smiled as that image came to life in his head. Amadeaha's lips curled, too, before she grew serious again.

"They're all worried about you," she said.

"Why?" he snapped. "They don't even know me."

She raised a thin brow at him. "Well, you certainly have the Lehor temper."

"I'm not a Lehor," he tried to ignore how much it hurt to say that.

"Yes, you are," Cam said from the doorway.

Dominic jumped a mile. Damn, his cousin could move as quiet as a frigging cat.

Cam came in, pulled a chair close to the bed and sat down.

He was wearing a pair of dark glasses so Dominic couldn't tell if his eyes were angry, he did feel them burning a hole into his head though. Things got even better for him when Michael came in the room, too, and sat down on the bed. "Did you find her?" Dominic mumbled to his sandwich. He felt like such an idiot as he recalled his earlier spaz attack.

"Not yet," Michael said firmly. "But I will."

"You're not going to hurt her are you?"

"Don't worry, I won't punish her or anything, I'll just take her back so she can get the help she needs."

"You need to let us worry about your mother," Cam added. "It's time you started being a kid. You know, go to school, get in trouble, be extremely lazy."

Dominic wanted that badly. So much that it pained his chest just thinking about it. Then he felt guilty, how could he be thinking of his own needs when his mom could be out there hurt or something?

Michael seemed to read his mind. "I swear a vow to you, I won't stop looking for Amiteil until I find her. Can you trust me?"

Dominic looked up into his brown eyes and saw the Chief was genuine. What's more, he saw Michael was actually worried about him. He lowered his gaze because the last thing he wanted was for the great Michael to see he had started to tear up like some wimp. "I do trust you, Michael."

"Uncle Mike," the Chief corrected gently.

"I do trust you, Uncle Mike."

"Good," said Cam, slapping Dominic on the knee "The angel school is going to reopen at the beginning of the week. You and Jordy can start together. I'll talk to Abdiel right away so he can start making a training weapon for you."

Even though the mention of starting school should have terrified Dominic, it didn't. In fact, now that he knew Cam and Michael were there for him, he felt safe for the first time in his life. He didn't have to worry about where his next meal was coming from or where he was going to sleep next. He could take it easy and really rest without worrying about someone hitting him or yelling at

him.

Kicking off his shoes, he relaxed and started eating again. Seeing the matter was settled, Michael nodded his head and left. Dominic expected Amadeaha and Cam to leave, too, but they stayed. Cam started going into a long spiel about what to expect at school and Dominic found himself comforted by his cousin genuine interest in his life.

Amadeaha didn't say anything. She just started handing Dominic bits and pieces off the tray. Before long, he had finished all of the food Ana had made him and was getting sleepy. He put his head down on the pillow and closed his eyes, even though he wanted nothing more than to stay awake and talk to Cam.

He flinched when he felt someone brushing their fingers through his hair. Instinctively, he knew without opening his eyes it was Amadeaha. Dominic drank in the tender touch, sleepily thinking to himself he could get used to this if he wasn't careful. He didn't know what was more comforting, her motherly touch or knowing Cam was there watching over him.

Chapter Eight

“Are you cheating?” Derel peered suspiciously at his brother over his cards.

Cam started to roll his eyes, only to realize the effort was wasted because he was still wearing sunglasses. He had to settle for a disgusted grunt instead. “No, Derel, you just suck at poker. I don’t have to be a telepath to know what you have in your hand, your frigging face gives you away every time.”

His brother glowered at him, but Cam took it in stride. Ever since they had gotten back from the neutral bar and seen Brad, Derel had been a real Debbie Downer. Not that Cam really blamed him. Brad had been his closest friend. It must really cut deep to know your buddy turned demon while trying to save you.

“He’s right,” Nathaniel drawled. He dealt a couple more cards to Derel and they all laughed as the healer made a sour face when he got a gander at them. “You have a sucky poker face.”

"I happen to like the way he plays," Mael added his two cents. "It makes it so much easier to beat his ass."

Derel gifted each of them with a rude gesture and just to show he wasn't dull, he made sure he gave them each a different one. He never cracked a smile though. Cam thought briefly of telling his brother to cut the pity party short, but held back. If Derel didn't knock it off soon, they would just slip him a Prozac. Cam had no idea how the drug would affect an angel, but it was a risk he was willing to take.

Heather came into the living room and waltzed over to table. Oddly enough, she had a long coat on, despite the fact the room was perfectly comfy in Cam's opinion. There was a timid smile on her face and a slight flush on her cheeks. She gave the brothers all a small wave, making sure to keep one hand on the coat to hold it closed.

"I need to see you for a minute," she said to Derel.

"Later," Derel grunted never looking up from his cards.

Heather's lips pressed together and Cam could feel the annoyance and hurt coming off her. But she was also pissed so she didn't back down. Instead, she fixed her mate with a stern look and steeled herself for a fight.

"It's really important." The small empath's

nostrils flared with anger and she clutched her coat so tight her knuckles turned white.

"If whatever you have to say is that important, then you can just tell me now." Derel sounded so bored he may as well have been watching an infomercial on TV.

"I can't, not in front of your brothers."

"Sure you can, there's no secrets in this family." His face grew even more stony and he gave all the sibs a jaded glance.

"I don't think you'll want to share this."

He slapped the cards down in exasperation. "Damn it, female, just tell me."

"No."

"Heather, do it now."

"I told you no!" she hissed between clenched teeth. "You're being an ass."

The brothers all nodded their heads in agreement.

"I'm not in the mood for games, Heather." Derel gave the table a glare.

Heather put her hand on her hip. "So you share everything with your brothers?"

"Sure," Derel said with a sneer. "We're just one big, happy family."

"Then share this."

Cam could tell by the look on Heather's face Derel was in big trouble. Her lips curled into a sarcastic smile before she slid off the coat. The

entire room came to a screeching halt. Heather was wearing the famous Snow White outfit and it was every bit as revealing as Cam remembered. The flared yellow skirt barely covered her ass while the blue, puffed-sleeved top dipped so low it was a wonder her boobs didn't pop out.

Heather tapped her foot and got thoughtful look on her face. "Now let's see. Which one of your brothers should I start with first?"

Cam quickly looked down at the cards in his hands, feeling a little ookie at seeing Derel's mate almost undressed. He noticed the rest of his brothers were all doing the same thing. Except for Bear who was sitting in the corner with a wicked grin playing on his face, showing he still had a voyeuristic side, little perv.

Derel was oblivious to all the reactions because he was too busy picking his jaw off the table. For the first time since the bar fight, the sour look on his face disappeared to be replaced with raw, naked lust. He stood up so quickly his chair flipped over with a loud bang. "Where in the hell did you get that outfit?" The healer was grinning like a kid at Christmas.

"When Ramiel and I went out for supplies, we stopped at a little store several miles from here." Her cheeks were now bright red with embarrassment, but to her credit she didn't cover herself up. If anything, she thrust her chest

forward even more, causing her breasts to come even more dangerously close to spilling out of the low top. "He thought maybe you could use some cheering up."

"My God, you look so freaking hot."

"Thank you." She twisted her hands together and gave him a sultry smile that was all sex and promises.

Derel curled his hands up and lifted them, dropped them, then lifted them again. "I don't know where to start, every part of you looks so sweet I want to touch it all at once."

"How about you two start in the other room?" Nathaniel drawled. "This is becoming a bit awkward here." He shot Bear a condescending look. "At least for most of us it is."

Derel finally seemed to remember there were others still in the room. He gave them all a sheepish grin before he threw Heather over his shoulder and ran up the stairs with her. He made sure to keep one hand on her butt, so the short skirt didn't flip up and show off her tush to the entire room. The last thing they heard after a door slammed shut was something crashing, then silence.

Jules came over and set Derel's chair back up before sitting in it. She took one look at his cards and threw them down in disgust, she shifted that same look up the stairs. "Doesn't the way they

carry on bother you guys?"

Nathaniel snorted. "Not nearly as much as the thought of Ramiel panty shopping."

Jules gave a snort of her own, her brown eyes rolling. "At least they're not as bad as Megan and Dina. Those two are like the Energizer Bunny."

"The Energizer Bunny?" Cam set down his own cards, deciding their poker game was a lost cause.

"Yes, but instead of going, they keep, coming and coming and coming."

They all gapped at her for a few seconds before bursting into laughter. Jules pushed the pile of cards toward Nathaniel and indicted he should deal. They started a new game, and to the surprise of everyone, but Jules, she cleaned them all out.

As they all got up, Jules looked at Nathaniel, guilty as she nervously played with a stray blonde curl, which had escaped the clip holding her hair back. "I'm sorry about my earlier comment."

"What comment was that?" he grunted.

"When I asked if Heather and Derel carrying on bothered you. I should of thought before I spoke. With what happened with your mate, it was pretty insensitive of me."

Nathaniel just shrugged and left without saying a word.

She turned to Cam, a small frown playing on her lips, as she continued to nervously twist her hair. "I am so sorry, I should have just kept my

big, dumb, mouth shut.”

He punched her lightly on the arm. “You didn’t do anything wrong. It’s just going to take him time.” Secretly though, Cam was worried. Nathaniel was thinner and he seemed angry all the time. He suspected it was more than just the Belora thing that was affecting him, too. Whatever Nathaniel had seen of Cam’s past had changed his brother forever, and he hated himself for that.

Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed Amadeaha slowly walking up the stairs, which led to their sleeping quarters. Already on high alert due to the sex vibes Derel was giving off, Cam’s body instantly responded to the sultry look she threw over her shoulder.

Trying to play it cool, he crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the wall. One of his brothers was saying something to him, but Cam wasn’t getting a word of it because all his attention was focused on the slow sexy sway of his mate’s hips as she walked up the stairs.

“Cam! Focus here,” Ramiel snapped as he punched him in the shoulder.

Reluctantly, Cam tore his gaze from the sexual promise in front of him and glared over at his oldest brother. “Whatever it is can wait ten minutes.” Amadeaha looked back at him before she opened the door to their room and slowly ran her tongue over her lips. “Better yet, it can wait an

hour," he amended.

"Damn it!" Ramiel growled. "I swear ever since you, Bear and Derel claimed your mates, all you guys think with is your dicks."

"You'll understand someday when you get your own mate," Cam replied absently. Amadeaha entered the room and closed the door behind her and he wanted to be up there with her now.

"No thanks. If I need sex, I'll just call on Nix or find a succubus." Ramiel pulled a face as if the mere thought of a permanent female in his life pained him.

"Yeah, well take it from someone who knows. That crap gets real old fast." Giving his brother a pat on the shoulder, Cam practically ran up the stairs to get to his mate. Slowly entering the room, he was greeted by the sound of the shower running. A groan rumbled deep in his throat at the thought of her naked, wet body being mere feet from him. Part of him wanted to go right in there and take her now, but he decided to hold back and stretch things out instead.

Toeing off his shoes, he got rid of all his weapons and took off his shirt. Clad only in his jeans, he sat down in a chair and watched the bathroom door. After much too long, it opened, a billow of steam and the most beautiful angel in creation came out.

Wearing only a fuzzy purple towel and about ten pounds of wet red hair, she was a vision, which made his gut clench in emotion. This perfect female had not only chosen to be with him, she had given up everything to do so. She came up and stood right in front of him, like she was waiting for him to take charge. A sly smile crept over his lips, he would be more than happy to accommodate her on that. "That's a nice towel. Lose it," he ordered, never getting up from the chair.

With a small gasp of surprise, or maybe it was pleasure, she obeyed, dropping the towel to reveal her gorgeous curves. Cam allowed his gaze to slowly rake over her, taking in her full breasts, pink nipples, taunt stomach and curvy legs before finally settling on the junction of her thighs. "You're wet for me already," he observed. "Tell me, Amadeaha, while you were in the shower just now, did you think about me and touch yourself?"

A bright flush appeared on her chest and cheeks. "I..." she trailed off and looked down.

"Oh no you don't. I would think we are long past the point of being embarrassed in front of each other. The first time I buried my face between those white thighs of yours and licked up your cream should have taken away any inhibitions you may have had with me. So I'm going to ask you one more time, mate. While you were in the

shower, did you touch yourself while thinking about me?" She raised her gaze to him and Cam sucked in a breath at the pure desire burning in her eyes. All this dominance and dirty talk was turning her on just as much as it was him.

"Yes," she whispered. "I touched myself and moaned out your name as I came."

Fuck, this vixen is going to be the death of me someday. Oh well, at least I'll go out with a smile on my face. "Show me."

"What?" Her eyes grew round with shock.

"Slide your fingers down to your clit and show me how you like to be touched." He shifted in the seat, trying to find a more comfortable position since his cock was straining against his pants.

With a shy smile, she slowly trailed her fingers down her chest, past her stomach until she was caressing her own slippery folds. Just as things were starting to get good, she stopped and gave him a saucy look. "I'll do it only if you do it, too. I want you to take your cock in your hands and show *me* how you like to be pleased."

Despite the blazing hot sexual tension racing through the room, Cam threw back his head and laughed. "Turning the tables on me? Only you, Crazy Pie. Okay, never let it be said I don't please my female." He unzipped his pants and pulled out his erect cock, fisting it. Never breaking eye contact, he started to pump up and down with his hand.

Pink lips parted in a moan as she returned her fingers to her wet core, teasing, dipping and caressing. "Like this, Cam?" she moaned. "Is this what you wanted to see?"

"Yes, your juices are all over your hand and I just want to lick them up."

"You do tease me so," she panted.

"I'm just getting started. Go over to the wall, face it and put your hands above your head."

She moved to obey him, splaying her fingers out as her palms pressed against the white wall.

"No," he commanded. "Move your hands higher and arch you back."

She obeyed, raising her hands as high as she could while titling her ass out further. The position caused her breasts to thrust forward and her back to slope perfectly. "Like this?" she asked.

"Just." He got up and walked to her. "Like." Dropping to his knees, he gave one ass cheek a soft kiss. "That." He kissed the other cheek. "Now whatever happens, don't move an inch." The supple flesh quivered under his lips.

"Just do something quick, please," she whimpered. "I ache."

Deciding to show her some mercy, Cam gently nudged her legs a bit further apart so he could dip his head between her thighs. The instant his mouth stroked her, she let out a loud shriek of pleasure. He closed his eyes and moaned at the

sweet taste of his mate and could have gone on eating her all day long. Spearing his tongue inside her opening, he caressed her thighs and rump with his hands, marveling at the way she trembled under his touch.

With an expert flair, he found her clit and sucked on it gently. Sweat broke out over her body, making her legs slick as she writhed under his attention. He gave her ass a slap and she screamed in pleasure. "I told you to stay still," he admonished before he started to lick again.

"I'm trying so hard, but I'm such a bad angel," she cooed as she wiggled her butt.

He gave her another slap, making the rounded globe turn rosy. Using the palm of his hand, he rubbed away some of the sting. All the while, he continued to suck, lick and taste her until she finally screamed out his name as she came.

Not giving her time to recover, Cam stood up and entered her from behind in one hard thrust. Her hot channel gripped him like a tight fist and he closed his eyes, hissing in pleasure. He pulled back and entered her again and again, making each stoke hard and demanding. Since he still had his pants on, he lowered them just enough to get them out of the way, not wanting to leave her long enough to take them off. Amadeaha didn't seem to mind, she stood on tiptoe and arched her back more so he went even deeper inside her. Reaching

around, he pinched her clit in time to his thrusts.

"Yes, like that," she moaned. "Don't ever stop."

Cam's balls tightened up against his body and he knew he was close to the edge, but he fought to hold himself back, not wanting to find his release before she did hers. Thankfully, after a few more thrusts, she threw back her head and shrieked as her channel convulsed around him. With a moan of surrender, Cam let himself go, shooting hot jets of semen into her. Wave after wave of pleasure washed over him and the entire time he held her close, murmuring her name over and over.

After it had all faded, she tilted her head to look back at him and gave him a satisfied smile. "I think I need another shower."

"Only if I can go in with you and wash your back."

She nodded her consent before she took him by the hand and led him into the bathroom.

* * * *

Even though Cam had expressly forbidden her to do so, Amadeaha accompanied Dominic on his first day of school. Cam said it would make it look like they were coddling him and that was the last thing any male his age wanted. Big surprise, Amadeaha disagreed. In her personal opinion, Dominic needed someone to support him during

something as hard as starting school for the first time. And since Dominic's mother wasn't there for him, well she would be.

Gabi was taking Jordy, too, even though she had confided to Amadeaha that her own mate, Abdiel had pretty much said the same thing. As they walked to the school, every so often, Gabi would reach out and tweak Jordy's pointed ear. Amadeaha could tell by the familiar way Gabi did the gesture that she did it quite often, like it was a sign of affection. Jordy took it all in stride. Maybe because he had a bone of a different kind to pick.

He shifted his new long bow awkwardly on his back and scowled. "I don't see why I have to learn how to use this stupid thing," he grouched. "I was perfectly happy with the long sword."

"You're a healer," Gabi soothed, completely unruffled by his pouting.

Amadeaha wondered where she'd learned such patience.

"All healers use long range weapons so they're more protected from injuries during the battle. Remember a healer can't heal if they are hurt."

"The long sword was fine for my dad. That's all he taught me."

Gabi got a troubled look on her face and Amadeaha felt for her. She wondered how the female healer was going to handle this one. If she continued to dismiss the sword, Jordy might feel

like Gabi was insulting his father.

"Just try it for a few weeks," Gabi finally compromised. "If you don't catch on by then, I'll go to Raphael myself and see if he will make an exception in your case and let you switch back to the sword."

"He should, Raphael uses a sword," Jordy pointed out.

Amadeaha noticed some of his earlier surliness was gone.

"Raphael may be a healer, but he's also archangel."

"And I'm also part elf. That has to count for something." He reached out and tweaked her rounded ear.

Dominic looked out of the corner of his eye at Amadeaha and they both shared a smile at their byplay. The youth had a brand new sword strapped to his back. Before he left for a mission that morning, Cam had helped the teen put the scabbard on, despite his lecture about codling the young angel.

They reached the school and made their way to the classroom that had angels around the two males' ages. All of the students had general classes together in the morning before they separated into groups in the afternoon. The archangels would go one way, the healers another and the empathes would be studying together as well.

There was a dull roar of conversation as the students congregated before the day started. Various groups of teens clustered together, gossiping and laughing. It looked the same as any human high school. All conversation ended as soon as the kids spotted Dominic and Jordy. The room grew so quiet you could have heard a pin drop as they all gaped at the pair like they were specimens on display at the museum.

Jordy gave a nervous chuckle before whispering to Dominic, "Are they all staring because I'm an elf or because you're dork."

Dominic gave his friend a droll look that reminded Amadeaha of Cam. "It's because you're an elfish dork."

Amadeaha knew why the students were staring and, judging by the anxious glare from Gabi's green eyes, the other female knew, too. It was because Jordy was related to Raphael and Dominic was related to Cam and Michael. The empath part of Amadeaha was picking up a potpourri of emotions from the group of young angels, fear, curiosity, excitement and even resentment.

Amadeaha wondered why her hand was aching and she realized it was because she had a death grip on Dominic's backpack. She wanted to take him and lead him back to the protection of their quarters where the teen would be safe from all the

scrutiny. She noticed that Gabi was clutching her own cousin's arm the same way and was comforted knowing she wasn't the only one worried.

"Dominic! Jordy! It is so nice to finally see you here." An adult female came into the room and approached them. She had her mousy brown hair up in a sloppy bun and her warm brown eyes were fixed on the pair of young angels. "Michael said you two would be coming to my class."

Dominic and Jordy mumbled a simultaneous, "Ma'am."

"Well, just don't stand there. Let's get you started." She arched a brow at Gabi and Amadeaha when they didn't release their hold on the males.

Amadeaha dropped her hand and shared an I-really-hate-this-bitch-because-she-wants-to-take-my-baby-from-me look with Gabi. The two males shuffled forward, standing close to each other. Now the silence in the room was giving way to hushed whispers and the other teens were shooting hostile glances at the pair. Jordy didn't help matters when he made a big show of itching his nose with his middle finger. Dominic elbowed him in the ribs to make him stop.

Dominic turned and gave the females a timid smile and a small wave. "Bye, Amadeaha, bye, Gabi."

Gabi got the strangest look on her face. She returned the gesture with a faltering wave of her own before she spun around and practically ran from the room. Amadeaha followed her perplexed at her reaction even as she hated herself for leaving Dominic in such a hostile situation. She found Gabi in the hallway, her arms were crossed and she was staring at the ground. When Gabi finally did raise her eyes, Amadeaha was shocked to see that they had tears in them.

"Jordy will be just fine," she tried to console the healer, thinking she must be feeling the same guilt and worry she was.

"It's not that." Gabi sniffed and wiped her nose with the back of her hand.

"What is it then?"

"Everyone is wrong."

Amadeaha's confusion grew. "Wrong about what?"

"They say that your Dominic reminds them of Michael. It's not entirely true. He reminds me of Cam, too. When he just told me goodbye, he sounded just like Cam used to. Before all this...all this...oh, shit." She let out an impatient growl as she dabbed at the tears running down her cheeks.

Amadeaha was stunned by Gabi's revelation. She'd forgotten Cam had served with Gabi on the same angel warrior team before his transformation. From what she'd heard, too, the

team had been very tight. The healer was probably as close to him as his own sister. What's more, Gabi seemed willing to talk about Cam's past, unlike all the Lehors. Amadeaha nervously licked her lips before asking, "What was he like then?"

"He was a dorky, adorable, lovable kid. Some of the messes he caused used to drive me crazy."

"What were some of the things he did?"

Gabi cocked her head to the side and pointed her thumb down the hallway, in the direction of the cafeteria. "You have time for some coffee? It's going to take a while to tell you all of this."

* * * *

It was late in the afternoon and Gabi and Amadeaha were still sitting at the cafeteria table, several empty cups in front of them, laughing at Cam's past exploits. Abdiel had joined them an hour before and he was adding his own tidbits. Some of them were so outrageous, Amadeaha would have sworn they were made up if she hadn't known better.

"I can't believe Cam got beat up and molested by some female demon." Amadeaha brushed a tear of mirth from her eye.

"It was a really tiny one, too," Abdiel added with a sly grin on his face.

Amadeaha was finding herself liking the dark,

brooding male. It was easy to see he was fond of Cam, too, that alone would have earned him bonus points in her book. Although Abdiel may look intimidating at first, she got glimpses of his soft side, the way he brushed his fingers over Gabi's arm every so often, how he smiled so easily, the tone of his voice when he talked about Cam.

"So, are you trying to tell me that he knew nothing about fighting when you first became his archangel?" Amadeaha asked, a little more than shocked. She just couldn't picture a Cam who wasn't able to handle himself no matter what situation he found himself in.

"It was so sad," Gabi confided. "He tried so hard, but he just couldn't get it until Abdiel started to train him."

"Please," Cam said from behind them. "I just pretended not to know how to fight to make Mr. Dark Angel feel better about himself." He bent down to give Amadeaha a kiss before he took the seat next to her. "Don't believe a word these two say," he said in a loud stage whisper. "It's all lies, every word of it."

Dominic and Jordy chose that moment to join them. They both had glum looks on their faces as they tossed their backpacks to the side and slumped down into chairs.

Amadeaha was a bit stunned to see them,

realizing she wasted the whole day away drinking coffee with Gabi. It had been worth it though to learn so many fun facts about her mate. "How was your first day?" Amadeaha asked, even though their expressions already revealed it hadn't been good.

"They took away my bow and arrow," Jordy grumbled as he started to pick at a sandwich Gabi sat in front of him.

"Why?" Gabi demanded sharply.

