"Lucifer had been a bit off the rails lately and even if Dan hadn’t felt obliged as a cop to do something about that, he would have been compelled to intervene, for Chloe’s sake. The situation was not one he could, in good conscience, allow to continue."

Dan goes to Lux to have a conversation with the Devil.

Written for the Lucifer Bingo Challenge. Prompt: "Biting/Bite Marks"

This story was written for the Lucifer Bingo Challenge, and I realize that we are way, way after the deadline and I’m not going to be calling any bingos, but I still want to post it!

This is and isn't a post-reveal fic. Because it takes place after the finale, I feel like I kind of have to deal with the reveal, but so many people have already done this and done it in amazing ways! I just really want to get Lucifer and Dan together, at least as partners. For the
record, I have nothing against Lucifer/Chloe, but I don't really write heterosexual relationships. I really like Lucifer and Chloe's friendship and I'm somewhat invested in their happiness within the bounds of the show... but yes, this is a slash story because that's what I like to read and write and boy, is there a dearth of that around this fandom!

I hope that will not deter anyone from reading. Please please please read and comment and let me know if there is any appetite for subsequent installments!

Much thanks to SidleyParkHermit for the beta.

Anyone who reads anything I write will immediately see that I'm a total whore for hurt/comfort and angst.
Daniel Alfonso Espinoza was a good cop.

It wasn’t easy to be good. First as a human being and then as a cop… especially as a cop because, well, people were always soliciting him and trying to hand him freebies, and he knew—he knew—that they wouldn’t even hold it against him if he accepted. What was a free coffee here or a second chance there? Nothing much, and after working both with and against Malcolm, he knew how easy it could be to believe he remained in the right, even as he was cutting corners to make sure that the bad guys got what was coming to them—or what he figured was due to him. And once he crossed that line, it got easier and easier. He might have started thinking, why not just snag a key of that cocaine or a few Benjamins from the evidence room? No one would ever miss them.

Yeah, he knew just how a good cop could succumb to temptation. Like what he’d done with Maze, getting Perry Smith killed by the Russians. He wasn’t proud of that, but he didn’t entirely regret it either.

Dan was a good cop, dammit. A good man. It was just that Chloe was his downfall—always had been, always would be. He and Lucifer had that much in common.

Okay, maybe there was more than one thing that he and Lucifer had in common. They were both trying to be good. Maybe in Lucifer’s case it was more about overcoming a millennia-old rap that was neither true nor fair—but it wasn’t like Lucifer didn’t have a dark side too. Hell, he was the dark side, if all the negative press was to be believed. Even before Dan discovered that Lucifer was… what he was… the guy had been a walking, talking enticement to rule-breaking. Dan had seen Lucifer smoke evidence at the scene of the crime. He’d seen Lucifer physically threaten witnesses and suspects, even if Lucifer usually didn’t have to touch them before they were begging to confess. Whatever it was that he did to them, he got away things that would have ended the career of any actual cop by now, in part because Chloe, and even Dan, had just gotten used to it. They even covered for him, because damned if the guy didn’t get results.

And then there was the fact that Lucifer was zillion-year-old celestial being who had literally been tasked with making sure that human beings got their just desserts. It felt a little bit foolish to insist on due process when Lucifer was doing his thing.

Nevertheless, the fact was Lucifer had been a bit off the rails lately and even if Dan hadn’t felt obliged as a cop to do something about that, he would have been compelled to intervene, for Chloe’s sake. The situation was not one he could, in good conscience, allow to continue.
There had been no covering up the Pierce crime scene, and there was no understanding it without resort to all kinds of impossible. Or not impossible. Dan had been watching Ella banging her head against that particular bundle of forensic evidence for three days. None of it added up. Feathers, for Christ’s sake. Bloody feathers everywhere, and bullet casings, but somehow the only person who had died was Lieutenant Pierce—and not of a bullet wound. Stabbed in the chest, right through the sternum and into the heart by someone with immense strength. And the carnage in the room suggesting all sorts of things that just didn’t square with the laws of physics.

“I did it,” Lucifer was saying with a supreme lack of concern, his hands neatly folded on the table in front of him. “I killed him.”

He was sitting across from the Internal Affairs agent who’d been assigned to clear up this mess. Detective Humourless-Son-of-a-Bitch Argentine had been with them for the past few days, interviewing absolutely everyone, but taking a particular amount of care with Chloe. He’d had her in the chair where Lucifer currently sat for hours at a time. Dan knew the man from his own case two years ago and he unabashedly hated the chinless fuck.

“In self-defense,” Argentine prompted, quite unexpectedly.

Chloe and Dan exchanged some raised eyebrows, then turned back to the two-way mirror. Lucifer was in the place usually reserved for suspects, no doubt aware that Dan and Chloe and Ella were watching from the other side of the mirror. He was, as per usual, immaculately groomed, crisply outlining the facts of the situation in that accent that made everything he said sound ten times more interesting. As near as Dan could tell, Lucifer was making no effort at seduction, and yet Argentine was listening to him avidly, head slightly tilted towards him.

“He came at me with the knife. I seized his hand, turned it and drove it into his heart.”

It wasn’t the first time Dan had heard this and, of course, Lucifer was presenting his usual, tell-no-lies account of things. Cain, the Sinnerman, the Devil, fallen angels with wings, it was all in there. Lucifer had told the story at the scene when Dan arrived, then again later when making his initial statement at the precinct. It was exactly the same story now as then, and he hadn’t troubled to make himself sound innocent of anything, or to sound a little bit less delusional.

Maybe at first Dan hadn’t noticed it, but he was beginning to realize that Lucifer was not his usual self. He had always been a compulsive truth teller, but this was beginning to sound like a man in who truly didn’t care what happened to him.

“You must be… extremely strong,” Argentine said, slightly breathless. “It would be almost impossible for any one man to strike that blow.”

Lucifer shrugged. “I’m a celestial being, love,” he said, and offered up a version of his usual, smarmy grin. To Dan, it looked like a pale facsimile, but it seemed to work on Argentine.

Dan turned to Chloe. “So,” he said. “Lucifer’s the Devil.”

The fact that Chloe didn’t try to dismiss Dan’s statement out of hand told him everything he needed to know. She was gaunt and dark-eyed like she hadn’t slept in a while. She threw a panicky look at him, then at Ella. Ella was clutching her little crucifix, nodding rapidly, her eyes flicking between Lucifer and Chloe, back and forth like she didn’t know where to find a place to rest.

“How long have you known?” Dan asked, when no reply seemed forthcoming.
“Since the loft. Since—Lucifer saved me. With his wings—”

“I knew it!” Ella exploded. “All those feathers… there’s no animal on earth with feathers like that! I can’t—I just can’t—“ She spun again to look through the window at Lucifer and concluded, “I guess I have to believe it. The evidence doesn’t lie…” She trailed off, staring.

Dan knew that Ella was religious, and he spared a moment to wonder how this would affect her, and if it would be a problem, but he had much bigger fish to fry. He surprised himself by asking, “Is he okay?” The feathers, and the blood, it had to be Lucifer’s…

Unexpectedly, Chloe teared up. Dan couldn’t imagine what had been going through her mind for the past three days as the fallout from the Marcus Pierce debacle rained down on them.

“I don’t know,” she said.

“You don’t know?”

“He won’t talk to me,” she lamented. “As soon as I get near him he… he gets this look like I’m his judge, jury and executioner, and he runs away.”

Dan again glanced at the man—not a man—on the other side of the glass. Okay, fallen angel, but what did that even mean? Super strong, sure, and possessed of mad fighting skills and weird powers and a complete lack of compunction about anything sexual. Dan’s abuela would have been appalled. She was one of those Catholic lady stalwarts who took her faith with a large helping of sentimentality. Her angels were cute and sexless, draped in miles of pastel-coloured fabric, painted on stained glass and displayed in calendars.

There was no rule book for this situation. What did you do when your ex-wife, the mother of your daughter, was in extreme distress because her partner and maybe-boyfriend turned out to be the Devil? Dan had been raised Catholic and would have described himself as a “believer” in a very, very loose sense, but Chloe was an atheist. Well, had been an atheist. This wasn’t just about Lucifer for her, whatever he was and whatever he wanted with her. This was her entire universe upended. She was a deeply kind, profoundly generous, open-minded person, but she was also a skeptic with a very organized mind. She believed in what she could see and touch, and to date that hadn’t included God or angels or devils.

Tentatively, Dan made a gesture towards her, opening his arms slightly. She immediately moved in, clinging to him with all her remarkable, tensile strength, and he was holding on to her no less tightly. He was quite aware that he’d almost lost her.

“What does all this mean?” he whispered in her ear.

Chloe shook her head, sniffling a bit against his shoulder. She was not a woman who broke down easily, he knew that from experience. “I don’t know what to do,” she said.

“Hey,” Ella said. “Guys?”

They broke apart to look through the two-way mirror. Lucifer was up, and standing very close to Argentine who was staring up at him as though in his thrall. Dan couldn’t make out a word, but the intent was obvious. After a bit of back and forth between them, Argentine cast a furtive look towards the mirror, then went with Lucifer out the door.

“Is he doing what I think he’s doing?” Dan said to Ella.

Chloe stared at the now-empty room. Her face was tight. Miserable. She said, “If you
think that he’s whoring himself to pacify Internal Affairs, then yes, he’s doing what you think he’s doing.”

Ella bit her lip. She looked helplessly at Dan, and Dan had nothing to offer in reply. That Lucifer subscribed to an entirely other code of sexual morality had been abundantly clear since the day they first met him. If he had been human, Dan would have said he suffered from a profound lack of respect for himself—but then it had also been abundantly clear some time ago that Lucifer was far from a paragon of emotional well-being.

It seemed that the only thing to do right then was to go for coffee somewhere out of the building, the three of them together and in secret as if they were talking over something that needed to be kept between them, as if anyone listening wouldn’t have just dismissed them as talking nonsense.

“I think we need a plan,” Dan declared over his triple shot latte.

“A plan for what, bro?” Ella demanded.

“For… confronting him?”

“About… what?”

“His intentions.”

“I think his intentions are pretty clear,” Ella said. She was giving him that pitying look she sometimes did. He seemed to get that a lot from women. “He wants to bring evil-doers to justice, duh.”

She really should not be taking this so well. Shouldn’t she be clutching her Bible and foaming at the mouth or something? Okay, no, that wasn’t fair. She had been raised Catholic like himself, and Catholic Christianity was nothing if not practical. But Catholicism also maintained a fairly intense attitude towards the profane. His own mother had been convinced that she’d had a cousin in New Mexico who’d been possessed by the Devil as a teenager. His grandfather thought that Wiccans were pagans in league with Satan. And all the official lore declared that the Devil was a liar who would seduce you into damnation. Lucifer didn’t seem like a bad guy, aside from the part where he sometimes behaved like a complete and total—and all-too-human—asshole. But that was entirely the point. If Dan had been the Devil, this was exactly how he would have done it, showing up in the guise of someone beautiful and charming and irresistible, someone with an irrepressible sense of mischief and a boatload of issues to entice all the rescuers out there.

Rescuers like Chloe. Sometimes it seemed like Lucifer was her second, much taller and less emotionally-mature child.

“Why,” Dan pressed, “would the Devil want to solve crimes with the LAPD?”

Ella rolled her eyes. “Not so much with the LAPD.”

And they both looked at Chloe, who was hunched over a hot chocolate. She’d said she needed the sugar, but she had yet to take a sip. “He likes to punish the guilty,” she said. “That’s all.”

Ella shook her head. “He likes to punish the guilty with you, Chloe.”

Dan asked Chloe, “Are you saying that you literally haven’t had any sort of conversation with him since the moment you found out?”
“Um… not exactly.”

Chloe proceeded to tell them everything that had happened from her viewpoint, culminating in the moment when she saw Lucifer’s tortured face, his inhuman, burning eyes. Ella gasped several times, and by the end she had her hands pressed over her mouth. Tears stood in her eyes, though for whom or for which parts of the story Dan wasn’t sure.

“I said ‘it’s all true’, and that’s when he realized, I think. And he instantly went back to being our Lucifer, except he looked… “ Chloe closed her eyes, opened them. They, too, were swimming in tears, and Dan wanted to curse aloud. Damned if that hurt little boy shick didn’t work on her. “He looked… devastated. And you know… I think he’s tried a few times to show me but it never worked for some reason? I don’t know why it happened now.” She ran her hands up into her hair, gripping close to her scalp. “And then he… his wings, they came out, and they were all covered in blood! Before I could say anything he was gone. I think he went through the window.”

Dan pressed, “And you’ve tried to—“

“I’ve called, I’ve texted. I went to Lux but the elevator is locked. I even tried to corner him at the precinct today but he just… he got away from me somehow.”

“Chloe,” Ella said. “Do you know what you’re going to say to him?”

Chloe peered at her, her eyes red-rimmed. “What?”

“I mean, what is it that you want to say?”

“I…”

“You must realize he’s waiting to be judged by you.”

Chloe stared. “By me?”

“Your opinion matters more than anyone’s, obviously!”

“But he’s… Lucifer. The Lucifer. How could he care what I think?”

Ella made a noise of dismissal. “I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but the guy’s got it bad for you. He thinks the world—maybe the universe of you.”

Dan chimed in, “She’s right. I think sometimes you’re the only person whose opinion he cares about. I think… if you told him to go away, he would.”

“Dan!” Ella hissed.

“I’m just saying.”

“But…” Chloe shook her head, appealing to Dan with hurt eyes. “You don’t want that, do you?”

Dan didn’t answer right away. It wasn’t so much that he had an answer, just that… damn, it was scary and he had to think that having the actual Prince of Darkness in your life wasn’t really good for your health. Or the health of the people you loved. If he’d thought Lucifer was damaged goods before—well, riding shotgun with the Devil was so much worse than riding shotgun with a narcissistic piano-playing addict with delusions of grandeur and a strange insight into people.

Ella smacked his arm. “Don’t you dare!”
“What?” he protested.

“Don’t try to get her to send him away.”

Dan stared at her. “How can you be taking this so easy?”

“Maybe I’ll freak out later, I don’t know. Maybe I’m more used to the existence of the supernatural than you think. All I know is, I can empathize, you know? This is a guy who was turned away from home by his father, abandoned by his family and forced to live in a hole in the ground!”

So the shtick worked just as well on Ella, obviously.

“And what about God?” Dan challenged.

“What about him?”

“You’re the one who thinks that God’s a good guy, and… well, he seems to have a bone to pick with Lucifer.”

“Does he, though? Maybe God overreacted all those years ago and he’s sorry for it now. How would we know?”

Dan’s brain was spinning. It probably wasn’t going to stop spinning any time soon, so he decided to just shut up.

That was when Chloe said, slowly, “I don’t want him to go away. But I don’t know how to just… be with him like we were. Not yet, anyway.”

Normal life resumed, except that nothing was normal. Chloe and Lucifer must have talked about something because they did return to working together after Argentine abruptly closed his file and left. The last time Dan saw him, he wore a slightly dazed, slightly stupid grin on his face. Whatever the status of the Marcus Pierce investigation, there was nothing like closure for the people involved.

Chloe was snappish and obviously angry at Lucifer a lot of the time. At first, Lucifer was creeping around like a battered wife, barely speaking at crime scenes or in the interrogation room, other than to use his mojo on suspects upon request.

Then he began to act out.

And even worse, he started showing up at work looking like he’d gone ten rounds with a —a what? What could even do that to him?

So Dan had been stationed outside Lux for a few hours now, sitting in his car in a no parking zone across the street from the building. He saw many people coming and going from Lucifer’s club. Party-goers, guests, favour-seekers, whatever they were. He’d never appreciated just how many people went in and out of Lux. Lucifer's subjects, or his worshippers perhaps. The Devil
hiding in plain sight, holding court over his little den of iniquity.

Dan didn’t know what he wanted to say, or do, he just knew that it had to happen as soon as possible. People he loved were hurting and he had to stop it. On top of which, he’d never had a chance to have it out with Lucifer about what had happened to Charlotte. He wasn’t sure how, but he suspected that Lucifer could have stopped it if he had made just a tad more effort. A little voice wondered exactly what Lucifer could have said that would have been believed by anyone else, but Dan kept banishing it forcefully to the back of his mind.

He’d nearly nodded off when a sharp knock on the side of his car window shocked him awake. He found himself staring up at one of Lucifer’s employees, one whom he recognized as a bouncer.

“Boss says you should go up.”

Dan felt a slight chill of dread. He didn’t think he had anything to fear from Lucifer but still...

…but still...

…they’d never said anything about the Devil stealing pudding.

Whatever Dan might have thought to expect when he got up to the penthouse, it was not a huge, cruel-looking man bristling with leather and hostility. The man stepped on the elevator as Dan stepped off, without so much as a word of good-bye. He glanced over his shoulder, and his lip curled. Dan couldn’t imagine what sort of man would dare show such contempt for Lucifer.

The entire place reeked of sex.

“Detective Espinoza!” Lucifer called out from somewhere in the penthouse. “Do come in, and please don’t mind the mess… I’ve been entertaining and haven’t had a chance to tidy up.”

Dan took several steps and stopped near the piano bench, unable to spot his host. “Entertaining… is that what you call it?”

“Indeed.” Lucifer emerged from the raised alcove of his bedroom, wearing a silk robe and quite obviously nothing underneath. His hair was more disordered than Dan had ever seen it, sticking straight up in places. He cracked one of his trademark grins and, despite himself, Dan found it utterly appealing. “Would you like a drink, Daniel?”

Dan shook his head. “Thanks, no.”

As always, the penthouse was lit by a few, ambient lights and one spectacular but not-very-bright chandelier, casting most of the room in shadows. The lights of Los Angeles were glittering from beyond the open balcony. Lucifer glided further into the living space and Dan took, for the first time, a good long look at the Devil.

Lucifer’s immersive brown eyes had always been one of his most attractive features—sometimes soft, sometimes wild, sometimes snapping with charisma. Dan had been secure enough in his sexuality not to be troubled by such observations. It wasn’t like he hadn’t wondered what it was like to be with Lucifer. The fact that Lucifer was an equal opportunity sexual adventurer made Dan wonder even more. Problem was, Dan had assumed that Lucifer’s appeal was the—maybe unfortunate—gift of just a very flawed man. Knowing that it was probably of supernatural origin made it truly dangerous.
Right now, Lucifer gave the appearance of someone who had had been most decoratively violated, with thin fabric clinging to his skin here and there, draped over the elegant shoulders and revealing bruises in certain places as though by some infernal design. Dan was assailed by images of Lucifer being manhandled, those soft eyes glistening as they looked up at him from somewhere down on his knees—

“Wait, what are you doing?” Dan growled.

“Doing?” Lucifer said, lilted almost. He was definitely on something, given the manic glitter in the dark eyes. He brushed past Dan, not close but close enough, going to the bar. The slight passage of air stirred every hair on Dan’s body. The smell of him should have been repugnant, but instead it only made Dan’s cock press against the seam of his jeans. “I’m not doing anything… Daniel.”

The sound of his name in Lucifer’s mouth was like a caress.

“Yes, you are,” Dan snapped. “Stop it.”

“I assure you, it’s nothing I can stop.” Lucifer poured himself several fingers of whiskey and downed them all at once. He turned to face Dan. He looked like shit—okay, yeah, no, he looked debauched and delicious. There was a livid bite mark in the place where his collarbone met his neck.

“I know you can control it if you want to,” Dan insisted.

“And why is that?” Lucifer looked Dan right in the eye, coaxing, lulling… maybe using his power on Dan. Would Dan even know it if he were?

Dan burst out, “Because I never wanted to fuck you before right now.”

Lucifer smirked. He didn’t have to say what he was thinking: You’ve always wanted to fuck me, Daniel, and the reason I know that is that everyone always wants to fuck me.

It should have been a real turn-off, being confronted with that attitude, that cocky, knowing face. Dan wanted to punch him in the—mouth. With his own mouth. But it was also the last thing he wanted, and his heart was racing as he tried to look somewhere but at Lucifer.

“All right, then,” Lucifer conceded, oddly gently. The waves of sex-sex-sex seemed to subside a bit, and Dan could breathe. “I suppose you’re here to talk about something?”

“Yes,” Dan gasped.

Lucifer’s smile turned brittle. “Daniel in the lion’s den, quite literally. Are you sure you wouldn’t like a drink? I have beer.”

Dan sighed. “All right.”

Lucifer fetched it for him from behind the bar, expertly pouring some unidentifiable craft label into a pint glass. He brought it to Dan and sat several feet away, watching as Dan sampled. It was ice cold, and truly one of the best beers Dan had ever tasted.

“This is amazing,” he said.

“I know,” Lucifer replied. His voice was normal enough, but his eyes still bore that hard,
wild sheen.

“What are you on, Lucifer?”

“Why, I don’t know what you mean, Detective Espinoza. In any case, it’ll wear off in a few minutes if that’s what you’re concerned about, and then I’ll be able to give my full consent—“

“Will you stop?” Dan shouted.

Lucifer actually flinched. It was slight, and subtle, but unmistakable. He sat back, something going flat in him. With his height, he should not have seemed frail, except that he did, and Christ, he had a black eye too.

Dan went on, “Has it occurred to you that I might still be mourning Charlotte? It’s only been a month, for Christ’s sake.”

The expression of regret seemed to deepen. Lucifer would not meet his eyes as he said, “You’re right, Daniel.” Then he looked up, and added, “As much as I’ve become accustomed to hearing his name invoked, could you please leave Yeshua, son of Mary, out of this?”

