Heart of Clay

by N_A_N_O

Summary

"... But I was tempted and provoked by someone else! Afflicted by that wicked power, we were fallen angels fighting a senseless fight!" Azazel remembered.

Headcanons started from this statement in Azazel's fate episode and clues in Dark Angel Olivia’s. A canon-divergent story which takes biblical proportions. From Sandalphon's creation, through his sexual awakening, to his rebellion and fall from grace.

What if Lucilius had lied about Sandalphon's purpose as Lucifer's replacement? What's the wicked power Azazel was talking about? Dark essence... or something he'd rather not admit?

Notes

@nezumi88 on Tumblr
A sparrow

Chapter Notes

POV in this chapter: Lucilius

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The angel’s birth was striking in its beauty. Records on the natural phenomenon were ancient, and the standard procedure had been artificial for eons. Lucifer wanted his creation to inherit a part of his powers and therefore held it inside of his core. It was a whim amongst many others coming from a being which was supposed to have none.

I had conferred Lucifer the task to give life and shape to one of his designs. He was free to select whatever features he fancied. The subject of my research was the process, rather than the result of his work. I made more discoveries on the way that I could ever have imagined.

He perplexed me with demands I deduced to be triggered by his survival instincts. During Lucifer’s conception, I hesitated upon adding those reflexes to his brain structure, but for the leader of a primitive species, they were necessary. I reluctantly gave the Supreme Primarch freedom of judgment, while dulling emotions secondary to the fulfillment of his purpose.

Close to the completion of his design, Lucifer disappeared for a few days. Belial found him outside of the city’s walls, by himself, lost in the wasteland. He couldn’t fly anymore and was covered in dirt. They had fought otherworldly beings on their way back, or so Belial said. They didn’t have any proof at hand, but I had no way to contradict them either. It was only a matter of time the truth would come to light.

Lucifer opposed the presence of Estalucia’s most eminent scientists on the site where his creation was to be born. They could observe the miracle from their screens, but not come anywhere near him. Following deliberation with my colleagues, we determined his reaction was legitimate. We didn’t have enough studies on the correlation between stress and failure in natural conditions. Astrals don’t rely on sentience for taking decisions, but this was an exception.

He tried to perform delivery in the laboratory. The measurement equipment displayed an imbalance in ether and hyperactivity in the pituitary and adrenal glands. He had endured a few experiments on the same operation table – Lucifer was afraid. His survival instincts had initiated appropriately, and they stood in the way of our success.

I allowed him to retire to a place he could be at ease and he chose our garden. He had shielded himself behind his wings under the shade of the tree of knowledge, as if still flustered. My measures and his reactions showed no evidence of pain. He spasmed, and his six shimmering wings bat open. We bathed in light as a shining orb came out from his chest. It settled against his stomach, its shine receding to a faint glow.

In his arms lay a baby wrapped in its wings, its face peeking out from the brown feathers. It was breathing, pink with life, and watched me with round eyes. Its narrowed lips quivered, and it opened its mouth wide, greeting life with piercing wails.

Lucifer surprised me with an aesthetic sense of his own. From his point of view, beauty seemed to be
the opposite of himself; he, who was my mirror image. He could have chosen to create a Throne or a beast, but he granted it a human shape. I stared at the earthy color of its wings, wavy brown hair and the tinge of red in its eyes. A loathsome analogy occurred to me; sparrows bathe in the dirt.

Lucifer, the regulator of ether and observer of evolution, held the product of his hard work with a swollen chest. The Creator made us at his image, and we could make the Primal Beasts at our own. With this experiment, I had proven Primarchs could as well. My pride was only short-lived and gave way to concern.

Lucifer wouldn’t spare me a glance or word, fascinated by the small being he held close to his face. It grabbed a lock of his alabaster hair, and he smiled. Paternal instinct wasn’t part of his design, and I started thinking of the margin of deviation in behavioral functions upon adaptive structural modifications of the cortex. What could have triggered such a reflex? I remembered the pitiful state of his wings after he had come back from the wasteland.

A terrible theory on his business outside of the city had haunted me until then. To confirm my suspicions, I took the baby from his arms. His weight proved my suspicions true. Lucifer flinched. His resistance was only momentary and weak, and he seemed surprised by his reaction. It weighed not much more than a pinch of dust, almost ethereal, but it felt different from an astral body.

My hands itched, uncomfortable as if they had sunken into mud. Lucifer had betrayed my trust. As an Astral Researcher, I was as interested in the means as in the underlying intention. All those were additional subjects of study, no matter if he had created an abomination, an insult to the Creator and myself. Even so, I felt tired.

“Lucilius, where are you taking Sandalphon?”

I was baffled he had already named it. When I told him that I was bringing it to the laboratory, he tried to convince me otherwise. He was worried that Sandalphon’s frail body wasn’t ready to endure my experimentations yet. Lucifer was pure and held no ill intent. His worry wasn’t that I discover his secret, nor any punishment. His fear was irrational, instinctive. It wasn’t like him.

The small Archangel’s shrill wails upset me, and I pushed it back into his hands, ordering him to follow me from a reasonable distance. Those primeval noises were nothing akin to the melodic chirps of an Astral’s offspring. He whispered small nothings to Sandalphon. It stopped wailing and fell asleep.

While I’d have preferred to relate his odd behavior to an imbalance in ether caused by the energetic transfer, I had to keep a close eye on him. If it continued and proved detrimental to his purpose, I might have to dispose of Sandalphon.

He became a bitter reminder of Lucifer’s betrayal.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! Most of this story only partially follows canon, and there are a few little crossovers with Shingeki no Bahamut (Virgin Soul). I can't estimate its length yet. A lot of it might be contradicted in the 3rd part of "What makes the sky blue", but the intention here isn't to guess or be true to what will be revealed. I can't estimate the length yet.
Genesis

Chapter Notes

POV in this chapter: Lucifer

As I held Sandalphon for the first time, I could feel the weight of my responsibility; I had lied to Lucilius and committed a crime.

When Sandalphon opened his red eyes, I could see the color of my sin, but also a warmth of heart Astrals and I don’t possess. He seemed surprised, and when Lucilius took him away, he cried. My arms felt too light with his sudden absence.

Beyond Canaan’s lush gardens and luxurious buildings, there were stretches of a desert which sank into the Celestial Strait at the floating island’s ends. We lived in greenery behind high shining walls which turned their broad backs on a wasteland and sat on the heads of the slaves who built them. Astrals ruled supreme on all of the skies.

During Sandalphon’s conception, I had a vision. A star fell from the night sky and settled over the borderland’s marshes. Someone familiar called my name, but I couldn’t reach them, nor remember who they were. A shape glowed in the darkness. The shining entity pointed towards the murky water and said I’d find my creation’s heart in the clay.

Unable to resist that delusion, I flew over the walls, out of the city, over the wastelands, to the furthest end of the island. By the time I arrived, the sun was rising. My legs sank in the marshes from which I started digging with my bare hands. That clay was considered impure and forbidden of use. As soon as I touched it, I materialized for the first time, no longer the Supreme Primarch, but a being of flesh and bone.

The cold and wet sensation of earth sticking between my fingers and seeping into my clothes was unpleasant, but I kept on digging until I was covered in mud. My wings were heavy, and my sight blurred. It was as if something were missing inside of me, and that heart would fill the void. I can’t remember how I made my choice, how it entered my core, nor how long it took.

I remained in an unsightly form for days, unable to fly and dragging my six wings behind me through the wasteland, facing monsters on the way. For the first time, I felt pain, hunger, thirst, heat, and frustration. Keeping that piece of clay was the source of my misery, but it was my cross to carry. Belial found me as I lay on the ground, wondering why death was ignoring me.

Lucilius had sent him to search for me. My absences from the city were frequent, but it was my duty to submit reports. My energetic trail had ended in the marshes. He had searched everywhere and only found me by following the few blackened feathers which had rubbed off the ground.

I admitted I had stolen the Creator’s clay and put it into my core. Also, they would have had to take it out of my dead body. My own words shocked me. To my surprise, he laughed and said we all have our dirty little secrets. Knowing something that scandalous was worth keeping a secret for himself. I blacked out and regained consciousness in the city.
Belial told Lucilius I had fought otherworldly monsters and fallen into the marshes. I confirmed. The lie tasted like dirt in my mouth. Lucilius sent me off to clean my wings without further questioning. He brushed the remaining dried bits out of my feathers, and his slender hands jittered. “What agony to see them sullied and feel them so soft…” he mumbled.

Sandalphon’s wings were the color of the earth bordering the marshes, his eyes, the Sienna of the wasteland. Lucilius’s shoulders sagged when he held him, and his face twisted as if in pain. I believed he had seen through my creation and was afraid he’d tear him apart. Instead, he pushed him back into my arms. Lucilius scrubbed and washed his hands until they were scratched and dry.

Sandalphon never received a purpose. Lucilius was punishing us both for my lie, and for making him an accomplice to protect his reputation. My mistakes were his own in the eyes of the Astral Researchers. He gave Sandalphon a sword as soon as his growth reached maturity, and sent him off into the army.

Angels expected my making to be taller, stronger, smarter – something more than what he was. His features were boyish, slim, his hair always tousled, and his temper was short. Primal Beasts gauged his value through strength. He endured, fought back and became strong, but I couldn’t do anything more than hold him tight when he seemed to fall apart.

Sandalphon fought with a rage other Primarchs couldn’t feel. When we were together, all he showed me was his smile, and he wouldn’t tell me how much he suffered. He revered me, talked to me as if we weren’t peers, as if I were out of his reach.

In his early years, following Lucilius’s experiments, I’d shelter him with my wings. We’d stay in that bubble hugging until he calmed down. His hair was soft like feather down. I felt at ease, running his locks between my fingers, breathing in his earthy scent. It was something which tempted many angels; when they touched him, they could feel. He was solid, close to something organic, while not an elemental angel such as the Primarchs.

Uriel was earth, Gabriel was water, but what was he made of, they wondered? I understood what Lucilius had meant while brushing my wings – he had felt them and guessed what I had done. He had probably struggled to hold in his anger and turned the other cheek.

I had designed Sandalphon as a part of an experiment, oblivious to the weight of a heart and the temptations of the flesh. I followed a delusion as if possessed. It took me too long to understand whose voice had guided me, and the evil I had done. When I did, Sandalphon couldn’t forgive me anymore.

As my severed head lay in his arms and life slowly leaked out of my former body, I regretted we couldn’t take a coffee together in our garden ever again.

Chapter End Notes

Hello!

1. Thank you to my beta-reader for their precious help. @uowen

2. I’m offering my help as a beta-reader and proofreader in exchange of the same
service. You can write to me on Tumblr account nezumi88 if you are interested (or for comments, or anything related to the fandom in fact.)
“Who let the devil in?” that asshole Azazel asked, before bumping into me at the library. I had a hundred problems on that day, and Azazel had only been one of them.

Lucilius dug into my organs for all kinds of reasons. I could regenerate immediately, so it wasn’t supposed to be a problem, he said. It hurt. It hurt like hell. That day, he said that he was trying to get the source of my stupidity out, but couldn’t find the little piece of dirt. Maybe my brain was in my dick, he grumbled. I snorted and said we might be one of a kind because Belial loved his brains. I should have shut up.

Then, the said brain-loving Belial. He’d been checking out Olivia, like most things which walked and breathed. She was smart enough not to trust him – I had been more naïve in the past. He tried to convince me to give her a gift, a suspicious fruit, but I refused. He called me a virgin too shy to talk to a girl and laughed at my face.

I’m not that big, not that smart, not that strong, but I still didn’t deserve to be compared to the devil. And what the heck was Azazel, before I dragged him down with me? Alright, he was an Archangel, but even then, that was one shady chalk-faced, purple-lipped bastard. I smacked him on the head with a comic book – he punched me.

I’d have stuck my sword into his mouth if I had it, not Wonder Woman, I shouted as punches rained like hail between us. He called me all sorts of names. A small group gathered around us and cheered as our plucked feathers flew about. Someone caught me by the shoulders and pulled me away from the groveling douche. Archangel Michael had grabbed me.

“That’s enough, Sandalphon, Azazel!” she shouted.

After a short explanation, she pushed us both down to our knees in front of Lucifer. I thought curses, unable to meet his cool blue gaze. There went my promise on managing my anger, and now he knew I went to the library to read comics rather than books.

Lucifer was standing in front of me, seeming as displeased as he could feel. He glanced into the comic and hummed. This life sucks, I thought. They had found a way to make me feel guilty; using the disappointment of the only man I respected. I was nothing more than a little shit who wasted his time, a worthless–

“Sandalphon.”

Oh, that soft, sad voice. It hurt like Lucilius’s scalpel digging into my chest. He set his hand on my shoulder. It was warm, kind, and my cheeks burned with shame.

“Apologize to Azazel. You shouldn’t hit people with books, no matter how thin,” Lucifer said.

Azazel burst into laughter. I clenched my teeth and fists. When Lucifer asked him what was so
funny, he seemed confused and said he had forgotten. Something about ‘Do what I say, not what I do.’ For Lucifer, I swallowed down my pride and apologized to Azazel. Lucifer sent him on a drill and set me on house arrest, and took my comics away.

Azazel was one of Lucifer’s most loyal partisans, and I must admit, a tough guy. He was supposed to be the Archangel of scape-goats, the protector of those oppressed and falsely accused. Still didn’t change the fact he was a moron. His attitude could have explained why there were so many bullies left on earth.

I believed he was jealous of my proximity to Lucifer. We shared a coffee in his garden every morning. I enjoyed watching Lucifer as he read seated at a small table under a tree. His wings twinkled where light touched them through the shadow of the leaves. Long white lashes quivered in front of his blue eyes as he read.

He had taught me how to grow and brew coffee beans and seemed pleased by what I did, so I made him some every other day. I’d carry our cups on a tray and sit with him. He’d set down his book, and we’d spend some time together. Our conversation subjects were mostly limited to the coffee and small talk.

I thought I was too stupid to hold a conversation at his level. He enjoyed reading about Socrates, Alexander the Great, Dante Alighieri, to name a few. A philosopher, a conqueror, a politician and poet, all vague figures to me who hadn’t studied their subjects. My head hurt just looking into those books. Lucifer said he wasn’t that smart – he was the shining one, while Lucilius was the bright one. To me, he was both.

I was on my way to the garden after that boring house arrest when I saw the twin Primarchs of instruction dancing to music. Cherubs played the tambourines and flute as they skipped, curtsied, took off and twirled in mid-air. That duo was part of the people who couldn’t keep their hands off of me, but I didn’t dislike them.

Watching Halluel and Malluel dance was pleasant. There was something in the sheen of their gold and bronze feathers, in the graceful movements, in the sound of their fluttering wings, the flow of their long hair, which made me think of Lucifer. It was warm, radiant, ethereal.

My feet started tapping in rhythm, and my hands twitched with the beat. Halluel spotted me. I was about to escape, but she plunged onto me like a harpy and carried me into the dance. They challenged me, peppering kisses on my head and ruffling my hair, calling me cute. “I’m not cute! I’m a manly man!” I said, my wings puffed.

“Then prove it, cutie pie,” Halluel said. Challenge accepted.

They took a pose; I mimicked them. The twins whirled, I followed while trying to imitate their graceful movements. They showed off their wings, and even though I was self-conscious about mine, I made them look bigger, stronger. Ignore the fact I wear high heels because I feel short and look like a goofy paradise bird dabbing, I thought, about to die of embarrassment.

Once the music stopped, they were both at my feet, holding my legs, crying praises on my sense of rhythm. The cherubs cheered. Whatever nonsense they were babbling about, I was too surprised to understand.

I noticed a tall, dark figure sitting on a tree branch, looking down at us. Belial clapped. He had that grin which never meant any good. *Time to run again.*

As I hurried off, Halluel called “Sandalphon, let us teach you how to dance!”
“I’ll pass!” I shouted back.

Belial caught up with me. His six wings were as black as Lucifer’s white, and they loomed, huge over me. He was a predator, and I was unable to shake him off. A vulture was about to dive onto a sparrow. Punching him wasn’t an option.

“Saaay, Sandyy, Sandyy, you were sooo sexy there, I got all hot and bothered! I think even Lucifer’s frigid little core would have started dripping.”

I cringed at his vulgarity but imagined Lucifer in my place. He’d be more beautiful to watch than me, or anyone. Belial’s idea had only been a small seed planted into the clay in the middle of my chest, and from it, grew temptation.

The next day, I returned to the twins. “Please, teach me how to dance.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!

Azazel isn't the Archangel of scape-goats in Canon. In fact, I can't remember if he said what he was. It's one of my headcanons. He appears in many religious texts in different roles, but the one which inspired the "Archangel of Scape-Goats" idea is the bible. In other texts, he's the fallen angel who taught warfare to humans.

This fanfiction isn't intended to teach any religion or debate personal beliefs, but only to entertain.