Amadeaha had a glimpse of how protective she was over the elf healer.

"I kind of shot somebody," he confessed, his face turning bright red.

"You what?" Gabi smacked her hand down on the table.

Jordy winced. "I didn't do it on purpose. They were still pretty mad at me though."

Cam and Abdiel started laughing at poor Jordy's humiliation. Amadeaha covered her own mouth with her hand so Gabi wouldn't see her grin. Dominic just sat there, his eyes bleak.

"Why are you pouting?" Cam asked Dominic. "Did you shoot somebody, too?"

"Nope, it's just everyone acts like they're scared of me."

"Why would they be afraid of you?"

Dominic gave a half shrug. "Because I'm related to you and Michael."

Cam seemed surprised, although Amadeaha wasn't. She had been worried all day the other angels would treat Dominic differently because of his famous uncle and cousin.

"Why should it make any difference to them who your family is?" Cam continued to not get it.

"Boy, for someone who's so smart, you sure are stupid sometimes," Jordy blurted. The instant the words left his mouth, he seemed to regret them. The color drained from his face as he clamped his lips tightly together. He even scooted his chair closer to Abdiel's for protection.

To Amadeaha's relief Cam didn't take offense.

He gave Jordy a fang-baring grin. "Well, since I'm so stupid, why don't you explain it to me?"

Jordy gulped so loud Amadeaha could hear him from across the table before venturing in a timid voice, "Think about it. Dominic lives with two of the most powerful angels. Most of those kids would piss their pants if you so much as looked at them and Dominic eats at your table and sleeps at your quarters. It's a lot for them to take in."

"You live with us, too," Cam reminded him. "Plus, you're related to Raphael. So, how come they aren't treating you the same way?"

"They are treating him the same way," Dominic grumbled, finally entering the conversation. "He's just too much of a jackass to care. All he's worried

about is that damn bow and arrow."

"That's because Raphael is going to have my ass in a sling when he finds out I lost it." Jordy continued to play with the sandwich, rather than eat it.

Gabi put her hand over his. "No, he won't. I'll just explain things to him."

"Does this mean I don't have to go back to school then?" he asked her hopefully.

It was Abdiel who answered in a firm, yet gentle voice, "No, you have to go back. I told you last night that point wasn't up for argument."

"But they look at me like I'm some kind of freak." Jordy threw his hands up in disgust.

Amadeaha felt for Jordy. It was hard enough to survive school during your teenage years being a normal angel. It must have been horrible for the elf to have to know he was different and that everyone else knew it, too.

"Everyone looks at me like I'm some kind of freak, too," Cam said, never taking his cat eyes off Jordy. "It used to really bug me until I just decided they could all go screw themselves. I'm who I am and there's no changing it. If they don't like it, that's their problem, not mine."

In the end, it was Dominic who saved the day. "I'll be your pal," he sang out in a teasing voice. "Why don't we go to MySpace and *friend* each other? We'll have each other and Tom."

Jordy let out a soft laugh. "Okay, buddy." He drew out *buddy* in a long sarcastic drawl.

Amadeaha laughed at the elf's antics. Jordy was a cutup through and through and that appeared to be what Dominic craved. They seemed to be becoming close friends quickly and that was something both of them needed after all the trauma they'd been through. It was nice to see they had each other for support.

"You ready?" Dominic asked Jordy. "We better go study for that test."

Jordy pulled a face and informed the table, "We have a huge quiz on demon species tomorrow and, even though it was our first day today, we still don't get out of it."

The elf grabbed his sandwich and downed it in a couple of bites before he got up, grabbed his backpack and followed Dominic back to their quarters. On their way out, they almost got mowed down by Bear making a beeline for the table.

Once he got there, it took him a couple of seconds to catch his breath. He leaned over and put his hands on his knees and finally got it out, "The guards from the front gate just called. There's someone out front who's wanting to see you and Amadeaha."

"Who could possibly want to talk to me?" Amadeaha asked, bewildered.

Bear stood up and his jaw set in a grim line as he informed her, "Whoever it is, claims to be you brother, Haniel."

Amadeaha suddenly got a little dizzy as this information slapped her in the face. Her mind was reeling and she had to take several seconds to get it around his announcement. She'd never thought in a million years Haniel would seek her out. Not after he'd been AWOL from her life for so long. She felt Cam's arms slip around her shoulders and she leaned back so her body could soak up the comforting warmth he was offering.

"I told them to bring him to your office," Bear told Cam. The Goth empath shot her a sympathetic glance. "I can go now and scan him before you guys get there. That way we'll know what he's up to."

Amadeaha shook her head. "That's okay, you won't have to do that. I'll know as soon as I see my brother whether he is genuine or not. He may have gone underground all these years, but he never was a big fan of my father or uncle. So I don't think he means us any harm."

"Well, let's go see what he has to say," Bear suggested. He winced and shot Amadeaha an apologetic look. "Sorry, that was dumb of me."

Haniel had been captured and briefly held in Hell. While there, the demons had cut off his tongue. Angels may be immortal and they may

heal at a much faster rate than humans, but they couldn't regenerate body parts. So there was no way Haniel could do any talking. Amadeaha gave Bear a reassuring pat as she stood to let him know she didn't take offense. He muttered another apology as he led the way out of the cafeteria.

They quickly made their way to Cam's new office. The entire time they were navigating the long twisting hallways, she was fighting dueling emotions. Part of her was ecstatic to see Haniel, the other was wary because he must have withdrawn for a reason. What if he'd gone rogue or demon? They finally reached the closed door and she steeled herself as Cam opened it.

Amadeaha's heart let out a nervous thump as she looked at her brother for the first time in years. His dark, black hair was cropped short and he was dressed in the typical warrior black leather although he hadn't served as an angel warrior ever since he had returned from Hell. He shared the same intense green eyes as her and they were narrowed dangerously at the two archangels who were guarding him, his gaze widened, then softened when he spotted her.

"Haniel," she exclaimed as she rushed forward and threw herself into his arms. She let out the pent up breath she'd been holding. All those years he had been missing, a small part of her had always feared he'd given in and turned his back

on the vows he'd taken as an archangel and turned evil. But here he was, sitting in the angel compound that was protected with anti-demon charms and he still had all the features of an angel. No, he hadn't gone demon. Thank God for that. Whatever other sins he might have committed she could handle. Just so long as she knew his heart remained pure, everything else was inconsequential.

Haniel clung to her so tightly her back creaked. She didn't care though, all that mattered to her was that he was here and safe. Cam and Bear stood back to allow them some privacy, although neither left the room. Amadeaha knew it was because they didn't trust Haniel despite the fact he was still an angel.

"Is it really you?" a voice croaked from the doorway.

It was Dina and he was staring at Haniel with an expression Amadeaha couldn't read. He took a couple of steps forward, then stopped as if unsure of himself or how Haniel would react to him. Haniel had always been Dina's protector and hero. Amadeaha could only imagine the emotions that must be swirling through him. Dina's gray eyes were filled with uncertainty and Amadeaha was reminded of the timid scared kid who had lived in Heaven. That all ended when Haniel motioned Dina forward with his hand.

Dina quickly crossed the room and knelt down on the ground, next to Amadeaha, so he was face level with Haniel. Haniel gave Dina's hair a playful tug, then smiled before pointing at the empath's earplugs and various tattoos.

Dina gave a small chuckle. "I guess I've changed a bit since you last saw me, huh?"

Haniel let out a choked sob before he pulled Dina into a fierce embrace. Even though he couldn't speak out loud, his mouth moved in silent speech. Amadeaha was able to read his lips that were barely visible above Dina's head.

I'm so sorry I wasn't there for you. I'm sorry I wasn't there when they killed you.

Chapter Nine

Cam watched the reunion between his mate and her brother. Even though it was really sweet and all, something wasn't quite right. How had Haniel found the compound and why was he choosing now to contact Amadeaha? Before he had time to ask Haniel any questions, Amadeaha beat him to it.

"Where have you been? How did you know where to find us? Have you talked to Jehel or Dad lately?"

Haniel smiled at her slew of questions and started to look around the room for something.

Amadeaha exclaimed, "How stupid of me, I forgot. You need something to write on."

Cam cleared his throat. "There is another way we can communicate."

When Haniel gave him a questioning look, Cam just pointed to his own temple. While Cam generally put up a shield to block out others thoughts, lest he end up a loon like Auntie

Amiteil, he could let it down long enough to *talk* to Haniel. When Haniel nodded his consent, Cam pulled over a chair and sat down facing the other archangel.

"Where have you been all this time?" Cam started. Haniel's voice came, loud and strong, into his head.

After I shamed myself by letting down my angel warrior team, I was going to retire and just stay out of trouble. But then I saw the things my father and Jehel were doing in their insane quest for power and I knew I couldn't stay in Heaven and watch it anymore.

Bear translated what Haniel was saying to Dina and Amadeaha in a low voice since he could pick up Haniel's thoughts as well.

Haniel continued, *I wandered around Earth alone for a while before I found a group of archangels like me, outcasts. We're not rogues, but we're not angel warriors either.*

"So what does this group do? I can't see a group of warriors sitting around knitting tea-cozies."

Haniel gave him a hard look and his jaw ticked, but he kept hold of his anger. *We do what we had vowed to do as angel warriors. We fight Lucifer and his demons and protect the human race. We just have more unconventional ways of getting the job done.*

Cam could only guess at what that must entail. He decided to let it go for now. Michael could sort it all out later. Besides, he'd found that sometimes

unconventional methods were highly effective. Who was he to judge Haniel?

“How did you find the compound?” While Cam knew Michael hadn’t expected to keep the location of the new headquarters secret for long, they had all hoped that it would be longer than this.

It’s common knowledge amongst all rogues and demons where this place is. It has been since the day you moved here.

Cam gave an internal wince. For quite some time he and Michael had been aware there was a mole amongst the warriors. Despite all their efforts and special gifts, they had never been successful in rooting out whoever it was. Now it would seem the spy had followed them from their old home and was already spilling their secrets again. Once they figured out who it was, Cam was going to have a field day ripping the traitor apart.

“Why haven’t you tried to contact us sooner?” Amadeaha asked, with a little bit of hurt in her voice.

Haniel gave her an anguished look. *How could I face you? First I let down my angel warrior team, then I failed to keep Dina safe. When I heard what Jehel and Kyian had done to him, it nearly destroyed me to know that I wasn’t there to protect him. Why did they give him a death sentence anyway?*

As soon as Bear translated this, Dina blanched. After several awkward moments of silence, he

finally admitted. "My father caught me trying to run away."

Why would you do that?

"I was going to find you."

Haniel briefly closed his eyes as he mouthed several curse words, when he opened them again, they were bright with tears. *I should have taken you with me.*

Dina gave a vigorous shake of his head. "Don't think like that. Everything worked out all right in the end. I'm very happy with the life I have now."

Cam decided to probe into the thing bothering him the most. "Why are you here now, Haniel? And why did you ask to speak to me?" He hoped it wasn't because Haniel was going to object to the fact Amadeaha was his mate because the ex-angel warrior was in for one hell of a fight if he tried to take her away.

I wanted to warn you the justice angels are no longer in this war by themselves.

Cam frowned. "If you're talking about the Powers, they haven't been seen in months. Michael thinks they have gone back to their clans."

Michael is only half right. The Powers were in seclusion, but rumors have it they've come back with even greater numbers. Jehel will use their manpower to attack this new compound.

"Jehel knew where our last compound was and he never attacked," Cam scoffed. "He's afraid we'd kick his and his justice dicks' ass if they tried

to fight us. Jehel is too much of a coward to try to take Michael on directly."

Jehel may be afraid to face Michael on his own, but if he is backed up by a Power army, that will change. There is also talk Jehel has made contact with the fairies and is trying to convince them to become his ally.

Cam shook his head. "The fairies have gone deep into hiding. No one has seen them for years. They don't even contact Cliona anymore and she's one of them." Despite his denials, he couldn't help but wonder if Haniel might be right. How else would Belora have been able to get her hands on the fairy poison? He got up to get Michael only to find the Chief had already arrived. By the grim look on his face, Cam could tell he'd already heard the bad news.

"So does this mean we're going to have to evacuate the compound?" Dina asked.

Michael shook his head. "What good would it do? Thanks to our leak, as soon as we move, the enemy is going to know. Besides, we still have some pockets of angel warriors and civilians unaccounted for, and if we go too far underground they won't be able to find us. Even if I were to try and evacuate just the children and civilians that would leave us even more vulnerable because it would split up my archangels."

Cam hated to admit it, but Michael was right. That still didn't change the fact that their situation

truly sucked. "So what's the game plan then?" he growled, frustration letting some of his demon half out.

"We double the guards we already have in place and prepare everyone here. I want every male, female and child ready to fight, civilians and warriors."

"If they have the Powers on their side again then we are seriously fucked," Cam pointed out in a tight voice. The last time the Powers had entered the fray, the casualty rate amongst the angel warriors had been staggering.

"We'll have to call on our demon supporters."

Cam was stunned the leader of the archangels and angel warriors was actually suggesting they fight side-by-side with demons. The times sure have changed. "I'll call Mangus and Brad." Right after the infamous bar fight, the incubus had left his new number with Cam, promising to lend his sword and clan if Cam ever needed it.

Bear added, "I'm sure Appolion and Abdiel could talk to their mother. She has several demon soldiers that are still loyal to her."

"I can call Cadean and Emmanuel," Dina volunteered. He had become really friendly with the harpy and rogue archangel on a mission he and Megan had gone on last Christmas. Michael nodded his consent.

"Not to piss in your Cheerios, Chief," Cam

drawled. "But I don't think that's going to be enough. We're still going to be outnumbered."

"No biggie," Bear scoffed. "Everyone knows one angel warrior is worth five justice angels. We'll still kick their asses."

"It's not the justice angels that have me worried. I'm just scared fuckless about what could happen to our children if the Powers got a hold of them." The entire room grew somber with Cam's words. The Powers were the most vicious killing machines out there. They weren't angel or demon. They were something else. Living only to destroy, they thrived on pain and despair. Cam still remembered the time they had found a safe house that had been overtaken by the Powers. Not only had they massacred everyone inside, they had eaten some of their victims bodies. Cam had always hoped those poor angels had been dead before that had happened.

"What about the elves?" Amadeaha finally broke the silence with a shaky voice. "Do you think maybe they would be willing to help?"

Michael ran his hand through his shaggy, dark blond hair. "I don't know. Last time I talked to their king I was told they wanted nothing to do with us or our war."

Cam took a deep breath as the hopelessness of the situation hit him. "You better try again, Michael, I think it may be our only hope."

* * * *

Several weeks later, Michael was still having no luck with the elves and the tensions in the compound were reaching a breaking point. Cam was having to break up fistfights and intervene into petty arguments every few hours. It made him wonder how Ana had managed to put up with him and his brothers all those years when she was raising them.

Cam was in his office talking with Jules and Heather when Bear came storming in, an annoyed look on his face. Sick and tired of dealing with crap, Cam was half tempted to turn around and run before he had to hear what his brother had to say. It took a lot to ruffle Bear's feathers and he had a sinking feeling this was not going to be good. "What?" he snapped in an irritated voice.

"It's your brother-in-law."

"Technically that's a human term," Cam was quick to point out, not wanting to lay claim on Haniel. "In the angel world, he's nothing to me."

"You going tell Amadeaha that?"

"Hell no." Cam gave a resigned sigh. "What did the psychopath do now?"

"He keeps following Cliona and Wacky Winnow around. He's convinced they're the spies and he won't listen to me when I tell him you,

Michael and I have all scanned them and they're clean."

This didn't surprise Cam at all. Ever since Haniel had come he had shown he didn't trust anyone, be they angel, elf or fairy. The only ones he let near him were Michael, his cousins and Cam. He suspected the only reason Haniel even put up with him was so he could translate for Amadeaha and Dina. Haniel wouldn't even give Derel the time of day and they used to serve on the same angel warrior team. "I'll talk to him," he finally said.

Bear grunted. "That's not going to do any good, he never listens. I think maybe you should zap his ass to teach him a lesson."

Cam gave him a warning look.

Bear held his hands up innocently and added, "You could just make it a little one. Set your hand on stun or something."

Cam paused for a second, tempted before he shook his head. "No, that might tick Amadeaha off. I don't want to end up sleeping on the couch again." He threw down the papers he was holding. "I've got to get out of this damn office for a while. I'm taking a walk, you want to keep me company?"

Bear nodded and they left the office and all the chaos it contained behind. They made their way down through the crowded hallways until they

reached the gym. A small group of young archangels were practicing their sword work in the center. When he noticed Dominic and Jordy were part of the group, Cam nudged Bear in the shoulder and indicated with a tilt of his head they should go into the bleachers to watch.

An archangel friend of theirs, Uriel, was teaching the young angels. When it came time for sparring, he pulled Dominic up first and asked, "Okay, who challenges him?"

All the youths immediately became interested in the mat. Not one of them seemed to have the guts to raise their hands. Cam was disgusted to feel the fear coming from the group. Judging by the sour look on Dominic's face, he could feel it, too.

Jordy finally jumped to his feet. "Well, if you guys are too chicken shit to do it, then I will."

Uriel shook his head. "You've sparred him the last six times. It's time someone else finally stepped up."

Cam watched as each of the other students, one by one, took a step back and shifted their gazes to the side.

Bear got a tick in the side of his jaw.

Unable to watch his cousin being humiliated any longer, Cam stood and sauntered over. "I'll take him on," he called.

All of the students jumped a mile at the sight of

him, their eyes wide with fear. He could only imagine what they would think if they saw him in the morning when he still had dragon's breath and bed head. Amadeaha always said that was when he was his scariest.

With a cocky grin, Cam pulled his sword out of its scabbard and all the students released a collective breath.

One even muttered, "Fuck me."

Jordy quipped, "You're not his type."

The side of Dominic's mouth curled at the elf's comment, but other than that his face remained unreadable. *You don't have to do this.* Dominic said telepathically.

Cam was surprised. While he had known Dominic was gifted, this was the first time his cousin had reached out to him mentally. *Well lookie who just joined the talking heads club. Now we're going to have to get you the tee shirt and secret decoder ring.*

This time Dominic cracked a whole smile. When Jordy laughed out loud, Cam was even more surprised. So the little elf had *overheard* their conversation. Uncle Mike had never mentioned elves were telepathic, but it sure as hell looked like they were. Raphael's cousin was getting more and more interesting each day.

"So why doesn't anyone want to fight you, Dominic?" Cam asked out loud, for the benefit of the shaking students. He leaned down and sniffed

loudly. "Does your smell offend?"

"They are afraid he's going to kick their asses again." Jordy gave the group a disdainful look. "Nobody can match his skills."

Cam cocked a brow at the elf. "Nobody?"

Jordy got a wolfish glint in his eyes. "Nobody but me. I told you my dad made sure I could handle a sword. Even though I'm a healer and not even supposed to be training with the big bad archangels, I'm ten times better than any of these idiots here."

One of the students scowled and muttered, "Why don't you get your ass back to the Shire?"

Jordy turned on him. "How many times do I have to tell you, Hobbits come from the Shire, not elves? If you're going to insult someone, at least get your facts straight. Like when I call you a douche bag. That is a total truth."

Cam looked away from Jordy before he did something stupid like laugh at his smartass comments, thus encouraging the punk. He was hard pressed to remind himself that the kid was related to Raphael. Old Raffie wouldn't know a joke if it came up and bit him on his uptight ass. Instead, he tipped his head toward Dominic and asked, "Are you ready?"

Dominic gave a curt nod and readied his own sword.

Cam charged the young angel. At first he held

back, not knowing how advanced Dominic's skills were, but once he saw the young angel was indeed a good fighter, he started to spar him full on. As soon as Cam switched gears, Dominic's eyes widened before he let out a loud laugh. It seemed his little cousin had inherited the gotta-love-a-good-fight gene from the Lehor side of the family.

Cam was amazed at Dominic's grace and the young angel's ability to anticipate his attacks. As they continued to fight, the crowd grew bigger as more and more angels joined to watch the show. Cam was more than a little amused to see most of them were cheering on Dominic. Amadeaha was watching, too, and she had a small smile playing on her lips.

They sparred for several minutes, Cam occasionally calling out corrections to Dominic. Cam finally called a halt to the fight by disarming the young angel and pulling him into a playful headlock. He softly noogied him on the top of his head before he let him go.

"That was so much fun," Dominic panted. His hair was plastered with sweat and there was an exited gleam in his eyes. "Can we do it again some time?"

"I'll tell you what, how about we practice every night after dinner? We'll start tomorrow. I have guard duty tonight."

Dominic gave him another wide grin before he

trotted off after the group of students leaving the gym to go back to the school. Jordy hung back and waited for his friend to catch up. They started talking excitedly to each other as they relived the battle. Amadeaha walked up behind Cam and wrapped her arms around his waist. "Wow," he said, still looking at Dominic's retreating back. "He smiled at me. Hell, he even laughed. I thought his laugh box was broken."

"You're so good with him," Amadeaha murmured in his ear right before she gave it a small nibble.

"It was nothing, really." Cam turned around so he could capture her in his arms. "I just didn't like seeing the other kids treat him like a pariah because he's part of the family."

"Why don't you come back to the quarters and let me feed you?" She nipped at his ear again.

The only reason he didn't moan out loud was because Bear was standing right there. "I can't, I'm scheduled for guard duty in an hour. If I'm not there to relieve them, Nathaniel and Ramiel will have my ass."

"I'll go for you," Bear instantly volunteered. "You haven't gotten any sleep in days."

"No, you won't," Cam countered. "You're not going to work at my office either. You're going home to Tiffany and relax for one night. You do too much for me." When Bear looked like he was

going to argue, Cam shook his head and continued, "I mean it, go home and play bongo drums on Tif's ass all night long. There will be plenty for you to do tomorrow."

Bear finally gave a reluctant nod. "Tif has been after me to spend so more time with her." He shot Cam a mock salute before he turned and left.

Amadeaha gave Cam's waist a tight squeeze and asked, "How about you? You look tired, too, and you haven't even eaten yet."

He nuzzled the side of her neck. "I only want to eat one thing."

"Oh, I think I would like that."

He let out a regretful sigh as he dropped his arms. "I really do have to go."

She gave a slight nod before she let him go and blew him a kiss. "Bye, I'll be waiting for you when you get back."

After he grabbed Derel from the infirmary, the two of them made their way to the outside of the compound. They found Nathaniel and Ramiel at the south side, on the top of a hill overlooking a valley. Nathaniel and Ramiel quickly briefed them on the day's activity before they went off to eat and catch some shuteye. Once they were alone, Cam and Derel settled into a comfortable silence.

The sun was beginning to set when Derel finally broke it. "Are you scared?"

Cam grunted. "Scared of what? The fact the

justice angels might be coming any day or that the Powers might be active again? Hell, yes. I just try to hide it most of the time."

"I should have never made Heather my mate. Now that she's part of our family, she's in even more danger."

"You weren't exactly given a choice. Santar was going to kill her if you didn't."

Derel gave him a droll look. "We both know I would have taken her anyways. I kind of feel that was selfish of me. You know, like I put her in danger just so I could be happy."

That made Cam pause. Was he selfish for claiming Amadeaha? If she died in the coming battle, would it be because of him? He didn't state those doubts out loud, instead he said, "Heather had already decided long ago you two belonged together. She was just waiting for you to come to your senses."

"What if I lose her like we lost Mom and Dad?"

The harsh edge to his voice told Cam how hard it was for Derel to say those words. "That's not going to happen."

"Why? Because you're the Great Cam? Not to diss you, baby brother, but you can't always protect all of us and neither can Michael."