“Who?”

Lucifer gave him a long, expectant look.

“Oh,” Dan muttered. “Okay.”

He was burning with questions suddenly, but he tried to focus on the reason he had come here.

“What are you doing, Lucifer?”

“I should think that was obvious,” Lucifer replied, nodding his head towards the elevator.

“Don’t you think it might upset Chloe?”

“Would what upset Chloe?”

“You. Fucking everything and anything.”

Lucifer frowned. “Technically, I was not the one doing the fucking. And that is incorrect and unfair, Daniel. I choose all of my partners.”

“What about Argentine?”

Lucifer rolled his eyes. “What about him?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I couldn’t help notice that he seemed attracted to you when you were giving your statement. Next thing I know, he’s closing the file and leaving town.”

Lucifer shrugged.

“There’s a word for people who exchange sex for favours, you know.”

Lucifer unfolded and refolded his legs the other way, like a less blond, more male version of a Sharon Stone at her worst, watching Dan from under his lashes. “I’m not people, Daniel, and I’ve already had this very conversation with the Detective.”
“Right,” Dan said. Now they were getting down to it. He shifted closer to Lucifer, still keeping a few feet between them. “You’re not human. You’re an angel.”

“Fallen angel, but yes.”

“An actual angel.”

“I’m aware.”

“Are all angels like you?”

“There are no angels like me.”

Dan took a long pull from his beer, enjoying the loosening of tension in his neck. “What I mean is… I don’t know, do they all act like their body is a commodity?”

Lucifer gave him a peculiar look. “I don’t understand.”

“I’m just asking if all angels are so… promiscuous.”

“You’ve met my brother. What do you think?”

Dan thought about that. “Well… you know in some ways he is a lot like you.”

Lucifer tilted his head, absolutely fascinated. “Really?”

“Uh, yeah. For one thing, you’re both absolutely consumed by your relationship with your father, and you both think he’s somehow in control of everything.”

“That’s because He is, Daniel.”

“I’m not so sure.”

With a lift of his eyebrows, Lucifer teased, “And you supposedly a good Catholic.”

“I’m not much of a Catholic, actually. Haven’t been since my mother died of cancer.”

“I’m sorry for that, Daniel. Not that I had anything to do with it.” There was a slight change of trajectory in that last bit. The words were slightly defensive—like Lucifer actively expected Dan to blame him—but also directed to someone outside the room.

Of course they were. The Man Upstairs was no abstract concept to Lucifer. God was an entirely personal connection, an intelligence who had built him and then cast him away, an almighty dad who was somewhere up above, still directing the universe and trying to run his children’s lives. Lucifer was his rebellious Pinocchio, desperate to cut his strings but (unconsciously, unknowingly) desperate to keep them. How did you stop being a daddy’s boy when your dad was God? The God? Dan remembered how he’d once believed his own father was kind of like God…but he’d had no choice but to grow out of that as he reached adulthood and saw his father for the ordinary, flawed man that he was. And he’d grown out of his child’s conception of God when his mother had died at fifty-two, far too young. There had been nothing evil in it, he’d come to realize, just stupid, meaningless, heartbreaking waste.

“Well,” Dan said. “I’d rather believe that God is all-loving than all-powerful.”

Lucifer barely even blinked. He just shook his head. “One of the classic solutions to the problem of theodicy.”
“Huh?”

“The problem of evil. How could a God who is benevolent and all-powerful allow evil to exist? One solution is to deny that He is powerful enough to control everything. What really helps in that strategy is to create an adversary who is responsible for the evil things—a Satan, if you will. Of course, that is really ducking the question since God would have to be responsible for the existence of Satan too, which brings us right back to the original question of how could a benevolent God allow terrible things to happen? And the answer is, God is not benevolent. He is not a loving god. If he were, he wouldn’t allow his children to suffer.” Lucifer was staring with molten brown eyes into some unfathomable distance as he said this, and Dan could see his indelible pain written on his face. Then Lucifer blinked and said, “But that was not what you wanted to know, was it? You were saying that in some ways, Amenadiel is like me. But when it comes to sex, he is very different. You could call him… uptight.”

“He doesn’t seem to be fucking his way through Los Angeles, no.”

“As the Detective once said, desire is my superpower. I was designed to elicit and fulfill desire.”

“Why would a father create his child that way?” Dan wondered. He had very little control over what Trixie would become, he knew that, but if he’d had such power, he would have never made his child into some sort of sacred whore. Dan couldn’t help but remember the parade of Lucifer’s many lovers, each of them proclaiming their deep satisfaction with what Lucifer had given them. His heart ached as he recalled the look on Lucifer’s face as he listened to them, one after another, dismiss him as meaningless.

“I really don’t know,” Lucifer said, with a shrug. “All I know is that from the moment of my birth I’ve wanted things.”

“Did you want Argentine?”

“Mostly I wanted him to go away, but he did have an enormous cock, so that was an interesting challenge.”

Dan stared, and shook his head. He watched Lucifer sip his drink, watched his throat move. Again he noted the mauled state of Lucifer’s neck. He said, “Lucifer, did you let that man do that to you?”

“Oh, no, Argentine is painfully vanilla, I’m afraid.”

“No, I mean the man I just saw leaving here.”

“Oh, him.”

“I thought you were invulnerable or something.”

“Immortal… not entirely invulnerable. However, you are right that no ordinary man could do this. Then again, that was no man.”

Dan shivered. “What is he?”

“A specialist, you might say. I ask him to come when I need things that other… beings… can’t give me.”

“When you want to be hurt,” Dan supplied.
“Shocked, my dear douche? There’s a thin line between pain and pleasure.”

“I’m not *that* easily shocked, Lucifer.”

“Then what are we talking about?”

“I have the impression that you’re more interested in punishment than pleasure right now.”

Lucifer went quiet.

“I’m not wrong, am I?”

“No. You’re not wrong.”

Dan remembered that time before when Lucifer had been unkempt and unmanageable. Dan had never found out what was wrong but he distinctly recalled nursing his bloody nose and hearing Lucifer shout: *Why are you so surprised, Detective? I’m the Devil, I’m evil!*

“Why are you trying to punish yourself, Lucifer?”

Lucifer stretched and rolled his neck with pointed casualness.

“Lucifer.”

“Yes, Dan?”

“Are you going to answer my question?”

“I don’t think so, no.”

“Then tell me… what kind of being can hurt you?”

“One angel can hurt another, but so can demons.”

“He’s… a demon?”

“They do get out of Hell occasionally. Not a lot of them, and they mostly keep to themselves. You don’t have to worry.”

“Who’s worried?” Dan muttered. He took a long quaff of his beer. When he looked back, he saw Lucifer eyeing him appreciatively. “What other kinds of beings are out there?”

“Is that really what you came here to talk about?”

“No. But I want to know now.”

Lucifer sighed. “I shall give you, Miss Lopez and the detective a complete primer on the supernatural, I promise. I owe that to you.”

“And Chloe? What else do you owe her?”

Lucifer looked at his lap, every inch the sad, regretful little boy.

“To let her live her life,” Lucifer whispered. “To leave her be.”

Dan shook his head. Okay, the man—angel—really was clueless. “No, no, no, no, no. And no, Lucifer…. listen to me, because I know what I’m talking about on this. Women do not
want to be left alone in this sort of situation.”

Lucifer blinked. “They don’t?”

“I’m not giving you permission to stalk anyone, for the record. But you and Chloe… Man, can’t you tell that Chloe is losing her mind? You need to talk to her, you idiot!”

The fallen angel cocked his head in that way he did. Dan was reevaluating all his behaviours, and realizing that they weren’t always an affectation. It was entirely possible that Lucifer was honestly puzzled by human ways. Still, Dan couldn’t not see what he had been seeing for three years: an annoying, frustrating, self-centred, occasionally generous and oddly lovable man who followed Dan’s ex-wife around like a lost duckling. He just happened to be the Devil.

“Is it possible that I’ve misread the situation?” Lucifer said, almost to himself.

Dan managed not to roll his eyes, somehow.

“But Daniel, I saw how she looked at me. She was terrified…. and horrified. I wanted to give her space, so I’ve been… waiting for her to be ready to talk to me. But she just seems to be moving further away from me.”

Lucifer’s eyes were actually glimmering with tears, and Dan wondered why he was wondering at it. Again Dan ran up on the rocks of uncertainty about how to evaluate Lucifer’s various tics. Family trauma could arrest emotional development… in humans. What about angels? Was there any excuse for Lucifer acting as immature as he did? Could you assess anything about an angel as you would a human? If Ella was right, he’d been hurt profoundly by his family. A few millennia short of his majority maybe, teen angel, interrupted…

… and Dan was going around in circles.

“I imagine you’re horrified too.” Lucifer sounded infinitely sad, and Dan realized he’d gone silent.

“What?” Dan said.

“I see you’re trying to spare my feelings but you are afraid of me. Of course you’re afraid… I am a monster, after all.”

“Geez, Lucifer, dramatic much?”

Lucifer huffed, “My very real self-esteem issues are the result of thousands of years of being a supernatural scapegoat!”


It was striking how human Lucifer could be, still. That was what it all came down to. He was an angel and yet he was prickly, vain, changeable, shockingly candid at times… all too imperfect, not human but still… but still he was people, however he might try to hold himself apart.

“I’m pretty sure you’re not a monster,” Dan said, working it out as he spoke the words. “Malcolm was a monster. Pierce was a monster. No one who worries that he’s a monster as much as you do could actually be a monster. Or… maybe not, but I’ve known you for three years now, and you are… I don’t know, I just see someone who really wants to be a good guy. You know, unless this”—Dan waved his hand, encompassing all of Lucifer in his post-coitus disarray— “is an act. And I don’t think it is.”
Lucifer studied him, a corner of his mouth tilting up. Perhaps it wasn’t complimentary, whatever Lucifer was thinking. Perhaps he was thinking about just how foolish a measly human could be.

“Thank you, Daniel,” he said at last.

Dan shrugged, unaccountably embarrassed. “And if you were really Satanic and trying to drag us down to hell, there are much better ways to accomplish that. I mean… I’m sure you wouldn’t be such a pain in the ass all of time.”

“Very funny.”

“I’m serious. You drive people away as much as you attract them. If that’s part of your fiendish plan… well, it’s not a very good one.”

“I think Dr. Linda might have said something similar to me once.” Lucifer got up to pour himself another drink. As he was doing this, he said, “Can I ask… why exactly did you come here? Besides the obvious wanting to shag me, that is.”

“I do not—” Lucifer met Dan’s eyes, and he couldn’t finish that sentence. “Okay, fine,” he allowed. “Maybe I’m Lucifer-curious. Who isn’t?”

Lucifer waggled one brow.

Dan continued, “I came here to tell you to stop being an idiot and talk to Chloe.”

“But I—”

“No buts. Just do it. She’s in distress, Man. She needs to talk to you.”

“The last thing I want to do is put the detective through any distress.”

“Yes, I know,” Dan sighed.

“And don’t think I don’t know that you also came here to decide for yourself if my intentions towards her are, for lack of a better word, honourable.”

Dan opened his mouth, then decided there was no point in trying to deny it. “Can you read minds? Is that one of your powers?”

“No,” Lucifer sighed. “If only…. Things might be easier if I could.”

“But you can fly.”

“Well, yes. Now that I have my wings again, and as much as I hated them all this time, they did make it possible for me to save Chloe, so I suppose I’m glad of them.”

Dan gaped. “Why would you not want to have wings, Man?”

“I’ll explain it to you sometime, maybe,” Lucifer said, and looked unutterably sad. “So have you decided then?”

“Decided?

“Whether my intentions are honourable.”
“I know you love Chloe. I guess the question is, if she returned your feelings, what then? Would you carry her off to the underworld to be your queen?”

Lucifer snarled, “I would never!”

There was a hint of something not-quite-sane in his tone, and Dan couldn’t help the shudder of fear that overcame him. Shit, so yeah, there it was. The Devil, Lucifer. Fallen angel. Celestial being. He could squash Dan like a bug if he so desired.

“All right!” Dan allowed. “Question answered. Sort of.”

“The answer is, I don’t know,” Lucifer said, switching from outrage to pure misery. “I can’t imagine that the Detective could actually love a thing like me. And even if she could, I don’t see her choosing to put up with me and all of my family drama.”

“You won’t know if you don’t ask.”

Not twenty-four hours later, Chloe sat Dan down and asked him if he would do her a favour and work with Lucifer for a while. Not permanently, she said, because Lucifer was her partner. But just for a while, until she could get her head sorted out.

He was a good man. A good cop.

Of course he said yes.
“To my superhero!” Dan declared, raising his pint glass in Lucifer’s direction.

“Okay,” Dan said. “Lay it on me.”

They were sitting side by side at a counter in Dan’s favourite greasy spoon in Mid-City, because Dan was doing carbs that week, thank you very much, and sodium, and all the saturated fats.

Lucifer was somehow still immaculate after pounding a double cheese burger and chili fries. He had been licking his fingers with an air of immense satisfaction, a cat washing its paws after a particularly fine kill but, to Dan’s disappointment, he stopped what he was doing with a startled look. “I beg your pardon?” he said.

“Supernatural 101, man. Like, demons… exactly how many are there in Los Angeles?”

Lucifer pondered the question for a moment. He picked up his paper napkin and dabbed at his lips, then replied, “Six.”

“Six?”

“Is that more or less than you were hoping?”

“I dunno, I guess one is one too many.”

“I’ll be sure to let Maze know you feel that way.”

“Are they all like her?”

“Like what?”

“Oh, I don’t know… terrifying? Dangerous?”

“Of course. They’re demons.” Lucifer eyed Dan, perhaps taking official note of his anxiety, perhaps just amused. “I had no idea you harboured these anti-demon prejudices, Daniel.”

Dan gestured to the waitress behind the counter several feet down, and waited until his Coke had been topped up before replying. He used the intervening time to contain his frustration. Since learning who Lucifer really was, he was perhaps tolerating some of the man’s more irritating personality quirks with a slightly better humour, but one thing that continued to gall him was Lucifer’s persistent inability to take seriously things that were. Actually. Quite serious.

“How do you know?” he demanded when the waitress had moved out of earshot. “How do you know it’s six?”

“I’m always aware of demonic activity,” Lucifer explained. “Just as they’re always aware of me.
They were created for me, to do my bidding.”

“So what you’re saying is, you have minions.”

Lucifer rolled his eyes. “Little yellow what-nots in blue overalls?”

Impatient, Dan slapped his hand down on the counter, just once, nearly in front of Lucifer. He insisted, “You have minions.”

Lucifer’s imperious gaze fell upon Dan’s hand as though offended by its presence near him. “All right,” he allowed. “I don’t know exactly what each of them is up to at all times, although I could if I concentrated. You have nothing to worry about.”

“You control them, then?”

“Does it seem like I have control over Maze?”

“No… not really.”

“Exactly. Well, the truth is that Maze is pretty special. Most demons don’t have any ambitions beyond following their appetites and as long as they can continue doing that in Hell, they’re quite content. There are just those few exceptions. Those few who are especially strong-willed and don’t want to be told what to do.”

“Like the one I saw at your penthouse.”

“Mm, yes,” Lucifer said. He shifted in his seat a little and ran his thumb briefly along his lower lip. “Maybe I’ll invite him over again tonight.”

His open display of unconventional arousal was discomfiting to say the least. Dan wished that he didn’t find it in any way appealing. “Lucifer…”

“Yes, Daniel?” Lucifer’s tone was cool.

Regal, like he was appalled at the mere notion of a human giving him advice, but Dan fought through that. “Maybe,” he suggested. “Maybe you should try being a little kind to yourself.”

“I don’t deserve kindness, Daniel. You’ll eventually come to understand that.”

Dan sipped his Coke, staring at himself in the wall-length mirror across from him, on the other side of the counter. There seemed no bottom to the abyss of self-hatred in this fallen creature beside him.

“But you wanted to hear about the supernatural,” Lucifer prompted, now deliberately light-hearted.

“Yes. So… you’re saying I shouldn’t worry about the demons.”

“It’s really the angels who make the most trouble.”

“Ange… really?”

“Look at the mess my brother created with Malcolm.”

Dan swallowed. He hated thinking about Malcolm… especially the part where Malcolm had kidnapped his daughter and tried to murder her and Chloe, and Dan hadn’t been there. Hadn’t even known about it until after the fact. Meanwhile, Lucifer had been there for Chloe. According to what Dan had been told, Lucifer had even died for Chloe.
"And then there are the fallen angels," Lucifer added.

“What?” sputtered Dan. “I thought you were—“

“The only one? Far from it. There were several others who fell along with me and were also confined in Hell, initially."

“Initially?”

“Like me, they got out.”

Dan decided, for his sanity, to not let that panic him unduly. “I thought that the only angels on Earth were you and Amenadiel. Now you’re saying there might be others kicking around? Are they dangerous?”

“I’m the most dangerous angel, Daniel.”

That shouldn’t have been hot, but somehow it was. Maybe it was Lucifer’s certainty, or maybe it was the heat of Lucifer’s dark eyes as he said it, or the particular way that his voice caressed Daniel’s name.

“Right,” Dan muttered, facing forward, away from those eyes.

Lucifer humoured him, continuing, “Most angels prefer to avoid interaction with humans, aside from when they’re required to by an assignment.”

Dan’s face was flaming. “I see,” he said.

The velvet voice added, “We’re forbidden to kill humans, you know.”

This erased the discomfort, drowning it in concern. Dan twisted on his diner stool and said, “What about Pierce? You killed him.”

“Yes, I did.” Lucifer shrugged. “But what more can my father do to me?”

His tone suggested that he was genuinely wondering about the answer to that question.

“Man, I don’t think you want to find out.”

Lucifer suddenly lost some of his energy. He even slumped, if he could be said to ever do such a thing. “I don’t know what He’s waiting for,” he muttered.

Dan had never seen such pain in a creature’s eyes as he saw in Lucifer’s right then, and it affected him far more than he would have liked. He sensed himself getting progressively sucked into the epic narrative of Lucifer’s fall, suffering his family’s abuse along with him. Dan knew he should be putting to a stop to it, except that he didn’t want to. In college, he had loved Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dante, and equally, he loved the wrestlers that his father and grandfather passionately supported, not to mention the superheroes he’d grown up reading about. Epic stories of gods, goddesses, kings, ghosts, heroes… angels. All of it larger than life but still exactly like life. Between himself and Chloe, he’d always been the greater romantic.

“For what it’s worth,” Dan offered. “If there was ever a human who needed to die, it was Pierce.”

Lucifer put on his humans-confuse-me face but he said, “Thank you, Daniel. I’m afraid such considerations don’t apply where my father is concerned with his sons’ transgressions, however. Particularly mine. But I appreciate the sentiment.”
Dan shook his head. “Or maybe he sees you punishing yourself and it’s more than enough for Him. Have you considered that?”

“I’d really prefer it if you don’t try to defend my father to me, Detective Espinosa.”

Sometimes, it became far too apparent that Lucifer had ruled a kingdom for much, much longer than Dan had even been alive. He could distance himself from a conversation and a person with a slight change in posture and address.

Dan had been dismissed.

“So what can you do?” he asked a little while later as they were driving to the scene of a crime in Dan’s assigned vehicle. He tried not to sound too eager.

“What do you mean?” Lucifer asked sharply, clearly not following the thread. He’d been completely absorbed in silent, glum self-contemplation for the past half hour.

“What are your…um, superpowers?”

“Oh.” Lucifer was all amused smarm once more. “Well, you’ve seen them, Daniel.”

“Yes, but I want to hear it so I know. As… as your partner.”

“Yes, of course,” Lucifer replied. He never looked so charming and fascinating as when he was noticing and acknowledging that he was charming and fascinating.

“You know about my desire mojo,” Lucifer began. “It’s a way of discovering the truth, although I will admit from time to time it doesn’t quite reveal what we expect it to.”

“So it doesn’t always work.”

“It always works,” Lucifer huffed. “With one exception.”

“Chloe.”

“Yes. And there are always people who find ways to not reveal themselves. People who are especially motivated, you might say, or especially complicated. They can tell me the truth while simultaneously hiding from me. So while my ability is almost always useful, it doesn’t necessarily reveal the guilty, not without some additional work. Think of it as a tool for generating insight.”

“Right,” Dan said.

“What, are my superpowers not super enough for you, Dan?”

“Not what I meant.”

“What did you mean then?”

""
“You’re very touchy, you know that?”

Lucifer fell silent for a moment.

“My apologies,” he said. “The detective went to great pains to explain that she is not rejecting me, and Dr. Linda also worked on me for several hours to aid my understanding, but you must understand that rejection—or things that seem like rejection—is a particularly bitter subject for me.”


“Milton sold me out with that particular bit of character assassination!” Lucifer snarled. It was in profile, but Dan thought his eyes might have glowed red. Then he sighed, releasing his ire. “I do understand the desire for a good yarn, however.”

“You knew Milton?”

“Oh, yes. We dated for a while before the demons of homophobia got to him. I think he wrote his little epic in part to curry favour with the man upstairs.” Lucifer shrugged, putting on a smug smile. “We’d already spent quite a few hours together, though. He couldn’t help letting in his sympathy for the devil, so to speak.”

“Does that mean… did he know who you were?”

“Oh, no!” Lucifer threw back his head and laughed. “He was modern, but not that modern. I don’t think he could have managed that knowledge.”

“Right,” Dan sighed.

“Problem?”