For an example of a weird paradise-bird dabbing if you have trouble picturing it: https://youtu.be/0dhLIsI0_Mg
Doubt is crucial for a scientist’s research. Our methodology is to come up with a question, identify the factors, choose a conclusion confirming the theory before we oppose it to at least two antagonising hypotheses. Without any doubt left, our work is meaningless.

Omniscience had become the source of my affliction, while my colleagues deemed ignorance to be the ultimate evil. I was jaded. Billions of years and the outcome of natural phenomenon and disaster never changed. Everything in nature strained towards homeostasis, and there was no more space left for doubt.

Life followed a constant cycle, always renewing, multiplying, dwindling and returning into the obscurity of a death I’d never know. There was no true evolution, only periodic regressions. My purpose as an Astral Researcher, to observe that repeating sequence forever, was pointless.

Exhausted by weeks of fruitless and sleepless labor, I stumbled out of the laboratory into the garden. Lucifer was seated under the tree of knowledge, completing his duties in a state of meditation. My thoughts were incoherent, mixing between science and sorcery, fact and insanity. I fainted at his feet.

When I woke up, I was lying with my head on Lucifer’s thighs. “It was unnecessary to interrupt your tasks to recharge me,” I said.

He opened his eyes as I stirred and bent down to me, as peaceful and radiant as ever. I stretched out my hand to feel the perfect face I had put together. He leaned into it.

“How do you see me when you look at me?”

His eyes widened. I hadn’t ever inquired him or cared about his opinion on me before. It wasn’t the case at that moment either; what interested me was him, what he saw, how he interpreted his environment. A fragment of my energy had returned, showered in his ether.

“I see my friend has trouble keeping his eyes open.”

I chuckled and sat up. That was the least one could say. I was decaying like an injured animal left to rot for reasons I couldn’t grasp yet. I had designed Lucifer never to question his existence or the order of things. Two parameters determined his judgement; he had to protect his purpose, and his purpose must forever remain the same. He couldn’t have enlightened me.

“How do you see when you look at Sandalphon?”

He paused, and his eyes evaded mine. He was trying to understand the objective of my questions. We were alike – cold, calculating and he needed reason.

“He tends to stand on his tiptoes when he wants a hug, and he’s on his tiptoes a lot these days, but he won’t let me hug him,” Lucifer said, his wings drooping like I knew they did when something weighed on his mind.

That was more information on the brat than necessary and didn’t exactly reply to my question.

His pure-hearted words lifted a bit of the anxiety from my chest. He had something that I lacked:
innocence. Maybe if my questions had been more straightforward, my struggles with my research would have been lesser. I returned to the laboratory soon afterward.

On top of a desk, Dark Essence whirled in an Angel Core, constantly rejecting light. They struggled to burst out of the glass bulb. Those two matters were heterogeneous, antagonistic and impossible to fuse without a resistant binder I had yet to discover. The liquid slushing and soft flickering glow lulled me to sleep.

Unlike Primarchs, Astrals dream. I was standing on top of a mountain. Blazes and destruction surrounded me, mountains were burnt down to ashes, villages reduced to nothing. Distant cries echoed in the chaos. There were no islands in the sky, the landscape, alien to me. Far away, a black dragon larger than any I had ever seen was on a rampage.

Wyverns flew over my head, humans and monsters alike riding them. They followed a row of knights in white armors, led by an angel. She carried a banner with a cross, and they hailed her name ‘Jeanne! Jeanne!’ Warriors in black armors slaughtered angels and ugly horned monsters, and their blood had the color of dark essence.

A gigantic black Skyfarer warship with tentacular protrusions at its front soared over me, followed by hordes of those horned monsters. A beam of fire touched it, and a shining entity flew towards the dragon. Terror, beyond anything I had experienced before, flushed through my chest and went up to my head. What I thought then was insane, irrational, dangerous; If that thing existed, so did He, and my torment would never end.

The cold metallic desk was against the throbbing half of my head, and cold sweat trickled down my neck. Beelzebub was next to me, holding my shoulders. “Lucilius! Get a hold of yourself! Wake up!” he said.

He must have entered while I was asleep and kept an eye on what could have burst in my face if it had remained unattended. Lucifer was knocking against the door, calling my name. Fear shot up my head again.

“Stand back, Lucifer!” I snapped.

“Fa-san? Do you need a massage?”

“Leave, Belial!” I almost roared, the mix of embarassment and fear turning into anger.

“You shouldn’t sleep so close to dark essence. It messes with your brain. Why are you panicking?” Beelzebub whispered, wiping the sweat off my brow with a handkerchief.

“I saw a great black dragon… Angels, humans alike, fighting it. Something like a war between heaven, hell, and earth,” I mumbled, not mentioning the warship which haunted me most.

Mixed with Belial’s offer, the nightmare suddenly seemed ludicrous to me, and my shoulders began shaking in laughter. Beelzebub stood in silence, arms crossed as if to protect himself from an infectious disease which made me insane. He narrowed his lips, but the shadow his hood cast wouldn’t let me see his full expression.

Beelzebub recited;

“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”
The verse Beelzebub said came from ancient scriptures he had collected and shared with me. While I thought he meant to prove my dream was only a mental representation of what I had formerly read, it kindled the terror in me anew.

Suddenly, the origin of my anxiety became crystal clear to me; without any doubt left to hang onto, I had lost my faith in the Creator.

Chapter End Notes

I see Lucilius as a man who lost faith in his purpose and in the "god" he was serving before he became a villain. He is similar to Sandalphon in a sense. To fall that low, he must have felt alone and used. He didn't want to destroy the world out of boredom, but maybe he tried to receive a response from the Creator, a proof he existed if his plans failed. For these reasons, I'm writing him as someone more sensible than he is most often depicted, from his own point of view. He will remain a villain and this fanfic's antagonist, but I wanted to analyze his side of the story.

I hope the small comical relief lightened the mood a bit. Btw Belial chapter coming up later, and I think it’s funny.

Thanks for reading! I'm not sure I can keep the super fast publishing pace up, but if you're interested by update notifications, please subscribe.
Blow your trumpets, Gabriel

Chapter Notes

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POV: Belial

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

‘Cilius kept plenty of books and documents censored by the government in his chambers. Under his bed to be exact. They contained all sorts of spicy information. To him, it must have been as exciting as porn; to me, complicated but useful knowledge for blackmailing. The genius creator of the Primal Beasts wasn’t the best at lying and dissimulating things – that was my forte.

There was a recurrent saying in the heretic texts; the best trick the devil ever pulled was to make people not believe in him, and the best trick the High Council ever pulled was to make everyone believe in their god, the Omnipotent. They pointed out the Astral Researchers hadn’t created anything new, only discovered ways to control mother nature.

Astrals were same as thirsty as the humans they held in contempt but kept everything sexy from the Primal Beasts. If those conspiracy theories were correct, Lucy was the most notable symbol of castration and the hypocrisy of their faith. Excerpts were missing, cut or torn out. It wouldn’t have surprised me if ‘Cilius had destroyed those insults to his masterpiece. At the same time, why keep such information at his side? Some sort of intellectual masochism?

Lucy, their alleged victim of castration, stole the 'Seed of Temptation,' also called the Creator's Clay, and put it into Sandy. Oh, the irony! Did he even know what he had done? Whatever had possessed him was a kindred spirit of mine. When thousands of years later, Sandy performed a courtship dance as good as if he had already banged half of Canaan, I saw the light!

The potential of destruction of the piece of dirt in him that made him just a little more human and freer than any of us was enormous. ‘Cilius recognized the necessity of certain facets of evil for the equilibrium of the world, so he put Dark Essence into me. Just a pinch… Even he was too afraid to use the Creator’s Clay – unpredictable, fragile, complex. Too grey to fully control.

My attempts to seduce ‘Cilius bore fruit unexpectedly. Something must have changed in him, something deep enough that he’d let me into his bed, and gather such subversive material. He wasn’t part of the High Council, but was the most famous researcher of Canaan. His knowledge on evolution might have been total, but not on politics. He wasn't an average citizen, but not a ruler or a religious leader either. Light and darkness exist as a pair, and the bright ‘Cilius started casting a shadow as dark and vast as his ambitions.

Our greatest conspiration started in bed. After a good home-run, ‘Cilius was subjected to whatever I said when he was too exhausted to throw me out. He lay next to me, on his stomach and naked in all his glory. His ribs were slightly apparent under his pale skin, and I traced a finger along the small bumps. He had lost weight, a bit too much to be healthy.

“Sandy did a courtship dance, and damn, he’s got the moves,” I said.

He hummed or snored, his face in the pillow. “He’s got such a sex appeal; he could draw a whole
army of horny fans to himself…” I continued, not minding if he was listening or sleeping.

He stirred, a lidded blue eye peeking at me from the pillow. It was as cold as ice and as sharp as a blade. His spear didn’t stick into my stomach, he didn’t kick me out of bed, but he kept glaring, as if offended, and it sent arousal up my spine.

“I wonder if Lucy would react,” I said to provoke him some more.

He sluggishly beckoned me to his side. Being this close to his face, where his breath tickled my lips, was a rare event. His words were devoid from any emotion or excitement, heart far from his warm, gleaming body when he said;

“Temptation could serve a higher purpose than satisfy your unhealthy curiosity, Belial. Help Sandalphon discover how receptive that bunch is to his… Dirt.”

How divine and decadent, the rift in him! Like his legs, it spread wide open, only for me. I got all randy again, just hearing that icy, detached voice. He was unlocking Pandora’s box with the cool of a surgeon in practice. Whatever he meant by that ‘higher purpose’ corruption was right down my alley.

“Oh Fa-san, don’t tell me you want a taste of Sandy too?”

He smacked my face with a pillow. That weak denial left me chuckling.

Was he trying to kill his boredom by setting them up? I doubted that to teach Sandy how to twerk would affect Lucy. In the low probability, it did, and they did the hanky-panky, it wouldn’t do anyone except them any good.

‘Cilius caught on my confusion and sneered. He stretched like a cat, his lean muscles inviting as the white sheets slipped down his waist. I’d have done anything to be allowed to bite his alluring neck right at that moment. His hips fit nicely in my hands. I drew circles on them as he swiftly straddled me.

“Gabriel will have to blow her trumpet to accompany the tambourines…” he mumbled, yanking me into round two with more energy than I believed he had left.

Readily accepted while he rid me, once cool-headed, completing the task he had given me seemed complicated. Sandy had learned a cruel life lesson from me firsthand. The naïve little virgin got hurt, while it was no more than a game. He wouldn’t trust me anymore. To hit my target, I had to sneak in sideways.

‘Cilius had designed the Archangels of Instruction with a nice pair of tits and legs and limiters on their intelligence, as the High Council dictated. They served their purpose well in the dictatorship of the Astrals. They taught, but only what was fun and wouldn’t lead to a rebellion. For example, modern ballet was forbidden; too controversial and often danced naked.

It wasn’t complicated to put glitter into their eyes – all I needed was a pretty girl. Olivia didn’t trust me much either, but just hearing Sandy’s name was enough to lower her guard. I joined her at twilight, while she was rising in the skies to chase the Astral’s nightmares away.

“What do you want? I’m off our common duty,” she grumbled.

“A smile? More seriously, a request from Fa… Lucilius…” Calling him by his full name felt strange in my mouth, but was necessary with colleagues.
My excuse was that Lucy wanted to dance with Sandy, and it was giving 'Cilius nightmares. She confirmed he was having many, and they were stronger than most she had fought until recently. It made my lies credible but surprised me nonetheless. What could torment him that much?

“Maybe if Sandy had a dancing partner other than his teachers, he could gain some self-confidence. Anyways, you know how overprotective Lucius is of Lucifer, and this ridiculous situation is giving him apocalyptic nightmares. Could you drive those away, cutie?”

My twisted scheme worked out. The next day, Olivia went fluttering like a butterfly to the Archangels of Instruction and offered them her help. They happily welcomed her great idea.

Oh, how I laughed!

Chapter End Notes

Explanation why Belial, while narrating uses 'Cilius, but when addressing Lucilius, calls him Fa-san: Simply because I find it sounds sexier. In Japanese, Lucilius is called Lucifar, and Belial calls him Fa-san.
My relationship with kindness had always been a bit complicated, even before I tried to throw the Singularity into the Crimson Horizon. They had offered me their help because they were pure-hearted and saw my potential at redemption. I took their outstretched hand and pushed them, annoyed that people kept on giving me second chances while I deserved none.

Olivia’s offer to become my dancing partner might not have been as selfless as the Singularity’s to join their crew. Her purpose was to protect Astrals from nightmares, and she had seen a fair share of the horrors creeping in people’s minds. She always observed others from afar for a while before engaging with them. When someone asked her a question, she’d always pause before replying, careful of every word she said.

When Halluel introduced her as my dancing partner, as gentlemanly as I ever was in the face of potential kindness, I said “I’ll pass,” and turned my heels on her.

“What? Do you want to dance with me too?” I snorted.

He lifted his middle finger.

“Got two left feet then?”

“The fuck do you know?” he hissed

“Ugh! Your childishness bereaves me! I shall not suffer more of this!” Olivia said.

She was about to leave when Azazel barked as if offended “And now you give up this easy? Didn’t you want to help him? Didn’t it take all of your guts to come here? That’s some weak-ass determination, woman!”

She stopped, and her golden hair flipped as she turned around. “His loss, not mine!”

Her face was red. It dawned onto me Azazel might have wanted to help her. He motivated his troops in the army the same way, shouting like a drill sergeant. No tact.

“The more, the merrier!” Halluel chimed, setting her hands onto Olivia’s shoulders and rubbed them as she pouted.
“Why don’t you join us, Azazel?” Malluel offered.

I rolled my eyeballs at Malluel who had landed next to me. It was natural to dance in pairs, but not with Azazel. Anyone but him.

“No way! I’m not making a doofus out of myself!” he said, suddenly stiff.

“Chickeeeen,” Halluel giggled, and Azazel took it as a challenge. The pair kept bickering, while Oliva and I watched, somewhat powerless.

Malluel came to whisper into my ear.

“He’s got a huge crush on Olivia. It’s so obvious! Come on, help us out!”

He didn’t have a crush on Olivia. There was a crazy rumor Azazel was stalking a half-dragon girl called Nina, even though she had a boyfriend. He didn’t stand a chance against his rival; he was the king of a prosperous kingdom, and they were often seen dancing together… Everything clicked together in my mind.

I grinned, and he caught the handle of his sword, seeming uncomfortable. “Okay then. Let’s prepare you for your dance battle against King Charioce XVII,” I said, bumping into his shoulder.

The air blew out of his lungs and his white cheeks turned purple. It was his way of blushing.

Whatever of those rumors was true, his dedication to that girl became evident to me.

We all kept regularly attending, for months. We learned dances from various Skydoms, several human, a few from ancient times. It wasn’t the same as the first Halluel and Malluel had shown me and praised me about, but it didn’t matter.

Azazel kept stepping on our feet in pair dances. He was a clumsy, irritable, big-mouthed brute who always insisted on taking the lead. Sword dance suited us better than tango… And it often ended as a sword fight. We had fun.

Olivia was too polite in the beginning, calling me “Sandalphon-sama.” She spoke like the Astral noblewomen; grandiloquent and stiff. Even Lucilius was slightly more comprehensible. To my relief, she dropped the suffix and simplified her speech for me once we had danced a few times, but her guard kept high.

I caught a glimpse at what was hidden behind those barriers she had set around herself in an unexpected situation. Olivia was rehearsing on her own, soaring in the air at the hills of the city’s periphery, dancing with an imaginary partner. Her hair glowed copper in the twilight, and Azazel was playing the tambourine.

He glanced at me, grunted and turned his head away. She pulled me a few steps away from him.

“He’s bereft by some personal matter but is too toxic a man to share with a woman. I am unable to console him, so may I leave him in your hands?”

I sat next to him. Olivia repeatedly remarked he was out of tune, but he’d hum, and keep his irregular, depressed pace. It irked me a bit, but more than that, he’d never been that lifeless before. I slapped him on the head.

“What the fuck is your problem?!”

He seemed more relaxed once he had vented his anger on me, and he started drumming again.
“How’s it going with Nina?”

He grimaced, and his drumming tempo accelerated as if he were hitting his head against a wall.

“That dumb bitch is useless! I never want to see her again!”

Olivia glanced at us, turned away as soon as he looked up. She had flashed me a smile.

“Does that mean you’ll stop dancing with us?”

He stopped drumming again, Olivia acting as if she heard nothing and didn’t notice it.

“What? Would you care?”

I rolled my head back and groaned.

“Yeah, I care. Sorry she gave you a hard time, but if you have fun dancing, why stop now?”