They lapsed into another silence, this one heavy and awkward as they continued to scan the horizon.

It was Derel who broke it again. "Do you really think the fairies have joined up with Jehel?"

"Michael says no, but I can't help but wonder," Cam replied with honesty. "How else would the slave traders have gotten the poison they used on Nathaniel?"

"I just wish I could take my mate, find a nice little house and live a normal life. Raise some kids, work some boring job during the day and watch crappy reality shows at night."

"That's a human's life." Cam finally took his eyes off the horizon so he could look his brother full in the face. "You're an angel warrior, our kind don't have those luxuries."

Derel sighed. "I know, but I can wish."

Cam hesitated before he said, "I need to ask a favor of you. I really should have come to you earlier with this, but I was hoping it would never become an issue."

"You can ask anything of me. You know that."

"If I die during this battle, I need you to get to Bear as quickly as possible."

As expected, Derel got a suspicious look on his face. "Why?"

"When the fates tied Bear and I together mentally, they also tied our life forces together. So if I die, so does he."

A flurry of emotions went over Derel's face, disbelief, anger, then fear as he seemed to accept

Cam wasn't bull shitting him. He worked his jaw together before asking, "Does Bear know this?"

"Of course he does, I would never keep something that big from him. But besides Michael, I've never told anyone else."

Derel cursed softly to himself before inquiring in a bitter voice, "So, what do you expect me to do?"

"I want to you to save Bear, no matter what it takes." Cam almost felt guilty for asking this when he saw the way Derel paled, but not enough to pull back his request. He would do anything to save Bear, even if meant asking Derel to go back to the dark place.

"What about you? Am I supposed to just let you go while I save Bear? How do you expect me to choose between the two of you?"

"You're not choosing, I'm ordering you to do this."

"I'm not one of your empath's. You can't order me to do anything."

"Fine, then I'm begging you to. Bear has never done anything wrong and he doesn't deserve all this."

The anger melted from Derel's face and he looked at Cam sadly. "You've never done anything wrong either."

For the first time, Cam didn't argue that one. Thanks to Amadeaha and her damn instance that

he talk about his past, he now realized most of what he had done had been so he could survive. Derel seemed amused by Cam's dumb silence.

"How about this," Derel said. "You just don't go and get yourself killed, then it won't become an issue because this family couldn't survive without either one of you."

"We couldn't survive without you either. You're more to us than a supernatural Doc Baker."

Derel blinked in surprise. "How did you know I thought that?"

"Because you're crappy at blocking your thoughts when you get angry. We really need to work on that."

They were still laughing when Amadeaha walked up, a basket hooked around her arm. "I brought you two some dinner," she announced.

Cam noticed, with pride, she had made sure to arm up since she was outside the compound. She had her sai strapped to her hips and there was a small dagger sticking out of the top of one of her boots. Dressed in the black angel warrior leathers, she looked damn good. The pants hugged her finely shaped ass in just the right way while the top cupped her breasts oh so perfectly. Derel could have his Snow White outfit any day because this was Cam's fantasy come to life.

Cam grabbed her around the waist and pulled her in for a long, hard kiss, not even caring that

they were displaying PDA in front of Derel. It wasn't until she lightly batted him on the arm that he let her go. Reluctantly he released her even though his cock screamed in protest. It hadn't even been five hours since he last had her and already his body was craving another round. A heightened incubus sense of smell caught the scent of her desire, too, telling him she was eager for a repeat performance as well.

The three of them sat on the grass as she got the food out and ready for them. Derel gave them an amused smile when Amadeaha settled into Cam's lap and started to hand feed him. Cam wanted nothing more than to tell Derel to *amscray* so he could have some alone time with Amadeaha, but duty called first. So he kept his gaze focused on the valley. Even though he wished to play. *Maybe I should have taken Bear up on his offer to take my turn at guard duty after all.*

When they were done eating, she didn't leave the hill or his lap. Cam was content to just sit there, keeping an eye out for danger while he ran his fingers through her silky hair. Just as the sun set and the sky grew dark, his empath senses alerted him there was something nasty lurking not too far away.

Amadeaha gasped, showing she felt it, too. "Cam?"

He nodded his head. "I know."

Derel grabbed a pair of night scope binoculars.

Cam didn't need them to see into the inky darkness, thanks to his highly developed demon eyes. He used them now to search the valley, looking for whatever was making his empath senses tingle. Right on the edge of the valley, he spotted two figures running for all they were worth. After a few seconds, Cam could see what they were running from.

A pack of Hounds from Hell.

"That's Lash and his elf friend, Odan," Derel exclaimed. "You know, the ones who told you where Heather and I were being held?"

"What in the hell are they doing here?" Amadeaha asked.

"I don't know, but if we don't go stop them from being doggy chow, we're never going to find out," Cam growled as he drew his sword.

Cam, Derel and Amadeaha tore down the side of the hill, weapons out and ready. Derel pulled out his bow and fired off an arrow without ever breaking pace. Cam noticed Bear and Appolion were coming from the opposite direction. Cam was pissed to see his brother had disobeyed his orders to take the night off, but he would wait to ball him out about it later. He sent off a telepathic update to Michael so the Chief could send reinforcements if needed. They got there just as one of the Hounds was getting ready to launch itself at Lash's back. Appolion sent off an energy

bolt that hit the Hound in the flank. It yelped as it rolled end to end and smoke drifted up from its blackened wound, the smell of singed hair drifted in the air.

When the injured demon flashed out, it confirmed Cam's suspicions that these doggy demons were sent by the justice council. Cam raised his hand and sent off a fireball at another hound pinning down Odan. Since Cam was pissed the demons had attacked so close to home, he didn't hold back but hit it with all his powers. The demon flew back several feet, before it exploded, raining itty-bitty doggie pieces onto the elf.

"Gah!" Odan yelled. "That's disgusting."

Cam ignored him and turned instead to see how Amadeaha was doing. She was crouched down in a shooting stance, firing off a Glock. Damn if she wasn't a good shot. She took two of the Hounds out herself with direct hits to their heads. He heard another growl off to one side of him and let out a groan. It sounded almost like a Hound's growl, but there was a familiar undertone to it as well. "Now isn't the time for you to be channeling demons, Bear," he shouted.

But it was too late, Bear's eyes had already taken on the red hue of a Hound and he had even sprouted a pair a fangs. The empath launched himself at a demon and the pair of them started to roll around the ground, howling and snarling at

each other. "Don't bite it," Cam ordered, worried his brother would get carried away and accidentally ingest some of the poisonous blood.

Bear turned to snarl at him and Cam took it to mean in doggy language, *I know what I'm doing, so back off, jackass.*

Cam saluted him with one finger before he turned to the remaining Hounds. The demon dogs must have been done playing because they quickly flashed out of there. He went over to Lash and hauled the rogue to his feet, none too gently. "What the hell are you doing here and why are the demons determined to see you dead?" he demanded in his most menacing voice.

But Lash didn't seem impressed or scared. He shrugged Cam's hands off and made a demand of his own, "If you all want to live, then you'll take us to Michael, now."

Chapter Ten

Since Cam didn't know where else to take the pair, he escorted them back to the family quarters. He wasn't quite sure of the reception they would receive from his brothers or Abdiel, but he didn't quite feel comfortable parading around an elf for everyone in the compound to see either. It was better to keep Odan's existence known only within the family.

Bear still hadn't changed back to normal. His eyes continued to glow red and he was snarling from time to time. But he was walking on two legs and he wasn't going around sniffing people's crotches so Cam was willing to put up with it for now.

As soon as they entered their quarters, Bear made a beeline right for Tiffany. He pinned the small healer to the wall and started to nuzzle the side of her throat. Tiffany didn't seem surprised or disgusted by Bear's behavior. In the short time that they had been together, she'd gotten used to

his unique mood swings. When he tried to inch his fingers under the blue jean skirt she was wearing, she lightly popped him on the knuckles to make him stop.

"What was it this time?" she asked as Bear continued to sniff his way up and down her neck.

"It was Hounds from Hell," Appolion supplied before he got a wicked grin on his face. "You wouldn't happen to have a collar and leash for him, would you?"

Tif brightened. "Yes, I do." She gently pushed Bear on the chest and ordered, "Stay!" She bounded up the stairs, her brown pigtailed bouncing on her back. The males looked at her in a stunned silence.

Finally Appolion stammered, "I was just kidding, I never thought in my wildest dreams—"

"Stop." Cam held up a hand. "I'm already scarred enough by this as it is."

Tiffany came back down the stairs, her steps so slight she nearly skipped. Holy crap, she seemed to actually enjoy having Bear be so animalistic. Cam almost choked when he saw she did indeed have a long silver chain in her hand and at the end of it was a black studded collar. She went up to Bear and he stood stock still while she slipped it on his neck, low growls of pleasure rumbling from his chest.

"So is this a nightly ritual for you guys,"

Appolion goaded.

Tif gave them all a saucy look. "No, I'm the one who usually wears the leash. I'm taking him upstairs now. Don't worry, if he gets too wild, I'll use the restraints on him we have up there."

Appolion, Lash and the elf thought that was damn funny. Cam on the other hand was doing everything in his powers to forget the entire conversation while at the same time admiring his brother. Bear didn't even seem to notice there was anyone else in the room as he let Tiffany lead him away.

"If you don't mind me asking?" Lash was still looking at the staircase the couple just used. "What the hell is going on with him?"

Cam did mind him asking, but there was no point in denying anything anymore. Not after what they had just witnessed. "Bear has the ability to channel the psychic energy from others and mimic their mannerisms and some of their physical appearances. Usually he's able to snap right out of it after the battle is over, but there were so many Hounds and they gave off such a strong vibe, it's taking him longer than usual."

"So when he copied my voice back at the slave compound, he was channeling me?" Lash acted like he had been personally violated.

"Yup." Cam took some satisfaction in seeing the rogue squirm.

"That's just so...rude."

"Get over it, Lash," the elf snapped, his forest green eyes sharp with anger. He had long, white blond hair that was held back with a leather tie. "We have more important things to worry about now."

"Such as?" Cam spoke directly to Odan since he decided he liked him best out of the pair.

"We talked to a contact in the underground and discovered the Powers and the justice council are amassing their armies even as we speak. They are planning to attack before tomorrow ends."

"How can we be sure that your source is telling the truth?" Appolion asked as he crossed his arms and leaned back on the counter. "I've dealt with the underground network enough to know not to trust anything that comes from it. For that matter, how can we trust you?"

"We did help free your brother and his little female," Lash was quick to point out. Where Odan had an almost regal appearance about him, the rogue angel looked hard and worn down. His raggedly cut brown hair, framed a weather face.

"Because we paid you," Cam said in his best *Duh* voice. "You didn't exactly come cheap either."

"Santar still could have killed us for aiding you. In fact, since he's still out there on the loose, he could come after us at any time. That has to count

for something. Besides I wasn't going to help you out just for the hell of it. I told you before, I want nothing to do with you angel warriors. I hate you all."

Amadeaha took a step forward. "Lash, I have known you for centuries and I know that's not true. You've always admired and respected Michael."

Lash looked over at her and the adoring look that came over the rogue's face made Cam growl in the back of his throat. It was obvious Lash and Amadeaha had been close in the past or at least Lash had wished they had been close. Cam reached out and pulled her closer to him. She gave him a sharp glare, but otherwise didn't say anything.

"They're telling the truth," Appolion said. "I just scanned them and I don't sense any lies coming from them."

"You can read elves' minds?" Amadeaha asked.

Appolion nodded. "Surprisingly enough, his was a lot easier to read."

Cam narrowed his eyes at Odan knowingly. "That's because he wanted us to read his mind. I discovered something earlier today. Elves are telepathic."

Odan gave him a doubtful look. "How did you learn that?"

Fortunately for Cam the *how* entered the room

at that moment. Jordy came waltzing in and was halfway to the fridge before he noticed the little conference that was going on in there. His eyes widened in an *oops* look before they nearly bugged out when he spotted Odan.

Odan stood up and approached Jordy. "I thought that they killed you."

Cam was surprised at the concern he heard in the elf's voice. It was obvious he was protective of Raphael's cousin.

Jordy shook his head. "No, the angels healed me and brought me here to live with them"

"Are they being good to you?"

"Yes, they're being really nice to me. They don't treat me any differently than any other kid my age."

Odan looked relieved. "If I had known that you still lived, I would have never left you behind. Although you are not my kin, in the elf world, all of our children are precious."

Jordy gave a half shrug. "I'm only half elf."

Odan fixed him with a hard stare. "All of our children." He turned to Cam. "Do the elves know he lives with you?"

Cam scoffed, "Are you kidding? We can't even get the elves to talk to us. Michael has been trying for weeks to get an audience. We were hoping they would be willing to help us out."

Odan pointed at Jordy. "This changes

everything.”

Before Cam had a chance to ask him what he meant by that, they were interrupted by the sound of Bear howling from upstairs. There was no mistaking the satisfied, victorious sound in it either.

* * * *

Cam bit back a yawn and stretched out the kinks in his back. It was past midnight and he was in Michael’s office, along with Appolion and Abdiel, as they went through battle plans with the Chief. All around them the compound was in a state of chaos as various angels made ready for the coming attack. Outside, archangels were patrolling the parameter and barricading all the doors and windows in order to slow down any intruders. Cam only hoped the barricades wouldn’t have to be used because then that would mean the enemy had gotten through Michael’s army and nothing stood between the Powers and the children.

It was so loud that Cam didn’t even notice Cliona had approached them until the fairy rudely poked him in the side. He did a double take when he realized she was wearing her ceremonial buckskin. In all the time she’d lived with them, he’d only seen her in it once, so for the life of him

he couldn't understand why she would sport it now in the face of an impending battle. It consisted of a sleeveless top cut low in the back so her tawny skin was open for display. There was a matching fringed skirt that ended right above her knees. Several brightly colored beads and braids were scattered throughout her dark hair. "What do you want, Tinker Bell?" Cam snapped as he rubbed away the sting from her poke.

"I think I might know who the spy is."

As soon as she made that stunning declaration, the entire room fell stone silent and they all turned to gape at her. She nervously toyed with a stray bead and audibly gulped. Her brown eyes looked nervously down to her knee high moccasins before she brought them defiantly back up as she jutted her chin out. It was clear she wasn't about to let the warriors know they intimidated her.

"It's funny you should say that," a nearby archangel said dryly. "There are a lot of us who think it's you or that blonde fairy."

Cam curled his lip at the archangel and let out a low rumbling growl. "I've told all of you that I have scanned both Cliona and Wacky Winnow. Neither one of them are the spy. Cliona is a friend to my family and she is under my protection. So if anyone has a problem with her, then they have to deal with me."

The archangel looked like he wanted to

challenge that, but in the end backed down and walked away. Cliona turned and gave Cam a weak smile.

"You really didn't have to do that. I'm getting used to the comments."

"Sure I did, Tink. Without you, Nathaniel would be dead. None of my family will ever forget what you've done for us. Now, what were you trying to tell me?"

"I think I know who the spies are."

Michael cocked a brow. "Spies, as in plural?"

Wacky Winnow appeared from the crowd and barreled her way toward Cliona, rudely shoving Appolion out of the way. Appolion gave her his scariest scowl, but she ignored the brooding male. Today the addled fairy was wearing a camouflage pattern from head to toe, from the bulky sweatshirt, tight leggings to the big camo bow in her hair. "What in the name of the Goddess do you think you're doing?" she screeched at Cliona.

"Mind your own business," Cliona shot back, sparing the other fairy only the barest of glances.

But ol' WW didn't appear ready to back down. "Do you realize what you're wearing?"

Cliona let out a sigh so deep that it puffed out a piece of hair, which had strayed into her face. "Yes, unlike you I have full capacity of my mind. Besides I'm not the one dressed up like a giant, human army doll."

"I am perfectly coordinated and if we have to run and hide in the forest, the enemy will never find me." She scowled at all the warriors when they snickered at her *brilliant* plan. "Besides what I'm wearing is the least of our problems. The real issue is you and what you're parading around in. It is forbidden for anyone outside of the fairy race to see us in our ceremonial dress."

Cliona finally turned and gave the fairy her full attention. "News flash, they've already seen me in it."

Winnow's mouth opened and closed several times before she stammered, "Not even you would be so reckless."

"Ha! You want to see reckless? How about I go into the center of this room and flash my wings for everyone to see?"

"Now you're just being crazy."

"Crazy? This is coming from the one who talks to trees and stands around and waits for them to respond."

"Is anyone else getting a headache from all this?" Abdiel asked. Everyone but the fairies raised their hands.

Cliona ignored them and kept her attention focused on Winnow, although this time she adopted a much more gentle attitude. "I would do anything to help the angels. They were the only ones who have ever truly accepted me for what I

am. Think about it, Win, our own kind has thrown us out without a second thought. The angel warriors would never do that to me and I'm not even one of them. They have been nothing but loyal to me and I will do nothing less for them."

Winnow still looked dubious. "But they're...well...angels."

"They're my friends and I would die for them."

There were several moments of silence as the two fairies stared each other down. Willow's face finally softened. "Fine, but if you're going to do it, then you'll need my help. There'll be way too many for you to take care of on your own."

Cliona threw her arms around the other female. "Thank you, Winnow. I will never forget this."

Cam gave them a sarcastic wave. "Hey, remember us? The angels who you love? How about you fill us in? You were going to tell us who the spies are."

She nodded, then ventured timidly, "Yes, I think it's all of you."

Michael shared a confused look with Cam. "I don't follow."

"I was thinking about how Nathaniel was poisoned and it dawned on me that if one demon had access to puthion, then it would stand to reason others would, too."

Cam felt a cold hand of fear claw at his chest as realization dawned on him. "Are you saying

demons have been snooping into our lives using this fairy drug?"

"That would mean they would have to get close enough to an angel warrior to touch them," Michael argued even though his face was lined with the same dread Cam was feeling. "They would have to do it without the angel knowing they were there, too. The only one I know who can shield themselves from angels is Appolion and he's on our side."

Appolion got a tick in his jaw. "Not true, the super demon was able to do it the night of the attack. Remember?"

Bear shook his head. "But Dina was still able to feel the demon. So he would know if it was coming to our compound on a regular basis."

"During the attack the demon was also shielding Hounds from Hell," Cam reminded. "That may have weakened the super demons shield's enough for Dina to sense him. So what do we do now, Cliona?"

"We can give the adults a potion to protect themselves from the mind intruders, but not the children," she said.

"Because your young are not immortal yet, it would be fatal to their sensitive bodies," Winnow added.

"So how do we protect our children?" Michael all but snarled as he ran a hand through his hair.

Cliona answered, "Remember when Ariel was born and I did the fairy welcoming song for her? It helps to shield a child's mind from intruders. If I could do it over all the children in the compound, it might work against the demon."

Michael looked over at Cam. "What do you think?"

Cam shrugged. "I hate to admit it, but I think they're right. It makes sense. That's why we haven't been able to root out the spy. There never really was one in the first place."

Michael let out a tired sounding sigh and his shoulders slumped slightly. "Okay, Cliona, all the children are being gathered into the gym in preparation for the attack. You can do the song then." She started to leave the room, but he let out a sharp whistle to get her attention. "By the way, thank you. The angel warriors owe you for this one."

Cliona inclined her head as a shy smile stole over her face. "No, it is I who owe you."

After the fairies left, Michael dismissed everyone but Cam before he leaned heavily against the table and rubbed the bridge of his nose. "Can this possibly get any worse?"

Cam had never seen his uncle act this defeated. That scared him more than even the thought of demons traipsing through their minds. "Everything is going to be okay, Chief," his voice

cracked slightly with emotion. In the past it had always been Michael comforting him. The role change left Cam feeling unbalanced and a bit shell shocked. "We'll beat the justice angels and this day will just be a bad memory."

Michael raised his eyes. They were dull, bleak and devoid of all hope. "I think I made a mistake."

Okay, now Cam was more than bothered, he was scared shitless. Michael admitting that he made a mistake. The empath gripped the edge of the table so the Chief wouldn't see how bad his hands were shaking. "Why would you say that?"

"I should have evacuated the compound. Those civilians are sitting ducks here."

"They're better off here than out there in the open, unprotected," Cam argued. "The demons would just attack them one by one and pick them off."

Michael didn't seem to hear him. "There are children here."

Cam leaned forward on the table so he could capture Michael's gaze. "Those children are going to be surrounded by all of your angel warriors. Nothing is going to get to them."

"Something already has," Michael rasped, his voice raw with despair and anger. "That demon has been in their minds and I didn't even know it."

"You're not the only one to blame here. Raphael

and I didn't know either."

But Michael dismissed his reassurances with a curt wave of his hand. "Don't try to make me feel better. It belittles both of us. Now let's get back to our battle plan."

Cam looked down at the table and tried hard to deny the desolate feeling threatening to overwhelm him. Because even though he had tried to deny it to himself, he knew everything Michael had said was true. The angel warriors were well and truly fucked.

The urge to hold Amadeaha and make love to her one last time overwhelmed him. There were so many things unsaid between them, at least on his part, and he was going to be damned if he left things unfinished. Cam pushed away from the table and walked toward the door.

"Where are you going?" Michael grouched.

"I'll be back, soon," Cam promised, never looking back. "There's something I need to do first."

Turning the corner to the hall, he heard the Chief mutter, "Make every moment count with her, Cam. Don't have regrets like I do."

He didn't have to ask who Michael's regret was. Rachael. Even if Cam hadn't been an empath or psychic, he would know the Chief's true feelings for the female archangel. Every time he glanced at her, the look in his eyes said it all. Part

of Cam wanted to turn around and tell Michael to get off the pot and piss already and go tell Ray how he really felt, but he knew it would be useless. Talking to his uncle about her was like chatting it up with a brick wall. An exercise in futility.

It was hard to navigate the crowded hallways. Angels of every rank and level were running around getting ready for the impending attack. Cam had to stop several times along the way to either reassure scared followers or bark off orders to warriors so things would run smoothly. As a result of all that, it took him much longer than he anticipated to get to the family quarters.

The chaos in the hallway didn't even begin to compete with the one going on inside the family's dwellings. The brothers that weren't currently on duty were still running around, trying to get the rest of the family prepared. Bear was chasing around his and Tif's ugly cat, trying to get it into a carrier. Ana was trying to get Ariel to eat, Ariel was making a sport of spitting out her food. Nathaniel was barking orders at Jules, Jules was looking bored. Abdiel had Jordy and Dominic in a corner, giving them last minute weapons instructions, the teens kept nodding and looked like they were trying desperately to soak in any bit of information being thrown their way.

Cam found her in the middle of all the mess.

Amadeaha looked calm and was a beacon despite the fact their whole world was shattering around them. He didn't even realize he'd stopped breathing until his chest started to feel tight.

Of course she knew he was there. She always knew when he needed her. Shifting her head to the side, she locked glances with him and her lips parted in surprise before her face softened with understanding. No words were exchanged as he walked up to her, took her slight hand into his and led her up the stairs. If his family said anything to him along the way, he missed it because all his whole life as currently centered around her—his mate.

As soon as they got to the bedroom, he shut the door, locked it, then leaned against it. Still keeping a firm grip on her hand, like it was an anchor, he just stared at her. Taking in the beauty that was her.

"You're scaring me," she finally said, her voice cracking as she gave him a weak half smile.

"I can't stand the thought of losing you." Saying it out loud hadn't been as hard as he'd thought, yet that still didn't stop the hammering in his chest as he waited for her reaction.

"Don't worry." She stood on tiptoe and gave him a kiss on the cheek, her sweet lilac scent invading his senses. "I'm not going anywhere. My place is, and will forever be, by your side."

