Caging the Devil

by Hircine_Taoist

Summary

Instead of flying away with Chloe, the bullets, and thus the cards, fall differently for Lucifer and the Detective. Trapped and fearing for the Detective's life, the Devil threatens to do all he can to send Hell to Cain. Pierce realizes his best chance of living out the rest of his days is to keep Lucifer imprisoned and vulnerable. While their friends desperately search for them, Cain seeks to keep the two locked away. Forever.

Keeping a clever detective and the Devil caged, however, is no easy feat. Meanwhile, Chloe and Lucifer are more vulnerable than ever, and forced to face some uncomfortable truths about their relationship while still trying to assure they both survive.

Notes
Hello my lovelies and darklings! I had so much fun binging Lucifer that I couldn't help but write up an alt-ending of season three just to keep on loving the characters while awaiting the Netflix rescued season four. I hope you all have as much fun reading it as I am writing it! As of yet, I do not have a proper chapter count, but thus far am working on editing four chapters with still quite a few to go. Enjoy, kittens.

Edit: Oh... My... Devil! There are over 1,000 kudos! THANK YOU SO MUCH! You guys rock!

Edit 2: dfjasdfas;dlkfjas;dlf 2,000 kudos! YOU GUYS ARE THE ACTUAL BEST!!! <3 Thank you!!!
This scene picks up right at season three finale, where Lucifer wraps his wings around Chloe to protect her.

“NO!”

There was no other thought. Pierce had given the order to finish them. Lucifer's wings erupted to circle around Chloe.

Still in shock at seeing her shot, his world narrowed to how limply she lay in his arms, the deafening gunfire, and the hot thuds of bullets lodging into his feathery limbs. The Devil stayed caccooned with her in his wings, even when the pain became enough to pull a cry of agony from him.

Pain he could deal with. Losing Chloe he could not. Lucifer just needed to wait until the bullets ran out, then he could make a break for it, take his Detective away and assure she survived, assured he healed whatever was broken with her fragile frame. He could do it. It wasn't too late. It couldn't be too late.

Fate was not so kind.

A bullet shot among the spray of hot lead and pierced directly in the joint of his wing's elbow. The limb dipped, flinched downward with the force. It was too far. Next was his shoulder, a shot slanting down atop his trapezius muscle, where it sliced a hot line to embed on the inside of his shoulder blade. Lucifer jerked, breathless. He bent in over Chloe’s prone form, half a flinch from the tearing pain, half to continue shielding her with his flagging wing. Another line of bullets rained into the brim of the wing muscle. He wouldn’t be able to protect his head much longer.

A jolt of fear iced over that thought. He wouldn’t be able to protect Chloe much longer.

The gunfire stopped, leaving the air smoking and ringing after the chaos. Lucifer’s wing slipped dangerously lower, but he tried anyway. He tried.

Beads of blood scattered when he moved. Lucifer managed to flap backward with Chloe once before it became evident flight with one wing wouldn’t be possible. The bullets in his wing’s wrist and elbow incapacitated it. Small spheres of scarlet rolled down the waxier feathers and spattered on the floor where he staggered. More soaked into the softer down, turning white to red. Lucifer’s frame tilted awkwardly to the left till he caught himself on his knee, keeping hold of Chloe.

It never occurred to Lucifer to drop her and flee himself.

Lucifer kicked away again, his more functional wing half carrying the Devil and his burden against one of the pillars. The statue by it tilted and crashed. He barely heard it over the litany of No and This can’t be happening in his head.

Chloe remained unmoving against him.
He slumped down the column and shielded her with his wings once more. The left limb shook with effort to drape over her. It ended up mostly laying atop her, even as Lucifer reflexively combed at the hair against Chloe’s forehead.

“Detective,” he breathed between pants. “Detective? Please… Don’t…” He glanced up swiftly, trying to keep track of all the armed men.

Pierce stood up, favoring his lower left side as the other men reloaded their weapons with sharp clicks. His footsteps were heavy against the red spotted floor and drifting white and scarlet feathers. “You’re still bleeding.” He aimed his gun at Lucifer’s head. “Good.”

Still bleeding. Lucifer ducked and lifted his wing as several shots fired. His arms curled around Chloe’s torso in a bid to protect her. He kept the trembling limb aloft even after the shots stopped, fresher pain smearing into the old. He ignored it as best he could, desperately hoping as he dragged his fingers just under the detective’s collar bone, on the fringe of the bullet proof vest under her shirt. He grazed the mashed metal of the bullet against the mesh. She was breathing. Her soul was still strongly anchored under his hand.

She’s alive. She’s alive. Thank Dad…

She was still alive. He was still vulnerable. Men were moving around him, freshly loaded weapons finding even more lethal angles to attack. But she was alive right now.

“CAIN!” Lucifer shouted, willing up a spike of anger to cover the fear rattling down his spine. “You let her go! You let her go, or I swear,” his voice lowered, a dangerous, promising edge in it. “When you send me to Hell I will find a way to reach up, with the most vilest demon if I must! You will not last another year of your coveted mortal life!”

“Like I can let you live,” Pierce retorted, reloading his gun calmly.

Lucifer lowered his wing, just enough to glare darkly over it, pupils glowing red. “If you kill her there’s not one of Hell’s hounds I won’t unleash to find you and end you, preferably dragging you to my old stomping grounds.” He grinned, sharp, white, promising.

Pierce aimed his gun toward him once more, blue eyes steady. “She chose when she shot me. You can’t shield the two of you forever.”

Lucifer tightened his wings, unable to check the movement. His eyes were still glowing red as he stared down the first murderer, the two measuring each other, unyielding in their promise to destroy the other.

“Mm.”

Lucifer’s gaze darted down. Chloe’s light blue were still hazy from being knocked breathless by the bullet, but she stared up at him, lips parted. The wings had left a drop of blood sliding down her cheek, a mar he wanted to wipe away and fawn over her in relief that she was awake. “Detective,” he breathed, the red leaving his eyes in an instant.

She stared back, confused.

“Bullet proof vest?” Pierce guessed.

Lucifer’s attention focused back on him, as leery as any coiled rattle snake as men closed in on them.
“Let. Her. Go.” Every word was a steely gavel.

Pierce seemed to consider, glancing to his men that only waited for this word to butcher the two of them. They could. Neither party doubted it at this point. Lucifer held his breath, mind scrambling. Chloe's stare lowered to the shivering wings encircling her.

“You mean it, don’t you,” Pierce finally said. “If I kill you, you will find a way from Hell to have me hunted down.”

“I don’t lie,” Lucifer promised.

“And if I kill her, you will become invincible.”

Lucifer only glared at him, wings angling lower from protecting himself to hide Chloe further.

Pierce continued his steady stare. One of the men near him was staring at the feathers drifting around their feet.

“Boss,” the hired gun said, quiet, as though that might forgive his daring. “This… Do you realize how much this might be worth? What his wings could fetch?”

Pierce flicked his gaze to the man, then nodded to himself, some internal decision made. He kept his gun leveled at Lucifer's forehead. “All right. Let’s deal.”

Lucifer felt a little thread of hope dangling, dangerous and gleaming. His frame was tight to the point of trembling. One little misstep…

But still, the Devil grinned. “Yes, let’s.”
Chapter Notes

Hello Darklings! No devils were truly hurt during the making of this fanfic. Mostly.

Enjoy, little bats!

Chloe’s chest hurt, an ache from a stopped bullet and a squeeze from the inconceivable. All around her were wide, white feathers marred with scarlet, a curtain keeping her from seeing the rest of the room.

Lucifer’s eyes were glowing coals when she first woke. The crimson had vanished the instant his gaze met hers, his face changing from a glare to a mix of relief and tension. His attention had quickly returned to his demands for her to be released. Chloe remained squeezed against him, the wings pressed to her and his long arms tight against her ribs as though he was afraid she would slip from him.

She should be paying attention to the conversation. It was important. The logical part of her brain kept pinging at her in alarm to take in her surroundings, assess the situation and act.

Chloe still drowned under the surface of reality shifting on her, time slow and reality sharper than it should be. The wings were living and alive around her, every shiver of the quills loud in her ears. Wings that were attached to a body. Her preposterous partner's body. The one she’d thought was delusional. The one she had less than an hour ago told to quit with the metaphors, that she couldn't indulge his fantasies any longer.

I haven't made up anything, Detective. I always tell you the truth, no matter what.

She felt another drop of blood patter near her temple. The drop was body temperature, so she felt nothing but the pressure from its pat on her skin before it trickled into her hairline. The air was sharp with gunpowder and copper, Lucifer’s cologne mingled in with the sharper scents.

This was real.

She stared up at the stubbly underside of his jawline as he spoke to Pierce, parsing the new factors and their current situation. A growing red in the corner of her vision drew her eye. She turned her head, staring at the stark contrast of his white button shirt and dark suit jacket. Red insistently creeped across the white, a dark color overtaking the pristine fabric.

Time started to regulate once more. Her partner was injured. She could drown later. “Lucifer,” Chloe mumbled, numbly trying to pull his attention to the wound. She reached for it.

His right hand unwrapped from her ribs to grasp her wrist gently before the detective could touch his shoulder, guiding the hand with slow insistence away from the wound. He was still negotiating with Pierce.

“No, that won’t do, Pierce. She walks free,” he insisted in a tone that was a mix of viper and cajoling friend.
“No. Without her, you’re too radical. All I can promise is that she won’t be hurt so long as she doesn’t try to escape.”

“She has a family,” Lucifer argued, tone ragged with anger.

“Family we agreed I won’t touch. But she goes with, or deal,” A gun clicked. “Is off.”

“Okay, wait. Wait. No need to be hasty.” Lucifer grinned, shifting his gaze around. His eyes were hard, a dark glitter in their twitching side to side to watch every motion.

Chloe felt his chest rising and falling in shallow breaths underneath her upper back. Blood pattered onto her shirt.

_He's afraid._ She couldn't see it on his face except in the eyes. Lucifer wore his masks too well at times. Chloe could feel it in his breath and the tension of his body against her back. A fine tremor ran through him like wire pulled too tight. The wing slumped atop her still shivered visibly.

Her partner was in pain and afraid, and she’d never seen him afraid. Lucifer had once demanded a sniper to shoot him down while a woman cowered behind him. He had guns pointed at him more times than she could count. He lived his life edgy, without care for what people thought of his eccentricities, social experiments, and harsh commentary. It was something that earned both her irritation and admiration.

The situation was beyond bad.

"What if she goes along only for now and you release her later?” Lucifer tried.

"No."

The detective flinched at the gunshot. Lucifer's wings squeezed in, spasming in reaction. A sharp tick sounded off chipping tile. A warning shot near them, then. Lucifer froze, not even breathing against her back now.

When she dared to breathe herself, Chloe tugged at her arm in his grip, trying to pull his attention to her. “Lucifer.” Too quiet. She swallowed, tried again more forcefully. “Lucifer.”

He looked down at her, his eyes tension and apologies. “Hey.” She reached up, touching his cheek. Lucifer’s five o’clock shadow rasped against her palm. "It’s okay."

Everything about the situation was not okay. But it was the best way she could convey her assurance to him. They were both alive, despite their odds. She could go with him. They would fix his injuries. They would escape. They would figure something out. He was Lucifer, her weird eccentric partner, and they’d figure out a way.

They always had before. She tried to fix her gaze to something more determined, willing him to understand she would be fine by expression alone.

Ridiculous as it was, with him leaning over her dripping blood from too many wounds, the sparse communication seemed to do as intended. He smiled at her briefly, sad and stressed, but a spark of happiness and admiration gleamed as well. He pulled her still held wrist close to his chest, his next breath deeper.

“Do we have a deal?” Pierce pressed. His tone said he was not at all impressed with this display, and in fact might reconsider his offer quickly.
Lucifer nodded, still looking at Chloe. “She does not get hurt,” he insisted.

“But you’ll send your demons after me. I got it. Now, surrender.”

At first Lucifer did not move, dark eyes searching Chloe’s. Deeper breaths lifted his chest under her shoulders. Chloe questioned him fervently with her gaze. Did they have a plan? Did he have a plan? What did she need to do?

“…Deal.”

It came out resigned rather than his usual glib exuberance at making a bargain, which made the situation wrong all over again. Hands shifted to her ribs gently, giving pushes as his wings peeled back. “Carefully now, Detective,” he murmured in that expressive, British accent, as though just warning her of a deep puddle in the street.

She looked at him, incredulous as she clumsily tilted from him to one knee. She glanced to the wings as they sank to the floor, the feathers, the men with their guns trained on them. Pierce stood directly in front. He twitched his gun to the right, a silent order for her to stand and step away.

Chloe shook her head, the thought ringing in alarm that if she did he might shoot Lucifer.

“Detective.” Lucifer’s tone was dulcet. “I’ll be all right, but we need to cooperate.” For now.

She looked over her shoulder at him. The red at least didn’t seem to be spreading further across his chest from his shoulder any longer, or had slowed to a snail’s pace. He watched her, a small smile trying to convince her.

The smile was weak, a little lie on his face that didn’t match his eyes, but she understood what he was saying all the same, and that was truthful enough. They had few options here if they wanted to get out of this. If she wanted to see her daughter again. If she wanted to survive so she could ask him about, well, everything. So Chloe took a breath, looking back at Pierce where he still aimed his gun down at them.

Knowing she needed to comply did not keep the helpless anger rising in her throat, her eyes hot as she stood and lifted her hands. Another twitch of the gun, and Chloe made sure her steps were defiantly slow. The fear that any moment Pierce would simply shoot Lucifer lingered, a heavy thread strung through her pulse.

“Cuff her,” Pierce order. “Ankles, too. Careful. She’s well trained,” He never took his eyes or gun from Lucifer.

The cuffs clinked around her wrist, cold as her hands were guided behind her back. She twisted to watch Lucifer, trying to judge how bad his injuries were. Injuries on his wings—No… don’t think about that right now. He’s not moving, not making any rebellious moves or glaring now. He’s breathing through his mouth and staying leaned back against the pillar. He won’t be going anywhere fast.

When Chloe’s legs were cuffed, she was pulled stumbling back near the wall to sit down among the priceless vases. Pierce glanced her direction, then to Lucifer. The gun swung from Lucifer over to Chloe. Head level. Her vest wouldn’t save her twice. His order was directed at the fallen angel.

“On the ground.”

Lucifer moved like Chloe did—rebelliously slow. Still, he obeyed, wings leaving semi circles of red swept on the floor as the limbs moved behind his back. The left sagged, unable to hold its own weight. He leaned on one arm and slid down onto the blood-spotted floor. When ordered to put his
hands behind his head, he struggled with his left arm to push it where needed. Prostrated, he was a
dark narrow line against the polished floor, dwarfed by the expanses of ravaged feathers on either
side.

One of the men moved toward Lucifer. Pierce immediately ordered him to stop. “Don’t bother.
The cuffs won’t hold him. No one get near his wings. They’re still dangerous.” He tossed his keys
to one of his men. “M, go to my car. There’s a small bottle in the glovebox and a packet of
syringes. Bring them to me.”


“She tolerates it well enough from you,” he noted. A bite lay in his tone.

Chloe looked from Lucifer to the gun aimed at her. “Pierce, you don’t have to do…”

Pierce’s eyes were blazing as they snapped to her. “You shot me.”

Chloe glanced to the wound in his lower side, swallowing thickly.

“Cain.” Lucifer’s voice drenched his name with warning. Guns lifted toward the prone angel
immediately. Chloe didn’t dare look. Her attention remained on the blue eyes glowering down at
her above the hand gun, eyes she once had gazed into with mutual affection. They were just hard
with anger now.

Pierce gathered his anger, balled it up and locked it under control once more and looked away from
her. He was matter-of-fact again, the same no nonsense voice he had used toward his fellow
officers at the precinct. “Decker, if you didn’t have a gift for making immortals vulnerable, you
would be in a body bag. Don’t try to negotiate with me.”

Vulnerable? Chloe stared at him before sending a questioning look to Lucifer. She waited for him
to snark or say something to either explain or confuse the situation further, the latter often being
what she was used to.

The fallen angel was silent, refuting nothing.

Chloe’s thoughts tried to jab the broken pieces together, not knowing what didn't fit. "I don't do
anything.”

“You make the Devil bleed. That's your only use right now." The man, ‘M’, was back, slightly out
of breath, looking to Pierce for orders. “Fill a syringe and give it to him." 

The goon obeyed, stopped at a few ccs.

"I said fill it," Pierce ordered sharply.

The goon paused only long enough to register the order, then stuck the needle back into the
miniature bottle and drew the syringe to its apex.

“You can’t give him that much,” Chloe protested.

“He’ll be fine. You make him vulnerable, not human.”

“Oh, does that have pain killers in it?” Lucifer asked lightly. “I wouldn’t turn down a bit of
morphine if you have it. It's one of my favorites.”

He was ignored by Pierce, who watched closely while his hireling cautiously approached the prone
Devil and crouched down to give the shot. Lucifer was ordered to put his hands on the floor. He did, pulling in a heavier breath.

"Wait," Chloe tried, moving to push herself to standing.

Deaf ears received her protest. Lucifer's fingers curled and his wings twitched as the syringe emptied into his neck. Seconds later, his exhale left him, and the tension with it, hands relaxing and leaving him limp and still except for breathing.

There was silence as everyone waited. Anxiety made her feel like her skin was stretched seams, wanting to burst. Her voice was tight with concern. "Is he okay?"

Pierce ignored her. He watched the prone arch angel, waiting out the seconds. The first murderer neared her drugged partner, considering the wing closest to him.

Chloe yelled and scrambled for her feet when he stomped on the right wing joint. It crunched dully under his boot. Another man grabbed her from behind before she could get far, so all she could do was scream at Pierce to stop when he brought his foot down two more times.

Lucifer jerked, a sick corpse like tug of his frame from each stomp pulling on his wing. He made no sound or movements on his own. He was inert and oblivious.

"Stop hurting him! Dammit, get off me!"

Pierce didn’t acknowledge her struggles at all. He stalked back to the exit. “Let’s get them bagged and load them into the SUV. I want all bloody feathers gathered and evidence scrubbed. Work quick before we have company, people!”

The man holding Chloe back began pulling her away. She fought, but she was far too hampered to do anything against someone who easily had half her weight more in muscle and some training of his own.

Her former chief of police stopped at the top of a set of stairs to address a man standing guard and the one restraining Chloe. “You two go back to M and get rid of the less trusted. I don’t need whispers of this getting around.”

“Sure thing, boss.” The men looked at the other, returned a grim nod and left Chloe with Pierce. He had a firm hold of her elbow, pulling her off balance so she stumbled back first against the wall. She jerked her arm away from him to remove his hand off her elbow.

Pierce’s look was unreadable, some maelstrom behind his eyes. Chloe stared back, trying to fathom any edge she might be able to gain in this hapless situation when the shooting started. She left the wall as though it had scalded her, intent on heading back. Pierce had her arm again. The detective’s back made jarring contact with the wall this time.

“Stay. Put.”

Chloe listened to the gun fire quickly die. They’re killing their own people. The bastards are murdering their own guys.

But hopefully not Lucifer.

Please not Lucifer.

Footsteps rapidly approached up the stairs. She turned just in time to glimpse the bag and cry out
before it went over her head.
Hello Darklings! Lucifer can't get a break (at least any that don't have to do with his bones), but at least he can take it! There's a lot more hurt caked on here and Pierce villainy, but never fear! Our Devil still has a mouth on him.

Enjoy, cupcakes!

Being moved woke him. Lucifer regretted it. This was the worst case of cotton mouth and pounding headache he had ever experienced Earth-side. He felt his limbs jerk as he was set on a cold surface face-down, the motion making his insides pitch unpleasantly. He opened his gaze, saw the fuzzy edges of objects, dark walls, bright light, and steel table corners turning in a slow spin. He quickly shut them again.

Was this what a hangover felt like? If so hangovers were **awful**.

He swam through his thick thoughts for recollection, coming up with very little other than a chemical smell making him feel ill. A thick swallow pulsed, trying to lubricate his papery throat. His tongue felt too thick and coated.

He wanted to rub at his eyes. The Devil’s arms wouldn’t move. They felt wrong and sluggish. Their angle wasn’t right. Lucifer puzzled where they were positioned, experimented moving his fingers until realizing with detached calm that they were tied behind his back, forearm against forearm. His shirt and jacket were gone as well. Ah. That explained the chill.

Pressure in his wing’s wrist was slow to reach his comprehension, busy puzzling over his immobilized arms as he was. The new sensation confused him, a weird tingle vibrating down his drugged nerves that slowly increased to outright irritation and, finally, pain.

When it was more than a nagging background sensation he could dismiss from his attention, Lucifer tugged. The limb didn’t move much. That caused him to jerk harder, the affected limb flailing to try to dislodge the irritation.

Voices distorted around him, urgent sounding. Hands pressed on him, trying to keep him face down on the steel table. Lucifer didn’t like that at all. His eyes were open now. Everything was blurry chaos. Leverage evaded him as he struggled, his limbs feeling graceless and numb. The pressure increased just under his wing’s forearm. He made a noise through his teeth, struggling.

Skin and feather gave, muscle parting. He choked as metal slid between wing bones, then roped around the abused metacarpus and squeezed tight.

The reedy sound that squeezed out of his throat was pathetic, but for once he couldn’t bring his pride to bear to clamp down on the noise.

He didn’t recognize the voice giving orders. Not Pierce at least. “Drugs are wearing off fast. Get the other one done quick.”

The sedatives were receding far swifter than natural, the numb blanket of his nerves starting to
send new discomfort through his limbs. His pulse alone was enough to make his head throb. The top of his shoulder felt stabbed, and every motion of his two shoulder blades on the left side stung and burned. His wings were a smear of feverish discomfort. When he tried to spread the right, the whole brim shot with new hurt, seizing the nerves with a radiating stab that didn’t abate. Lucifer squirmed under the hands, grunting with effort to get away from the torment. His arms remained bound. He could barely move the right wing when someone’s full weight laid against it. He was left breathless as bones shifted further out of place.

They worked the metal through, pressure then a shock of giving flesh. He barked a sharp cry, part pain and more anger as he renewed his flailing. It didn’t stop the metal cable from being cinched in around his wing bone in the least. Hands left him immediately after.

“Okay, crank them.” Metal clicks and an electric whine sounded.

Lucifer’s wings were pulled.

He was dragged right off the table. The floor bruised when he fell, unable to catch himself with his bound hands, and still the cables relentlessly marched. Lucifer gave an irritated shout as he slid along the cement floor. The cables pulled up and away, his abused feathered limbs being spread toward the upper corners of the room. Lucifer gave another sharp sound before he grit his teeth together, spine arching as he started ascending, trying to relieve the new agony. His bare feet scraped at the cement floor for purchase.

When the pulling and metal clicking stopped he was barely on his toes, breathing shallow, wings stretched unbearably. Forearms strained where they were wrapped together behind his back, but he could do nothing more than clench and unclench his fingers. The bindings felt like cable as well, thinner, and nothing that would give easily.

“Now that is an impressive sight. Lower him a few inches.”

A few metal clicks, and Lucifer’s heels touched the floor, his weight settling. Grateful, the pressure in his wings and shoulders eased. The Devil stood catching his breath and glaring. His vision smudged and swayed, his balance drunken, but he could remain upright by indignation and hot rolls of anger alone now.

“Tell the boss we got things sorted in here. Should be okay for a doc to look him over now.”

Lucifer focused on the speaker as best he could, watching doubles ghosting around the figure. One of Pierce’s people, someone tall and thickly muscled with a groomed beard. The room had four others, some openly staring at the wings at nearly full span.

A little show of divinity. Bloody and broken as it was in this ugly place.

The door groaned and swung back with a heavy clang when one of the men left. Lucifer swung his clearing gaze about. An old factory? This room was large, long, with old machinery mounts making the floor a blocky chaos. The stainless steel tables were old and warped. An abandoned production floor, perhaps. The police consultant took in the industrial lanterns shining light sideways at sharp angles across the room. Dark eyes trailed along his more broken wing to the beam the cable looped over, down to the large winch bolted to the floor. It had cheery, yellow paint, the cable gleaming still and the bolts surrounded in cement dust. Two brand new contraptions toted in specifically for this task.

How special.
He had to get loose. Find the Detective. *Focus.*

Lucifer offered the goons gathered a winning grin, too sharp to be truly friendly. His voice rasped. “Well, gentlemen, just you and I now, is it?”

It wasn’t hard to pull some of their gazes. The wings already stupefied the simplest among them. Lucifer's interest fell on the one giving orders, though. He locked eyes with him, pulling at the psyche to help the desires surface. “Now really, do any of you think doing this is wise? Surely there is something else you want? Something else you de-.”

The heavy metal door clanged open. “Everyone out,” Pierce ordered.

The man shook himself, head whipping as though trying to rid of water from his ear. Lucifer grimaced at the lost chance, only to fix his intentions on Pierce as the men filed out.

Pierce stood motionless, waiting for the last of them to leave. Gauze peeked out from under his freshly changed shirt. Someone had patched him up.

The door clanged shut again. He still didn’t move or speak.

Lucifer tried to turn his wrists subtly behind his bare back. The cable around his folded forearms held firm. His feet were cold and scraped bloody on the edges. The bullet wound atop his shoulder seeped sluggishly. His head was still thick with dull pain. The wings remained in place, cable wrapped between the bones and still too raw feeling for him to attempt any motion that would jar them.

Lucifer gained nothing from the silent staring, and patience was not a virtue he held dear while in such discomfort. “Where is the Detective?” he asked.

“Nearby. Unharmed.”

Pierce couldn’t be bothered to speak in complete sentences again it seemed. Lucifer did his best to not react to the news, simply nodding as though they discussed the weather.

He’d like nothing more than to break Pierce’s limbs.

“Nice place you got. Not very cozy, though,” the bound Devil said, tilting his head and letting his dark gaze roll around the decrepit room once more.

“It’s functional for now.”

“Just for now? So we’ll be moving?” Lucifer tried to keep the murder out of his smile as he turned it to the underworld boss. “I know some great places for a getaway if you want suggestions.”

Even if the murder wasn’t hidden in his smile, it didn’t unsettle Pierce. “I’ve already decided on permanent accommodations.”

“Oh? Busy little bee, aren’t you?”

“Making new identities for most of human history made me very efficient at relocating.”

“I suppose it would. Of course, it can’t be some pitiful hole like this. That won’t do for the Detective. I hold her becoming sick due to environmental causes in the harmful category.”

The edge of Pierce’s mouth pulled briefly, as though he might smile or grimace before it left. “It does leave some complications. However, your deal was only for your surrender, which you’ve
done.”

Lucifer tried to move his wrists again. The skin burned under the cable’s bite. There was no give. “But the circumstance has not. If she is hurt or killed, I will exact my wrath on your highly shortened remaining days.”

The former police lieutenant looked toward the wall. “I think we can come to some agreement.” He turned his gaze back. “To assure her continued good health, of course. We both know that’s synonymous with my lifespan currently. But... if I have to become desperate to keep you in line?” He looked down briefly. “I wouldn’t like it, but I would do what’s necessary.”

Lucifer recalled the sound of two gunshots, and how his shock had rattled him as swiftly as the bullets flew when Chloe collapsed in front of him. He’d been so afraid she was dead. She was trying to protect me. Had the bullet only been a finger span higher...

Lucifer pushed the what-ifs away. Chloe needed him to keep his head here. She was somewhere close in this wretched building, and he couldn’t know how roughly she was being detained or mistreated.

He licked the back of his teeth. “You have a detestable way of treating the people you claim to love.”

“I gave her the chance to walk way. She shot first.” Pierce barely sounded defensive.

“What choice did you give her?” Anger hissed in the fallen angel’s words and blazed in his eyes.

“She had every choice. Better choices.”

Lucifer tilt his head to one side, studying the tension in Pierce’s jaw. Ah, yes. Lucifer had been battling to be chosen by Chloe for a while. In the end, he supposed she had made her decision between the two of them vividly clear. The giddy chuckle escaped his dry throat before he could stop it. “‘Better’ is up for debate, but she did choose, didn’t she?”

Pierce followed his inner thinking easily. “Only because she doesn’t know what you are.”

“Oh, she does now,” Lucifer said. Something warm settled under his sternum as he remembered her touch on his face, her quiet it’s okay. That warmth smoothed his face as he looked to the floor, examining the warm memory of her acceptance. “Strange. There have been times when I didn’t think I could be surprised anymore, after so many years. She continues to do so.” He gave a breathy one-syllable laugh. “I thought she’d have a much different reaction.”