His face twisted in what seemed to be disgust, but he lowered his eyes, and in a faint voice, he said “M’fine… Okay, just for a while…”

When he saw my grin, he blushed purple and said “Only ‘cause you’re Lucifer’s right arm huh? You’re just more useful to me than her! We’re not friends, and I don’t like dancing with you, understood?!”

Neat. I slapped his white head, he hit back, without much energy.

“And why did you continue?” he asked.

“Would you believe me if I said because you motivated me?”

“Urgh…”

Touché. He was violent, rough and rash, but pure. Unlike Olivia, his reactions were always genuine, predictable. Those types of comebacks left him powerless. Someone coughed. Olivia had landed in front of us.

“Am I stepping into a moment?”

She brushed her hair to the side. Her smile was honest, and I think both of us had to squint at how bright it was.

“Ew, don’t make it sound disgusting!” Azazel said, and Olivia ruffled his hair, which he hissed at but let her do.

We parted ways. My plans for the next day were to have a coffee with Lucifer and talk to him about my new friends. Azazel was going to introduce a human halfling protégé of his, and we’d hang out if there were no battle to fight.

I prepared coffee in the morning and carried the tray to the garden. Lucilius was seated at the table instead of Lucifer. The Astral Researcher was taking notes on a pad, and didn’t even raise his eyes to give me his orders;

“Uriel and Raphael’s disciples are visiting to introduce themselves. Lucifer’s giving you a chance to prove yourself capable of representing him. You don’t deserve such an honor, but I guess your privileged position as his creation allows it.”
Lucilius put six spoons of sugar into the coffee I served him, and still called it bitter. He signed the paper and gave me a copy. It was an official declaration making me Lucifer’s representative in his absence.

“You shan’t tarnish his reputation with your impulsive behavior…” and his warnings went on, falling on disappointed, deaf ears. So long for hanging out with my friends, and telling Lucifer about my dancing lessons.

And of course, I got into a fight.

Chapter End Notes

I put away the F/M tag because it's only secondary in the story. Also, dear subscribers; thank you, and sorry for typos which may disappear within one or two days after publishing (what my beta-reader read isn’t the same as the final version at all, so no proofreading here.)

Publishing will slow down to one chapter a week or less, for the sake of quality, because the next chapters are longer than the previous ones.

EDIT 25th Feb 2019: LuciSan Fluff coming up tomorrow. We all need some right now I think.
Sandalphon tiptoed when he was nervous in my presence. As a child, he’d tug onto my sash, and he’d smile gently, pushing himself as high as he could, both arms and hands open wide for me to pick him up. It became a quirk which followed him well after he had grown up when he needed comfort.

After trying battles, meeting small Sandalphon was my respite. I carried him around before he could walk, and when he was tired of following me around the laboratory’s corridors. For too long, he had remained confined to those quarters, and we’d only meet under the artificial light, in between sanitized white walls, tables, and humming machines.

He too, had his struggles every day. His brown head would bob from fatigue, and when Lucilius allowed me to bring him to the garden, Sandalphon would fall asleep, cradled in my arms. Each experiment drained his ether, and his unique heart required rest. Unlike any other Archangel, he had dreams in that sleep.

He told me about a scary black dragon and a horned beast which looked like Lucilius. I asked, surprised, in what way Lucilius and I were different because we had the same face. He couldn’t explain. It just was that way, he said. The simplicity of his deduction struck me as charming. Lucilius forbade me from ever influencing his nightmares, explaining that they were something intimate and necessary.

Intimacy was a concept beyond me and most Primal Beasts. We were created as weapons by the Astrals to help them dominate the skies. Our purposes confined us, restricted our ability to think for ourselves and to fathom loving another.

Sandalphon taught me intimacy. He made me aware of how much knowledge, but little understanding I had of matters of the heart, including my own. The first question he asked which left me voiceless was why people care about the weather and the color of the sky. He must have heard a conversation between researchers, and didn’t know what rain was.

Against all orders, I snuck out with him on top of the laboratory’s roof. He stood motionless a while, looking up at the sky as the drops hit his pale, sunless face. He was more interested in the rain than the landscape, indifferent to the white blocks and unfamiliar noises. The city must have looked like a giant laboratory machine, nothing more.

He suddenly ran in circles squealing and hugged my legs, giggling, “It’s wet! It tickles!”

I picked him up as he went onto his tiptoes. He touched my wet hair and laughed even harder. That melodic sound stirred something curious within me, a wish all other sounds would stop, and only his laughter continue.

“I love rain!” he said.
I failed to understand his enthusiasm, so I asked why. He fumbled for words, trailing off as a child does, speaking of the fish in the laboratory’s fish tank.

When I least expected it, he said: “You are rain!”

He was my radiant sun, and his plump cheek was soft and warm under my lips. Sandalphon twitched, never having felt a kiss before. I was about to apologize, uncertain why I was so happy, but he said, “Ew! Slippery!” and giggled.

My confusion only deepened and I carried him to cover, drenched from head to toe but happier than on any cloudless day.

I knew people who kissed had a shape of intimacy but had failed to understand the underlying feelings which enticed a kiss. How it was different between family, friends and colleagues though, I still lacked nuance. From then, intimacy meant a moment shared in the rain with my ray of sunshine.

Sandalphon grew up. He seemed to have trouble adjusting in his changing body, and it made him irritable. Lucilius’s words against him were sourer than ever. It seemed he had to deal with an ‘adolescent’ angel who demonized him and had started talking back and refusing to cooperate. That phase as Lucilius grunted, lasted a few decades.

He ran after the worst influence I could imagine with the enthusiasm of a fisherman plunging after a singing mermaid. I warned Sandalphon that Belial was the Archangel of cunning, but he wouldn’t listen to me anymore either. It didn’t end well.

Lucilius set him into the army like every other Archangel, and Sandalphon was freed from the laboratory.

On the occasions he was still summoned for tests, our routine changed. He refused to play and cuddle with me as we used to do.

His new concepts of manliness and being a responsible adult were different from mine. How could we keep on sharing some intimacy, without embarrassing him, I wondered?

I searched for common ground between us. Sandalphon came into the laboratory while I was grinding a few coffee beans. Rather than drink it there, I had the idea to share it with him in the garden. He said he loved it. Several times, in the beginning, his lips would narrow, and he’d squint, still saying it was delicious.

We picked the fruit from the plantation together, extracted the seeds, dried them and completed the entire procedure. I secretly wished for Mithra to grant us indefinite time like this together. He was beaming as he made his first coffee, proud of what he had done.

It became a custom of sorts to share one either of us made. Sandalphon preferred a dark, bitter blend, over the drip, and never added sugar. He made a drip for me, who enjoyed watching him pour the water into the coffee cone with a slow, circular motion.

I said, “I think I have grown fond of coffee.”

It was true – as true as he had loved his first coffee. I understood intimacy was also knowing when a lie was well-meant, and not needing to set everything out explicitly. Another bubbly sensation in my chest had tied my tongue. I shared my discovery with humans, thinking of the day we might be able to visit that tree together.

As I sat watching him prepare a coffee centuries later, Sandalphon told me he wanted to show me
something he had learned, but he had to rehearse a bit more to not make a fool of himself. Recently, his gestures had become more confident. He seemed to be on a little cloud of his own while he made coffee, and he hummed songs I didn’t know. I was curious to discover who or what had such a positive influence on him.

I was appointed to an emergency the evening before his demonstration. A breach with the Otherworld had opened, and a horde of monsters escaped. It was the beginning of a grueling battle several Archangels had to join. Sandalphon was perfectly fit to help us, but Lucilius refused. He needed someone to receive the Primarch's disciples, who had traveled long and far. He assured me Sandalphon could prove his worth that way, and join us later.

He never joined us, and when I returned, his attitude towards me changed drastically. Oh, if only I had told him the truth from the start...

Chapter End Notes

I think everyone, including me, needs LuciSan fluff right now, so I indulged. T_T
It was my first opportunity to be a responsible adult. I left somewhat confident it would go well and came back home a wreck.

Lucilius had sent me on a mission to greet the Primarch’s disciples as Lucifer’s representative. I wasn’t supposed to meet the Primarchs in person. Alexiel was the defender of the god-realm, Grimnir, a cyclone-riding god of war. We saw those kinds of people quite often in Canaan, but the Primarchs were something else; they allowed our island to stay aloft above the Crimson Horizon and ruled the elements necessary for life to exist.

The disciples were waiting for me on top of a mountain far away from the city walls, as close to the sky as could be on our island. Many Astral pilgrims of various Skydoms had gathered there just for a peek at them. Only a few Astrals from the High Council had ever seen Lucifer, even less exchanged a word with him. The responsibility weighed on my shoulders like lead.

A boulder the size of a large building flew over my head. Something shining hit it. Everything vanished before the rubble reached the ground. A second gigantic slab flew by. Someone blast into a thunderous laughter which could have shaken the skies. I squinted – it was Uriel. He was tiny compared to what was flying at him, but a knock with his shield reduced it to dust.

Five mirror-blades whirled around a woman with ruby red hair which reached her ankles. She lifted a chunk of the mountain over her head and threw it at him as if it were a ball. The aim would have been lethal and precise but didn’t have more effect than flower petals sprinkled on him.

Her projectiles unsuccessful, she charged with her swords. Uriel let her come at him, his boulder-like muscular arms wide open. She tried to punch him, but quick as lightning, he grabbed her wrist. He laughed and hugged her while she squirmed and protested.

The woman was Alexiel, and she yelled he should be considerate of his surroundings – there were people. Their small demonstration finished, the Primarch disappeared, and I went to greet her. Alexiel’s speech was chopped and monotonous but convenient to me who wasn’t the small-talk type. Our short conversation was uneventful. Grimnir was awaiting me higher uphill.

Pilgrims by dozens had gathered atop the freshly disfigured mountain around a rock. An energetic shrimp dressed in a rather unprotective armor was talking in a loud voice like a preacher who preached his own name. They listened to him in a religious silence while he spoke about his successes, and how damn cool he was.

A representative from the High Council, let’s call him Joe, greeted me. Raphael was on the same battle as Lucifer and hadn’t accompanied his disciple. He tiptoed to Grimnir and interrupted his speech with a whisper. He led the short conqueror down, and Napoleon Primal strutted towards me. Oh, horror, I thought; face to face, we were the same size.
“Who’s this?” he asked, scanning me up and down, like a king a peasant.

Joe introduced me as Lucifer’s creation and representative. Grimnir laughed. He came close, his nose almost touching mine. One red and one green eye, both same as judgmental, evaluated me. The back of my neck prickled.

“Tales from the battlefield say you’re close to equaling Raphael’s strength, yet you look puny and average. I challenge you on a duel,” he said as if he were giving me a great honor. Maybe, but heck, did I care?

“Sorry but I don’t have any cards to play,” I said, deadpan.

He blushed and let out a strangled sound, probably unused to be denied his fun.

“It’s a privilege to cross blades with me!”

“I am here to greet you, not to fight,” I tried to say in a very calm tone as his chest-plate touched mine and small whirlwinds shaped in his breath and went up my nose.

“Revered kin of Odin…” Joe meekly tried to intervene, but Napoleon Primal had already made his next trophy out of my head.

He considered me again, seemed to come to his conclusion, and snickered. “Hah, what was Lucifer’s issue, to create a coward without a purpose?! Maybe the reclusive elder needed a mate?”

Something in my neck muscles cracked. Joe’s meek, annoyingly honeyed voice sounded distant as rage thumped in my throat, and my face became hot.

“Say whatever nonsense about me you wish, but how dare you talk down to Lucifer? I’ll indulge you!” And we drew our swords.

Winning was a breeze. He was young, inexperienced, hasty. Wait, no, that wasn’t the issue! The young god lay splayed on the ground, motionless. What had I done?! Lucilius’s warnings repeated in my head like an alarm.

Pilgrims were standing all around us, giggling and whispering amongst themselves. ‘That’s impulsive Sandalphon for you!’ someone said, but Grimnir must have heard the one saying ‘Did he really beat Fafnir?’ because he groaned like a hurt animal.

Poor Joe, considering how to best repair this diplomatic incident with gods, found an excellent excuse to calm the sore loser down. He almost would have saved the day, my face, and Lucifer’s name wasn’t it for Grimnir’s shitty personality.

“Winning against Sandalphon would have been a feat. It is true he could equal a Primarch in strength! He is a weapon created by Lucifer, after all…”

Even with Joe’s efforts, that brat hadn't finished with me. I had reached out to help him stand up, but he slapped my hand away, maybe more insulted by my well-intended gesture than by his defeat.

“You have no purpose, no merit as a warrior! You’re nothing more than Lucifer’s creation, a deadweight who has no right being at the Supreme Primarch’s side!” he said, his face red.

My guts twisted. It was true; all of my privileges were due to my birth as Lucifer’s creation. My rank in the military, this responsibility, none was truly mine. I nodded, defeated, and he snorted. All was a blur of negative emotions until I got home.
The laboratory’s garden was a safe sanctuary meant only for us. The bird’s chirps sounded hollow and monotonous, the tree of knowledge, looked grey. I’m not sure how much time I spent curled up, my back against it, mulling over what Grimnir had said.

A hand settled on my shoulder. Lucilius was crouching in front of me, his expression unreadable, but grip painfully tight. The sun was setting behind him over the white roof of the building.

“You’re a disgrace,” he said.

He didn’t seem to expect or care for an apology but wanted to belittle me as usual.

“Time and time over again, we give you chances, Sandalphon. One disappointment after another. How is it that a few words have such an impact on your fragile ego?”

“It’s because he was right; I have no purpose which justifies my existence, or my place at Lucifer’s side,” I said.

Lucilius hummed. “If you had none, I’d have disposed of you long ago.”

“You… Gave me one?”

Asking him about something like my purpose had seemed off-limits because of the gap in our positions. Some weird Stockholm Syndrome had stopped me from hating him, but being alone with him gave me goosebumps.

“All creation is born with a purpose, even failures like you,” he said.

“It’s been thousands of years, and you tell me this now?”

He sneered. “Thousands of years haven’t taught you how to behave with important guests. Thousands of years haven’t told you respect and deference towards your superiors. And here you are, on your knees like a child, wallowing in self-pity!”

“If my immaturity is the problem, then why do creatures with the intelligence of beasts protect islands, while I have nothing?” I asked, my throat tight.

Lucilius paused, and his spear leaned to the side as he thought. “Lucifer is to blame for your predicament, not I,” he said, suddenly seeming in a hurry to leave.

I blocked his path. “Out of my way, or shall I throw you into the dungeon?” he hissed.

“I beg of you, tell me why,” I kneeled.

“A fool such as yourself wouldn’t understand or believe half of my explanation without a demonstration! It requires more work than you'd imagine!” he said, shoving me out of the way with a foot like trash.

“Show me, please! I'd do anything in exchange!”

He pinched the bridge of his nose and thought for a short while. He glanced at me and sighed. “Would you sell your soul to the devil to know?” he asked, sarcastically.

I agreed. Lucilius' shoulders slumped. "Fine. My only condition is for you to never tell anyone about what you saw or heard,” he said.

That didn't seem so hard. I swore never to tell anyone. Lucilius told me to wait for him near his
home. He came back with a pouch and a saddled wyvern. I followed him through a secret evacuation passage reserved to him and a few privileged researchers.

“We must leave as long as the sun is down. An Astral seen leading an Archangel there would cause a scandal.”

I couldn't have imagined how hard and isolating that truth would be. All that mattered to me was to get a clue on my purpose.

We flew off beyond the walls in the middle of the night on a journey to the end of the island, at the border with the Celestial Strait.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so excited about the upcoming 000 I couldn't hold this back for a week. I'll have a lot to do, so no time for writing in the next few days.

I have a feeling Lucifer will appear... Differently, if he comes back. Given how Belial looks in the preview poster, I think the Shingeki no Bahamut Lucifer isn't far. Oh, and that white angel outfit *drool*
Forbidden Fruit

Chapter Notes

Warning; Slight Lucilius/Sandalphon. There isn't any non/dub-con or explicit smut, just tensionnnn :3

POV: Sandalphon

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The subject of my birth had always had felt like a taboo, a shameful event. After having seen birds hatch from eggs in the laboratory, I managed to pressure Lucifer into explaining how Archangels were born. We went to a place surnamed the ‘Nursery’.

Lucifer held my hand as we walked through a long illuminated and frequented tunnel from the laboratory. It led to an ancient dome. In stark contrast to our modern city, ivy hung along stone walls, and the floor was cracked. Large feathery cocoons were lined up like chess pieces. A few of the very first of us, Original Primals, were born there.

He explained Archangels had to be ready to serve their purpose from birth, so they grew mature almost immediately. Some would keep the appearance of children, others, grow up, depending on their duty. For example, messengers could remain as children, while fighters were more often adult.

I excitedly asked him if he thought I’d grow as tall as him. Without batting an eye, he coldly replied he didn’t know, because I didn’t have any purpose. It was the first time his insensitivity hurt me. The tears stayed stuck in my throat. He didn’t notice and changed the subject as if it didn’t matter.