"You don't understand." He pulled his hand away and went to the middle of the room to pace. "This battle is going to be bad. I don't know if we're going to be able to win it. I'm prepared to die for this cause. I know that it's what my duty is as a warrior and leader of the empaths, but what I'm not prepared for is to watch you die."

"What exactly are you saying?" she asked, her eyes narrowing dangerously.

"I can't lose you," the confession came out ragged as he turned his head to hide the despair that must be stamped on his face. She marched over, grabbed his chin and forced him to look back at her.

"And I can't stand to lose you." Her eyes were bright with determination and tears. "So we will fight together, as mates. I will never let you push me away, not even if you think that's what best for me, Cam."

"But—"

"No, buts," she interrupted. "I am angel warrior and I am Lady of the Empaths, my duty is to be on the frontlines of this battle. My honor will allow no less and I know you would never want me to anything less, despite what you're saying now. I'm not going anywhere but into that battle, by your side."

It felt as though his heart were being ripped out, but he knew she spoke the truth. Her place

was there by him and, even though it was going to destroy him to have to watch her go into battle, he had no choice in the matter. Like he'd said to Derel before, they didn't have choices in life like humans did.

So all he could do was gather her up in a fierce hug and hold her tight to his chest. She embraced him back with the same urgent need, her slender arms wrapping around his waist like a vise. Rubbing his cheek into her silky hair, he closed his eyes and savored her. "You are everything to me, Amadeaha. Your name is the last thing that passes my lips before I go to sleep and the first thing I say when I wake up. I was born loving you and I will die doing the same. Everything that I have gone through, everything that has been done to me, everything I've become, it's all worth it because it brought me to you."

"Cam." She tilted her head so their lips were a mere breath apart. "Make love to me. This may be our last chance and I want one of my final memories to be of touching you."

"That is something you never have to ask me twice for." He bent down the last few centimeters so he could press his lips to hers. Not wanting to rush it, Cam took his time, slowly relearning the shape of her mouth. Darting out his tongue to remind himself how soft and full her lips felt, he then slipped it inside so he could reminisce at her

sweet taste. He wasn't about to take one second for granted.

Opening her mouth even further for him, Amadeaha plunged her fingers into his hair and kissed him back with the same tenderness. He could feel the same desperation, need and love in her touch. He walked backward to the bed, never breaking off the embrace. The only time their lips left each other was when they pulled off their clothing. Shirts, pants and other articles seemed to melt away with a brush of a hand, a caress of lips or a gentle tug. Soon they were both blessedly naked and her satin flesh was pressed against him. Cam couldn't resist running his hand up and down the gentle slope of her ass as he continued to plunder her mouth with his tongue. A soft whimper slipped from her as she rocked her hips against his cock, making it jerk in response.

"You're killing me here," he whispered between kisses.

"I'm just getting started." Slipping her hand between them, she circled her fingers around his cock and squeezed. He let out a hiss of pleasure as he dug his fingers deeper into the flesh of her rear. One lift. All it would take is one lift and he could jerk her up and impale her on his erection. But he didn't want it to end just yet.

Reluctantly, he lowered his hands so he wouldn't give into his primal needs and let

himself get lost in the magic of her fingers. Bending down, he took her nipple in his mouth and began to suckle slowly. Her breath hitched in response, but she never ceased her stroking. Up and down her fingers worked on his cock until his balls drew tight into his body. "Babe, you need to let up or I'm not going to make it," Cam bit out between clenched teeth. A bead of sweat trickled from his brow as he strained for control.

Amadeaha let go of his cock, but only so she could drop to her knees in front of him.

"What are you doing?" he asked. Her mouth was only inches from his erection and every breath she took fanned the glistening tip, teasing him. A seductress smile played on her mouth.

"Have I ever told you I love the taste of you?" She looked up at him through her thick lashes.

"You do that, I'm going to come in seconds." So then why in hell was he fisting a hand in her hair to urge her on?

"So." She reached a finger out and wiped away a droplet of pre-cum off his tip. "Archangels can go all night, all females know that." Gazes locked, she slowly brought her wet finger to her mouth and licked it clean.

"But you haven't found release yet." He let out a groan because she'd leaned forward and ran her tongue along the head of his cock.

"Don't worry about me, I'll be very satisfied

before we're done. For once I want this to be all about you. You are always putting your own needs and wants second, for once I want to see you come first."

Before he could even think of arguing, she took him in her mouth and then he was lost. Hot wet heat enveloped him as her lips sucked greedily. Cam tried to hold himself back, but thanks to her earlier petting, he was already on the edge. Jacking his hips back and forth, he worked in and out of her mouth. Not that she seemed to mind. She grabbed his ass with her hands, nails digging in, as she hummed in pleasure. All too soon the pressure in his balls built up until he threw his head back and erupted in a blinding orgasm. Part of him was embarrassed, he'd never come that quick before, another part of him was amazed at how intense it was. Amadeaha never drew back, drinking him in as he ran his fingers through her hair. It wasn't until every last bit of pleasure was wrenched from his body that she stood and molded her curves against his hard planes.

Cam kissed her swollen lips, tasting the salty remains of himself on her mouth. True to her words, his cock was already growing stiff again. Archangels were known for their stamina, added to the mix was the incubus part of him, too. It was a wonder he didn't walk around with a constant erection. Pulling back, she gave a satisfied smile as

she stroked it.

"I need this inside me now," she cooed as she lovingly caressed it.

"But what about your foreplay?" he teased as he kissed her softly on the tip of her nose.

"I don't need any. See, I'm more than ready." She took his hand and brought it to her pussy.

When he found how wet she was, he groaned. Grabbing her by the waist, he spun them around and took her down to the bed in one smooth move. She let out a small squeal of surprise that turned into a gasp of pleasure when he separated her legs with his body and entered her in one hard thrust. It still wasn't enough for her. With a cry, she arched her hips up and clawed at his back.

"More, I need more of you," she sobbed.

So Cam took one of her long legs and hooked it around his shoulder so her pelvis was thrust even further up. As soon as he was impaled deeper inside her womb, she shrieked in pleasure so loud it was a wonder his brothers didn't come barging through the door to see if there had been an attack.

"Being inside you is like coming home after a long battle." He pulled back and thrust into her again. "I don't ever have to go back to Heaven because whenever I'm with you, I find a piece of it." He turned his head so he could slowly lick the inside of her ankle resting on his shoulder.

"Cam, don't hold back. Give it all to me," she

pleaded as she thrashed her head back and forth on the pillow, her red hair a flash of color on the white linen.

That shattered his last bit of control, letting out a hiss that was more incubus than angel, he started to thrust into her hard and fast. Sweat covered them, making flesh slick as the sound of their bodies slamming together filled the room. Cam drove himself hard inside her, wanting to consume every inch of his mate. Slipping his hand under her shoulder, he gripped the spot where his mark, the Lehor Tiger, was forever imprinted on her skin. He wanted to remind himself of the link they forever shared. Nothing, not even death, could break that bond. He wouldn't allow for it.

He could feel her tighten around him as she came, her thighs trembling with pleasure. After a few more thrusts, he joined her, closing his eyes and letting the pleasure wash over him like a gentle wave. As he emptied his seed inside her, his only regret was that the demon half of him could never allow for his child to be planted inside of her. Maybe then, even if he did die and leave her, she would have something to remember him by.

Spent, he collapsed on top of her soft body for a second, before he rolled to the side so he didn't crush her with his heavy weight. As they both got their breath back, he passed the time by gently caressing her soft hip. This moment could have

gone on forever and he would have been happy. Now he truly understood what Derel had meant earlier about wishing he could take his mate and leave everything behind.

Cam sighed. If only that could be, but this was the hand he was dealt and he knew there was no way he could turn his back on it. Just as there was no way Amadeaha could shirk her duty. Like it or not, he was going to have to resign himself that she was going to be fighting on the front lines. "Promise you'll stay right by my side the entire time," he said.

"I promise." She got up in one elbow and looked down at him.

"There's one more thing I have to tell you and you have to promise not to be mad at me."

"What?" Her eyes got a suspicious glint in them.

"If you see Bear fall, get the hell out of there. Don't worry about me, just leave." He swallowed hard and looked away, unable to meet her gaze.

"Why would I do that?"

"Because if Bear dies then I die. The fates tied our souls together long ago and now neither of us can survive if the other does not." He finally dared to look back at her, expecting to see anger for hiding such a big secret from her, but instead, he saw her eyes were wide with terror.

"Why would they do that to you?" her voice

cracked as she slowly shook her head.

"I don't know." He shrugged one shoulder in an indifference he really didn't feel. "With great power comes great sacrifice? I know I should have told you sooner, I just didn't want to worry you more than you already do."

"How could I not worry about you?" She threw herself down on his chest. "I just found out you have two targets on your back."

Cam stoked her hair as she sobbed. He didn't have the heart to tell her he really had three targets on his back. Because if anything were to happen to her, he would cease to exist, because he would be destroyed inside and the demon would finally be able to take him over completely.

Chapter Eleven

Cam stood on top of the tall hill, overlooking the valley. Using his heightened demon vision, he scanned the distant trees, looking to see if there was any swaying of branches, any scattering of birds as they were disturbed, anything that would warn him the enemy was getting ready to attack. But everything was still. *It's too still, almost foreboding.*

Amadeaha stood by his side. Even though every instinct in Cam still made him want to take his mate and hide her from the coming battle, he knew that he could never do that to her. As an angel warrior, she had earned the right to stand and fight with honor at his side. Both of them had already bled for this cause, now was the time to see it through to the end. He just wished that he'd had more time to train her more time to prepare her for a battle this big. More time for...everything.

Bear and Ana came up the hill and made their

way to him.

Cam asked, "Are they coming?"

Bear nodded. For once the usual carefree gleam was absent from his eyes. His face was set and determined as an aura of danger surrounded him. "All the empaths are on their way up the hill now."

"How about the children?"

Ana attempted a smile, but it quivered before it fully formed. "Michael has them all in the cafeteria. The room is surrounded by adult warriors, but I'm still scared for Ariel."

Cam was saved from having to give false words of reassurance when his empaths came into view and started assembling. Leading the pack was Dina, Jules and Heather, followed by the hundreds of others that Cam led. Each one of them precious and important to him. He'd made a point to memorize each of their names and their family histories. Even though he'd been forced into this position as leader, he now knew that it was what he'd always been destined to do and he'd never trade any of away. Amadeaha went to go stand with them, but he grabbed her by the hand and held on tight. "You stay by my side." He brought her fingers up to his lips and kissed them. "You're not just my mate, you're the best part of me. We always stand together."

A tender smile ghosted her face before she gave

him a nod. The two of them started to walk amongst his followers. While Michael and Raphael had chosen to meet with their groups in the compound, Cam had purposely picked the battlefield. He'd also chosen to talk to his empath's individually. Not only because it was more personal in his opinion, but also because he hated to give speeches to big groups.

He knew time was running short so he was only able to spend a few seconds with each of them, but did his best to make sure those seconds counted. The entire time Amadeaha stayed by him, adding her own comments and words of encouragement. Pride swelled his heart at the way she handled herself. He couldn't have picked a better mate or Lady for his empath's.

They stopped at a father with his son. It was obviously the son's first battle. The young angel was pale and his blue eyes were wide with fear. He nervously toyed with the whip that was coiled at his side. He even tugged at his light brown hair in a mannerism familiar to Cam. He'd done the same damn thing the day of his first demon fight.

"Benton, it's good to see you've completed your training." Cam clasped the young angel on the shoulder.

Benton seemed shocked Cam knew his name, let alone the fact that this was his first time. "Yes, your Lordship. I just completed my trials before

we moved to this compound.”

The trials were a series of tasks and tests all young angels went through once their formal training was finally done. It was at times brutal and dangerous. That was because it was a necessary evil since it proved the angel was truly ready to face the danger of Lucifer and his demons. They couldn’t risk sending out a warrior who was unprepared or weak.

Benton’s father beamed proudly. “He passed his first time through. He did proud by you, Lordship.”

Cam nodded. “And he will do me proud again today in battle. I heard from all his instructors that he was top of his class.”

As Cam moved on, he noticed Benton had gotten his color back and stood more proud now. Amadeaha gave his hand a squeeze. He squeezed back, happy to have her there with him. This was one of the hardest things he’d ever had to do and it was nice to know he wasn’t going it alone. Sure his brothers and sister had always been there, but that was because they were family and they had been stuck with him. Amadeaha was there because she wanted to be—because she had chosen to be with him.

He purposely saved Ana and Bear for last. Too choked up with emotion to speak at first, he stood for a few moments as he faced them, just looking

at them. Ana who had always loved him, even when he had been going through his darkest times and was more demon than angel. He couldn't count the times she had come into his room and soothed him after he'd had one of his nightmares. Sadly, she'd had to do that more so in the last few years than when he had been a child.

Then there was Bear. Bear who had always been loyal to Cam. Without Bear's help and support, Cam never would have been able to lead the empath's with efficiency. Bear had never expected a thank you either. He'd done it because that was how he rolled.

In the end, all Cam managed was a simple, "I love you guys."

Ana got a tender look on her face as her eyes welled up with tears. "We know, Cammie. We love you, too. We always have and we always will."

"I know that now." He did, too. Thanks to Amadeaha, he now saw love could be unconditional. Cam tilted his head as a breeze blew by. His heightened senses told him there were demons approaching. He would know that sickening decay stench anywhere. Michael must have sensed it, too, because the Chief came up the hill at that moment, his archangels following him.

Further away, the healers stood in formation. Cam strained his eyes until he was able to make

out Derel amongst them. They started arming their bows and aiming them into the valley. They all stayed their weapons, waiting for Raphael's order to shoot, although Cam knew the head healer wouldn't give that order until he was certain the enemy was in sight and close enough to make the shots count. Raphael was, if nothing, practical and efficient. Cam both admired and hated him for that. "Arm up, weapons at ready!" he shouted to his empaths.

They all answered with a loud, "Whoo ha!"

Cam nearly jumped out of his skin. Now where in the hell had they learned that? He sure as heck had never taught them to do it. One look at Bear's mischievous grin, told him who was behind it. Obviously Bear had been watching way too many human war movies. "Funny, Pookie Bear," he murmured low so only his brother heard. "I'm going to kick your ass after this battle is over."

Bear didn't even have the good graces to look afraid or sorry. "Get over it, you know it's cool."

The archangels intermingled themselves into the empaths so they were all standing together to face their enemy as one strong force. Amongst them were his archangel brothers and friends. Cam felt the familiar comfort of Abdiel's presence at his shoulder. Abdiel had been Cam's archangel when he had still been a goofy little empath. It had been Abdiel who had taken Cam and molded him

into the warrior he was today. "Were you guys ever able to reach your mother?" Cam asked him.

Abdiel gave a curt nod. "She said she would come with her demon assassins. The only problem is they can't flash either so they have to drive here and I don't know if they're going to make it in time."

"Demons drive cars?" Cam pretended to be shocked, hoping to lighten the mood some. "It must be a bitch handling a stick when you have claws."

Abdiel gave a shallow laugh. "You haven't changed a bit. You're still the same smartass you were that first day that we met."

Justice angels started to flash into the valley below, just far enough away so the healer's arrows would not be able to reach them. At the same time, several hundred demons arrived. Some came lumbering and slithering from the trees, others flashed in. Every species was represented. Tall, muscular assassins, black, hairless, Hounds from Hell and even smaller foot soldiers. Those were just the ones Cam was able to identify. There were many other types that he'd never even seen before.

"Fuck me," Ramiel breathed. "I didn't even know there were that many demons. How did the justice council get them all to agree to fight?"

"Most demons would love to have a piece of

Michael and his angel warriors,” Cam answered, never taking his gaze off the demon horde. “This is finally their chance.”

“How could the council do this?” Amadeaha asked. “They know we have children inside.”

Dina screwed his face up like he’d tasted something bitter. “Like they give a care. My father used to say the only good angel warrior is a dead angel warrior. He was always looking for a way to kill Michael, now he has it and he doesn’t care if a few angel warrior children get in his way.”

“Why are they just standing there?” Bear asked bewildered. “They should be attacking, it’s like they’re waiting for something.”

Cam cocked his head to the side. Bear was right, they should be attacking. He locked eyes with Abdiel and they both came to the same sickening realization at once. “Everyone, down,” he shouted. “They have flyers.”

No sooner had Cam said those words, then the sky came alive with gargoyle-like creatures of various sizes and colors. The angel warriors dove for the ground, but one male archangel wasn’t quick enough. A black flyer swooped through at a blinding speed and decapitated the angel right where he stood.

A nearby female empath started to shriek when his blood sprayed on her. Her blue eyes widened with panic and she started to scramble away as

she let out small bursts of screams. She was making herself such a big target that she might as well have painted a bull's-eye on her ass. With a frustrated growl Cam started to move toward her, but Amadeaha got there first. She threw her body on top of the other female and pinned her down.

"Shhh..." she soothed as she smoothed back the empath's long blonde hair. The female continued to sob, but she remained in place and didn't fight Amadeaha's hold.

Cam crouched and started to shoot off flame balls at the demons, but he was fighting a losing battle. Every time he would take out one flyer, another would take its place. Appolion was shooting off his own energy bolts, but he was in the same boat as Cam. Too many demons and not enough time.

You boys keep your heads down and let me handle this, Ray's telepathic voice ordered.

What makes you think you'll have any better luck? Appolion groused.

Because I'm going to use my brains instead of my brawn. Watch and learn.

The female archangel was sitting against a tree, eyes closed, face relaxed as she slipped into a deep trance. Michael and several other warriors were standing in a circle around her, keeping the demons at bay. A thrill of excitement jumped through Cam as he realized what her plan was. Of course, why hadn't he thought of that? Ray

controlled the weather.

There was the roll of distant thunder, followed by several fat drops of rain. The rain continued to fall down at a faster and faster rate, until everyone began to get soaked. Cam could see the flyers begin to falter under the now torrential downfall. A few were struck by lightning and they spun to the ground in flames.

An arrow came from the direction of the enemy, making a whistling sound as it cut through the air. It sliced through the protective ring that Michael and the other archangels were forming and slammed into Ray's right shoulder. She let out a loud scream that mingled with the other war cries. She didn't collapse like Cam thought she would. Instead she remained sitting, her back against the trunk of a tree.

When Michael pulled at her shoulder to help her to the ground, she let out another cry of pain. Cam came to a sickening realization, Ray was still sitting because the arrow had gone all the way through her and had pinned her to the tree. When Cam got a closer look at the arrow, he came to another sickening realization. It was of Power make.

The last time the Powers had been active it hadn't lasted that long, but one of the things Cam remembered from that horrible experience was what their arrows looked like. They were always

gold with white feathers and that was the exact description of the thing shish kabobing Ray. Since Ray was hurt, the storm weakened and started to dissipate. Knowing he would have a clear view of the valley now, Cam dared to look over. What he saw made his blood run cold.

The Powers had come back and they were mixed in with the vast number of demons and justice angels. Even if Abdiel's mother and Brad managed to come to their aid, the angel warriors were grossly outnumbered.

Cam thought of Amadeaha, his family and all the other angels in the compound. His heart sank and his throat grew dry with fear and despair. There was no way any of them were going to survive this day.

A deafening roar came from the valley. He gave Amadeaha one last desperate look as the ground shook under the feet of countless demons right before the enemy attacked.

Chapter Twelve

The wave of demons, Powers and justice angels was so strong the angel warriors were immediately overtaken. They slammed into the angels with such force that Cam's breath was knocked out of him and he was thrown to the ground. He rolled, first one way, then the other as he tried to avoid being trampled.

A midnight black demon spotted him and decided to attack. It let out a hideous sounding shriek, showing off its rotted brown teeth. Blackie swung its kris down and Cam rolled at the last minute, barely avoiding having a part of him sliced off by the wavy blade. When it made to strike at him again, Cam decided he'd had enough of that game. He jumped up and brought up his sword, deflecting the next blow.

Cam realized he'd been separated from Amadeaha and started to scream her name out into the mass of bodies as he continued to exchange blows with the demon. The assassin

tried to strike at Cam again, so he swung his sword around and neatly decapitated the monster.

He looked around, frantically, for Amadeaha. He still didn't see her or any of his family for that matter. He did catch a glimpse of Dina. The empath was fighting, a sadistic smile curling his lips all the while. But then the crowd shifted and Cam lost sight of him as well.

Another battalion of the enemy flashed in between the angel warriors and the compound, boxing them in. Cam swore out loud. Their children were in that compound. The most vulnerable and innocent were now going to be at the mercy of Jehel and his bastards. He tried to fight his way to the compound, but there were too many enemies blocking his way.

Cam yelled for Amadeaha again, the same time taking out another demon assassin with a stroke of his sword. The demon fell on top of Cam, knocking him off balance and causing him to fall to the ground. Nathaniel appeared from the mob and pulled him to his feet. "Have you seen anyone else?" Cam asked.

Nathaniel dodged a blade thrust. "Just Appolion and Abdiel. They're trying to make their way into the compound to get to the kids."

Something came swooping in from the sky and tackled a small demon getting ready to attack Cam. It was the succubus, Lilith. She blew Cam a

kiss right before she ripped out the demon's throat with a pair of claws that appeared at the ends of her fingers. A war cry sounded off to the right of Cam. It was Brad and his clan. The incubus was fighting with a pair of blades and his succubi took to the air. They were every bit as vicious and deadly as the flyers had been earlier. Except this time, the advantage was for the good guys. Mangus, Cam's demon bartender friend, was there as well with Emmanuel and Cadean. The bartender was still wearing his usual Harley Davidson shirt and jeans and using a machine gun with ruthless efficiency.

"I can't believe they're joining in the battle," Nathaniel breathed out in awe. "They have to know it's a suicide mission."

"And you used to ride me for hanging out with succubi so much," Cam drawled.

Another cry sounded off as Appolion and Abdiel's mother entered the battle with her guards. While Cam was heartened to see them, he knew their help was futile. They were still up shit's creek without a paddle unless a real miracle happened.

* * * *

"Do you feel any different now that we've been blessed by a fairy?" Jordy asked as Cliona and

Wacky Winnow finished up their song.

Dominic shrugged, the only thing he had noticed during the song was how good Cliona's legs had looked in her ceremonial buckskin skirt. The little top looked darn fine on her, too. He ducked his head when he realized he was acting like some horn dog. They were in the middle of some huge mega war and he should be thinking of stuff like how to save his hide, not looking at Cliona's.

Still, it was a mighty nice hide.

He jerked his head up at the sound of a loud roar outside the doors of the cafeteria. Several of the teen empaths started to shake and get really antsy. They paced back and forth and one male even went over to the garbage can and puked. The only reason they would be acting like that was because demons were inside the compound.

Cliona grabbed a sword. It was small and crafted by Abdiel for her specific measurements. "Stay put," she ordered. "I'll be right back." She ran out of the room, shutting the doors behind her.

Wacky Winnow and the adult archangels that were there, followed her so only the teens and the children were left. They all waited with baited breath for her to return. Some of the younger ones started to sob. Dominic reached down and picked up Ariel, even though she hadn't been one of the ones who had been crying. He held her in his arms

and patted her back. She patted his in return with her tiny little hand.

"Why isn't Cliona coming back?" a female healer asked. She moved closer and clutched onto Dominic's arm.

Jordy cocked an eye at her gesture. "She probably ran into whatever is out there."

They all flinched at the sounds of crashing furniture, screams and glass breaking. All hell was breaking loose outside those doors and it was getting closer to them. Dominic felt the weight of every pair of eyes suddenly settling on him and Jordy. It reminded him a lot like their first day of school. Except this time those looks weren't saying, *What freaks*. They were saying, *Please, help us*.