“Nothing. We just keep getting off—”

“Getting off?” Lucifer interrupted, grinning.

“—getting off topic. There’s just so much to cover.”

“I believe we were discussing my angelic powers.”

“Yes. But we started by talking about other supernatural things.”

“Dealer’s choice, then.”

“Okay.” Dan suddenly found his brain blank. He started to babble. “What about witches? Do they exist?”

“Witches, as in Wiccans? Of course.”

“No, I mean real witches.”

“And what would a real witch be, Daniel? I promise you I haven’t profaned any naked women in the woods lately—at least not to lend them satanic powers. There are undoubtedly men and women running around with wands and crystals and herbs, chanting nonsense. And there are others who try to live close to nature. But casting spells and curses and such? That is usually the preserve of celestial beings like myself.”

“So there is such a thing as magic.”
“Define magic.”

Dan wondered if he should scream, if that would convey his very real frustration.

Lucifer, for once, seemed able to read another person’s mood. He explained, “There are those who would call me magic, Daniel. So magic is real, in that sense, but to me it’s just the rules I live by. There are thousands of books filled with complete nonsense purporting to be magic, but there are also a few true things out there amongst the trash. I doubt that you need worry about it. The magic, so-called, that does exist, is far more of a threat to me than to you. Does that put you at ease?”

“Not exactly,” Dan muttered.

They had arrived at their destination. Dan pulled in alongside several marked police cruisers and an ambulance. A dead body awaited them, and Chloe would already be on the scene. Dan put the car in park, turned off the motor and turned to Lucifer.

“What about monsters?”

“Monsters?” Lucifer echoed.

“Yeah, monsters. Vampires, werewolves… mummies.”

“Oh!” Lucifer laughed with pure delight. “It might be easier for me to give you a list of things that do exist rather than those that don’t. The idea that a human could live forever and stay young and beautiful just because they drink the blood of another human is very obviously born of irrational, unscientific thinking. It’s ludicrous, Daniel!”

“But a man with wings isn’t.”

“Obviously not.”

Daniel sighed. “Fine. And you have super strength, super speed…”

“I’m not at Superman levels, but yes.”

“What about the thing with handcuffs?”

“I can’t be contained by any mortal means. So locks don’t work. Or knots, for that matter.”

“What about immortal means?”

Lucifer coughed. “Yes, of course. But that’s not your problem.”

“Isn’t it, though?”

“What?”

“Isn’t it my problem?”

Lucifer blinked at him.

Dan went on, “What if another Cain, or a demon or some other… fallen angel… comes after you? Which, by the way, they have.”

“Then you get out of the way.”
“Man, I can’t do that.”

Lucifer frowned. “Why ever not?”

“Because we’re partners?”

Lucifer’s frown deepened.

“Partners look out for each other. We have each other’s backs. Not only that, but you’ve saved Chloe’s life a bunch of times. I owe you.”

Lucifer looked directly at him, and yes, his eyes did glow. “I did that because I wanted to. It was my desire to. You owe me nothing.”

Again, prickly fallen angel was prickly.

“And what about me?” Dan asked.

“What about you?”

“Will you watch my back?”

“Bloody hell—of course!”

“So why shouldn’t I watch yours?”

“That’s different.” Lucifer pointed at himself. “Archangel. It’s no hardship for me to look after you, and remember, with Chloe not around, I’m fairly invulnerable. In fact, if someone shoots at us, you make sure you use me for cover. Savvy?”

Dan declared, “I’m not going to hide behind you, Lucifer.”

Dan hid behind Lucifer as an enraged murder suspect with a double barrel sawed off shotgun opened fire.

“Fuck you, pig!”

“I resent that,” Lucifer said with his usual, maddening calm, even as the smoke cleared. “I mean, yes, I work for the LAPD in a very loose sense. Volunteer, really. I don’t take money from them, however, so I am certainly not a pig.”

Dan peered around Lucifer’s shoulder and saw the man’s eyes widen in shock, and despite the fact that they were there to take him in for the most despicable of acts—beating his wife to death—Dan knew a brief moment of empathy. It had to be confusing. Anyone else would have been lying in
nearly two pieces after that blast.

Faster than any human, Lucifer grabbed the business end of the shotgun and bent it upward at an almost ninety-degree angle.

“Now,” he said, and his tone made Dan shiver despite himself, “It takes a particular breed of coward to beat a woman to death, so I’m sure you’d be more than willing to make another attempt to murder me or Detective Espinoza if you get half the chance.”

Dan didn’t see what happened next. All he knew was the suspect had crumpled onto the floor, recalling those other times when Scary Lucifer had made an appearance. They hadn’t had that talk yet and Dan wanted to kick himself. So Lucifer had a certain moral authority when it came to punishment, but Dan wanted all his arrests to stick. He’d gotten far too close to the edge in the past and he honestly had thought that Chloe sometimes gave Lucifer too loose a rein. That was before Dan had spent much time working with him, of course. The man—angel—simply would not be controlled.

“Lucifer!” Dan shouted.

Lucifer turned, every bit as innocent and childlike as Trixie at her canniest. “Yes, Daniel?”

“Don’t damage him.”

“I did nothing to the repugnant piece of… feces. He fainted.”

“Oh.”

That seemed to happen a lot around Lucifer.

Lucifer said blandly. “I will say, jail is far from an adequate punishment for him.”

“He won’t be allowed to hurt any more women, though. Our case is airtight. And you know where he’s headed… after. Right?”

“Absolutely.”

Some hours later, after the feces had been processed and the shotgun filed away in an evidence locker, Lucifer invited Dan to Lux that night for a drink.

“I don’t know…” Dan said.

“What do you mean you don’t know? Either you want to or you don’t.”

Dan really didn’t have the energy to explain himself while managing Lucifer’s easily damaged sensibilities. “I’m tired, man.”

“One drink.” Lucifer had a knack for making his eyes somehow go luminous right when he wanted —and, well, he was the Lightbringer, wasn’t he?

Dan sighed. “Are you having your demon friend over?”

“Which one?”

“You know which one!”

Lucifer sighed. “Not tonight, not while you’re there. Does that satisfy you?”
As he spoke, Ella happened to enter their space—hardly surprising as they were standing in her lab.

“Sounds like a serious negotiation in here,” she said.

“Just negotiating Dan coming to Lux for a drink,” Lucifer supplied.

“Oh, don’t mind if I do!” Ella chimed.

Lucifer stared at her. “Are you sure, Miss Lopez?”

“Are you kidding? I’ve been dying to ask you some questions.”

Lucifer made a querulous face and said, “Not my idea of how to spend one’s free time, but if that is what you desire…”

“It is.”

“Very well, then.”

With this much settled, Lucifer cast an anxious look through the blinds, out to where Chloe was sitting at her desk, head down. His eyes took on an anime-level quality of angst, and Dan’s heart ached for her, but more for him. He wanted to make that look go away. He wanted to offer his shoulder, for Christ’s sake.

Damn. Dan was in trouble.

“We should invite her,” Dan said.

“I don’t think she wants to be anywhere near me,” Lucifer said quietly.

“We still should ask though.”

Lucifer half-shrugged. “Then you ask, Daniel. I have promised not to importune her in any way.”

Dan nodded, and proceeded over to Chloe’s desk. Sensing him hovering, she looked up from her paperwork. “What is it, Dan?”

It wasn’t hostile, but it wasn’t entirely welcoming either.

“We, uh… were wondering if you wanted to join us for a drink.”

Chloe looked over at Ella and Lucifer, and her face did a thing. It was the sort of look that was out of character for her, as straightforward and openhearted as she was. It was furtive, full of secrets that she was holding to herself. It was not a healthy look.

“We?” Chloe echoed.

“Me, Ella…and Lucifer.”

Chloe looked back down at her work. “I’d better not,” she sighed.

“Chlo…”

Her head snapped up. “What?”

And Dan backed down. “Never mind.”
Now it was Chloe whose eyes were shiny and filled with pain. “Don’t you think I’d like to go to a bar with you guys? With—with Lucifer? I miss him.”

Dan sat down on the chair that Lucifer had always occupied, pulling it as close to her desk as possible. He lowered his volume to a hush. “Then come with us.”

“I can’t.”

“Why not?”

Chloe shook her head. “I just can’t.”

Dean leaned in even closer. “C’mon,” he urged.

Chloe pressed her lips together. Then she said, “I know I should be getting over this, I know that!”

“I don’t know about that.”

“You and Ella seem fine with it.”

“But we don’t have the same kind of relationship with him.”

“In my mind it all makes perfect sense, you know? I can wrap my head around it… but at the same time none of it is real. I see myself going through the motions, doing my job, going home, and I hear myself talking and saying things, but I feel… like I’m not real.”

Dan couldn’t not be concerned at this. He understood trauma response. He knew that feeling like there was a wall of glass between you and the world. It was completely normal after an incident, but also potentially quite serious, especially if time went on and it didn’t dissipate. “Maybe you should talk to someone,” he proposed.

“And who would I talk to?” she whisper-hissed. “Yes, Doctor, I’m having a really hard time adjusting to seeing my partner looking like a burn victim. I’m having a hard time because he’s actually the Devil and it turns out God is real, Heaven and Hell are real and every single decision I make could send me to one or the other. People I love could go to Hell and I can’t even warn them or stop it! Oh, and also, just being around me could kill the Devil.’ I could kill the Devil—me, Chloe Decker, confirmed atheist! It’s too much responsibility, Dan, it’s too much—”

Chloe choked, breaking down a bit and controlling herself with some effort. Dan glanced around, saw a few people staring. Hopefully they hadn’t been able to make out her words. At least Lucifer had exercised his prerogatives and hidden himself somewhere else.

“You could talk to Linda,” Dan said quietly. “She knows everything, right?”

“That wouldn’t be ethical. Lucifer is her patient.”

“It wouldn’t be unethical if she treated it like couples’ therapy… and I think the circumstances are extraordinary, Chlo. Something tells me she’d make an exception for you.”

Chloe looked dubious.


She sniffed. “Yeah, he does that.”

“I’m feeling quite grateful for my life, so I’m going to have a drink to celebrate.”
Right in front of him, Chloe summoned a wan smile. That was a thing she did, always finding a way to give something back, even when she had plenty of reasons to be entirely focussed on herself. “I’m glad, Dan,” she said. “Glad Lucifer had your back.”

“He took a shotgun blast full in the chest.”

The smile dropped away. “And if I had been there, he’d be dead.”

Dan bit his lip for a second. Then he returned, “Do you remember Spiderman?”

“What?”

“The movie. We went to see it on one of our dates.”

“Which one?”

“The first—or second one, maybe. I don’t remember. Anyhow, Spiderman spends most of the movie angsting about how being around him is going to put his loved ones in danger. Mary-Jane in particular.”

“Am I Spiderman in this analogy, or am I Mary-Jane?”

“You’re Spiderman.”

“But Lucifer’s the one with the superpowers.”

“Beside the point. You’re the hero in this story. You’re the do-gooder.”

“Okay,” Chloe allowed, sounding more like herself than she had in a while. “I’m Spiderman, then.”

“Okay, so Spidey’s torturing himself through the whole movie, thinking he needs to be alone. At the end, Mary-Jane basically tells him that it’s up to her if she wants to put herself in danger and he just needs to get over himself. And then they’re together.”

Chloe considered Dan for a moment, then said, “Do you really think Lucifer hasn’t made that point to me already?”

Dan felt chastised.

“In any case,” Chloe continued, “The analogy doesn’t totally work. This case would be more like Mary-Jane might get Spiderman killed. Spiderman is much more important than Mary-Jane, and I can’t believe I just said that considering Spiderman is fiction and Lucifer is real!”

Dan just looked at her and said flatly, “How do you know?”

“How do I know?”

“If the Devil is real, who’s to say superheroes aren’t also real?”

“A guy is bit by a radioactive spider and suddenly he can climb walls and spin webs from his hands. There is no way that could happen.”

“And Lucifer has wings. He can fly. That shouldn’t be possible either.”

Finally, Chloe had a genuine smile on her face. “All right,” she admitted. “You have a point.”
Dan mocked being struck by lightning, putting a hand over his heart and staggering back in his chair. “Did you just say what I think you said?”

“Maybe,” Chloe replied, still fighting a grin.

“So you’ll come for a drink then?”

“To my superhero!” Dan declared, raising his pint glass in Lucifer’s direction. It was his fourth, and he was well in his cups. He thought that was the expression, and he also thought he had probably been a little bit too loud a moment ago.

Ella raised her own glass with a loopy grin. She was entirely wasted and barely conscious. Lucifer looked ridiculously pleased at being compared to some “muscle-head in a body suit.” It was a step up from his mood of a short while ago.

Chloe was not present, not any longer. She had made a brief appearance, listened as Lucifer played the piano and sang an adaptation of Our Lady Peace’s song “Superman’s Dead”. His eyes had made contact with Dan’s more than once throughout, sparkling with amusement at his own joke. Chloe had seemed to enjoy the music, and she did a shot with them before leaving. Dan counted it a win, although—

Although.

There was a tiny voice in his head whispering that he wanted to keep Lucifer as his partner for a little while longer.

It was the same Inner Dan who noticed how warm he felt all over his body when Lucifer’s eyes held his, acknowledging him in a way Lucifer had never done before. Dan didn’t like that voice at all… but he liked the warm part.

What’s going on, Daniel? Seems like somebody’s got a little crush.

Don’t be an idiot, Inner Dan.

Hello, I was here when you were getting all tingly?

Was not.

Liar, liar, crotch on fire.

Okay, Inner Dan. You caught me. So I’m in lust, I can admit to that. Big deal. It’s not like I’d be the first. Or the thousandth.

And what are we going to do about it?

Nothing, Inner Dan. And you can shut up now.

'I can resist everything except temptation.'
Huh?

Oscar Wilde.

“Whoa, oops!” Ella cried, accidentally spilling her drink. “Oh, Gosh I’m sorry!”

Lucifer rose gracefully, signaling to someone nearby. He put his hand on Ella’s and said, “The time has come for me to escort you to a taxi, Miss Lopez.”

Somehow, by this means he managed to lift her to her feet. She swayed, poking an exaggerated finger in his chest. “You’re… a Devil and a gentleman.”

“Yes, I am,” Lucifer agreed. “Daniel, I trust you won’t go anywhere?”

Before Dan could reply Lucifer had disappeared, guiding Ella through the crowd with an arm about her shoulders. Dan checked his watch. Somehow, it was past 1:00 a.m. Dan was in that stage of drunkenness when he was impaired enough to make reckless decisions but not so impaired that he could no longer enjoy himself. In fact, he was in a very fine mood, and he was wondering why he should not get him some Lucifer Morningstar this very night. Inner Daniel was, in point of fact, a douche, but the case could be made that Lucifer was a free agent. The case could also be made that he was not. But then—

Somehow, the Lord of Hell had reappeared at his side without him noticing. He was sitting there, straight-backed even as he lounged against the velvet upholstered booth back, far too perfect for one a.m. and Daniel was filled with an urge to just wreck him. Mess him up, somehow rip away that smarm and charm and—

Hold him.

Lucifer was gazing back, perfectly knowing and satisfied with himself, letting Daniel just sit there and stew, and damn, those eyes… and those lashes, no man should have lashes like that… and Daniel’s heart was pounding.

Which was crazy. He had no business crushing on Lucifer Morningstar, Lucifer Morningstar was not Dan’s, and more to the point, Dan had just been burned, he’d been falling in love with one Charlotte Richards, a veritable goddess and sorta kinda Lucifer’s mother—

“I don’t want you,” Daniel blurted.

“Indeed,” was Lucifer’s reply, crooking one, perfect eyebrow.

“I don’t want to want you. And I shouldn’t.”

“Absolutely you shouldn’t.”

“You don’t want me… Do you want me?”

Lucifer shifted slightly so that there was little more than a skin of air between them. Daniel could feel the heat from Lucifer and smell… he smelled delicious.

“What do you think?” he asked in a silken voice. He nosed gently downwards, barely nudging Dan’s lips, waiting to be met. Dan only had to move a hair, shift a muscle or two, and then, there he was with his lips touching Lucifer’s, just barely but enough to taste, and oh, he tasted, he tasted…

Dan drew back. He felt the delicate, moist parting of mouths like a rupture. His heart seemed to be
leaping out of his chest. He looked up slightly to find Lucifer’s eyes. They were at times quite opaque and other times, like now, shimmering with emotion.

And Dan was, unexpectedly, angry. Lucifer would reveal himself just as much as was needed to appeal to a Dan, or a Chloe. From his wonky, celestially wonky point of view, it probably felt like he was bending to the desires of whomever he happened to be next to, and isn’t that the whole point, Daniel? It would never occur to Lucifer that he was manipulating his humans.

“You want anyone who wants you,” Dan accused.

Lucifer did his puzzled head tilt. “I told you… I always choose, Daniel. Besides…” Lucifer shifted again, and a fresh abyss opened up between them. “I didn’t say that I would have sex with you.”

Dan stared at him. “What was all this then?” He waved a vague hand in the air, encompassing the charged space between their two bodies.

Lucifer licked his lips. “Fun?” he ventured.

His face said he knew he was being a bad boy.

There was no dignified way to get out of a velvet booth, but Dan started to make his best attempt.

Lucifer grasped his arm. “Daniel—Dan, please, wait—“

“You’re an asshole,” Dan said, but he didn’t move any further away.

Lucifer ducked his head. “Maybe I was—misbehaving.”

Dan growled.

“All right, yes!” Lucifer admitted, raising both hands in a gesture of appeasement. “I was wrong to—no, I will not say I was playing with you. I’m feeling something I’m not used to feeling, Dan, and I acted on it, I— please don’t go?”

Helpless against the lure of the damned creature, he was. He found Lucifer’s eyes yet again and saw, unexpectedly, some very familiar, human things: Sadness, longing… confusion. Maybe even garden-variety heartbreak. Lucifer probably didn’t know what was happening inside his own chest—and this was three years into therapy! God help Linda, she had to be a saint. Whatever Lucifer was paying her, it wasn’t nearly enough.

“I’ll tell you what you’re feeling,” Dan sighed, trying to be brusque. It wasn’t easy when Lucifer was wearing that particular face. Fortunately, he had some training from dealing with his daughter. “You’re lonely, and you’ll take whatever you can get to make it go away. I’m convenient, so you were playing—having fun—with me. But I guess you do have a tiny bit of a conscience—so you stopped yourself.”

Lucifer shook his head in indignation.

“Yes,” Dan insisted. “I’m a warm, willing body… that’s it.”

“No.”

“Yes.”

“Not so, Daniel! I choose my partners. I choose, I—I don’t just fall into bed with the first person who gives me a come-hither! I chose you because I know you and you’re safe, and easy, and you’re
as close to Chloe as I can get right now! And you want me because I’m as close as you can get to Charlotte!”

The words rang slightly despite the general noise all around them. Dan felt them all the way into his stomach and balls. He was cold all over, the spell of Lucifer entirely dissipated. He withdrew himself from the booth, ignoring Lucifer’s pleading face.

“You’re a monster,” he informed Lucifer, and walked away.

He took an Uber home to his empty bed and tried to sleep.

At five in the morning, lying flat on his back staring into the dark, he said, “Shit.”

Chapter End Notes

I feel like I could do more on this chapter, but I don't want to sit on it for too long either. So here it is! I hope that those who were waiting enjoy it. Maybe I should add a "slow burn" tag?
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Lucifer was a wild creature who, in one more heartbeat, might tear out Dan’s throat—yet all the rest of what Dan felt was pity. Lucifer’s posture said he was the most dangerous thing in the room, yet he was staring at Dan as though pleading not to be hurt.

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry this took so long! For some reason this story is coming very slowly as I work out certain plot and character decisions, and Real Life isn't helping much. I hope people haven't given up on me! I already have several pages of the next chapter written, though, so that's something.

Very much thanks to Jak_the_ATAT for the beta work!

Fate—or was it God getting vengeful on his son’s behalf?—had no mercy for a human who had gone a little too far the night before. When Dan got to work the next morning, hungover and hurting from the lack of sleep, there was barely time to take two gulps of caffeinated healing before the call came in. A new body. Dan was sent out by the interim lieutenant to canvas the area, interview some neighbours—basically, to do all the slave labour that he-who-had-been-demoted-but-was-still-nominally-a-detective was called upon to perform.

The crime scene took him to a neatly coiffed suburban cul-du-sac in Baldwin Hills—a little dated, a little shabby but still respectable. The victim’s house was painted a cheerful teal blue, and the body was lying in the kitchen in a crimson pool of blood. She was wearing nothing but a satin nightie that had bunched up around her thighs, leaving her sprawled in a state of frozen indignity. No matter how many times Dan saw people exposed like this, he never quite got rid of the urge to cover them up.

Quite evidently, the woman had been stabbed numerous times. Her phone, stippled with blood, was lying on the floor near her open hand. Dan squatted down next to the body, examining Ella’s face across it. She was hunched over, intent on her work, but she looked as disgustingly perky as ever.

Glancing up, she saw him staring at her. “What?”

“You were hammered last night, how are you even upright?”

“This gal doesn’t get hungover.”

“Seriously?” Dan grunted.
“For real. A gift of the Lopez genes.”

Dan grunted again.

Ella lifted her head above counter level and scanned the area. “Shouldn’t Lucifer be here?”

“I haven’t called him.”

She must have heard something suspicious in his voice. She fixed him with a knowing look and said, “Oh?”

“We’ve plenty of expertise on this between Chloe, me and you.”