Maybe nobody cared, maybe it was shameful, but what could Lucifer have done worthy of such silence, even his own? Had I been born in that creepy place as well, or did he mislead me intentionally? Lucilius was the first to offer to share how much he knew.

We flew over the wasteland, guided by a single flickering orb of light. The cold night wind struck my face while we flew as fast as we could, away from the city’s eyes. Stars shone brightly over us in the dark empty desert. By the time we landed near the end of the island, dawn had drawn a pink streak on the horizon.

Lucilius didn’t bring me to a hidden laboratory inside a mountain, no hall at the bottom of a lake, but a marsh. Whatever dark secret was hidden here didn’t seem impressive. It stank of mold, humidity, and rot. Fat dung flies buzzed around, and toads croaked from the murky water. This part of the otherwise dead wasteland crawled with life.

Had my core incubated here? Why so far from the city, in such a dirty place, I wondered? My reflection frowned back at me from the brown water, and I reached out to blur the image.

“Don’t touch it. We’re on sacred grounds,” Lucilius said dryly.

All we had shared until then were formalities before he or other researchers began their experiments. It was a relationship comparable to between a laboratory animal and its vivisector. His instruction sounded like the clipped ones he gave his colleagues, and it made me flinch.
He rummaged inside a pouch covered by his white cloak and took a thermostat out. While pouring a concoction into his cup, which smelled of a repulsive artificially flavored medicine, he said:

“Lucifer tells me more about you than I’d care to know, but this,” he pointed towards the water, “is something he’s hidden from everyone, except Belial. I suspect they had an arrangement for him to keep silent after catching Lucifer red-handed.”

He took a quick, noisy sip, and grimaced. Belial knew what Lucifer had done here? Hard to believe he’d keep anything secret from Lucilius.

I observed the hellish landscape which surrounded us while he drank; the earth was red, dunes like waves on the horizon. Pebbles shook with the passage of bugs. Only the marsh was full of tall green grass which seemed out of place in this vast desolation.

Lucilius pointed his spear at the water. A sphere of grey mud emerged. It hovered towards us. He gave it the shape of a bird and left it at my feet. It started moving, chirped once as if surprised and flew away.

“This is the Creator’s clay. It becomes whatever you want it to be if you have the power of creation. It can also modify the energetic structure of celestial bodies when consumed. Simplified, it can make an Astral temporarily mortal.”

He mumbled something which sounded like a prayer. As I watched the sparrow’s flight and sudden disintegration with confusion, it took me a few seconds to realize Lucilius had plucked out a bit of clay and swallowed it. His eyes rolled back, and he fell, spasming and coughing. Even in this emergency, I had to pause when I touched him.

His shape had become fragile, impermanent, but something magnetic made the air between us heavy. I couldn’t explain what had happened to him other than his body felt different to the touch. Static prickled under my palm. He seemed fine and was staring at me as if waiting for my next move.

“Go on,” he said. He pulled my hand onto his head, and I jolted in surprise. His hair was soft and even as white as it was, warm from the sun. I wouldn’t dare touch him more, so he insisted.

“Do you prefer the use of quantum physics for an explanation?” My unease was lesser than my curiosity, so I outlined his face, his shoulders, wrists, each with his permission.

It sounded a bit like an operation, with a question, followed by a robotic yes or no. Lucilius chewed his inner cheek impatiently, sitting completely immobile. As I was about to break the awkward silence, probably with an even more awkward conversation, he started talking.

“The Creation Myth says the celestial half of the Omnipotent, our Creator, shaped the first Astrals out of this clay, long before we transcended as the equals of gods. Sin and desires are integral to an earthly body, and therefore, we also call it the ‘Seed of Temptation.’

Most Astrals believe they can’t hear or see the Omnipotent because we still have residues of that clay we are striving to eliminate. Unlike us, our creations are pure, without a trace of ego, closer to perfection than some of us…”

His voice became husky; he touched his face and grimaced in disgust, rubbed his shivering hands together as if they were dirty.

“But Lucifer, the one highest of all, my greatest creation, he… Committed a sacrilege…”

His Adam’s apple bobbed. The mirror image of Lucifer seemed to be containing tears. It was
disturbing to see him vulnerable, in a body which seemed no more resistant than a dried-out twig. He rubbed his face and grunted as if resigned to endure his new form.

His chest plate thumped as it hit the floor and I winced. A second metallic part clattered as it fell. Then, a layer of his cloak, and my jaw. His nimble fingers raced along the opening buttons, undid the strings like stitches. Only his skin-tight black top still covered his torso.

He sat down next to me as if nothing had happened.

“With all due respect, why have you undressed?” I asked.

“Come listen,” he said, pointing at his chest.

His tone wasn’t as commanding as usual, but I leaned back and threw him a scandalized glare. He first frowned and then sniggered. A voice in the back of my head was warning me of danger. It felt as if Belial were near, observing us and probably laughing.

“You’re such a prude,” he hummed, snatching the back of my neck and pushing my ear against his bosom. He was still much stronger than he looked. I let out an unhappy grunt he replied to with a click of the tongue, and I opposed a short struggle against his iron grip. I inhaled deeply.

Usually, he smelled of sanitizing and conservation products. His odor had a punch like an unrefined black robusta coffee, and while bitter, it wasn’t unpleasant. His chest under my ear was hard, and the dark fabric hot. Heat crept up my neck. Hearing the beat of a heart for the first time was surprising. Lucifer’s core sounded like a humming crystal glass, as did all the Archangel’s. I believed mine as well.

Lucilius pushed me away after a few seconds and looked at my face. He smiled almost tenderly. It was as if the Seed of Temptation had melted the ice cocoon which had trapped his entire being until then. I inhaled again; there was something pleasant about his smell, and when his expression softened, he looked a bit more like Lucifer.

“My, what a reaction,” he said, squinting.

I was under the illusion that man was a different Lucilius, one as soft and harmless as a lamb. He decided to pat my head, maybe trying to understand why Lucifer did it so often. Whatever he felt seemed to relax him, and his smile brightened, so I let him indulge. He cleared his throat and looked serious again.

“Your heart always beats the same as mine does temporarily, for this clay shapes your core. Lucifer stole a piece.”

“Lucifer wouldn’t ever steal—“

He shifted brusquely, letting me go, and I slipped against him. Lucifer’s eyes didn’t have any temperature, only a pure color which said nothing of what he felt. He was always equal, unmoving. Lucius’ were hot with the blood running through his veins and every tense muscle in his face. His anger surfaced and radiated like heat between us. Lucifer’s image overlapped his, and a ticklish, excited sensation took over my stomach.

“He stole from the Omnipotent, betrayed me, and hid it from you. Why would Lucifer stab us all in the back? Could you enlighten me?” he asked with a low, quivering voice.

Memories I had buried surfaced as he stroked my cheek and I leaned in, his scent overwhelming. The clay could have explained a certain number of my experiences. Was it the clay’s fault, that Belial
got interested in the first place? No, he tried to seduce everyone. It was impossible; Lucifer was unable to lie…

“The clay intoxicates all Primal Beasts, drives them wild. Do you know the effort it took me to cover up for you? Why have you never even attempted to discover why everyone flocks to you, be it to challenge you, to hug you, to dance with you?” he asked.

“I thought it was because I was Lucifer’s creation! His name, his status, and their disappointment when they met me!”

Lucilius shook his head, an open-lipped smile curled up with a twitch, and said, his tone honeyed, “You are as irresistible as the Forbidden Fruit because Lucifer put the Seed of Temptation into you. Not all Primals react equally, but they all unconsciously want the same; to consume you.”

He whispered into my ear “And you, what do you want from me right now, sniffing me like a horny beast? And where is that hand of yours going?”

It was on his thigh, and I pulled it away as if I had put it into fire. The wolf dropped the white wool coat. He stroked me behind the ear, the only bare skin with my neck he could reach. I tried to glare at him, but my expression must have been meek because he chuckled.

“I doubt this is the effect I’d have on you if I’d entice you without having consumed the clay. Or would you flatter me,” he purred, knocking the tip of his index against the iron of my chest plate, “and beg for more?”

My stomach sank when, against all rational thought, I wanted him to push me down on the spot. That warning voice in the back of my head became clear to me – he was telling the truth. That trepidation and sickliness was lust. Lucilius was giving me a taste of my own medicine.

“I’ll pass. Not like you’d do anything in such an unsanitary place, now would you?” I said, in an effort to tear myself away from his toxic influence.

“As snarky a conceited little shit as ever,” he snorted. “Good. You seem to have understood. You can always try to force the truth out of Lucifer, if you still doubt me, but never tell him or let him guess I showed you.”

He pushed me aside, all semblance of warmth vanished from his face, as stoic and icy as ever. He had deceived and used me, without a sliver of regret. Given our relationship, it didn’t matter much to me either, but the radical and immediate switch in his demeanour was chilling.

Memories of Olivia and Azazel shot past. Did they have limiters which influenced their emotional capacities? Had the clay intoxicated them while we danced? Could they deal with the strain? A knot shaped in my throat.

We had to move far from the marshes and go home at night. After having followed Lucilius in a secondary, shocked state, we landed somewhere in the cover of trees. The wasteland felt cold, my body as if it were dirty and would sully anyone who would touch me. He slept peacefully to pass the time.

As we arrived back in Canaan, Lucilius said;

“This time, mark my words, or you might lose everything; Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
I don't know what to say, except stay tuned. Updates will be slower, but still ongoing.
“Fa-san, I ate dirt for you… It was close to impossible playing your part with that stuff in me, so you could at least give me a little reward, hmmm?”

Cilius glared down from the top of his seat on the top of his private library, far out of my reach. How frustrating, to be unable to fly to him and pluck him off his throne, the laws of physics applying to my earthly body. He huffed and turned back to the notebook he was writing in as if giving me my body back wasn’t an urgent matter.

“Okay, I’ll go wank myself in front of a mirror then. I should have done it earlier, but my tummy hurts,” I whined, with Cilius’ face, forcing my voice, his voice, to be as pitiful as possible.

Cilius’ book slapped shut, and he stood up from his seat, towering over my vulnerable, mortal self. Once face to face, he looked at me as if I were an insect he was about to stomp. Usually, it would turn me on, but as it might take weeks to heal if he decided to leave me like this and lock me up, the shivers weren’t quite the same.

Improvisation wasn’t his style, even less when the plan included stealing from the Omnipotent. He kept Lucy busy with a battle which he knew would take a few days to win. He’d anticipated how arrogantly Grims would behave when meeting Sandy, and the outcome to an argument between them. I drank a shape-shifting potion and fooled everyone until I had completed my mission.

“I almost dismantled you for treason the day I found residues in Lucifer’s core, so quit yapping,” he said, walking a far past me.

“Yet, you didn’t! You didn’t dispose of Sandy either or even question Lucy. Talk of contradictions!” I laughed, following him out of his library.

Except for his library, his house was tall empty white walls, no decoration, only a few pieces of furniture playing extras. It was a place he didn’t live or even sleep in, every object, a set prop. It was the façade to greater things in hidden rooms, passages to secrets so numerous, it was almost a maze. The laboratory he officially worked in was only one extra curtain in front of his main stage.

He led me downstairs through one of the secret passages, and we arrived into the storage which looked like a wine cave. Instead of alcohol, the bottles in various alcoves held all sorts of potions. Some glowed, others contained living things, dead things, monstrosities... The disgusting concoction he gave me to keep his appearance after consuming the clay must have come from there.

“They are more useful alive than dead,” Cilius said, choosing one of the bottles. “Your decisions are part of an algorithm I can predict. The only variable amongst you is Sandalphon. My predictions with him…” he handed it to me, holding it by the end, “are limited. You have a better understanding of him.”
I opened the lid and sniffed. The black liquid reeked even worse than the potion I drank before I swallowed the clay. Formaldehyde, in which dead animals were conserved, smelled like flowers compared to that.

“This will help you regurgitate the clay,” he said without an ounce of concern in his voice.

“Seriously? Won’t you even thank me before this grizzly stuff?”

He raised his eyebrows. “I’ve acknowledged your efforts.”

His typical game was never to give me what I wanted unless I was begging him, and in enough pain to satisfy his sadistic streak, but this time was different. He kept a distance between us unlike when he was open to foreplay.

I took a stride forward. As I suspected, Cilius took a step back.

“Don’t you dare defy me,” he hissed.

In that small room, his back had quickly reached the limits. He glared at me as I set my hand against the wall behind him.

“I told him only the truth and didn't fuck with him. I deserve a prize!”

“That’s none of my concern,” he said, tipping his head to the side.

I was used to be taller than him, but both at the same height, cornering him mustn’t have been as overbearing, but he looked down, long white lashes fluttering.

“Oh, don’t tell me that Sandy fawning all over you, or Lucy learning somehow you’d bonked his sweet little pet, wouldn’t have gotten a biit awkward?”

“Quit playing dumb. You knew it wouldn’t have affected the plan negatively if he had consented,” he said.

Indeed, I was playing with him, because it was fun. Cilius tried to ignore we both looked the same, and maybe, that was why he was avoiding me. Arguing with his double, which carried my expressions, must have been disturbing.

“Is this face turning you off? Don’t tell me you never imagined fucking your clone if you had one?” I said, pushing a leg between his.

He caressed the back of my neck, the shadow of a smile on his face, and leaned in. He squeezed my leg as I rubbed it up. His other hand ran down my arm, locked our fingers and softly took the bottle away. He whispered into my ear “My first reaction if I had a clone, would be to eliminate it.”

He pulled my hair, yanking my head back, and shoved the bottle into my mouth. Surprised, I swallowed the content. He punched my stomach so hard I flew back. I barely hit the opposite wall that I was throwing up. Something silver glowed under my face, as tears blurred my vision, and all of my innards twisted.

By the time the crisis ended, the floor and my clothes were a terrible mess. The pain disappeared as if nothing had ever happened. A little ball of dirt floated inside a small vessel Cilius had held under my face. He covered his nose with a tissue and transferred the liquid into another container he set into a safe.
He considered me up and down, still in his spare clothes, but myself again.

“A shame that precious linen is drenched in puke,” he mumbled to himself, seeming amused by something.

“I-I didn’t know you were into a vomit fetish,” I said, my voice hoarse.

He sighed exasperatedly. “Take a bath. You stink of a rotting corpse,” he said, throwing his towel at my face.

An alarm rang in the room. “I’d have asked if you’d join…” I started, but Cilius was already hurrying off.

He replied on a device in one of the cubicles, and his tone was bitter, and then became icy.

“Fifty units? How many damaged? Ten irretrievable?! Just what is happening back there? How’s Lucifer?”

The only Archangel he ever asked about was Lucy. It didn’t matter how battered the more significant, more complicated to repair Primal Beasts were; he’d always only worry about his favorite. The bitter taste in my mouth deepened, and my libido fell to zero. He sighed in relief, and I felt nauseous. Maybe the potion’s effect wasn’t over yet.

“They need you on the battlefield,” ‘Cilius said, hanging up the device. “The High Council has made its first move, as I anticipated.”

I followed him out of the storage, back into his fake living space. He didn’t join me for the bath, as busy as ever. He had set a white military uniform onto his bed. I slipped into it a bit disappointed until I read a message he had put into a pocket.

Come back repairable and ready for an upgrade.

It seemed like I’d get my bonus after all!

Chapter End Notes

You believed it was Lucilius the chapter before, being all hot and bothered? Sike! It was Belial all along :D I tried to hint it...

There are so many things I have to say about WMTSBIII. First, it put me into a deep, three-day-long depression (I haven't healed completely yet either. Not like two-thousand years would make a huge difference for them, but Lucifer also deserved a fulfilling life. I was unable to write because of the shock!)

Then, there are still so many plotholes... Like someone said on Tumblr, wtf was Olivia doing while the fallen angels were fighting to get out of Pandemonium? My question would be, what was Azazel doing? They both appeared in the rebellion flashback, and I kind of expected them to have a part in the story, but they didn't. Will they ever? Next year?

Also, how was the rebellion organized, how did Sandalphon join? Did I miss something? Are they giving me a space to make up the whole thing as a very long fic (it
won't be detailed here much)?

Enough of the rant. Also, a piece of advice; don't believe everything Belial tells you, even as a reader ;)

Pride

Chapter Notes

POV: Lucilius

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

I have existed since the creation myth, awakened with the first spark of light, and shaped most of the earth’s creatures with my own hands. Even born from the void, omniscient on evolution, it happened my plans had unexpected consequences. Blame it on Belial’s infuriating magnetism, or Sandalphon’s naivety, but “our” flirt in the marshes earned me a pet. Sandalphon kept hiding in my robes like a needy child ever since.

I’d anticipated he’d avoid his friends, but not by locking himself up in the laboratory he hated, at my side. He had to become my ally, at least for the first phase of my plan, so I tolerated his presence.