Jordy must have read the same thing because he growled, "Oh, now they want our help?"

"Please," the female implored, her hand still on Dominic. "You're both related to the greatest angels known."

Dominic couldn't hold back the, "So?" The female's blue eyes flashed with anger before she seemed to tap down her emotions. Dominic noticed how nice her eyes went with her dark hair. She was really kind of pretty and she did look scared. Wasn't it his duty as a future archangel to help those in need? "Okay," he relented. "I'll help."

Jordy rolled his eyes. "Why do I let you talk me into crap like this? All it takes is a girl to flutter her eyelashes at you and you start thinking with the wrong head."

Dominic ignored him and started issuing orders. "Put the youngest ones in the center. I need all the archers to get up on chairs and tables and be ready to shoot as soon as the doors are breached. Empaths, go stand by the archangels and get ready to fight."

Dominic was shocked out of his tennis shoes when everyone actually ran to do what he said. He was even more stunned when the female gave him a kiss on his cheek before she ran off. Jordy let out a snort of disgust, but Dominic could see the underlying respect in his friend's eyes.

Dominic took his little cousin, Ariel, and sat her in the middle of the room. "Stay here," he ordered. "That way they'll have to get through us to get to you."

She smacked him on the face with her slobbery hand and he tried not to let it gross him out too much. He smoothed down her fuzzy hair, only to have it spring back up into disarray again. *Since when have I become so protective? I liked it better when I only had to worry about Mom and me.* Then the baby smiled at him and he felt himself melting. "Stop that," he muttered. "It's not fair playing the cute card on me."

She laughed at him and darned if he didn't

smile back. Then his heart skipped a bit. Crap, he was the only one there to protect her. If he failed, then the demons were going to get her for sure. He'd be letting down Ana, Cam and Michael if that happened.

Jordy was leading his own cousin, Atar to the middle of the room and he had a look on his face that showed he was having some of the same fears as Dominic. Jordy gave Atar a pat on the top of his head before he came over to join him. "How many times have you fought demons before?" Dominic asked

Jordy grimaced. "Only a couple of times and I never came out on top. How about you?"

"Just that one night at the old compound. Besides that, the only ones I've seen have been the ones in our textbooks."

The noises outside were getting louder and more distinct. There was a roar, something that sounded like nails scratching against metal and a scream. It was female and Dominic prayed it wasn't Cliona. Even though she was a fairy, he really liked her a lot. She had always been nice to him and the other kids.

Jordy fixed his eyes on the door as a nervous tick developed in his thin jaw. "Well, I think you're going to get to see some more demons soon. I wonder if any of the adults are still alive."

Dominic knew Cam and Michael were still

living. He didn't know how, but he did. It was something that he wouldn't have been able to put into words if asked. It was because of some deep connection he had with them. "They're still alive," he reassured his friend.

Dominic grabbed his sword and tried hard not to notice his hands were shaking in fear. He bet his cousins were never afraid before a battle. Jordy pulled out his own sword and stood by his side. The double doors started to rattled and then they were thrown open and some of the grossest most disgusting demons ever, came in.

* * * *

When the next group of combatants flashed in, Cam yelled out a few choice words, thinking that it was more Powers. He spun around to face them and was shocked by what he saw.

It was elves. A whole battalions worth.

At least he assumed it was elves. They were all tall and angular and they had the same slanted eyes and pointed ears Jordy did. Some were armed with longbows while others carried swords. There were an equal number of females as males, all of them hard muscular and battle ready. Dressed in bright silver armor that covered most of their bodies and faces, it was hard to determine their expressions. They all stood in a calm manner

at odds with the chaos going on around them. Cam tensed, waiting to see if they were friend or foe.

The tallest one of them, a blond male yelled out something Cam couldn't hear over the battle sounds and the other elves yelled in response. Then they moved en masse and attacked the demons and Powers at the rear of the angel warriors.

"Thank God," Nathaniel said. "They came after all."

Cam couldn't help but be impressed by the elves' battle skills. They cut through the enemy like they were nothing, moving with a fluid grace that was captivating to watch. The angel warriors all gave out a cry when they realized that there was hope after all.

He finally heard Amadeaha's screams mixing in with the rest of the noise. It was distant and faint, but he would know her voice anywhere. He let out a sigh of relief, followed the sound and found her several feet away. She was standing over her cousins, Dina and Azreal. The two males were rolling on the ground, engaged in a vicious battle. Amadeaha stepped forward to help, but another justice angel jumped on her and took her down.

Cam let out a demon growl as he lunged forward to help his mate. He grabbed the justice angel and threw him to the side. Once Cam was

able to see Amadeaha wasn't hurt, he turned to the bastard who had dared to touch her. The justice angel struggled to stand only to collapse back on his ass when he saw Cam coming for him. "Stand and fight, you coward," Cam snarled. He put his sword back in its scabbard because he wanted to feel the blows he planned on giving.

He recognized the justice angel as one of Azreal's two lapdogs. He had long dark hair that he kept tied back and enough flashy jewelry on to make Paris Hilton weep in jealousy. Cam had always thought the male was an arrogant nancy who fancied himself a ladies' man. For a brief moment, fear passed through the male's brown eyes, before he masked it with a curled lip and condescending glare.

"I was just going to smack your whore around a bit," the male sneered. "I wouldn't have hurt her, much."

Oh that was such the wrong thing for that prick to say. Cam didn't even give him a warning before he punched him in the face. The justice angel tried to get off a punch and that was the only chance he got before Cam one-twoed him into oblivion. Leaving the justice dick on the ground so he could get trampled, Cam turned to take care of Azreal.

Ever since he'd found out it was Azreal who had hurt Amadeaha back in Heaven, Cam had vowed he'd find the fucker and tear him apart

someday. Well that someday was now here and he planned on taking advantage of it. Azreal and Dina were still fighting and Cam had taken two steps toward them when he stopped himself.

As much as he wanted this fight, Dina deserved the vengeance more than him. Dina had suffered for decades by Azreal's hand and he, more than anyone, had the right to make the bastard pay.

And Dina was making him pay.

The fight was no longer evenly matched. The empath had gotten the upper hand on the justice angel and he was showing no mercy. Dina had a blade in each hand and he was using those with a skill that bespoke of the countless hours of training he'd put in since he'd come to live with the angel warriors. Bleeding, Azreal stumbled to the ground. Dina didn't pause, he just used his feet to continue his assault. Between each kick, he would yell another sentence.

"This is for what you did to Amadeaha."

"This is for all the times you and your friends kicked my ass."

"This is for hunting down Haniel and making him leave."

It went on for several minutes. Amadeaha went to stop him, but Cam wrapped his arms around her and stopped her. "Don't, he needs this."

She sagged in his arms and he buried her face

in his chest so she wouldn't have to see anymore of the fight. Azreal was curled up in a ball, not responding to any of Dina's rants and that seemed to make the empath even angrier.

"Get up and face me like a male of worth," he screamed as he delivered another vicious kick to Azreal's ribs. Dina's face was a mask of hatred, his eyes blazing with so much fury they almost appeared black instead of their usual pale gray.

When Azreal still refused to move, Dina let out a roar and grabbed the justice angel by his hair. Azreal looked a lot like Jehel or the way Dina did before the empath had gone Goth, with silver blond hair and eyes so light they appeared almost colorless. Dina held one of his blades to his cousin's throat, pressing so hard Cam could see a slim ribbon of blood trickle out.

"Please, no," Azreal begged, finally finding his voice. "Whatever you may think of me now, I'm still your family."

Dina let out a crazed sounding laugh, showing Cam the empath had taken a leap into the dark part of his mind. "You're nothing to me but a worthless pile of crap. I never considered you family."

Azreal gave Cam an imploring look and when he saw that wasn't going to do any good, the justice angel continued with the pleas. "Even so, cousin, know if you kill me you will be spilling the

same blood that flows through your veins.”

“Did you care about that all the times you beat me and left me bleeding?” Dina pressed the blade in even harder. “You know what I think? Maybe if I killed you, then I wouldn’t hear the whispers in my sleep anymore.”

Just as Dina brought the blade up for a killing blow, Amadeaha screamed, “No! Stop, he’s not worth it.”

Dina whipped his head around. “Why should I show him mercy when he never showed me any?”

“Because you’re better than him,” Cam answered. “I know you, Dina, you have more honor than to allow yourself to kill one of your own family. You do this and you’ll be giving into those whispers and becoming the thing you have vowed to fight.”

Dina became still and, for several long, agonizing minutes, it looked like he was going to ignore them and kill Azreal. Then the anger and hate drained from the empath’s face and he threw Azreal from him. Azreal didn’t wait around for anyone to change their minds, the justice angel flashed out of there, his tail between his legs.

Megan appeared out of the crowd like she’d known her mate needed her. She threw her arms around Dina. No words were spoken between the pair. She just held him close and stroked his hair.

Azreal wasn’t the only one to rabbit. Other

justice angels flashed away, followed by the Powers. The demons retreated as well. They left behind scores of wounded angel warriors in their wake. Some of them were moving around, others weren't and Cam feared the worst. He didn't even want to guess how many angels they had lost this day.

But he knew that it could have been worse, too. If the elves hadn't of come, then the angel warriors would have lost this battle for sure. Frantic, he looked around for his family, desperate to know they had survived the carnage. After several heart pounding minutes, he was relieved to see his brothers coming up to him. They all seemed to be mostly unhurt. "Where's Ana?"

"She went with Appolion to the compound," Ramiel supplied as he wiped away some blood dripping from his nose.

"Let's go help them." Cam grabbed Amadeaha's hand and started running there.

They had to step over the front doors because they were smashed into a pile on the ground. The walls had deep gouges in them from demon claws and the floor was coated in blood, dirt and mud. Crap, the demons had gotten to the children. Cam's stomach fell at the thought of any of the kids being hurt. He saw a small figure crumpled on the ground.

"Cliona, no," Joe cried in an anguished voice.

He ran over and pulled the fairy into his arms. She opened her eyes and gave him a weak smile. There was blood on her face and she was holding her arm protectively over her right side.

"I'm okay," she said weakly, her usual spitfire attitude dulled. "I don't need some archangel to rescue me."

Seeing she really was going to be fine, Cam moved on toward the cafeteria. He was dreading seeing the bodies of angel children. His stomach clenched as he thought about all the families that were going to be devastated by the losses.

Once he entered the cafeteria, he looked around for bodies, but there weren't any. At least not angel ones, there were a few demons. Ana came running over to him, she had Ariel in her arms. Both her and the baby were smiling. "What happened?" Cam asked.

"The teens fought them off."

"You're kidding." His jaw dropped as he looked at the fallen demons again.

"No." She gave her daughter a tight squeeze. "Guess who led them? Jordy and Dominic."

Stunned and proud beyond belief, Cam scanned the crowd until he found his young cousin. He was with Jordy and the pair were leaning heavily on a table with slightly amazed looks on their faces. Like they didn't know how in the hell they had managed to pull it off. Cam went

over to them and patted them each on the shoulder. "You two did good today," he said as he looked them over for obvious injuries.

Dominic stood up straighter.

When he winced, Cam realized even though he didn't see any bleeding, the young angel was hurt somewhere. The teen was still clutching his sword and Cam noted it was covered in demon's blood. "Let me take you to the infirmary," he offered.

Dominic shook his head. "It's not that serious. I know there are others who are way worse than me. I can wait."

Cam felt a rush a pride. God help him, but this kid had managed to squirm his way into his heart already. "You really are a Lehor, kiddo. Not only do you love a good fight, but you're stubborn as hell, too."

Dominic shrugged as a slight blush came over his cheeks. "I'm not a brave as you think. I was scared out of my wits."

Cam chuckled. "We were all scared. You'd have to be stupid not to be when you're going into battle."

Dominic's face registered shock. "You were afraid?"

Cam leaned down and spoke in a stage whisper, "Just don't tell anyone. I've got a reputation to protect."

Dominic gave a small smile that disappeared

once they all noticed Michael coming their way. Cam was taken aback by his uncle's appearance. The Chief's face was lined with worry and his shoulders were slumped. His eyes were dull and listless as he swept the area, taking in all of his followers and the destruction the enemy had left behind. He looked so defeated, despite the fact they had just won the battle.

Michael ran a hand through shaggy hair, something he always did when he was pissed or upset. "You need to come with me, Jordy."

The elf actually jumped when the Chief addressed him. "Did I do something wrong?"

He was giving off terrified vibes and Cam was reminded that for all his cockiness, the kid obviously was far from over his time as a slave.

Gabi came running from the crowd. Her eyes were full of tears and her face was tight with worry. She clutched at Jordy's arm. "I won't let you do this, Michael."

Michael looked even more defeated, if that were possible. "Gabi, I don't have any say in this."

"Bullshit!" she gritted out between clenched teeth. "You're our leader, you're Jordy's leader. That means that you should protect us."

"What's going on?" Cam asked, taken back by Gabi's venom. He'd never heard her talk to the Chief like this in all the years he'd known her.

Gabi impatiently wiped at a tear. "The elves

want to take Jordy with them."

"We don't know that for sure," Michael reasoned. "They just said they wanted to see him."

Gabi's grip grew so tight on Jordy, Cam half expected the poor kid to start wincing.

"We both know that they'll want to take him. Michael, how can you even consider it? After the way they treated you as a child."

"It was different with me. I wasn't one of them."

"Neither is Jordy, not totally." She shifted her hands to Michael, placing them imploringly on his arm. "Please, I'm begging you, as my friend and my Chief. Don't let them take him from me."

"They won't."

They all turned at the sound of Raphael's voice. His face was hard and his arms were crossed in a defiant manner. Reaching out, he pulled Jordy to him in a protective manner. The healer left his hand on the youth's shoulder as he continued to stare down Michael, challenging the Chief's authority even though he didn't speak one disrespectful word. Jordy looked up at Raphael with astonishment as he moved closer to him for protection. If the situation had not been so damn serious, Cam might have laughed at the young angel's expression. It was equal parts fear and confusion. For once though, Jordy was smart and kept his trap shut.

"We'll go and talk to the elves, but Jordy stays with us," Raphael didn't raise his voice, but the determination and menace carried through nonetheless.

Cam was a little surprised at the head healer's attitude. Raphael had never been accused of being loving, even toward Gabi and she was his sister. Cam knew one thing for sure. There was no way in hell he was going to miss this little sit down with the elves because it looked like things were going to get very interesting.

Michael didn't call Raphael out for his insubordination, he just gave the slightest nod before turning to Cam. "We have to do something first before we go meet with the elves. We have to talk to the demons who helped us and then we have to account for our dead and wounded."

Cam felt Amadeaha reach out and grab his hand and give it a reassuring squeeze. "How's Rachael doing?"

Michael sighed. "Rachael is doing fine. She's at the infirmary and Derel's already working on her."

Cam gave Amadeaha a quick kiss and walked with Michael back toward the battlefield. They found Brad off to the side as far away as he could get from the angel warriors. He was kneeling next to one of his succubi. Her right wing was torn and she had a hideous slash across her abdomen.

"How is she?" Michael asked in a surprisingly gentle tone.

Brad whipped his head up, then quickly lowered his eyes once he realized it was the Chief addressing him.

Even in the midst of all the suffering and fear present on the battlefield, Cam could still feel the shame and remorse rolling from Brad.

"She's hurt pretty badly. I need to find a healer for her," Brad answered, still averting his eyes.

"I'll get someone over here real quick," Michael promised.

"Thank you."

"Brad, look at me," Michael commanded in a soft voice. When Brad reluctantly raised his gaze, Michael said, "I know it wasn't your fault. I don't blame you for what happened."

"I'm so sorry, Chief," Brad's apology had a ragged edge to it.

"I know you are. If I could change you back, I would. Thank you for coming to our aid today. That showed you still have the heart of an angel warrior and I will never forget our debt to you and your succubi. Is there anything I can do to help you?"

Brad hesitated only for a second. "I just need to you to look out for my brother, Daniel. Now that Ramiakle and I are gone, he has nobody. I worry he'll follow our path."

"I'll make sure he has guidance and support."

"Daniel's a healer. Why don't I go get him to heal your succubus?" Cam offered.

Regret passed over the demon's face. "He refuses to talk to either one of us. Ramiakle tried to talk to him right after the battle and he told her he never wants to see either one of us again."

Cam felt for him. "Crap, I'm so sorry. Do you want me to talk to him?"

Brad gave a sad shake of his head and it seemed as if the weight of the world had settled on his shoulders. "No, it's better this way."

Cam spotted Megan in the crowd and he waved her over. "I need you to help somebody," he told her as soon as she came up to them.

Her brown eyes got huge when she saw Brad. "Oh my God. I mean, Bear said that you were big, but...wow."

Cam tilted his head toward the injured succubus and Megan seemed to notice her for the first time.

"Oh, sure."

The sated tone of Megan's voice showed how hard the battle had been on all of them. She was usually so bubbly and carefree that nothing got her down. She brushed back a strand of her strawberry blonde hair and tugged at her top so a rip in front didn't show off so much of her stomach.

"I like your boots," she mumbled to the succubus as she knelt down on the ground.

"Thank you," the demoness gasped. She was breathing hard and her face was pale.

As Megan began to heal the succubus, she rattled on and on to Brad, filling him in on all the gossip he had missed since he had left. Brad did a good job of pretending to be interested. He got a small smile on his face and nodded his head in the proper places.

As Cam walked away, he could hear her continue to babble behind him. He almost smiled at Brad's predicament. Almost. One look at the battlefield sobered him right up. The wounded and dead from both sides were almost more than he could bear. He swallowed hard.

They had won the battle, too.

"How many more would we have lost if the elves hadn't come?" he croaked.

Michael's gaze traveled slowly over the carnage. "I can't allow this to happen again. Which is why we have to do everything we can to make sure the elves remain our allies."

"I'm sure it won't be too hard to convince them to stay in the war. They already helped us this much."

Michael let out a harsh laugh. "You don't know the elves. They have strange ways of negotiating. Their customs and traditions are seriously fucked

up."

"Is it true they raised you?"

"Yes," Michael said curtly, obviously not wanting to delve into that topic.

Cam decided not to let it go. "Was it that bad?"

Michael got a haunted look in his eyes. "I would have rather been raised in Hell. Does that tell you anything about how the elves really are?"

Chapter Thirteen

“**W**here is the child?”

Cam narrowed his eyes at the elf who asked the question and tried hard to keep his diplomat's hat on. It was damned hard because of the elf's arrogant attitude. Introduced as the leader, he had long blond hair, ice blue eyes and a narrow, angular face. His cheekbones were high and arched, adding to his aristocratic looks. Having lost the armor he wore into battle, he was now dressed in all leather. It looked like it was a lot softer than the leather that the angel warriors wore. All the elves were sporting it, although the colors varied. Some were blue, some brown, others a dark green. In total there were almost a dozen elves on one side of the table.

On the other side were Cam and Michael, representing the leadership of the angel warriors. Appolion, Ramiel and Abdiel were there because they were Michael's top generals. Bear was present as well, because he was Cam's left hand

man. Lash and Odan were also sitting on the same side as the angel warriors. By the way the elves had sneered at the outcast elf when they had first come into the room, Cam doubted they would be claiming Odan as one of their buddies any time soon.

The leader had a bow and a sword. Both of which he wore to the table. It was rude and made Cam hate him all the more. He wasn't the only one either. Bear had made the mistake of calling him Leglois when they had first walked into the meeting and that had caused a bit of a scuffle. Even though both sides had calmed down, there were still simmering hostile vibes.

The leader turned on Odan and addressed him coolly, "If I find out that you are lying to me and there is no elf child here, then exile will be the least of your problems."

Cam rapped his knuckles on the table to get the leader's attention. "*The child* has a name, Jordy, and he's on his way here now. His family is bringing him."

The leader curled his lip. "His angel family. They don't count."

"And I thought Cliona was snobby at times," Bear muttered under his breath.

The leader picked up the comment. "Is Cliona that fairy? How is it even you angels can stand having a fairy in your mists?"

From the sound of the leader's tone, fairies ranked lower than angels in his view. Michael had told him once there was no love lost between the two species. Obviously he hadn't been exaggerating things.

Michael finally stirred in his chair. He'd been sitting with his arms crossed and his face impassive. "Cliona is considered family to us. I won't stand by and listen to her being insulted. She's proven herself loyal to the angel warriors and their cause."

The leader didn't back down. "I thought my father had taught you better, archangel. Or didn't the countless beatings he gave you, count for anything?"

Cam was about to tell the leader to take a flying fuck, but he was interrupted when the doors opened. Jordy came in, Raphael at his side. The young elf's gaze darted back and forth rapidly as he took in the assembled group. He looked like he was two steps from puking. Raphael had his hand on his cousin's shoulder in a gesture that was at complete odds with his usual cold self.

Jordy turned and whispered something only Raphael could hear.

The healer responded aloud, "Don't worry, I'm not going anywhere."

Jordy still seemed reluctant when he took a chair next to Cam. As soon as he sat down, the elf

leader leaned forward on the table and smiled. "So it is true. One of our youths was saved from captivity."

Jordy crossed his arms over his chest and gave the elf a distrusting glare. The kind only a teen could manage. "Yes, the angels saved me."

The elf seemed insulted. "If we had known one of our children had been enslaved, we would have destroyed that entire slave compound to rescue you."

Jordy gave off a cocky grin, though Cam could still detect the underlying fear in the youth's eyes. "The angels did that, too."

The elf let out a deep sigh. "Let's try this again. My name is Thiloan. Your mother, Fioana was my sister."

Jordy's smile faltered slightly before he pasted it back in place. "How do you know who my mother is?"

"I knew the minute you walked into the room. Although you do not look like her physically, your aura is the same as hers. I would know you anywhere."

Cam exchanged covert looks with Michael. This newest bombshell made things even worse. Thiloan was more than a leader in the elf world, he was royalty, much like Raphael was royalty in the angel world. So that made Jordy important to both sides.

"He needs to go home with us," Thiloan declared to the entire table. "He must learn of our ways and be amongst his own kind."

"Jordy already is amongst his own kind," Raphael replied sharply. He glared down the elves, almost daring them to argue.

Thiloan got a tick in his jaw. "If you are keeping him so that we will continue to fight for your side, then you can stop. We have committed ourselves to this war and will see it through to the end."

Cam finally decided to add his two cents, "Hey, jackass, did it ever occur to you that we might want to keep him because we care about him? Jordy has a loving family here."

Thiloan's eyes honed on Cam's fangs and dark glasses. "Like I would trust any of our children with an incubus."

Bear lunged over the table at the elf and it took both Cam and Appolion to drag him back. "Let's remember our manners," Cam admonished in a sarcastic tone. "We don't attack until after dessert."

A couple of elves who were standing behind Thiloan pulled out their swords. Cam was stunned when Raphael pulled his own out and pointed it at the elves.

Michael stood, but didn't draw his weapon. "Why don't we ask Jordy where he would like to live?"

Jordy didn't even hesitate. "I want to stay with Gabi and Raphael."

Thiloan waved his hand at his guards and they put their weapons away. He studied Jordy for several tense moments before he said, "If you stay with them, then how will you learn the ways of your mother's people?"

"Odan can teach me," Jordy suggested.

Thiloan shook his head. "No, I cannot have some exiled thief teaching my kin."

Michael took his seat again. "You could have someone from your clan come live here with us. They could teach Jordy everything he needs to know and I promise to treat them as an honored guest."

Thiloan gave Cam another disgusted look. "Yes, I'm sure you and the incubus would make wonderful hosts."