“Again, that’s only because she doesn’t really know you.” Pierce’s features were even, the words so unvarnished it pulled Lucifer’s dark gaze to his pale eyes once more. “You think seeing a few white feathers really has prepared her to accept you for what you are? The Devil?”

Lucifer huffed and grinned at the words. A tendril of uncertainty wormed through his thoughts, but he hid it. She had just been shot, was probably still in shock. But... “Oh, she seemed fine, Mr. Sinnerman.”

...What if it had been my Devilface instead that she saw?

Pierce approached him now. “You truly think she’ll still accept it after time to think? A torturer? God’s outcast delinquent? You two aren’t even the same species.” Piece’s eyes were steely on his, a mere arm’s length from him. “Do you even think you deserve her? You say you never lie. Answer me that.”
Lucifer felt his eye twitch before he could control it, trying to draw up straighter as Pierce neared him. His shoulders hurt, and his breath was getting away with him. “Well, Cain,” he said, keeping his words slow, a facade of control he didn’t feel. “I think there is one truth we can both agree on, and that is neither of us deserve her.”

But I want to be worthy of her. I do.

Pierce nodded, lip thin. His arm flashed forward. Lucifer barely had time to register his breath had been knocked from him before the fists came again, and again, and again. His feet gave out from under him. The cable made distraught metal squeaks against the overhead beams as his wings twitched, full weight pulling on them.

It was over quickly, Pierce efficient with his strikes. The Lord of Hell was left fighting for breath, dangling and blood slithering from his bottom lip. The room was a blur around him, eye stinging.

“Well… Someone’s been working out,” the Devil blustered, mustering as much sally as he could. His voice sounded far fainter than he liked.

The door opened with its metal shriek. “Blindfold him. Nobody is to look him in the eye. Sedate him again and see if the doctor can do anything about the bullets.”

Lucifer didn’t bother struggling against the blurry men who approached. He spit to clear his mouth, clambering for his feet to take the hot tearing sensation from his wings. “Blindfold me?” he rasped, voice rich with humor. “I hope you have silk? … No, no, what is that? That is the roughest cotton… Gentlemen, as much as I enjoy the kinky treatment, if you’re not even going to tie it properly, I will not be calling for a second date.”

One of the men gave a snorted laugh. It was the only respite for the moment to know at least one of his captor’s appreciated his wit.

There was a pinch of a needle, then nothing.
Hello Darklings! I realized this chapter was getting quite long so I split it. I'm busy editing the second half, so we'll get two chapters in a row with Chloe's POV!

Enjoy, puddings!

It was a few hours after midnight.

Chloe could feel it in the weariness of her bones longing for a soft bed and the arid feeling in her eyes. Her stomach was tense, knotting at the odd hours of wakefulness and stress.

The Detective had been on enough stakeouts to ignore the uncomfortable sensations, but they were useful compasses to know it was sometime after 2am.

The accommodations weren’t comfortable, either. The abandoned locker room was rusted and caving to decay. Chloe’s hands were cuffed in front of herself, and one of her ankles was cuffed to the steel leg of the hard bench she sat on. Her chest hurt, a dark palm sized bruise nesting on her chest from the bullet. Still, things could have been much worse. Nothing felt broken. The men guarding her, who called each other M and T, gave her regular bathroom breaks. Earlier she had been given a large subway sandwich with chips and a blue sports drink. T had even given her gum after to clear the taste from her mouth.

But she was a prisoner, not allowed to breathe by herself and constantly observed. They had tasers at the ready whenever they approached. They had ordered her out of her bullet proof vest and taken it, leaving her less protected. They answered none of her questions and only shrugged at her remarks. Their loyalty was fast. Chloe wasn’t sure she had any angles she could work with them. At least, not yet.

Lucifer had been better at finding vulnerable angles in people.

Her brain quickly reminded her that Lucifer was the Lucifer. The Devil. Heaven’s fallen angel.

She rubbed at her temples to ease the steadily worsening pressure. Chloe has been turning the new information over in her head repeatedly until at points her thoughts were nothing more than scrambled eggs with a bitter dusting. Mostly she was surprised at how unsurprised she was. As though she had known it, but had refused to believe it until it stared her in the face. Part of her had admonished herself for not being in more shock, not spinning from it, but then shortly after she’d dismissed that as being wholly unhelpful. Her detective brain was far busier putting pieces together. Relief came with having explanations for events she previously had to push away because she didn’t have enough information. Now there were easy slots and edges that fit together, and while there were still some past events that continued to confound her, the picture was much more complete.

Which meant Pierce was likely truly Cain. Which meant he had years of experience on her, as well as deep ties with the criminal world he probably had built up for generations. He had already proven ruthless and uncaring of people’s lives if eliminating them solved his problems. Pierce had
even been ready to kill both her and Lucifer.

She couldn’t rely on his feelings for leverage again. Her shooting him would mean he would not falter if she tried to appeal to their previous relationship.

Chloe leaned over her knees, clasping her hands together and feeling the hard rub of her knuckles and finger bones against each other as she mulled over the situation and how close it had come to utter disaster.

They could both be dead. Especially since Lucifer hadn’t run when she fired. Of course he hadn’t. She should have known he wouldn’t. Her strange partner wouldn’t have even if he was delusional and not the actual Ruler of Hell.

The picture of his red glowing eyes swept into her thoughts, how the hellish glow had faded as soon as he’d looked down at her, his expression changing to something softer and so mixed with human emotions… Vulnerable.

Chloe was looking at the blood spots on her beige over-shirt when Pierce entered the room. Chloe didn’t stand, just tilt her chin to look up at him, her expression flat and ungiving as she took in the hard set of his jaw.

“Wait outside,” Pierce ordered M and T.

They did so without a questioning glance. Again, that concrete loyalty.

Pierce’s blue eyes flicked over her. She let her rumination fade to be replaced with quiet alertness, ready to openly observe what this conversation would bring.

“Were you trying to kill me?” he asked finally.

Not threats? Not anger, nothing like before. Chloe frowned, keeping eye contact steady so he could read her sincerity. “I needed to incapacitate you, so I aimed for center mass. I knew it was a high probability, but, no, I did not want to kill you.”

Pierce looked as though he were mentally turning that in his mind for flaws. “If you had killed me, you know you would have been mowed down immediately. If you had run, you wouldn’t have made it. I had another man on the stairs.”

Chloe nodded slowly. “I know.” Even though her close call with death had been mulled over, it still made her throat tight.

“You should have stepped away, could have pursued me later. Why didn’t you?”

She pulled a breath through her nose. It was stuffy from the dust and didn’t help the pressure in her forehead. “I couldn’t let you shoot him.”

“You shot me.”

“He’s a civilian.”

“No, Decker, he’s Satan.”

Chloe swallowed before adding. “A civilian Satan.”

Pierce tilt his head at her, brow pinching. “You… really haven’t grasped what he is, have you. Not all of it.”
She broke eye contact, letting her gaze wander along the corrupted lockers instead, hands folded under her lips. “I don't need help comprehending it, Marcus. I'm dealing with that. It does change my world perception. A lot.” She looked back at him, searching. “You’re really Cain? Cursed Cain from the Bible?”

“I’m not cursed anymore. You helped with that.”

Chloe shook her head, miffed. “You said something earlier about me changing immortals, but I don’t see how.”

“Because…” Pierce looked up, shifting his weight back while taking a breath deep in his chest. “I thought… I had found someone I wanted to grow old with. You cared for me enough to want that, too. That broke the curse.” He gave a soft snort. “Now that it’s no longer the case, I’d rather have the curse back.” When his eyes returned to hers, the gaze went from a soft bitterness to icy stone. “I have to start over now, make a new life, and with much more limited time than before. I have to take the life you knew away, too. All because you decided to step in front of evil incarnate.”

“He is not…!” Chloe stopped her sharp rebuttal, pausing to gain control of her vocals. “…Evil incarnate.”

She had to believe that. All this time, all she had seen from him, all their trust and friendship. Yes, there had been glimpses of something... wrong. Dark even, a mysterious, screwed up past that dogged Lucifer’s heels and made his eyes flinty, his jaw tight at times. But evil?

“No?” Pierce seemed amused at her. “Think it through. Do you know what his purpose in Hell is?”

Chloe gave him a unyielding stare, steeling herself inwardly for his next words.

“He punishes. You’ve heard him brag about how good he is at it. He takes people and inflicts pain and torture on them. And he likes doing it, Chloe. It doesn’t matter if they’re good or bad, just that they feel guilty. And when they get to Hell he’s there waiting to rip them to shreds and put them through cycles of their worst nightmares for eternity.” He smiled briefly as though unbelieving he had to spell it out for her. “That’s the difference between him and I. I do what I do because I’m pragmatic. I’ve lived too long not to be. What he does? It’s because he’s sadistic.”

Chloe shook her head, pursing her lips to keep the tight feeling from unraveling into a tremble. “No. Not to me, he isn’t.”

Pierce rest his weight back on his heels, looking down at her like she was some ignorant child. “I guess it seems that way. The Devil is a bit like a magpie. You’re shiny to him, a miracle. But possession is not the same as affection, Decker. He knows lust, ownership, and manipulation. He doesn't know what love is. He’s not capable of it. Right now, he wants you, and he’ll do anything to anyone who dares to move on what he considers his territory. It’s as simple as that.” He paused. "Lucifer only cares about Lucifer."

Chloe felt her breaths squeeze, a furnace building under her sternum at his words. She was angry on Lucifer’s behalf, angry the words were stinging against doubts she’d had long ago concerning her partner. “I don’t believe that,” she stated, more rigid than she would have liked.

Pierce regarded her. When he realized she would say nothing more, he shrugged. “You’re a detective, a damned good one, so you’ll need proof. Do you want to see him?”

He was up to something, yet Chloe was already standing before she realized it. “I want to see he’s all right.”
Piece didn’t respond. Instead he knocked on the door for M and T to enter again. “Bring her into the holding area.”

“Doc’s in there now,” M informed. “The sedatives we tried aren’t holding the freak, but things seem under control.”

“I know,” Pierce assured with the unwavering mannerism he had, stepping out to go ahead.

Chloe held still while the cuff was moved from her ankle, but she squirmed inside with impatience. She hurried after T, M keeping close pace behind her with his taser.

With each step she worried of what she would find.
Angel, Devil--They're Just Two Different Faces

Chapter Notes

Oh my gawd, darklings! Over 100 kudos! Thank you, my doves and ravens!

This chapter contains not only whump, but emotional whump. I upped the rating to mature, because there's even more violent pain elements and cursing. (Some British cursing, as well!) I really wanted to get this one out tonight, since it's a part two of the prior chapter with Chloe's POV, so I apologize for typos. Please let me know if there's anything I need to fix! I'm so glad you're all enjoying this and don't want shoddy grammar to ruin that!

Updates will be a bit slower after this, since the work week starts, but I'm still going to try to get them up every one to three nights. Next one will feature Ella Lopez! Much love and ache, darklings!

The forsaken facility was large, decrepit, and had been abandoned to rubbish and the elements.

The Detective couldn’t see any windows. Traffic sounds were absent as she picked her way through the debris-riddled hallway, hobbled between her two guards following Pierce. The lack of civilian noise may have been the thick walls or simply that they were in an isolated region, the latter a possibility considering the time she had been stuck in the back of the SUV some 12 hours earlier. She kept quick track of the few doors and rooms they passed before T opened a heavy metal one at the end of the wide hall. Its hinges squealed as the heavy thing swung inward.

Pierce stepped in and to the side to lean against the wall, allowing her past him into the production room. Her two guards went left and right.

Wings.

They immediately pulled her gaze, luminescent white where they remained unbloodied. Her heart stuttered in her chest, the surrealism taking her breath. Chloe hadn’t forgotten them, couldn't forget about them, but something so immensely significant could not fail to rapture her attention again. The limbs were so vast, some prime feathers longer than her arm. They sailed toward the corners of the room with top most feathers nearly horizontal, so great they nearly dwarfed the man they were attached to.

The fascination was gone as soon as it came, an instant of wonder becoming the ashes of horror. Chloe’s mouth fell open, her eyes taking in the grisly details of the scene. The wing’s wounds made Chloe sick with empathy. Fresh blood shone brighter red from freshly aggravated punctures. Black, wiry stitches further marred the gored limbs. They looked ugly and blasphemous against the feathers, like grotesque insect legs. The left wing was swollen, and instead of a proper splint, industrial vice clamps had been pinched over the brim, their bite softened only by two hand towels on either side of the wing’s zenith. The cables holding the wings aloft pierced through them, forcing them stretched and pulled to nearly full span, so they could not rest to relieve what must be agony.

Lucifer looked far too vulnerable without his suit. He was shirtless and shoeless, his arms bound
wrist to elbow behind his back. Yet he absurdly talked with his usual *bon mot*. A swarthy man with a deeply creased, dour face stood on a step stool just behind the arch angel's back, busy with the work of manipulating flesh and extracting bullets.

“Are you certain you, ahh, know what you’re doing, doctor?” a blind folded Lucifer asked. He looked like he was struggling not to squirm.

The doctor responded calmly to Lucifer. “I can’t get to the bullet from above, and you move too much when I try. It’s very close to the surface here.”

*His shoulder...* The doctor had pushed what seemed to be a thin dowel rod down the bullet hole through the Devil's trapezius muscle. Lucifer’s chest was smeared with dry blood on the left with fresh rivulets coursing down from the bullet wound to soak into the top hem of his trousers, turning the black material shining wet.

“Ahh-Hah! Yes, that *stings*, though! I am all for trying anything once, and I really do mean anything, but I have already decided I do not favor this form of pene-penetration!”

Chloe quickly documented his other wounds, more aghast with each cut and bruise she beheld. Lucifer’s feet were scraped with thin scabs. A dozen small feathers were littered around his bare toes. His ribs scored dark bruises. The lips were split and swollen, blood still drying on his chin. A bruise peeked out from under the blindfold against his cheek. Likely a black eye hid under the cloth. The fallen angel's hair was unruly from sweat. Chloe had no idea what state his back was in.

The Detective's feet were already moving without thought toward him, her breath held.

“I almost have it. Hold still.” The back alley doc’s voice held no inflection.

“That’s not voluntary twitching!” Lucifer growled, twisting marginally away when his muscle jumped. “Perhaps if you were not trying to pry my second scapula out of my back, you-you could… fecking *hell*, man! If you can’t get the bloody thing, *leave it!*”

“Just a little…”

“Fffff-UCK!” It echoed off the far walls as the doctor’s arm jerked back.

Chloe had never heard him curse like that before. Her mouth opened and closed, lump thick in her throat. She stood directly in front of him now, appalled.

“There we are,” the doctor said mildly, stepping down from the stool, bloodied scalpel and tongs in hand. The shiny remnants of a bullet were locked in the tongs's grip. Lucifer listed, making a small sound as he pulled in shallow breaths. His skin was too pale and sweat-beaded. The cables creaked with his weight.

“What have you done to him?” Chloe rasped. She came in closer, gravitated to her hurting partner. She paid no attention to the doctor passing her to drop the compressed bullet with several others into a bowl on the table.

Lucifer immediately lift his head. “Detective?” He was on his feet again with sudden energy in his beleaguered body. “Detective!”

“What have you done to him?” Chloe demanded louder, even as she kept her eyes on Lucifer. She took hold of both of his cheeks. She didn’t press, just enough to touch so she didn’t hurt him further, letting him know she was there.
Lucifer grinned, quick and wide as he had so often when jesting with her. It made the stubble on his cheeks rub against her palms. A red hue tinted his teeth. “I’m fine, Detective. Trust me, these people are amateurs.” His flash of teeth died down, leaning her direction. He couldn’t lean far. “But how are you? Have any of them hurt you?”

“No. God, no Lucifer I’m fine. And you’re not!” Her hand moved from his cheek, hovering just over the wooden rod inserted in his shoulder’s bullet wound.

Lucifer seemed about to argue, though over her use of ‘God’ or his injuries, she didn’t know. The arch angel considered his words more carefully. “Well, I’m fine if you’re fine, because that’s what matters.”

“What if I’m not fine with this? Your wings!”

“Oh.” He tilted his face toward his broken wing, though the black blindfold made it impossible for him to see. He bared another grin her way. “Never mind those, Detective. I’ve cut them off dozens of times. They’ve grown back lately, so it shouldn’t be a problem!”

“Are you…” Chloe floundered for words. He said he had cut off his own wings. *Cut off his own wings? Are you serious?*

Pierce spoke up, still standing next to the door. “Nobody is cutting the wings off.”

Chloe wheeled on him. “Let him down from there.” She pointed up at the cables.

“Not happening. So long as his wings are incapacitated, it doesn’t seem he can jump dimensions. It’s also difficult to effectively bind someone who can pop limbs in and out of their back at will.”

The doctor had come around behind Lucifer again, now with a needle holder and suture at ready. Chloe shot him a sharp glare before turning back to Pierce again.

“This is torture,” she said hotly.

“And clever,” Lucifer added with much less heat. He hissed, jerking a little, turning his face blindly to the left. “Your alley physician leaves much to be desired, though. He’s a rough little man.”

“I could have left you to bleed,” Pierce said easily.

“That would be unhealthy of you, to let me die now,” Lucifer jabbed.

“He can't heal like this, Pierce!” Chloe declared angrily. Her furious steps aimed Pierce’s direction, the cuffs clinking. She already halfway across the room with her shortened pace.

The doctor spoke up before the argument went further, intent on his stitching. “Is it true these feathers can heal?”

Lucifer tilted his head back. “I don’t lie,” he said in the voice of someone sick of repeating himself. “They just don’t heal me.”

Pierce held up a hand. “Wait.” Chloe stopped, turning and spoke up with him. “*Your feathers heal?*”

Lucifer looked irritated and indignant at the stereo question. “Of course they do. I’m not some low-rung celestial being!”
The doctor tied off his stitches. “I see you were unaware as well, Sinnerman. Perhaps we could have used one for your side.” He reached up and pulled the wood out of Lucifer’s shoulder. Chloe could see it was a long q-tip now, the cotton colored with orange antiseptic and blood.

“Ah!” Lucifer clenched his teeth. “A little warning on the pull out?”

The doctor gave a small smile that made Chloe’s opinion of him drop lower. “I’ve already given him antibiotic shots.” (“I didn’t need them,” Lucifer complained.) “He should start to heal nicely, though there’s not much I can do for the bones. I patch people, not birds.”

Lucifer coughed an indignation. The doctor paid him no mind, packing his equipment into his bag.

“You can’t just leave him hanging like this, Pierce,” Chloe tried again.

Pierce watched the doctor pack his items, ever taciturn. “It takes a lot to hold him. Especially if I have to hurt you.”

Lucifer’s head jerked up. The pinion feathers of his left wing spread higher. “Don’t you dare,” he warned.

Chloe didn’t like the look on Pierce’s face. It was far too cold and calculating, but he was speaking casually, entirely at odds with his expression. Her gut was alarmed, warning her he was up to something.

Pierce leaned up from the wall. “Actually, if that holds him, I don’t need you, Chloe.”

“Cain…” Lucifer’s voice had lowered, full of menace.

“It stands to reason that since he already has holes in him, the'll stay for me to keep him tethered, whether he’s invincible or not.”

“Don’t.” Lucifer sounded scraped with anxiety.

Chloe’s pulse picked up higher. Was he changing his mind now on letting her live? “Pierce… Marcus.” She took a step toward him, slow, using the body language and voice for when she was trying not to spook a cornered criminal.

Pierce pulled the gun out from the small of his back. Chloe froze in place, palms up.

The doctor looked between them, eyebrows hitched. He stepped to the side around them and opened the door, grunting at the effort. The metal squawked in protest. “Well, I’ll be no my way. Wouldn’t want to be a witness. I trust my payment will be at the usual drop off.”

Lucifer called out again. “Cain, you know I won’t rest if you touch her!” His arms were flexing, trying to work out of his bindings unsuccessfully.

He had no way of seeing when Pierce pressed the gun to the doctor’s chest. The doctor froze, then at a push stepped back.

“What are you doing, Pierce?” Chloe asked shakily. The door swung closed under its own laborious weight, clanging shut.

“Detective?” Lucifer was less calm now. “Pierce! She doesn’t deserve this! She doesn’t deserve to be hurt! We can deal instead! Just don’t…”

The doctor had opened his mouth to speak. The gun lifted swiftly to his forehead and fired.
Chloe jumped in place, blinking as the body hit the floor with a crumpling thud. The smell of hot brain and gunsmoke made her nauseated.

Lucifer gasped. “No… Nonono, you didn’t…! Chloe?” His voice was a reedy tremble.

Pierce aimed the gun at the Detective, and put his finger to his lips. He was telling her to be silent. She kept her hands up, swallowed, mind racing. She opened her mouth. Pierce be damned. She was going to tell Lucifer she was all right.

The change in the room was tangible, a primal fear spiking in her gut. The flare of heat at her back caused her to turn. Hot wind rushed past her, forcing her eyes to blink at the sting of it. The putrid smell of sulfur smothered away all other scents.

Watery eyed and blinking, she watched her partner change as he struggled to free himself.

Lucifer’s skin was on fire from underneath, his shoulders straining against his bonds. His face twisted from pale panic to rage, teeth bared as his voice filled the room.

“CAIN!” he screamed, and lunged in his bindings. The wings pulled, strained downward. The cables twanged at the strain, metal groaning. One of the winches’ bolts popped, the corner of it tilting up. “I WILL FLAY YOU ALIVE FOR THIS!”

Lucifer stomped down. Blood and little tongues of fire spattered from the ball of his foot as the cement cracked. His voice went rough, deeper vocals winding into a monstrous tone. “I WILL PLUCK YOUR EYES OUT AND FILL YOUR SOCKETS WITH HOT LEAD!”

Another bolt popped from a winch, snapping the front of the contraption upward. The wing struggled down, straining against the weight. The fire flared bright beneath fissures in the skin, crackling down his chest. The wing flailed for freedom with heavy beats of hot air. “IF I FIND YOU IN HELL, I WILL PULL YOUR INTESTINES FREE AND LET THE HELL FLIES NEST IN THEM!”

He jerked his frame downward. Blood and flame dripped from where the cables pierced him, like melted plastic on fire. The cement cracked under his foot again. His hair was gone, a deeply scarred scalp with dark red skin in place now. Smoke rose from the blindfold. “DAMN YOU, CAIN! I WILL KILL YOU! WHEN I GET FREE, I SWEAR! I WILL…!” His voice cracked.

Lucifer scraped his foot on the cement, straining for leverage he couldn’t gain. As viciously as he struggled, the bonds held. His feet scraped against broken floor, but he could gain no purchase, couldn't use enough of his weight. The Devil was realizing the futility of it, yellowed teeth no longer biting together in rage, but raw pain. His darkened frame was shaking violently from the strain.

“I will…! I swear…! Why!” A choked sound fought from his throat, and he seemed to collapse on himself. The red, rough skin remained. The blindfold smoldered still, but his struggles became defeated. The wings trembled one final time before the weight of the winches won. The heavy machinery fell back onto the cement with a jarring clang, and the wings were pulled taut in their prisons. The cables rubbed on raw bone.

Chloe’s mouth moved, trying to remember how to breathe. “Holy shit,” she finally breathed.

At the sound of her voice, Lucifer sucked in a breath and held it, face jerking up. His voice was small when it came out, nothing like the roar of fury from before. “D-Detective?” He sounded broken, but so terribly hopeful. The smoldering blindfold peeled away partly. He shook his head,
freeing a tatter of burnt cloth from his eye. Alarmingly red with black sclera stared at her. He released a ragged breath. “Oh. Chloe. You’re… you’re not dead!”

“He… He shot the doctor,” Chloe said. She couldn’t pull her eyes away. There were sparks in her vision. She needed to breathe. The air was too hot and smelled wretched.

“Oh… So he didn’t… But you’re all right?”

It was still his voice, that lilting non-rhotic accent, no matter if shakily voiced. Chloe nodded stupidly.

He coughed a disbelieving sound. Then laughed. It was unhappy and wet sounding. The Devil was laughing and crying at the same time.

Chloe jumped when Pierce grabbed her elbow. “Now you’ve seen his skin.” He looked up at the cables, gave a nod and pointed vaguely with his gun. “Good to know those will hold.” He looked to Lucifer. "That, though. That's a bonus, to see what you truly are."

Lucifer opened his mouth, closed it, swung his scarred head side to side, as though he had dropped his words and sense on the ground and looked for where everything good had scattered to.

Chloe breathed too fast. She didn’t think to fight as Pierce guided her away at first. She only looked over her shoulder a few times at the Devil, crimson skinned, white and blood winged.

Wait. She couldn't go yet. He was hurt. The blindfold was damp and wisps of steam rose from tears. Her voice sounded faint even to her. "Lucifer?" Chloe tried to plant her boots. Pierce pulled, so hard she was off her cuffed feet and he had to support her weight as he dragged her out the door. "Wait!"

Lucifer lifted his devilish face just before the door closed, red and black meeting blue and white.

The look Chloe last saw was devastated.
Detective Daniel Espinoza made his way to the crime scene like a wary deer approaching a clearing. He surveyed the edges, waiting until the clusters of law enforcement were occupied to slip by, blue eyes quick to observe where and what everyone was doing.

Forensic specialists were combing the scene still. Historian and appraiser consultants were busy packing items. They had been called in specifically to help the FBI piece together the priceless artifacts on the scene and attempt to trace their origin, their possible sellers and buyers.

Daniel spotted the small woman he searched for crouched near the tuscan style pillars. His hand rubbed the back of his neck as he made his way toward her. “Anything?” He kept his voice quiet.

Ella didn’t look up. She stayed in a crouch with her goggles fixed over her eyes and tongue sticking out to one side. She was busy prying a bullet out of the little floor tiles, manipulating her tongs back and forth with her small gloved hands. "Um..."

Still no acknowledgement. Ella muttered rapidly in Spanish. At last something gave and she fell back on her small rump.

“Got the booger!” she announced happily, holding up the tongs and the squashed bullet. She swiftly looked alarmed, scrambling to her feet off the floor and turning circles as she tried to look at her rear. “Maldito! My pants are probably bleached now.” She sighed at him, shoulders and arms slumping. “I should have stolen the precision molding bar.”

Daniel gave her a slow nod. Ella jumped tracks to the main concern, her mouth forming a brief “o” and her palms up. “How's Maze? Any word from Amenadiel?”

He shook his head. “Maze is, uh, out of commission still. Sleeping off the beating Pierce’s men gave her. Linda is with her at Lux along with Trixie.” They had decided together Lux was the safest place. Maze had offered double pay for extra bouncers to watch the club floor and guard the elevator.

“Well that’s good, somewhat. Amenadiel?”

Neither of them spoke their fears. Lucifer had mentioned that Pierce seemed a little too happy about Amenadiel being absent. They both worried the Sinnerman had gotten to Lucifer’s brother. They had no real idea of Amenadiel’s last whereabouts, and looking in his usual haunts had turned up nothing.

“Jeez.” Ella looked down now as well, allowing herself a moment of depression.

Daniel cleared his throat. “So, what about the…” He twirled a finger in a circular motion to indicate the round room.

She immediately perked up. “Oh yeah, I figured out some stuff!” The tongs were dropped to the floor while her gloves snapped off, wrapping around the bullet to tuck neatly in her skinny jean’s pocket. “Where to start… Right here!” She grasped Daniel by his coat shoulders and tugged him to the center of the room. Daniel stood, uncomfortable, sure it would draw attention to himself. Ella was far from clandestine, not even lowering her voice as she turned, spreading her arms upward. “So get this! Three guys up top, right in between the ladies.”

Daniel looked up to stare at the statues guarding the mezzanine railing. Ella pointed with a finger gun to the left. “Bang bang with a 9 mm over here.” She mimicked holding another gun waist high “Jj-jj-jj-jj!” with a Ten-9 here in the middle, and up here on the right? She dropped her pointing arm, grimacing with a side nod of her head. “A bad tempered HK UMP.”

She turned quickly on heel, pointing with two fingers at Daniel’s feet. “All pointed here. But see the spot you’re on? No bullets there! I got ricochets pinging off here and over there. I got fire spray leading right up to here, a tiny bit of warped trajectory two inches up, but right there? Nada!”

Daniel barely got a look at the small tile craters. The tiny forensic scientist had circled behind him, the detective spinning dizzily to keep up with her. She crouched on the ground, arm up at an angle right at Daniel’s throat. “And these holes over here? Shot right aboooout here, so!” She jumped back up to her feet, standing on her toes and pushing atop his shoulders. “They would have hit the head of anyone standing. So, if you get down some…”

He went, bewildered to just his knee. “Further!” Ella cheerfully ordered. He dropped down to sitting on one heel. “Perfect! About that high, and,” She made a wide circle with her arms. “About this wide!”