I needed cores, heaps of them, to create a being able to destroy the world. All of the probable scenarios were listed in my mind, and even if that creature failed, it could serve as a distraction to whoever would try to oppose me.

I hadn’t always wished to cause the apocalypse. Lucifer’s existence was due to my former ideals; protect the world I had once helped creating, by love for all things living and to serve the Omnipotent. After eons of His silence, I concluded there is no God. He hadn’t ever directly addressed me from the top of that tower in the highest strata of the sky. The church talked for Him through the mouths of those who sought power.

The void within me was tolerable, even in His absence, until pride took over the High Council. They believed they had reached near perfection, a godly lack of ego, and that they held all the truths of the world. A paradox, as that in itself, was a sin.

I didn’t care Astrals oppressed other races, took over the skies, killed, pillaged and dominated in the name of the Omnipotent. Many skyfolks had made the same mistakes for similar reasons – the belief they were right and others wrong or inferior. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves, they had once preached.

My rebellion began when they tried to restrict my freedom. Primal Beasts were mere tools born to fight. It didn’t matter how many died fulfilling their purpose because it brought their existence to completion. What elevated me was to give them a personality, the freedom to think, to share their conclusions. Even though their sentience was the byproduct of an algorithm, an unintentional side-effect of crafting autonomous tools, it made them worth creating.

The High Council feared freedom of thought, rebellion, and refused to recognize their mistakes. From a well-respected Astral Researcher, I became an outcast. My creations, which were older than most of the brats ruling us, became a more significant threat than the skyfarers. My superiors forced me to put limiters on their intelligence, to the point it made them dysfunctional.

Sariel, the Archangel of Execution, was my pride in warfare, but a failure as a living being. His sole purpose was to eliminate enemies. He couldn’t take any initiative, couldn’t judge a situation by instinct. I had noted earlier that Lucifer was born with the ability to think for himself to survive on the
battlefield. Sariel caused carnages on the enemy’s side, but always came back heavily damaged. It infuriated me to spend hours on repairing him while lowering the threshold of his limiters could have saved many lives. He was too dumb to protect anyone, including himself.

The basics of survival are dependent on emotion: he who fears nothing won’t have the right reflexes in the face of adversity. I fumed over his unconscious body, Sandalphon observing us from his bed, still dazed by a potent dose of anesthetics.

My laboratory pet had offered to test the Fallen Angel’s upgrades on the condition he slept, so I indulged him, but the experiment failed. His wings were still as repulsively brown, and the feathers hadn’t fallen or turned black. The clay protected his elemental integrity. Not even Lucifer could have changed him.

Sandalphon sat up and groaned, holding his head. I was about to ask him if he felt anything abnormal aside from a headache, but a door opened. He flinched, and laid back down, faking slumber.

Lucifer greeted me and stopped next to Sandalphon’s bed. He observed his creation for a moment, maybe hoping he’d wake up to spend some time with him in the garden. The battle had been terrible, and our workload consequential. Ten losses on a hundred Archangels, five seriously injured, twenty with minor repairs. Belial hadn’t reported to me yet but was unscathed.

“Did the transplant succeed?” Lucifer asked.

“No, a total failure. Something in his ethereal cells prevented the elemental inversion and safe removal of his wings. Even consulting his blueprints, I couldn’t determine the origin of the anomaly. Might there be an omission or mistake in the formula?” I asked.

Sandalphon could hear us, wide awake by then. He knew about the clay, about its effects on his body, that it was the origin of the transplant’s failure. Probably, he still hoped for honesty on Lucifer’s part, a conversation between us on how he’d confess his sin to him. The truth was their last hope for easy reconciliation. Once that trust destroyed, Sandalphon would take rash, destructive decisions.

“There is no mistake whatsoever in his conception,” Lucifer said, his soft smile replaced by his usual complacent expression.

Lucifer flinched and turned around. The ethereal link between them allowed Lucifer to feel when Sandalphon was distressed. He didn’t guess Sandalphon was awake, because he still simulated sleep, and Lucifer couldn’t understand the mechanics of such behavior.

“Sandalphon seems in pain.”

A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin. You opened the way for the serpent to speak soft words into Sandalphon’s lonely, desperate ear. It’s all your fault, my dear Lucifer, I thought, looking forward to observing the development. Now, it was all in Belial’s hands. He only needed a little help to become a mentor again.

“He’s unstable, but don’t fret; I’ll take good care of him,” I said.

Lucifer hummed and patted Sandalphon’s head. I let him do, pretending to concentrate on Sariel. He left a small while later to return to his duty, only after repeated assurances Sandalphon needed much rest, nothing more.

Once he was far enough for his aura to be imperceptible, I heard Sandalphon shift onto his stomach,
and stifle an enraged scream with his pillow. He didn’t seem to mind my presence. A proof of trust, maybe.

My glee was too hard to contain, and the only person who might have seen a smile rip through my face from ear to ear was Sariel.

Chapter End Notes

nezumi88 on Tumblr :)


Friendship

Chapter Notes

IMPORTANT: In the second part, it transitions from Lucifer’s POV to a 3rd person
POV. Let me know if you found the change confusing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

“The heck you locked Sandalphon up, Lucifer?!” Azazel growled, barging into Luciliius’ library as
he sometimes allowed himself to do, in my presence that is.

I heard the pitter-patter of someone running in high-heels, and a young woman with black horns and
twilight wings peeked in. After a few gulps of much-needed air, she saw me and slipped down the
door frame before breathing in deeply, holding in her breath and straightening up as stiff as in rigor-
mortis.

“I see the transmutation succeeded for you,” I said, noticing Azazel’s asymmetrical black horns.

Since my return from battle, days had passed without a single coffee break in Sandalphon’s
company. Work was without respite, without solace. My ether seemed destabilized by sitting alone at
the table, so I tried spending more of my free time in the library. No place, even imaginary in a good
book, seemed to bring my balance back, fill that curious emptiness. Sugar didn’t change the bitter
aftertaste of hopeful waiting either.

“You heard me?!” he hissed.

“Azazel, mind who you’re talking to!” the woman squeaked, her face crimson red.

“Don’t worry about that, Miss….”

“O-Olivia, Archangel of Dusk!” she said, bowing down low, “Forgive the intrusion, O Supreme
Primarch. W-we dance with Sandalphon, but haven’t heard of him in weeks.”

Azazel’s face flushed purple at the we, and black streaks flashed out his back and arrowed through
the room. I wasn’t fond of Belial’s pet, Nahash, which was thick and white, while those were slim
somber serpents.

Reflecting upon the failure of Sandalphon’s transmutation, a curious development occurred to me; 
Lucilius didn’t complain about him anymore. I was relieved they seemed to have gotten into better
terms, but there remained a discomfort, a word I feared could break the spell – How? What had
happened in my absence, for Sandalphon to spend all of his time at my master’s side?

“You were dancing with him?” I asked.
Azazel took it as a provocation and growled, a quirk he didn't have before his element changed to dark. Olivia suddenly snapped and strode to her companion. She slapped him between the horns. It seemed to pacify him, as his black wings drooped and the flying snakes disappeared into his back.

While it was complicated for me to assess emotions listening to a voice, there was something familiar and warm in hers as she said “Part-taking in such a strange human activity feels even odder without him. Please, if you could orient us, or at least assure us he’s safe…”

She prodded an elbow into Azazel’s side, searching for his support. He glanced at her, and they seemed to have a common understanding of something which escaped me. It gave him the courage to be a bit more honest than usual.

“Y-yeah. Had a reason to dance, lost it, and Sandalphon told me to continue for myself. Got pissed off he’d not show up after saying other sappy motivational stuff,” he said, chewing on his words in a barely audible voice.

Ah, there it was, that sensation of being at a table, facing an empty seat. We sat together, observing the same phenomenon. That concern came from a type of intimacy I couldn’t name yet.

“He’s been in the laboratory since my return. It’s beyond my control – he chose to stay at Lucilius’ side,” I said.

Azazel snorted and grimaced. He suddenly lunged onto me and caught my shoulders as if to shake me awake. A sensation of déjà-vu and his new black wings stunned me into immobility. Olivia shouted something, but he yelled louder than her.

“Hell, no, that’s not a choice! He hates that place and Lucilius! You can sit here, reading a goddamn book, your Sandalphon is torturing himself?! Well, you know what? I’m going to beat Lucilius’ ass if I have to protect Sandalphon because that’s what friends do!”

He had given me the word; Friendship – something the Supreme Primarch couldn’t have, and an Archangel with limiters couldn’t express. Azazel was a free and unhinged Original Primal. Never before that verbal slap in the face, had my purpose felt this confining. I couldn’t reply, a star falling into the marshes, mud straining at my wings.

The two Fallen Angels left to find their friend, while I stood dumbfounded and guilty.

* 

“Come back here, fucktard!” Azazel yelled while Sandalphon fled, still in his operation robes, struggling to keep the opening in the back shut.

No obstacle would stop Azazel, no Astral would get in his way; he had his snakes attacking, wreaking havoc in the background. Why the hell was that moron, that pair of ridiculous brown wings and a mop for a head, locking himself into this glass and iron cage? Okay, he was one for self-flagellation, but that was a step beyond.

“Sandalphon, we only want to help!” Olivia called, distributing unfelt apologies to shivering researchers.

Azazel had found Sandalphon sleeping in bed as if he were doing his depression afternoon nap.
There was no experiment underway, Lucilius on some mission outdoors, as the intern with chattering teeth had explained to a glaring Azazel. There was no freaking reason for that moron to be there – he was lying to everyone, running from something, and that enraged him.

“Stay away from me!” Sandalphon cried uncharacteristically, trying to hold his robes down, without success as his wings unfolded.

The sudden flash of round pink peaches made Azazel lose his balance, and crash into a machine like a bird against a plane’s cockpit. It didn’t budge, but he had engraved the shape of his head and horns inside. Olivia caught up with him, the resistant weapon far from damaged by such a small impact.

He found her a while later with a sobbing Sandalphon in a vast garden he had never seen before. A gigantic tree with a gnarled, ancient trunk towered over them, tempting red plump ripe fruit beckoning to be harvested. His throat dry with a sudden craving for sweetness, he looked away.

From the first glance at them, he understood it was time he shut up. They let Sandalphon cry for a while. As beasts, they could smell his distrust. It was thick in the air, a cloud looming over his head. It wasn’t the sweet, alluring scent of when they danced, all grace lost on the wet, red face he tried hard to hide. Azazel was one of those men who thought a man shouldn’t cry unless someone died, and he had too many times.

Azazel chewed his lower lip. When his friends were this distraught, he knew better than to force the words out of them. Grief, shame, loss, all of them complicated to spell, and for someone as prideful as that brown mop, something he’d typically keep bottled up until it popped.

He had learned those things from Mugaro, a mute child he helped take care of in secret. The little boy, a former slave he saved, hid in the slums outside Canaan’s high walls. Before meeting him, his life had revolved around war, weaponry, drinking wine and killing. A zombie necromancer had taken the boy under her pale rotten wing, and Azazel played with him as often as he could.

Olivia did the right thing; she respected Sandalphon’s request and kept her distance from him. The girl had limiters installed, but her purpose kept her sense of judgment and empathy intact.

Once Sandalphon had calmed down, the first thing she said was “Come back to us whenever you feel like it. We’re here for you,”

To which, that infuriating idiot replied, with a cynical grin “I think it’s better you stay away from me, for your own good.”

Azazel decided to step in, patience lost. “You think we can’t take care of ourselves? Has Olivia ever told you why she started dancing with you?”

Sandalphon sniffed and clenched his teeth. Azazel counted to ten, while Olivia caught on to his idea. She was probably a bit miffed he’d talk for her but wasn’t that what the two of them always did when the words were lacking on either side?

“As ridiculous as it might sound, I almost died because I couldn’t dance,” she said.

Chapter End Notes

This was Azazel’s arc.
Maybe some of you have watched the Rage of Bahamut anime (which is great). Granblue Fantasy's Azazel seems to be the same, and his history seems linked to the original world. I haven't played the event when it came out, but in this Canon-Divergent story, he's the same shameless, pushy guy. As a reminder; 1. He was a cardboard villain in Genesis. 2. In Virgin Soul, he told an underage girl he'd make love to her to turn her into a dragon if he had to without batting an eyelid, while she was naked, lying next to him in an operation room. 3. He doesn't hesitate to shake (a much more intimidating) Lucifer up, and got slapped in the face with a book for that.

I have decided to make a bit of further development before anything spicy comes up because this is also a friendship fic. Does the clay have an effect on them? Certainly. How it will affect Sandalphon's actions? You'll see if you're ready to read some more.

Don't hesitate to subscribe if you want updates, and if you're too shy to leave a comment here, you can write to me @nezumi88 on Tumblr.
Envy

Chapter Notes

POV: Sandalphon

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

On Sable Island, there is a myth of an outcast and bullied girl named Branwen who lost her heart and soul to grief. She cried all of her tears into a cursed kettle. When that kettle overflows with anguish, a grotesque, writhing horde spills out of it, transforming the world into an ocean of torment. The island became stricken with war and misery until the tears of her persecutors replaced hers. Morality - karma comes back to bullies and bites them hard on Sable Island.

Before that myth, Branwen was a Primal Beast created by Lucilius, one of his “Necessary evils in the world.” In truth, he had made her on a day he was furious about new manufacturing laws and threw her into the face of the High Council. Her kettle absorbed the Astral’s nightmares and turned them into the Nox monsters. It was Olivia’s task to fight them from dusk ‘til dawn.

One of the High Council’s worst nightmares was to lose control over their weapons. So, they set boundaries to the Primal Beast's emotional intelligence, as if it were only tightening a loose screw which threatened to make their entire hierarchical structure crumble. Meanwhile, Lucilius was creating monsters without any consequences under their noses, and sniggering at them from the shadows of his lab.

Olivia was part of the third generation’s victims of those limiters. She observed many social interactions she couldn’t understand unless someone explained. To her, those monster’s grief made no sense, and for that reason, she didn’t fear them. Without any insecurities to feed on, the Nox ignored her and were easy to defeat.

Those limitations didn’t make Olivia an insensitive person; She enjoyed music, but she couldn’t explain why certain melodies made her chest squeeze, while others made her smile, or gave her unpleasant chills. She could tell she found a dress beautiful, but couldn’t understand why someone would wear something so cumbersome to dance, nor why she preferred a specific color or design.

The first time she saw an entire procession of magnificent dresses was during a ball in Canaan. Women were wearing plumes, frills, lace, dresses which could have housed five children and wigs nest a family of birds. They stepped out of their carriages at the foot of the city’s Acropolis. People from the lower social classes had gathered behind white gates to observe the many nobles the Astrals had invited, hoping for peace treaties.

War was a constant threat which loomed over everyone’s head. Skyfarer unions were seething at the Astral’s heavy taxes and complicated laws, human nobles wanted exclusivity guarantees and more riches, while Astrals faced inner power struggles which made them vulnerable. The political oppression within Canaan was even worse than the outside world, but those matters didn’t reach the Primal Beasts until the great war began.

Music which played from the Acropolis had attracted Olivia into the crowd. She watched the parade, oblivious to the mechanics and goals of such an event, but was curious. People commented on the clothes excitedly, fawned over the things those people flaunted.
She asked someone what those nobles were going to do. “Dance,” they replied, and she didn’t understand what that meant. Catching onto her confusion, they added “For peace,” and that made even less sense to her.

At dusk, hundreds of those monsters appeared, falling from the sky like rain. It had never happened before, and their affluence caught the security services by surprise. Olivia had to deal with them alone. The sun had long set, and the party was at its peak. She could hear the happy clamor, the fiddles, the tambourines, the lyre, and cymbals, the people oblivious to what was happening outside.

Suddenly, one of the monsters screeched “You can’t dance!”

Her arm froze in mid-air, and she felt as if her heart had skipped a beat. The monsters seemed attracted by the ball. Weren’t the people there happy?

“You look like an old hippo squeezed itself into a corset and smashed its face into powder!” another one howled.

Those words reflected the insecurities of the monster’s prey. Was that what those women thought of themselves? Why? Unlike her, they weren’t weapons or Primal Beasts with no culture, she thought.

Mocking laughter started ringing in her ears. She wore rags and didn’t know how to dance, how to speak to those people, uneducated, stupid little beast, with a pea for a brain, voices whispered in her ears. She tripped in the middle of the dancefloor, and everyone stared in silence. Rather than a fight or flight response, she froze.

The Nox had attacked, some of them glued to her body like leeches, causing the hallucinations. Her chest hurt, her throat, so tight she could hardly breathe. Negative emotions she wasn’t equipped to analyze and resist strained her limiters to their boundaries. Minutes later, she’d have broken. Guards from the Acropolis saved her, and she couldn’t remember anything else.