Cam felt Bear tense up so he sent him mental message. *Calm down. It won't help our cause if you keep attacking the elves.*

I won't stand by and let this jerk insult you, Bear sent back.

Let it go. We need their help and if that means I have to listen to this asshole insult me, then so be it.

"But that doesn't mean that I have to listen to it," Michael said aloud, showing that he was being a mind buttinsky.

Cam was impressed Michael had been able to pick up his and Bear's conversation. They'd been

using the private mental link that only the two of them had shared. Not even Ana had been able to crack it and she had been trying for years.

Michael used it to communicate his next orders. *Get ready for a fight. This is going to get real messy.*

Fuck me. Cam returned. *I thought we were supposed to be smoking the peace pipe here.*

Did I ever tell you that your mother used to live with the elves, too?

Cam actually turned to give Michael a what-the-hell look. *Now really isn't the time for you to be telling us our family history.*

This time Michael used a common mental link so all the brothers, Appolion and Abdiel would be able to listen in. *This is important, damn it. I didn't want your mother to have to go through the same crap I did while being raised by the elves. So I made a bargain with them so they would leave her alone. They made me walk a gauntlet through their village. Every male was allowed a go at me. Before it was over, they almost destroyed me.*

Cam sucked in his breath, shocked stupid. Michael was actually talking about his childhood. That was sure a change from his earlier mute attitude on the subject. But then if his childhood was as bad as the elves comments had led him to believe, he really didn't blame Michael for not wanting to relive it.

Michael continued, *What I'm trying to get to is that the elves admire brawns over brains. They're a*

warrior breed, even more so than the angels. They're deliberately trying to provoke us into a fight.

Why? Cam asked. To see if we are worth going to war for or to prove we're good enough to raise Jordy?

Both I suspect, although once they entered the battle earlier, they did go to war for us.

Ramiel entered the conversation. So does this mean I can start provoking them back? Because it has been really hard for me not to beat the shit out of these arrogant assholes.

Michael gave a half shrug. I think they would see it as a weakness if you didn't try to push their buttons.

Ramiel smiled wickedly right before he gave a little wave to a female elf sitting across from him. She was wearing dark green pants and a tight fitting top with long sleeves. Her auburn hair was done up in a series of knots and braids. She pointedly ignored him.

Undaunted, Ramiel whispered loudly, "Hi there."

The elf's green eyes sparked fire and she turned her nose up. Ramiel made a loud kissing sound and wiggled his eyebrows at her. She curled her lip up at him and let out a soft hiss.

That only seemed to encourage Ramiel. He raked her body with a long, slow sweep of his gaze. "How about you and me find some place private?"

She growled low in her throat. "You wish, angel."

"My name is Ramiel. You might want to learn it because I have the feeling you're going to be saying it over and over again in the near future."

One of the male elves put his hand on the hilt of his sword. "You would well be advised to mind your manners, angel."

"Wow," Ramiel drawled. "You guys really talk that stuffy all the time? Don't get all hot and bothered there, pal. I'll give her back to you once I'm done. Although she might not want to go. You know what they say, *Once you go angel, you never go back*. I've always had a thing for pointy ears, too."

Appolion and Abdiel both let out chuckles, before they put their hands over their mouths and pretended they had just been coughing.

"Sorry," Appolion quipped. "We're allergic to all this elven magic."

A dark-haired male elf snapped, "You are such heathens."

"Now that's not true," Abdiel pointed out. "Just the other day, Appolion here said, *Excuse me* when he belched at the dinner table."

Appolion gave an eager nod of his head. "I did and Abdiel is also improving on his manners. He almost, always washes his hands after going to the bathroom. He even uses soap."

"I do." Abdiel held his palms up. "Wanna smell?"

"Why are we even bothering with these barbarians?" one of the male elves asked Thiloan.

Michael cut in before the elf leader had a chance to answer. "Don't say it's because of Jordy. We both know that's only a small part of it. You've been looking for a reason to go to war with the Powers for centuries. Now, not only do you have your war, but you have the angel warriors on your side. This is the opportunity you've been waiting centuries for."

Thiloan leaned forward on the table and gave a slight shake of his head. "I don't think I want my nephew being raised by a weak leader like you, Michael. Or by some perverted sex demon like you, Camael."

Okay, that did it. Nobody, but nobody called him by his full name and got away with it. Cam leaned forward so his face was only inches away from the elf. "Fuck." He took off his sunglasses so the bastard could have a good look at his demon eyes. "You."

Raphael had always been quick on the uptake so Cam wasn't surprised when he grabbed Jordy and shoved him out of the line of fire. At the same time, Cam stood and threw the table to the side. It flipped once before it hit the wall and broke in half. The sound of metal whispering against leather echoed loudly through the room as everyone pulled their weapons free. Both sides

attacked each other at the same time.

* * * *

Twenty minutes later, everyone was sitting back down. They'd brought in a new table because Cam had pretty much trashed the last one. Again, the elves sat on one side and the angels on the other. This time though, almost every single one of them was bleeding. Cam took great satisfaction in noticing the punch he'd given to Thiloan had produced a nice shiner. Ramiel had a nice cut to his right arm, courtesy of the female elf. She was furiously wiping at her lips because Ramiel had pinned her down to the ground and kissed her. He continued to smirk at her, even though his bottom lip was bleeding because she'd bit him in retaliation.

The fight had been pretty even and it had seemed to win the respect of the elves. Thiloan had even shook Michael's hand when it was over. Lash and Odan were still sitting with the angel warriors and that was fitting because they had fought on their side during the little brawl. In fact, Odan seemed to enjoy fighting his own kind.

Thiloan cleared his throat. "We are prepared to fully commit ourselves to this war."

Michael inclined his head. "We thank you for your support. Don't think that we are not grateful

you came today. We would have lost even more lives if you hadn't."

The elf leader smirked. "Let's not sugarcoat it. The angel warriors and all of your civilians would have died."

Cam decided to eat some crow for the cause, even though it killed him to do it. "I will forever be indebted to you and your elves. The demons had forced their way into the compound. My niece and nephew were in there. If your troops had not come..." He left the rest unsaid, not even wanting to think about how close they had come to losing Ariel and Dominic.

The negotiations went on for several hours and, before it was over, it was decided Jordy would stay along with a battalion of elves to protect him, the elves would move closer to the compound to better protect both sides and Ramiel would never try to get frisky with one of their females again. Once it was over, everyone stood and shook hands.

Thiloan went up to Jordy and put a hand on his nephew's shoulder. "If you ever change your mind, I will come and get you immediately. You will always have a home with us."

"Thank you," Jordy replied dully. He still seemed a little shell-shocked over finding, yet another relative.

After all the elves had flashed out, Cam asked,

"How is it they can flash and we can't? They're not wearing those amulets the justice angels use."

"It's because they're a different species. Our rules don't apply to them," Michael replied as he tenderly touched a bruise that was forming on his jaw.

"So does that mean Jordy could flash if he wanted to?"

The entire room turned to look at the youth. He blushed and shrugged one shoulder. "I haven't been able to flash in years, just like you guys. I guess there's too much angel in me. Can I go now? Gabi promised to wait for me outside and she's probably pretty worried."

Michael nodded and Jordy practically ran from the room in his haste to get out. The adults sat back down at the table. "How many total did we lose?" he asked grimly.

"We don't know for sure yet," Raphael answered. "The healers are still trying to identify all the wounded. I should be back at the infirmary and not here. My place is there."

"You can get back in a minute. We need to set up a recovery plan so we can decide how to better protect the compound to ensure that this never happens again."

Cam rubbed his eyes, he was so damned tired he could have slept for a million years. "Now that we have the leak taken care of, why don't we just

move to a different one? Somewhere that the enemy doesn't know about."

"And do what?" Michael's voice sounded harsh. "Move every single time another angel is captured, like Derel was? Let's say we did leave. How long do you think it would take a demon like Mammon to rip our new location from a slave angel warrior?"

Cam felt a chill slide down his spine at the mention of Mammon. He'd been the demon who had scrambled, fried and flambéed his brain while he had been in Hell. Cam didn't fear much, but that demon was a different story.

"This is our home," Michael declared, his eyes fiery with emotion. "Those bastards took Heaven from us, they destroyed our first compound, I'll be damned if they're going to drive us from this one, too. Our children need someplace stable where they can learn and grow up to protect the future generations of humans."

Raphael nodded. "Not only that, if we move, the unaccounted angel warrior teams would never be able to find us. We can't desert them."

Cam hated it, but Raphael and Michael were right. He felt like they were weak and vulnerable in their current dwelling. And he didn't like feeling weak and vulnerable. That brought back memories of Hell.

Abdiel looked over at Odan. "Do you trust the

elves? Will they really commit themselves wholly to this war?"

Odan got a wry grin on his face. "For all their faults, elves always keep their word. Thiloan would sooner die than be branded a liar or dishonorable."

When Cam noticed how Odan almost choked on his words, he felt compelled to ask, "So, I take it you and Thiloan aren't bestest friends."

"No, even before I got exiled, we hated each other. But that's a story for another time and another place. We should probably get moving on soon."

"You're both welcome to stay with us for as long as you like," Michael offered.

Lash gave a half chuckle. "In case you haven't noticed, I'm a rogue. Aren't you supposed to shun me?"

"You're a justice angel rogue. As far as I'm concerned, that speaks highly of your character."

"Why did you go rogue?" Cam asked.

"I used to work for Jehel as one of his top guards. During that time, I became very close to his son, Dina. The kid was so scared and lonely all the time I couldn't help but feel protective of him. It was a good thing I did. Most of the other guards used to use him as a punching bag."

Michael shook his head as he clucked his tongue in disgust. "Let me guess, Jehel didn't do

anything to stop it?"

"Quite the opposite. The idiot encouraged it. He thought it would make Dina stronger."

Bear clenched his hands together and his nostril flared with rage. "That son of a bitch."

It didn't surprise Cam that Bear would grow angry at hearing about the empath being mistreated. Ever since Dina had come to live with them at the compound, the pair had grown so close they were like brothers. You rarely saw one without the other.

Lash got a pained look on his face. "After Dina left and I heard about what happened to him, I knew I had to leave or else I would have killed Jehel. I used to have a kid brother before he was destroyed centuries ago. Dina reminds me a lot of him."

Cam felt compassion for the rogue, but not enough to clear one more matter up. He pinned him with a glare. "So the feelings you had for Amadeaha, were they all brotherly, too?"

Lash didn't back down. He returned the hard look with one of his own. "Does it really matter? The only one she ever had eyes for was you."

Appolion let out an exaggerated sigh. "Awh, how sweet."

Cam pushed him off his chair. Appolion may be the Destroyer, but that didn't mean that he had to take crap from him. Appolion didn't take

offense, he just sat on the floor and kept laughing. "You're a dork trapped in a warrior's body," Cam growled down at him.

"Your sister likes my body," Appolion shot back with a wicked smile.

Bear, Ramiel and Cam all groaned.

Michael rapped on the table to get their attention. "If you ladies are done, we have a lot of work ahead of us. First and foremost, we need to figure out how to handle the dead."

Everyone was silent. The angel warriors who had fallen deserved a proper death ceremony in Heaven. Their final resting place should be there. But they were going to be denied that thanks to the war.

"They died for the humans and their Earth," Cam said quietly. "So perhaps it should be seen as an honor that they rest here. This is our new home now. We might never go back to Heaven. Maybe it is time to let go of our old ways and embrace new ones." Cam got uncomfortable as everyone turned to gape at him. He looked down at his hands and tried to act casual. *Great, nothing like everyone knowing you're an idiot and how inexperienced you still are with this whole leader thing. Michael was probably insulted by my words.*

"You have changed so much these past few years," the Chief finally said.

"Yeah, yeah, we already know that I have a bad habit of letting my demon side out," Cam shot

back in a nasty tone. Why did it always have to hurt so much whenever he let his uncle down?

"That's not what I meant. I was referring to how wise you've gotten. You've become such a good leader to the empath's. Better than even Lehor."

Cam finally raised his eyes, just to make sure Michael wasn't bullshitting him. The Chief was grinning at him. It was the first smile he had seen on his uncle's face in weeks. Feeling a bit bashful he looked pointedly at Bear. "I've had a lot of help."

Michael reached over and ruffled Bear's hair. "I know you have. You've both outdone yourselves. Your father would have been real proud of you."

Chapter Fourteen

Bear and Tiffany sat several feet apart in the computer room of the command post. Still working with only a skeleton crew, it was just the two of them on duty in the room dwarfed by several computers. They were monitoring not only enemy movements, but closely watching safe houses to make sure that they were still secure. It'd been a month since the attack and almost all of the missing angel warrior teams were accounted for. There were still a few missing groups, but Bear was beginning to seriously doubt those poor bastards would ever be heard from again.

The justice jerks would just love to be able to get a hold of the data he computers held, but luckily for the angel warriors, they had some of the best hackers out there on their side. They had the system locked up tighter than Fort Knox.

"My back is killing me, Bear," Tif complained as she rubbed her neck.

"Come here, babe, and I'll massage it for you."

She skipped across the room as fast as her little brown loafers would let her and knelt on the ground in front of him. The two of them couldn't have been any more different. Her hair was a light brown and tied back in a preppy ponytail. His hair was blond, spiked up and today the tips were dyed black. She wore a short plaid skirt and tight red sweater with blue thigh-high stockings. He wore a pair of black baggy jeans and a black tee shirt, on his feet were battered tennis shoes.

Yet, to them, their differences didn't matter. They were totally and completely in love with each other.

Falco's *Rock Me Amadeus* came on the radio and Tiffany jumped to her feet with a squeal. "I love this song, come on and dance with me, Bear."

"No way, we have work to do and they're too many angels milling around."

She gave him that cute little pout of hers and he almost relented. But every time he danced with Tif it led up to sex. While he normally wouldn't complain about that, now wasn't the time or the place.

She slowly walked up to the office door and made a big show of locking it. All seduction, she stared to do a slow, sensual dance for him. Mesmerized, he stared at her undulating hips, letting his gaze slowly move up to take in her full breasts, her parted lips and her smoky do-me eyes.

Okay maybe a little quickie, nobody would have to know. It was time for their lunch break after all, and suddenly he wasn't hungry for food anymore.

Tif crooked her finger at him and gave him a sexy little smile. Bear shook his head at her and kept his body planted in the chair. He knew that she loved it when he played hard to get. Undaunted, she slinked over to him, turned her back to him, before she straddled his legs and started to give him a lap dance to end all dance laps.

"Tif, where in the hell did you learn this?" Bear moaned as he reached out to grab her.

Playfully, she swatted his hands away before she leaned back, her breasts straining the fabric of her sweater. Before straightening back up, she tucked something into his pants pocket. "I watched HBO last night, it's very educational."

She ground herself into his cock with one backward thrust of her rump. Waves of pleasure rocked through him and he lifted his hips so there was even more contact. Bending over at the waist, she slowly arched her back so her backside tipped at just the right angle. Good gravy, he'd always loved her ass. Not too big, not too small, he could feast on it all night long. It was no mistake the Lehor Tiger was forever marking her right butt cheek.

With a growl, he pulled her to him and slipped

his hands under her tight sweater. Jackpot, no bra! His girl was smarter than anyone ever gave her credit for. Just as he was cupping her perky breasts, one of the command centers cell phones rang.

Crap, there was no way he could ignore it someone could be in trouble. As he leaned over to grab it, he could both feel and hear the frustrated sigh from Tiffany. When he looked at the caller ID and saw Ramiel's name, he rolled his eyes. Somebody better be dead. "What?" he grouched into the phone.

"I love you, too." Ramiel shot back.

"Why did you call me on this number? You should have used my personal line."

"Oh, don't we have a nice sunny disposition today? You keep being so cranky and we're going to have to start calling you Dina junior."

Bear didn't answer his brother because Tiffany had slid off his lap and was now on her knees facing him, her body between his legs. Even as he was shaking his head at her, she slowly unzipped his pants and gave him a naughty smile.

"The safe house in Travis City has been compromised," Ramiel's voice broke in.

"Okay," was all Bear managed to get out, Tiffany had freed him from his jeans and was slowly stroking him and it was making all coherent thoughts difficult. When she lowered her

head and took him in her mouth he thought he was going to die. If she'd learned this trick from HBO, he was going to become a lifelong subscriber. Hell, he was going to send them a damn fruit basket as a token of gratitude.

Completely giving into the moment, he threw back his head and let out a hiss of pleasure, only half aware Ramiel was still chattering away on the phone. Tif's hot moist mouth enveloped him, while her little pink tongue did an erotic dance down the entire length of his shaft. Bear stroked her hair as he watched her through half closed eyes.

"Bear, are you there?" Ramiel sounded a little pissed off.

Oops, completely forgot big brother was on the phone. No biggie, he could play it cool. He just needed to get through this conversation without Ramiel figuring out what was going on because if Ramiel knew what was happening, then all of his brothers would know within the hour. They would all just love to ride him about getting a Lewinski during working hours. "Yeah, I'm here," he said, trying to keep his voice neutral.

"You need to send out an email letting everybody know they can't use the house in Travis City anymore. Nathaniel and I were just there and the place was crawling with justice angels. We barely got away with our asses intact."

"All right I'll fire one off right away." Bear looked down at Tiffany and mouthed to her, *Take off your panties.*

I'm not wearing any, she mouth back.

Bear suddenly remembered she'd put something in his pocket. Reaching in, he grabbed it and let out a whimper. It was her red thong. He brought it up to his nose and inhaled her musky scent. Tif gave him one last lick before she stood up, took his hand and guided it to her pussy. Already, even though he had yet to touch her, she was wet and ready for him. He let his fingers play over her creamy, hot flesh. "Fuck," he growled. Tif loved it when he talked dirty.

Ramiel's voice broke through his sex hazed brain. "Well excuse us, Bear. You don't have to cuss us out. We're just telling you what we found."

"Sorry," Bear rasped, the same time Tif let out a loud keening cry as he slipped a finger inside her.

"Hey, baby brother," Ramiel sounded amused. "Tiffany wouldn't happen to be there with you, would she?"

Bear groaned when he heard Nathaniel laughing in the background. He was about ready to say something smart when Tif climbed up on his lap. He could feel her moist heat against his cock. All thoughts of his brothers disappeared then. She rocked forward and started to suck on his neck. "You're going to give me another hickey

if you keep that up," he told her. "You better stop or I'm going to have to spank your little ass."

"Oh man, that is one visual I did not need," Ramiel groused.

Bear sent both of his brothers a mental, *Get bent, you morons*, and started to hang up on their laughing asses before a wicked idea came to his head. He tossed the phone aside, but made sure that it stayed open so the connection wasn't broken. Only then did he give Tiffany his undivided attention. He grabbed her by the hips and slowly lowered her down until he was completely inside her. She tossed her head back and let out a little kitten noise followed by a loud whimper. A thrill of satisfaction went through him at the sounds, Tif was always very vocal during sex and he loved every second of it. With a pleased moan he tilted her back some more so he could start sucking on her neck. There was a warning creak before the chair broke, sending them both to the floor.

With a muttered curse, he twisted his body so he took most of the force and wrapped his arms around her. She buried her face in his neck and giggled. When he grabbed her hips again and guided her back home, her giggles turned into a cry of ecstasy. Since she was on top, he let her take over and control the pace of their lovemaking. He reached under her skirt and rubbed her ass. The

thought of having sex while still almost completely clothed and in a very public place was the biggest turn on ever. He never would have guessed that his little perky Tif had it in her, usually it was he who initiated their voyeur encounters. Then he thought about how his brothers were hearing every whisper, groan, cry and sound of flesh hitting flesh and Bear couldn't help but feel a thrill of alpha pride.

When she came, he reached up and covered her mouth with his hand so the entire compound didn't hear her screaming and come running to their aid. After a couple more strokes he joined her, his balls growing tight to his body before he erupted in a blinding orgasm. Bear held his mate firmly by her hips as his seed pumped inside her. Afterward, she collapsed on his chest and he held her with one arm, his other hand was still caressing that cute little ass of hers.

"I love you, Bear," she whispered against his chest.

"I love you, too, Tiff."

"Do you think your brothers knew what was going on?"

He gave a convert glance over to the phone and saw that the call had been disconnected. He was willing to be they had listened in for quite a while before they had hung up. "I'm sure they had a pretty good idea."

She sat up and looked down at him, her cheeks bright pink. "Oh my gosh, your brothers know we did it. They're going to think I'm some tramp."

"Tiffany do you honestly think they don't hear us when we have sex in our bedroom?" He gave her a gentle smile to take away the sting of his question.

"How would they know?"

"You're kind of loud when you come."

With an outraged squeak, she hit him on the side of his head. "You're loud, too."

He grabbed her hand and started to kiss the tips of her fingers. "I can't help it. You drive me crazy."

Her eyes got even wider. "So you mean to tell that when you and I had sex last night, everyone knew?"

"Ah, yeah."

"All of your brothers knew?"

"Yes."

"Abdiel and Gabi knew?"

"Yup."

"Ana and Appolion?"

"Yes."

"Cam and Amadeaha?"

"Yes, Tif. They all knew, but so what? I love you and you make me happy and I don't care who knows."

Blushing, she buried her face in his chest to

hide her embarrassment. "You make me happy too, Bear."

"Are you sure? I mean, thanks to my family and me you're wanted by the justice angels. They're hunting you right along with us."

She lifted her head to look him in the eyes, the love for him was obvious in her gaze. "I'm your mate, Bear, and I love you. Wherever you go, whatever you do, I will always be by your side."

"Why are you so worried about them hearing us anyways? The other night we had sex and Dina, Megan, Heather and Derel were right in the room with us."

"That's different."

He let out a half chuckle. "How so?"

"They were having sex, too, and it was movie night," she supplied simply.

"Well how can I argue with logic like that?" he asked sarcastically.

She stuck her tongue out.

He was struck by how cute she was. He still couldn't believe that she was truly his. "I'm so freaking lucky I met you. Do you know that I fell in love with you the instant I saw you, even though you were sporting a ridiculous pair of pigtails?"

"You sure had a funny way of showing it. You shaved Hairball, remember?"

"The cat loved his new hairdo." He rolled them

over so he was now on top. Grabbing her thigh for leverage, he entered her in one hard thrust. "Now lets finish our lunch break, we can talk later."

This time he took things slowly, savoring the sensation of her soft body underneath him. He leaned down some, so he could drink in her sweet scent. This was so worth the razzing that his brothers were sure to give him later. Her small hands slipped up the back of his shirt, and her nails started to dig into his back.

"Faster," she demanded as she scratched him harder. "I need more, now."

"You're going to kill me, female."

She clawed at him more frantically. "Then you'll die happy. Please, I need all of you inside me."

Needing to be deep inside her as well, he lifted her legs over his forearms and then spread her out more so he could enter her even further. This time, he didn't even bother to try and stifle her loud scream. Who was he kidding? He loved to make her yell with pleasure. He gave into her demands and took her hard and fast. The entire time, she continued to scratch his back. The feeling of pleasure mixed in with pain was so intense that he lost what little control that he had. As soon as her felt her muscles clamping around him, he released himself in her. He closed his eyes as the waves of pleasure rippled through his body.

He looked down at her and laughed at the

satisfied look on her face. She was a spoiled rotten brat and he should know it since he was the one that did all of the spoiling. Bear knew she had him wrapped around her little finger, but at times like this he really didn't give a damn.

Sure his brothers liked to give him a hard time about it and call him whipped, but they didn't understand. Maybe Cam did now that he had a mate of his own. But the rest of them had no idea what they were missing out on. Besides, Tif spoiled him as much as he spoiled her. He couldn't count the number of times he'd come home after a long day and found her up and waiting for him. She would always have hot food on the table, and something even hotter on under her clothes.