“… What was?” Daniel asked, blinking up at her and trying to keep up with her swift dialogue.

“Whatever was here!” Ella stated excitedly. “My guess? Some big chair! Or-or-or some fancy antique rounded desk made outta heavy wood. Maybe even a vanity? I don’t know. But the goods news is that there was definitely something here aside from two people.”

“But…” Daniel swallowed thickly. “How can you know?”

Ella grinned eyes sparking with enthusiasm. “Over-penetration, Dan! Our mean tempered ‘ump’ spit .45’s! As many that pelted this area, we’d see some slowed bullets here, so at least some tile nicks. So something sturdy had to be here to stop a hoard of bullets.”

Ella spun on her heel, hands landing on her hips. “And whatever it was? It isn’t here. And that! Well…” She quieted. “That’s the weird thing.” Ella pulled in a deep breath and blew at the fall of bangs that had dropped too far over her goggles.

Daniel got to his feet, glad to be off the hard floor with his knee. “But on the phone you said they dropped a… a…” He tried to recall her exact verbiage. “A kiddie pool’s worth of hydro and oxy
bleach. That means a lot of blood clean up.”

“Oh, they did! Right here in the middle so it spread everywhere, and then upstairs, too. It was one heck of a quick and sloppy job, but gotta admit it was pretty darn effective. Point is, if Chloe and Luce were here, they might still be all right. Especially considering at least one person got gunned down on the stairs, likely one of our three shooters. Ballistics guy is over there trying to figure it out. Area was heavily scrubbed.”

"Infighting?" A doubtful look was cast at the stairs.

Ella shrugged. "Couldn't tell ya. Point is, they might have been cleaning up after someone else entirely down here, or maybe just injuries.”

They both knew that it was unlikely, but right now there was no proof that his ex-wife and her crazy partner had been murdered. It had to be enough to keep going on for now.

Ella shook her head, looking over the scene. "Professional criminals, man. Rushed, but good, and out there somewhere with my weird shaped mystery furniture.”

Daniel’s thoughts twisted darkly. “Which means they probably had to take it with because there was too much evidence on it. Maybe something with cushions they couldn’t get blood out of.”

Ella turned quickly, eyes wide as she leaned forward to take his wrist. “Hey, hey.” She spoke both soft and urgent. “We agreed we’re not going to think like that. Let me show you something else.”

She tugged on his wrist, leading him over to where she had been digging into the tiles. “See this hole here? It’s not at an angle someone from the balcony could hit. Too sharp downward.” She aimed her finger gun down two feet in front of her. “Someone shot about here. So what’s that tell ya?”

Daniel’s eyes lit. “That’s not a shot you miss. That’s a threatening shot.”

“Exactly. And up here?” She pat just shy of touching the pillar with her hand. “Not near the heavy clean up like on the stairwell wall. Plus…” She winced, chin tucking as she looked at the bust where it’d rolled to a damaged stop and the larger fallen statue. “Someone knocked those over while here, in that direction. But guess what? Zero cleanup there.”

Daniel stood at her side, looking down at the broken statue. “So maybe one of them was right here, stepped there... But no blood trails.”

“Correctomundo. So I’m going to hope that both of them just got pinned here and are still okay. Well.” She made a smile as though her teeth hurt. “As okay as you can be when in criminal hands and your friends have no idea where you are.”

Daniel didn’t respond, grim and silent as he stared ahead. What if they weren’t okay? What if they had been marched out only to be executed at a place that suited Pierce’s convenience? What if Chloe was hurt, being hurt, and he was missing the clues necessary to find her? How could he possibly tell Trixie she’d never see her mother again if he failed here? How, when he couldn’t bear it either? Not so soon after Charlotte… Charlotte…

Ella pushed her goggles on top of her head and leaned toward him, trying to catch his eye. “Hey… Hey, you going down the dark path in there, Dan?” She thumped her palm on his shoulder solidly, as though just trying to wake him from a nap. “Told you we’re not having that. Until it's in our face, they're alive and well. We’re going to find them,” Ella assured him. “Chloe and Lucifer. You’ll see.” She looked skyward. “Putting that request in there right now, Big Guy. You want off
rocky ground? Here's your chance.”

Daniel couldn’t help but huff at that. His face barely managed the shadow of a smile. It took too much effort to pull his mouth into any semblance of happiness right now.

“Man, I do wish those two were here, though. They always pieced together clues. Even Lucifer, as much as he messed with the evidence.” Ella crouched down by the broken statue. “You know how much money they said the stuff is worth in here? Tons. I bet even this broken lady warrior thing with the tiny bra is worth a big chunk.” She reached down and picked up part of the carved hand that had broken free. “And he’s not here to juggle any of it like he… uh…” Ella turned the broken piece in her hands, falling quiet.

“Detective Espinoza!”

Dan looked over his shoulder to see who approached. The fed. Of course. Daniel turned more fully, his weight shifting on his toes in absent minded preparation for a confrontation. The man approaching them was older, brown hair greying at the temples, spectacled with heavily lidded eyes. He stood some inches shorter than Daniel, with a thicker middle under his suit jacket and jeans.

“Agent Carney,” Detective Espinoza greeted, not bothering to hide his irritation.

“You were told to go home. This case is too close to you, and it’s in federal hands now.” There weren’t any threats in the man’s mannerism. He was being candid.

Daniel tucked his hands in his coat pockets, shrugging. “I know what I was told, but being at home…”

“If not home, somewhere.” The man took in Daniel’s raw eyes and rumpled appearance. The next statement was no less firm, but quieter. “But you can’t be here.”

Daniel met the man’s gaze, stubborn fire kindling, the want to push back. The agent remained undaunted, waiting for him to act. Finally with a jerk to the side, the detective stormed around the agent toward the exit.

Agent Carney looked down at the forensic scientist patiently. “And you, Miss Lopez.”

“I’m just here to help? No? … Right, right! I’m out of here, too.” She stood up, folding her arms and walking around him. Ella sucked in a breath when the FBI agent held an arm out to bar her path. She stared up at him with her wide, dark eyes, mouth slightly open. The FBI agent was still looking straight ahead rather than at her “The bullet?

“Bullet? Oh, yeah, the bullet. Ha! Yeeeeeah, that bullet.” She fished it out of her pocket, still wrapped in her glove and held it out, lips pursed. The FBI agent took it. He nodded to her before turning away.

Ella bounced in the spot, hugging herself while she had a swift inner debate, then called out. “I’m pretty sure that bullet will match with Charlotte Richard’s case.”

The FBI agent stopped, turning to her with a furrowed brow. Ella kept her arms folded over her chest, shifting her weight nervously. “Pierce used a SIG-Sauer P226 SL Sport II, with, you know, 9mm. I’m just saying you should look into it.”

“I believe I will. Thank you, Miss Lopez.”
“Heh. No problem.” She lifted one hand to wave a little, turned, and fled from the scene.

She caught up to Daniel’s angry strides in the parking lot, jogging to his side and speed-walking to keep pace. “Hey! So, we should go to my lab now while everyone is busy here!”

“They won’t let us near this,” Daniel said angrily, unlocking his car door. “We know those two best, and they won’t even share what they know. We should have handled things ourselves.”

Ella shook her head. It made her pony tail sway frantically. “It’s not like we had a choice. We couldn’t just keep Barrow tied up at Lux forever.”

“I know,” Daniel said, the frustration at his inability to be on the case openly bleeding. “But as soon as we turned him over and we explained Pierce’s involvement, the feds came in and took away any chance of us finding them. Who knows what they’re going through?”

“Yeah, I know, I get it!” Ella’s eyes were still too wide. She pursed her lips, looking guilty as her gaze falling to the side. “Which is why I… uh, I pulled a Lucifer.”

“You… A what?” Daniel squint at her.

Lopez squirmed, pursing her lips. At the same time she was suppressing a smile. “Thereeere might be part of a lady warrior’s hand stuffed down my cleavage.”

Daniel blinked. “Say again?”

“Well, I was just looking at it, right, and then I saw a dark spot, and sure enough, when I turned it over, there was a whole glob on the thumb of it.” She looked at him, practically vibrating as she tried to whisper. “Dan, it was missed. By Pierce and the Feds. I mean, worse case, it’s not someone we want it to be, but if it’s one of their thugs, maybe they have a record we can use to track them down!”

“Ella…” Daniel stared at her. The next second he wrapped her up in a bear hug, almost picking her up.

They had a chance, a slim one, but it was something, and the detective needed any scrap of hope he could get.

“Ow!” Ella unexpectedly protested, tapping at his shoulder quickly. “Nope, not a good hug! Statue hand is now digging into soft places!”

“Sorry,” Daniel said, releasing her. He looked around quickly. He didn’t see anyone watching. “Get in the car before anyone thinks we’re up to more than they already suspect.”

"Okay," Ella agreed, scrambling to the other side. "But this time? I pick the music."
Lucifer hurt.

His body, of course, felt wretched.

Emotionally, he felt wrecked.

The door clanged shut, and all he could hear was his own rough breathing. He was alone.

The whiplash dealt to his feelings unsettled everything inside, like a house picked up by a giant and dropped to its random ruin. It made it all the easier for the fallen angel to ignore the distress his nerves were desperately trumpeting in favor of wrestling his inner turmoil. His inner walls, already far too brittle before, were casualties he was trying to rake back into place for some shelter from what felt like an open wound inside.

Fear had been whispering in him since Chloe had been shot in the bullet proof vest. He’d been anxious with how powerless he was and how little he knew of her well-being since Pierce had dragged him here. Now the fear sat like a beast in Lucifer's chest and squeezed his heart like a cat’s teeth on a frantic bird. He’d felt his world break this time when the shot fired and a body hit the floor.

Then he’d embraced the monstrous part of himself and it had howled. The Devil had burned and wanted to burn the world with him, wanted to rip the person responsible to rags and repeat until the grief started to drown him.

Hearing Chloe’s voice again had left him reeling, so relieved and still not quite believing his world wasn’t as broken as it was.

Except that… it wasn’t unbroken. The pieces were not fitting together. They were jagged and destabilized. The Detective had seen it, seen him, and it left him panicking.

She’d looked shocked, far too wide-eyed. He wasn’t sure what else she’d been feeling. Perhaps nothing other than being stunned at part of him the Detective had never seen. He wanted to take the last hour back, take time and cut it away like editing film from her memories, but there was no way to fix what she saw.

The Devil looked past the ragged edges of the burnt blindfold down at his chest. The sharp
industrial lights emphasized every skin flaw clinging to him. He was still a muddy red, so deeply fissured with asymmetrical scars, a body of craggy damage and monstrousness. Lucifer closed his eye, swallowing the pain swelling in his throat. There was a time he’d embraced this appearance. Oh, not at first, but when in a land of demons to torment the guilty-feeling, the visage had its advantages. So he’d been angry when he thought his devil face had been stolen. After all, it was his, and he used it well when someone needed to know what they were dealing with.

But not the Detective. Not Chloe. Not the person who’d taught him how dismantling a soft kiss could be, how it could hook into his core and make him believe there was something redeemable there after all. There must be, if someone as good as the Detective could touch him with such accepting tenderness. Surely?

_I don’t want to be the Devil anymore. Not around her._ Lucifer focused on the burnt skin, tried to will it away, but everything still bubbled too close to the surface. When Lucifer opened his eyes, there was still crimson greeting him.

_Calm down… Push it away. Into the back where it doesn’t matter. Think._ He honed in on the singular problem of putting away the mask, fortifying breaths taken as he straightened. A wave of dizziness derailed his concentration, and he had to take time to simply breathe before rallying himself with a spit of anger at his incompetence. This shouldn’t be so damned difficult! He needed to get it together.

Lucifer thought he had grasped how this worked from Amenadiel.

"What if He wants us to judge ourselves? So my wings, your wings, your devil face… Brother, what if we’re the ones who control it?"

Lucifer really wanted to control it now. Unfortunately, it was controlled by how he felt, and that… He huffed angrily, jerked in frustration against his bindings. The wave of pain was enough to knock him breathless, but he dove into it like a wave at sea, letting the injuries fan the blaze in him to something white hot, pulling on his arms and wings as his spine arched. Pierce had deserved a monster. Chloe did not. He wouldn’t be one.

"I’m talking about the rules of Heaven and Hell, Luci. It’s all based on the human subconscious, what they think they deserve."

Lucifer stared up at the ceiling, even as his vision darkened on the edges. Fighting himself was so tiring. Fighting what everyone thought he was left him feeling scraped inside. The lights glared, and he felt his arms sting viciously as the steel cords bit into cuts when he clenched his fists. _I need to focus on what I deserve, not what everyone has told me I deserve. Try to rid of feeling guilty for what I don’t deserve._

What would Linda say? He tried to imagine her asking him those uncomfortable probing questions, trying to get him to identify the storm he kept shuttered away inside. She would ask him to identify what he felt. _What’s unfair? What do I feel is unjust?_ He narrowed his thoughts on that.

“I don’t deserve to be everyone’s villain,” he whispered. “I don’t… _I never wanted to be._”

_But you’ve done things_, the other part of his mind supplied. _Bad things. You are the Devil._

He remembered the feel of Chloe’s hands on his face, the earnestness of her blue eyes as her truth cut all his defenses down. _”No, you’re not. Not to me.”_ Then she had kissed him, and he’d felt such a mix of scared, want, and… warm. Hopeful.
Lucifer swayed when the heat left him, slithering away to leave his skin clammy and cold. The arch angel pulled in gulps of air, hanging on to consciousness narrowly as he opened his eye to look down.

Smooth, warm beige skin. Blood and bruises painted it, dark on a pale, living canvas, but the rough hide of the Devil was gone. He huffed a triumphant laugh, then listed to the side when he couldn’t keep his balance. The arch angel tried to regain it, pushing his feet down with a grunt to take his weight off his agonized wings.

His feet screamed, shooting breathtaking pain up his legs. Lucifer dropped again with a gasp that ended in a bit out cry when his wings were jarred by his falling. Dark spots float in his vision. The arch angel looked with his limited view down at the broken cement floor. His throbbing feet were bleeding and large splattered drops glistened in a sanguinary mess at his heels. He stared dumbly, still dizzy and unable to think until the black sparks receded some. He then tilt his head and leaned the little amount the cables would allow, trying to get a look at his arms.

He could see the tip of his elbow and fingertips. Even as he watched, another dark drop grew heavy and round off his fingertips and pattered onto the broken cement.

“Huh…” The utterance sounded distant to himself, vertigo carrying sense of up and down away as his thoughts slipped over each other like broken gears. Things hazed in and out, and he retreated into it at last.

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Hours passed, time crawling by on swells of trauma and aches.

The fallen angel was still in a pain haze when the door opened again. He didn’t respond, just stayed as still as he could. Every time the discomfort turned into a lance of pain some where he could no longer stand he would shift to a new position, get nauseated by his own nerves shouting out damage, and go back into the fog of too much and yet not enough to fall unconscious. He just stared ahead, eye unfocused, watching blurs move past his field of vision and listening to the murmur of voices.

The blindfold coming off his face was unexpected. He blinked rapidly as his swollen, unadjusted eye twinged at the bright light. The person in front of him was the tall, bearded one who usually gave orders in Pierce’s absence. He had a medicine cup full of liquid in this thick fingers. “If I try to give this to you, will you bite?”

“Ihsh…” Lucifer cleared his throat, voice arid. “Is it drugs?

“Yes.”

He barely had a voice, more rattles of air when he spoke. “Then your fingers are quite safe.”

“All right then. Bottoms up.”

Lucifer didn’t need told twice, guzzling the bitter liquid in a single swallow and even licking at the cup once before it was pulled away. It didn’t taste good at all. He very much didn’t care at the moment, so guzzled the next two miniature cupfuls with just as much eagerness. The moisture felt good on his throat, if nothing else.

“Give that about twenty minutes. You should start feeling it.”

Lucifer managed a grin, despite the protest in his cut lip. He then attempted to pull his challenged
attention to the proceedings around him, watching curiously as two goons he didn’t know the
text-link for busied themselves at one of the tables with first aid materials. The slide of thick
medicine hit his stomach, distracting him with the nausea as his stomach clenched, empty and
hungry.

He almost kicked when the blindfold came over his eyes from behind. The order-giver who had
just drugged him uttered a quick “Knock it off,” in response to his surprised jerk, continuing to
fasten the cloth.

He cleared his throat before speaking. “Just surprised.” He was glad his voice was much more
flippant sounding and smooth again. “…My safe word is ‘Halo’, by the way.”

“Cute.” The guy’s tone indicated he didn’t think it was cute at all, tying off the knot with a rough
yank. “G, where are the bolt cutters?”

Lucifer lift his chin. “Uh, what are the bolt cutters for?”

“Right here, L.”

Ah, so the one who seemed to give out orders was called L. That was good to know. He was
currently approaching behind him, supposedly with the bolt cutters, speaking as he went. Lucifer
did not like how immobilized and trapped he felt.

“So, I’ll make you a deal. You’re the Devil, right? So deal’s are your thing?”

The night club owner decided he liked it much better when he explained to others that deals were
his thing. His answer was a curt, “Quite.”

“Then I will get these off your arms, and you behave, keep your blindfold on… Or I will crank
those winches so you can’t touch the floor at all and your wings are about to pop off. Deal?”

“Oh, well, let me think…”

“Hey, B, why don’t you crank that winch up a few-.”

“Deal, you humorless tosser,” Lucifer grumbled.

“That’s what I thought,” L said.

Metal scraped against the cables and along his arms. The metal snapped and the cables loosened
immediately. Lucifer’s strained shoulders came forward on their own. His shaky gasp was hardly
dignified. Oh, that **stung**.

“Meds hit yet?” L asked, even as Lucifer started to slowly work his shaking hands in front of
himself, the muscle protesting like stone.

“Unfortunately not.”

“Give it a few more, than.”

The men moved and shuffled about him. When the drug’s warmth went up his spine and the back
of his head with a numbing hand, Lucifer made an audible moan of relief. “Oh, that’s good,” he
murmured in appreciation.

“Hey, L, I’d say it hit him.”
“Let’s get this done quick then. Lower him down, boys.”

Lucifer listened hopefully. The winches whirred and clicked, and the cables started to slide him downward. He went like a limp puppet, groaning as he crumpled gracelessly onto the floor. His wings were still aloft, but now the cables were only pulling their weight alone. The medicine was making everything feel heavy. He had to work just to get his feet out from under him, which made him laugh breathily at the absurdity.

“Feeling good?” L asked.

“Vastly improved,” Lucifer said, nodding. His head was filling with cotton rather than the nag of pain. Hell’s Former Ruler decided he liked that a great deal.

“Good.”

“Mmhmm…” If asked, Lucifer was sure he responded with something witty rather than just a non-intelligible hum. He pulled a leg up to rest his arms on, the drugs causing his consciousness to start in a nose dive. He moved his hand. It felt like a flop of disconnected weight at the end of his arm. Fascinating. “Huh.. Whazz ‘at shtuff gave… there’s… In the liquor cabinet… help yo’shelf… I’mmm… ti’ed…”

He slept.
Sorry for the delay, darklings! What I was trying with this chapter wasn't working, and I finally had to do some cutting and rearranging, and voila! It finally came out just fine. I will someday learn not to force chars and scenes to do what they don't want. Someday.

Have some BAMF Chloe Decker, who takes no shit. Enjoy, little crows!

The second day of capture found Chloe in surly spirits.

Sleep had been impossible. She was sore from laying restlessly on the hard floor in the provided sleeping bag. She’d tossed and turned under the watchful eyes of guards until she’d given up a few hours ago and simply sat against the wall, legs folded in the sleeping bag for warmth. She still had the same dark gray skinny jeans, beige jacket and cotton shirt underneath, and everything felt grimy and ill-fitting.

Aside from her less than desirable sleeping conditions, her head wouldn’t stop. Crimson skin. A red and black eye.

She remembered Jimmy screaming. "You don’t get it, do you? He’s the Devil! He’s the Devil! He’s the Devil!"

The criminals that had cowered in terror when Lucifer hadn’t touched them now made so much sense.

T had entered the room, nodding to the guard that had currently been watching her in greeting. The other guard got up to leave, stretching his back while T walked further into the room. The detective looked with bleary eyes at the large cup of flavored steamed milk and espresso T was leaning down to offer her.

"What time is it?" Her voice sounded rusty. There was no sun in this room, and she had no watch and no phone. She suspected the latter had been destroyed. *I had pictures of Trixie on there I hadn’t downloaded yet…*

"Around 10:30. There’s some breakfast sandwiches if you want," T offered. "Or we can get you something else. Just has to be generic pick up food."

"Let me… just see how this goes down first," she mumbled. She took it and set her lips to the coffee, testing to be sure it wasn’t scalding before pulling more into her pasty mouth. Not brushing her teeth was going to wear on her nerves.

"Sure," T said. He was lankier than M, bonier in the bridge of his nose and brow and favored a leather jacket. His mannerism was like someone who was once a well-meaning kid from poor straits who justified doing the less-than-savory to get by, and it was now too saturated in his life in his mid-thirties. He slumped deeply into his seat by the door of the decrepit locker room that Chloe had been shut in since she last saw Lucifer, leg bouncing on his toes.
He frowned when he saw Chloe scowl briefly at the cup. "Not to your liking?"

"No, it’s exactly to my liking," she explained with distaste. She continued glaring at the floor near T’s feet. *Damn Pierce.*

She did not like having the reminders of their intimacy, not when he had this whole other side of him he had kept from her. She hadn’t known him well at all, while she’d been so open with him. It was an angry thorn in her chest, and thoughts of their relationship made something sick and hard knot in her gut.

The man she’d almost married was torturing the person she had come to trust more than anyone, despite his delusions and egocentricity. Except her tall, rich, playboy partner wasn’t so delusional, and he’d been *exceedingly* honest with her.

She thought again of stretched, bloody wings, dark red skin with deep scars, and a single black and red eye boring into her.

Chloe shook her head just as quickly, shoving the image aside and focusing on the next drink of coffee. It had become like a crime scene to her, the ones that she looked at too long with too much emotion, so the images would flash up unbidden when she let her thoughts stray. There had been no sleeping without seeing how her partner had been pinned up, seeing how blasé he was about his many injuries and situation, and seeing that burn away to… someone else she hadn’t met yet, someone enraged, murderous, and not human.

Except for the look in the streaming red and black eye as she’d been pulled away. He had metal cable through his wings and other injuries and he had mostly seemed annoyed with. But that look as she was leaving had screamed pain and fear far deeper than could be inflicted in his skin.

It’d be much easier to figure out what she had seen if Lucifer had kept with rage and fire and hate. Instead he’d crashed emotionally in front of her and that was so… *human* of him. It muddled everything when she tried to sort what she knew about the Devil, her partner, and this recent image of him into the growing revelations. How did she quantify this new side of Lucifer with the one she knew?

He’d tried to tell her. She remembered his dark eyes glittering down at her on the balcony, trying to get her to understand. "I’ve been avoiding dealing with things in the present like… how I feel about you. I was afraid. Afraid that you’d want me ‘cause you’ve only seen certain sides of me. That if you saw all of me—knew all of me—you would run away… The other side of me, it’s bad. It’s monstrous even. But you wanted the truth, and you deserve the truth. Right now I can’t show it to you, so I’m just going to have to tell you. Detective… Chloe… I am the Devil."

"Fuck…" she mouthed, thumping her head lightly against the wall.

"… Not settling well?" T asked, offering what was supposed to be a sympathetic grimace.

"It’s fine, just…” She scratched at the nape behind her ear at a wispy bit of hair tickling there absently. "This all has me out of sorts. You can’t tell me at all how Lucifer is doing?"

"Nope." T slumped even further in his seat, brows raising and his eyelids lazy, as though daring her to try to get him to sympathize and spill information he was strictly ordered to say nothing about.

"Unhelpful," Chloe announced peevishly. She pointedly looked away from T at the wall and continued turning information in her head, sips of her coffee taken absently.

T stood up when Pierce entered. Chloe didn’t, glaring over the top of her coffee’s plastic lid while
sipping.

"I… gather you didn’t sleep well," Pierce noted.

Chloe raised an eyebrow in response before draining her coffee. She set the empty cup to the side and looked at him impatiently.

Pierce looked at T, who just offered an upturned palm and a grimace, as though to say Chloe’s attitude was nothing he had done. "Let’s go for a walk, Decker."

Chloe narrowed her eyes at him. “You know? Offense meant, I don’t want to walk with you.”

“Too bad it wasn’t a request, then.”

So Chloe had put on her ankle boots over her unclean socks and allowed the guard to cuff her hobbled again while Pierce watched on patiently. They left her hands cuffed in front of herself this time. That left her feeling a little more stable when they started down the hall. The way was lit only by Pierce’s cell phone. It made the place just all the more abandoned feeling as the halo of light cast dark, skittering shadows among the trash.

They didn’t speak as they went. When they reached a juncture in the hall, Pierce called a number and put it on speaker when it picked up. “Okay, we’re starting.”

Another man’s voice came over the speaker phone. "Go ahead boss. We’re red."

Chloe frowned, walking with her shortened steps along with Pierce and trying to figure out what he was doing. He was focused on whatever app was running on his phone. “Five more meters,” he finally stated when they’d gone a short distance down hall.

There was a pause on the other phone, then, “Red.”

He walked on. Chloe still said nothing, listening to the other side of the phone. The person didn’t sound muted, from the soft sound of static, but it was quiet.

“Five,” Pierce stated.

The pause again. “Red.”

“I’m going to go fifteen then.”

Chloe’s brow pinched when Pierce muted the phone and then kept along with her slow pace down the hall.

“You’re figuring out perimeters,” she realized aloud.

“It’s beneficial to know how far away you have to be from him to affect him.”

Chloe made a small sound of disgust. “So you can keep us as far apart as possible while still hurting him?”

“So I can detain him.”

“What you’re doing is torture,” Chloe stated, voice hard.

“He’s done far worse to others.” Pierce sounded like he might shrug. “It’s not like he’s an innocent.”
Chloe thought about how he’d grinned at her with a sheen of blood on his teeth. “I’m fine, Detective. Trust me, these people are amateurs.” She rapidly shook her head. “So you’re just cutting into him in the meanwhile just to see when he stops bleeding because you’re such a humanitarian.”

Pierce didn’t speak again until after the next check in. ”Red” came back from the man on the other side. He muted the phone before speaking again.

“Look, Chloe.” Chloe hated that he was trying to be personal. “I know that you can never reconcile with me. You’re too good of a person to be with a criminal. Now I was going to put all of it aside, had retired the Sinnerman, even, but knowing what you know now? I’ve thought about it. You were right to call off the engagement.”

Chloe flicked her eyes side to side, trying to figure out his angle. “Excuse me?”

Pierce wasn’t looking at her, continuing to watch the app on his phone. “I just think the reason you called it off wasn’t a good one.”

She lifted her chin some. “Because you run an underground criminal organization while pretending to be someone else?”

“How, that would have been right. The wrong one was Lucifer.”

Chloe glared down at some debris lit by the halo of light, stepping around it with her limited mobility. “…You think I dumped you for Lucifer.” She was far from impressed, even though something in her belly swooped that it had not been wholly inaccurate. Still, neither was it fully the truth.

“You have unresolved feelings for him. I get it. But here’s the deal. The circumstance means I can’t always protect you from him. You two are going to be forced into close quarters for a long time, and you need to understand what you’re caged with.”

Chloe’s mouth fell open, even as he pulled her to a halt and unmuted the phone to check in. ”Red still,” answered back, and he muted the phone again.

“You think I need protection? From Lucifer. While you imprison me. Away from him while he’s being tortured.” Every statement was disbelieving.

Pierce shot her a provoked look. “It’s not as though I like this situation, Chloe.”

“You were ready to kill me yesterday.”

“Only if I had to, and you would have gone to heaven. There’s no real harm in that.”

“How, for my daughter, my mom, and Dan, who you also tried to ‘send to heaven’ in cold blood.” Her words were picking up in speed and heat, as well as her steps. Pierce looked up, as though searching for patience while she went on. “But your life is so much more precious, that you were ready to murder me for it, someone you supposedly loved. You’re that scared of Hell?”

Pierce gave a negative jerk of his chin to his side. “I’m not going to Hell. I don’t feel guilty.”