The number of monsters that night had been exceptional, but with the lingering memory of helplessness, fear, and solitude, she was vulnerable to their influence. Nobody cared. She was disposable like every other weapon, and if she broke, she’d be replaced.

Belial had visited her with a request for Lucilius and told her about my dancing lessons. All she thought at that moment was that if a fellow Archangel could learn to dance, she could as well. Maybe if she could dance, those monsters wouldn’t scare her anymore.

I had listened to her entire story in silence, sitting under the tree of knowledge. Azazel was leaning against the trunk next to me. The tale had been tedious to tell for her, pauses long as she struggled to find the words to describe her thoughts, but we were from the same place and had seen similar events. I knew the nobles she talked about, the Nox monsters, the Astral Researcher’s cold indifference.

I wasn’t able to reciprocate her effort. My vow to Lucilius tied my mouth shut. They shouldn’t ever know about the clay, even less if it hadn’t influenced their decision to dance with me.

“I’m sorry, I can’t tell you what happened, but it’s over now,” was all I could say.

Azazel sighed, and Olivia cocked her head to the side, maybe confused at why I’d apologize.

Olivia’s wings drooped, but then she smiled shyly. “Whatever your reasons, I want to continue dancing with you, because it’s… I think the word is fun,” she said.

That was the sweetest thing anyone had ever told me. I wanted to take Olivia’s hand, pull her onto a
dancefloor. She could dance better and was prettier than most of those snobs, and she most certainly wasn’t stupid. Feeling that damned knot in my throat threatened to squeeze my tears out, I smiled at her.

“I’ll dance with you until you forget that nightmare - until you can waltz over those monster’s heads and laugh at those insults,” I promised.

Olivia’s cheeks turned a happy pink as she grinned whole-heartedly and Azazel clicked his tongue and sighed even deeper.

“He’ll be stepping on our feet again,” he said, and Olivia slapped the back of his head.

“I was joking! I’m not serious!” he growled, and she swayed, unsure if she should be scared by his reaction, what the joke was, and why he’d make such a joke. Azazel noticed her confusion as well and seemed sorry, but didn’t apologize.

“Don’t try to understand me, woman. I’m complicated, even for myself,” that moron huffed, while she held to his arm, asking him what he honestly thought. They completely forgot me at that moment, and that was damn adorable.

We parted ways, dusk nearing. On the way to the laboratory, I heard a familiar voice calling “Na-san! Na-san! Here pretty-pretty-pretty…”

It was Belial looking for his pet snake.

Chapter End Notes

Have you noticed the Nox who appear right before the last battle against Lucilius? That inspired this chapter. I imagine they represent Lucilius’ grief, maybe at facing Lucio, and that he was only part of a “Grand celestial plan”. If you played A Teardrop in the Sand, you’ll know they are attracted by all kinds of negative feelings, including sadness and hatred. Each time I see those guys, I get a knot in the throat, and their appearance in 000 killed me.
The snake on the tree

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There lay a snake on the Tree of Knowledge which could have swallowed a horse, chewing on the forbidden fruit. Some of the sweet juice dropped from its large mouth, down onto a cooing Belial’s face.

The white monster, in an almost feline way, acted same as disdainful towards its master as Lucilius towards his **Deputy Head Researcher**, glaring at him with its cold red beady eyes without reacting to any of his calls. I had to snort when I heard about his promotion reporting directly to Lucilius, but wasn’t surprised; he knew how to get favors even from cold-blooded reptiles.

Belial extended a hand, and his approach was rejected with an open-mouthed hiss which had his short hair shivering. “Come now baby, daddy said not to eat those, they’ll make you woozy…”

It evaluated him with its red slit eyes a while, flicking out its long pink tongue. It yawned, and turned its head away, resuming on masticating. Snakes aren’t supposed to do that, like, at all – they don’t have the right teeth. The crunching and liquid sounds had the hair stand up at the back of my neck.

There was a disconcerting fact about Nahash. It wasn’t that it could change in size to settle on Belial’s shoulders comfortably, seemed to understand human speech and have higher intelligence than any reptile, but that we were both laboratory **animals**. We had more in common than I’d have liked to admit.

I had seen enough of that damned gigantic gnarled trunk for the day, but finding the opportunity to talk with Belial, I had offered to help him find his pet. She had taken advantage of the havoc Azazel wreaked to slip out of her cage, and go into the garden.

“Oh, you’re leaving, just when I have some time off my busy schedule?” Belial said with a grin as I came out from behind the curtains dressed and armed, carrying the box which contained my coffee cup.

“It’s the right time to leave then,” I said, deadpan.

Belial snorted. We kept on searching without more of a conversation.

Finally, we found her in the garden, up high in a tree, almost like any other snake.

Nahash came from the wasteland, and while she did have a few magical powers and had lived for centuries, she wasn’t a Primal Beast. If she had been around to hear Olivia’s tale, she couldn’t have told Belial about it. What would he have had to gain from such information?

I disliked my way of thinking about him when he kept his act together. Everyone else seemed to trust him, even though his vulgarity grated their nerves at various degrees. He knew how to behave when it mattered and treated the Fallen Angels with more respect than any Astral did.

For example, what did he have to gain by being kind to Sariel? I had seen them hunched over a line of ants, but not heard their conversation. Belial’s purpose was to seduce, trick and deceive, and I had been the first to approach him. I couldn’t shake off the feeling the way he had used me was my own fault.
Nahash crawled down a branch, and as if willing to crush Belial, let herself drop onto him at her full size. She squeezed him as if to kill prey, strangling him and biting his head.

He held her up on his shoulders, laughing “Na-san, how cuddly you are! Um, oh, any more and I’m gonna pop!”

A fruit fell onto my head and rolled on the ground. I picked it up. It was red with a purple hue, heavy, and it smelled as sweet as candy. They were meant to tempt, as they had been part of one of Lucilius’s first experiments on human society. Lucifer warned me about them, long ago, when I took my first steps in the garden.

Eating those fruits could kill us. Even though we were technically immortal, breaking beyond repair meant death. Curses, charms, poisons and other debuffs could affect us the same as they did mortals, but Nahash ate them as if they were just apples.

“Is it true eating those fruits could kill us? Why can she?” I asked.

Belial pat Nahash’s back and frowned. “She’s not one of us, maybe that’s why,” he shrugged to lift her into a more comfortable position, “But that’s just my wild guess.”

I considered the fruit in my hand as a stupid idea I thought made sense at the moment surfaced.

“Guesses aren’t something very scientific.”

Belial chuckled. He bent down to me, close enough to whisper;

“Why the sudden interest in the forbidden, Sandy? Has Dark Essence awakened your rebellious side?”

“I’m only interested in proving something,” I said.

“Oh my! And would that be?” he asked as I tried to put a bit more distance between us.

“A huge lie.”

The smile which appeared on Belial’s face wasn’t short from predatory. He had understood my actual question, but wouldn’t give me satisfaction without having some more fun. The snake, shrunken to a reasonable size, slipped from his shoulder onto mine. I shivered.

“You will not surely die. For Lucifer knew that when you’d eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you’ll know good and evil,” he said, daring me with a hint of mockery in his tone.

The fruit was in my mouth. See if I’m playing tough! The juice spilled down my lips, down my throat, into my core, down my stomach, flowed into my veins and every cell of my body, and the poison burned like hell’s cauldron.

Belial gasped “Seriously?!?” and threw himself onto me, grabbed my jaw, forced my mouth open, pushed his fingers into the back of my throat. My knees buckled, and all strength drained from my limbs at once. I collapsed in his arms.

“Spit it out, you reckless idiot! Hell, I didn’t think you’d have the balls! You’re in for one crazy trip!” He said that in a scolding tone, but he was laughing like mad.

Every wave of heat which rose from my stomach, every faraway stroke at the back of my throat to initiate my gag reflex, Belial’s distant calls to keep conscious, were fading.
The last thing I saw, real or hallucination, was the white serpent’s beady red eyes as it flicked its tongue against my face, feeling the heat draw from my cheeks.

My ears buzzing, vision blurred and my head heavy, I believed I heard Nahash hiss;

“Each person is tempted when they are lured and enticed by their desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. And you, what is it you truly desire?”

The answer was simple: love, even if I must anger Lucifer to get a reaction out of him. I wanted him, more than anyone else, to tell me I mattered. I knew Olivia and Azazel cared, and my promise to dance with them still stood, but what did Lucifer want when he put that clay into my core?

“Sandalphon, my sweet little devil…” Lucifer’s voice was distant, echoing in the back of my head, but recognizable between all. Unable to move, barely able to breathe in the scorching heat, I reached out in thought to the beacon of light with all of my willpower.

I was seated between black and white sparkling feathers, and the Lucifer who was holding me wasn’t the one I knew.

Chapter End Notes

Publishing this chapter was slightly delayed because I wanted to be absolutely sure I’d go through with what happens in the next chapter, so I had to write it entirely and have it checked.

As mentioned in the tags, when there's smut in this fic, it's mild. It would be OOC in my opinion for Sandalphon to suddenly become a Casanova just to try to piss Lucifer off, and that's not what's going to happen. While he's unlikely to follow Belial's advice and advances, I think he'd listen to what Voidwing (Shadowverse/Rage of Bahamut) Lucifer has to say :3

Still gonna take a week to work on the next chapter.
Brictom

Chapter Notes

*Bristom: Charm or Spell in Gaulish, an ancient Celtic language.

Bonus: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EplEsr5IVj0

How on earth had he ended up straddling Lucifer, Sandalphon wondered for a few shocked seconds. His beacon of light, his creator, his everything, suddenly kissed him on the corner of his lips. Sandalphon’s mind combusted and froze at once.

Lucifer’s skin had a golden luster, and his wings, even the pair of black ones, glimmered as if they were covered in diamond dust. His eyes were dark sapphires which seemed able to pierce through a soul, a hue of purple not unlike the crimson horizon shadowing them. Sandalphon couldn’t hold the penetrative gaze, his core, down to the clay, smoldered.

More than the slight differences in appearance, he knew that Lucifer was a stranger. A part of Sandalphon’s memories belonged to somebody else. When he tried to remember, he could retrieve fragments of that person’s life. The quick flashes without context only allowed him to try to connect the dots.

He was in the body of a fanatic, a madman who had killed countless people in Lucifer’s name. They were banned from Heaven for rebelling against God, thrown into the Void they made their home and renamed Cocytus. All of his thoughts gravitated around Lucifer, Lucifer, Lucifer. If his King wished so, he’d make the world fall into oblivion without a second thought.

Lucifer caressed a trembling Sandalphon’s cheek and lifted his chin. The claws on his gauntlet were razor sharp, but Lucifer handled him with feather-light care. His penetrative gaze had become one of quiet evaluation.

“Well, hello there. What’s your business possessing my pet?” he asked.

Sandalphon reached for ground behind him with a foot, pushing himself off the mattress. There was none, and he fell. They were on a throne which hovered high over what looked like an active volcano’s crater. A pair of small dark wings fluttered in his back as he reached both of his arms out. Lucifer, lightning quick, caught his wrist.

A leather collar with an iron loop dangled against Sandalphon’s chin, and he winced from the bits of steel wrapped tightly around his arm. His long, black pointy tail wriggled as he gasped, feeling powerless.

The clothes Sandalphon’s vessel wore were similar to his own, but his lower stomach was bare, marked by a charm etched on his skin. The Brictom held a deep religious significance part of the demon's rituals, a privilege many envied; being one of Lucifer’s concubines. As he understood the implications, Sandalphon went limp.

Lucifer caught the small of his back and pulled him onto his lap again as if he were no heavier than a
ragdoll. Sandalphon sat obediently, struggling to digest the embarrassing memories which were flashing behind his eyes. Life sure seemed pleasant, freaking wonderful in Cocytus. Belial would love it here, he thought, cynicism his only line of defense.

“There, there, easy little lamb… I won’t eat you. Who are you?” Lucifer asked with a wry smile. Sandalphon knew that was a blatant lie, and the King wasn't even hiding his amusement.

Sandalphon pushed as much distance as he could between them without falling, his face so hot he must have been flushed. Lucifer’s gave him a sideways glance but put his hands onto the armrests.

“I am Sandalphon.”

“Given that shining Angel aura, and how bashful you are, definitely not my Sandalphon,” Lucifer said, his eyes narrowing.

His calm, unwavering tone was the same as Lucifer’s, and the familiarity of it prompted Sandalphon to talk. Lucifer put an elbow against an armrest and leaned his head on the back of his hand. He listened without a word until Sandalphon had finished.

“A fragmented aerial world made of incomplete beings who try to find their missing bits in their creations. How depressing,” Lucifer mumbled to himself, seeming unimpressed.

Sandalphon couldn’t take his eyes off the purple lips Lucifer tapped with a golden claw of his gauntlet while thinking. It wasn’t supposed to be an attractive color, but Sandalphon knew what they could do to him. They were soft and hot, and the fangs which appeared as he talked pricked on the skin. Lucifer seemed to gauge his every reaction, so he was quick to stop gnawing his own lips.

“My dimension’s Tree of Knowledge and yours seem to mirror. It may have sent you here to find an answer you couldn’t find in your own realm. Perhaps, if I help you, my pet will come back.” Lucifer leaned in, and his voice dropped. “I’d be delighted if he did.”

Sandalphon shifted uncomfortably. This Lucifer knew good and evil, could take his own decisions and wasn’t bound to a purpose. His answers were more sensible than what Sandalphon would come across in his world.

“Then, why do you think he put the Creator’s Clay into my core, knowing it might deprive me of a purpose? It's everything to us, and without one, our existence is meaningless.”

Lucifer smirked, twirling a lock of Sandalphon’s wavy brown hair between his fingers. He didn’t hesitate before he answered: “Because he wanted you aaaall for himself.”

Sandalphon felt weak in his knees, and something stung in his chest. Lucifer wouldn’t ever say something like that, unabashed and flirtatious. Those words felt like a ray of light in the fog. Nonsense! Lucifer wouldn’t ever feel that way, but it would give meaning to his existence.

“For a slave to a purpose, it’s the greatest rebellion to grant freedom to his creation. If we are anything alike, he yearns for independence and freedom. You must have suffered so, you poor thing, but he needed you,” Lucifer said.

The corners of Sandalphon’s eyes were wet. How cruel, to dig into his heart, and expose his deepest desires as if there were a reason he existed. He wanted to hear more impossible things from those pretty lips. It didn’t matter if it was an act to fool him; he was a fool and tempted beyond saving.

Sandalphon leaned in, and Lucifer patted his head. He enjoyed every second of the care he believed he’d never receive elsewhere. Those words sounded like music to his ears, because he knew they
contained no pity or mockery. They were a blinding gloss covering an infinite, dark void which attracted him irresistibly.

This Lucifer could be cruel, indifferent, and he might have been saying this to get into his pants – he had a thing for virgins. If the King had wanted only that, he could have taken it by force. Perhaps his restraint was because he pitied the Primal Beasts. Their situation was similar to the fallen angel’s before they rebelled.

“Maybe your Lucifer wants you to be naughty,” Lucifer said, wrapping a strong arm around Sandalphon as he sank against him.

“But, the clay is –” A finger set on his lips.

“Ah, the angel’s sense of virtue!” Lucifer chuckled. “When people want to fall into temptation, they do inevitably. The clay is a seduction device you could control.”

Lucifer traced his thumb on Sandalphon’s parted lips. Sandalphon stifled a sigh, unable to stop staring at every sculpted muscle his decorative armor didn’t cover. Everything of this man oozed temptation. Lucifer’s touch felt _heavenly_. Why was the King this tender to him?

Lucifer caressed his thigh. Sandalphon bore his fangs but didn’t slap the adventurous hand away because he wanted it between his legs.

“Don’t you?” Lucifer asked. A leer not much unlike Belial’s appeared on Lucifer’s face. The dichotomic, sinful overlap almost ended Sandalphon, but he managed to keep his voice steady.

“There’s a bottomless pit of hellfire below, and these wings won’t bring me anywhere else,” he said, flapping them to make his point.

“You're such a bad liar!” Lucifer giggled and claimed his lips. Sandalphon reciprocated.

All of his body was set ablaze by the passionate kiss. Intoxicated, numb, heated – he couldn’t think anymore. He melted into it, giving the tongue Lucifer solicited, his arms wrapping around the back of his muscular neck.

Lucifer nibbled and sucked his lower lip before they spread apart, their remaining connection a thin trail of saliva Sandalphon licked off. He was eager for more, reacting to each touch with a jolt of pleasure.

Lucifer’s erotic voice stroked him even where they couldn’t physically reach. It was unlike him to say sweet, innocent things, and the worship was for Sandalphon alone. Not exactly alone, as his vessel laughed while he felt his ears burn with embarrassment.

The light teasing contact on Sandalphon’s behind and the small of his bare back was enough to have him twitching and press his face in the crook of Lucifer’s neck. They were burning hot and left a trail of frustration as soon as they left him. Sandalphon muffled a whine.