The other phone line started ringing so he got up to answer it, adjusting his clothing as he did so. He could hear her doing the same thing behind him. "Command center," he said as he pushed aside the broken chair and pulled up another one.

"Bear, it's me, Jules. Is Cam there?"

Bear frowned, Jules sounded panicked and she was breathing in a hiccupping way, like she had been crying. He waved Tif over and mouthed, *It's Jules*. Tif's brow wrinkled in concern. "Cam's not here right now, it's just Tif and I. Why?"

"Can you get a hold of him?"

"What's going on? Is something wrong?"

She gave out a little sob. "I'm at the old human school building. I really, really need Cam to come get me. Something bad has happened."

Bear instantly thought of her old healer boyfriend, Thomas. Tif had confided in him how that asshole had treated Jules. Bear had wanted to go right then and kick the jerk's hide, but Tif wouldn't let him for fear of embarrassing Jules. "Did Thomas do something to you, sweetie?" As soon as Bear asked the question, Tif sucked her breath in.

"I don't want to say." Jules was crying full out now. "I just need Cam to come. I want him to come alone, too. I can't stand for anyone to see me this way."

"Just sit tight. It will only be a few minutes," Bear promised. As soon as he hung up the phone, he gathered up his Glocks and a few daggers to arm himself. Cam was on another seeking mission for the lost teams. There was no way that he would be able to get home anytime soon. But Bear couldn't leave poor Jules out there all alone and hurt. She was as much his friend as Tif's. "Stay here and watch the computers." He gave Tif a quick kiss on the cheek. "I'll go get her and be back in about an hour."

"Is she okay?"

"She was pretty upset about something. You really should have let me beat Thomas to a pulp."

Tif gave a little growl. "If he hurt her again, then I'll be the one that knocks him around."

He chuckled at her vicious streak as he walked out of the room. Then he stopped and turned back to look at her. A sudden feeling overcame him, telling him that he should remember this moment. It was like something really important and life changing had happened and nothing would be the same again. A nagging voice was screaming at him, telling him not to go, to go back to the comfort of Tif's arms and forget all about Jules.

He shrugged it off. It was just the stress of the past few weeks getting to him. He gave her one last wave before he turned around and left.

* * * *

By the time Cam got home that night it was so late everyone was sitting down to dinner. The table was so crowded it looked like they were posing for a rendition of *The Last Supper*. His brothers were there, along with, Appolion, Ana, Heather, Abdiel and Gabi. The kids were there, mixed in with the adults. As usual the banter between everyone was so loud all anyone caught was every other word. That didn't stop any of them from yammering on though.

He took the empty chair next to Amadeaha and sank wearily into it. She immediately started to fill

his plate with food, even grabbing a can of soda and cracking it open for him. Touched by the small gesture, he smiled. It was nice to have someone to come home to. It almost made the long hard hours of work worth it.

"It's about time you got home," she said gently. "I've been worried about you."

Cam grabbed her hand and skimmed a kiss over her knuckles. She smiled at him and he completely forgot he was tired. He couldn't wait to get her alone.

Ramiel loudly cleared his throat. "Did you and Michael find anything?"

Cam shook his head. "No, the angel warrior home looks like it hasn't been lived in for weeks. The furniture was all broken and it looks like all hell broke loose there."

"Damn," Nathaniel whispered. "How many teams are we going to lose?"

Cam took a drink before answering. "The bitch of it is we can't stop sending our angel warrior teams, even knowing how vulnerable they are. If we all hide out, then the demons will have a field day with the humans.

When Jules came into the room and sat down at the table, Tif started to look around, a frown on her face. "Where's Bear?"

Jules shrugged as she helped herself to a bowl of salad. "How would I know? He's your mate,

not mine. Maybe you should tie a bell around his neck."

Tif gave a slight shake of her head as her face grew pale, her brow crinkled in confusion. "But you called him earlier and said you needed someone to come help you."

"No, I didn't."

Tif rose halfway from her seat, her eyes widening in concern. "Yes, you did. You called him and asked for Cam. Only Cam wasn't there, so Bear went instead. You were really upset and crying."

Jules gave a frantic shake of her head. "I was working out in the field all day. I didn't call him, honest."

Cam exchanged uneasy looks with his brothers. "Tif, are you sure it was Jules who called Bear?"

Tif flashed him a pissed off glare. "Of course, I'm sure. He talks to her and Megan at least a million times a day. He knows her voice."

Jules glanced around the group like she was desperately looking for support. "I swear it wasn't me. I would never lie about something like that."

Tif was gripping the table so tight her knuckles were turning white. "What's going on? If it wasn't Jules, then who was it? Bear is the only one I know who can copy voices that good."

Cam and his brothers all stood. "Do you have any idea where he was going?"

Tif started to cry. "To that old human school up the street. Oh my God, we were so stupid. Michael always tells us we are supposed to let others know where we are going whenever we leave the compound. If Bear had gone to Michael and told him what was going on, then the Chief probably would have realized something wasn't right. It was that super demon, wasn't it? It tried to trick you into going out and Bear went instead."

Ramiel put an awkward arm around her and Tif collapsed in his arms and started to sob. Fury making his features hard, he asked Cam, "Can you contact Bear mentally? Maybe we're all worried about nothing."

Cam tried reaching his mind out to touch Bear's and what he found was so disturbing that he stumbled a step. "I can't feel him."

Amadeaha reached out and rubbed his back. "What do you mean?"

"I've always been able to reach him, to feel his presence. Now all I see is emptiness."

Ana let out a distressed cry. "I feel it, too."

Cam was already starting toward the door. He could feel the demon half of him rising up. This time, instead of fighting it, he let it come out. He wanted to be a monster when he got a hold of whatever had Bear. "Don't worry," he snarled with a snap of his fangs. "I'll find him and then I'm going to tear that mother fucking demon

apart. If he so much as touched Bear, then he'll live only long enough to regret it."

But Cam knew they were already too late. The link between him and Bear was strong and it was telling him Bear was dead. But if that were the case, then why wasn't he dead? Lehor had said that if *either* one of them died, then the other would. So if Bear had been destroyed, then there should be no way Cam could be still breathing and walking.

Unless Lehor had lied to them all once again.

Chapter Fifteen

Before they even entered the old schoolhouse, Cam knew it was too late. As they ran through the winding hallways to the classroom in the back, he felt Bear's death with every beat of his heart. They found him in the corner, right under a peeling, fading poster of the multiplication table. His body was broken and battered, a small pool of blood coming from his mouth. Tiffany's screams tore into Cam's heart, they intermingled with the wails of Ana, Ray and Gabi.

Tiffany threw herself to the ground and buried her face in his chest. They could all still hear her muffled protests. They jumbled together, at times angry, at others pleading and forlorn. "No, No, anyone but you. Damn you, Bear. Why did you have to go off and play the hero? You can't leave me, I love you too much. I can't survive without you."

Cam dropped to his knees beside Bear. He reached out and touched his brother's cold face

and it was then that he noticed that some of the blood on the ground was demons. Bear might have been taken down, but he was at least able to get a piece of Moloch. Why Bear? Of all of them, he was the most innocent and noble. He didn't deserve this, he'd never hurt anyone. Tif staggered to her feet and sought out Derel. She grabbed the healer by the front of his shirt. Her knees buckled and Derel wrapped an arm around her waist to keep her from falling.

"Bring him back," she pleaded. "You did it with Dina, so you can do it for your own brother."

Michael spoke up, his voice cracking, "It could be very dangerous. Every time Derel travels into the Death Realm, we risk him not being able to come back."

Derel gazed down into Tif's face. "That's a risk I'm willing to take." He looked over at their sister. "Don't worry, Ana Bana. I'll get him back."

Gabi and Raphael had come with the rescue party and Cam half expected one of them to object. Instead they drew closer and Raphael placed a supportive hand on Derel's shoulder.

"We'll lend whatever strength and support we can," Raphael vowed. "While our gifts are not as strong as yours, we still have a lot to offer."

All the healers in the group gathered around Bear and started to recite the healing chants as they went into a trance. Derel took a deep breath,

before he placed a hand on Bear's chest.

Instantly Cam could feel a jolt of energy surge through the room. It was like when Dina had been brought back, but ten times stronger. Cam wished he could help in some way, but this was one of the few times he had no control of the situation and it scared the hell out of him. The only comfort he had was when Amadeaha slipped her hand into his and leaned in so he could drink in her familiar lilac scent. That and that alone helped him keep his sanity during the wait as time went on and on, and yet there was no sign of Bear coming around.

Suddenly, Appolion's eyes snapped open. "We need to pull Derel out, now!"

"What's happening?" Cam asked, heart hammering so hard in his chest it actually hurt. *Not Derel, too. Please.*

Raphael came out of his trance. "He's trapped there with Bear. We've lost all contact with him."

Cam reached out to shake Derel, but Gabi grabbed his hand and stopped him. "No, we can't touch him. We do and we might sever his thin hold onto this realm."

Derel's lids opened halfway and Cam could only see the whites of his eyes because they were rolled up in the back of his head. The healer's mouth moved in a silent incantation only he knew as the color drained from his face. The energy was draining from him so quickly Cam could almost see visible tendrils raising up. Heather let out a

choked sob and tried to launch herself at her mate. Nathaniel held her back, not even wincing when she started to violently struggle in his arms.

Ana shrieked at Michael, "Do something, we can't lose them both."

"You won't," a voice called out from behind them.

They all turned to find a tall, regal looking female standing in the doorway. The strange angel was dressed in a long, flowing, white gown. Long raven hair fell in soft waves all the way to her hips, the only adornment she wore was a golden tiara, encrusted with emeralds. The green jewels matched her sharp eyes.

"Mother?" Gabi stammered in an awed voice. All the color drained from her face as she grabbed at her mate, Abdiel, for support.

Lehor and Nix flashed in next to Iofiel. Lehor immediately ran to her fallen sons. Tears were streaming down her face and her blonde hair was all in disarray around her blotchy face. Not saying a word, she grabbed Cam's hand and placed it on Bear's chest. Cam noticed both he and his mother were trembling.

"I don't know what to do," he confessed, his voice wavering slightly. He looked into her face and saw his own fear mirrored there.

Lehor gave his hand a vicious squeeze. "Derel couldn't find Bear in the other realm so he went in

deeper looking for him. Now they're both lost, we need to go find them."

Cam shook his head. Had grief made her lose her mind? "That's Derel's specialty, not mine. I can't do that."

"No, you can't. But with Iofiel and Nix's help we can do it together."

Cam pulled back slightly, ashamed he didn't fully trust his mother to tell him the truth anymore. She'd lied so many times in the past. Tif's and Heather's cries cut into him and that alone made him nod his head in agreement. To get Derel and Bear back he would do anything.

Amadeaha shook her head, her eyes wet with unshed tears. "What if you get stuck?"

Cam broke away from his mother's grip so he could cup Amadeaha's face between his hands. "I'll come back because I know that you'll be waiting for me."

Her bottom lip trembled. "Do you promise?"

He gave her the softest of kisses. "I will always come back to you."

"And I'll always be waiting," she vowed.

Iofiel glided forward and interrupted, "We're wasting time with all this idle chatter. We must go now and undo this."

Cam placed his hands back on Bear's chest, trying hard to ignore how cold his brother was. He felt Lehor, Iofiel and Nix touch his shoulders one

second before he entered a place so dark and horrifying he almost wished that he was back in Hell again.

* * * *

Amadeaha sat in a chair that was at least ten sizes too small for her as she waited and worried. Cam had been *gone* for at least ten minutes. While his eyes weren't rolling around and he wasn't getting sickly pale like Derel, he wasn't showing any signs of coming around either. The room was silent as they all waited. Tif and Heather sat together, their arms around each other, their sobs punctuating the tense silence. Michael paced nervously, a tic working in his jaw. The brothers sat on their knees, in a semi circle, stone quite and still as they watched for any sign of Derel or Bear coming around. Dina came up and pulled Amadeaha into a hug.

"Where exactly are they?" she asked him. She hated bringing up his previous trip there, but she had to know.

She could feel him shudder. "It's dark, cold and as an empath I felt all the despair of the other souls trapped there. The darkness fed off our anguish. Normally I would have overloaded, but it held me in place. That's what drove me mad."

She felt a tear slip down her cheek. "You said

that you can sometimes still hear whispers.”

He nodded. “The entire time I was there, I could hear hundreds of voices all around me. They were so low, that most of the time, I couldn’t make out what they were saying. When I could, what they said was so horrible I screamed at them to shut up.”

“But you were able to get better in the end. So Cam should be okay.”

Dina’s face got grim as he looked over at Bear. “It’s not him I’m worried about. Bear amplifies any emotion that’s coming at him ten times over. He’s learned how to control it here, but over there I don’t know that he’ll be able to. Whatever happened to me is happening to him now and it’s even stronger.”

She gasped in horror as the ramifications at what he was suggesting hit her like a blow. “So if they get Bear back, he’ll be even worse off than you were?” His face crumbled a bit before he brought it back under control and Amadeaha got a glimpse at how much his friend meant to him.

“I don’t think it was an accident that Bear came here. I think Moloch wanted Bear all along. He knew Derel would bring him back. That fucking demon knows all of the Order loves Bear. If they get a shell back or worse, a stark raving lunatic, it’ll tear them up. He wants to weaken them so when he finally has to fight them, it will be easier

for him to win.”

Everyone jumped as Derel let out a loud yell before he was thrown across the room by some unseen force. Iofiel came out of her trance and raced to him, her long gown billowing around them as she crouched down by his side. Lehor, Cam and Nix seemed oblivious to any of this since they were still locked inside their trances. Derel rolled to his side and took in several large, harsh sounding breaths. Iofiel stroked his hair and held her other hand out to Heather.

“Come,” she commanded. “Your mate needs your touch.”

Heather didn’t have to be told twice. She threw herself at Derel and buried her face in his chest for a second, before she came up and started to run her hands all over him. “Are you okay, Derel?”

He opened his mouth like he wanted to talk, but all that came out were those same gasping breaths. Iofiel continued to run fingers through his hair and with each stroke, his color got better.

“What about the others?” Michael demanded sharply.

“Lehor is anchoring Cam while Nix fights to get Bear back. A force is trying to contain the little empath.” She looked down at Derel before she fixed an icy glare at the Chief. “You must never let my healer do this again, Michael. Derel is too valuable to our ranks to lose.” She turned her

wrath onto Raphael. "How could you have let him do this? You're the leader of the healers, you should have known better."

When Raphael looked down at his feet and said nothing, Gabi jumped to her brother's defense. "Derel did it of his own free will. Unlike you, Mother, the Lehors know the true meaning of family."

Raphael got a half smile on his face. "If it were Gabi and me that were dead, would you even lift a fucking finger to wipe a tear away for us, Mom?" The bitter words hung heavily in the air.

Every person in the room who wasn't in a trance threw a stunned look at Raphael. Amadeaha had known Raphael all of her life. She'd attended countless council meetings with him. She'd never heard him say more than two sentences at once, let alone one with the F bomb in it.

The tension was broke when Cam let out a gasp as he came out of his trance, much like Derel came out of his earlier. By way of being thrown across the room. He recovered quickly and scampered back to Bear. As soon as Cam got closer, Bear opened his eyes and let out a scream that echoed through the room. It was so anguished and crazed sounding it made the hairs on Amadeaha's arm raise up.

Bear continued to yell and thrash around so

loudly it took Amadeaha several seconds to realize the empath was talking in a demon language. Cam tried to respond in kind, using a slow measured tone, but the empath threw him off him with such a force, that Cam was thrown across the room for a second time. Tif tried to go to her mate, but Nathaniel grabbed her and held her back.

"He needs me," she cried, tears running down her cheeks.

"He'll hurt you if you get near him," Nathaniel said in a choked voice. "Bear would never forgive himself for that."

Bear tried to get up and run away, but Michael tackled him and pinned him to the ground. It looked like Bear was going to throw the Chief off, too, but Mael and the twins helped pin Bear down onto his back. Michael grabbed Bear by the face so he could look into the empath's eyes.

Bear let out a low laugh and addressed the Chief in that demon language. Whatever he said caused Michael to pale and let out a low curse. That just made Bear cackle even more.

Michael recovered and asked, "Whoever the hell you are, let my nephew go."

Bear stilled as his lips curled up into a sinister smile, his eyes were stone black, both in color and in emotion. "I don't think so, Chief of Archangels. I like this body."

“What is your name,” Michael demanded in his scariest tone. “Are you Moloch?”

Amadeaha grew cold as she realized that Bear hadn’t come back alone. Someone...something was in him. Which was impossible. Angels couldn’t be possessed. Then Bear turned and pinned her with a glare and the evil in his eyes took away all doubts. There was something wicked dwelling in there.

The demon in Bear wasn’t intimidated at all by the Chief. “No, I’m not that demon. I’m older, older than even you, Michael. I am called Legion for I was once one of many. Oh, and someone might want to go check on the whore oracle. I think I might have winged her a bit in our little fight.”

It was then that everyone noticed Nix was curled up into a tight ball in the corner of the classroom. Raphael went to her and rolled her over. Amadeaha was stunned to see the oracle was even paler and sick looking than Derel.

“What the fuck is going on, Michael?” Cam yelled as he struggled to his feet.

Bear whipped his head around and let out a vicious laugh right before Cam crumpled back to his knees screaming.

Amadeaha ran to his side, but he didn’t even seem to notice that she was there. He held his head between his hands as he continued to cry

out. A fine sheen of perspiration covered his pale face and blood started to trickle out his nose. She reached out to touch him only to find he was trembling violently. Whatever was inside Bear had a firm grip on Cam's mind and it was torturing him. "Someone do something!" she screamed. "He's going to kill Cam."

* * * *

Cam hadn't felt pain this bad since he'd been in Hell. Only this time the torture was coming from someone he loved and not a demon. He almost threw up a mental wall to block Bear. Cam was stronger now than he had been in Hell and he could stop Bear from ripping into his mind, but he didn't know how that would affect Bear so he held back.

Shit it hurt though. He had no idea Bear was this strong of a psychic. Trying to retreat, Cam crawled weakly toward the door. He really would have liked to run, but he couldn't gather up the strength to get to his feet, let alone make them work. He made it a couple of inches before the crushing pain caused him to curl back up into a ball.

Then, just as suddenly as the attack had occurred, it stopped. Cam sucked in several breaths of sweet smelling air as the pain receded. His hearing slowly came back and it was then he

realized all hell was breaking loose around him.

"You hit Bear," Ramiel yelled as he punched Nathaniel. "What the fuck were you thinking?"

Nathaniel threw off a clip himself, getting Ramiel in the jaw. "He was hurting Cam, someone had to do something."

Appolion took on Nathaniel while Abdiel grabbed Ramiel. They separated the two of them.

Cam finally managed to push himself to his feet and he stumbled over to Bear. The empath was lying on his side in a tight fetal position. Cam gently rolled him over, wincing when he noticed the bruise already forming on his right cheek. Bear opened his eyes and they were once again blue.

"Oh God, I can feel it inside me," Bear rasped, he was no longer speaking in demon talk, but his voice was weak and barely there. "It's slithering inside me. Get it out, Cammie." He started to claw frantically at his own chest and abdomen. "Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit! Get it out!"

Tif rushed to her mate's side. "I'm here, Bear. We'll make you better, I promise."

Bear didn't seem to hear her. His eyes were wide with panic and he was letting out sharp whimpers as he continued to grab at his body. "Uncle Mike what's happening to me? Stop it."

Tif started to cry even harder. She turned and gave Michael a look so forlorn it tore at Cam's heart. "Do something, please."

Iofiel huffed, "This is just getting out of hand. Does nobody on this realm know how to conduct themselves?"

She waved her hand and the entire group was flashed back to their quarters at the angel warrior compound. Bear's eyes turned black again and he started to laugh a mad cackle and she stormed over to him and placed her hand on his head. "You need to take a nap, demon boy," she snapped as she compelled him to sleep.

Their sudden appearance, startled Jordy, Dominic and Atar. They'd been obviously watching TV on the couch when they had everyone literally popped in on them. Iofiel spun around like she was going to yell at them. She stopped dead when her eyes settled on Jordy. Her faced softened for such a brief moment and Cam almost thought that he'd imagined it. Her green eyes shifted toward Atar and a ghost of a smile played on her lips. She gave a slight shake of her head before her regal mask returned to her face.

"Take the children out of here," she ordered Abdiel with a dismissive sweep of her arm. "They should not be around Barakiel while Legion dwells within him."

Abdiel nodded before he ushered the three boys out of the room. Appolion pushed passed them, Nix in his arms and put her on the couch they just vacated. She was barely conscious, her

breaths quick and shallow.

Michael walked over knelt by her side and said, "I didn't think you had it in you to care enough about us to fight that hard, oracle."

There was no contempt in his voice. They all knew Nix was part Power and because of that, she was unable to feel love or kindness toward others. That was one of the reasons she craved sex so much, it was only then that she felt any emotions at all. Nix opened her eyes and her gaze searched over the room before finally settling onto Tiffany. Cam could have sworn there was a bit of longing in her face as she looked at the small healer, but that had to be a mistake. Nix didn't give a rat's ass about anybody but Nix.

"I didn't do it for you, Michael," Nix murmured.

Michael seemed slightly surprised, an emotion the Chief rarely showed. "Then why did you do it? You almost were destroyed. Did you do it for Cam and his brothers?"

She gave a subtle shake of her head. "I wish to rest now."

Michael's eyes narrowed suspiciously. "Of course, you've earned it."

Cam looked over at Tif to see if maybe she could clue them on to her mysterious connection to Nix, but she was so engrossed in Bear she didn't even notice the exchange. Ramiel had scooped up

the empath and was carrying him up to his bedroom. Tif followed, for once she wasn't talking a mile a minute. Cam was saddened to see how distraught she appeared. Even her usual light step was heavy as her sorrow was literally weighing her down.

* * * *

Bear had been asleep for two whole days and the entire time Cam refused to leave his side. He would find himself periodically reaching out to touch Bear, letting the feeling of his chest falling and raising reassure him. Bear was alive, that was all that mattered. They could handle all this other crap. Really, they could.

Cam shuddered as he remembered the Death Realm. When he had finally located Bear in that dark, oily place, his brother had been rolled up into a tight ball. Several creatures were crawling all over him, feeding off his despair. They'd resembled some demented form of mutant insects. Bear had been screaming and yelling gibberish.

Cam had tried to fight the vile things, but he hadn't been able to get a hold of them. Every time he tried to knock them off Bear, his hand went through the parasites. Only Nix had been able to fight them and they had seemed to drain her every

time she touched them. She hadn't given up though. She'd fought them until they left.

Appolion confided the oracle was healed now, but she was refusing to leave her room. She wouldn't speak to anyone, only opening her door to take in the trays of food that Ana left for her.

Lehor came in and Cam didn't even bother looking up at her, let alone taking the time to say hello. He'd been hoping she would leave again ever since they had come back to the compound, but she'd remained and her presence was irritating him. She went over to Bear and sat down on the bed.

"It is okay, my son," she cooed in the empath's ear. "Everything will be all right."

Cam gave a sarcastic laugh. "More lies, Mom?"

Lehor stiffened. "Cam, I—"

"It's not going to be okay. I can sense that thing slithering around inside Bear's body and I know you can, too."

She opened her mouth.

"Don't tell me your lies are for our good either, Mother. I'm so damn sick of you using that excuse. You told me if I died, Bear died and vice versa. So why didn't I die the other day when Bear was destroyed?"

"Now isn't the time to talk about this," Lehor protested in a small voice.