“Uh huh.”

Dan tried to brazen it out, but he could feel the sharp nudge of her eyes on his face. He groaned, and damn if that didn’t make his head throb even worse. “Just say it.”

His knees ached too. Just another sign that he was approaching forty and not apt to bounce back from a night of overindulgence the way he would have a decade ago.

“Say what? I’m just minding my business here.” Ella brushed something on the floor right next to the body. And then scarcely taking a breath: “So what the hell is going on with you and Lucifer?”

Dan knew that gaping and babbling weren’t exactly conveying the cool that he wanted, but he couldn’t help himself. “How could you tell?!”

“Um, it’s totally obvious? You’ve been giving him the soppiest eyes lately.”

“God,” Dan said, mortified. “Does everyone know? Does Chloe know?”

“She might if she spent more than two minutes in Lucifer’s general area.” Ella sighed, a melancholic flash of something passing across her face. “I really thought those two were meant for each other, you know? But lately… lately I’ve been having some doubts about God’s plan. It’s funny… If you’d asked me a year ago, I would have said that having proof of the divine would be like a money sundae with diamond sprinkles… but instead it’s just a shit sandwich.”

Dan couldn’t think of anything to say for a minute. Then he asked, “Are you angry?”

“At God?”

“I was thinking more like angry at Lucifer.”

“Why would I be angry at Lucifer?” Ella wondered, her dark brows forming a puzzled shape.

They had to shut up then, because Chloe had arrived.

“What have we got?” she asked, brisk and professional. Dan noted her eyes moving, surveying the scene. He knew that she, too, was wondering where Lucifer was, among other things.

Dan had uniformed officers canvassing the neighbours and a tech had presented him with the victim’s passport. “Shelby Lammers,” Dan stated, holding the passport in his blue-gloved hand. “She teaches at Eisenhower Middle School. When she didn’t show to work this morning, one of her colleagues came to check in on her and found her.”

“She was stabbed sixteen times,” Ella supplied. “Most likely cause of death is blood loss but we’ll
have to wait on the autopsy to be sure.”

“Crime of passion, then,” Chloe said, her eyes on the deceased. “Where’s the person who found her?”

“Outside in the ambulance, being treated for shock,” Dan answered.

“And where’s Lucifer?”

Ella coughed.

Now Chloe looked up, finding Dan.

“I haven’t called him,” Dan admitted.

Chloe continued to look at him.

“We managed to solve a few crimes without the help of the Prince of Darkness before he ever showed up,” Dan grumbled.

Chloe sighed. “What did he do?”

Dan was very conscious of Ella’s big eyes and big ears, not to mention her big mouth. “Can we not talk about this right now?”

“Sure,” Chloe said easily. “But you need to get him here. You know he can help us with this, and that’s the goal, right? Solving crimes? Getting justice for Shelby Lammers?”

Dan’s face burned. He felt like he had as a seven-year-old discovered with candy that he hadn’t paid for in his pockets. His abuela had never needed anything but her words to take off a layer of skin. His Chloe was cut from the same cloth.

He stepped off to one side and texted Lucifer: At a crime scene. 221 Evelyn. Please come. Five minutes later there had been no reply and, since Lucifer was an avid texter who probably had his phone nearby at all times, even during orgies, this was worrisome.

There was nothing Dan could do at the moment, however. He was summoned by a uniformed Officer Brown, who took him to the house of a neighbor, one Davis Davison who lived behind the victim. His bedroom window looked directly into Shelby’s back yard, and there was also a clear eye line across Davison’s yard, over his fence, of the side entrance to the victim’s house.

“For real?” wondered Dan out loud upon hearing the name, and the officer raised his brows in confirmation.

Dan and Officer Brown were soon invited into the witness’s house, and Dan immediately recognized one of Los Angeles’s many failed but still aspiring actors. Davison was tanned, toned and plucked. His face had that oddly unnatural look of a person who’d had a certain amount of work done. His hair was probably dyed as well. Yet, with all that effort, he was just almost handsome enough to star in the next Sharknado sequel.

“Coffee, detective?” Davison crooned as he showed them into his kitchen.

Dan snuck a look at his phone. Lucifer could have cracked the guy open with barely more than a sentence and a smirk.

“No, thanks,” Dan said, tucking his phone in his pocket. He did not miss the fact that Davison had
made no offer of coffee to Brown.

“Are you sure? I just made it.”

In the absence of supernatural powers of persuasion, one had to do what they could to cultivate rapport with a witness. “All right,” Dan said. He’d been denied his full cup at the precinct, after all.

Davison clapped his hands together. “Right! Cream? Sugar?”

“Just black, please.”

The man made a face but agreeably pulled a coral Fiesta-ware mug out of the nearest cupboard. Dan waited until Davison had filled and placed the mug on the counter.

“So I understand that you saw someone leaving the—leaving Shelby’s house last night?”

“Yes, but I also saw her arrive.”

“Her? You think the visitor was female?”

“She was most definitely female.” Davison gestured broadly over the mug he had just set down. “Your coffee, detective.”

“And what time was this?” Dan asked.

“When she arrived or when she left?”

“Both.”

“Um… how’s the coffee?”

Repressing impatience, Dan lifted the mug and took a sip. It was like ashy water. “It’s great, thanks.”

The witness actually batted his eyelashes at Dan from the other side of his kitchen island. “Glad you like it!” He was a diva in the role of a lifetime. He was Blanche Dubois entertaining her male guests under a paper lantern.

“So when did she arrive?”

“It was around twilight, so maybe 7, 7:30?”

“And how did you know the visitor was a woman?”

Davison grinned in a way that meant to be knowing but was actually quite repugnant. Dan couldn’t help making unfavorable comparisons to Lucifer. This man was like some sort of cheap knock-off of a cheap knock-off. Davison liked to imagine that he was that alluring, that fascinating… but of course, he was at a disadvantage, not being a celestial being.

“Well…” the man said. “I’ve seen her visiting before.”

Now this was interesting. Dan scribbled on his notepad while asking, “Really? How many times?”

“Three or four, maybe,” drawled Davison. Something about this entire conversation was really tickling him.
Dan withheld his dislike and got the details. The mystery woman was young, under thirty, with mid-length dark hair and a “killer rack”. She came each time in the early evening and stayed a couple of hours. She drove a small sports car, red, make and model unknown.

There was still something that Davison was not telling him, though. Dan tried asking some general questions about Shelby, trying to get a sense of what a nosy neighbour might have seen over a period of time sharing a fence. Apparently she had been a quiet person, rarely going out except to work. She hadn’t engaged much with her neighbours, although she and Davison had traded a few words over the fence. In fact, Davison had asked her to have coffee with him once and she’d turned him down. But he had a feeling that he wasn’t her type. Dan sensed that it was very important to Davison’s ego that he believed this.

“What do you think the visits were about then?” Dan asked. “Were they friends?”

“Why, I couldn’t tell you,” Davison replied, still with a salacious gleam.

“All right, then.” Dan handed the man his card. “Please call me if you think of anything else.”

“But you haven’t finished your coffee—!”

With this, Davison flung out a hand that was probably meant to forestall Dan’s leaving and instead knocked his nearly-full cup right off the counter. The watery brew instantly went everywhere, some of it spraying Dan’s jeans.

“Oh, god, oh, my, detective, I’m so sorry! Let me get you a towel!”

“It’s fine, really.” Dan brushed at his lap. Very little had landed on him, and he was getting anxious to go. He intuited that this man’s objective was nothing more or less than to keep him there and keep him talking. Dan was no angel with the power of desire but he was capable of that much insight.

“Are you sure? I could get you a spare pair of pants and put yours in the washer…”

“No, it’s fine. I’ve got to go, but we might need to call you for a follow up interview, all right?”

Davison’s panic eased somewhat. “Very well, detective—“

“Espinoza.”

“—Detective Espinoza.”

Finally getting away, Dan nearly ran back to his assigned vehicle. He sat in the front seat, took a deep breath and called Lucifer. There was no answer and Dan almost hung up before voicemail kicked in. He told himself to stop being a coward and left a message.

“It’s me,” he said. “If you’re—if you’re not answering because you’re pissed at me, I get it, but we could really use your help on a case. Yes, Lucifer, we need you. Can you please give me a call at least?” He added after a moment, “It’s Dan.”

He hung up. He closed his eyes and scrunched his face in misery.

*It’s Dan.*

*It’s Dan? Really?*

He got out of his car and, like a big boy, went to find Chloe.
She was finishing up with the poor woman who had discovered Shelby’s body. The witness was sitting on the stairs at the back of the ambulance, wrapped in a silver shock blanket. Her eyes were swollen, her complexion both pallid and blotchy. She couldn’t have been much older than twenty-five.

“Thank you for your help,” Chloe was saying, gently. She touched the woman’s hand, just once, and then caught Dan’s eye. They moved to a space out of earshot to confer.

“She says she thinks Shelby was seeing someone, although she didn’t know who. Apparently Shelby wasn’t very forthcoming.”

“I have a lead on that,” Dan said. He conveyed the information that Davison had just shared with him.

“So maybe she was seeing this woman,” Chloe speculated. Something twigged, and she checked her notebook. “Another neighbor said she saw a red car parked in front of the house several times over the last month. She didn’t know who it belonged to.”

“We need to comb through Shelby’s life for some idea who this woman might be.”

Chloe nodded. Then: “What about Lucifer?”

“He didn’t answer.”

She folded her arms, regarded Dan steadily.

Dan turned a squirm into a shrug. “So I mighta… hurt his feelings last night.”

Chloe just nodded, and Dan suddenly realized that he had some very important, very pertinent things he had to tell her because he was at risk of becoming a douche all over again, for a second time. Third time. Okay, maybe it was more than three.

“Maybe we should take this someplace else?” he suggested.

“What was that for?” Dan asked, rubbing his jaw. The punch wasn’t entirely deserved this time in his opinion. He supposed he should be grateful it hadn’t been as hard as the time he had told her he’d been lying to her and manipulating her to avoid her (or anyone else) finding out that he had shot Malcolm.

Chloe gawped at him in disbelief.

He fumbled, “I mean… which—was that—?”

“Which of your many offenses made me want to punch you?”

Dan tried not to look too hangdog; it was not his most appealing quality, he knew. “Something like
that, yeah.”

The look of rage in Chloe’s eyes subsided to misery. She closed her eyes and sighed, then replied with her usual forthrightness, “I don’t have any right to be jealous.”

“We should go in the interrogation room,” Dan said. He communicated, with his eyebrows, that this was probably stuff we shouldn’t talk about where people can hear. They were standing in the break room, a place of limited privacy. There were people coming in and out occasionally, as people did, in search of snacks. Not the sort of conversation for this place, but he’d started it. Quite plainly he could see a few colleagues’ heads turned in their direction; if he could see them, they obviously could see him, and probably Chloe. (He sometimes wondered what had had possessed the brass upstairs to build a precinct full of glass walls.) He didn’t care much for his own sake—he’d already pretty much hit bottom in the police gossip zone at the Paddock—but he worried for Chloe’s reputation.

She nodded, following him into the opaque interrogation room and closing the door gently. Before he could take more than a step, she had smacked his arm. “What the hell, Dan?”

He turned to face her. “Again, is this about…?”

“Since when are you attracted to Lucifer? And even if you were, why would you kiss him? I mean, how could you—and how could he…?” She trailed away, swallowing hard.

Dan didn’t know how to proceed. There were too many ifs and thens and he didn’t know how to not hurt her.

“No,” Chloe said, forcefully curtailing herself. “Lucifer isn’t my boyfriend. He isn’t my anything. In fact, I was the one who said I needed time and asked him to keep his distance so why shouldn’t he go around doing what he always does? He was with Argentine, he’s probably surrounded by his usual harem of beautiful boys and girls.”

Dan thought of the demon he’d witnessed leaving Lucifer’s penthouse. He wondered if he should mention it and decided he’d better not. “For what it’s worth,” he ventured. “I don’t think he is doing his usual routine.”

Her eyes met his. He felt his face heat up with shame.

“This thing that’s—popped up—between me and Lucifer,” he started to explain. He coughed, fidgeted. He felt as idiotic as any fourteen-year-old boy trying to negotiate the social labyrinth of high school interaction. “He said something about it and it upset me but I think he was right. It has to do with the fact that I’ve lost Charlotte—“ He heard his voice tremble. “—and he’s lost you…” “Chloe shook her head in protest at that, and he added, “At least he doesn’t know where he stands with you. We’re both lonely and that’s not a justification, it’s just me trying to explain it.”

Chloe said nothing, just watching him. There was no absolution, but no apparent condemnation either.

“And for what it’s worth, I think that he knows he did a bad thing. He backed off and apologized…”

“For leading you on?”

Sharp as ever, his Chloe.

“Yes,” he admitted.
“So you do want him.”

“For whatever twisted reason…yes.”

She frowned. “You think it’s twisted.”

“Because he’s in love with you, and I know that! I’d like to think I’m not that kind of guy. And because he’s…”

“Because he’s the devil.”

“No, no, Chloe, that’s not what I meant.”

She folded her arms and bit her lip, clearly waiting for him to dig himself out.

“It’s because he’s…” Dan began and fell back, helplessly, on one simple reality. “…he’s Lucifer. I mean, I barely even like the guy, and like I said, we’re both on the rebound… if an archangel can be on the rebound…”

He was warming to his subject now.

“And because he’s Lucifer! He is not relationship material! Dammit, he was playing with me, he knew it was wrong but he teased me anyway, and then he had the nerve to make a joke like some puppy that just peed on the carpet! He knows he did a bad thing but it didn’t stop him, did it? He acts out and then he apologizes instead of trying not to do it in the first place!”

Unexpectedly, Chloe was wearing a wry grin.

“What?” Dan snapped.

“Nothing. Just… feeling nostalgic.”

“Seriously, Chloe, how do you put up with the guy?”

“He grows on you.”

Their eyes met again, and Dan knew that she knew that Lucifer had more than grown on him.

There was a knock, and Ella stuck her head without preamble. “Not interrupting whatever you two are doing in here, nope, not at all curious about that… I thought you’d like to hear the full report on Shelby Lammers, if you’re ready to wrap up whatever life-altering conversation this is?”

“We’ll be there in a second, Ella,” Chloe said, professional mask firmly in place.

Ella did not manage to hide her disappointment. “Okay.” She closed the door.

“We should go,” Dan said.

“In a sec. You said you hurt Lucifer’s feelings?”

“Can’t we finish this later?”

Chloe shook her head and made sure to block his exit. Dan was entirely conscious of the weight of his phone in his pocket, how it hadn’t made a sound all day even after he texted Lucifer. How his head throbbed with residual hangover and the lack of sleep brought about by his lying guiltily awake all night. He was also aware of the slight sting in his jaw where Chloe had clocked him. He could
do without any new physical complaints.

Dan confessed, “I might have… told him he was a monster.”

Chloe’s eyes got very wide…then very narrow.

“I know,” he defended. “I know… but I was drunk and he had really hit a nerve! He has to know that…”

He gave up on his own sentence half-way through.

“Dan.” Chloe spoke in a low, measured tone and Dan knew she only got like that when truly angry about some injustice, never for herself, because she was just that kind, even to the Devil himself.

“You need to go find him.”

“I’ll go after Ella’s report—“

“Now, Dan. Don’t you know that’s the worst thing you could have said—? Well, yes, of course you knew, didn’t you?”

“I was drunk,” he muttered.

“You know that’s no excuse.”

“He hurt me first.”

Dan had intended that as a sort of joke. It didn’t quite come off that way.

“Are you for real right now?” Chloe demanded. Her eyes were nearly burning with Luciferian wrath. “He hasn’t shown up at work or responded to your texts, you need to go find him!”

“He’s a grown—hell, he’s a billion-years-old! I’m sure it can wait until after work.”

“You know better than that!”

Dan opened his mouth to say that he knew perfectly well but that wouldn’t have helped his cause one bit. He wasn’t even sure why he was trying to argue. He knew she was right; he’d known it since five a.m. last night.

Chloe refused to relent. She went on, “You remember how he was during that Halloween wedding murder last year, the one with the sniper? He tried to get the man to shoot him, Dan, and it would have worked too because I was there.”

“Yes,” Dan agreed, placating. Not long after that sniper case, he’d watched as Lucifer put out a hit on himself, and when Dan had commented that he had some serious issues, Lucifer had said, “Obviously.”

“A few months ago,” Chloe added, “He was cutting off his own wings.”

Dan’s stomach dropped. “He what?”

“He believed his father had forced his wings back on him so he kept cutting them off.”

“What do you mean kept cutting them—“

“They kept growing back. Linda convinced him to stop.”
“Jesus Christ.”

“Yes,” Chloe said, absolutely ferocious on Lucifer’s behalf. “Exactly.”

“I’ll go see him.”

“Dan—” She caught his arm as he reached for the door handle. “—you don’t really think he’s a monster, do you? Because he’s not.”

“I know,” Dan sighed. “I know.”

There was construction on Sunset, of course, which made for one of those diabolical midday traffic snarls in the downtown core, right on the main artery between the precinct and Lux—a drive which, at times, could take as little as fifteen minutes. So Dan had plenty of time to macerate in his own douchery.

Okay, he’d done wrong yet again but, in his defense, Lucifer was… Lucifer. And here was the sticking point, over and over: He didn’t know how to judge Lucifer’s feelings because he was not human, all visible evidence to the contrary. Yes, he had a physical shape that resembled humanity. God had supposedly created humans in his own image, etcetera, and it stood to reason that he’d done the same with the angels. So Lucifer had a body with all the necessary equipment to enjoy—revel in—things that were quintessentially human, and Dan was not trying to condone his own behavior in any way—

Once, during his years of teen melodrama, he had screamed at his father “I hate you!” He would never forget how, to his shock, he’d seen tears well up in his father’s eyes. His father had forgiven him for that, and Dan had eventually been able to forgive himself.

—but was Lucifer truly capable of feeling pain in the same way as humans? How could Dan, a mere mortal, have such an effect on him that he would retreat to acts of self-harm like some borderline personality in the habit of making suicidal gestures?

Well, but Lucifer gave every evidence of being able to suffer real pain and real joy. Dan had seen him dig into a bag of cool ranch puffs with perfect abandon. Maybe too perfect because how many mortals could eat those accretions of processed dust without the least bit of self-recrimination? Lucifer could get tired, hungry, or at least he was good at pretending that he did. The fact that he needed to care for his body, that would seem to suggest that, immortal or not, he’d been made to feel, that he had a brain and a nervous system…and thus emotions of the same design as humans, sort of. Hell, Lucifer was a textbook neurotic; it couldn’t possibly be necessary to straighten his cuffs that many times in a single day.

On a third hand—or did Dan have five hands now? He’d lost count.

The crux of the matter, maybe, was God’s behavior towards his son. Was it really fair to brand the creator as an abusive parent? This was a being who had created a universe where countless millions suffered and would suffer, some of them for all eternity. Putting aside Hitler and other exemplars of evil, did anyone really deserve that? Clearly, any human measures of justice didn’t apply to that
creator, and as for the creator’s own, immediate family, their dysfunction played out on such a scale that… well, Lucifer’s fall from grace was just one more chapter in a blockbuster saga of divine truth and consequence. Lucifer’s entire existence was composed of afflictions that would have destroyed any human nervous system, many times over.

All in a day’s trauma for him. So what was a little self-mutilation this to the archangel who had spent millennia torturing human souls? Lucifer’s biography was so horrific that it boggled any human sensibilities… but, again, wasn’t Lucifer basically an alien in a human suit? If he was removing his own limbs repeatedly, it didn’t have to mean that he was a victim hacking at his own body as some expression of internalized violence.

If only Dan hadn’t been able to vividly picture and empathize with Lucifer before his fall. Supposedly the “brightest” of all God’s angels, he would have been incorrigible, irresistible, infinitely lovable, the veritable archetype of spoiled rotten. His father would have pardoned him over and over, like any doting parent. What a shock it would have been to Lucifer, accustomed to receiving so much adoration, to be cast out. How long had it taken for the reality to sink in, that this time would be different? That this time there would be no reprieve. No forgiveness.


At last, Dan had pulled up in front of Lux. He bounded out of the vehicle and tossed his keys to the valet. Thankfully, he had been around enough that he was familiar and the man didn’t question him.

He didn’t have a good sense of Lux’s official hours. There was an almost organic ebb and flow to activities in the place, he suspected. Sometimes, the party could proceed right through the night, the following day and beyond. So perhaps the front door would be locked—but it wasn’t. Dan strolled right in.

The main room was fully lit and bright, in a way that it never was at night when the carousing was in full swing and people needed shadows to retreat to. There were a few people milling about, dressed in normal clothes rather than club wear. Dan was fairly certain they were all employees.

Lucifer was among them, sitting at his piano and conversing with one of them. He wore his usual shirt and slacks with the shirt open at the neck, but with no vest or jacket. He was barefoot, Dan couldn’t help noticing, which was perhaps the most bizarre part of the entire scenario. For some reason, the sight of Lucifer’s bare feet made Dan’s heart ache with affection.

As Dan walked up, their eyes met briefly. Lucifer showed no reaction.

“… five cases of the 50-year-old, ten cases of the 100-year-old,” Lucifer concluded, to his employee.

“Right, boss,” said the man. He walked away, towards the bar.

Rather than acknowledging Dan, Lucifer swiveled and faced his piano. He began to play, idly fingerling this key and that key, as though picking out a melody that he couldn’t quite summon. Dan couldn’t help watching his hands. Long-fingered, elegant… a musician’s hands to be sure.