“T-take your clothes off,” Sandalphon scraped against the plate which barely covered Lucifer’s chest. His top was already down below his shoulders. He slid flush against Lucifer.

“As I repeat without avail to my pet; I’m your King, so watch that bossy tongue of yours,” Lucifer said in a heated voice, licking Sandalphon’s neck and tipping him backward.

Surprised, he wrapped his legs around Lucifer’s hips. Fangs grazed his Adam’s apple, and Sandalphon drew in a sharp breath. He wanted them to sink into his thighs or one of his wings while
he was on all fours.

“Do you want me?” Sandalphon asked.

Lucifer growled and rutted his hips up. The dark blue pupils were blown, and his chest plate gone. Sandalphon squinted at the abs. An aroused giggle, unlike anything he ever thought he’d hear from himself, burst out of his throat.

“Beg me then,” Sandalphon said.

He gasped as they both slipped off the throne, Lucifer holding him tight.

“Oof!”

They sank into the mattress of a divan. Lucifer was over him, all wings spread, immense. He hoisted Sandalphon’s leg over his shoulder, exposing all of the erect truth wrapped tightly within thin leggings. Lucifer plucked holes into them with his gauntlet.

The more Sandalphon struggled, the more he was exposed, but that demon wouldn’t give him any friction. Lucifer’s smile was smug as he slowly ripped them. He’d free anything except Sandalphon’s dick, and it drove the squirming angel insane.

“You want me?” Lucifer asked playfully. Sandalphon groaned. “Then beg,” he said, kissing the thigh he held firmly.

Sandalphon shut his eyes, imagined his Lucifer. It didn’t sound anything like him, heavy with lust and arousal. Beyond sexual desire, Sandalphon craved something more profound. He was aware what he was doing was meaningless, hollow, selfish.

“Stop,” he whispered. “T-this doesn’t feel right!”

Lucifer let go of his leg and set a soft, chaste kiss on his forehead. “It seems you have found your answer,” Lucifer whispered, hugging him.

Had he guessed what Sandalphon really wanted? Had he been that easy to read, even when he had acted tough and accepted to go that far? His eyes remained shut, not willing to see he wasn’t with the right person. Lucifer’s hands were hot, unlike the cool ones who had often treaded in his hair.

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it,” Lucifer’s said, his voice seeming distant like an echo.

Sandalphon wanted no other than the Lucifer of his world, the one who was unlikely to spoil him, who was neither good nor bad. It wasn’t about sex; it was about love. He didn’t want to feel desired, but respected and needed.

The intoxicating sweet taste of the forbidden fruit came back to his mouth.

“Say you love me.”

“Sandalphon?”

“Please, Lucifer, say you love me!”

He heard a familiar obnoxious snigger. “How cute.” Something was strapped against his face, and a machine nearby was beeping. Sandalphon’s vision was out of focus, but he recognized the two silhouettes hunched over him, one with a white head, the other black. Lucifer’s cold hand was on his
sweaty forehead. Crushed by the poison still running in his veins, he could barely move, and his mouth was pasty.

Of course, this Lucifer wouldn’t ever tell him the words he wanted to hear, nor seduce nor tempt him. All of that delusion for more confusion, more yearning. Had he stayed dead, he might have lost his soul to that devil, but it wouldn’t have burned this bad. If anything flowed from his heart at that moment, anger was more bearable than the amount of sadness which crashed over him.

“I love you,” Lucifer said, seeming confused.

“You liar! You selfish liar!”

Chapter End Notes

... Wow! This was so long and hard to write! It’s probably the longest chapter in the entire story because it deserved a consequential build-up. I think five more chapters left after this before it ends. Don’t worry; I’ll give some breathing time after all of this drama. Let’s call it the calm before (hopefully) the storm.

This is my vision of Voidsandy's and Sandalphon's mixed vision of Voidluci (does this make sense?) For example, Sandalphon might think that Voidsandy is mad, a fanatic by the short flashes he sees, but there’s no context to the images. At the same time, Voidsandy is rather cynical and critical of Voidluci, which sets him apart from a non-discerning fanatic. Sandalphon can’t understand (in his present mindset) how someone could do so much evil for one person, which is his interpretation of "madness". Well, if I have written it well enough, I hope this explanation isn't necessary...

I’m overwhelmed by the attention this story is getting. Thank you so much for your Kudos, subscriptions, and comments! They really push me forward.

See you in a week or two, depending on my vacation schedule :)
I’m am not perfect. To most people, crying, laughing and facial expressions are reflexes, and in that sense, I was created faulty. People saw me like a statue, something flawless, not someone who could experience inner turmoil. Human’s first reaction to a stone face is to try to break through. Even hatred is more bearable than indifference. I couldn’t counter that defect when it mattered most.

I felt something was wrong with Sandalphon. His ether dwindled. I rushed to the garden. Belial was holding him, hoisting him up, attempting to push something out of him. Sandalphon spat a piece of Forbidden Fruit he had swallowed.

We rushed him to the laboratory. The Forbidden Fruit’s formula was secret, and only Lucilius knew the contents. Belial’s knowledge was limited as well, and time was working in our disfavor. He broke into the classified archives to see if there were any blueprints while I kept an eye on Sandalphon.

The few minutes it took Belial to come back stretched out like an eternity. Sandalphon’s vitals stopped regenerating. Only his heart continued beating, but his stomach, kidneys, and intestines, gave up one after the other. Suddenly, his ether emptied from his body. My core thrummed and my vision narrowed. The door opened, and Belial came in holding a scroll.

“He’s gone,” I said, my tone miserably flat.

“What? His heart is still beating.” Belial laid the scrolls flat on a table nearby. “Oho, this is interesting,” he pointed at one of the screens. I hadn’t watched over Sandalphon’s data, because it wasn’t crucial for his survival.

His element had changed to dark. It was as if the elemental inversion Lucilius had attempted succeeded with delay, which was impossible. His physical aspect didn’t change.

“Is the system bugging?”

“Doesn’t look so,” Belial mumbled, “Faa-san would have loved to witness this! A possession!” I didn’t quite hear what he said next.

A distant voice rang in my ears. “Look,” it said, and I wasn’t standing in the laboratory anymore.

Whoever was holding Sandalphon let me see him through their eyes. He shifted on their lap, stared at them with round eyes between terror and awe. I couldn’t hear what Sandalphon was saying, but he
blushed and swelled his chest, gnawing his lower lip. They stole him a kiss. Was death cruel enough to show people when it snatched their solace? No, that was a devil devouring his soul and taunting me as he melted into their arms!

They dared to manipulate him, use him, and make fun of the situation. "Lucifer!" He called. My mind went blank.

"Let him go!" I shouted.

"Lucifer, snap out of it! I'm not touching him!" Belial said, shaking my shoulder. I had drawn my sword, and my wings had entirely unfurled. They had knocked a few objects over.

"Thank you," was all I managed to say, and he frowned at me in confusion before turning his back on us, searching for an antidote in the scrolls.

"This formula is genius!" Belial said, slamming a fist on the table and sneered. "I'll be right back. I trust you could handle a demon on your own," he said and hurried out.

Was the lack of scientific explanation for his elemental inversion causing errors in my system, and those visions? That was unlikely. His body jolted, and his eyes opened. They darted around aimlessly before he spat a purple liquid. His temperature rose to high fever, and he looked at me with glassy eyes.

It was as if a void surrounded him and sucked in the ether and warmth from around me. A strange smile appeared on his lips. They moved slowly, and he whispered: "How nostalgic, my King." Then, just as abruptly as he had awakened, Sandalphon’s eyelashes fluttered shut. The darkness receded, and his soft shine replaced the void.

Sandalphon was back. Whatever had possessed him had returned to its shadow realm. I couldn’t sigh or tremble from the stress and relief, but I kneeled next to the bed. Belial hurried in but stopped in his tracks.

"Say you love me," Sandalphon mumbled.

"Sandalphon?"

"Lucifer, say you love me!" Sandalphon’s eyes opened again.

Belial sniggered "How cute!"

What was cute in this? Sandalphon had tried to commit suicide under Belial’s eyes, and I had no idea why. I had almost lost my solace, my everything, and there he was, delirious from fever, calling my name and asking for something so strange. If it brought him any comfort, I’d say it, so I did.

Sandalphon glared at me, and he cried “Liar! You selfish liar!”

It wasn’t a lie, but insisting would have only upset him more.

“Belial, leave us a moment please,” I said.

“Okay. Man, poor Sandy, you look like you’ve been through hell and back!” he said, rolling his scrolls. Sandalphon glared at him even harder than he did at me.

“I expect an explanation on how this could have happened in your presence,” I said.

Belial glanced over his shoulder and hummed. “And you, tell him about the darn thing. I'm getting
bored.” Having sown some more discord, he pranced away.

“Why have I survived?” Sandalphon asked, avoiding eye contact with me.

So, he was planning to die, I thought. It hurt, but it wasn’t my place to decide whether he should stay by my side or not. He was free to choose, no matter how I felt about it.

“Your heart kept beating, and your brain wasn’t damaged,” I said.

“I’ve had enough…” His voice wavered. “Who should I believe? Is it because I’m a freak that I don’t have a purpose? Is it my body? Is it my attitude? Everything?”

Oh, that question again. Was that why he didn’t want to stay here anymore? Was that the only thing about life which mattered from his point of view? How selfish! But selfishness was a byproduct of having an ego, and I loved him the way he was.

“It might be entirely my fault,” I said, "I put a forbidden ingredient into your heart."

“You don’t seem sorry,” he said between gritted teeth.

“I am not sorry for having created you the way you are.”

He frowned at me as if expecting something more. A long and icy silence stretched between us. He let out a shuddering breath.

“What did you want when you burdened me with it?”

“I don’t know.”

I could have told him in which way it could help other Primal Beasts, but not why I had wanted to put the Creator's Clay into his core. His empathy touched Primal Beasts, taught them how to be kind. We were naturally drawn to that clay because it contained everything we weren't supposed to possess and understand. But what would that have meant to him if all that mattered was to be like everyone else? He rejected what made him extraordinary, and I felt like defending my position was a losing battle.

He slowly closed his eyes, and seemed to introspect.

“I guess he was right, then. Let’s have some coffee once I’ve recovered,” he said.

For the first time, I couldn’t tell what he was thinking.

Chapter End Notes

Hmmm... Vacation does me no good for writing.

I wanted to add a little illustration to thank you for all of the Kudos, but I think I'm better at writing than at drawing, hehe.

EDIT: I forgot to mention, it’s rather recent, but I retweet a lot. Follow me @NANO74546347
EDIT 2: With all the GW, battle of the beasts and a "special bonus" coming up in a few
days, I've been slowed down. No chapter update on the week of the 1st May.
You’re shorter than me! It’s logical I should be the one leading!” Azazel’s shoes squeaked on the marble floor, out of rhythm with the cherub’s music.

We were rehearsing in the lobby of Lucilius’s manor, château, or whatever you call a place with towers and about thirty rooms. A broad stairway led from the main hall upstairs, and we danced at its foot. Here a vase, there a statue, a random painting barely covering a sterile white wall - it felt like a museum rather than a home.

We were a group composed of the usual trio, the teachers, a few cherubs, and a friend of Azazel’s
called Mugaro. Lucilius was still absent, somewhere on another island working on a private project. Belial was working in a room nearby. He said the silence sometimes became daunting when he was alone. Owning a set of keys didn’t seem related to his function as the Deputy Head Researcher.

“But you dance like a left foot! Show some flexibility! Like… This!” I said.

I stretched my wings out to keep balance. Azazel’s heel plunked down the floor, and his leg shook as I sat on his hip in a figure. It wasn’t from exertion; he could lift me with one arm if he wanted. He looked at me as if I had murdered his pet puppy.

“I-I-I freaking hate this dance! I hate you!” He turned his face as far away from me as he could while maintaining the pose. I took his cheeks between my fingers and pulled him back towards me. He snarled. Before I could make a snarky comment, my butt hit the floor. Mugaro, Azazel’s friend, started clapping.

Mugaro was grinning, his laughter silent. He was a mute cryptid child from the slums who looked like a human. Azazel had freed him from rare beast traffickers and taken him under his wing. The boy had tried a few steps at dancing before settling to play instruments instead. He chose the tambourine to give us the rhythm with the cherubs, small humanoids no taller than an arm’s length.

Azazel’s nose flared and he turned towards our teachers. “Sensei, can’t you do anything about -- This?” He pointed towards me. Olivia and Halluel had stopped dancing and were looking at us with round eyes.

“Oh my. I’m afraid not,” Halluel giggled.

Given Azazel had thrown me away and seemed too bothered to continue, I took a few steps to ask for Olivia to dance with me. Azazel grabbed my wrist and snatched me away. He had twisted his face into a scowl. Maybe I pushed him a tiny bit too far this time.

“If I dance like a left foot, then keep on both my feet!” he said.

He swept me back into a dance. Olivia kept gazing at us, pensive and fumbling. She had been more silent than usual today as if something were bothering her. I felt her eyes in my back, but couldn’t tell what she was thinking.

It was only a few seconds until we lost balance and fell. That double-left-footed-dork groaned and stayed lying over my legs.

“Sorry,” I mumbled, and he sighed.

My intentions weren’t to use Azazel as a test subject, but how could I set boundaries without knowing the exact potency of the clay? Trying to determine it was like fighting several opponents and an invisible shape-shifting blob. I couldn’t hide from my friends, isolate myself in the laboratory forever, but it had to remain a secret.

Malluel intervened. “Sooo much tension in the air! Ah, I can’t breathe!”

She skipped around the room, looking at various decorative objects, followed by Mugaro like a curious puppy. Malluel stopped in front of a bust. He eyes narrowed, and she nodded at herself before lifting it. She carried it to the center of the circular room and set it there.

“Okay, so line up behind me, one step apart! We’re dancing the Luxtos!” she said, her hands on her hips. We did, followed by Mugaro and the cherubs. Their small wings fluttered like hummingbirds as they hovered behind us.
“Take my position!” She said, and we all put our hands on our hips. “A hand on the left shoulder of the person in front of you!” We did. “Now, repeat after me:

*We are strong, and we are rich*

*And we gladly are*

*We are strong, and we are rich*

*We are free, that’s what we are*

We repeated them a few times until we were in unison. “Louder!” she said, and we sang with all of our hearts.

The line departed. We followed Malluel, sang along, skipped around the statue. I was surprised Azazel did something so goofy without a complaint. Mugaro moved his lips as if he could sing with us.

After a few turns, someone outside of the group clapped. It was Belial looking at us from the rails of the second floor. He was dressed black, in his informal attire. Azazel put a hand to Mugaro’s shoulder. The boy hid behind him. “Well, time to go!” Azazel said, in a voice a bit too loud to be natural.

“Wait, wait a moment there Azzy, you don’t have to leave,” Belial said. He walked down the stairs and came to us. He glanced at Mugaro but didn’t comment.

Belial put an arm around my shoulder and whispered into my ear “I saw what you’re doing, Sandy. Was that about testing the clay, or do you have the hots for Azzy? Mmmh, talked about mixed messages.”

I stiffened. Belial smirked as if he could see right through me. It was the first time he mentioned the clay itself. Now that Lucifer had told me about it, Belial had no reason left to keep it a secret from me anymore.

“I’m going to borrow this one for a bit,” he cheerily said to the teachers.

We climbed the stairs into his office. A screen was connected to a machine in which several cores were growing. It displayed red and green curves, measurements of some sort. New numbers appeared with a regular beep. He pulled back one of the chairs for me, and we sat down.

“Do you have anything helpful to share about it, or did you interrupt me for another reason?” I asked.

Belial rubbed his chin and chuckled. “That depends on what you want and how much you’re ready to risk for it.”

His last encouragements to do something risky almost killed me, but at the same time, he was only following my idea.

“What’s in for you? I imagine your offer isn’t uninterested,” I asked.

“Faa-san’s over-protective of Lucifer, and won’t share any of his findings with me. We have a sample of the clay, but he won’t let me touch it. Also, I’m more involved in your situation than you’d
give me credit for, from the moment I kept that secret,” he said.

“What’s your plan?”

“Dance with you. As simple as that.”

It was never that simple, but how could dancing, except with knives, harm anyone? That fruit also looked more harmless than it was and led me to another dimension. After that bad trip, not much intimidated me anymore. Somehow, the sense of danger itself was exciting.

“Alright, let’s dance,” I said.

“Good, good Sandy! Now we’re talking! Oh, I’m so excited, I could pop!” he laughed.

We returned to the lobby where the group was in the middle of a break. Azazel sat with Mugaro and Olivia, while the Archangels of Instruction were tuning a large winged harp they often played. I was questioning my decision.

“Ladies! May I do a dance demonstration?” Belial asked.

“Of course!” Halluel said.