Chloe looked at his dimly-lit profile while he checked in, and another “Red” came back. She walked slower, still observing him closely. He wasn’t looking at her, despite being aware of her stare.
“…You’re not sure.” Pierce glanced at her, looking uncomfortable. “You know you’ve done a lot wrong, and now you’re wondering if you’re going to doubt when your time’s up and end up where you don’t want to be. You’re not sure you’re innocent enough.”

“I’m pragmatic. Everything I’ve done was only to ensure-.”

“You killed Charlotte.”

The hard statement was like a heavy stone dropping in water, sending silent ripples between them. Both had stopped with Pierce turning to face her. The former police chief was trying to stare her down. The detective didn’t budge, just hated that her eyes blurred and she could feel her nose starting to run.

“That… was an accident. The bullet was meant for Amenadiel.”

_God, Amenadiel_… Who she realized must also be an actual angel. The Detective closed her eyes, shook her head briefly with brows high. “How does that make anything better? You realize that wouldn’t help you into Heaven at all?”

“You ever play Hearts, Decker?”

They were back to Decker again, the first murderer keeping emotional distance again.

“Not really.” Lately her card games had mostly consisted of Go Fish, Uno, and Phase Ten.

Pierce motioned ahead and they started walking again, turning down another hall. Chloe could see faint light ahead. “Normally the name of the game is to avoid taking points each round. The person with the least points in the end wins. Following?”

“Somewhat,” she agreed, doubtful where this was going. They turned into a hall that had windows. She observed the slant of light through dirty, half broken squares of glass. There was a hiss of traffic, but it was distant.

“If you are dealt a really bad hand, the best thing you can do is try to take every point possible that round and not let the other players take any. If that happens, you end up with zero points, and everyone else has to take 26. It’s called shooting the moon. One moment.” He stopped to check in.

"Still Red, boss. This is quite a range."

Pierce didn’t answer, mute tapped again. Chloe folded her wrists together, the best she could do to come close to an arm fold with the cuffs. “So killing Amenadiel was an attempt to shoot the moon?”

“Yes. Amenadiel was God’s favorite. So I was hoping if I killed him, God would give me my curse back.”

Chloe turned that over in her mind before shaking her head. “That doesn’t make sense. If God pays any attention, I just can’t see you being awarded for killing one of his angels.” This was a conversation she never thought she’d have with seriousness, needing to keep God a fact, rather than a mere possibility.

“From what I can tell, He doesn’t bother to look closely at things. It was worth a shot, but didn’t go as planned. Now, I might not need to rely on a misdeed to keep a comfortably long lifetime.” Chloe gave him a questioning look. “Feathers,” he provided.
“You think if Lucifer’s feathers heal that they can keep you alive longer.”

“They do heal. That’s been tested.” He pat at his side where Chloe had shot him. “I’m hoping they halt the aging process as well.”

Chloe pondered on that while Pierce stopped at a door in the brick wall. It squeaked on its hinges when it opened. Bright outside light flooded through it, stinging her eyes. There were no steps leading down the two and a half foot drop to the dirt yard outside. Pierce circled his hand around the chain of her cuffs, then jumped down. He turned to offer his hand to help her.

Chloe didn’t want his help. She sat down on the edge, but before she could scoot off, he scooped her close to land easily with her feet in the clay and gravel, too close to him. At one time that easy strength of his arms had thrilled her. Now she just glared up at him with her cuffed arms barring their chests apart. Pierce was looking down at her, his blue eyes complex with thoughts and hidden emotions.

“You know Lucifer could have been out healing the sick all this time, helping people who were blind, crippled, and worse.” He started walking, which allowed her more breathing room. Chloe swept her gaze around, taking stock of the yard they were in. It was fenced with ugly gray boards, junked vehicles here and there at the edges. Abandoned somewhere with no one likely to go poking but vagabonds, then. “All that power, and instead, he set up a nightclub and indulged himself.”

Chloe was still searching the grounds to try to get an idea of where they were. The sky was bright blue with a sparse sweep of thin clouds overhead, the sun already high. Spotty patches of gravel crunched under her boots, wherever clay and weeds hadn’t overtaken the yard. “You run a criminal organization. Pretty sure you can’t take any high ground here.”

Pierce had them pause, checking in again. Still red. Chloe looked back at the building. They had gone a ways.

Phone muted, Pierce didn’t start walking, instead facing her with a considerate look on his face. “What if I changed the direction of my organization?”

Chloe was suspicious. “What do you mean?”

“I mean what if I used my resources to make the world better. My organization has a wide net. I have already taken out some of the most unsavory within it. I can use it to take out other criminal elements out there. My people are good at what they do. I could make it happen.”

Chloe squint at him like he was someone familiar, but she wasn’t sure if she knew him or not. “I’m pretty certain that there is something biblical about wrongs being unable to make things right, and you would still be holding someone and torturing them. I won’t pretend I know a lot about this, but that doesn’t scream scoring saintly points to me.”

“But it would still be something that prevents a lot of pain in the world. Come on. We both know what kind of people are out there.”

“You want to do the right thing, you would have turned yourself in like I asked you to.”

Pierce repeated the same thing he told her then. “Not going to happen.”

“Because you don’t deserve it?”

“I walked Earth for nearly the entirely of human history suffering everything imaginable. I think I’ve more than paid my dues.”
Chloe huffed an incredulous breath, looking away and starting to walk again. They were nearly to the edge of the yard before Pierce stopped and unmuted his phone once more. “Check.”

There was another pause. Two voices murmured over the results. Then, “Green, boss. I just tried pressing as hard as I could on his arm. Nothing.”

“About time. Try the demon knife.”

There was the sound of metal being picked up, a pause. “Still cuts him just fine. That’s handy. This came from that demon chic?”

Chloe frowned. “What? What demon chic?”

There was a sudden sound of chains clinking and a yelp from the man who’d been updating them and curses from another. “Detective?” The British accent identified the speaker immediately.

“Lucifer!” Chloe’s answer was loud and clear.

“D’ective! Hello, how’m you?” Lucifer sounded out of it.

“Holy shit, boss. He just woke up out of a dead sleep.”

Pierce gripped Chloe's elbow and started pulling her back to the building. Her heeled boots skid along the ground, unable to get enough purchase to stop them as they neared the door.

Lucifer continued, tongue sounding clumsy on his words. “Um moment. Let me geh’ these off.”

There was the sound of chain shuffling, then metal falling onto cement flooring.

One of the men on the other side of the phone started repeating ‘shit’ over and over in a high pitch. The other one was yelling orders at him. “Get the needle. Get the fucking needle!” There was a sound of scuffling starting on the other side.

“Lucifer, get out if you can!” Chloe yelled, even as she was hauled to a stop just outside the building’s door.

“Status!” Pierce ordered.

Lucifer’s slurred voice sounded closer. “Oh, yeh’re inna phone. D’ective? You a’ight? I’m sorry for... ehrlieh. I din’t wan’…” Metal crashed over the speaker. Loud clattering of a phone dropping drowned out everything briefly. Lucifer sounded much more distant. "D’you mind? I’m on the telly.” Someone, not Lucifer, yelled in surprise, moving rapidly away before there was a heavy whump of sound.

“Lucifer?” Chloe asked, leaning over the phone with Pierce. The scuffling had stopped.

“L, talk to me,” Pierce demanded.

"Wings are still pinned and he’s doped again, Boss. He should go down in a few seconds.”

Lucifer was still talking in the background. Chloe stayed quiet, trying to pick his words out between the louder thug’s. "I’m soh’y for what I am, D’ective. I wan’ be better, so please... Jus’…” A breath. “Chloe. Please.”

Chloe thought about the red and black eye staring at her.

The rest from Lucifer wasn’t intelligible at all, distracted, half halted sounds that bled into faint,
sleepy syllables, then finally nothing.

“Lucifer?” Chloe listened hopefully. She felt her chest squeeze. The Detective had been so sure that she could keep herself guarded, analyze Lucifer’s behavior carefully, try to decide what she could accept about her hellish partner.

That pleading made her remember how much she cared. She wanted nothing more than to go to him. Chloe listened to the silence on the other side of the phone, and just wished he’d wake up, laugh, and get them out together so they could sort everything out, somewhere safe with Pierce locked up and him not suffering while she was mostly okay.

“L?” Pierce prompted.

“He’s down again. Damn thing burns through shit fast.”

“I’ll be there in a moment. Keep him monitored.” Pierce hung up the phone and tucked it in his pocket.

When he reached for Chloe’s elbow, she jerked her arm from him. “You can’t keep doing this to him, Pierce.” She kept her teeth bared at him angrily. “You can’t keep him in critical condition and overdosed!”

Pierce raised his hands. “Just get back in so I can go see what happened. I’ll get it sorted.”

Chloe looked at the open door and the two and a half foot height to climb. Then looked back at him, jaw set and blue eyes fierce on his. “You want to get points for heaven, you have to do better than this.”

“I’m…” Pierce looked away, some of his frustration evident. Then he looked at the sky. “He’s not human, Decker. He doesn’t even feel things like-.”

Chloe didn’t realize she was punching him until she heard the sock of her knuckles on his face.
Hello, darklings. Well, this one turned out longer than I thought it would. I'll have to add the "Lucifer needs a hug" tag. Again, feel free to help me fix any errors. I know I'm a bit cross eyed at this point.

Next chapter is a break, and after that we finally will have Chloe and Lucifer face to face again. Hope you enjoy, owlets and batlings!

Someone was shaking his shoulder. Lucifer didn't like it. He was enjoying his haze still, old memories turning in his head.

“Maze,” he grumbled. “Stop it. I’m sore.”

Unfamiliar voices float around him.

“Who’s Maze?”

“Short for Mazikeen. The bitch who killed a bunch of our guys.”

“Ah. That was a mess.”

“That’s what happens when you underestimate someone.”

Was that Cain? He thought that might be Cain. Lucifer was terribly thirsty. He should probably get up and find some wine. Or whiskey. Whiskey had a nice burn on the way down. That would clear his throat, and maybe numb the pain that was nagging at his senses stronger the more he woke up. His wings were the worst, stretches of agony off his back.

“Any word on B?” Pierce again.

“He’s got some gnarly bruises and a concussion, but he’ll be fine, Boss.”

“He was lucky.”

A younger voice this time. “Damn. See, that’s why if I had a superpower, I’d go with super strength.”

“Not me,” someone new piped in. Lucifer was just now starting to follow the conversation some, realizing his discomfort was not from some wildly kinky night that involved some demon forged instruments. His head was pounding when he opened his eyes enough to see pairs of shoes in various states of class and cleanliness standing some eight feet away. He was also aware he was on his knees, and his hands were bound in front of himself.

“Why not? You saw him. Threw B like he was nothing.”

“Yeah, genius, and look at how many bandages this guy has on him. Strength isn’t worth anything if you throw a punch too hard and fracture your arm.”
“Invulnerability, then?”

“Yeah, sure, as long as I can’t drown or any of that.”

“What about flying?”

“Children,” Lucifer chastised. “I’ve a rather intense headache. Would you be so kind as to guard quietly, thank you.”

One of them leaned down to look at him, his bland featured and balding face lowering into his field of vision. “You awake now, freak?”

“Freak? Oh, please, you wouldn’t know.” Lucifer opened one eye further to take in the man head to toe. “You’re a three, maybe four if you clean up. Definitely not my type.” Lucifer squint toward the industrial lamp lights, wishing they didn’t glare so. They were lancing his head through his eye sockets.

“H, stop being an idiot. Don’t look him in the eye.”

That was definitely Pierce. Lucifer let his gaze rove over to the other side of the room, trying to focus on where the first fratricide case sat. Pierce’s legs were stretched out in front of himself, ankles crossed. He was flipping a knife repeatedly in his hand. He looked right back at Lucifer while the men uttered apologies. When he decided Lucifer looked lucid enough, he ordered the men out.

Lucifer waited until the heavy door closed. “Quite the shiner you have there, Cain.” He studied the cut lining the edge of Pierce’s eye and the swelling bruise. It was difficult to see the details. His vision still had a fuzzy halo around it.

“Decker,” he answered simply. Before Lucifer could ask, he lifted a palm the fallen angel’s way. “She’s fine, just bruised her knuckles and wrist. The cuff cut her only a little in comparison.”

Lucifer relaxed some, as well as he could anyhow. He looked down at his hands. There was gauze wrapped and taped neatly around his forearms, and around that simple rope around the wrists and making a neat two inch knot in between. That granted him quite a bit of mobility, and that puzzled the recent Ruler of Hell.

“Yeah, that.” Pierce motioned toward him with the curved knife in his hands. “How’d you get out of the other binding? It was secured with a heavy duty combo bike chain. I closed it myself so I was the only one who knew the combo.” He sat up more, setting down the knife and pulling said bike chain off the table from where it was coiled with a wrap of chains. “Now? Totally unraveled. Nothing broken, just undone.”

Lucifer licked at his mouth, trying to moisturize the dry surfaces. He felt far too sluggish to wade these treacherous waters. “Well, it’s not fair to tell all my secrets, Cain. It would be unseemly.”

“But you couldn’t get out of the permanently clamped cable before, when you really wanted to.”

The arch angel pretended he didn’t hear the unspoken question. “Do you have any liquor about? Wine? Beer?” Lucifer was exasperated to ask. “Water?”

Pierce’s stare was a hundred miles away. Then he pulled something off the table, shiny metal glinting. Lucifer’s eyes became hungry. That was his flask, the one that he always kept in his jacket inside pocket.
“What makes a bad guy?” Pierce inquired.

Lucifer frowned, trying to think where this question might be coming from while his head was swimming with pain. “What’s that now?”

“You’re the King of Hell.” Pierce stood up. “So you know what makes a person go to Hell. So what defines a good person from a bad person?”

Lucifer laughed, head tilting down before looking up to find Pierce staring at him. His smile fell. “Oh, you seriously want an answer.”

Pierce raised his brows and nodded at him once, as though to say *Duh.*

He tried to think, shuffling on his knees uncomfortably. They felt permanently bruised at this point. It was still better than trying to stand on his self-inflicted injuries. “Well, let me think… All sorts end up in Hell, but the one thing they have in common is that they all feel guilty. They did something wrong, something bad enough, or several somethings bad enough, that they feel they must pay for it. It weighs them down, and they wind up in my realm. Some of them are aware. Some… not so much.” He spoke the last quietly, thinking over the many souls he would go to check on that were surprised to see him because he didn’t fit with their loop. They knew he wasn’t supposed to be there, but couldn’t place why.

Then some were very aware. Those were always more horrified of their Hell. *The knife pierced flesh with a wet sound that shivered up his spine. He couldn’t pry his hand off the handle, couldn’t stop it.*

No. Not now. I won’t think of that now.

He swallowed, blinking his eyes rapidly. “Um, and then, some… some are so aware, that they don’t stay in their personal hells so much. They acknowledge me and the demons that come to visit them. Usually masochists. They’re tricky. They don’t just feel guilty, but they desire the punishment. Sometimes denial is the best to offer those ones.”

“Sadistic,” Pierce muttered, shaking his head and eying the flask he held.

“Enjoyment in a job well done. My Dad had it picked for me from the start, I’m sure.” Samael… *Venom of God.*

“So it doesn’t take much to get there. How does one stay out?”

“By being good and doing what’s right, I suppose.” He shrugged, as though that held no interest for him. The movement made his wings sting anew where the bone was rubbed bare against the cable. New complaints groaned from the broken bone, reminding him why holding still was in his better interest.

“Like Detective Decker?”

Lucifer sniffed, amused. Then agreed with a nod. “Yes, like Detective Decker.” He couldn't keep the fondness from his voice. The knot between his bandaged wrists was turned for renewed study. “No duplicity in the Detective. She’s a truly good person. If it feels wrong…” He took a deeper breath through his nose. “She generally doesn’t do it.” Generally… He thought about Chloe disappearing in a closing elevator, looking wrong-footed in a way that didn’t suit her. *I’m not angry. I’m glad she showed up… She just kept me from making a big mistake.* That had hurt at the time, but he couldn’t argue.
He should really put a stop to her ideas that he could be anything good for her. He just…

The flask dipped into his vision. The fallen angel blinked, reaching for it uncertainly. Pierce just tilted his head in an inviting gesture and Lucifer took it. He hesitated, then wriggled his wrists side to side, the knots loosening and the rope sliding to the floor as he unscrewed the cap. "Is it drugged?"

"Do you care?"

"Point."

Pierce didn’t comment on his escapism trick, just walked back to the table while Lucifer took a drink. It burned in a delicious way down his throat, all the way down his sternum. He gasped noisily after, looking at the flask with appreciation. “I forgot I put the good stuff in there,” he said. Hopefully whatever was in here would make him feel improved in some fashion.

“So… Being resolute that what you’re doing is right is part of it.”

“Hmm?” Ah, Pierce was still going on about that. Lucifer took another sip, running his tongue against the roof of his mouth. His mouth still tasted funny. “Mm… Suppose that’s part of it. Being good isn’t my forte, truth be told.”

“But it’s like I said… You want to be good.” Pierce continued pacing back and forth, going to the table and picking up the knife again. “Even your job. It was a crap job, and you still wanted to do it well.”

“And here I am, taking a break from it all. I’m not sure that paints me as the devoted employee sort,” he said, irritated that he wasn’t sure where Pierce was going with this.

“Some vacation,” Pierce noted, looking at his wings.

Lucifer couldn’t help it. He laughed, which caused Pierce to quickly chortle as well. “It’s not so bad,” Lucifer said glibly. He’d fastened the cap on his flask, and now was unfastening it again for another drink, as though closing it in between swallows was mere habit that needed followed through. “There are far worse punishments out there.”

“Punishments. Yeah… Those used to be really creative. Humanity has gotten soft with how they handle crime. There used to be public spectacles made of torturing wrong-doers. Hanging, drawing and quartering, beheadings, burning at the stake, crucifying…. All entertainment for the masses.”

“Mm.” Lucifer swallowed quickly. “It’s considered barbaric now.”

“You could always tell which criminals were people who had just made the wrong turns from the monsters. I mean, the real monsters. They might scream and curse like everyone else, but they would also grin.” Pierce turned to look at him. He was flipping the knife repeatedly in his hands again. A dark curved blade. “You probably know a few like that, down there. And you… That doesn’t look like it tickles. So either wings are as sensitive as ear lobes, or you’re just one of those monsters that knows it doesn’t have room to complain and would do it all over again given a chance.”

Pierce had stepped closer. Lucifer had started to take a drink. He lowered the flask, dark eyes watching the oldest human in existence near. His gaze flicked to the knife and stayed there.

“You aren’t bothered by this because you know you deserve to be punished.” Pierce pointed the knife at him, almost playfully bouncing it.
Lucifer didn’t answer. He didn’t like the wormy feeling in his belly. He didn’t like this conversation. He didn’t like that the flask felt too heavy in his fingers. More drugs, his mind supplied. “Why do you have Mazikeen’s knife?”

Pierce pretended to not hear the question. Instead he turned the back of the blade over his thumb to examine the edge. “See, like you, I want to be good, but I actually want it for me. You want it for someone else. I also realize that I… don’t want to hurt her. But you…” He pointed the knife toward Lucifer’s eye. The arch angel leaned back from it. “I would not be condemned to offer the Devil his dues. I would happily indulge you and carve you up till you begged to be sent back to Hell. But I still care enough I’m not going to put her through that. Because you’re right.” He leaned up and away, knife going with him. “She’s a good person, and she deserves better.”

This conversation was getting away from Lucifer, was touching too many raw nerves, He couldn't hold his arms up any longer. “Maze’s knife. Why do you have it?”

“So you get to stay in one piece while I figure out a humanitarian way of doing this. I do not want you to mistake this as any benevolence on your behalf, though. This is about Chloe, and while pulling you to pieces would be far from a sin, hurting her is, and for whatever reason-.” He stopped when the flask clattered to the cracked cement floor. Pierce sighed as Lucifer watched his hands, the strange numbness in them. He crouched down so they were eye level, picking up the flask. “You can’t resist temptation, can you? That’s mixed with a paralytic poison. Not too much. Enough that you’ll behave for a few minutes. I'll send the boys back in, figure out what they can do with a bit of welding.”

Everything felt so heavy. Lucifer's body was dragging itself down, the strength leaking out of his muscles. Lucifer was used to being out of control in his ventures, but feeling his body ceasing all obedience to him was unnerving. Even breathing was taking effort.

Pierce stood up, looking down at Lucifer's wide pupils with a shake of his head.

“M-Maze,” Lucifer forced out stubbornly.

“She was only supposed to get captured and held. She's the reason I had sedatives in my car. It was to keep her immobile and out of the way while I dealt with you. But she woke up and fought to get free.” He looked away. "That should have gone differently, if she had just cooperated… At any rate, demons don't really weigh on my conscience.” Pierce's words rang with finality. "Your demon watch dog isn't coming to save you this time."

Lucifer made a hiss of denial. It was all he could manage. Not Mazikeen. She could take down anything, anyone. She has before!

Pierce leaned forward. He took his time selecting one of the smallest feathers near the wing’s bicep. It pulled free with a clip of sound. Holiness glowed softly as he pressed it to his black eye. The cut faded as the feather disintegrated. Lucifer couldn't protest. It was taking all he could to breathe around the pain in his chest. Part of it was the paralytic. The other part causing the breathing difficulty was so much worse.

The boots sounded heavy on their way to the door, the knife still flipping in his hand as Pierce left the Devil with a new, devastating wound.
Mazikeen was pissed.

It was the Friday evening after Lucifer and Chloe had walked into Cain’s trap. No one had turned up anything.

Dan and Ella had returned to where Mazikeen had escaped from. The bodies were gone and the place was picked clean of evidence. Thus it had become another scene turned over to the Feds.

They still had no clues to go on. Because the blood from the toppled statue baffled Ella and Detective Espinoza.

It hadn’t baffled Mazikeen, or even Linda. But would anyone listen to her?

It left everyone in low spirits. That just unsettled the arch-demoness’ stomach. She was missing one of her knives, the fucking Devil himself was possibly dead along with one of her favorite humans, and she had no idea what to do with the moping around her while everyone fussed that she should still be resting.

The knife thunked into the wall for the third time. Mazikeen frowned at where it had left her outstretched fingertips and started getting out of her seat. Her bones were better, and the bruises were getting there, but there was a soreness left. She didn’t like to admit it, but the humans had given her drugged ass a beating. She pulled her hell-forged knife free of the wall to walk behind the penthouse’s bar to pour herself another drink, stubbornly forcing her normal stride. She didn’t like bruises that tried to stiffen how she moved. A limber burn was always more preferable.

The 10-year old lounging on the leather couch with a set of comic books glanced her direction. As usual, that’s all that passed between them. A glance, looking away, and nothing spoken.

She blamed that on Lucifer, too. The angel had been a self-absorbed ass before, but he had been a ruler then. He was allowed to be full of himself when it meant something. Somehow a Lucifer who cared about himself and Chloe had done her more damage then the demoness had experienced emotionally in over a millennia.

It didn’t change that some of this was her fault. She didn’t like the feeling trying to crawl up her throat to choke knowing she had helped Pierce.

Guilt.

She pushed that away. Again. For the hundredth time. Demons don’t feel guilty.
Demons weren’t supposed to cry, either. She’d done that much more than she wanted to admit lately.

Amber liquid burned pleasantly as it slid down her throat. The demoness turned the knife in her hand, then threw it again. It thumped into the wall. Young, brown eyes glanced up, then back down to her comics again.

The chasm between them was leagues wide, even if they were in the same room. Mazikeen just wasn’t sure how to cross it. Demons hurt people, after all. They didn’t apologize for it. She wasn’t sure what to do about that hurt hurting her, though. She had tried to explain why she needed to go home to Lucifer. She hurt people. She wasn’t meant to be hurt by people. The demoness had just wanted to return to where things made sense again.

*Damned fucking Lucifer.*

The old Lucifer would never have been taken down by a human. Not even one as old as Cain.

She stalked to the wall, plucking the curved knife free, staring at the blade. She had served Lucifer, slavishly, for so long with her two blades at the ready. That was when he was all cutting grins, eyes dark and malevolent, his humor biting, and through and through full of fury. Hell’s fallen prince could seem so casual and jovial, but it was all a cloak over an edge of ice and fire. His spine and shoulders had been strict lines, always waiting for someone to be stupid enough to test his tenuous patience. And when they did... oh....

The last demon she could remember doing so, Mazikeen had made it suffer dearly. What had they been meeting over? Territory disputes? It hardly mattered.

What had mattered was that one of the demons had claimed Lucifer’s lack of harsh action was weak. The demon was a ghastly thing with many mouths, one large maw starting to spew disrespect and provocation. She hadn’t watched the demon at all. No. She had watched the Prince of Darkness’s eyes glitter, icy black chips that were a mix of rage and glee, and watched his smile grow till his teeth were showing. Mazikeen had seen him set both hands on a single arm of his chair, curling like falcon claws, and his shoulders had flexed.

She had grinned with him when he moved, a blur of white feathers, such heinous brightness in Hell, and red, red eyes. Mazikeen still licked her teeth at the memory of the demon’s jaw bone clattering across the floor, leaving spits of black vitae behind as the pointy toothed wedge skid to a halt next to her toe. The guttural scream from its many other mouths as Lucifer smashed it to the floor had been delicious. He had still been grinning when he’d given him to Mazikeen for three hundred years to play with.

The high demons had sat stiffly in their chairs all the while. No matter what Lucifer looked like or did, no matter how fallen, he was still an angel, an archangel, and sometimes they forgot that Lucifer was their natural predator.

Mazikeen never forgot. Then, Lucifer had been able to send a thrill of fear through Mazikeen. She had adored him for it.

Now, he was a puppy-eyed thing with mortal skin. Vulnerable, and not nearly careful enough. So damn him. Damn Cain. Damn Amenadiel with his words.

“I will always be here for you.”

Damn her for feeling so damned soft for it all.
The knife sunk to the hilt in the wall as the elevator opened.

Mazikeen folded her arms, turning to watch a weary Dan and Linda come in with groceries and takeout. Something oriental that smelled delicious. Trixie was up in an instant, relieving a few bags of the take out from Linda, which she thanked her for.

“No problem,” the young human said, setting to help her father with getting items out of bags. She wasn’t cheery, but she was eager to help.

While the father and daughter were occupied, Linda caught her eye. She nod toward Trixie, and mouthed Did you talk?

Mazikeen gave quick, nervous shakes of her head. Linda tilt the corner of her head down, brow up with that look of You need to. Mazikeen answered with eyes and fingertips turned upward. She knew. She knew. Linda sighed and shook her head.

Mazikeen looked toward Trixie. The two caught each other’s gaze again. The unhappy, deadpan look from the ten-year-old made the demoness' guts feel like a knife was twisting them.

Damn it, she was the one who twisted guts with knives. She’d done so literally many times.

Talking to a kid about the stupid things she had said shouldn’t make her feel the same.

“Any call?” Dan called from where he was gathering plates and silverware. He’d learned his way around Lucifer’s kitchen quickly during their stay.

“None.” Mazikeen stated it hard and flat, her disappointment bending into the word. “Either people are too afraid of the Sinnerman or they truly know fuck all.”

Dan shot a look toward Trixie, but she didn’t react to the language, just continued checking containers for her noodle order. Then the detective had looked as though he didn’t know whether to be glad or dismayed at this. Either Trixie was too used to it, or that despondent. It rankled the demoness anew. She was aware that she needed to be more understanding, because he was in mourning, but they needed to find Lucifer and Chloe now. Not be… emotional… about it…

Fuck.

She had the knife flipping back and forth in her hands, all restless energy seeking an outlet. She gravitated to the food, snatched something that looked like it had beef. This apparently turned out to be Dan’s dish, but she still got a few bites of it before Linda exchanged food to the correct people and navigated the two away from an argument. Fortunately for Dan, Mazikeen didn’t feel like arguing with Linda. They had reconciled, but things still felt fragile.

They were halfway through eating when the elevator door slid open for Ella. Mazikeen instantly pounced her with questions.


Ella spread her hands, eyes rolling. “Traffic cameras are still being looked into, but I got a guy to slip. Pretty sure they think at least Chloe was in the SUV. Still no word from my buddy over at the university, though. Last I checked he didn’t get the sample I sent to him, so no telling why my specs were totally off. Ooh, is my sesame with extra duck sauce in there?” She gravitated toward the food, looking over all the white boxes with interest.
“You shouldn’t have sent it to him at all,” Mazikeen grouched.

“Look, I’m sorry if I got to science the bejeezus out of something before I call it angel blood, okay?”

“And no one’s heard from Amenadiel?” Mazikeen looked pointedly at Linda.

The therapist gave a helpless shake of her head. “No word.” She looked worried and tired.