“What can I do for you, Detective?” Lucifer asked, his voice cool.

“You didn’t respond to my voicemail,” Dan said.

“Correct.”

The condescension in that one word raised Dan’s hackles like the scrape of metal on metal. He had
walked in absolutely convinced that he was going to be apologizing shortly; now he wanted to turn around and walk out. He made himself stay and speak in a level tone.

“I was under the impression that you want to continue working with the LAPD.”

“Are you threatening to bench me, coach?”

Dan closed his eyes. Counted to twenty. While he was doing so, Lucifer’s tinkering with the piano morphed into something more definitive. The tune was unfamiliar to Dan but the style was pointed. It was playful yet brusque, with a melody reminiscent of lumbering hippos, and it was most definitely mocking him.

Dan rested his hand on the piano. “Listen, Lucifer—”

Lucifer gave his hand a look.

Dan removed the hand and pressed, “Lucifer, I want—“

The music changed instantly, drowning him out. Now it was some sort of jolly ragtime number, and Lucifer was pounding it out at high volume, staring straight across the piano’s surface.

“Dammit, Lucifer, would you just—!”

Dan ventured to touch his shoulder.

And Lucifer exploded into motion, slapping his hand away so powerfully that Dan nearly fell over. In the same moment Lucifer somehow managed to put the piano bench between himself and Dan. He stood on the other side of it staring, breathing wildly, nostrils flaring.

All the anger fled from Dan. That he was in some danger, there was no question—Lucifer was a wild creature who, in one more heartbeat, might tear out Dan’s throat—yet all the rest of what Dan felt was pity. Lucifer’s posture said he was the most dangerous thing in the room, yet he was staring at Dan as though pleading not to be hurt.

The room held its breath—all of them, Dan and the bartenders and dancers and whomever else, waiting either for violence or escape. They didn’t necessarily know that Lucifer was anything but their hedonistic and somewhat aloof boss, because there was a something happening that any animal with a nervous system and a modicum of self-preservation would recognize and react to. The air itself seemed to pulse, and there was no questioning where—who—it came from. It was the instant, complete knowledge that this unfamiliar organism was coiled and ready to strike.

Dan lifted both his hands, palms out… slowly. “Easy,” he hushed. “Easy. No one here is going to hurt you.”

For the sake of his own skin, he was keenly focused on any movement, even the slightest twitch from Lucifer, so he did not fail to see how Lucifer’s eyes—bright and wild and unblinking—flickered and travelled towards the elevator that went up to the penthouse.

Dan’s cop instincts howled at him. He saw shudders rippling through Lucifer’s body and recognized the posture of a person who was potentially under duress, which made no sense. Lucifer was a powerful archangel who should be able to reduce to ash anyone who threatened him. And here he was, agitated and, yes, afraid. It wasn’t Lucifer smarting from what Dan had said the night before and it wasn’t typical. Lucifer was like a feral yet moderately sociable cat at the best of times, constantly watchful even when he deigned to let someone stroke his fur; this was something else. Something worse.
As suddenly as it had come, the threat was over. Lucifer released—something. The entire room took in oxygen. Normal activity in the space resumed.

Dan remained just as he was, however. He watched as Lucifer placed both hands on the edge of piano, lowering his head. He watched as Lucifer took a deep, tremulous breath.

“What was that about?” Dan asked, as mildly as he could manage.

Lucifer raised his head and said, “My apologies, Daniel. I’m a little on edge.”

Daniel allowed himself a small snort of amusement. Lucifer smiled ruefully in acknowledgement.

“Can we talk?” Dan proposed.

Lucifer waved towards one of the curved leather booths. “By all means.”

“Somewhere private?”

“What say we go somewhere for lunch?” Lucifer replied, just a tad too eager. “I’m famished.”

“I was thinking more like up in the penthouse.”

“You see the thing is…” Lucifer paused, clearly tap dancing around something, “… didn’t you want my help with something?”

“Interviewing a witness, yes.”

“Very well.” Lucifer gestured towards the exit.

“You’ll probably want socks and shoes.”


“I’d like to talk first, Lucifer.”

“So talk.” Lucifer waved a magnanimous hand.

“Lucifer, what’s going on here?”

“Going on?”

“Why don’t you want me to go upstairs?”

Lucifer made an exaggerated shrug. “If you must know, I had some guests around late last night and they haven’t left yet. The place is a bit of a mess. It’s embarrassing, really.”

“What sort of guests?”

Lucifer just smiled. He was trying for his usual salacious smirk but there was something ragged around the edges of it.

“You know what?” Dan said. “I don’t think I believe you.”

“Are you calling me a liar?”

"I think that you just told me something true to hide something else true. You do that a lot.”
Anger flashed in Lucifer’s face, but he quickly shut it down. He gave every impression of a man holding himself carefully in check.

“Daniel,” Lucifer said softly. “Dan, my friend… I’m rapidly running out of energy for this dance, so maybe you could just say what you came here to say so I can absolve you and you can go home and get a good night’s sleep and not feel any guilt about our dealings. I assure you, it’s easily done. The fault is entirely mine. It always is.”

There was an entire piano and a chasm of experience—and time—between them. “Lucifer…” Dan muttered. “You’re killing me here.”

He closed his eyes, took a deep breath—

Then made a straight bolt for the elevator that would take him up to the penthouse. He figured that Lucifer would not be willing to reveal himself as supernatural to the various staff who were standing about, so he stood a good chance of making it.

“What are you doing, Daniel… Dan?!”

He made it to the sliding doors, pressed the button to go up and—behold—the elevator was waiting for him. The doors opened.

Dan stepped into the car just as Lucifer got to him. His hand fell on Dan’s arm and the clasp was powerful enough to drive him to his knees. Lucifer growled, a deep red fire burning at the heart of his irises. Dan’s bowels turned to liquid.

“You think you can invade me?”

“You… you don’t—” Dan ground out. His arm was pure agony. In another second, Lucifer would snap the bone in half. “Lucifer…”

The doors closed on their little tableau and, with a ding, the car began to rise.

The hand on Dan loosened. Dan surged up, pushing Lucifer back. Lucifer either was caught off guard or he wasn’t in the frame of mind to resist gravity. His back met with the wall of the elevator, not terribly hard, but Lucifer let out a disquieting cry of pain, a sound that Dan had never thought him capable of making. He staggered, searching for his balance.

“What…” Dan gasped, trying to catch his breath. “Lucifer, what…?”

“It’s nothing,” Lucifer said, his breath ragged. He positioned himself stiffly in the corner, staring into a middle distance. “It just needs a bit of time to heal.”

“Did you… cut off your wings?”

Lucifer stared at him. “No,” he said. “Why would you think—?” He stopped, clearly putting a few things together. “Oh, no, nothing like that, Daniel. I thank you for your concern.”

“Then what?” Dan said, taking a single step.

It wasn’t anything so visible as a flinch, but it was unmistakable. Dan had seen that sort of thing before, when interviewing certain witnesses, certain suspects. It was the response of a body that had been battered beyond its ability to endure and beyond any thinking defense, all strings and wires.

“It’s that demon,” Dan said, very sure. “Your guest. It’s him, isn’t it.”
Lucifer tried a shrug. “Yes. Well, more than one. Five to be exact.”

“That was a shock. ‘They attacked you?’”

Lucifer displayed a brief, brittle laugh. “Let me spell things out for you, Daniel, since you refuse to take a hint and leave. I invited all five of them over. As I’m sure you know, there aren’t many beings with the strength to control me. I’ve had my friend in leather over before to administer some solid punishment, but you know that I would have to agree to submit to it. Now, I had the thought—since you asked me the other day how many demons are in town—that if I could get all of them to participate, I could get some serious chastisement that I wouldn’t be able to control. So I invited all five of them to come over for a visit. I told them exactly what I wanted and they were happy to deliver it.”

Dan snarled, “Deliver—what?”

“Let’s not be crass, Daniel.”

“Oh, please, you don’t hold back a damn thing when it suits you, so tell me. Or are you ashamed of your desires now?”

He saw a flush rise on Lucifer’s face. Lucifer opened his mouth to speak, but just then the elevator dinged a second time.

So there they were, four demons on Lucifer’s leather sectional and the one right near the elevator door, waiting for Lucifer’s return. Each and every one of them turned hard, hungry eyes in that direction and, for the first time, Dan could appreciate how well Maze impersonated humanity, for these were anything but. They had all risen to stand and watch, and it was something about their proportions, and the way they held their bodies, as though they were truly wearing an uncomfortable and ill-fitting garment.

One had the appearance of an old woman. Had it chosen this aspect for maximum grotesquerie? It was wearing some flowing thing that might have been purchased from Walmart and which allowed certain joints to protrude at peculiar, unnatural angles. The hair was long and greasy, grayish-brown, and there was a large, floppy hat that covered most of the face. Only the hands were visible… and they were strangely proportioned, knobby and almost claw-like. Two other demons were like squat and square twins, resembling neckless sculptures hewn roughly from cement. Most terrifying of all, they both wore the uniforms of security guards, smeared with blood. Did these creatures somehow hold down a job, supposedly watching over people or property? Dan’s imagination could barely summon it. The last of the foursome was thin, spindly and spider-like, clothed all in black. It might have been seven feet tall if it stood up straight, but it was hunched and twisted, like a distorted comma.

Dan remembered Trixie talking about how Maze had a “special Halloween mask”. It was hard to imagine how they could look more demonic—and God, had these been Lucifer’s company for the eons that he’d spent in Hell? Lucifer’s attachment to Maze began to make a lot of sense.

The fifth demon, the one whom Dan had seen leaving Lucifer’s penthouse not very long ago, was standing near the elevator, not five feet away. He was even taller and bulkier than Dan had remembered, towering over him and even able to look down slightly upon Lucifer’s head. He was so massively built as to remind Dan of some freakish Mr. Universe gone far beyond the limits of sane muscle development.

So as to leave nothing to the imagination, he—it—was wearing nothing but leather harness covered in spikes and bearing before him a mammoth erection, more befitting a bull moose than a human-
shaped demon.

“Where did you go, my lord? I thought… we might jus-s-t clean you up before we went for the next round but you ran away.” The tone was pure, childish indignation even as the brutish eyes travelled up and down Lucifer’s body, visibly assessing, laying claim. The demon’s voice was surprisingly high and nerve-gratingly sibilant as though he were speaking with a forked tongue. At this point, nothing seemed too hard for Dan to believe.

Dan thought he saw Lucifer shiver, and he wished he could be sure it wasn’t a shiver of arousal.

The demon’s obsidian eye caught Dan. A grin slid up one side of his face only, as though he’d only troubled to learn to master half of the muscles in his face.

“I thought s-so.”

Dan thought about pulling out his weapon and emptying a clip into it. “You thought what?” he said through numb lips.

“I thought…this-s… here is a…man with anger issues,” the creature whispered. “Issues you might like to work out in another man’s flesh… specifically… this man, yes?” He gestured towards Lucifer with his giant meat hooks. “The former prince of Hell, once beloved of God, once upon a time archangel. Nothing now. Not even our lord, really, just… one more of us?” The human-facsimile licked its lips. “Just a prettier one of us, when he isn’t showing his beast. So pretty…. so plastic.”

Dan didn’t dare look at Lucifer. He didn’t want to see Lucifer aroused by this humiliation or by the prospect of more of whatever agony—and Dan could make a pretty good guess at this point—had driven him downstairs. And he didn’t want Lucifer to see just how angry he was at him. Not yet, anyway.

He took a step into the penthouse.

“Daniel—” Lucifer protested.

The man-demon grinned. He held out an enormous paw and, of all things, introduced himself.

“Boyden Thursday. Daniel, is it?”

The name rang a very vague bell, itching somewhere in the back of Dan’s mind. He didn’t have the luxury of time to dredge up details, though, because there was a smile not unlike that moment in a horror film when some otherworldly aberration split open its maw to reveal a row of fangs and chomp down on its first victim—usually a douche whom everyone knew would be the first victim from the moment he appeared on screen.

“Detective Espinoza, LAPD.” Dan glanced over at the other four demons. He was pleased to see that they’d gone unnaturally still. He saw them all there like a pack of dogs ready to feast on the corpse of their former master, and his natural sense of justice—a feeling he’d all but forgotten he had at times—roared up out of some quiet corner of him. “I’m going to ask all of you to leave now.”

He tapped his badge, affixed to his belt as usual.

It had just come together in his head when he saw those hungry eyes and grasping claws: Lucifer had brought them here to give him what he thought he needed and deserved. Maybe he’d gotten just what he’d asked for, but it had done a number on him nonetheless.
And Dan was a cop. A protector. He took the action that a cop should take, without thought, not entirely expecting to survive but very clear on his duty. Lucifer was standing slightly behind Dan and just to his right, being uncharacteristically quiet. Maybe stunned with anger at Dan’s daring to kick out his guests. Dan would deal with him after… if he lived through it.

He added, “Either you all can clear out or I can arrest you right now.”

Thursday took a menacing half-step. It was all that was required. “We were invited here,” he said.

“And now I’m telling you to leave. I think I was clear about that, sir.”

He was so going to die.

“Detective Espinoza,” the man-demon said. “Have you ever heard the expression ‘I’m going to tear you a new one’?”

Dan didn’t think he should answer, but the demon continued as though he had.

“You know, of course, that we aren’t mundane beings. We used to work in a place where there were no limits to what we could do to people, because they had no flesh…” Thursday spoke as though he was reciting porn. “I’ve worked on some of the fallen ones down there but it’s not the same.” There was something about the way he said “flesh” that made Dan cringe. “So we came here to experience the pleasures of working with real bodies, but there are limits. We can’t do some of the things we would do down there, not if we want to stay.” Thursday shrugged, as though diagramming the pros and cons of a certain business deal. “It’s a trade-off, except—“

The demon grinned, eyes glittering with pure sadism.

“Except for when my ex-lord Lucifer gives me a call. I long for those calls, Detective Daniel Espinoza. I hunger for them. You understand why?”

Dan understood. He refused to say so.

“No matter what we do, he is good as new within a couple of hours. I come here, I get to—” The demon ran his tongue around his lips with a sneer—“quite literally ‘tear a new one’ in this thing that came down on us one day very long ago stinking of the upstairs. I make him like the downstairs and he loves it, he begs for it. I tear him a new one and then—“

Thursday half-groaned in ecstasy right in front of Dan, cock twitching, muscles rippling.

“He heals. He’s like a warm gummy in my pocket. And we start over.”

Thursday took another half step. Dan couldn’t seem to make his body move.

“And Boyden Thursday offered a freakish impersonation of a smile, his mouth extended so wide that there was a shark-space between his top and bottom teeth.

Dan recited, “Mr. Thursday, I asked you to leave.” He was retreating to words that he could have recited in his sleep. It was all he had at this point, since his brain was frozen with horror.
“We’re not going anywhere.”

Just as Dan was bracing for what seemed inevitable, he heard Maze’s voice, like music:

“You.”

Five heads snapped to the space immediately behind Dan. He’d been so engrossed in his stand-off, he hadn’t heard the elevator going down and coming up another time, hadn’t heard the doors slide open.

The other demons standing by the couch just shifted—and vanished, one more impossible thing that Dan didn’t have time to process.

Maze put herself in between Dan and the demon Thursday. “What are you doing here, Adrammelech?”

For the first time, there was apprehension on Thursday’s face. It had twisted into something profoundly ugly. “Mazikeen.”

“I asked you a question.”

“On whose authority, ex-right hand? I hear that our little lord here is no longer your patron, that you betrayed him one time too many.”

“And I heard that you’re about to be arrested for making pornographic films with underage actors,” Mazikeen returned. “You’re either going to jail or back downstairs… I’ll leave it to you to decide which you prefer but for now I believe the detective asked you to leave.”

Ah, yes, now he remembered. Dan had worked shotgun on a case in Major Crimes involving a certain Boyden Thursday, producer of porn films. While the pornography business was squeaky clean and all but mainstream these days, there were still certain fringe elements making films so far from the accepted that they constituted obscenity. In Thursday’s case they had involved extreme, non-consensual sadism, graphic rape and even worse. They’d put one of Thursday’s partners away but somehow he’d slithered free.

“My lord wants me to stay,” the demon crooned. “Isn’t that right, lordy? We wouldn’t want to prevent you from getting what you want.”

At last, Dan could afford a moment to turn to Lucifer. He gave him a glare that, he hoped, conveyed everything he found it necessary to say.

Lucifer said, his voice somewhat hoarse. “Leave, Adrammelech.”

“But my lord—“

“I said go, before I find it necessary to smite you from existence!”

Could Lucifer smite demons? Was that a thing? In any case, Thursday was convinced. He turned and sauntered past Maze, past Dan and past Lucifer, into the elevator. The familiar ding announced his departure. Lucifer immediately made for his bar, finding a decanter and pouring a large tumbler of golden whiskey.

Dan’s legs wouldn’t hold him. He was made of rubber. Somehow he made it to the camel-coloured couch and crumbled onto it.
Chapter Four

Chapter Summary

Lucifer emerged into the main room of the penthouse looking entirely put together in a deep burgundy suit with a navy blue shirt. His hair was perfectly styled, his look as polished as ever. The only indication that there was anything wrong was the fact that he swallowed another fistful of Oxycodone before they left and lowered himself into Dan’s car—Dan refused to let him drive—with a wince and a frown, keeping his mid-body as still as possible.

Chapter Notes

Well, I've been a little distracted for the last week! I loved Season 4 with a deep and fiery passion and I'm on tenterhooks waiting to find out if there will be a Season 5. I've been sitting on this chapter for a few weeks, but finally got it polished and ready to publish. I hope that after Dan's canonical behaviour, folks are ready for a fic where he is actually rather nice to Lucifer.

This is definitely AU now. I've added the tag.

I am egotistical enough that I want everyone to know that I wrote all this before I saw Season 4.

Thank you to everyone who's read this far and left kudos and comments. Allow me to say that I look forward to comments with a quiet desperation...

Please enjoy. Beta'd by the excellent Jak_the_ATAT!

Chapter Four

“I suppose a thank you is out of the question.”

Maze was sounding hostile or she was just sounding like Maze, or maybe that was Maze telling a joke, who could tell? Not Dan, who had been truly enjoying his little time-out. He’d let himself abide in an alternate dimension of dark and quiet with his eyes shut, savouring being alive, trying not to think about how close he’d just come… but it wasn’t over yet.

From some offhand comments of Lucifer’s over the past couple of weeks, he’d gathered that Lucifer and Maze had fallen out. Dan recalled a remark, something like: Maze’s betrayals are getting to be an annual event. Lucifer had come off more hurt than angry when he’d said it—but it now dawned
that Dan might need to avert Clash of the Supernatural Titans after all.

Bubble Boy Dan straightened up and rejoined the world.

Lucifer and Maze stood between the piano and the bar, not quite within striking distance of each other. That could change in a nanosecond. Lucifer was considering some space just above and over Maze’s shoulder, his hand resting, white-knuckled, on the edge of the bar. Maze was wearing one of her usual, skin-revealing fabrications of leather and metal, and crackling with violent energy. The contrast between them could not have been more extreme, yet Dan had no doubt that Lucifer could do some damage if he chose to.

Dan found that his knees were still a bit wobbly. “Maze, thank you,” he said.

Maze swiveled her glare towards Dan. “I was talking to him, actually…” She jerked her head in Lucifer’s direction. “Those people you were trying to scare away with your little badge… do you even know what they were?”

“I had an idea, yeah.”

Lucifer groused, “I never needed any help. I could have kicked them all out at any time.” He made sure to catch Dan’s eyes momentarily, including him in this censure.

“Sure,” Maze drawled. “That’s why you’re just stood there like a damsel while Dan nearly got himself disemboweled.”

A spike of nausea rushed through Dan. He tried to breathe through it.

Maze seemed to be seriously attempting to burn a hole through Lucifer’s forehead with her scowl, while Lucifer must have been doing his best to appear regally disinterested in her. The effect was ruined by the fact that Lucifer was sickly pale, his skin contrasting sharply with his dark hair and lashes. Even his lips were white.

“Mazikeen, can you get on with it and explain why you’re here?” Lucifer said. His tone betrayed absolutely none of the weakness that Dan knew he was feeling. “Was it perhaps to apologize for plotting with Cain to betray me?”

Most people would have had the grace to look a bit shamefaced at such an accusation, particularly if it were true. If anything, Maze’s glower went darker still.

“You should know,” she spat at Lucifer, “that I also planned on framing you for Cain’s murder so you would have no choice but to take me back to Hell.” She lifted her chin and folded her arms, looking completely unrepentant.

Lucifer took in this new information without expression. Dan waited for him to explode with wrath or… something.

“I see,” Lucifer said, and his voice was nearly gentle now. He didn’t seem to be finding fault with her actions. “That sounds like typical demon reasoning—but it might just have worked. Why didn’t you follow through?”

His gaze was focused on some point just over Maze’s shoulder that only he was seeing. Unexpectedly, his throat worked, the only evidence of a reaction to Maze’s treachery. These two had spent eons in close proximity, perpetually wounding each other if current patterns were any indicator, but undoubtedy relying on each other too. The problem wasn’t that they weren’t close; quite the opposite.
Maze’s face had changed. The anger dropped away, leaving a demon who was uncharacteristically hesitant, even remorseful. She fumbled a hand towards her former king.