“I’d like to present a courtship dance,” he said with a wide grin.

Halluel and Malluel glanced at each-other, brows high.

“Oh, you found a way to make it work for Fallen Angels? Black wings aren't ideal for fascination,” Halluel said.

“I know the original is all sorts of flashy-sparkly, but a bit too vanilla to my kind’s taste. I just added a bit of spice and excitation to it.”

I wasn’t as clueless as to not understand his intention, but a courtship parade was unlikely to do anything to me. It wouldn’t be mischief to perform, but I was curious about the consequences. The teachers accepted without further comment.

“Alright, you’re dancing with me, Sandy!”

We went to the center of the room.

“I’m leading. You can still run away, little virgin,” he said, unfurling his six wings.

With his transmutation to dark element, they had become six bat-like fleshy monsters with sharp bones protruding at their ends. Nothing about them was alluring, except maybe for that twisted Astral Researcher of his.

Did he think I would chicken out? He didn’t know where my soul had gone and what I had experienced. I couldn’t look at Lucifer the same way anymore. Each time we took coffee together, I’d keep imagining him plucking holes into my leggings. The other Sandalphon’s memories were gone, but mine had remained.

“I’m getting used to playing with fire,” I said.

He grinned, “I’m also into temperature play!”

Wherever I turned, he was facing me like a wall. The daunting black shadow in front of me blocked
all escape. His heels clapped against the floor at a regular pace, the noise almost deafening. His wings cut out everyone else. In the shadow he cast, his red eyes looked like they were glowing. All I could see was those hypnotizing rubies.

I was turning in circles on myself, snap, snap, snap, and my eyes followed his. He led me around like a puppet. It was tempting just to let go, let him lead me like the other Lucifer did - forget myself in the clamor. He had become a shadow which completely covered me. I lost the sense of space, of my limits, of where I was. In a sense, it was terrifying.

“Anagenesis,” he whispered.

And suddenly, that shadow had a body; first, the hand which set on my waist, then, his arm. I caught onto whatever I could and ended up hanging onto him, entangled in whatever spell he used. My mind was muddled, and his hot breath against my cheek my only bridge back to reality.

“Sandalphon!” Olivia called.

Her voice snapped me back to reality, and I was on one piece. My feet were on the floor, and I was in the lobby. If Belial thought he could use whatever spell he wanted on me, he was wrong! I unfurled my wings and made them as big as I could In Defiance.

“Seriously, Sandy? I don’t mind to switch from time to time, but – Woah!”

I unfurled my wings, made them as large as I could and nudged his with them. I caught his waist in earnest and pulled him into dance steps. He looked at me at first with wide eyes and laughed.

He had made me turn in circles; I made him twirl. He had blocked my path; I pushed him in whatever direction I wanted. He had covered me in darkness; I blinded him with light. He made my mind go to weird places; I didn’t give him the time to think or breathe.

He had stopped laughing, and his face was twisted and flushed. He was panting, unable to say any of his smartass comebacks. He thought he could shamelessly use me in front of my friends, step on my pride again?

My wings were glowing in my peripheral vision, and my heart was racing. I could feel it knock against my chest. The blood in my veins was boiling, the power contained in them threatening to leave me standing alone in heaven.

“S-Sandalphon! S-stop it!” Olivia cried, and something crashed.

Her voice was weak, and her breath hitched as if she had trouble breathing. I had lost control over myself. It was a dance. A dance, not a fight! He collapsed, giggled and twitched like a broken toy on the floor. Not only he was in that state.

Belial had managed to trigger the clay’s full potential, but at what price? Everyone except Mugaro was on the floor, prostrating at my feet, flushed and panting, even the teachers. The chill of a strong draft hit me.

Lucilius stood in the frame of the door, broken tablets at his feet. His glare contained the wrath of a god.

Chapter End Notes
Thank you tons to Dr. Wink for the marvelous Voidwing! Sandy art. It was the highlight of a hard week.

I have been working on a Voidwing LuciSan one-shot, and it slowed down my publishing process. It should come out soon, depending on my Beta-reader (who is only working on that fic). BTW, beta-readers welcome, I seriously need some help on the polishing. I can do with a fic exchange if you want to receive help back.

The last line is an allusion to the Exodus.
Another useless travel, enduring my colleague’s rhetoric at a symposium, the cycle of homeostasis proven once again. The High Council members contented themselves with coming back to the same point with new proof. The Omnipotent’s plan was perfect, our gardens green, everything would return to balance, and everyone could go on with their meaningless immortality.

None of my plans would have been possible without minimal external assistance, so I had to attract more vermin than Beelzebub alone. Anthropologists, biologists, physicists, all kind of shady data diggers and corrupted nobles took part in my conspiracy. A rebellion was brewing.

A few of the kind of Loki didn’t need much to agree, chaos alone enough of satisfaction to them. It seemed eternity didn’t affect only my sanity. I needed to become part of their crowd to reach the few lesser essential pigeons I’d pluck and eliminate later.

Worst of all, the required façade; I had to nod while they gossiped about others who gossiped about them in their back, and they gossiped about me in mine. If it had been required to smile in our culture, my face would have split in half from the inhuman effort.

Hell on earth was in the United Skydom’s Health Organization’s conferences and their aperitives.

Doctor and Lord this and that, I didn’t give a damn, handed me tablets each one considered of the highest importance. If only Belial had been there, he’d at least been useful to carry that rubbish and do the small-talk. They weighed like lead on my way back to Canaan.

No time for respite, I thought; this world urgently needs destruction. I had spent weeks working on new blueprints, leading tests inside my secret base with a few colleagues. The Fallen Angel’s dark cores alone wouldn’t be sufficient to aliment Avatar. All-Out war was inevitable, but it could wait; we had eternity for the perfect coup.

I hurried down the rubble path to my house. There was noise coming from behind the entry door, music. People, in my home? Belial hadn’t warned me. Hopefully, it wasn’t a High Council member who invited himself.

As soon as I opened it, a heady scent struck me. I inhaled sharply. The hormones shot up my head, particles and chemicals shut off most of my left brain’s functions. All logic wiped away in one regrettable breath. Oh, that despicable feeling that locked me inside of my physical shell more than
anything else!

I let go of the tablets, stunned. I tried to focus on whatever disaster had made the air toxic. Beasts, animals were performing a mating dance in my house. Belial that fool was parading, and Sandalphon had already lost control over his powers. That dirt pulled me down to their primitive level!

The Primal Beast's stupid smiles triggered my killing intent, and the female amongst them sensed it. She noticed me, and all the blood drained from her flushed face.

“Sandalphon!” she quipped.

He first looked at Belial at his feet. The dumb red beads turned to me. I was like a bull, driven insane by their color. None of my plans nor logic was of importance anymore. He could die under my hands – all I wanted was to sink everything of myself into him and devour his corpse.

“Phosphorus!” I roared.

After that, I couldn’t remember anything until someone strong caught me from behind and tackled me against the floor’s cool marble.

“My friend, I beg of you, please stop! What has gotten into you?”

There was drool on my lips, my entire body sore from whatever I had done. A black shape lay between Sandalphon and me; his clothes had tears, footprints, and he was unconscious. Belial, that moron had taken all of my beatings. Why did he even bother?

Lucifer was blanketing me with his six wings, my arms pinned in my back. His grip was like iron. I set my face against the cold marble to cool down. Heat still flared up from the pit of my stomach -sickening. He noticed my change in demeanor and let go immediately.

I stood up and noticed the tears in my robes. The other Primal Beasts were shaking, prostrating in front of me, blabbering apologies. A small boy peeked from behind a shield he had created, and let it go. I couldn’t remember ever having met that Primal Beast. Either that, or he was a powerful cryptid. Interesting.

“Everyone, to the lab for repairs, now,” I said. “The boy included.”

They all flinched and hesitated.

“Now!” I roared, and all except Lucifer scurried out like the bugs they were.

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“I beg of you to reconsider my friend; they made a mistake, not a crime!”

Sandalphon, Belial, Azazel, Olivia, Halluel and Malluel were all locked in pods. Belial was still unconscious and going through automated repairs. He had taken in Lucilius’s Iblis attack and was petrified. Sandalphon stood with his hands pressed against the thick glass, his expression unreadable.
Lucilius was reading through the report of Sandalphon’s poisoning, and his eyebrows furrowed at a specific line. His hands started shaking, and the paper crinkled under pressure.

“A change in element after consuming a bite of forbidden fruit?” Lucilius asked in a drawl, “Is this a joke? And what is this, about his aura changing as well? Lucifer, are you dysfunctional?”

His movements were slow, almost hesitant. He put me through detoxification first, then everyone else. The poison wasn’t supposed to affect an Astral, and he refused to pass a short screening in the Primal Beast’s presence. Fatigue, he said.

“And you, you dare lie to me and accuse Belial, who saved your sorry life twice within a few weeks?!” Lucilius hissed at Sandalphon.

“I swear he said something like – Anagenesis – and this happened!” Sandalphon said, his voice coming through a loudspeaker.

“Did you see a flash? Did it hurt you?” Lucilius asked.

Sandalphon shook his head. As if that movement had triggered his aggression anew, Lucilius struck his palm against the glass several times as if to slap him.

“He danced a mating parade, and you got horny, that’s as far as it went, you lowly animal! This,” he waved his hand at the other Primal Beasts, “this is all your doing! Haven’t I warned you? Should I have taken that extra step to pound some sense into you?”

Sandalphon face twisted and flushed. He covered it with both hands and groaned. I couldn’t stand the sight, didn’t understand what Lucilius meant, but couldn’t do anything to calm my friend down either.

“It must have been an accident!” I insisted.

Azazel punched against the glass next to me. I couldn’t hear what he was shouting while looking at the little boy. The child had fainted at the sight of the laboratory and was under observation. Olivia glared at me with her arms crossed. The Archangels of Instruction had decided to take a nap in their pods, unaware of the urgency of the situation.

Lucilius sighed, switched the interphone off, and addressed me. “Imagine if it happened in my colleague’s presence? We’re not immune, and Sandalphon knows.”

He pinched the bridge of his nose, and let his head fall back as he sat down. The repair’s room was full but eerily silent with everyone else’s voice shut out. All eyes were on us, but they couldn’t hear what we discussed either.

“I believe that Sandalphon would behave well if he received proper guidance. We need further research on the clay’s chemicals.”

Lucilius crumpled the report and threw it into the trash destined for the shredder.

“You lied to me, tried to dissimulate a potential weapon right under my nose,” he said, “and now you hope of me to help you?”

“If anyone should take responsibility for what happened before, it’s me indeed,” I said, and Lucilius snorted.

“You couldn’t have known. I discovered its potential by experimenting on Sandalphon. Astrals think
of the Seed of Temptation as a creation myth, not soil with magical powers. They never should.”

His eyes flicked from side to side, and the edges of his lips twitched as if he refrained from smiling. He seemed to have a plan, but his demand left me at a loss and shouldering a new responsibility.

“Find a way to contain Sandalphon’s powers, no matter the means, and I will let this incident slip,” he said.

I believed I could, so I agreed without much of a second thought.

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“Why isn’t Lucilius letting Mugaro out yet, Lucifer?” Azazel asked while we waited for Lucilius to join us in the lobby to settle the entire conflict.

Everyone had kept their memories of the event. It was a bit of a dangerous wager to let them free after what they experienced, but Sandalphon trusted them with his life. They swore they’d not talk about anything, and a Fallen Angel always keeps his word.

“We have to find his parents or legal representatives,” I replied.

Azazel huffed through his nose. I had to pry him off the child’s pod on Lucilius’s order, and we almost fought. He was one of my former subordinates, a familiar face amongst the legions of angels under my command. His relationship with Sandalphon seemed to have improved, but none of them had ever told me they danced together.

“Yeah, I’ll call Rita then,” Azazel said.

“Oh my, I didn’t know you were hiding a secret son!” Belial said with a wry smile.

Azazel shrugged him off. He wasn’t in shape to react to any of Belial’s provocations. Either that, or he had a secret son.

“You have one?” Malluel asked, agape.

“Yeah, sure, and he’s the King,” he snorted.

“Oh my god!” both Archangels of Instruction said in unison, and I was shocked.

“What the hell do you people take me for?!”

Sandalphon shifted on his couch, slumped inside, and arms crossed seated next to Olivia. He noticed I was watching him, and turned his face away. Olivia sighed and rested her head on Sandalphon’s shoulder. They both stayed that way, eyes shut. Their apparent relaxation brought me some welcome solace.

The room was silent without Azazel’s regular groans and yawns. We had spent a good hour in detoxification, and it was an exhausting process, even for Primal Beasts. Belial was about to open his
mouth to pick on Azazel when the door opened, and Lucilius slipped in.

He kicked into sleeping Sandalphon’s leg as he passed him by, and Sandalphon’s wings unfurled. Olivia squeaked, almost nudged off the couch.

“I don’t have time to waste, so make it quick,” Lucilius said, sitting down on an empty couch. “What was that tomfoolery about?” he asked Belial.

“A dancing lesson,” Belial said, shrugging.

Lucilius was so articulate; it was as if each of his words cracked like a lashing whip. “Primal Beasts taking dancing lessons in my home, under your surveillance? Just what exactly are you trying to accomplish?”

“Oh, me? Just have some fun,” he said with a grin.

“I started taking dancing lessons to learn something Lucifer didn’t know about,” Sandalphon said.

“His purpose is to observe evolution and protect the skies, not monkey a human or a paradise bird! And with third-generation Fallen Angels at that? Foolish!”

Olivia coughed and intervened. “I joined Sandalphon because I needed to understand something personal.”

Lucilius tilted his head to the side, his eyebrows high in disbelief, but she didn’t back down. She stood her ground, dignified. She and Sandalphon glanced at Azazel, who rolled his eyeballs and groaned.

“I joined them because -- because we are friends!”

“Personal… Inspirational… Friendship…” Lucilius repeated and put his hand on his face.

His face contorted into a strange, Cheshire-Cat grin. Tears trickled down his flushed cheeks, and he burst into throaty, mad laughter. It echoed through the entire vast, empty manor.

“Good! Very good! And I believe you’d like to join the next grand ball, Madam?” he asked Olivia in between sharp breaths.

“I-I do,” Olivia said.

Lucilius slapped his leg, shaking his head, about to blow up into a million little pieces of shrieking laughter. Belial had caught his shoulders as if to contain him.

“Alright! Perfect! Please, be my guests!” he said.

“Faa-san, you can’t be --” Belial tried, and Lucilius grabbed him by the collar, yanked him down at his height and gnarled;

“Let them see, Belial! Let them see where their place lies in this sick society! Let them meet the people who disrespect and sabotage my research, demonize me, paint over my works of art! Let them see how little perspective this world has for them, how short-sighted average people are, how bound we are by our duties and social status!

Let them set foot into the real world and dance the devil’s parade with me!”

Azazel’s purple eyes shifted from side to side. If one of us them about the ugly faces of the outside
world, it was him. He dealt with humans and marginalized Astrals more than any other Primarch.

He knew about the population’s anger boiling beneath the surface, the rage threatening to take over all Skydoms. I was unaware a coup was in preparation, but wouldn’t ever have guessed the humans wouldn’t be the first to rise against the High Council.

Sandalphon had grown up in a greenhouse, isolated from the darker aspects of the world. Humanity wasn’t always worth protecting, but life, existence itself, the peace of the skies was worth all of my efforts. Maybe it was a lesson he must pass to grow, so I didn’t try to discourage them.

“I allow you to accompany me for the next ball that I can’t avoid, but now, get out of my sight,” Lucilius said in a slow, exhausted drawl.

Belial stayed with him while I accompanied the group out.

“Sandalphon,” I called.

He was holding Olivia’s hand for a reason which escaped me until I watched closer: she was shaking from head to toe.

Lucilius was one of those who experimented on her, a terrifying character from her perspective. She stood her ground to protect Sandalphon, didn’t show any sign of weakness until the threat was far behind her.

He craned his neck back and responded with a hum.

“Would you dance with me next time we meet?”

My question was innocent, ignorant, insensitive. Sandalphon held tightly to Olivia’s hand but ignored her insistent tugs as he hesitated.

Sandalphon smiled meekly and replied, “Yes, let’s dance in the garden next time we have a coffee.”

Chapter End Notes

The rebellion is nearing...

I'd like to take advantage of this plot point reveal to repeat this fanfic isn't a fix-it, but a canon-divergent story. I can't say more, but don't let this spoil your fun; whatever happened before would have influenced whatever could have happened in 000 (+ I've used the concept of parallel dimensions for a good reason.)

If you want happy and liberated Voidwing Lucifer/Voidwing Sandalphon doing very kinky hanky-spanky, I've done a smut one-shot to fill that gap: Beast on a Leash It's kind of a bonus inspired by chapter 15, but not directly linked to this story. PLEASE MIND THE TAGS
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!