Mazikeen shoveled a rude amount of noodles and beef into her mouth, chomping with her brow pinched. Her mouth was still half full when she pointed her chopsticks at Linda. “You know, push comes to shove, Lucifer can pray for him. He usually comes running. That likely won’t change even if Pierce got to him.”

Daniel clenched his eyes shut, jaw jumping in a way that said he was biting hard on saying something.

Ella blinked, still half crunching on a won ton. “You guys think angels will answer other angels’ prayers?”

“Worked before,” Mazikeen said, with distaste. Amenadiel was on her good side now, but that hadn’t always been the case. His popping in and Lucifer calling on him to use his time trick hadn’t always set well.

Linda just looked more thoughtful. “But will Lucifer? The two’s relationship has improved, but it’s never been great. Amenadiel tried to manipulate him at one point. Lucifer might not even consider him an option.”

Mazikeen scowled. “He will if Chloe is in danger.”

Dan’s chopsticks clicked against his container as he dropped them, hand over his brow. “Will you… stop. Just stop with the metaphors or whatever it is called? We need real answers.”

Mazikeen looked at Linda, then to Dan, mouth opening to give him a piece of her mind. Ella looked slightly panicked, dropping yet another wonton across the counter in favor of holding her palms out to everyone. “Whoa! Okay, so even if that’s the case, what can we do right now?”

The demoness was still scowling till she looked to Linda for support. Linda just shrugged a little, a clear indication that the matter had to be let go for now. Dan and Ella were already talking about going back to the scenes to see if they missed anything. Mazikeen huffed and took her box of food over to the couches and sat. Let them talk about what they wanted. She was waiting on a few favors, but it was clear she was going to have to get out there and start beating locals for information.

Not a hardship, as far as she was concerned.

The small weight settling by her surprised her enough she stopped eating, looking to Trixie as she settled in. Since her mother had disappeared, the youngling had been even more closed off. It made something squeeze inside Mazikeen. She didn’t look too closely at why.

Trixie was using a fork to pick at her noodles. They settled into quiet eating together, even while the other three discussed their next move. Mazikeen let it fade into the background. That knife was stirring her guts again, but it had to be done.

The words kept threatening to collapse her throat. She stared into the saucy remnants of her food
and the sorry bits left. “Look, I shouldn’t have called you a brat. I was… I was angry, but not at you.”

Trixie was quiet for a moment, chewing slow and thoughtful. She turned her brown eyes up at the demoness holding her breath for reply. “I know. Sometimes… Sometimes I can be.”

“Not really. At least nothing worse than Lucifer. I’m pretty sure he defined the meaning of the word first.”

Trixie’s lips quirked up at the edges. It didn’t reach her eyes, though. “It was pretty mean.”

Mazikeen floundered. This wasn’t working. Of course it wasn’t. It seemed like people were quick to throw her away if she didn’t fulfill what they wanted of her. “I’m mean.”

“You’re not. Not to me.”

Mazikeen looked at her. “I was that day. So…” She looked back at her noodles, trying to think how to continue. The silence stretched out. The other three were talking about looking up more on the last location of Chloe’s phone before its gps disappeared.

“Dem— People like me and where I grew up, we don’t really say sorry. If someone wronged you, they had to pay. The payment often fit the crime, or they would draw it out in service, goods…” Mazikeen frowned with a nod. “Body parts. At any rate, I feel like sorry isn’t enough. So what can I do to fix this? Is there anything?”

Trixie was quiet, looking at her food. Mazikeen was about to give up on getting an answer when the small human looked up. “There is something I want you to do.” She took a deep breath. “You find my mom. Lucifer, too. Find them and we’re good.”

Something in the demoness was set to high alert like a hound at the gate before the rabbit was let loose. “I find them, we go back to how it was?”

Trixie swallowed. “Deal.”

Mazikeen grinned. “I’ll do you one better.” She took the blade to her palm. Trixie’s eyes widened when she pulled it sharply from her closed fist and opened her hand. The cut welled up quickly with red.

The demoness met her gaze, unwavering and determined. “I will find them before this cut disappears. If I cannot, I’ll forfeit our friendship. So I will find them. Deal?”

Trixie swallowed. “Deal.”

Mazikeen grinned, abrupt and happy. Then she put aside the meager scraps in the bottom of the container and strode for the elevator.

“Where are you going?” Ella called.

“To fulfill a deal I just made. I got some people to shake. Don’t wait up.” She waved with red-painted fingers as the elevator door closed.

No more resting and waiting. The hunt was on.
Each Other's Weakness

Chapter Notes

Finally, my darling and darklings! Have a 4,000+ word chapter! I apologize that it took a while to post. I wanted to be sure I got this one right, since I've had this set up in mind since the beginning of starting this fic. But if you see any errors, please point them out to me. I'm an edit monkey, so will happily fix things!

I am so thankful for all the comments and kudos! I hope you continue to enjoy, lovelies!

Saturday night found Chloe ready to claw at the walls.

Four evenings in captivity had left the Detective feeling rough, dirty, and emotionally threadbare. After her lash out at Pierce two days ago, she had been carried over his shoulder, deposited back in the locker room, and left to be guarded and ignored. Sleep hadn’t gone well, and the men were no closer to answering her questions or letting their guard down around her.

Worse. She still had no idea how Lucifer was doing.

So when two more men joined her usual pair of guards that night to switch her cuffs around, she was jittery with both eagerness for a change and nervous what the change could mean. They cuffed her hands in front of her and hobbled her ankles, then led her with the restricted pace down the dark hall to the large room where Lucifer was held.

He was still alive.

Some of the weight lifted from her chest at that. Lucifer was not well, but he lived and he was awake, turning his blindfolded face warily toward sounds. The arch angel was standing at his full height, unable to do otherwise, his wings pulled taut by the winches and his arms bound behind him once again. A circle of menace coiled around him that had the men working in the area avoiding him and the shadow of the stretched wings. The Devil was left to shift his weight side to side and listen.

Chloe felt her insides knot at the sight of the dried blood on his bare torso, the ugly, rough stitches, and the bandages on his feet and arms. The sites around the cables that pierced his feathery limbs looked raw and angry, skin peeling back and feather-bare. Lucifer's motions and the tense, angry line of his lips screamed absolute discomfort. The shifting seemed more of a reflex, trying to escape pain that bit him no matter how he stood. Dark hair had abandoned its grooming long ago for chaotic, dark waves. His five o’clock shadow was now a five day shadow. The only good Chloe could see was that the bruise under the blindfold and his split lip looked better, as did his ribs. At least something was healing.

Chloe quickened her short steps, wanting to close the distance between them faster. Lucifer heard her, as though he’d been listening for her heeled boots. His frame turned as much as it could to her approach and his chin lifted. The jaw unclenched, the dangerous zone around him falling away to attentiveness.
“De…?” He stopped, swallowing and leaving his raspy inquiry unfinished.

She kept her tone soft. “Hey.” Chloe felt a hand wrap around her elbow, jerking her advance to a halt. She made a small sound of protest, glaring at T, but then turned her attention back to her partner. “I’m here, Lucifer.”

The arch angel opened his mouth, breath expanding his chest and leaving it slowly. He was now less rigid and on edge. He even smiled at her, though it was small and pained, dried blood cracking. Lucifer's voice was dry and breathy. “Good to hear from you, Detective.” He sounded so demure, as though shying from a coming blow.

Chloe smiled back, a nervous laugh stuttering out. “Good to see you, too. H-how are you feeling?”

It said a great deal when he didn’t cockily announce he was fine and straighten up like a soldier in a parade line. Instead he let his weight list to the other side, bandaged foot raising off the cracked cement to relieve the pressure from it. The smile had bled into something a little more sincere, warmer and so raw in its hopefulness Chloe ached for him. “I’ve certainly had better days. You?”

“Definitely. Definitely have had better days, yeah.”

The smile faded, mouth edged with anxiety. His voice was rough and quiet, words a rapid rush that gushed from him like water from a broken dam. “I apologize for before. If it hurt or frightened you, or if you can’t—If you don’t want to see me-.”

“Lucifer,” Chloe cut him off sternly. “There is nothing to apologize for. Okay?” Chloe meant it. She also wanted time to sort things out between themselves, without an audience who might gleefully use their emotional weak points against them. When he just stood there, expression blank and lips parted, she pressed. “Okay?”

“Okay, Detective,” he agreed. He clearly hadn’t expected that, opening his mouth a few times, closing it, shifting his weight again with a wince.

She looked around, trying to fathom what was going on. There were two men busy at the back wall with a welder, the sparks flashing in the already disturbing, sideways lighting. Someone was writing down instructions to another goon over bottles of drugs. Still others were packing up equipment and setting it to one side in cargo trunks.

And there was Pierce, near the far wall talking with a small, wiry guy with glasses and an assortment of body modifications. He had snake bite piercings, a colorful tattoo that disappeared down the collar of his t-shirt, and short, black hair spiked up in a purposeful mess. He had a laptop open, the screen casting a blue glow on both of their faces as Pierce leaned over the table and discussed with him. The guy kept motioning to some objects on the table, but Chloe couldn’t make them out other than they looked metal, black, and plastic, two flat and one a small tower. She tried to tug on her elbow, but T kept his grip.

“Are we moving?” she asked, throwing the question out in the open and hoping someone would answer.

“That would be my guess,” Lucifer rasped for her. He jerked when there was a loud clang in the back of the room. “If the discussion from these fucking thugs is any indication.” He pointed those words toward the nearest set of footsteps passing by.

His vehemence surprised Chloe. It was nothing like his earlier attempts at brazenness. This was angry and bitter.
“Lucifer, they haven’t been hurting you, have they? I mean, worse?”

“What?” Surprise flashed on the parts of his face she could see. “No, it’s just…” He faltered, hurt lining his face. "They… Cain said… Maze might be…” He cut off, swallowing his arid words.

“Maze? Is Maze okay?”

“I don’t know!” It sounded like he had tried to yell it, but his vocals failed so the words were just breath. Lucifer bit his teeth together in a helpless grimace. He babbled swiftly even when Chloe tried to interrupt him. “She’s so strong and good about taking care of herself. I… I tried to pray to Amenadiel, but he’s still not answering me, so I can’t even ask. But if she isn’t, it’s my fault because I wouldn’t—she tried to tell me—and she didn’t deserve—She would just be gone, Detective. Do you understand? If she’s gone, she’s gone! And I can't apologize to her for every stupid thing I did! I should have—!”

“Okay. Okay… Hey. Hey… Lucifer!” He finally stopped, picking his other foot up now, bare toes barely touching the cement. “Maze is strong. She’s an actual demon, right? Just… let’s focus on the here and now, okay?” That was hard to say when she felt her stomach bottoming out and her lungs felt caught in claws. Mazikeen had been a strange roommate, but she and Trixie had loved her all the same. All she could do was hope that what Pierce had said wasn’t the case.

“But Detective…”

“No, listen. We need to focus right now. If we don’t…” We might die. “Well… Mazikeen will kick our asses. I don’t want that. You’re beat up enough.”

Lucifer took the line she threw him to prevent his drowning after an indecisive battle of emotions on his face. He flashed teeth, in what was probably supposed to be a grin. “N-No, I guess we don’t want that.”

Chloe tried to tug on her elbow again. T looked at her annoyed. She looked more annoyed back. “Have they been feeding you and letting you rest?”

Pierce answered. Chloe hadn't even noticed him disengaging from his other conversation, and now he was only a few meters from her. “No. Easier to keep him hungry and dehydrated.”

The menace was back like freshly turned coals around Lucifer when he heard Pierce speak. His feathers bristled, pinions on his left wing spreading.

Chloe looked at tall crime boss, mixed incredulity and anger. “You haven’t given him anything to eat or drink for four days?”

“A little to drink,” Pierce corrected, entirely unconcerned.

“What about rest?”

Pierce looked at her with one brow raised, forehead crinkled. “We’re talking about a guy who tore me apart with a chainsaw for fun, Chloe.”

Lucifer snorted. “That was consensual dismemberment!” He paused. “The mess wasn’t worth it. Wouldn’t mind doing it again if the opportunity presented itself, though, Cain.”

“I wouldn’t mind putting more holes in you.”

Chloe shook her head, cuffed hands raising. “Okay, stop. Stop?”
“Sorry, Detective,” Lucifer quickly offered, contrite.

Pierce didn’t offer any such apologies. “Let’s stop wasting time. L.” The large man was over by his boss as soon as he disentangled himself from the crate inventory. “When was the last time B was heard from?”

“I’m not sure, boss. I’ll check.”

“Do that. We’ll move forward as planned in the meantime. Smudge!” The tattooed man near the far wall with the laptop looked up. “Let’s get those on and activated. Start with her.”

“Yeah, sure thing,” the smaller bespectacled man agreed. He picked up one of the smaller devices and walked toward her. “Uh, I kinda need the cuffs off on her ankles.”

Chloe squint at what he held. “Is that an ankle monitor?”

“Kinda, but this baby has a bit more hardware built into it.” He grinned at her, the spiked ends of a smiley piercing gleaming against his upper teeth. “Had to do a lot of modifying to get everything right.”

Chloe looked down as T unlocked her ankle cuff and the pierced fellow knelt. He frowned. “Uh, boot has to come off, too.”

“Why?”

“Cause they cover your ankles some, and I gotta make sure this goes on right.”

Chloe didn’t like something she couldn’t figure out. Neither did Lucifer, who sounded dismayed and suspicious. “Wait, what are you doing?” He was straight-spined again, like a hound sensing trouble.

“We’re not hurting her,” Pierce said.

“I’m hardly reassured by that,” Lucifer complained.

Chloe was just standing there, unwilling to help with this. A small crate scraped behind her. Another lackey and T pressed on her shoulders, and she sat a little hard with their ‘help’. She glared at them before looking to ‘Smudge’. “Okay, so this is to monitor where I am at all times?”

“It’s a little different, more of a perimeter device.” He unlaced her boot, helping himself in removing it. Chloe considered kicking him in the face, then decided it wouldn’t do much good. Instead she looked at the ankle device waiting by his knee. It had the wide, thick, rubbery band, but there was some sort of tubing circling it, also coated in black rubbery material. The big box curved on the inside to accommodate her leg better, but it was still a huge blocky rectangle, cumbersome looking. It had a small screen facing out and four little buttons just under it, no bigger than a watch’s.

The younger, pierced man spoke while he worked. “Now, don’t worry. I made everything as elite as possible on this.” He circled it around her ankle, cinching it in and wiggling to make sure it wasn’t too tight. The loose end insert into a compartment and tugged through to close fully. There was a click and a yellow light blinked on top. “It’ll start beeping and flashing yellow if it starts getting outside an area where it’ll go off. It’s water proof. You can still spin it around your ankle if you need to, and you can jump around all you want. Nothing is going to jar loose in this thing.”

Lucifer did not sound pleased. “And what it ‘this thing’?”
Pierce and his goons ignored him.

Chloe frowned as Smudge stood. The device hugged very close to her skin, and it was heavy. “All right. Just put in a code of your choice,” the tech instructed Pierce before hurrying back to the laptop.

Chloe looked to Pierce, eyes daggers as he knelt in front of her. The last time he’d knelt in front of her had been to ask for an engagement. She realized she hadn’t known the man she’d said "yes" to at all.

The first murderer didn’t look at her. He hovered one hand over the device to block her view and entered a code. The device clicked once, then the yellow light turned green.

The pierced tech looked up from the laptop. “That one’s a go!” Smudge picked up the second device, walking to meet Pierce nearer to Lucifer. The other device had a much more curved box on it, more like a thickening on a third of it. It was too large for an ankle, but not wide enough for any part of the torso. Chloe squint at it. It already had a yellow flashing light. “As soon as you close it, the chemical will unseal and it’ll weld itself closed. So it’s gotta be put on right the first time.”

“Probably best to drug him first, then.” The crime boss turned and called orders. “Pull the truck up! You! Go ahead and dose him!”

There were mutters of affirmative from the men, the few working on welding now putting aside tools to force open a bay door. There was a growl of a truck moving outside. The men who had been discussing doses pulled apart, one taking a needle in hand and piercing the top of a bottle to fill the syringe.

“I usually don’t complain about drugs, but why?” Lucifer’s shifting was more agitated than ever.

“Because this collar has to go on correctly, so we can't have you squirming around.” Pierce answered.

“Collar?” Lucifer leaned back, clearly dismayed, then fierce. “You will not be collarling me!”

“If we have to force you to, we will.”

The man was at Lucifer’s side, tapping the needle to relieve any air bubbles. Lucifer tilted his frame toward him as soon as he heard the man near him. Chloe opened her mouth to plead with Lucifer to not, already seeing how he coiled his body up to move, knew it after working with him for three years. It was far too late. Lucifer jumped as the man leaned forward to give him the shot, knee cracking into the man’s chin and the other foot shooting forward in the same motion to land in his chest. The man flew backwards. The needle clattered to the floor. Lucifer landed and immediately gave a short cry, choking it down to where it was only a growl in his throat, limping on his freshly stinging feet. The wings shuddered. That movement cost him dearly.

Chloe was trying to stand as soon as he had jumped. T pushed her down onto the crate before she could run forward. She 'oofed', but didn’t waste time to glare at the criminal. “Lucifer? Are you all right?”

Lucifer’s legs were trembling, and he looked like he was having to fight to keep his feet. “Yes, somewhat… Ow… Bloody hells…”

Pierce was barking at his men to check the unfortunate goon. Someone gave a thumbs up over the groaning man. “He’s alive, boss!”
“Use a feather on him,” Pierce said. He was clearly annoyed, pointing to Lucifer. “L, shoot his knees out.”

“Sure thing, boss.”

“No!” This time when Chloe left her seat, her elbow went right into T’s solar plexus with all the leg power she could muster. She ran past the bowled over man, not even thinking about it and barely avoiding twisting her ankle from trying to run on one barefoot with a heavy device and one heeled boot. She was in between L and Lucifer by the time the man had turned and pulled his gun out. “No! You don’t have to shoot him!” She backed up, putting herself closer to Lucifer to better cover him.

L lowered his gun toward the floor, looking uncertainly at the Sinnerman.

“Decker, move,” Pierce ordered.

“No. You’ve done enough to him.” She was shaking with adrenaline, pulse pumping hard as she watched the gunman closely.

“Detective…” Lucifer said it in that breathy way, the way he always did when she surprised him. Her heart was somehow not thumping hard enough to avoid flip flopping the way it always did.

Pierce’s face was stormy, blue eyes flashing. But then he bit his jaw together and nodded. “Fine. You give him the shot.”

“What?” Chloe stared at him.

“Unless you think he’ll kick you.”

They both responded at the same time. “I would never!” “He would never do that.”

“Then give him the dose, or I make sure he can’t kick the next guy who does.” He nodded toward the floor.

The detective followed the direction of his nod to where the syringe had landed. Her breaths felt too heavy to pull in properly. “I… I don’t think…”

“Don’t make me order him to shoot you in the knee as well, Decker.”

“No, no, I’ll take the dose!” Lucifer quickly cut in. “Detective, if you could…”

Smudge laughed a little. "Holy shit, you were right, man. These two are their own worst weakness." He stopped when Pierce just looked at him. "Uh, not that I'm laughing or anything." The short tech cleared his throat.

Fuck… Chloe thought over her options quickly, hoping her frazzled mind wasn’t missing anything. The last time she’d let them dose Lucifer in front of her, Pierce had stomped on his wing. But the thought of watching Lucifer get shot in the knees till he couldn’t stand at all…

She breathed out shakily, taking careful steps across the cement floor to where the syringe had fallen. Her socked foot could feel the grime of the floor, the new device pulling on her balance. She had to walk on her toe to keep her hips even as she stepped up to the needle and looked down at it.

“We’re on a clock, here, Decker,” Pierce said impatiently.
She stooped to lift it between her fingers, mindful of the needle. It was cool to the touch, the liquid still full. She stared at the gleaming bit of metal, able to see small slope of the tip into something that would easily puncture skin. Chloe wasn’t sure if it was dirty. She didn’t think it would be smart to wipe it off on her shirt, though. So instead she held it carefully away from her and turned to slowly head back to the arch angel.

The Devil was standing, alert and listening, one foot lifting shakily before planting underneath him again.

*I shouldn’t surprise him.* She thought about how quickly and viciously he had executed the kick to Pierce’s crony. So she swallowed and talked. “I’m coming up on your left, just a few paces away right now.”

Lucifer stayed quiet. Sometimes she forgot how tall he was. He could easily set his chin atop her head, and was strong enough to rip a person’s limbs off. She’d had to coax him out of hurting people after he’d thrown or picked them up by the throat like they weighed nothing. *A red and black eye*….

Lucifer was dangerous. She could not deny that.

Just… not to her. Maybe he had been a danger for her heart at one point. Maybe he still was. They’d have to talk about that.

“Hey… I am going to touch your arm now, on the left, okay?”

“Kay.” He whispered. He didn’t flinch when her fingertips touched his bicep. His skin was clammy, full of friction so she had to lightly graze her fingers up to touch his chest. His inhale was deeper under her fingertips.

“All right?” Chloe whispered to him.

“It’s fine if it’s you,” he assured.

“You have a lot more confidence in me than I do.” She still whispered, as though that gave them privacy somehow, despite all the eyes watching them. “Where do I even…?”

“Arm is probably best.” She moved her fingertips to touch his bicep. The muscle was tight. Chloe figured it was from the way his wrists and forearms were wrapped bent behind his back. “Yes, around thereabouts.”

Chloe looked at his arm, at the defined cords of muscle there. “Is there a way to do it so it hurts less?” she asked anxiously.

“I’m not sure. I don’t have much experience with needles, honestly.”

Chloe tried to remember what she could of getting shots. It had been a while.

“Decker,” Pierce called, impatient.

“Pompous cockbite,” Lucifer muttered. “Just don’t think about it, Detective.”

She really tried not to when she hovered the needle over the intended bicep, pursed her lip and held her breath while she pressed it. There was hardly even a pluck of skin, it sank in so easily. She tried not to jiggle it while pressing in the fluid. There was a lot, so she kept pressing slow and steady. “Doing okay?”
“Mmhmm. Just pressure.”

Then the syringe stopped. Lucifer had made a breathy sound halfway through the injection, and was already sagging. Whatever was in it, it worked fast. *Like those patients in psyche wards.* She pulled the needle out, examining the puncture site, pressed it lightly. It bled very little.

“How are you?”

Lucifer didn’t answer. His head dropped. The cables creaked as his wings took on his weight once more. Chloe looked up at him, touched his face, the blindfold, the hairs on his chin that were quickly trying to thicken into a beard. His breaths were even, lips partly open. It seemed he was gone again.

The men moved around them again. “All right. Work quickly, people. We have twenty minutes, tops. Smudge, get the other explosive on him and activated.” Chloe turned to stare at Pierce. “M, L, lower him down. We need him in the truck ASAP.”

“Explosive?” Chloe didn’t like how high her voice sounded.

Pierce looked aggravated as he marched up to her. “I’ll explain the dynamics of this arrangement once, so you can explain it to him when he wakes up so he doesn’t do something idiotic that will kill you both. The collar and your anklet are set to explode if they sense the other out of range, and they will also explode if they go out of range of the third device.” He pointed to the table, where something as small as a hand phone with a stand sat. It had two lights, one steady green light and another blinking yellow. “So if both of you try to run or one of you tries to run, you both die.” He glanced down at her ankle. “Well, you might live. It really depends how bad the explosion is and if you bleed to death, but you’ll definitely lose a leg.”

“You… you strapped a bomb on my ankle?”

“And that one is going around his neck. I can’t trust him not to try to chop off his own leg. So let me explain this clearly. If the device is tampered with, both blow. If the pressure sensors detect the device isn’t circling a limb or neck anymore, both blow. If any three goes out of range of the others, both blow. And I will be traveling in a separate truck, and I or one of the men will be holding the third device, in dead switch form. So if I or one of my men let go of it, even by accident? Both blow.” Pierce looked down at her, blue eyes icy. “And the only person who knows the code that will allow either device to be removed? Is me. Not even Smudge will know it. Any questions?”

“Explosives?”

“You wanted a way for me to remove the cables out of his wings? This was the answer. Deal with it, Decker.”

Chloe stammered at him, then looked to Lucifer as the cables lowered him to the ground. Lucifer was boneless and oblivious. Smudge was there, and she watched as he clicked the collar around the arch angel’s neck. Pierce circled around Chloe. The Detective turned, not sure what she was going to do, but ready to act, starting after him.

Hands quickly looped under her arms and locked behind her neck. She hissed, kicking ineffectively.

T grumbled right back at her. “Behave. Just watch.”

So she did, heard the beep of the device as its code was entered. The light on the back of Lucifer’s
collar was green when Pierce pulled away. She looked down at the matching green light of the device on her ankle.

*Well, fuck.*
Lucifer came to slowly, with wakings more like breaths at the surface before deciding to sink back down once more into the comfortable feeling of not-feeling-anything. It was blissful after the exhausting agony.

Subsequently, it started to become harder to fall into that comfortable blankness, other things creeping into the wonderful darkness, like red pain and unfamiliar noises. A motion made his body rock back and forth, and he made a sound of protest. That was going to make him nauseated if it kept up. He did not like being nauseated. It was a foreign and wholly unwelcomed sensation.

“Lucifer?”

*That’s the Detective. But that doesn’t seem right… Shouldn’t she be home?*

Another judder and he felt the slowing down, the pull of force on his frame as though his weight and blood were trying to flood into his head. A rattling rumble picked up in pitch as they accelerated again. Ugh. Yes, that was very nauseating. He groaned, perhaps not for the first time.

The touch on his shoulder startled him and brought everything back in a panicked rush. *Captured! Chained! Chloe!* The Devil flailed, entirely disoriented. He was laying on his back, and his arms jerked against chains. A weight lay heavy on his throat. When his wing slammed down against the bottom surface and wall, it made a loud, metal bang. Pain rang down the limb through the fuzziness, but it didn’t alarm him nearly as much as Chloe’s startled sound.

Lucifer froze, panting. Pain rang down his limbs anew, causing him to sweat and his limbs to shake. He wasn’t concerned with that at the moment. “Detective?” *Hellfire burn me, if she’s hurt…!*

“Y-yeah, I’m fine. Hey, hey! What are you doing?”

Lucifer was confused. He wasn’t doing anything. There was the sound of someone moving just at his side and he realized what was going on far too late. The needle stuck hard into his thigh. Well, he didn’t realize it was a needle when he felt the punch against his leg, but he figured it out when his consciousness started to bleed everywhere until he felt like he was falling again.

It was terrifying for a few seconds before there was nothing.

Consciousness was spotty after that, as was his memory. He remembered voices. He remembered wanting to be sick. He remembered Chloe’s voice gently coaxing him into drinking something familiar and bitter. He remembered complaining it was cold.

When he next rose to the surface, he felt comfortably warm and boneless. He hummed, stretching. He didn’t even care that a clink of chains rose from his ankles. He reveled in the fact he was laying down, having spent far too long being upright on ruined feet. It felt good.
“Hey, are you awake now?”

Ah, the Detective. There was a rumbling around them. Lucifer opened his eyes. His lashes brushed against cloth and he saw nothing. “Mm, cannæ tell. Shtill dark un’ here.” *Oh dear, am I slurring words?*

“Let me remove the blindfold.”

A man’s voice protested somewhere beyond Lucifer’s head. Chloe’s voice was thrown the same direction, arguing that it should be fine. She must have won, because Lucifer felt her work to untie the blindfold before she gave up and just pulled it up to expose his eyes. “Sorry, I know it’s dark in here.”

Lucifer looked up. Everything was gray shades with little color, but he could see details just fine. Chloe’s pupils seemed as wide as they could go, her human eyes needing to strain to see. Her pony tail was messy, and her skin was oily. She looked tired, unkempt, and the most beautiful thing he could possibly lay eyes on.

“Hey, darling.” He felt his smile widen.

She didn’t run from me. She’s even touching me. She is so…

Lucifer released a long breath, feeling light-hearted for a brief moment.

Her smile was chapped and weary, but there. She seemed glad for his response at least. “Hey. How are you feeling?”

“Mmm…” He stretched his spine and wiggled his ankles. His wings flexed against the close walls shuddering around them at every bump. Chains clinked and slithered. The Devil couldn’t concern himself with it too much. “Quite high, so I feel looooovely.” There was a slow down, and he looked around as he felt his blood gravitate toward his head with the movement. “Though I do wish the room felt less movey.”

“Movey?” Chloe smirked. “You really must be high if you’re using words like that. If it helps, we’re in the back of a truck. In a semi trailer, I mean. We’ve been traveling for about three hours now. I think.”