Faster than any human, Lucifer clouted it away, just as he had done with Dan downstairs. This time, though, the sudden motion caused him to unbalance. He was forced to put his other hand on the bar, clutching at it with his head lowered. He looked as any human might when on the verge of throwing up or passing out.

Maze stared at this display of vulnerability. She shot Dan a helpless look and he shrugged, equally helpless.

“C’mon,” Maze urged. “Aren’t you going to at least threaten to smite me?”

Lucifer detached himself from the bar and edged around her without touching her. “You make the mistake of thinking I care enough to be angry,” he said as he went. His voice was a lot rougher than a moment ago. He cleared his throat, adding, “I should know better than to expect loyalty or even friendship from you at this point, Mazikeen. Please do show yourself out.”

Stiffly he managed the few steps up into his bedroom and disappearing from view.

Maze stormed to the elevator and left.

Dan couldn’t say he was sorry to see her go; he’d had enough supernatural threat for now. He waited a full minute and, when Lucifer didn’t reappear, returned to the nearest leather sofa to regroup. He could do what Lucifer clearly expected him to do and leave. However, it occurred to him that he’d accomplished none of the things he’d originally come here to do, and Chloe would be anxiously awaiting some report.

After he was sure that his legs were steady again, Dan rose and went to the bedroom stairs, peering up into the raised bedroom area. Lucifer was not there. There was, just to the right, another open entryway to what was most likely the bathroom. “Lucifer?” he called.

There was no answer.

Dan heard a shower running, so he took the few stairs up, seating himself on the chair near the window. Once more, he reflected on how very grateful he was to just be alive. It was not at all boring. He could have appreciated being alive all day.

Fifteen minutes in to Lucifer’s very long shower, he received a text from Chloe: Everything okay? He responded quickly: Think so. Talking to Lucifer now. A slight fib, but he didn’t want Chloe to be showing up while Lucifer was in need of some serious healing, and he still intended to have words with Lucifer, in raised voice if necessary.

At last Lucifer appeared in the doorway to the bedroom. He came to an abrupt stop at the sight of Dan. “Daniel,” Lucifer said. Surprised by the presence of another being and without his usual armor of clothing, makeup and coiffure, he was entirely unguarded, wearing only a robe, open and unbelted. Dan supposed he was lucky that Lucifer was wearing anything at all.

With that much of Lucifer showing, Dan could see the mess of lacerations and bruises around his collarbone and neck and down his body. Some of them were evidently teeth marks. Others could have been made by claws. There was extensive and deep bruising as well. No marks on his face, so Lucifer had requested, and received, a lavish quantity of punishment, and the fact that it was everywhere on his body except above the neck made it all the more horrific. That these creatures could administer pain with complete abandon while maintaining such a that careful boundary...
images spun in Dan’s mind that he didn’t want but couldn’t seem to dispel… Lucifer lying there completely passive, accepting, while they took him apart. Had there been a moment when he’d had enough and needed some respite, only to find that they wouldn’t give it? Did he fight with all his strength while those four abominations held him down, one at each limb, and Boyden Thursday took his pleasure? Did Lucifer cry and beg him to stop while Thursday revelled in his fear and humiliation?

“Do you need medical attention?” Dan asked, at a loss.

Lucifer just blinked at him. “Why are you still here?” he said. He closed and belted his robe, remaining poised in the doorway between the two rooms.

“I needed to make sure you’re okay…and we never did have our talk.”

"I’m fine, Daniel."

"You don’t look fine. You look like a pack of dogs chewed on you."

“Not far from the truth.”

“Why haven’t you healed already? You seem worse now than you were downstairs.”

Lucifer uttered a deep, put upon sigh. “Suffice it to say that adrenaline was keeping me going for a while there. And then… pride.”

“If you’re bleeding internally—“

“It doesn’t matter,” Lucifer overrode him. “All I needed was a hot shower, and now a nice, long sleep. I’ll be good as new after…” Lucifer trailed away, perhaps hearing the echo in his own words of what Thursday had said about him a short while ago.

Lucifer proceeded to his bed. Carefully not bending at the waist, he was required to perform a strange maneuver. He ended up dropping like a plank, emitting a tiny whine when he landed. Then he rolled onto his back and put a hand over his eyes, breathing shakily.

Dan bit his lip, not knowing what he could or should say. It was pretty obvious where Lucifer was hurting, and maybe still bleeding—but guys didn’t talk to other guys about this sort of thing. He offered, “Can I… is there some way I can help?”

“No, Dan.”

“You really are going to heal?”

“It’s what I do.”

“Do you want me to leave?”

“Yes.”

“Too bad,” Dan retorted. “Because I’m not going anywhere until you talk to me and tell me you’re coming to work tomorrow.”

Lucifer, without otherwise moving or uncovering his eyes, said levelly, “I will come to work tomorrow, Detective Espinoza.”

Dan rubbed his face and groaned. He decided to try moving a little closer. He perched on the end of
the bed near Lucifer’s feet. Lucifer reacted to that, lifting his head slightly and watching him. If he’d been a cat, his tail would have started to twitch. Gingerly, Dan rested a hand on Lucifer’s shin.

Lucifer immediately produced a violent shudder that unseated Dan’s hand and warned him against trying a second time. Dan clasped his hands together, nearly in an attitude of prayer and begged, “Lucifer, will you give a douche a break here?”

"I don’t know what you mean, Detective Espinoza.”

“Look. I’m sorry for what I said to you. I knew it was bad and I should never have said it.”

“Even if it’s true?”

"It’s not—and I can’t believe that you’d let yourself believe it just because I said it.”

Lucifer subsided a little, closing his eyes again. “It’s more complicated than that, obviously.” Then he sighed, “If it will make you leave faster, you can do one thing for me.”

Dan gritted his teeth. “Yes?”

“Behind the bar, on the second shelf, there’s a little chest. You’ll find several blister packs of Oxycodone in there. Bring me four of them and a tumbler of whiskey to wash it down.”

“Four—?”

“Celestial being here, Daniel. It’ll just take the edge off for half an hour if I’m lucky.”

“I’ll bring you a tumbler of water,” Dan said, rising from the bed. He drew the line at using alcohol to wash down narcotics, even with celestial beings. Behind him, he heard Lucifer spitting some words in a language full of consonants.

When Dan returned to the bed with the handful of pills and the water, Lucifer shot him a glare, but he took the glass and used the water to throw down his Oxies. Almost instantly, he uttered a small sigh, some of the stiffness in his body easing away. Dan, feeling less endangered, placed himself on the side of the bed, looking but not touching. He fought the urge to stroke Lucifer’s thick, dark hair. Would it be as soft and silky as it looked, or did angel hair have a different texture to it?

Lucifer said dreamily, “I used to, you know.”

“Used to...?”

“Believe what people told me. Before I fell.”

It was like a punch in the gut. Dan felt keenly that he was poised on the edge of something; some new vista of intimacy was opening in those few, quiet words. If he so much as breathed, the horizon would close and be lost, maybe forever. He tried to be as a statue.

“You probably won’t believe this, Daniel, but I used to be quite gullible. I didn’t know that there was such a thing as lying.”

Far from being unbelievable, it made a lot of sense to Dan. Lucifer had a way of speaking truth as though it had never occurred to him that there was another other way of proceeding.

“When I rebelled, my twin brother Michael used a lie to trick me into letting down my guard when he came for me. Even after one hell of an education... I still don’t seem to catch on. Maze is just the latest example… my dad… well, where do I start? Oh, and my mum supposedly lied to protect
me.” Lucifer emitted a small, bitter chuckle, completely unamused.

Dan floundered for some thread of conversation to pursue. He was supposed to be making a point here. “Wow,” he said.

Lucifer maneuvered himself onto his elbows and pinned Daniel with a look. “‘Wow’?” he echoed. “I’m bringing you into my confidence and that’s all you have to say?”

“Sorry,” Dan mumbled, flushing to the roots of his hair. “I’m just… I mean… Michael? The Michael? And he’s your twin?”

“We were made the same time, so yes. But he’s not identical to me if that’s what you’re thinking.”

“I wasn’t thinking about that, just… actually, when you talk about your family, sometimes it reminds me of my family.”

“Really?” Lucifer said with his sometimes childlike curiosity.

“Really. I know what it feels like to be hurt by family, but then I wonder if… maybe it isn’t the same thing at all because—you know, your dad is… your dad. But it does happen to all of us, you know, getting hurt by the people who are supposed to love us the most. And usually when they lie, it’s because they think it’s the right thing to do.” He laughed a little at the expression Lucifer offered in response to that. “Stupid, I know. But that’s family.”

Lucifer laid back down, closing his eyes. He nestled into his pillow with a sigh. “Ahhh… that’s lovely.”

“Should I even ask where you got the pills?”

“Not unless you really want to know, Daniel. There’s plenty more where they came from.”

“Oh, no thanks. Unlike you, I need my job.”

Lucifer shrugged, then winced. He said, eyes still closed, “For what it’s worth, Daniel, I accept your apology. I know you didn’t mean what you said. And I think I had it coming.”

Speaking of family, Dan mused with an internal sigh. Dealing with Lucifer sometimes reminded Dan of his elderly Aunt Sofia. His father’s eldest sister and the family matriarch, she was a master of self-deprecation. It was her go-to tactic for getting the upper hand in any conversation, and Lucifer could definitely give her a run for her money. Dan had a hysterically funny moment envisioning the two of them going toe-to-toe, each battling to get to the bottom in the moral hierarchy—but it wasn’t so much funny as tragic.

"Lucifer, do you have to do that?"

“Do what?”

“You’re the one who’s always talking about how unfair it is that you’re blamed for humanity’s sins. You aren’t evil, you punish evil. You didn’t set up the system, your father did. You don’t send people to hell, they send themselves. You see, I was listening.”

“Yes, Daniel, very good.” Lucifer dismissed Dan’s statement with an imperious hand. “A gold star for you.”

Whatever further arguments or opinions Dan might have offered right then, he didn’t get the chance,
as Lucifer fell asleep between one breath and the next.

Dan didn’t want to wake him, so he opened the glass door between the bedroom and the balcony, and sat outside, enjoying the sun and quietly keeping watch over his relationally-challenged friend. He’d never thought of himself as an especially insightful person but compared to Lucifer, he was an emotional genius. One step forward, three steps back. Just when Dan thought they were connecting, Lucifer could brush him off like—like he actually wanted to be alone—but the worst anxieties were self-fulfilling, weren’t they? Lucifer feared driving people away and thus, acting from that fear, people being driven away was exactly what happened.

Soon his own eyelids were drooping. He had nearly nodded off when his phone rang. Chloe. He snatched at it and answered, hoping the single ring hadn’t disturbed Lucifer.

“Hey, Chlo,” he said, keeping his voice low. He stood up, moving as far away from Lucifer’s wide open bedroom as was possible on the balcony.

“Hey,” she said. “How’s Lucifer?”

“Sleeping.”

“Not an answer to the question, Dan.”

“He’s… he’ll be okay.”

“Dan.”

“I’ll tell you later, okay? I intervened in something—” Again, a slight fib. “—and he should be in to work tomorrow. I’ve just been sitting here with him. Do you need me back there?”

“There were fingerprints at the scene for one Vivian Cambridge, aged 32, a.k.a Velma Kettle. She’s in the database, has a record for solicitation and assault. She’s the registered owner of a red 2017 Miata. We’re bringing her in for an interview right now and it would be terribly helpful if—“

“If Lucifer could be there,” Dan finished. “Chloe, he’s in a bit of a bad way. Needs to sleep it off.”

“All right,” she sighed. “Then can you get back here soon? I could use some backup.”

“Absolutely. See you shortly.”

Dan hung up and returned to the bedroom just in time to see Lucifer awake, upright and heading into the bathroom. “Lucifer, you—“

“I heard,” Lucifer said. “The detective needs me.”

“You need to heal,” Dan said to his back.

“I’ll be ready in ten minutes,” Lucifer said, choosing to ignore Dan.

It was infuriating, but Dan supposed he understood; Chloe hadn’t asked for Lucifer’s help in several weeks.

After something more like twenty minutes, Lucifer emerged into the main room of the penthouse looking entirely put together in a deep burgundy suit with a navy blue shirt. His hair was perfectly styled, his look as polished as ever. The only indication that there was anything wrong was the fact that he swallowed another fistful of Oxycodone before they left and lowered himself into Dan’s car—Dan refused to let him drive—with a wince and a frown, keeping his mid-body as still as
Lucifer was not tracking well. His face was ashen, his pupils the size of dinner plates. His overall coordination had taken a dive right about the time that they entered the precinct. He offered a grand wave that was nearly a stagger and Dan put a hand out, thinking to steady him. At the last second, he snatched it back. Lucifer grinned dopily as he got his feet under him. “You called for me, Detective… and so… here I am.”

Chloe was looking Lucifer up and down. “Are you drunk?”

“Oxies,” Lucifer explained, and then graced them with an absolutely blinding, beatific smile that spawned an ache deep in Dan’s gut. Chloe looked similarly affected by it. Then Lucifer’s expression twisted slightly and they both lost that ephemeral glow of the divine. He turned towards the interview room for a moment. “Is she here?”

Chloe answered, “Not yet, but Lucifer, I thought—“

“I can help.”

“I’m not so sure about that.”

“My apologies, Detective. I forgot how you affect me so the…. the pills are packing more of a punch. I should be better in a few minutes.”

“Do you want to tell me what happened to you?” Chloe said.

Lucifer dodged the hand that she had been moving in his direction. A wider space opened between them, and Chloe looked grief-stricken.

“Jus’ a bit of rough trade, Detective.” Lucifer closed his eyes and inhaled slowly, the picture of a person trying not to keel over. “Nothing I didn’t set myself up for.” He opened his eyes, attempted a grin. It was that brittle, bizarre one that, now that Dan knew what he was looking at, resembled nothing so much as an alien wearing its best approximation of humanity. “Shall we go in?”

“Lucifer… I think you should sit down.”

Lucifer shook his head—and with that motion, came close to falling. Both Dan and Chloe involuntarily tried to steady him. He wrenched away with a querulous sound that was half a growl, half a protest. At the last instant he turned it into a forced, slightly nervous laugh but there was something forbidding in his eyes as he stared at Chloe, something like warning.

“Unh-uh!” Lucifer hissed, moving out of reach. “Hann’s off the merch-merchandise.”

“Lucifer…” Chloe gulped. She went a little white, staring at him with pleading eyes. “What’s wrong?”

“You wan’ me bloody here, ’m here.”

Intended or not, Lucifer’s aggression was palpable, a live thing. It oozed out of him, twined with
despairing self-loathing, looking for something to strike. Dan braced himself, ready to tackle him, or perhaps he would need to tackle Chloe, to shield her with his body because he feared that Chloe wasn’t ready to give up just yet. He was very conscious of how often she and Lucifer had tended to touch each other—always there were the shared jokes, back pats, small gestures—

It was then that Vivian Cambridge arrived; Dan didn’t need to have seen her picture to recognize her. She swept into the precinct like she knew—and expected—that every eye was on her. She was accompanied by a much older man in country club wear. Dan recognized the symbol of the club on his jacket as one that would have rejected him solely on the basis of his last name, never mind his bank account.

A besotted, uniformed desk officer was directing the couple to the interview room.

“Okay, how about this?” Dan suggested in the wake of Vivian Cambridge’s passing. “Chloe and I will conduct the interview. Lucifer, you watch from the viewing room and we’ll see how it goes. I’ll signal if we need you to come in.”

Lucifer turned slightly and stared at Dan. Dan wasn’t confident that he was taking anything in. Then he nodded and ambled towards the door to the viewing area.

When the door to the room had closed, Chloe immediately turned on Dan. “How could you let him come here?”

“You think I could stop him?” Dan protested.

“Why is he like this?”

“He got beaten up, he’s in pain, he took painkillers. A lot of them. That’s the gist. And I guess now that he’s here...”

“Around me,” Chloe finished. “And beaten up by whom?”

“Demons.”

“Demons plural?”

“Yes.”

Chloe gave her head a little shake, as though using that physical jolt to master her thoughts. “Okay... putting aside the whole bit about more than one demon... how did they get the jump on Lucifer? Shouldn’t he have been able to beat them?”

“Erm...” Dan wasn’t sure what Lucifer would want him to share, but then it occurred to him that if Lucifer had been here he probably would have blurted it out anyway. “He invited them over. Gave them permission.”

“Permission...?”

“Permission to hurt him.”

Chloe stared in an appalled silence.

Dan elaborated, “You remember that porn producer, Boyden Thursday? We looked at him last year for an obscenity charge? Well, he’s one of them and he’s actually a demon... and I’ve run into him at Lucifer’s twice now. Lucifer says he calls him when he needs...um.”

“There’s more, and I swear I’ll tell you…but right now shouldn’t we get in there and talk to this woman?”

Chloe took some time to compose herself; then she nodded. Meanwhile, Dan had flipped open the report and read it over quickly.

The ME had concluded that despite all the stab wounds, Shelby had bled out from the single wound piercing her jugular, caused by a shattered piece of porcelain, one of many found at the scene. There were prints on the shard but nothing that could be identified. Other prints at the scene belonged to one “Vivian Chelsea”, according to the police database, a.k.a. Velma Kettle. Velma Kettle had a fairly extensive history. Born in Tennessee, survivor of parental neglect and abuse, in and out of foster care, her first arrest for assault at sixteen, multiple arrests for solicitation—the last in Los Angeles when she was nineteen. The “Vivian Chelsea” moniker had been her porn name. After a brief but celebrated career in that industry, Vivian Chelsea had found her first husband. Two husbands later, she was Vivian Cambridge, living in a twenty-bedroom home in Beverly Hills.

Ella’s reconstruction of the scene suggested that there had been at least two individuals in the kitchen and some sort of fight had ensued that involved things being thrown. There had been shattered glassware and plates and cups around, one of which was the source of the murder shard. Someone had found it a convenient stabbing weapon. All of the wounds, including the one that had killed Shelby, were sloppy, suggesting some passion but not necessarily premeditation. Of course, one didn’t stab a person sixteen times without the intention to do some harm.

Chloe went into the interview room first, followed by Dan, and they both sat down across from the woman.

Vivian was wearing a crimson red sheath dress that revealed just a little too much, hugging every curve like a second skin. Her hair was a rich, dark brown, framing a face of perfect porcelain skin, a bee-stung mouth, and eyes like those of an anime creature. What made it truly extraordinary was that every bit of it looked real, unenhanced other than by make-up. This was a person whose beauty had been both a curse and a blessing. She had a sort of practiced but lazy fidgetiness about her, as though she were the titular cat on the roof. When she sat, parts of her bulged a little, making her décolletage even more impressive. She didn’t meet Chloe’s or Dan’s eyes, constantly studying her nails—crimson with a silvery finish—or examining herself in her compact mirror. The effect was pure solipsism.

In another life, Dan might have found her attractive. She was a woman who had obtained money and used it to study and train so as to not appear vulgar, but the Velma Kettle was just under the surface, barely submerged in the expensive dress, the effective use of foundation garments, the professional-looking makeup. She was a trophy but she stood out, more than a construct of effort and maintenance.

Before Chloe could even begin, Vivian said, “I’m glad you called me, Miss…?”

“Detective Decker,” Chloe supplied.

“Oh, my bad.” Vivian made a little bow-shaped moue with her mouth. “Detective.” There was just a trace of southern accent. The woman had evidently worked hard to get rid of it.

“Is this your lawyer?”

Cambridge did not offer to shake their hands. He sat with his arms folded, watching them as a snake would watch a couple of rowdy mice. Under the table, though, his foot was tapping; Dan could both hear it and feel it.

“You’re glad I called?” Chloe prompted Vivian.

“Because I cared about Shelby and I want her killer brought to justice.”

Chloe didn’t let any reaction show. “So you did know Shelby.”

“Of course. We were lovers.”

Dan snapped a look at the woman’s husband. He didn’t appear at all surprised, although he did favour Dan with a bit of an adversarial sneer. The tapping, which had slowed, shifted into a higher gear.

“Lovers,” Chloe echoed. “For how long?”

“Hmm, let me see. I think I came to her house three times. We had an assignation at a house party once before that.” The way she said assignation, it was clear that she wanted her vocabulary to be noticed.

“So you admit you were at her house.”

“Oh, yes. I imagine that’s why you found my prints there.”

“I apologize for being direct but… you went there—?”

“For sex, yes.”

Vivian smiled, reading the unspoken bit. “I know what you’re thinking.”

“What am I thinking?”

“Vivian smiled, enjoying the
effect her words had. “Anyway, Shelby told me she was interested in a lover with some experience to initiate her… not in those exact words, but that was the gist of it. She had always been a rather restrained, cautious person. This was the first time she experimented with breaking out. So we started seeing each other. She was quite lovely in her way.”

Dan tried to control his face. He wasn’t sure that he was succeeding.

Chloe resumed, “So you and Shelby were in a relationship.”

There was a brief silence.

“I wouldn’t call it that. We were having sex. I think she might have wanted a little more but I made it very plain from the start that I wasn’t looking for anything perennial.” Vivian turned and placed her painted claw on her husband’s arm, gracing him with a smile. “I have my dear Anthony for that.”

Surprisingly, this sounded almost convincing to Dan’s ears. He supposed it wasn’t unheard of for a young woman to find something she needed in an older man. She might even mean it.

Dan inquired, “Were you at Shelby’s house last night?”