"Then why don't you just leave? We don't need

you here.” Her face registered hurt and Cam had to work hard to ignore it. Her lips turned down and she gave a small sniff.

“Iofiel doesn’t want to leave. She has a desire to know Atar and Jordy better. I can’t leave until she takes me.”

Cam looked down at the silver angel harness around her slender wrist. So long as she wore that, she wouldn’t be able flash anywhere. It would appear that Iofiel wanted to keep Lehor at her side. “So then you have nothing but time on your hands and you can tell me why I didn’t die with Bear.” Various emotions passed over his mother’s face, guilt, shame, anger, then finally sadness.

“You didn’t give me a choice. I had to do it to save your life.”

Cam didn’t even bother to hide his anger or disgust. “What in the hell is that supposed to mean?”

This time Lehor didn’t back down, she took got up, walked over to his chair and met his fury with some of her own. “At the time I told you that lie, you were going off every night, playing with whores and getting into fights. You were so reckless and you didn’t care if you lived or not. I knew if you didn’t give a damn about yourself, you did care about Bear.”

“You lied to me,” Cam accused.

Lehor’s blue eyes snapped with fire. “I gave

you a reason to live and I'm not sorry that I did it."

"Not sorry?" Cam echoed. He couldn't believe she was actually justifying her actions. "I told Bear about that whole our-whole-souls-are-connected-by-the-fates thing. What if he had pulled back in a battle because of it? Did you ever stop to consider how he felt having all this hanging over his head?"

"Nobody told you to tell him."

"See that's the difference between me and you, Mom. I don't keep secrets and throw lies around."

She fixed him a knowing glare. "Really? Then how about we sit down and talk about that month in Hell? You throw accusations around all you want, but we both know you are the king of secrets. Why didn't you tell your brothers about what happened there?"

"Because I wanted to protect them." Cam snapped his fangs together once he made that admission. Damned if he didn't sound like Lehor, she had him there.

Lehor reached into her pocket, pulled out a tan felt pouch, then handed it to him. The anger was gone from her posture and voice. She looked so much like the mother he'd remembered from when he was little, the one from before all this shit hit his family. Cam's gut clenched as the guilt came crashing over him. He'd been acting like an

ass. Lehor had given up so much for him and his sibs and he'd only seen the bad in her instead of the good. Crap, he could only imagine how it must feel for her to have two of her sons almost die in the span of a few weeks. The last thing she needed was him pointing a finger at her and throwing accusations.

Lehor fingered the pouch and said, "Your father sent this. He wishes he could come and see you himself, but he doesn't have the powers that Nix, Iofiel and I have so he can't travel from the upper realms."

Cam opened up the pouch and dumped the contents out into his hand. It was a wooden set of horses, just like the ones he had been forced to leave behind in Heaven. He choked back a sob. How ridiculous was that? A full-grown warrior reduced to tears because his daddy sent him a new set of horsies. He was so caught up in his emotions he didn't even draw back when Lehor came up and bushed her hand through his hair in a loving manner.

"He wants you to know he's so proud of you," she said. "He always has been and always will be."

She walked out of the room, giving him the chance to save his dignity. He sat there for several minutes, caressing those horses. Cam thought of his father's hands carving the figures and felt

connected to Reese for the first time since he'd been a child. He hadn't realized until now, how much he really did miss his father.

"How's Bear doing?" Amadeaha asked from the doorway.

Cam couldn't speak, his mouth opened and closed several times, but he found he was so overwhelmed by despair that nothing came out. She instantly crossed the room and came to him, just like she had done before when he so desperately needed her. She kneeled in front of him and wrapped her arms around his waist.

He buried his face in her hair and did something that he hadn't done since right after his transformation. He cried. He cried for Bear, for all the warriors who had been killed in the war, for the loss of his father. And, finally, he cried for the loss of his old self, too.

Amadeaha didn't say anything. Instead she just continued to hold him and do what she did best—be his anchor and his support. Her hand made slow lazy circles on his back as he clung desperately to her, taking in her warmth and the comfort that it brought. They held each other for what seemed to be forever, not pulling away until Bear started to stir on the bed. He opened his eyes and Cam was relieved to see they were his normal blue ones.

"What in the hell were you thinking?" Bear

rasped.

Cam was slightly taken aback. That wasn't quite what he expected Bear to say. "What else could we do, Bear?"

"You and Derel almost died, it was stupid." He gave a shuddering breath and a burst of demon talk came from his mouth. After some internal struggle, it appeared he got control of himself again. "I don't have much time, it's fighting me again. I need you to promise me something."

Cam reached out to touch Bear, but his brother pulled back almost like Cam's touch would hurt him. "Just tell me what you need, Care Bear, and it's yours."

"I need you to keep Tif away from me."

Cam balked. Tif would never willingly agree to leave Bear's side. The only reason that the healer wasn't in the room right now was because Appolion had insisted that she take a break to get something to eat. He exchanged helpless glances with Amadeaha. "Tif is going to want to be with you. She loves you and it's only natural she would want to take care of you while you're sick"

Bear's back arched off the bed as another violent torrent of demon phrases erupted from him. His head snapped so hard to the right Cam half-expected his neck to break. Bear's eyes briefly turned that sickening black before they returned to the Lehor blue.

"Please, Cammie," Bear's voice was weakening, like he was starting to lose his internal battle. "It wants to harm her. I'm fighting it for control and that's ticking it off. It will hurt her, just to get back to me."

"But you can use her love and support to help you get through this."

"Damn it, listen to me. It told me it wants to use my body to use her, then slowly tear her apart."

"Go get Michael," Cam murmured into Amadeaha's ear.

She gave a little nod. She was pale, the classic, oh-shit look on her face. She left and Michael came in mere seconds later, showing the Chief was sticking close by.

"Can't we do an exorcism or something?" Cam asked him.

"I've already tried. This demon is something I've never seen before. It comes before the time of angel and man. It's got a firm hold on Bear and it's not letting go. Nix is looking to see if there is something written in the old texts that might help us, but so far she hasn't found anything."

Bear let out a low laugh. Cam moaned when he saw the black eyes had returned. "Poor wittle Michael cannot save his baby nephew. Do they know how pathetic you really are, Chief? How you would look at them for all those centuries, so desperately wanting to be a part of their lives, but

not being able to because of your noble blood vow?"

"Shut up." Michael nearly snarled.

Cam was shocked to see a look of hurt and shame flicker over his uncle's face. The demon had obviously hit on a sore subject.

The demon continued, "And just when I thought you couldn't get more lame, you do. You walk around, mooning for some female you know you cannot have."

"Go to hell, demon."

Bear-Legion yawned. "Been there, done that. Frankly, the place didn't impress me. Too primitive by my standards."

Michael leaned down so he could talk right into his ear. "I wouldn't get too comfy in there, demon. I know my nephew, he's going to fight you at every turn and he's a lot stronger than you think."

Michael motioned to Cam and they walked out of the room. Bear tried to lunge at them, but the restraints pulled him up short. Once they were in the hallway, Cam shut the door to muffle Bear's screams. Michael winced when one of them sounded particularly forlorn.

"Is Nix really looking for a cure?" When Michael nodded, Cam continued with the interrogation, "Why is she going out of her way to help us?" Usually Nix only helped others when it was beneficial to her. Usually that payment came

from the beds of one of the Lehor brothers. As far as Cam knew, she had been keeping her claws to herself.

Mike shrugged. "She won't tell me. I think it all has to do with Tiffany, although I don't know what that could be."

"The demon said you made a blood vow for us." Cam studied his uncle closely, looking for his reaction. "What was it and who did you make it to?"

Michael averted his eyes. "Forget about it. It doesn't matter now."

Cam held up one of the horse carvings. "Do you know why I liked horses so much as a kid? One morning, when I was about three, we woke up and found a horse in our yard. At first, I thought it was a present from my parents, but as soon as I saw how angry Lehor was, I knew it wasn't from them. It was obviously a gift from someone though. Horses only exist on Earth so someone had to of brought it purposely to Heaven. Mom wanted to get rid of it right away, but Dad talked her into letting us keep it. I never understood why that gift made her so damn mad, but now I do. It was from you, wasn't it?"

At first, it looked like Michael was going to deny it. In the end he finally admitted, with a wry smile, "Yeah, it was me. I shouldn't have got that stupid horse, but I saw it and all I could think

about was how you kids would love it.”

“I did love it. Even though it belonged to all of us, I rode it the most. Maybe a part of me knew it was from you. I named it Michael.”

“I knew you liked it. I used to watch you kids riding it.” He flushed a bit, seemingly embarrassed by his admission.

“That blood vow was made to my mother, wasn’t it? You vowed you would never let us know who you really are.” As soon as Cam said those words, he knew they were true. He let out a low curse. A little bit of the earlier anger he’d felt toward Lehor returned.

Michael caught it. “Don’t be too harsh on her, Cam. She did it to protect all of you. At the time I thought it was because she was still angry at me for our fight, but I realized years ago it was so I wouldn’t sense your powers and try to use you like I did the other Order.”

“It didn’t matter in the end. Bear and I are still caught up in that prophesy. So what good did it do? We blamed you all this time and you just took it. Why didn’t you tell us the truth from the beginning?”

“I didn’t want all of you to be angry with Lehor. She’s my sister and I love her. Wouldn’t you do that same for Ana?”

In a heartbeat.

Cam flinched when he thought back to all the

hurtful things he'd said to Michael in the past. "I'm so sorry for all that crap I threw at you." He thought about how lonely it must have been for the Chief. How often had he stood off to the side and yearned to be with his niece and nephews? The fact that he had to interact with them every day because he was their Chief must have made it even more unbearable. "That female the demon talked about. The one you're yearning for, it's Rachael isn't it?"

Michael tried to walk away.

Cam jumped in his way, blocking his escape. Michael put on a bored expression, but he recognized the underlining panic, too.

"Cam, this really isn't the time or the place. We have a possessed Bear, a whole army of Powers up our asses and a horny oracle to deal with."

"Nix hasn't humped anyone since she's been here," Cam pointed out.

"That's not the issue. I'm just trying to say that we have enough to worry about without adding some demon's gossip to it."

Cam wasn't fooled for a minute. "If you like her so much, then why don't you tell her? I've seen her look at you the same way you look at her."

"You're not going to let this go, are you?"

"No, you deserve to have some happiness, too. What makes you think that your entire lot in life is to take care of us angel warriors and you should

never have anything for yourself?"

Michael ran his hands through his hair in his usual frustrated manner, showing how much the questions were getting to him. "If I were to take Ray as my mate, I would only end getting her hurt somehow."

"She's capable of handling herself."

"I don't mean physically. Ray is a free spirit. If I were to try and force her into my world, it would suffocate her. Look, don't try to argue with me anymore on this one. Don't you think I haven't thought about this time and time again myself? There's just no way it could work."

Cam was about to argue further, but Bear started screaming again. This time it sounded all like him, only there was a crazed edge to his voice. Icy dread slithered down his spine as his gut clenched in despair. "Do you really think that he's going to be able to fight this?"

"I honestly don't know," Michael admitted. "Legion is strong. If anyone can do it though, it's him. Bear has a strong will to live."

"What if he doesn't pull through this?" Cam hated to even ask the question, but he owed it to the rest of the family to find out.

Michael's face turned bleak. "I don't even want to think about that. By all rights, he should be destroyed, but I know I'll never be able to do that myself."

“What are you going to do if someone else sees him as a threat and tries to eliminate him?” Cam subconsciously gripped the hilt of one of his daggers. If anyone made even the slightest move against Bear, they would have to go through him first.

Michael’s eyes took on a dangerous look. “If anyone tries to harm him, I’ll personally rip them apart.”

Cam nodded his head in approval. It looked as if he and his uncle were on the same page about that.

Another one of Bear’s screams echoed down the corridor.

Chapter Sixteen

“**S**o does Tif hate me?” Bear asked.

It had been a couple of months since he’d been brought back and, while Bear was in the driver’s seat of his body most of the time, he still insisted on staying in his room. He also made sure the restraints were kept on him.

“No, she blames me,” Cam replied as he shifted through a pile of paper work. He’d been doing most of his leadership duties from Bear’s bedside, leaving his brother only long enough to sleep and eat. Michael and Amadeaha were the only other ones Bear let in and that was only so Cam could keep up on things.

“Is she still sleeping in the hallway?” Bear nibbled on his thumbnail.

“Every night.” Cam didn’t add that not only was Tif sleeping outside Bear’s room, she would also slip her hand under the door so at least her fingers were in the same room as her mate.

Cam didn’t know who looked worse. Tif had

lost a ton of weight and her eyes were always puffy and red from crying. Her wardrobe only consisted of sweat pants and one of Bear's shirts. Where she once talked so much Cam was tempted to duct tape her mouth shut, now she often went days without a word. Bear, on the other hand had a ragged look complete with pasty complexion and dark circles. He spent most of his time sleeping or watching television. That's when he wasn't looking at a strip of pictures from a photo booth of him and Tif goofing off. It was from a year ago and they both looked so happy and carefree in it. Like they had all the time in the world. Cam had looked at it once himself and he couldn't bring himself to glance at it again. It just reminded him of all the pair had lost.

A couple nights before, Cam had almost relented and let the healer go to Bear. Appolion had come at the last second and stopped them. Appolion had gone off, yelling at Cam and making him promise never to try something like that again. Shocked by his friend's reaction, he'd agreed.

"I miss her so much," Bear confessed in a harsh whisper.

"I know you do."

"The other day I got to the point where I couldn't take it anymore, I was going to call her and ask her to come to me."

That didn't surprise Cam. Bear lived for Tiffany. Bear's devotion to the healer was so blatant it had been annoying in the past, now it was heartbreaking. It was killing him to push her away. "What happened?"

"I could feel the demon trying to control me so I fought it. I must have blacked out for a while because when I woke up I found my pillow and sheets torn to shreds. The worst part was it left me a note."

"What did it say?" Cam's mouth grew dry and he swallowed nervously around the pit in his throat.

"*I almost got her.*" Bear shivered and pulled the blanket up around him, like he was chilled to the bone. "It was right, too, Cammie. I almost let that thing get her in my moment of weakness. How long before Legion starts going after other angels I care about? I couldn't live with myself if it hurt you, Ana or, God forbid, one of the kids."

"You're getting more and more control of that thing every day, Bear."

"I know, but until I lick it completely, I think it would be better for everyone if I left for a while."

Cam shook his head adamantly. "No way, that's not how our family rolls and you know it. You guys didn't give up on me and there's no way I'm going to give up on you."

Bear viciously grabbed Cam's arm. "You need

to stop approaching this whole thing like a brother. You have an angel who can read minds that is possessed by one of your enemies. How long do you think it will be before that bastard in me starts using my gifts to find out our secrets?"

"I won't let that happen," Cam protested.

Bear's lips curled into a bitter smile. "Cam, we both know my psychic abilities are just as strong as yours or any other member of the Order. While I can't throw flame like you can, I do have a lot of your other gifts. I could very easily go into some poor angel's brain and scramble them like I did yours."

"Bear, that won't happen," Cam snapped, even though he knew every word Bear just said was right.

"All it would need is to be in control of me for five minutes and then some poor angel would be toast. The only one who can fight it is Dina."

Cam didn't even bother to hide his confusion. "Why would Dina be able to resist it?"

"Haven't you noticed how Dina's brain waves have been different every since he came back from his trip to the Death Realm?"

"Yes, I just figured that was why he went batty for a while."

"It probably was," Bear conceded. "But it also made it so his mind was always a blank space whenever I tried to read it. So that means I won't

be able to hurt him that way."

Cam's mind reeled as he tried to take in all of what Bear had dumped in his lap. Shit, how could he actually be entertaining the idea of letting Bear leave? But if what Bear said was even partly true, then how could he let him stay? Would it really be fair to put the entire compound in jeopardy for the sake of one angel? Even if that one angel was his brother? "We'll talk about this later," he finally said, stalling for time. "I have to go to some stupid meeting Mom called."

"Mom's still here?"

Cam nodded. "Yes, so is Nix and Iofiel. In fact, Iofiel has really bonded with Jordy and Atar. She even reads to Atar every night. I think she's finally realized what she missed out on all these years with Gabi and Raphael and she's trying to make up for it."

Bear raised an eyebrow. "Really? How is Raphael taking all this?"

"He's still keeping his distance from her. I didn't realize how much it had bothered him that Iofiel left him and Gabi behind until now."

Bear shrugged. "We all have a crap load of hang-ups to drag around, why should Raphael be different?"

"That is so poignant," Cam quipped. "You should write for the fortune cookie company." They shared a laugh before he got up. "Well, I

better go before I piss off the Three Crones."

Bear frowned. "Who are the Three Crones?"

"Mom, Nix and Iofiel. Dina came up with the name and I think it fits them." Cam held up his hands and waved them around sarcastically. "Them being all mystical angels and all." Going out into the hallway, Cam found Amadeaha was waiting for him. Dressed in a tight pair of fighting leathers with her Glocks still on, she'd obviously just come in from a mission with Ray and Cliona. Amadeaha had been going out on patrol without him for a couple of weeks now. Damned if she wasn't turning out to be a good angel warrior. "Have I told you how much I love you yet today?" he asked as he observed how hot she looked in the tight outfit.

"Yes, this morning right after you rudely interrupted my shower." She gave him a crooked smile.

"I just wanted to help you wash your back."

She arched a brow at him. "News flash there, pal. That wasn't my back you were rubbing."

He snagged her by the waist and pulled her into a kiss before whispering, "You were rubbing me, too." Cam slid his hand down so he could cup her ass and she let out a low moan. "I wish we didn't have to go to this stupid meeting," she said. "I'm suddenly feeling very dirty and in need of another shower."

"Hopefully it will be a short talk." He playfully nipped her ear. "Then I can take my little warrior to bed and teach her the Slushie game can be played both ways."

"Oh, that would be nice."

He pulled back enough so he could gaze down into her eyes. "Thank you so much for being here for me. I wouldn't have been able to make it this past couple of months without you."

"I'm sure you would have managed, you always seem to kick anything in the ass that comes at you."

He ran the pad of his thumb across her cheek. "I really mean it, Crazy Pie. Without you, I would have been lost."

She smiled at him and her eyes grew soft with love. "Don't think it was all one-sided. You saved me as much as I saved you."

Cam thought about the love Bear and Tif had for each other and how it might be lost forever. He hugged Amadeaha tight to him as fear coursed through him. He couldn't even dare think about what his brother must be going through now.

"Don't worry about Bear, it's going to be okay." She hugged him back just as tightly.

"How do you know?" he asked as they pulled away from each other.

She gave him a cheeky grin. "Because we're the good guys and the good guys always win in the

end.”

Cam chuckled as he thought to himself that she would be able to go work at the fortune cookie company with Bear with that sort of logic. By the time they made their way to the meeting room, they were one of the last ones there. The meeting still hadn’t started because Michael had yet to arrive.

Nix, Lehor and Iofiel stood at the head of the room and everyone else was standing around in small clusters. All of Cam’s brothers were there, along with Abdiel and his sibs. Heather was there as well as Gabi and Raphael.

While Nix and Iofiel were still dressed in the white gowns, Lehor was in a pair of jeans and Eeyore sweatshirt. She looked nervous, Iofiel looked haughty and Nix looked downright sad. Which was funny considering the oracle wasn’t supposed to feel anything.

Once Michael entered the room, Lehor began. “While Nix was going through the ancient texts, she discovered something that might help end the war.”

The Chief crossed his arms and leaned up against the wall. “Really, and just what might that be?”

Nix said, “According to Fairy Lore, there was once a ruling family who controlled all of their clans. Several centuries ago there was a rebellion

and almost the entire family was killed. The survivors were rumored to have scattered around the Earth and hid, lest they be destroyed, too. I have found proof one female child is still alive and living with human caretakers."

"Unless we are all planning on writing the fairy edition of Anastasia, how is this going to help us?" Cam drawled.

Iofiel's eyes narrowed in anger. Obviously she wasn't a fan of the Lehor family brand of sarcasm. "If we can find this child and bring her into the angel fold, we might be able to convince some of the fairy army to join with us."

Cam didn't even try to hide his disgust. "So you want us to kidnap some kid and bring her back here as a hostage?"

Lehor sighed, "When you put it that way, it sounds like something it really isn't."

"If we can find this child," Nix added. "The fairies will be indebted to us. They'll have no choice but to enter this war as our allies."

Michael uncrossed his arms and pushed himself from the wall. "What if the fairies don't want this child back? If the same ones are still in power that originally assassinated her family, I don't think they're going to be too happy to see her alive and kicking."

"That's a risk that we'll have to take," Iofiel replied briskly, showing off her usual cold self.

Michael's face became a mask of anger. "So you want to sacrifice some kid on the off chance it might help us? Count me out on this one."

He started for the door, Iofiel called out, "Even if we told you this child would have the powers to heal Bear?"

Michael pulled up short and spun around. "You expect me to believe some fairy kid can expel Legion when the most powerful of our healers could not?"

"Legion is not a normal demon."

"Well, duh," Cam said. "We already knew that one."

Iofiel gave him an annoyed glare. "Legion comes from an ancient time. He is not really a demon, but a one of a kind. The lone survivor of a vile species that was eradicated before the time of angels."

"Let me guess," Cam quipped. "It was fairies who destroyed the rest of Legion's friends and family."

Iofiel nodded. "But not just any fairies, only members of the royal family had the powers required to kill the creatures. When it was down to just Legion, he retreated to the Death Realm to wait for a time when he could return. Moloch made a deal with him, he would bring a warm body for him to posses and Legion had to swear allegiance to Lucifer."

"But Bear's getting a grip on everything," Cam argued. "He's getting really good at fighting Legion."

Lehor frowned. "For now he is, but Legion is only going to grow stronger. In the end, I don't think there is any angel who would be able to fight him."

Ramiel had been watching the entire meeting in silence. "Fine, if it means we can get Bear back, then we'll go fetch this little female. Where is she?"

"We don't know for sure," Lehor admitted. "Nix has lost her connection to the fates so we're having to go by the ancient texts, rumors and just plain guess work. We have eight locations we think she might be at."

"You will be leaving in groups of two and your departure times will start tomorrow and be staggered for a few weeks," Iofiel commanded.

"We will be picking who are in the groups of two and when they leave," Nix added. "While the fates are no longer speaking to me, I am still able to consult my runes and they tell me this is the only way we will have success."

Michael got a wary look on his mug. "Who is going with whom?"

Lehor tossed him a baseball and he barely caught it before it hit him in the face. "Relax, big brother." She smiled. "Trust us."

"The first group will be Bear and Dina and they leave tomorrow," Nix said.

Bear and Dina a twosome? Were they completely off their rockers? Even before Bear had started to share his real estate with Legion, it was never a good idea to let the two empaths go off alone for an afternoon. By the sounds of it, this mission could go on for weeks or months.

"There's no way Bear can go on any road trip," Cam argued. "Especially one that would take him away from us for any length of time."

"We don't have a choice," Lehor replied tightly. "We need to get Legion away from the compound."

"Aren't you worried Legion will tell Lucifer that we are looking for the child? By sending Bear on this seek-and-find mission, he'll be a privy to inside information." *Shit, it hurt to say that one out loud.*

"That's why Bear is leaving tomorrow." Lehor wrapped her arms around herself and bit her bottom lip nervously. "Bear can't know anything about this mission, neither can Dina. Once we have the child, then we will bring Bear back so she can make him whole again."

Cam realized while the situation sucked, it was the best option they had. "So who's in the other teams?"

Lehor announced who would be paired with who and, well...that's when the shit really hit the

fan.

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.