“Oh marv’loush. We’re cargo.” That was fine, as long as he could be happily buzzed cargo. The fallen angle tried to tilt his head back to look at her better where she knelt just at his crown. A weight sat on his throat. He slumped back down, swallowing after the pressure and tried to feel. Chains pulled taut. His wrists halted after only a few inches and his wings were tugged on. He turned his gaze from his Detective to the bindings, trying to work them out.

A light colored cloth draped over his bare chest and arms. He lift his hands the few inches they would go to see under it. The chains went around his wrists, forearms, and the back of his elbows, crossing his arms over his chest, shuddering around him. These in turn connected to the cables looping around the bones of his wings, now shortened and welded clamped to the chains. Which meant his wings couldn’t spread far at all from where they folded on either side of him.

So a lot like a straight jacket, or… He gave a snorted giggle. “I feel like bloody Dracula.” He thumped his head against the floor of the semi trailer. “Hey, hey, Detective. I vant to suck your blood.”

“You… are so high,” Chloe whispered.

“Mnhmm.” He half-closed his eyes, still reveling in the sensation of not being in pain. “You should try shum.”
“No thank you. Hey, if I move closer, will you stay still?”

“Yeeees?”

“Good… Just… Don’t wing me.”

Lucifer laughed. “Oh, Detective… winging… I… Oh.” Blurry memories capsized his mirth. “Did I hurt you earlier?”

“No. You missed. Barely.”

Lucifer tilt his head back again, feeling the weight on his neck as he watched her sit closer to his head. “Detective. I would never hurt you.”

Chloe just nodded, making no comment. She settled, hands on her knees. “Sorry, Um…” She picked up a hand and looked at the palm before setting it back down on her gray skinny jeans. “I probably stink.”

Lucifer grinned. “Oh, I don’t think your scent could ever offend me. I’ve been in Roman bathhouses, after all.”

Chloe just stared at him. Her eyes were unfocused, like she was only staring in the direction of his face without seeing it. She wore only her long sleeved undershirt. Where was the shirt she’d worn over....? Oh... Lucifer looked down at his chest briefly. His fingertips played with the material of the shirt. She draped it over me?

He wasn’t given much time to ponder this. “Lucifer… I have some questions.”

Dread wriggled through the happy fuzziness coating over the anxiety of their situation. Still, he smiled, wide and open. “Oh? Do you want to play truth and dare? I like truth and dare.” Oh, it’d be delightful to play that with the Detective. She’d play it so safe and stick with truth, and he would start asking for her hidden sexual fantasies. How many shots would it take until she was okay with answering? She wasn’t an entire lightweight, so maybe four…

“About you and some of the things you said earlier. I said that we were going to discuss what else you knew that you were keeping from me. I think I need to while I have a chance.”

Oh. She didn’t sound like she wanted to take turns with truths. He feigned aloofness. “An interrogation then? I’m game. Ask away, deary.”

“You said you tried to pray to Amenadiel? But he wouldn’t answer… What did you mean?”

“Ah.” No reason to dodge that one. “Angels can hear prayers if they wish, especially from the truly faithful who are sure of their existence. So if I pray, he hears me. Usually he’s very prompt to come when I call.”

“But not this time?”

“He might be unable to. If Father’s directly forbidden him, or if he was still vulnerable and killed… hm… causes complications… At any rate, he’s fine. I found one of his feathers, so I’m certain he got his wings back. He’s most certainly back in the Silver City, either way.”

“So he’d lost his wings… And got them back?”

“Fell for a little while. Poor chap was quite bent about it.” Lucifer made a tsk sound. “I think he
turned out better for it, though. He could be such a prideful prick, before.”

“But you cut yours off.”

“Mazikeen did. Well, the first time.”

“Why?”

“I told her to, of course.”

“Yes, but why?”

“Why, so I couldn’t just hop back to Hell. I left. Done with it. No reason to rule that abysmal place any longer. Without wings, I couldn’t be tempted to do so.”


Chloe couldn’t see well in the dark like he could, but her eyes were still moving back and forth with thought. He liked watching it, the way the wheels in her head turned. “And you cut them off again.”

“And they kept popping back into existence. It was annoying for a while.”

Chloe opened her mouth, her brow pinching. She shook her head, blinking and setting her thoughts back on track. He watched it happen, smiling fondly, seeing when she took her breath to rein the conversation the direction she wanted.

“So, couldn’t you pray to one of your other siblings to help us?”

Lucifer’s smile faded. Something ached under his sternum. “No, I can’t do that.”

“Lucifer, we could blow up. As in explode. If there was a time to swallow pride and call on family to help, now’s the--”

“It’s not like that, Detective. Amenadiel is different. He and I have seen each other off and on over the centuries. I crawl upstairs to enjoy some Earthly pleasures, he would arrive to harass me back down to Hell. He was the one to keep the order of things, keep them above, humans in the middle, and me below.” Lucifer paused to curtail the bitterness in his voice. “What I’m saying is… Amenadiel changed. I had maneuvered him into a bargain and he’s not the type to break his vow, so over the past eight years, he couldn’t force me back down into Hell. The others have no such vows. If they showed up, Detective, it would not be to help.”

“Even though you’re--.”

Lucifer’s tone cut. “I’m the Devil.” He took a breath. “Even Amenadiel called me evil. They don’t even try to… What I mean is…” He made a disgusted sound at himself. “Just… trust me, Detective. They would not help.”

“Okay… Okay.”

Lucifer sighed, trying to clear the ache from his chest. “Well, I think that killed my buzz entirely.” Aches and pains were starting to grow, the discomfort matching his heart. He frowned, thinking over her words. “Wait… What do you mean, ’explode’?”

He listened while Chloe explained the purpose of her anklet and the collar fastened on his neck.
Lucifer turned this over in his mind, considering the implications and how much it limited him, even if his wings were free. He made another disgusted sound, thumping his head back to show his distaste and frustration.

“I’m going to kill him.”

“Pierce?”

“Cain, yes,” Lucifer said irritated. The nerve of him, putting a bomb on the Detective!

Chloe’s question was quiet, like a mouse peeking out the hole to spy a cat. “Did you mean what you said? When… When you thought he’d shot me?”

Lucifer tried to remember exactly what he had threatened. He gave a nod, never mind that she couldn’t see it well and his neck was hampered some. “Yes, at that moment, I did.”

“You changed…”

Lucifer cringed inwardly. He closed his eyes against her wide-eyed stare. He suddenly felt far too tired for this conversation.

“Is that what you really look like?”

“Yes, but… Not always.”

“Not always? So is it a mask or… Or is this one the mask?”

Right. He should get this over with. Pull off the bandage and watch things fall apart sooner rather than later. The pain had expanded from under his sternum up to the base of his throat. “Neither is a mask. Both are my face. This one and the devil face are both real.” Chloe still looked confused. “They’re both me. One does not mask another. They both express who I am.”

“But it was gone for a while.”

“I didn’t feel like… that side… For a while. Not until I thought I…” He paused, pulling in a breath. “I think my wings came back and the devil face went away for a while, because around you, I didn’t feel like I had to be… the Devil… anymore.”

Chloe thought it over, brilliant mind turning and examining the information internally. Finally her eyes cleared, pushing the puzzle aside to work more later. “So.. Cain. You knew he was the Sinnerman. Explain.”

Lucifer did as briefly as possible, trying to remember the order of events as clearly as he could and relaying them to her. He concluded with, “So I had told him I wasn’t going to help him find death any longer, but Maze helped to keep me distracted from you while he sought your attentions. Of course later you broke it off with him and things just… quickly got out of hand.”

Chloe had tilted her head back, not looking at him while she thought this over. “But why me,” she finally asked. “Why do I affect immortals? You? Cain?”

“I’m not convinced you were directly responsible for the mark’s removal, Detective. I think when Cain broke up with you the first time, he did so because he realized he was using you. It was unselfish enough to break it.”

“Okay. So why do I affect you?”
Lucifer swallowed. “Because… my father put you here. You’re a miracle. Amenadiel was sent down to bless your mother. Otherwise she would never have had any children. Because of that, you exist. At first, you didn't affect me. But then I was around you, becoming friends with you, and…” His heart was trying to escape the cage of his ribs, thumping against the bone bars trapping it. He took a deep breath, his reply riding the sigh with a sense of helplessness. "And I’m vulnerable around you. In so many ways.”

Chloe didn't look at him. Her lips were tight, brows creased. She looked on the verge of crying, he realized. A sense of panic shot through him, hurriedly trying to reassure and comfort. “Detective. Detective, you don’t have to do anything. You are not obligated to…to me, or anyone. Certainly not Him.”

The Detective sniffed. She placed the heel of her hand under her eyes, shaking her head. “You… You almost let me marry him, knowing he was using me.”

His words spilled rapidly. “I wasn’t entirely sure that was all there was to it. He seemed sincere. I thought that maybe he…”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I tried, but-but you wouldn’t believe me.”

“Bullshit, Lucifer!” She was crying, angry, and Lucifer wanted to sink through the floor and let the semi tires roll over him. “You could have showed me your wings. You could have told me he was the Sinnerman! You could have done a number of things to explain why I should have questioned his motives, but you…” Her voice squeaked, her hand slapping at the air in frustration. “Didn’t.”

*Why do I always find ways to hurt her?* Lucifer searched for words, swallowing at the lump in his throat. “I couldn’t take away your choice. I wanted you to choose. Free will is yours.” He closed his own eyes, shaking his head. “I would never take it.”

Chloe wiped at her nose and eyes, pulling in deep, shuddering breaths to steady herself. “You should have told me. Letting me make an ignorant choice was no better.”

*Linda was right. Burn me, she was so right, all this time…*

He flexed his hands against the chains. The metal clinked quietly. “I know I’m undeserving of your forgiveness. Detective… Chloe…”

“You’re these two different people, Lucifer. On one side, you’re this goofy, eccentric loon and I would have liked to… If that person had asked me…” She took a breath, her admirable control almost fully returned, voice steady again. “But then you’re this other person who kept things from me, who schemed and treated me like a consolation prize, and didn’t have the guts to let me make an educated decision. And now…” She looked toward him, those wide pupils searching where he knew his face should be. “I don’t know that I can reconcile these two people that you are. My partner... The Devil... I don’t know how I can trust anything.”

Lucifer felt his breath die in his chest.

He watched Chloe wipe her sleeve against her nose, sniffing and looking away. Her eyes were everywhere but toward him now. The furtive animal of hopefulness darting in his emotions was eaten by the snake of his bitterness. He felt no surprise, but it still hurt. Deeply.

So much breathing hurt. He tried to blink away the stinging in his eyes, fought to keep his breath steady when everything felt strangled.
The truck rumbled around them. Two men were talking some distance away, murmurs he couldn't make out. Chloe was just breathing, tired and tense. She still looked like every emotion was raw inside.

Lucifer swallowed, spoke as quietly as he could. “… Detective? Could you… put the blindfold back on, please?”

She turned her gaze his direction again, brow pinched. Then understanding smoothed her face. Her fingers were careful, feeling their way in the cloth and sliding it back down. Her hand rest on his brow briefly, then slid away. The Devil heard her move away from him, retreating and letting him pretend to sleep.
Chapter Notes

Hello, darklings! This chapter we get to see from Trixie's POV. Because of course she can't be kept out of things. Next chapter will be from Chloe's POV again, and I'll be drafting that up tonight.

I've been so thrilled with all the kudos and everyone enjoying the story thus far! Thank you so much!

Enjoy, bird and batlings!

Charlotte’s funeral was on a Saturday.

It was even more horrible than Trixie feared it would be, and she had expected it to be pretty horrible.

The worst thing was watching her dad cry. That had broken her own facade, so the pair were left sniffing noisily through the service with many others. Trixie kept a tight hold of his hand, leaning into his ribs as her young mind turned over the surreality of death and the service went on, and on, and on.

When everyone was finally allowed to mingle, she watched her dad head off to give his condolences to Charlotte’s ex husband. His children clung to his sides like birds seeking shelter from the rain. Terribly unhappy, their faces kept crumpling up with fresh tears. Is that what I’m going to look like, if Mom isn’t found? Trixie blinked her eyes rapidly against the horrible dread in her chest. She pursed her lips, feeling like she had done enough crying for now, and instead of following her father, she retreated to where there were refreshments.

She hated her shoes. Dad had insisted she wear nice clothes, and with that came something other than sneakers. They felt slippery and her toes were uncomfortable. At least she had been allowed leggings under a skirt and a fairly comfortable shirt. Trixie would have to see if she could lose the shoes in the back of her closet forever, like she had some other items she didn’t like.

There was a balding man sitting at a table close to the refreshments in a black suit and dark blue tie. It managed to fit well over his larger belly. He had glittering rings on his large, blunt fingers. Trixie looked at them while waiting for a woman to move so she could get to the miniature sandwiches.

He noticed, his wide features giving her a measured smile. “You’re another unfamiliar face,” he noted with curiosity. He had an accent, but Trixie wasn’t sure what kind. “How did you know Ms. Richards?”

Trixie gave him another look, puzzling over him briefly. She didn’t recognize him. She finally shrugged her small shoulders. “She was friends with my dad and I.”

“How?”

“I guess… both?” He was asking questions in that way adults had when they wanted to wheedle
information out of someone younger than them. She turned her attention to selecting a piece of cheese, one of the neat little squares speared with a toothpick.

The man nodded, looking over the people gathered. “Ms. Richards helped my family out for many years. Even though she changed the direction of her career in the end, we don’t forget such favors.” The man wagged his head back and forth, lips tight. “It’s a pity. Death. It’s a hell of a thing.”

Well, he wasn’t holding back his words or trying to treat her like an imbecile. That gave him some points as far as she was concerned. She ate her cheese, decided she liked it and selected another. He went on, talking to himself more than her.

“Soon, it will be my mother that I have to attend a funeral for. Perhaps within the next week.” He made a rough sound in his chest, again shaking his head. He tapped the funeral program against his knee. It made a sharp, papery click.

Trixie stood rooted in the spot, taking a deep breath. My mom’s funeral…

The man noticed her fighting tears, surprise lifting his brow and hurrying to reassure. It made his accent thicker. “Oh, it’s all right, little one. My mother is in a lot of pain. Sometimes… it’s better that they go.”

Trixie wiped at her eyes, angry at herself but stubbornly keeping her voice steady. “Maybe, but it’s not fair.” I’m okay. I have to pretend to be okay.

He leaned forward giving her young, angry face a discerning search. He breathed out a quiet, growled sigh of understanding. “Ah, is your mother…?” He left the question open at the end for her to finish.

“Missing.” Trixie looked at him, stubborn. “She was kidnapped, not killed.” She hoped.

“Oh. Not by anyone here, I hope,” He scanned the crowd again.

Trixie shook her head. She huffed in a breath, willing the pain and uncertainty down.

“There you are,” the man said, nodding encouragingly as she took deep breaths. “No shame in tears, as long as you pull yourself together again, and act accordingly.”

The frustration reared in her again, at how powerless she was. “There’s not much I can do.” And everyone is treating me like I’m glass and won’t tell me anything. Like I don’t know things are bad without them saying anything.

The man looked up to someone approaching. Trixie could hear rapid footsteps. “Isn’t there?” He offered one of those measured smiles again.

“Trixie!” Her dad reached for her, pulling her quickly to his side, hand fixed firmly on her shoulder. Trixie immediately recognized the protective behavior. Dad didn’t like this guy. Dad probably had a good reason for that, since he was a cop. Which meant… perhaps… “You shouldn’t talk to people here.”

“She was just getting some refreshments, Detective Espinoza. We were not speaking of anything harmful.”

“Don’t.” Her father’s tone was adamant and fierce. Trixie felt alarmed at its abruptness.

The man held up his palms, eyebrows lofty in a show of peace. “We have no reason to harm you or
your family, Espinoza. After all, we still remember your part in helping us sort out what happened with our man Boris."

Her dad was stock still. Trixie wasn’t sure what she thought of the cold anger she felt radiating from him.

The man stood, straightening his suit jacket. “You and Ms. Richards,” he went on in a way that showed he was weighing his words. “You were close. And now the Detective Decker is missing. Whispers… they get around quickly. Everyone is always wondering what family is doing what, and why… But this was an anomaly, not one of the families, but the elusive Sinnerman.”

“I’m well aware who-.

The Russian man lift his hand. “Ah.” His admonishment was quiet, but still her dad stopped and listened, letting him continue. “You helped before, even if for selfish reasons, and none of us want to be in the path of Mr. Morningstar’s pet and become her next target.” Maze, Trixie realized. “So I will give you something. Properties are an important asset in Los Angeles. It’s not uncommon to have a broker of sorts arrange property deals. Keeps yours from sniffing into our affairs, yes? Some are owned by a company, Kendot Inc. Perhaps look there.”

Her dad stood there without response, his hand still on her shoulder. The man looked to Trixie, offering her a smile.

“Now, you stay strong, young lady. Farewell.”

Trixie pursed her lips, words fighting from her stomach until they pitched from her mouth, vaulted quickly at the man’s retreating form. “I hope your mother gets better!”

She received a turn, smile, and head tilt for her words. As soon as he had turned away, Dad gave her an admonishing, “Trixie.”

"What? He said his mom's sick. She might not be a criminal."

"How do you know he... Never mind. Let's find Linda."

Trixie let him guide her away to where the black-dressed therapist was waiting with a drink in hand. Linda looked mildly surprised when Dad planted her right next to her. "Hey, can you watch her? I want to look around and ask some questions."

"Charlotte used to work with prominent criminal families, and one may have given me a lead. I want to see who else is here. We still have access to a lot of the firm's files. The Sinnerman was only slightly less elusive with them as he was to law enforcement. If nothing else, we might be able to figure out where they were, and thus where he wasn't. Just... Please keep an eye on her for a moment."

Linda looked down to Trixie, clearly concerned. But it was too late, her dad was gone.

Trixie looked after him as he started to circle the crowd. "Working," she muttered.

"Hm?" Linda leaned down, trying to make better eye contact with her.

Trixie folded her arms, shifting her weight onto one uncomfortable shoe. "He's working. But it's
good right now. They used to fight over it a lot."

"Chlo-Your mother and father?"

"They were pretty good about trying to not let me hear it. Or talk about work at all. Lucifer doesn't care, though. He tells me everything they're working on if I ask."

"...You like Lucifer a lot, don't you."

Trixie gave her a clear 'well, duh', look. "He never pretended to like me right away or know how to treat kids. I liked that about him. He was weird, but honest."

Linda opened her mouth, then closed it, giving a self-reflective hum.

Trixie's brow pinched, and she looked to doctor. "Can I... play on your phone? I'm pretty bored."

"My phone? Oh, that's... well..." Trixie kept looking at her, trying to look needy but not petulant. "Okay. There are a few games on there." She unlocked it, handing it over, then stood awkwardly with her drink, looking around while Trixie quickly swiped and tapped her thumbs over the screen.

"You know, if you need someone to talk to..." Trixie was suddenly handing her phone back. Linda took it, blinking.

"I gotta go to the bathroom," Trixie said quickly. She started trotting away, as well as her shoes would let her.

She didn't wait around to see Linda look at her phone and make a noise of exasperation.

Trixie was waiting by the road when the car pulled up. The window rolled down to show a less-than-impressed Mazikeen. She quirked her scarred brow at the ten-year-old. "You said you had information for me?"

Trixie quickly pulled the door open and climbed in. "Yeah, plus I really need out of these damn shoes."
Here you are, darklings! I always liked when Chloe almost swung at the paparazzi in season one, showing she does have to control herself from lashing out. After so many days of maltreatment (though not near the level of Lucifer), she's back to being ready to punch a camera lens in two.

There's more whump and emotions are running high. After this I decided I need to add the tags for Chloe needs a hug, Protective Lucifer, and Protective Chloe. Because. Oh! And let me know if there are any improvements I need to make. Thanks for hanging on to this ride! Enjoy, my cupcakes and tarts.

The truck engine turned off.

Chloe’s head lolled forward, the world fuzzy before voices made her jerk out of her daze. She blinked rapidly, cursing inwardly at leaving herself and Lucifer unguarded. She felt frazzled, thoughts dizzy and her pulse flighty. She was dehydrated. Her stomach felt tore up. Her neck ached. The Detective pulled her bound hands up to cup the sore muscle leading up her shoulder as she looked around in the dark trailer.

Lucifer? Is Lucifer….? Her eyes spied the white glimmer of the wings, faint, but present. So Lucifer must be there. She breathed out, turning her attention to the men moving at the back of the trailer.

The door rolled up with a grating rattle, a split of bright light glaring in and growing. Eyes stinging, she brought her hands up in front of herself, trying to see. Lucifer was a fuzzy outline on the floor, tilting his head to listen to the sound of the men moving around. A man clambered in, sharp shadow against light. The clunks as he moved on the trailer were loud. A chain clinked. Chloe was getting to her feet, slow and sore, disoriented from her exhausted nap. She was still squinting, trying to see what was going on, get a clue where they had stopped.

The chain was wound around the bindings on the Devil’s ankles. Lucifer flinched at the unexpected touch, his foot jerking up and to a swift halt as the chains pulled taut. The man scrambled out. There was a call, and Lucifer made a short sound as he was dragged out, startling fast. Chloe gasped, then winced when she heard him hit the ground outside. She hurried after, cursing mentally at Pierce and his men. She was still in one boot and one socked foot. The ungainly weight on her ankle was cumbersome feeling.

Stay calm! Stay calm, Chloe. Her heart was still jumping despite her inner mantra as she looked down.

Lucifer sounded annoyed, laying on the ground below her. He’d toppled partly on top of one of his wings. “Ow?”

It was dark around them and Chloe couldn’t see her surroundings. The headlights of another truck facing the back of the one she was exiting kept them in a blinding tunnel of light. The smell of dirt and diesel fumes clogged her nose. She had only jumped to the ground between the two trucks
when two men closed in on her, one blocking her elbow strike as another grabbed her other arm.

“Easy, girl,” the man said as he kicked at her booted foot to throw her off balance.

Lucifer squirmed in the dirt, trying to get off his wing unsuccessfully. His accented admonishment was haughty, nonetheless. “She’s not a girl, you boorish, ignorant cad. She’s a grown woman, and a fine one.”

“Thank you, Lucifer,” Chloe managed through her teeth. Her attempt to stomp on an instep was met with another bruising sweep to her legs to make her stumble for balance once more, tottering against the other man with her weight. He righted her quickly.

She could see Lucifer swallowing, tilting his chin up higher over the heavy collar on his throat. “Quite welcome, Detective.” He sounded so casual, like they were just out on another case, though with a dry throat. Like they hadn’t just brought each other to tears in the back of a semi trailer. Like there wasn’t a bomb around his neck. Like he wasn’t in horrible condition, laying half naked, blindfolded in the dirt, getting his white feathers even filthier and one of his wings moving in weak jerks atop his chained torso.

*Dammit, Lucifer, you're not supposed to sound like I didn't hurt you. You're not supposed to sound like you're not being hurt right now. You're not supposed to be okay with any of this when you're the one bleeding, and that's because of me, isn't it?*

“Shut it. Get the bag on her.” That was Pierce. Chloe glared at him as he came into view, headlights silhouetting his unmistakable frame. Fresh anger ran in her blood. It made her head pound, all her mantras to stay calm fizzling to white noise.

Damn it... Damn it... Damn it. He teeth clenched, watching Pierce look down at Lucifer. So unconcerned. So aloof. So emotionless. Damned son of a bitch!

Another man approached. Chloe shot him a sharp look, just noticing him as he was rolling up a bag to put over her head. Her booted foot reared up and her thick heel shot forward. Hard.

The man went down with a squeak. The two on either side struggled to keep their balance with her as she shouldered into them and swiped a glancing blow with her doubled fists at one’s throat. The grappling became confused, and her breath was quickly running out, body sticky and overheated already. The three won, getting the bag over her head. Lucifer was calling, concerned. Chloe cursed, but finally settled, her quick, humid breaths making the bag uncomfortable.

"Detective? Detective!"

"I'm fine," she grit out angrily.

"Detective..." Gentle admonishment. The Devil knew she was lying.

Chloe stumbled as she was led along between the two thugs, her scuffle to see what they were walking into entirely fruitless.

She could hear them *dragging* Lucifer behind them. Like he was a thing. He made a complaining noise, but nothing else. The scrape of his weight, wings, and the chains made Chloe's gut turn, anxious about his well-being.

The Detective could tell they were going down a slope. The air, dry before, became cooler. Their steps started to echo on packed dirt and gravel. *We're being led underground. Pierce is burying us alive.* She tried to keep her footing. She felt so damned *tired*, blind, her limbs trembling, her
stomach one painful knot. Her control was worn thin and her normally sharp mind felt like tatters, nerves frayed as the roll of panic jut through to the surface. *I'm never going to see Trixie again.*

She heard the electric whir and shudder of what she thought was a garage door. The men warned her of steps, and Chloe awkwardly made her way down, boot nearly tripping her up. The floor under her filthy sock became smooth and cool, and their steps echoed in a corridor. She could tell through the bag that there were lights up above.

Lucifer’s raspy voice was laced with concern. “Are we going down? Oh, nono, easy with…” Metal clacked against cement with each step and there were several weighted thuds as they pulled Lucifer carelessly along. Chloe tried to lunge free to go back to him. She wasn’t successful except to make the men curse as they kept their grip. Behind her, Lucifer groaned. His voice croaked when he spoke.“Oh, that’s going to leave a mark. How’s my money maker? Is it okay?”

“Shut up,” one of the men grumbled.

“Assholes!” Chloe snapped at them.

It was difficult to tell how far they went, but she counted the few turns. One curving hall, a door, straight, right, left again. Then she heard the men behind her and the grating slide of Lucifer start off to the right, the opposite direction she was being led. She dug in the heel of her boot, fighting toward the retreating sound. “No. No, where are you taking him?” They didn’t answer. She started pulling more desperately. The men had to stop as she flailed. “No, I don’t want to be separated!” Her voice had gone up in pitch. “Lucifer? Lucifer!”

“God dammit, lady,” the man grunted, trying to keep his grip. “Stop being difficult!”

There were thuds down the hall and alarmed yelling. A sharp metal snap rang, immediately accompanied by a scream.

“My knee! My fucking knee-gawdfucknnnggh!” “Watch it! His legs are free!” ”Dose him! Dammit, dose him!”

The men and Chloe stopped to listen. She could hear Lucifer snarling for the men to get off of him, the struggle continuing for a few breath-holding seconds. Then one last whump and clatter of chains. There were a few seconds where only panting filled the tense air.

“...Whoops.” Lucifer’s exhaled voice was a quiet echo down the corridor, weak and dizzy sounding. Chloe felt her hopes sink and the salt water rise in her eyes. The men pulled her one way, and the drag of Lucifer fell into silence in the opposite direction.

They stopped only a few more steps down the corridor. A heavy electronic door whooshed open, and the Detective was shoved forward. It clanged shut behind her. An electric whir and heavy machinery clicked together. Then silence.

She was alone again.
Even the Devil Doesn't Want to Be Locked Alone With the Devil

Chapter Notes

Hello, kittens! We're back to our duo, this chapter solely on Lucifer. Here we get to meet an original character. I've had him lurking around in my imagination for a while. We'll get to learn more about him and this arrangement next chapter when we're back to Chloe. Meanwhile Pierce is up to his villainy below. As usual.

Hope you enjoy, darklings!

Water woke him up, a shock of wet and icy cold raining down on him.

Lucifer gasped, voice rough and coming awake fighting. Discombobulated, it took a few awkward jerks to finally get his legs underneath him. He scrambled to sitting upright, scooting against the wall with shoves of his feet to escape the cold.

The pain crashed on him just as his wings and back touched the wall, seizing him mid-motion. His leg bones felt like shards of glass. His arms had jerked on his wings, and the raw bones screamed, making him cringe. The cold was suddenly unimportant. The chained angel let the agony shudder through his limbs with clenched teeth until the wave of it peaked. When it became a bearable throbbing once more, he thunked his head against the shower wall, panting against the heavy collar on his neck and blinking through the water dripping down his face.

The water in his mouth felt good at least. Lucifer let it run down his throat, only the swallows interrupting his loud breathing, hurriedly gasping and breathing after. Lucifer was also aware he could see. Hell’s former ruler blinked harder, focusing on taking in his surroundings. After so long of being blindfolded, everything seemed too sharp and bright.