Acquisitive hazel eyes turned on him. He felt, despite himself, the power of a woman endowed with the gift of getting whatever she wanted. She leaned in slightly, giving him an excellent view of her cleavage. “Yes, of course,” said Vivian. Her perfume was rich and thick, almost nauseating.

“What time did you leave?”

“Around… nine, I think.”

“Did you fight?”

Vivian blinked at him. There was just a tiny hesitation. “No.”

“You had no disagreement with Shelby whatsoever.”

“No.” This time it was confidently said.

Chloe rejoined with, “We found a lot of broken dishware at the scene. Do you know how that happened?”

“Um…” Vivian bit her lip, making a show of thinking about it, then exclaimed, “Yes, there were dishes piled up in the sink and one of them slipped. Everything came crashing down! I told Shelby to be careful because she had bare feet.”

No one in the room could have possibly believed her. For an accomplished liar, she’d been quite off her game with that answer.

Chloe said, “You just left Shelby to deal with a mess in her bare feet.”

Vivian shrugged. “I don’t do housekeeping, Detective. And I would never assault anyone, in case you were wondering.”

“That’s interesting, because according to your record you have hurt someone.”

“What?” Vivian said, startled.
Chloe glanced down at the document in front of her and recited, “‘You assaulted a Jeremy Linklater in 2008 with a broken bottle. Apparently got very close to taking out his eye.”

For the first time, Vivian truly lost her composure. She went red, her eyes flashing with something that was both rage and fear. “He attacked me…! And I was a different person then!”

Anthony Cambridge put a hand on her arm and murmured something in his cultured, patrician voice, and Vivian calmed. Cambridge said, “I think my wife has answered all of your questions, detectives.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” Chloe pressed. “Vivian, you say you left Shelby on her own around nine. The ME has estimated her time of death at between nine and eleven last night. If you didn’t do it, you could very easily have been a witness to it.”

Vivian breathed in through her nostrils, schooling herself back into her expression of self-possessed disinterest. “I told you, I left at nine. Shelby was fine… but I can tell you who did do it.”

“Oh, yes?” Chloe said, raising her eyebrows.

“You need to look at that neighbor of hers, the peeping tom.”

Dan leaned forward. “Davison?”

“I don’t exactly remember but that sounds right. He was always watching us.”

“Really?” Chloe said, putting the full weight of her skepticism into it.

“Yes! He’s a voyeur, Detective. We actually caught him with his face at the bedroom window once. It was dark and I happened to look up and saw him. I nearly jumped out of my skin! I shouted and he ran away. Another time I met him on the sidewalk when I was leaving Shelby’s and he pretended it never happened. Shelby told me he asked her out once and he was upset when she said no.”

“That’s interesting, Vivian… will you excuse me for a moment?” Chloe shot a look at the mirror where, presumably, Lucifer was standing. She got up and stepped out of the room.

Dan took this opportunity to ask Anthony Cambridge, “Aren’t you at all jealous of your wife’s… extracurricular activities, Mr. Cambridge?”

Cambridge drew himself up and replied frostily, “Vivian is a woman with strong appetites, Detective Espinosa, and our relationship is none of your business.”

Just then the door re-opened and Chloe came in, followed by Lucifer. Dan wasn’t entirely surprised to see him; nevertheless, he quickly scanned Lucifer to assess his general state. He was still pale and stiff, obviously in pain, but he also seemed entirely sober now. His eyes were as steady and observant as ever. Chloe resumed her seat and Lucifer positioned himself to the side of the table. Dan had dubbed it his “stalking position”.

“Vivian,” Chloe stated, “This is our associate, Lucifer Morningstar.”

Vivian immediately spotted a future notch on her bedpost. Lucifer, in turn, looked her up and down, taking in her features, her body, not bothering to hide his perusal. Dan waited for him to begin with the sexual singsong. He didn’t want that woman looking at Lucifer, let alone touching her and… holy crap, was he jealous? No, he was just feeling protective of Lucifer after what he’d suffered recently and…
No, he was jealous. His feelings for Lucifer were beginning to be downright territorial.

“Oh,” Vivian said. “Yes, I’ve heard of you, Mr. Morningstar. Owner of Lux, isn’t that right?”

“That’s correct,” Lucifer said. “But I also consult for the LAPD.”

“Is that so?” she breathed.

She had been meeting his gaze directly, the first time she had done so with anyone in the room. But he was not enthralled by her, not if his bland expression was any indication. Wasn’t this just the type of woman that appealed to Lucifer, and wasn’t he just the type that appealed to her? They should have been on their way to a convenient flat surface by now. Dan wondered if Chloe had warned him off any sort of display of interest before they came in.

Cambridge was appearing concerned for the first time. He frowned, putting his hands flat on the table. The tapping sound had gone full staccato. “Mr. Morningstar. What is it you do here?”

“I consult,” Lucifer said.

“In what way?”

“I help the detectives notice things, and right now I’m noticing that you are very controlling of your wife despite the fact that you claim not to care who she has sex with. Do you make her give you the details of all her encounters? Do you get off on choosing them for her or is she free to make her own choices?”

“I… uh…” Cambridge said. For the first time, the cold mask faltered, giving way to confusion. Dan thought that Lucifer had just used his desire mojo on the man; it could be hard to tell sometimes. Nothing looked or sounded different in Lucifer’s voice but he did move in closer, nearly looming over Cambridge and meeting the man’s eyes with the keen gaze of a predator in search of a juicy spot to bite. Having been whammied himself once, Dan remembered not being scared, not at first. It was like being sucked into a nice, warm bath, and only after having the awful realization that it had been quicksand.

“Yes?” Lucifer prompted. “Do go on, Mr. Cuckold.”

“I… I want her to know she’s mine.”

“Of course you do, because ownership is very important to you, isn’t it, Anthony?”

“Yes…”

“You like to keep all your things together and under strict regulation.”

“Yes… I like to be in control.”

“But Vivian shares her body with many people and you can’t control that.”

Cambridge’s face twisted. He pressed his lips together so hard that they all but disappeared.

“Anthony,” Lucifer sang.

Cambridge burst out, “She told me I have to accept her as she is and if I couldn’t do that, we couldn’t be married. I know she needs more than me to satisfy her! So I made her promise to tell me about all of her lovers… who, where, when and how many times.”
“Oh, you are a dirty old man, aren’t you? And when she told you about her latest paramour you couldn’t take it anymore, is that right?”

Cambridge shook his head vigorously. “No.”

“You followed her and attacked her young lover after Vivian left.”

“No!”

Vivian suddenly shouted, “Stop it! Anthony didn’t do anything! He told you! He wouldn’t hurt a fly!”

Lucifer’s intense eyes shifted instantly to Vivian, and he leaned over the table, resting two hands on it so that his face was only a few feet away from hers. “And you know that because you would hurt a fly, wouldn’t you, Vivian?”

“I… I would not.”

“But you do have a long history of violence, don’t you?”

She stared at him. The jewel-like eyes shimmered with memories of pain.

“What do you want more than anything else?” Lucifer coaxed. “Is it revenge against those who have hurt you?”

“No,” she breathed. “I want to be safe.”

Lucifer blinked a few times, then said, “That’s what we all want, isn’t it?”

“I won’t let it happen to me ever again. I choose who touches me. I use this….” She gestured at her own body. “… to make sure I’m the one with the power.”

Lucifer straightened, opening up a space of consideration and relative distance. He asked, genuinely curious by the sound of it, “Does sleeping with multiple people make you feel safe?”

“Yes, because I choose.” Something terrible and unexpected broke over Vivian’s face, an expression unprecedented in this interview. When she spoke again, there was a noticeable twang; the ghost of Velma Kettle had possessed her. “Y’all call me bimbo and slut behind my back. Alla you do, I know.” She glared at Dan.

“I don’t, Mrs. Cambridge, I assure you,” Lucifer said.

She blinked, smiled faintly. “No, you don’t, do you?”

“Some people call me a slut,” Lucifer mused. He didn’t sound hurt about it, just puzzled. “It’s a curious thing how so many of you humans police your body.”

Dan was beginning to be somewhat alarmed by the direction of this questioning. He shot Chloe a look, and then another at Lucifer.

“I know when someone wants me,” Vivian stated. “So I use it. People’s so obvious.”

“Indeed,” Lucifer agreed. “Using their desires to control them… it’s almost too easy, isn’t it?”

“It depends on how you define ‘easy,’” Chloe interjected, clearly directing it more to Lucifer than Vivian.
Vivian answered, “Sex is nothin’ to me. I been having sex since I was twelve. Since my foster father…” She trailed away, shrugged.

Lucifer frowned. He seemed at a loss. Dan didn’t doubt that Lucifer abhorred any kind of assault on someone’s freedom, sexual or otherwise. He had insisted repeatedly to Dan that he always chose his partners, except Dan wasn’t sure that choice equated with consent. He’d seen Lucifer choose to offer his body for various purposes now, and sure, it was his body and he could do what he wanted with it. Dan just wished Lucifer could distinguish better between others’ desires and his own.

Chloe said, into the quiet, “I’m so sorry, Mrs. Cambridge.”

There was a tear track on Vivian’s face, a fact of which she seemed unaware. “Why are you sorry?” she said, her voice growing cool and well-rehearsed once more. Velma Kettle slipped away. She was hard as nails as she said, “I learned from him. I learned that my body gives me power over men…and some women, but mostly men.” She never once looked at her husband. “I swore I would never let anyone hurt me again.”

“Did Shelby hurt you like that?” Dan asked, following Chloe’s lead and speaking with as much understanding as he could. It seemed unlikely but maybe Shelby had inadvertently triggered this woman and she had lashed out.

Vivian shook her head vehemently. “No. Absolutely not!”

Lucifer folded his arms, leaning back against the wall. He said, “I believe you…but you are hiding something, Vivian.”

Vivian stared at him and opened her mouth to speak.

“This interview is over!” declared Anthony Cambridge. He seized his wife’s arm and dragged her up, pulling her with him to the door.

“We aren’t finished yet,” Chloe said, twisting in her chair.

“Oh, yes, you are.” Cambridge favoured everyone in the room with a patriarchal scowl, save for Lucifer who received a glower made of equal parts terror and malice. “I don’t know what sort of coercion you’re practicing in here, but I’m going to be consulting with my lawyer!”

He made his way to the door, taking Vivian with him. Lucifer moved to obstruct Cambridge but Chloe waved him off. The three of them followed helplessly out of the room, watched the Cambridges make their exit. Vivian cast a glance over her shoulder at Lucifer just once, and then she was gone.

Dan said, “Well, shit.”

“I don’t think she killed Shelby,” Chloe stated quietly.

“She’s a very damaged person, Chlo.”

Dan had been making a simple observation, not a judgement, but Chloe reacted. She turned to him and demanded, “So she must be the murderer?”

“Not necessarily…but she’s hiding something like Lucifer said. She said herself that she would never let anyone hurt her again, and if Shelby accidentally did or said something…it’s tragic, but this is how most of the people we arrest get into trouble.”
Somehow, Dan found himself gazing at Lucifer as he said this. Uncharacteristically, Lucifer was not offering his opinion on the subject. He appeared both troubled and confused. Chloe bit her lip and didn’t respond. Meanwhile, Ella emerged from her lab, coming over to where the three of them stood in the space just outside the interview room. She took in their tableau and didn’t comment on it.

“She confirmed being at the victim’s house last night,” Lucifer informed her without being asked. “But claims that she left before Shelby died. She pointed at the pervy neighbor.”

“We’ll have to interview her again,” Chloe announced. “Hopefully next time without her husband. Dan, I want you and Lucifer to go talk to Davis Davison again.”

Dan nodded—and then, catching her look, he said, “Tonight?”

“Tonight,” she confirmed.

It wasn’t that Dan didn’t want to know what else Davison had to say, but it had been a long day for him already, and he was truly wondering if Lucifer was up to it. He opened his mouth to attempt a statement along those lines.

“Very well,” Lucifer said, his voice raised a little. He ground Dan down to silence with his eyes.

“But first I’d like to talk to you, Lucifer,” Chloe added.

Lucifer cracked an ironic grin, plastering over any hint of discomfort. “By all means, Detective,” he said.

“In private.” Chloe gestured to the room they had just exited.

Lucifer raised his brows. “I guess it’s my turn to be cross-examined over my sluttish ways,” he remarked, and willingly stepped into the room, with Chloe following right behind and shutting the door behind them. Dan had to make an effort not to press his ear to the door. As it was, he was standing near enough that he could hear a hum of emotional energy in there.

Not five minutes later, the hum ceased and Lucifer was back out. He swept past Dan with rapid, if somewhat ungraceful, strides. “Let’s go question this pervert, Daniel.” He didn’t wait to see if Dan was following. Dan managed to catch Chloe’s eye, noticed that she was teary and a bit red-faced.

“Go,” she said. “And keep an eye on him.”

Dan wanted to say he was sorry, although he wasn’t sure for what. He turned and followed Lucifer.

“You think I’m like that woman, don’t you?” Lucifer said, sitting across from Dan.

It was the first he’d spoken since their departure. He’d been sitting there staring straight ahead as Dan drove. The silence was far from comfortable.

“What?” Dan said, stalling while he mentally scrambled for a strategy.
“You heard me, Daniel, I know for a fact that your hearing is excellent. I assume you told Chloe about my very sad, self-destructive activities. She read me the riot act over my behavior and told me she expects me to treat myself better.” Lucifer coughed. “In fact, she informed me that I am to allow you to take care of me.”

Dan tapped on the steering wheel, processing the possible meanings of that. He made a left turn, and then: “Really?”

“As if I needed such a thing.”

“She said I can… I should… do that?”

“Oh, yes. I suppose you can’t wait to tuck me in bed and wait upon me… bring me soup and tea and aloe or whatever you humans use for your boo-boos.” Lucifer sounded disdainful of the very notion of such interventions. “All of which begs the question of how she knew about my injuries in the first place.”

“Lucifer, you were a mess when you got to the precinct, or don’t you remember?”

“Of course I remember!” Lucifer snapped.

“She just had to look at you.”

“Maybe I was a tiny bit wobbly! It still doesn’t explain—”

“—and since when do you care if people know about your personal life? She asked, I told her. I didn’t go into detail.”

“Yet she was able to jump to all sorts of unwarranted, melodramatic conclusions.”

“Right… right. And the way you’ve been acting all self-conscious and defensive doesn’t mean a damned thing. You don’t have to admit that you’re hurting… or that maybe you made a mistake!”

Lucifer fell silent. He angled his head further away from Dan, focusing on the view outside the passenger side window. He resumed his disconcerting silence.

Dan pulled up in front of Davison’s bungalow. He turned off the engine and they both just sat in a heavy, noisy quiet. The sun was right on the horizon before them, a slanting, golden light that defined everything with a heavy line of shadow. It was impossible to equate the complicated and very flawed creature beside him with the being who had made that light. Dan supposed he should ask about that.

“It’s like you want me to be weak,” Lucifer stated as the sun went down. “You and the detective.”

“We want you to be human,” Dan replied, and even before Lucifer could finish his contemptuous snort, he amended, “Human enough.”

“Enough for what? To be some pitiful victim? And I have to tell you, Dan… I don’t think Vivian is a victim. She’s honest and direct about who she is.”

Dan rubbed his forehead. “The thing is, Lucifer… she’s not being honest. Not with herself.”

Now Lucifer looked at him. “Whatever do you mean?”

“You asked her what she wanted. She didn’t say she wants to have sex with thousands of people. She said she wants to be safe… but she is safe now, more or less. She has money and security and a
husband who will protect her interests. But she’s still sleeping around.”

“Because she has desires to fulfill like everyone else.”

“It’s about trauma and low self-esteem and fear, not desire! I don’t know how I can make you understand this, Lucifer.”

“Don’t patronize me, Daniel. I’ve lived longer than you humans have numbers to count.”

Dan gritted his teeth, resolved not to say anymore, then ground out, “Fine. Forget it. You and Vivian Cambridge can live happily ever after in Slutsville.”

“Now you’re suggesting that I’m a liar.” Lucifer’s eyes glittered on the verge of being frightening, not red but still intense. “You know how I feel about that.”

“Not a liar, just dishonest with yourself. It’s not the same thing and I’m done trying reason with you. Whatever I say, you’ll find a way to keep punishing yourself, so what’s the point?”

He put his hand on the door handle but remained in his seat, breathing hard. Davison’s bungalow, he noticed, was almost an exact copy of Shelby’s, just flipped so that the layout was inverted, and instead of teal it was yellow. He wondered if Davison had seen them sitting out here. It was probably not very professional. It might be downright un-professional if the guy was indeed the killer and they were giving him a chance to run. Still, Dan couldn’t bring himself to move just yet.

“What would you say to me?” Lucifer asked quietly.

“Huh?”

“You said that no matter what you say, I’d find a way to punish myself. So what was it you wanted to say?”

Dan saw that Lucifer was giving him an opportunity to offer something meaningful. If only his brain weren’t empty. There were things he had been wanting to say just moments ago, all sort of things he wanted to shout at Lucifer until they soaked in and finally convinced him that he was something more than a supernatural scapegoat. But now… nothing.

“I didn’t get around to figuring that part out,” Dan admitted.

Lucifer chuckled, and Dan joined in; with that, the tension between them dissipated.

“Something I need to understand about myself?” Lucifer suggested.

“Right… but you know, I’ve been banging my head against a wall ever since I found out about you, trying to figure you out…especially trying to figure out you and your dad…”

“Why would you do that?”

There it was yet again, that deep sorrow and grief etched on Lucifer’s face that must have had something to do with his father, and all at once Dan knew what he wanted to say, and he would have said the exact same thing even if Lucifer’s father hadn’t been God.

“Lucifer… no one hurts you like your family. No one else has the power. I think that at least half the people on this planet do bad things because someone in their family made them believe that that’s who they are. Most of the people I arrest aren’t evil… they’re sad, broken people who made mistakes, horrible mistakes.”
“I’m quite amazed, Daniel. I knew you had hidden depths, but what does this have to do with me?”

Dan closed his eyes and begged—someone, not God—for patience. “They might believe in their hearts that they’re monsters but they’re not.”

“And you think this applies to me?”

“Yes.”

“How, exactly?”

“I’m getting out of the car.”

Dan opened his door, stepped out. Slammed it. Lucifer caught him a few feet away from the vehicle. “Daniel…! I wasn’t trying to provoke you, I promise! I just don’t understand.”

Dan pinched the bridge of his nose. He turned to Lucifer. He spoke slowly, as if to Trixie… but Trixie when she was five. He could trust his daughter at ten years old to understand things that seemed to be utterly beyond the ken of an ancient celestial being.

“There’s a thing that happens when children are treated badly by their parents, Lucifer. Even when it’s really bad, the child will still love them. The child convinces themselves that they deserve whatever the parent does to them… because they love their parent. And your father has done terrible things to you, Lucifer. Yeah, you rebelled, but the punishment didn’t fit the crime. So just because you feel terrible doesn’t mean you actually are terrible. Just because it feels true doesn’t mean it is true. Okay?”

Lucifer was staring at him. His mouth opened; closed. Dan didn’t think he’d gotten anywhere, so he decided to cut his losses. He went up and rang Davison’s front doorbell.

The man opened the door almost instantly, suggesting that he’d been aware of their visit and was just waiting by the door. Even so, the man looked flustered and unsettled, like he had just gotten out of the shower and hadn’t had time to perform his maintenance routine.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Davison. I’m sorry to intrude again… would it be all right if we came in?”

“I suppose,” the man muttered, self-consciously shoving his ungroomed hair back over his scalp. “I…” He trailed off as he spotted Lucifer. “Oh. I know you.”

“Indeed,” Lucifer said with one of his smarmiest smiles.

Dan was more or less used to people reacting to Lucifer, but for some reason he was finding it particularly annoying today. He fought it down. “This is Lucifer Morningstar. He works with me sometimes.”

“I help the LAPD find the right people to punish,” Lucifer contributed.

Davison gave him a look that was equal parts alarm and perplexity. “So, uh… what can I do for you, detective?”

“You can tell us the truth,” Lucifer stated, subtle as ever. He took a step, entering Davison’s space, towering over him. Davison took a hasty gulp of air and pushed himself back.

“Lucifer,” Dan warned under his breath.

Lucifer’s eyes turned lazily in his direction and Dan realized that Lucifer wanted to make short work
of this interview. He was giving no evidence of injury but there was a strain, an exhaustion around his eyes. He wanted to get this done sooner rather than later and that meant he had no patience for due process—or avoiding lawsuits.

"Wh-what?" Davison stuttered. "I did tell you—"

Lucifer overrode him. "Let’s skip the foreplay, shall we? Look at me. Right here.” He gestured towards his own eyes. Davison met his gaze and went sort of doll-like. "What did you want from Shelby?"

"I… I wanted…"

"Yes?"

"I wanted her to see me. I want everyone to see me."

"To see you," Lucifer echoed, seeming mystified, which was funny considering that he seemed to be constantly attention-seeking with his clothing and his behavior and his… Lucifer-ness.

"I’m tired of being invisible," Davison said sorrowfully. "No one sees me."

"I’m looking at you right now," Lucifer said with a frown.

"You look, but you don’t see," Davison insisted. "No one does. They ignore me."

"Huh," Lucifer commented.

"You wouldn’t understand. Everyone sees you." Davison was echoing Dan’s thoughts now. They were all as helpless moths to Lucifer’s light. Maybe it was so natural to him, he never gave it a moment’s thought. "They can’t stop looking at you. You could do what you want with them, you have them all in the palm of your hand."

"It does get tedious sometimes, I assure you."

Davison clearly did not comprehend that. He was starved for attention… ravenous, in fact. Dan had seen that earlier in the day but not fully digested it. "Did Shelby ignore you?" he asked quickly, before Lucifer’s spell ended.

"That bitch! I asked her just to go for a little coffee and she barely even glanced at me when she said no. Of course, she didn’t know what she was missing…"

For a moment, Dan was afraid of what Lucifer was going to do. A familiar energy of threat and danger filled the room and Davison whimpered, looking at the floor.

"What have you done to the women who don’t see you?" Lucifer purred, and a chill went through Dan.

"I don’t touch them!"

"But you watch them, don’t you?"

"Yes."

"Like you watched Shelby."

"I… sometimes I came to the window and watched her with that hot slut girlfriend."
“They didn’t know it, but they were just getting warmed up for the main event, right?” Lucifer intoned. “Which was you, of course.”

“Yes, I…” Davison sagged. “No. I don’t… I wouldn’t.”

“You wish you could, though,” Lucifer urged. “You wish you weren’t such a coward.”

Davison looked up at Lucifer. “No, I didn’t want them. I tell myself that I want them, but I don’t. It’s a secret… can’t tell anyone.”

“What, that you’re gay? For Dad’s sake, man, get yourself sorted.”

Davison’s face twisted. “No!” he moaned. “Not gay, just… I don’t feel anything for them. I just like to watch.”

“Did you kill Shelby, Davis?”

“No, I didn’t. I didn’t, but that dyke, she did it.”

The threat had been slowly dissipating but now Lucifer’s eyes narrowed and there was again danger palpable in the air. “Do you mean Vivian?”

“Not the hot one, no. Another woman. I saw her drive up and run to the house. Totally butch, that one, muscles all over, practically no hair. I wouldn’t want to meet her in a dark alley.” Davison sneered.

Over the past few weeks, Dan had learned that when working with Lucifer it was good to let him run with things for a while, until the moment when he could step in and take care of police business. This was that moment. He elbowed his way around Lucifer and asked, “You saw this woman do what, exactly?”

Davison looked like he didn’t want to answer, but he continued with a sigh, “She was pounding on the door, yelling until they let her in. I could hear them screaming at each other all the way from my yard.”

“What were they screaming about?”

“I couldn’t make it out.”

“You had to get closer, didn’t you?” Lucifer coaxed. Dan gave him an anxious glance. He couldn’t let the Lord of Hell hijack this train.

But Davison barely paused. “Yes. I snuck into the yard, all the way to the carport. There’s a window on the kitchen there.”

“So what did you hear? What was the argument about?”

“It was all between the dyke and the hot slut.”

“Vivian,” Dan corrected through clenched teeth.

“Vivian, yes. The dyke was screaming ‘I’m the only person who ever loved you’ and ‘How can you do this to me, I know you love me, Viv…’ Oh, that’s right, she called her ‘Viv’. And Viv was saying things like ‘I do what I want, you know that, you agreed to take me as I am’. The same stuff over and over.”
“Where was Shelby?”

“In the kitchen with them but she wasn’t saying much. I think she was scared. I mean, this woman was hysterical. And then she started threatening to kill herself.”

“And it never occurred to you that maybe you should call 911?” Dan wondered.

Davison gave him a look like he was mad.

“The woman, Vivian… she started begging her to stop, to get help. And I think Shelby got involved too. They were both trying to talk her down. It got quiet for a while. Then all of a sudden she exploded and started smashing things. It startled me, I thought I made a sound. Shelby looked and saw me, I think, and I… ran away.”

Once again, Dan had to work hard not to show his feelings. Lucifer, being Lucifer, had no such compunction. “What,” he taunted, “Someone finally sees you and you run away?”

Davison turned a couple of different colours, ending with red.

“Did you see the woman’s face?” Dan prompted quickly.

“No… her back was to me. But she was kind of short and stocky. Dark hair, spiky butch cut.”

“Did Vivian call her by name?”

“I can’t… wait, I think she called her ‘Jen’ a few times.”

Dan sighed to himself. Just once, couldn’t they have a suspect named Portia or maybe Felicity? There had to be thousands of Jennifers in Los Angeles.

“Did she have a car? Did you see it?”

“Yes, but I don’t know what make it was. Some plastic thing from Korea. Probably cheap.”

Lucifer marveled, “You really are a bundle of prejudices aren’t you? Tell me, Davis, why didn’t you call for help.”

Davison said, like it was obvious, “I can’t let people know that I was watching, it’ll ruin my career.”

“Your career.”

“I’m an actor.”

“Are you now? When was your last gig?”

“Lucifer!” Dan ordered.

Lucifer smiled and consented to be contained. He waved a hand of dismissal.

Dan told Davison, “We need you to come in and make a written statement.”

“I’d rather not.”

“It’s not optional,” Lucifer growled.

Davison started, looking nervously at him, and Dan again intervened. “You’ve been a great help, Mr. Davison. A great help.” He waited a moment, then added, “At some point we may need you to
testify in court.”

He paused to let Davison picture himself on the witness stand, performing before a jury. That was all it took.

“You’re good at this,” Lucifer said.

Dan started the engine and pulled away from the curb. “I know,” he said, and Lucifer laughed. Dan then told the car to dial Chloe.

“Decker,” she answered.

“Davison didn’t do it. He says that there was a third person there. Some woman who was jealous of Vivian and confronted her at Shelby’s house. Davison says she was highly emotional and probably the one who started throwing things.”

“Does she have a name?”

“Jen. That’s it.”

“Shit.”

“Yeah. But she and Vivian clearly have some sort of connection. So we need to get that woman back in and sweat her until she gives us the name.”

“Right,” Chloe’s voice confirmed.

Dan heard a certain tone that he recognized. “Chlo? You should go home. There’s nothing more to be done tonight.”

After a pause, Chloe agreed, “Yes, okay. Is Lucifer there?”

“Right here, Detective,” Lucifer chimed.

“You need to go home and rest too.”

“I will, Detective.”

“I have your word on that?”

“Yes, Detective.”

“Okay. Do me a favour and let Dan stay over?”
Lucifer and Dan exchanged a look that was, on Dan’s part, dismayed—but of course Chloe wasn’t suggesting what he’d thought she was suggesting! Here he was thinking with his cock again, and Inner Dan was smirking and all but rubbing his hands together with glee. Inner Dan was a shit who wanted to pound Lucifer through a mattress, any mattress, even while Lucifer was recovering from an earlier pounding.

“Um… yes, Detective.”

“Just in case you need something.”

“I’m fine, I promise you. Or I will be.”

“Humour me?”

Lucifer conceded, but once they were in the elevator going up to his penthouse he protested, “You really don’t need to do this. I don’t require an escort. I can take care of myself.”

Dan retorted, “Recent evidence says otherwise. Besides, Chloe will execute me if I don’t keep an eye on you.”

Lucifer was a mixture of pleased and put out. “I know what this is about. You both think you can run interference if I try to call Thursday over again.”

Dan nodded. “That’s exactly what it’s about.”

“Oh ye of little faith.”

The doors opened with the usual ding. Dan had been half-joking when he said it, but he was relieved to find the place empty, and once again immaculate. The cleaning service must have been around.

“I assure you,” Lucifer said, shedding his jacket and tossing it on the piano. “I intend to go directly to bed. It’s been a long and difficult day.”

“Then there’s nothing wrong with me staying over to make sure you get a good sleep.”

Lucifer turned to him, eyebrows high. He had been in the act of pouring himself a drink. “I can think of a few ways you can help me get a good sleep.”

Dan ignored the innuendo. “You have a guest room, don’t you?”

“No, actually. When I have guests, we usually like to be in the same room.”

“I can sleep on the couch then.”

“Daniel. You needn’t forego the comfort of your own bed on my account.”

Dan thought of his bed. Since Charlotte had died, he’d hated it. It was too cold, too empty. And there were still traces of Charlotte kicking around his apartment. A note she’d left on a scrap of paper. A lipstick she’d forgotten. When he was at work, and especially when he was wrestling with understanding Lucifer, he didn’t have to think about what was waiting for him back home. Like his disastrous domestic life.

No, he had no burning desire to go home and sleep in his own bed.

“Why don’t we share your bed then?” Dan suggested. “It’s big enough.” Inner Dan high-fived him
while Lucifer, of course, was absolutely galvanized with possible implications. Before he could say a word, however, Dan blurted, “Just to sleep. No sex.”

“Aw, but didn’t the detective say you were to take care of me?”

“I’m pretty sure that’s not what she meant, Lucifer.”

Lucifer rolled his eyes. He downed his shot, poured another and offered it to Dan. Dan took it and drank. He was putting his lips where Lucifer’s had just been and it was intensely and unexpectedly intimate. The whiskey burned in a way that was both subtle and powerful, warming him through, and the entire time, Lucifer’s eyes were on his, teasing. Like a certain witness they’d just interviewed, Lucifer couldn’t help himself. If Dan were to reach for him, would Lucifer have the wherewithal to stop, for all of the good reasons that they both knew? Would he just go along with it because it was the only kind of intimacy he knew or because he was Lucifer Hot Pants Morningstar?

“I’ll get you something to wear,” Lucifer said, his eyes and mouth smiling at Dan.

Lucifer brought him a t-shirt and shorts—from where, Dan couldn’t guess. He’d never seen Lucifer wearing a t-shirt, other than that time a female suspect had vomited blood on him. As for Lucifer, he had already changed into silk pajamas, and instead of looking old fashioned or quaint, they were like liquid sin on him.

But he had left the top buttons open, showing much of his neck and chest, and there were all of the marks left by the demons. That was a dash of cold water on Dan’s libido.

“So,” Dan said. He tried not to stare at that beautiful place where Lucifer’s long neck met his shoulder.

“So,” Lucifer repeated. “Gracious, Daniel, no need for a panic attack. I’ll keep my hands to myself.”

“That’s not what I’m worried about,” Dan muttered.

“Anyway, it’s still nine o’clock! Far too early to go to bed. Let’s hang out and watch something. Netflix and chill?”

Dan glared.

“Kidding, Daniel! Can I entice you with the new director’s cut of Body Bags? We could watch that.”

“Actually… actually, that sounds really good.” Dan plopped himself down on Lucifer’s couch, which of course was a wickedly soft leather. His body instantly declared an intention to never get up. “Snacks?”

“Of course, what would you like… caviar? Some paté? Crudités?”

“Oh, yes. I don’t keep anything like that here, but I can send out.”

“Please don’t do that—“

“It’s no trouble, Daniel.” Lucifer picked up his phone and pressed a single number. “Hello, Patrick. I need you, or someone, to go and get me and my friend an assortment of snacks. Chips, popcorn, whatever looks good…”
“Bar-B-Q Fritos,” Dan mouthed.

“… and some Bar-B-Q Fritos, whatever those are. Thank you, Patrick. Pick up some for yourself too if you like, I’ll pay for everything when you get back here, okay? Thanks, love.”

Dan listened to this display of privilege in some disbelief. Once upon a time he’d let his masculine ego be intimidated by Lucifer’s money… but it wasn’t so impressive when you took into account that he’d had millennia for his interests to accrue. Plus, with all of Lucifer’s favour-trading, he probably accumulated assets like furniture accumulated dust. If the cost of such ridiculous wealth was being confined in Hell for an eternity—well, it put things in perspective.

As Lucifer inserted the movie disc, Dan treated himself to a view of Lucifer’s ass. Then there was Lucifer, sitting not more than two feet away from him, and Dan could feel his warmth, smell his unique, spicy combo of flesh and aftershave. Lucifer was curled half on his side, cuddling with a pillow, his hair rigidly in place, his posture equally stiff. Perhaps he was still too sore to sit properly, and Dan felt something akin to shame for having admired him the way he had, especially when it almost seemed that Lucifer was using the pillow as a shield. He was definitely not himself yet.

They were twenty minutes into the movie when Patrick entered bearing a Santa-sack full of goodies. Lucifer handed him a hundred-dollar bill and thanked him, adding that Patrick’s workout routine was showing results and he hoped it was working for him like he wanted. Patrick grinned, apparently okay with his employer engaging openly in sexual banter with him, and said, “Tips are up forty percent.”

“That’s my boy.”

After Patrick left, Dan let himself be swept up in the movie. He’d seen it so many times that he could have recited the dialogue along with it, but never in 4K hyper-definition. And there were several scenes that he’d never seen before. Each time a new bit appeared, he and Lucifer would debate what it added to the story, if anything. Lucifer’s general position was that more *Body Bags* was always better, while Dan preferred quality over quantity. Still, it was interesting, and fun to geek out over a movie, a thing that hadn’t happened since—

Since he and Charlotte had watched *Aladdin* with her kids. They had never seen it, being of the *Frozen* generation, and Dan had been pleased to introduce them to it. Dan had only just started building those relationships, and had been expecting them to develop further. He doubted he would ever see them again now.

He hadn’t realized that his thoughts were on his face, until Lucifer said, “What’s wrong, Daniel?”

“Nothing.”

“You know, I hate when people lie to me.”

Dan sighed. “I just miss Charlotte.”

Lucifer was silent for a long pause, like he was uncertain of what to say. Then: “I’m so sorry, Dan.”

“What for?”

“Maybe there was some way I could have made people see what Marcus Pierce was… sooner.”

Dan let himself entertain the idea that he did blame Lucifer, but … he didn’t. He couldn’t.

“You said it yourself,” he stated. “No one would believe you, either that he was the Sinnerman or
that he was Cain. Charlotte knew what he was though, didn’t she?”

“Yes.”

“And she decided to put herself in harm’s way.”

“Quite literally,” Lucifer said. “She saved my brother’s life.”

Dan heaved another sigh. “Cain chose to fire that gun, and she chose to step in front of Amenadiel. I can’t blame you.” He looked for, and found Lucifer’s eyes. “I don’t blame you, Lucifer. Maybe I did for a hot minute but I wasn’t thinking straight.”

He thought that Lucifer looked grateful, and it was nice to think that Dan’s opinion of him mattered to him a little.

“Look at us,” Lucifer commented, “Sitting here in our jam-jams, talking about our feelings.”

Dan glanced at the TV screen, saw credits rolling. “Movie’s over.”

Lucifer tossed his pillow down and got to his feet, stretching himself out. Dan could hear his joints snapping. “Shall we retire? I’m quite exhausted.”

Dan rose and followed Lucifer into the raised area that constituted his bedroom… and looking down at the bed, he felt a sudden, almost-panic. He met Lucifer’s gaze and it didn’t help any. Lucifer was nervous.

“Um,” Dan said. He rubbed his forehead and told his Inner Dan to shut the fuck up.

“Bloody Hell,” Lucifer muttered. He abruptly shimmied out of his pajama pants, dropped his robe, and got into bed like he was expected to storm a beach.

Dan saw no option but to do the same, and for several seconds they occupied themselves with punching pillows and arranging sheets around themselves. As with everything Lucifer owned, the bed was pure comfort. Dan squirmed and fidgeted and finally turned onto his right side, his favourite sleeping position. He found himself face-to-face with Lucifer. It was a king-sized bed and there was an entire valley of space between them… but it was still a shock. Lucifer had turned onto his left side and his hair had been charmingly jostled. His eyes were a lovely, melting brown, offering to yield to whatever his bedmate wanted.

Just as suddenly as he’d panicked, Dan calmed. He might never stop being taken by surprise by the Devil’s more yielding qualities and, yeah, he wanted to fuck the Devil, but there was something he wanted more right now. The request slipped out before he could stop it: “Are you ready to let me touch you?”

Lucifer frowned. He blinked several times. Tried on a smile. It was weak, halfway a grimace. “You… touch me?” he echoed. He was approximating the usual smarm, but his voice was shaking a bit. He couldn’t carry it off. He couldn’t quite make eye contact either. “You know… you know I’m always ready… Daniel.”

Dan didn’t respond to that. Once the last dregs of the sly smile had dropped away, he presented his hand, letting Lucifer see it. He held it palm up as though making an offering.

“Just this, on your shoulder,” Dan said. “And you don’t have to say yes, you know.”

Lucifer shrugged. Meanwhile, his eyes fixated on Dan’s hand.
Dan took a careful breath. He moved his hand tentatively across the space, resting it on Lucifer’s shoulder. He planted it there. Under his palm, Lucifer was rigid, celestial energy condensed into a taut stillness that promised absolute violence if he so much as twitched in the wrong direction.

“Okay?” Dan breathed.

In response, Lucifer shuffled a little closer so that Dan didn’t have to stretch so far to reach him. Still, his body remained inflexible, refusing to give way to the promise of comfort. They remained like that for what felt like a very long time but was probably less than a minute, after which Dan decided to attempt to knead Lucifer’s shoulder a little. Lucifer tolerated it for a moment. Then he put his hand on top of Dan’s and calmly, gently, but irrevocably, removed it from his person.

“You don’t have to touch me, Daniel,” he said. “I know you’re disgusted by me.”

Dan shook his head in protest. “I’m not disgusted, Lucifer, I’m horrified!” He longed to give Lucifer more physical comfort, to pressure him to accept it even… but Dan left his hand where Lucifer had put it, lying on the bed between them. “You don’t deserve to be treated like that.”

“But I do, I deserve the worst they have to offer.”

“Lucifer…”

“There’s something you keep forgetting, Dan. I’m not human. I’m not like you, I’m not like Vivian. I’m the Devil.”

“So… what, then?” Dan said. Despite his best intentions, his voice had risen. “No amount of punishment is too much where you’re concerned?”

Again, Lucifer fell quiet. Dan was trying to muster some words for another attempt to breach his barriers when Lucifer asked, “Do you know what it’s like to oversee souls at their worst for millennia, Daniel?”

“Obviously not,” Dan muttered.

“No amount of punishment is too much where you’re concerned?”

Again, Lucifer fell quiet. Dan was trying to muster some words for another attempt to breach his barriers when Lucifer asked, “Do you know what it’s like to oversee souls at their worst for millennia, Daniel?”

“Obviously not,” Dan muttered.

“Even if you just watch, you get infected. For the first eternity or two, you stand apart and oversee it. You try not to let it get inside but gradually, you start enjoying it, getting satisfaction from seeing people hurting. You start having ideas about how to improve the punishment and before you know it, you’re lending a hand. And do you know something remarkable? To enjoy participating, you have to feel their pain along with them. You have to suffer along with them, be guilty with them. So even though Hell was just a place I worked, I was no better than any of them. That’s what it really means to fall from grace, Daniel. There’s no grace anywhere in Hell, just endless remorse and pain and depravity. That’s what I earned for myself when I rebelled against Him.”

Lucifer voiced all of this in a dry, almost empty tone, but with several universes of self-blame in his eyes, and Dan supposed that Lucifer expected him to judge him, to be disturbed and appalled and vengeful on behalf of the human race. There was nothing but compassion in him, though. Well, that and arousal because he was still a douche, but he would just have to ignore that.

“Shit, Lucifer… would you just… c’mere, please? I swear I won’t hurt you.”

After a blink, Lucifer nodded.

Dan curled his arm over Lucifer’s shoulder and shifted his body. After another brief hesitation, Lucifer shifted too, and then he was right up against Dan with his head tucked against Dan’s neck. Dan could feel his mouth pressed there, a soft, moist sensation, maybe tears against his skin. He
could feel Lucifer’s body shaking against his.

He wanted to tangle their legs together. He wanted to press his hand against Lucifer’s spine and bring him closer. He wanted to lay a kiss on the top of Lucifer’s head. He didn’t do any of those things—but he did hold Lucifer as tightly as he dared. *I’m holding a fallen angel in my arms…*

Inner Dan smirked. *Ooh, poetry. How nice. Now tilt his head up and kiss him. This is your best chance to fuck him. You know he won’t deny you.*

*Go to hell, Douche.*

*Takes one to know one, doesn’t it?*

Out of nowhere Lucifer said against Dan’s ear, “I despise those demons. Truly, I… I never want to see them again.”

When a person was confessing, Dan had found, sometimes even the tiniest interruption could shatter the moment. It was like the intent to come clean was something extremely delicate, a fragile spell that could dissolve under the pressure of needing to remain dirty. He’d learned that the hard way.

So he held his body as still as he could, as still as Lucifer needed.

Lucifer raised his head, showed Dan wet eyes and a hectic flush. “But I’m afraid… afraid that I will call on them again… even though right now I don’t want to.”

*Here you go, crowed Inner Dan. Look at him! He’s all but begging for it. He’s not like us, he’s made of different stuff, he can take it. You won’t be hurting him… you’d just be giving him what he desires.*

“You said just because I feel something’s true doesn’t mean it is true… but I feel like I… I truly deserve to be punished, Dan. And as much as I hated what they did… it made that feeling go away for a while.”

Dan sucked in a breath, and on the exhale: “No.”

Lucifer blinked rapidly, flinching under that single syllable as though it had been a judgement. It wasn’t, but Lucifer was entirely vulnerable to Dan at this moment. Whatever Dan wanted to happen now, would happen.

“I want you to go to sleep,” Dan told him in a whisper.

“Oh… okay.”

“I want you to put your head down and sleep… and know that I’m not going to let those beasts anywhere near you ever again.”

Lucifer gave him a little smile.

“That’s frightfully romantic, Daniel,” he said, recovering his urbane, cultured, oh-so-British voice. “And how do you think you’re going to stop me, exactly?”

“I’ll figure something out.”

“Right,” Lucifer said, like he was agreeing to terms of battle, and buried his face once more in Dan’s neck.
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