He was sitting in a sizable shower stall, a shallow, square basin of concrete with a drain at its center. The water was cascading on tile and floor, echoing down the drain pipe and against the walls, nothing softening the sound. Utilitarian walls and overhead lights lay just outside the stall. No shower curtain or door. And Lucifer wasn’t alone. Someone was reaching for the shower knob and turning off the water.

Lucifer tried to focus on those standing around him, even as the hiss of running water stopped. The lingering drops echoed, falling further and further apart. His slacks clung to him, soaked through. His feathers were dripping rusty red droplets, cloudy red trails snaking their way to the drain near his bare feet.

Pierce was looking down at him with folded arms. Two of his cronies stood nearby, one with a handgun ready, the other with a cattle prod. The last man seemed strange in comparison to the other three, standing back by the wall, bearded chin in hand. He was older, at least into his fifties, thick in limb and torso. His eyes were deep set under an even brow, with a long nose that had a slight bend from a previous break.

“I had hoped you were joking,” he said. His voice was hushed, awed as he looked at Lucifer. “But here is the proof. You brought me Satan himself. What am I to do, trying to hold one of God’s creatures, Sinnerman?”
Lucifer noted the accent. The man rolled his r’s, spoke soft s’s, and had a particular click to his k’s and g’s. He tried to place it, but his thoughts dribbled about like melted wax, formless and useless. So he just stared straight ahead, dazed, breath too loud in his own ears and letting them talk over him.

“The woman makes him mortal,” Pierce explained. “He can be injured, drugged, and as you can see, bound. He’s supernaturally strong, but… not without weaknesses.”

Lucifer swallowed, still trying to catch his breath. He tilted his head back further. The bit of water he had swallowed was sitting sour in his stomach, but his restricted throat wanted more. The lights above hazed in and out.

“So I see. You’ve brought him to me in poor shape. You know I dislike that.”

“He downed too many of my men. You saw what he did to M’s knee alone.”

The shorter man made a dismissive sound in his throat. He hadn’t taken his eyes off Lucifer. “I’ve kicked a knee backward once. It’s not as hard as it seems. But truly… Look at him. His pupils are dilated. He’s groggy and pale. I’m not sure if he needs to eat, but I’m guessing…” The man muttered, then raised his voice, irritated. “Who stitched him up? I’ve done better out in the field with floss! And those clamps on his wings? Horrid job.”

“Doesn’t matter. They’re dead,” Pierce stated.

The man shot a look at Pierce, than looked back to Lucifer, wagging his head back and forth, beard shuffling over his wide chest. “That leaves me no one’s ear to chew on. How am I to berate your tots if you keep killing them?”

“I’ve been cleaning house lately.” Pierce turned to face the man, hands switching to fold behind his back. “Are you saying you won’t take him, CT?”

Lucifer slid a little down the wall, rolled his gaze as far as he could down the corridor. He couldn’t see far. The Detective was nowhere in sight. She’d called him, hadn’t she?

No. She wouldn’t… Would she? But the Detective… He was sure… Where…? He wanted… Detective?

The man was looking at him. “What’s he saying?”


That pulled his attention back to the first murderer. Lucifer blinked, leaned his head down into the heel of one of his bound hands, trying to stop the throbbing migraine. “Stop that.” He glared through the dripping water of his unruly bangs. “I’m tired, but not too tired I won’t rip your throat out.”

There was a sharp snap of the cattle prod on the wall above his head. Lucifer flinched, looking up at the goon holding the crackling cattle prod. The man was glaring down at him, an older twenties with rugged features and a scar on his chin. Young. Simple. Full of bravado.

Lucifer glared right back, eyes flaring red. His psyche reached out and clawed into the other, shredding into his simpler mind like a hawk into a tender rabbit as the visage of the devil stamped into the fragile, woefully younger mind. The cattle prod fell and the man scrambled backwards, his panicked voice leaving him with every too-fast huff as he tripped on himself and fled.
Pierce watched him go, unconcerned. Lucifer swallowed the sound in his throat as vertigo made the room tilt. His hands planted over his eyes, bending down and trying to swallow. He didn’t feel right. He felt both too cold and too hot, and…

“And that’s why you don’t look him in the eye.” Pierce was saying.

‘C.T.’ Made a noise of agreement. Then a sound close to sympathy when Lucifer pitched to one side and vomited.

The shower brought him back to his senses again. The water was tepid rather than the frigid chill. He righted himself once more, squinting toward Pierce and the other two men.

“Are you back with us?” Pierce asked.

When Lucifer gave him a scathing look, the criminal boss nodded to his remaining goon and the water was turned off. This one kept his distance, his eyes too wide and everywhere but at the too close Devil. \textit{At least one of them has the sense not to taunt a cornered monster.}

"You ready to listen now?"

Lucifer forced himself to grin. \text{"Fuck off, Cain."}

"Oh, so that’s how it is." Pierce's mouth pulled to one side, seeming thoughtful. \text{"Well, I could. I would leave you down here. Have Caretaker lock you in a room by yourself. Keep you chained. Keep you just one inch from death. Starved. Wanting. In darkness and silence. Decker would be only some meters from you, and you would never hear or see her."} Pierce's eyes flicked back to him, giving time for those words to weigh in.

He searched for the lie. He found none. Lucifer felt his pulse flutter, moth wings against glass. The thought of being in pain was one thing. He did not want to be locked up alone away from Chloe. He closed his eyes, trying to push those fears from his face. Leaning back, he rolled his head against the wall. It was hard, smooth cement. He could feel the explosive device scrape and press on the back of his neck. Water dripped from the tip of his nose.

“Or. You make me a promise, an oath. You can see Chloe. But you can never seek to leave this place or hurt anyone working for me again.”

Lucifer cracked his unbruised eye open, looking at Pierce. The crime boss' blue eyes were steely, unyielding. Immediately the fine print of such an agreement was measured in the Devil’s mind. He’d made so many bargains before; the details mattered.

After a stretched moment, Pierce tilt his head. "Well?"

Lucifer swallowed against the taste of bile. His head pounded. Sleep and escape from this discomfort of his skin were so tempting... But this was important. A few shallow breaths to fight down the nausea. \text{"We will see each other every day, speak and communicate during,"} he stipulated, voice quiet and smooth as he leaned forward over his chained arms. Lucifer’s wings dragged on tile, dripping water. Both eyes bore into Pierce’s now. \text{"But on her terms. If she agrees to not see me, she cannot be forced. Likewise, she cannot be coerced into not visiting me, and we may see each other for as long as she likes."}

Pierce’s eyes narrowed. \text{"Ten minutes a day."}

"Thirteen hours per 24 hour cycle."
“Half an hour.”

“Ten hours, plus mealtimes.”

“… One hour. No meals.”

Lucifer breathed out a sound, forced a pained grin. “How many men do you have for me to break?”

“How many men do you have for me to break?”

“Two.”

Lucifer snorted, then leaned back. He thought he could taste blood in his throat. His eyes sank closed, the light too much. “Six per 24 hour period, and we should be able to touch if we choose. The deal is off the moment your men lay hands on Chloe Decker or threaten her with pain or death. You may not touch her friends or family.”

The muscle in Pierce's jaw jumped. “How about three, and I won’t have you tased every day.”

Lucifer cracked his eyes open. “My other terms stand?”

Pierce looked annoyed. “Yes.”

“At least three then. Deal.” Lucifer thunked his head back. Hellfire, he was exhausted.

"Deal."

C.T. or Caretaker or whatever alias he was going by gave an inquiring noise. “No amenities for yourself?”

Lucifer opened his eyes, finally really looking at the man. He took the opportunity, quickly latching onto his gaze. The magnetism pulled, even without his willing it, the hazel eyes too open and curious for it to not. Lucifer felt the language form, speaking with a chuckle rumbling in his voice. “I ruled Hell. This is nothing.”

The man broke into a surprised smile. His words came haltingly, having to think over his native tongue. Someone who did not get to use it often, Lucifer realized. “It has been a long time since I’ve heard someone speak my old tongue, Iblīs.”

“It’s been a while since I’ve heard that name as well. You’re Yugoslavian?”

“No. No one is really Yugoslavian anymore, are they.”

Pierce cleared his throat, trying to interrupt.

Lucifer's head rolled back against the wall. “Ah. I forgot. Sorry.”

“No fault of yours. I hope?”


Pierce looked exasperated. “If you two are finished…?”

The man smiled, deep set eyes saddening. “That I’d never picked up the gun. My sister would be alive, plus many others over the years.”

Lucifer eased the intensity of his gaze, the man’s psyche unshackled from his. “Oh, you’re one of
the regretful ones.”

“Would you two…?” Pierce was looking even more agitated.

“And now I have looked into the Devil’s eyes.” The man shook a finger between them, voice playful. “Not how I expected my day to go when I woke this morning. I can’t regret it. You’re beautiful.”

Lucifer blinked, words evading him while Caretaker turned to Pierce, resuming English. “I’ll have a list for you in a few hours of what I need. He’s agreed to your deal, so I should be fine now.” He looked back to Lucifer. “I’ll be back with the bolt cutters, bring you something to wash with and towels.” He looked over his wings critically. “I suppose we’ll need several.”

“Finally,” Lucifer said, looking upward. “Some room service.”

Pierce shook his head, walking out of sight, his goon on his heels like a skittish puppy. Now alone, Lucifer let his facade crumple, all the anxiety, exhaustion, and lost feeling welling upward. There was a solid thump when he tipped his head back sharply. He thumped his head against the wall again for good measure.

“...Fuck.”
Chapter Notes

Hello darklings and demonlings! I was going to have more happen in this chapter, but it turned out much longer than expected, so saving that for tomorrow. I ended up being busier today than expected.

I did promise we’d start seeing more comfort. I’ve had this scene in my head for so long, it’s good to finally see it in words. Also, for the measurements mentioned below, a foot equals 30.48 cms.

Much love, readers. <3

With the bag removed from over her head, Chloe took stock of her surroundings.

The cell was sparse, but at least not bare. The cement floor was smooth and polished, the ceiling high with small circular lights above shining day bright. It was an L-shape, with the small part of the L containing a toilet, standing shower with a curtain, a sink and mirror. A little plastic crate held still-packaged items to tend to hygiene. A short shelf had neatly folded towels and clothes atop it, slippers resting just below on the floor. A full-sized bed lay in the main area, made up with two pillows, sheets and comforter. A small, square table with a wooden chair pressed against the middle of the wall, the chair’s back to the room. A plain plastic pitcher with water and a short tumbler sat atop this. The wall had a strange indent in it there, some odd paneling. Once a window? She’d look at it later.

Another heavy security door guarded the wall near the bathing facilities. Like the door she had entered through, she had no buttons, knobs, or anything to assist with its opening on her side. Pushing on it didn’t budge it. Chloe stepped back to the center of the larger L side, looking up through the vent in the ceiling. It was barely a foot wide, and high enough even if she stood on the table her hands would only just brush it. The Detective could glimpse spinning fans above, a draft pulling upward. A quick glance showed there were small vents high on the walls as well, slits that kept air flowing in and up.

She wouldn’t suffocate down here, at least, and the earthen smell wasn’t unpleasant. She couldn’t say the same for herself. After long minutes of standing, listening to the quiet whir of the fan and the faint buzz of the lights, the Detective set about seeing to her physical needs.

The water in the pitcher was icy cold, and didn’t taste like L.A. tap water in the least. It was actually good, like spring water. It probably is, if this facility is off grid. Not a comforting thought, but at least she wouldn’t thirst to death.

She hesitated in the bathroom, looking around carefully for cameras, searching the corners of the room, around the sink. Pressing on the mirror revealed it wasn’t glass, something unbreakable like what was used in prison. No weapons in here than except the chair and my sorry boot. Chloe looked at herself.

Disheveled would have been a gentle description. Her hair was a halo of greasy, loose tresses tumbling out of her pony tail. Her eyes were deeply lined, skin tinged a bruised blue underneath
them from being so tired. Her clothes had been worn for far too long and were dirty, smudged, and hanging stretched on her frame. She wasn’t sure what had happened to her overshirt, she realized. It had been dragged out with Lucifer and she’d lost track of it.

Chloe wiped at a smudge of dirt on her cheek, then looked at her fingers in disgust at the grit clogging her fingernails. She really should bathe, but…

The detective closed her eyes, shaking her head at herself. *The whole world has seen your boobs, Chloe. Get on with it.* She pulled her shirt off over her head, gladly discarding it to the corner.

A memory flashed. She remembered Lucifer studying her from his piano. "*Now, are you sure that we haven’t met? I could swear I’ve seen you naked. Have we had sex?*"

Chloe snorted a laugh to herself. Gawd, he had pissed her off right at the start. Now he was somewhere in this damned place, at Pierce’s mercy. That thought sobered her weary mind quickly. She stripped hurriedly out of the rest of her clothes, then stepped into the shower, finding shampoo, conditioner, and soap tucked away.

No matter what other terrible things concerning the situation were, getting clean made her feel immensely better. Chloe felt like a different person when she left the shower. The clothes set out for her were pretty much pajamas or scrubs. She couldn’t even care.

She was pulling them on when she realized she could smell food. Chloe cautiously pulled the loose pants up, drawstrings untied as she peered around the corner. There was no one, and she was sure she would have heard the door. But the smell… It was tantalizing, her mouth salivating as she spotted its source.

The table had a plate on it. A scoop of mashed potatoes and brown gravy, green beans with a square of butter melting atop them, a dinner roll, and slices of beef coated with gravy awaited her. They were still steaming hot.

The Detective set aside her caution, sitting in the chair and pulling the plate and plastic ware to herself greedily. She hadn’t eaten for at least 18 hours, and now hunger roared to life, demanding and sharp. Normally she was careful with how many calories she consumed, something instilled from her mother and days of being a starlet in a comedy. She didn’t care now. She soon found herself using her roll to mop the plate clean, the food sitting heavy in her belly.

She sat there at the table, numb feeling. Her stomach felt too full. Her hair was still wet. Her eyes were heavy and her mind turned into a slug. Her eyes settled on the strange indentation in the wall in front of her, seeing the seams there. A window, but a blocked one. That explained how the food had appeared.

That was the last intelligible thought Chloe had. She lost time, just staring blankly. Finally her body complained of the slumped posture she was holding. She pulled in a breath, looked around, mind casting around for anything she could do. When she came up with nothing, she dragged herself up and to the bed.

Sleep hit her hard. She didn’t even remember laying her head on the pillow.

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Chloe dreamed she was at home.

She was cooking breakfast for Trixie when the buzzing started. She started searching around the apartment for the sound, checking phones, watches, even digging in Lucifer’s pockets to see if he
had anything. (His flirty comments about her fishing in his clothes didn’t annoy her nearly as much as she pretended.) Finally she started to stand on chairs and fiddle with the smoke alarms. Trixie was sitting at the counter, insisting that the fried sandwich was going to burn, but the sound was so annoying and if she could just find it and if Lucifer would just take over the stove for a moment, she was sure it would be the next thing she checked…

She came awake groggy, mouth dry and disoriented. Gruff, inquiring noises that in no way could be passed as actual words were confusedly voiced. The buzzing stopped. She blinked crusty eyes.

“Are you awake now?”

Chloe looked sleepily toward the wall. The voice was coming from the table area. “Huh?”

The accented voice had an electronic sound to it. Relaying through an intercom? The same as the annoying repetitive buzz that had woken her, most likely. “Ah, still not there yet. I would let you sleep more, but your presence is requested elsewhere. If you’re willing, of course.” The wall slid open at the table, the panel opening a space around two foot by two foot. A carafe and metal coffee mug appeared and were set down. She glimpsed a large hand and long sleeved cuff.

“Hopefully this will help. Do you take cream and sugar?”

“Yes?” Chloe was slow to slide out of bed. Her feet touched the floor, cautious. The cement was unpleasantly cold after the warmth of the covers. The ankle device pulled on her foot, the annoying weight making her steps feel awkward as she went to the table.

“I’ll be right back, then.” The panel slid closed abruptly. Chloe blinked at it. She looked to the coffee as she sat down, keeping her posture small and closed as she waited.

Less than a minute later the window opened again. A little metal pitcher of cream and a small bowl of sugar with a plastic spoon sliding in. “Here you are, miss.”

Chloe leaned down, trying to see who it was handing things through the window. All she could see was a button shirt over a stout belly, thicker arms and a broad chest, the very tips of a dark beard.

“Um…”

C.T., or Caretaker, whichever you prefer. Now, I have a question. Please be honest. Do you want to see Lucifer Morningstar?”

“Yes.” It was adamant, out before he had the last syllable of ‘star’ uttered.

“Very well then.” A thick finger pointed her direction, though the man didn’t lean down for her to see a face yet. “I suggest drinking a cup, then taking another with you. I’ll open the door in fifteen minutes. It will give you time to tend to your morning care. Then just follow the hall to the right.”

A pause. “And I suggest the slippers. The floors do get cold here.”

The panel closed again. Chloe stared briefly before looking to her coffee with new energy. Lucifer. She was going to see Lucifer and hopefully he was okay. The coffee tasted good, with little bitterness and a roasted after taste that washed the sleepy coating from her mouth. She stood up, heading toward the bathroom. Her figure flashed in the mirror, and she backed up to look. She’d fallen asleep with her hair still wet. It was a wreck on one side. She made a frustrated sound, hurrying over to the small crate and unpacking the brush and comb.

She made herself as presentable as possible in record time and was making the suggested second cup of coffee when the door whirred and clanked noisily. It swung open, a portal to a hall beyond. Chloe froze, watching it. Her pulse was quick, her mind suspicious. There was no way she wasn’t
going to try to walk out, though. She plucked up the carafe and her second cup, tucking the former in the crook of her elbow as she approached the opening.

Able to see the door's edge now, she could see it was thick and heavy, and there were several thick metal contraptions in the frame that locked it. The construction looked new. She poked her head out, looking left and right down the hallway. Blackness lay to Chloe's left. The circular lights, much like her room, led brightly to the right, ending in a room beyond. She could see a wall of prison bars there.

Her slippered feet scuffed quietly on the floor. The anklet made her walk awkward, but no less swift, eager to find her partner.

She passed two doors and a hall junction, all set close together. The hall leading to the right was pitch black and uninviting. Until she had more information, she didn’t want to deviate. Not yet, not until she saw what condition Lucifer was in. He’d been dragged away like a sack of feathery potatoes, and they might have hurt him more or…

The hall opened into the room with the prison bars, three cell blocks with three separate doors splitting the room in half. And there he was. “Lucifer!” she breathed, slippered feet quick to close the space between them. Lucifer was resting against the wall in the left cell block. His back and folded wings rest against the solid wall. His elbow was propped against the bars, cheek pillowed against his arm so he was partly slumped over. Long legs stretched out alongside the prime feathers and the iron bars, crossed at the ankles with one slipper twisted and the other dangling off his toes. He was wearing an outfit similar to Chloe, though hers was tan and his was dark gray.

At least he was more dressed.

And asleep.

Chloe knelt down by him, looking Lucifer over anxiously, trying to take in all details at once. The chains and cables were gone, clean white bandages and neater stitches replacing them. The blood was gone, only a few hints of rusty pink lining the feathers where the bandages were thick at the tops of his folded limbs. A bruise remained around his eye and upper cheek, his lip mostly healed with only a dark line where it'd been split. The explosive collar was still fixed around his throat, a dark reminder of their dangerous imprisonment. Soft, tousled hair curled from freshly being washed and shampooed. It definitely wasn’t the neat styling he preferred. The feathers weren’t in much better condition, fluffed and in disarray from being wet and ungroomed. Yet his face was relaxed, freshly shaved and trimmed, his lips partly open.

He was drooling all over his arm.

“Hey,” she whispered. He didn’t move, breaths even and eyes closed, face slack of all tension. Lucifer looked peaceful.

It was easy to forget he was the Devil, that he’d been a raging, scarred thing with fiery skin and red and black eyes. Not when he was framed by messy white feathers and making a puddle of saliva in the crook of his arm. Chloe considered him briefly before doing what felt natural, what her gut said was right to do. She set the coffee cup and carafe down, then sat against the wall as well. She stretched her legs out to mirror his, her hands folding on her stomach nervously.

“So, hey, quite a mess we’re in,” she said quietly. Her blue eyes remained fixed on his face, trying to absorb how he looked when he was asleep. “I, uh… I’ve had a lot of time to think.” She paused, gathering her thoughts. “You’re the Devil. That makes some things, well… things make a lot more sense when I look back at them. But some of it… doesn’t. There’s so much I don’t know.”
Chloe felt her face pulling a nervous smile, a tug of mirth at her own ignorance and the ridiculousness of the situation. Again, she let instinct guide her, moving her hand from her stomach. She reached between the bars, to where his hand lay folded across his torso. A brush at first, a testing touch, then she let her skin slide over his, all the way to the wrap of bandages on his wrist. His skin was warm. *He’s always put off a lot of heat.*

Lucifer didn’t flinch or startle, only his breathing changed.

Chloe swallowed, looking straight ahead and kept the weight of her fingers around the edge of his. She steadied herself with a breath, continuing on. “But what I do know is that you have been the best partner I have had for the last three years. You also… like toasted cheese sandwiches, and silly word games on your phone, and you bring me coffee at work, just the way I like it. You like to make me laugh… and you like making me roll my eyes at your antics.” Chloe breathed a short laugh before her brow pinched.

Her voice lowered further. “…You get sad when people you’re connected with pass. You care that people who are hurt get the justice they deserve. You’re protective and love your friends… Even though you show it in weird ways at times.” The breaths had fallen to near silence on the other side of the bars. “You’ve also… kept a wall between us because you knew I would never believe you without proof. It kept you safe from me walking away because of what you are. And you’re right. Part of me wants to run from the truth. It’s difficult for me, trying to understand you’re not just Lucifer, but also this whole other… That you’re…” Chloe closed her eyes. “…You’ve also… kept a wall between us because you knew I would never believe you without proof. It kept you safe from me walking away because of what you are. And you’re right. Part of me wants to run from the truth. It’s difficult for me, trying to understand you’re not just Lucifer, but also this whole other… That you’re…” Chloe closed her eyes. “But I know you, and what I know of you is that you’re my friend, and I want to know more about you, all of you.” She took time to breathe, then added bluntly, “You’re still not off of the hook for letting me date Pierce, though. So, we’re going to have to work on that.”

Chloe looked over at him. She could see the lashes were parted a minimal amount, though no hint of his dark eyes. “No more walls, okay? No more deciding for me what I can and can’t handle. I want to trust you again. That means trusting me when I say I’m here, and I want to be here. I always have, and that—that hurt every time you hid things from me. I hope you can help me understand what happened all those times before, but I… can’t have that anymore. We’re going to get out of this, and I want to… figure things out, and that means honesty. Not just not lying… Being truly honest.” She searched his profile, noting the way his mouth closed slowly and his throat pulsed against the collar. “There’s no reason to hide from me anymore… Okay?”

She held her breath, waiting. For a moment she thought he would go on pretending to sleep, wall up behind half truths again. Then she felt his hand shift under hers, pulling her fingertips into the curl of his. Chloe squeezed her hand more firmly around his.

Lucifer’s exhale was unsteady as he leaned closer against the bars, the corner of his forehead resting against the metal. His whisper was just as unsteady, more air than voice. “Okay.”

Chloe leaned her head against his, barely able to touch skin with his through the gap. She closed her eyes, just resting with him there. “Okay,” she affirmed.

Their hands shifted, his turning up, offered but not daring to close into the spaces between her fingers until she wrapped hers with his. Long digits closed in between hers, squeezing then relaxing, a comfortable fit. The two breathed together, taking comfort from the other in the quiet between them as his thumb caressed over her knuckles.

Between one breath and the next, the two fell asleep again.
Chapter Notes

Hello, darklings! Here we get to see what Lucifer was up to settling into his new arrangement as well, so a little backed up in time. Not fully angst free, but nothing too terrible. Pierce also gets a wordless fuck you here as well, which I enjoyed writing.

Do I need to tag for nudity? There's nudity.

Lastly, sleep-deprived Lucifer being woken up is like a grumpy teenager in my head. I'm not sorry. Enjoy, demonlings!

Lucifer gave into the exhaustion.

Sleep had been scarce for the Devil during the past four days. He’d too often been left standing with his weight either pulling on the bared bones of his wings or pushing on his injured legs, and he’d only slept the few times they had drugged him. Of course, drugs never stayed in his system long. His angelic blood tended to burn impurities with annoying efficiency, so he would always wake up far too quickly. After the warehouse, he had slept in the truck some. He wasn’t sure the length of time, and it again had been with the aid of drugs.

Now he was underground, with little promise of escape. When he struck the deal with Pierce, the fight boiling in the Devil’s blood had snuffed out. There was no point right now. Not until he could see the Detective. So Lucifer allowed himself the luxury of not caring and letting the weariness have him.

Caretaker had clipped the metal from him. The stinging slide of cables exiting his wings and blood tingling as it flowed freely to his extremities once more made it unpleasant, but it was better than the constant sting of metal on bone. Finally free to move his limbs without painful restriction, Lucifer stripped off his few clothes and sat in the shower to let the water run over him. He didn't remember passing out.

His warden had to wake him, and the fallen angel soaped and shampooed himself down with the other man's help, then went to asleep again. He only vaguely remembered Caretaker pulling him out of the shower, the two swapping quips on each other’s weight as he was helped to towel off, shivering the entire time uncontrollably. Lucifer had spotty memories of being helped limping down the hall.

Once in his new quarters, the Devil had gravitated immediately for the bed, nude and uncaring. He’d fallen asleep again, letting himself be maneuvered around for stitching and bandaging. Lucifer didn’t give a whit. Darkness hit him hard, and the world was gone.

When Caretaker woke him next, he was unsure how much time had passed. Lucifer just knew he was still tired, and not too gracious about being coaxed into sitting up. Caretaker had modified a shirt for his wings and insisted he get dressed and eat some crackers and water. Lucifer complied, but whined about it, of course. He grumbled that if his wing weren’t broken, he wouldn’t need a shirt that could button around them. He cursed at the discomfort of the heavy collar. His warden had bore all his petulant commentary with solemn nods while he studied the wounds on his wings,
arms, and feet, salved and rebandaged them.

Those felt better at least. His bones still ached, and every muscle and cut was sore, but it was no
longer the torturous agony of before. The holes in his wings from the cable throbbed, the muscles
still complaining where they had been separated from the bones which had been left to open air far
too long, but so long as he didn't try to push his outer wing outward, it was bearable.

Not like he wanted to move his wings with the right one still feeling sharp and swollen where the
bone was broken.

“You’ve been at the shelter for some time, now,” Caretaker noted when Lucifer’s complaining
lulled into the sleepy munching of crackers. “It’s Sunday morning, around 11am. Ms. Decker
should have had time to rest. I thought for ease we would start a 24 hour cycle at 12 midnight. We
could split up time as needed, so if you wanted you could see her twice a day, an hour and a half
each, perhaps?”

Lucifer listened as he chewed on the last cracker. His stomach had been without food a long time.
As much as he had argued he wasn’t some sick child, the crackers had been a good idea, his belly
needing to get a taste for digestion once more. He swallowed, his thoughts rolling over each other.
He was nowhere near fully awake. “That… is up to her.”

“Very well. We’ll defer to her. Now, slippers, and you can head to the designated area any time.
When you’re there and have locked the door behind yourself, she’ll come to you.”

Lucifer frowned, looking to the man’s black combat boots, worn but polished. “C.T… What if she
doesn’t want to?”

Caretaker frowned at him. “I... don’t think that will be a problem.”

“But what if? If she doesn’t want to, she can’t be forced to-.”

The warden looked up as though for patience, muttering something about foolishness in his Serbo-
Creotian. “I’ll let you know if she doesn’t want to. Now, take your time. I am trusting you with a
pair of clippers and a razor. Don’t make me regret it.”

Caretaker took the plate from him. Lucifer made a grouchy sound, but Caretaker was already out
the door.

Were it anyone else, he would have squirmed under the blankets again. But it was the Detective, so
he slapped at his own cheeks to ward off his sleepiness, felt all the hair there, and decided there
was a reason Caretaker had left him something to groom his facial hair with. He stared at the floor
like it was thin ice for a moment, took a breath and eased his weight onto his feet.

The first few steps were the hardest, the bolt of agony up his bones and the grind of his ankle the
worst. The arches felt torn, overstretched despite the cushion of the slippers and bandages. He
grimaced, but eased his weight from one foot to the next. The pain bled into a hot burn till he
couldn’t tell what ache was what, and went to see what he looked like in a mirror and to clean up.

When ready, Lucifer found the door Caretaker had left from still open. The Devil walked on with
his hand against the wall, slowly, but functionally enough. His wings were bound in a fold with the
bandages. That at least left them close to his back and not dragging on the cement floor.

The lights led him to the end of the hall, where he stopped. “Oh, for the love of Dad…” His dark
eyes traced over the bars. “Why on Earth are there holding cells down here?” Lucifer considered
the bars, annoyed. It didn’t break his stipulations, he realized. Plus perhaps the Detective might
feel better about having a barrier between us.

So with a sigh he limped in to the one on the left and shut the door. There was an electronic buzz and the wide metal lock bolted into place. After that it was a matter of getting off his feet, and waiting.

Sleep found him while he did.

~~~

Chloe, as usual, surprised him.

"There’s no reason to hide from me anymore… Okay?"

"...Okay."

Her words left him frightfully hopeful, her fingers snug between his and his thumb caressing the soft skin on the back of her hand. So small and fragile compared to his, but he was the one who felt like he’d break if he tried to speak. So he stayed still, and said as little as he could, staying shoulder to shoulder, forehead to forehead with her through the bars.

It seemed it was enough. She relaxed, her breathing even. That was enough for him at the moment, as well. More than enough. She wasn’t running from him. He needed to stop running from her. He would be terrified about it later, but in this moment, some of the weight dropped from his emotional shoulders, and the doubts evaporated to leave him vulnerable but light. So he fell into an easy sleep right alongside her, enjoying the strange sensation of peace.

~~~

Pierce’s harsh words made them start and sit up at the same time. There had been murmurs echoing down the hall, but the barked order cut across all other noise.

“I don’t care what you need to do. Find him, and kill him!”

“Yes, boss.”

The two looked to the approaching men, at each other, down at their joined hands. Lucifer started to open his, but Chloe tightened her grip. He opened his mouth, saw the slight raise of her brow, and wordlessly curled his fingers through hers once again.

There was a red mark on her forehead from the bars. He wasn’t going to point it out to her, considering he probably had a similar mark and was using his other hand to wipe drool from the corner of his mouth.

This woman, she could be the death of me, and I can’t even care.

They both turned their attention to Pierce as he approached the cell. He looked to their joined hands. It did nothing to abate the thunder lurking in his tightly controlled expression. He addressed Chloe instead of Lucifer.

“Visiting time is over. You can finish later.”

Lucifer scoffed. “Trouble in paradise, Cain?”

Pierce ignored him, still looking to the Detective. “I need to collect some feathers. You don’t need to be here for it.”
Chloe looked about to retort, but then she looked considering at him, at the two men still lurking near the hall entrance. “I think Lucifer is right. Trouble in paradise. One of your boys skipped out on you, didn’t they.”

Dear Dad, he loved her quick mind. Lucifer felt a grin growing, wagging a finger in the air thoughtfully. “Oh, you lost track of someone.” He looked to Chloe. “‘B’, right? He asked about him when that Smudge fellow was mucking about giving me the world’s least attractive choker.”

“So all those feathers you dropped when this asshat first shot you? Gone to the wind?”

“To the B, more like.”

“Yeah… Bitchin’.”

“Brazen.”

“Ballsy.”

“Brassy!”

“Bold,” Chloe grinned back at him.

“Um, bucca…neering?”

“No,” Chloe stated, feigning seriousness.

“Blast.”

Pierce looked like the two of them were giving him a headache. “We’ll handle that situation. In the meantime, Decker, unless you want to help remove feathers, I suggest you go back to your cell.”

Chloe didn’t look to Pierce. Instead she kept her attention on Lucifer. He felt the bottom of his heart swoop, and he couldn’t help giving her hand a squeeze. “Oh, I brought you coffee. Hopefully it’s still warm.” She reached over one handed to the carafe and put it atop her thigh, opening it. “Still steaming, so must be. Though, don’t think the coffee in my mug fared as well.”

“Oh, Detective, you’re a saint. I suppose it needs to be drank before we can have the fresh stuff. You didn’t put a terrible amount of sugar in there, did you?”

“They didn’t exactly offer me splenda.”

“I’m pretty thirsty… Hm.”

“Give me a moment. Got an idea.” She tipped the tepid coffee to her lips, swallowing it down in big gulps.

Pierce was looking like a blood vessel might be popping somewhere in his head. “Decker,” he tried to admonish.

She paid the crime boss no heed, instead stopping when the cup was half empty and then looked around to try and maneuver one handed. Lucifer thought he knew what she intended, so reached through with his free hand. “Here, let me… Just… there we are.” He got a hold of the mug from her. It was just a little too wide to fit through the bars. It worked well enough for her to pour hot coffee into it, though.

Once done, she set the carafe down, then took the cup back. It was an odd angle after all if he tried
to hold it and drink from it. She held the cup right against the bars, enough he could get a sip if he was careful.

“Mmm…” The cup tilted back. It wasn't too hot, nor too cold, and not too sweet and creamy now either. “Oh, that’s good. No coffee for a week is a terrible thing.”

“No booze either.” She took a sip from the other side of the cup.

“I know! Amazing my liver hasn’t had a panic attack.” He took another sip. “And you know? I think I'm sick of drugs for the meantime. I’ll stick to caffeine for a bit, I think.”

“If you’re not going to move,” Pierce stated, “Then maybe yank some feathers while you're there?”

Chloe turned to retort.

“Bollocks.” Lucifer moved first. He reached up with his free hand and grabbed a handful of the small feathers on the inside of his wing. He relaxed the limb and pulled. The Detective must have heard the soft rip, because she looked back, wide eyed.

“This enough? Here, Detective, set the coffee down and give these to the blighted duffer.”

Chloe did awkwardly, not looking at where she was setting the mug since her eyes remained on the feathers. She held them in her palm, a few falling and floating down, swaying side to side as they went. Their reflection was bright in her eyes.

“Don’t worry, dear, there’s more where that came from,” Lucifer reached through the bars as best he could to push her hand some, a quiet urge for her to discard them. “They do grow back.” He frowned. “Even if they’re unsightly pinfeathers for a bit.”

Pierce had approached and was reaching for the feathers. Chloe released them. Lucifer didn’t miss that she gave Pierce a “drop dead” look for it. The glee he felt at that was entirely worth the irritated skin.

Feathers exchanged, Pierce gave them one last, irritated look. He marched out of the room, the men quickly falling in line behind him.

“More coffee?” Chloe asked him.

Lucifer smiled back at his partner, feeling a mix of giddy, tired, and happy. “Yes, please.”
Hello, darklings! I totally came up with this idea after everyone loved Maze and Trixie's scene so much, and I love how this goes so much more than the more serious scene I had in my head with other characters. This chapter is a bit from both of their POVs, but hopefully the transitions are smooth.

Oh, and that memory? I totally have a note down to write it someday, because, yeah! Lucifer totally promised her in an episode and we never got to see it happen on screen!

I have a scene that I'm going to try to write up that I've already roughed up some. One reason this update is late, sorry! If it's not here tonight, it will be tomorrow. If I can resist binging on Lucifer season 4. (I watched the first episode. Nnngh! Graahhh! Wha-Chloe-Lucifeelz! Resisting binging more!)

Enjoy, spiderlings!

“This is a lot of what you have to do when you’re bounty hunting?”

“Yes.”

“It’s not very exciting.”

“No, it isn’t.”

“And there’s not an easier way to do this?”

“Not on a Sunday,” Mazikeen responded, her voice breathy with exasperation. She opened another drawer and continued walking her fingers along the tabs. “Humans still trying to keep a damned holy day… Messes with me. Good thing you can fit through those little cellar windows. Hold the light up higher.”

Trixie complied. They were down in the basement of a government's record building, Maze digging into the files, busily tracking down deeds. She had a few leads already, but she needed a hard copy.

Trixie held the flashlight, sitting atop one of the filing cabinets and trying to refrain from swinging her legs. After a moment, she asked, “Any luck?”

Mazikeen looked up sharply. “You’re the one who wanted to come along.”

Trixie pursed her lips apologetically. The demon went back to digging into the files. Finally she made an interested whisper, naming things quietly to herself, then pulled the paperwork free. She opened the file atop the others, flipping in the papers with interest.

“Anything?” Trixie asked hopefully.

“Yeah… But… Pretty sure this is an alias. A John Sparrow.” She frowned, thinking. “Barrow. John Barrow is the guy the feds have locked up right now. Assholes still won’t let me question him.
He’s locked up tight.”

Trixie watched as Mazikeen folded up the file, then hopped down, flashlight swinging its light around haphazardly. Mazikeen was briefly blinded. “So what now?”

“Now, it looks like we’re going to hoof it to the properties themselves for clues. There’s not much else we can do.”

Trixie looked disheartened. Mazikeen noticed, leaning down to look at her. “Hey. We’re going to find her.” She held her palm up, showing the still vivid red cut there. “Promise.”

Trixie gave a nod, taking a deep breath to keep her nerves settled. The demon walked past her, and she trot quickly after her.

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Trixie took a noisy bite of her burger, lettuce and tomato crunching moistly and the wrapper crinkling loudly in the car. She set that down to wipe french fry greasy fingers on her leggings and reached for her soft drink. There was a vibrating sucking sound as Trixie hit only ice.

Mazikeen continued to stare forward at the abandoned factory they had parked outside. It was starting to get dusky outside, sun setting. “You… are the noisiest eater… I have ever been in a car with.”

Trixie looked over, fry already in her mouth. “Sorry?” She shrugged. “My dad’s a noisy eater, too.”

“No. I’m impressed.” She raised her brows thoughtfully. “You could easily torture people with misophonia.” At Trixie’s side look, Mazikeen motioned to her own ear with an energetic circle of her finger. “Sounds like chewing and breathing drive them crazy… I wonder what sounds you make when eating corn.”

“Probably pretty obnoxious ones,” Trixie agreed.

“Could record it, maybe. Hm.” Mazikeen leaned back in the seat of the car, listening to another fry’s demise between Trixie’s teeth. She gave a slow head tilt as Trixie again sucked at the straw for hopeful remnants of soda. “I just thought of something… I just gave you soda. Which means you’re going to need to pee soon.”

Trixie released the straw, looking at the cup thoughtfully. “And stakeouts take hours… yeah, that was probably not the greatest idea, was it?”

“And gas stations usually have surveillance. Damn. All right. I’m going to hurry this up and check out the building.”

Trixie looked at the dilapidated structure, rusted and shabbily fenced. Hurrying things up sounded like a great idea suddenly. It looked spooky, like she was being watched.

“I’ll come.” Trixie put aside her food wrappings and was out of the car before Mazikeen could protest.

That was how they both ended up staring at the security camera perched onto corner facing the other way. Mazikeen frowned at it. “No sticker. Not standard security. It’s pretty top of the line tech. What do you got?”
Trixie pushed at her phone, then turned it so Maze could see the screen. “It’s this one, right?”

Mazikeen looked at the image and the specs. Then whistled at the price. “That is high dollar to just keep squatters out of a dump. This place probably has something.”

“Are we going in?”

“No. I am going in. You are going to be my lookout.”

Trixie flapped her arms up and and slapped them against her sides. “Are you trying to kill me with boredom?”

“I’m trying to not get you killed at all. What did I say?”

Trixie sighed, rocking her weight to the other foot. “Shit goes down, listen to you.”

“Right. So this is a situation where shit might go down. So I need you to be on lookout duty and let me know if anyone arrives.” Mazikeen was pretty sure she could dodge the security, though. She held up her phone. “Anyone does show up…?”

“I text you.”

“Anyone looks like they’re going to check out the car?”

“I’ll… honk the horn?”

Mazikeen smirked. “No. You’ll hide under my coat on the floorboard as best you can and text me right away and call 911.”

Trixie looked doubtful.

“Or you go home and I come back later by myself.”

Trixie looked skyward, as though seeking patience from the heavens. “Lookout duty it is.” She started back toward where the car was parked well off the abandoned warehouse’s lot. “Let me know if you need me to crawl through any small windows again.”

“Hey.” Trixie turned and made a surprised catch of the keys tossed her way. “Keep the lights off and your phone charged. If you don’t hear from me in twenty, call Dan.”

“Got it.” Trixie nodded, then started her long trot back to the car.

Mazikeen watched her go before she ducked along the building’s wall. She looked through a broken window, backed up and smoothly dove between the jagged slice of pane and the frame, disappearing inside.

~~~

Mazikeen found the big, empty production floor by following the scent of blood.

She caught a whiff of it while traversing the halls, and followed it to the end to the heavy metal door. It swung open with a groan and she took in the scene.

There was sawdust on the floor at her feet, the wooden powder reeking of human blood and something danker. Mazikeen had smelled brain often enough in Hell to know the likely cause, and the size of the puddle fit with a mortal head wound.
Demons rarely stocked any energy to hoping, but at the moment she fervently hoped Chloe was not the cause of that sawdusty puddle.

She walked slowly to the center of the room, eyes sweeping from the shiny new winches up to the cut cables dangling from the ceiling beams. The cement in between them was cracked, and the cracks were splattered with blood.

Inhuman blood.

“Fuck…” She looked anxiously at the scene, seeing blood on one of the stainless steel work tables. Sweeps of rusty red swiped on the edges of the metal. She cast one last look to the dangling cables then explored the table more fully. There was a bowl with crushed bullets in the bottom. Mazikeen tipped it, watched them roll once before she released it, spine stiff and breath tight. “Fuck,” she hissed.

That was a lot of bullets. Too many when Lucifer was so mortal and easily injured. And she wasn’t there to stop it.

She slid her finger along the metal, tracing the plain pattern of a large feather quill printed in rusty red.

_He was here. He was here and he was hurt. They had him chained up like a piece of meat. I once guarded his every move from other demons… And now some fucking humans… And I wasn’t here… Fuckfuckfuck!_

Her phone vibrated. Mazikeen frowned, pulling it out to look at the text.

“Fuck!” Mazikeen ran.

~~~

Trixie peeked over the dashboard as the SUV skid to a halt outside the warehouse and four people piled out, three men and a woman. Her eyes were wide when she saw the long guns one man and woman were packing as they head into the building.

That left two of them by their vehicle, looking around with their hands suspiciously in their inside jackets. They looked toward the building first before expanding their search other directions while walking the perimeter. Eventually they spotted the car parked across the street. One nodded sideways at it, and they started walking toward it.

“Ohhh, fuck.” Trixie sank down below the dash.

~~~

The two entered the building, flashlights taped to the barrels casting bright light among the old debris of the factory. Firearms raised, the duo kept close as they moved through the halls, sliding corner to corner and guarding each other’s blind spots. They moved in easy synch, clearing rooms as they went in search of the intruder.

The team entered the large production area, panning in both directions before moving in.

Mazikeen could see them just fine. She needed no flashlights. She stayed where she was atop the beam, studying their movements from above.

The phone buzzed. The demoness slapped her hand over her pocket to muffle it, but not in time.
The woman jerked the barrel of her gun upward and fired.

~~~

Trixie almost dropped her phone when she heard the gunfire inside. Maze…!

She thought quickly. She could sit on the floorboards, like Mazikeen said. But that wasn’t the right thing to do. Perhaps the easiest thing, since she did want to curl up in a ball right now and hold her breath in terror.

The thought of them shooting her through the windows was more terrifying. She inched into the driver’s seat. Still keeping her head low, she insert the keys into the ignition.

She heard Lucifer’s voice in her head. ”Now, to start the car, you want to turn the key, gentle like. You’re turning it on, not cranking a chainsaw. There, see? Go ahead and give it a sip of gas. Not a beer guzzle. We’re talking like the first taste of a fine bourbon. Give you a feel for the difference between a purr and a roar.”

Trixie recalled that day clearly. A deal was a deal, and while it had taken some maneuvering to find time when both parents were none the wiser, Lucifer had made good on his promise to let her drive.

That had been a fun and thrilling day. She remembered how the car had lurched as Lucifer let her go around the parking lot, the way she had to crane her neck to see in front of herself. The roar of the engine when she pushed on the pedal while in park. Trixie had been grins the rest of the day. Best yet, Lucifer hadn’t been nervous at all of her driving, insisting she not treat the car like a supermarket cart and go a bit faster. As usual, he was just nervous of her, which was always fun to watch the way he’d squint at her, uncertain and trying to figure out what to do with a ‘small human’.

Trixie took a deep breath, staying low in the seat (which wasn’t far for her), and going over everything Lucifer had taught her.

”Now press on the brake-ahah! Not with your left. Always use the right foot, or you’ll go pressing both and that’s no good, not until you’re learning how to drift. We’ll hopefully get to that some day. It’s quite fun… Good. Now… push that button in on the stick and pull it back till you’re in drive. That’s the big D there. Eheh, it’s—Oh never mind, you’re probably too young for that joke.”

She had entirely gotten the joke, but she let him believe otherwise. Sometimes that was the better thing to do with adults.

The men were getting closer. The gunfire in the warehouse had stopped. Trixie took a deep breath, fingers ready on the key, going through her mind what she needed to do. Turn the ignition, brake, lever button, drive, then gas. She snaked on her seatbelt. The men noticed movement, starting to speed up, one pulling their handgun free.

Maze came bursting out of one of the warehouse windows in a shower of glass. She hit the ground in a crouch, hands down, looking wildly about. The men turned, aiming their guns toward the new noise.

Trixie turned the ignition. Brake. Shift to the D. Run over the D’s.

The car’s wheels shrieked as the car roared forward. The thugs dove to get out of the way. A handgun went off. Trixie flinched.
Oh. Brake. Brake… Brake! She finally got her brain to listen, the muscle memory still not there, and she screeched to a halt just as Mazikeen jumped onto the hood. The leather-clad bounty hunter kept going, launching over the car roof and into a flying kick into one guy, then rolling, leaping up, and round housing the other. Trixie watched in the side mirror.

“Wow.”

Mazikeen rushed one of the men. Trixie winced at the sound of the wrist snapping and the guy’s agonized cry before being kicked in the face. The demoness had his gun in hand before she dropped him, and in the same motion threw it right at the other dazed man trying to pick himself up. The revolver hit him in the head and he dropped cold.

Mazikeen didn't pause. She ran to car. Her eyes were still wide and panting as she whipped the door open and stared at Trixie. “Are you okay?”

“That…” Trixie’s face lit up. “Was so awesome! You launched over the car like a super action hero!”

Mazikeen sagged with relief, laughing briefly. She shook her head. “Yeah. Nice distraction, shorty. I must have tripped a motion sensor somewhere…” She looked around at the prone men, the car, Trixie in the driver seat.

Trixie was looking thoughtful as well, glancing about at their situation.

They both spoke. “We are not telling anyone about this.”

Mazikeen straightened with a nod, hands on her hips. “Glad we agree. Let’s call the others and let them know we found the place. And hope no more of their goons show up.”

“What do we do with them?” Trixie nod toward one of the men laying in the dirt.

The demoness looked at them thoughtfully, then quirked her scarred brow at Trixie with a sly smile. “Want to learn how to duct tape people together so they can’t get out of it while we wait for the others?”

The kid was already undoing her seatbelt and scrambling out of the car. “Do I!”

Mazikeen smirked, leaning down to pop the trunk. Her hand stung slightly.

We’re coming, you big feathery dope. Just hang on.
A Lesson in Angel Anatomy

Chapter Notes

Darklings, I am soooo sorry! I took some meds right before I started doing editing last night and fell asleep during! I didn't mean to break my promise to have another chapter up. D: I was just more tired from the week than I thought!

Hopefully the size of this chapter will make up for it. This is an over 5,000 word beastie, picking up right after the chapter before. We get some answers on their mysterious warden. Some medical procedure is present in this one, but no one is awake in any torturous way during, and hopefully the ending makes up for any tension over that. Chloe is being bamf and compartmentalizing as needed, and definitely being a caretaker herself here. Lucifer's wings feature heavily here.

Enjoy, dearies!

Chloe didn’t like the deal.

She knew Lucifer could tell she didn’t like the deal by the slightly panicked edge on his smile, the way it twitched like a bird wanting to fly.

“Don’t be angry,” he pled.

It was difficult to be angry with him when he was sitting on the floor still, head tilt back, thick bomb around his throat, and his long limbs wrapped in so many bandages.

When Caretaker’s voice had come in over the coms overhead to announce their three hours were up, Lucifer had just sat there, resigned. It had made Chloe immediately suspicious that he wasn’t protesting. She’d asked what Caretaker meant. Lucifer explained they only got three hours visitation time. And, oh yeah, he couldn’t do anything about it, since he wasn’t allowed to hurt anyone in the facility or try to escape, either.

So Chloe had stood and paced, weary mind turning it over while Lucifer looked increasingly uneasy. The weight of the bomb strapped to her ankle made her stride different, annoyingly so. She stopped pacing finally, facing him with her arms folded.

“Why?” Her question was flat and insistent. Lucifer always had reasons for why he did things, convoluted as they often were.

“Why? Because…” Lucifer’s eyes danced side to side. “Wouldn’t you get tired of me after three hours?”

“Lucifer Morningstar,” she said slowly. “If you give me an honest explanation as to why you would make a deal that sabotaged yourself so much, I might not be mad. However, if you bullshit me like this? I’m definitely going to be upset with you.” We just talked about this. Minutes ago. Honesty, not just not lying...

Lucifer looked at her like she was threatening to pin him to the wall with a spear. In his mind, she realized, it might be the same. He didn’t like being exposed, so there had to be something there as
to why the deal he struck made him feel like he needed to hide.

“I…” Lucifer took one of his stressed but resigned breaths, deep through his mouth and out through his nose, eyes falling to his toe. He moved the slipper barely hanging on to his toe in distraction. “I didn’t want to be alone. It was that or I wasn’t going to get to see you.”

Chloe pieced it together, looking to the empty cup and carafe while she shuffled the information into a shape that made sense. “Pierce wanted extra insurance that you would stay put and not fight his people. So he applied pressure.”

“Sorry, I know it was a bit weak, not my shining moment, but I… Detective, I hate being left to my thoughts with nothing to do. Boredom is awful! It’s torture! Worse than watching golf!” He was back to being glib, using hyperbole to hide his insecurities. Truth, but said with exaggerated tones so no one took it seriously.

She’d fallen for that trick too often in the past. She pinched the bridge of her nose. She had a constant pressure from being so tired, but now there was a buzz of caffeine making her thoughts spin, making them harder to rein in. So she took her time to breath a bit, letting Lucifer ramble for a moment about some rooms in Hell being just blank white walls.

“Lucifer, it’s not weak to not want to be isolated.”

Lucifer’s rambling halted, words stuck in his throat and swallowed down. “No?”

“No. I mean, have you seen the arguments concerning the use of solitary confinement in prisons? Many argue it’s just psychological torture, entirely inhumane. So, of course…”

His interruption was quiet. “I’m not human, though, Detective.”

Well, the Devil wasn’t trying to hide behind gab and humor, now. Those dark eyes were far too serious, steady on hers. Chloe scrambled for thought, because the past few days, that fact that he wasn’t human had been clamoring in her mind like battling pots and pans. Finally, she settled on motioning to him, “Yeah? Well, you sure bleed like one.”

That surprised him for a moment, expression slack a brief instant before he laughed. “That’s not fair!” he said, still laughing. “That’s special to you.” He shook a finger.

Chloe smiled at him, then it was her turn to be serious. “Speaking of being more human… you’re not standing.” Lucifer’s mirth wilted away. “Usually when you’re feeling cagey, you don’t like to be prone. You go for distracting motions, walk around. Usually go for alcohol when you can.” She softened her voice. “So. How bad are your legs. Really.”

Lucifer looked to her, then down to his feet, wiggling his toes. The slipper finally gave up its balance and fell off his bandaged foot. It made a clopping sound against the hard cement. “You know, I’m really not sure. My ankle feels better?”

Caretaker’s voice sounded over the overhead com again. “I suspect he has at least stress fractures in his feet and legs. I was going to look him over in the morning after I did a bit more research.”


“They’re cracked bones, so they’re not fun,” Chloe informed. “You stomped so hard on the cement you split the skin on the bottom of your foot. Actually, surprised its not worse.”
Lucifer sounded peevish, defensive. “Well, so nice that your angelic invulnerability nixing powers extend to my skeleton. Bollocks.” Lucifer looked up at the ceiling. “I want a second opinion!”

Chloe thankfully didn't have to address his sudden verbal shove to hide his discomfort. Caretaker sounded patient but firm. “*What you need is some more food and rest. There is a protein shake back at your room, and dinner is about ready. But first, the Detective has to return to her quarters.*”

That was good information to hear at least. Lucifer wasn’t stuck in this bare cell with only bars. Hopefully he had a few creature comforts in his cell like she did. Still…

“What if I don’t?” Chloe asked.

“You just drank… how much coffee? I may be wrong, Detective Decker, but you do not strike me as the kind who will forgo the use of proper facilities if given a choice, and you are still a little dead on your feet.”

“Okay, point for the jailer.” She turned to Lucifer, looking him over. “How are you going to get back to your cell?”

He still sounded irritated. “Oh, limp like I did to get here, I suppose.” Lucifer started to move, using the bars to pull his tall frame upright, wings dragging up after him. He closed his eyes and grimaced the entire time, but then he was standing, if a little unsteadily. Chloe thought about when she’d seen him right before they had loaded him into the truck, the way he’d fidgeted his weight from one side to the other, picking up his bloody feet as though he were trying to relieve stepping on nails.

“Okay.” She came close to the bars, reaching up to touch his shoulder. “I’m going to hurry back to my cell then. You get some rest.”

“You as well.”

Chloe nodded, started marching away. The sooner she was back in her room, the sooner Lucifer could get back to his and off his hurting feet.

“Detective?”

She stopped and looked over her shoulder. Lucifer was hanging on the bars, dark eyes vulnerable. “I’ll see you tomorrow?”

“Of course.” Her mind worried at that question, but he was giving a tired smile, some of the anxiety melting away in his eyes.

“Good night, then, Detective.”

“Good night, Lucifer.” She continued looking over her shoulder as she started walking, then hurried on.

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The lights in her quarters were a nice touch. They were slowly dimming. After a good meal of chicken and broccoli, she had brushed her teeth, done a few minimal stretches and crawled into bed as the room lights faded into blackness. It was absolutely dark, velvety concealment that made the room silent save for the spin of the fan above.
It was strange sleeping without any lights whatsoever. With her thoughts still being too flighty to pin down and exhaustion gnawing at her, she fell asleep.

In the morning, it felt like she had slept forever, giving herself the luxury of laying among the warm blankets and smelling the earthy, clean air as the lights slowly crept back into a morning glow. Her head felt clearer, the buzz from lack of sleep gone.

Day Two underground. Seven days in captivity. Definitely where we’re intended to be held long term. But this place… No way it was built in so short a time. It doesn’t smell that new, even though the technology is top of the line.

Chloe sat up, giving her back a luxurious stretch. Still stiff, but her hips and shoulders weren’t absolute knots from having nothing but a sleeping bag on cement, or slumped over in the back of a jittery semi trailer. She stood up, feet on the smooth concrete, and made her way to the bathroom to shower and change into the fresh set of clothes neatly folded on the shelf.

The Detective wasn’t surprised when she heard the panel move while rinsing off the last of the soap. When she dried off, dressed, and walked into the room with her hair wrapped up, she was greeted with a fresh coffee mug and carafe, complete with the small pitcher of cream and a plastic sugar bowl. She was a little more surprised to see the bowl with a portion of oatmeal, little cups of walnuts, dried cranberries, and brown sugar on the platter by the bowl. Two slices of wheat toast were cooling on a plate, melted butter sunk deep into the bread, and there was an empty tumbler and a clear plastic carafe of milk. The dishes weren’t pretty, but the food was welcomed.

And of all things, the New York Times was set next to the wall. It wasn’t the newspaper of it, but a printed stack from online articles, but it looked complete, crossword puzzle included. She’d have to ask for a pencil later.

“Hotels could learn a thing from you, C.T.,” she murmured, sitting down to the breakfast.

After some morning stretches, she did a thorough investigation of her room, which was largely fruitless except to determine the pipes in the washroom were not easy to get to, nor the cameras up by the lights, and the narrow com speaker above the panel was solid on her side. Exploration done, Chloe finally settled down to peruse the newspaper. She was pondering if she was bored enough to read the wanted ads when Caretaker’s accented voice interrupted the quiet. She jumped, making a small sound, coffee sloshing over advertisements.

“Ms. Decker, I hate to inconvenience, but I could use your assistance if you’re willing.”

Chloe looked to the speaker where the voice came from, trying to school her heart rate into some level below the stratosphere. “You… want my help?”

“With Lucifer, if you could.” When she didn’t answer right away, he added, “I won’t count it as visiting time, considering he’s unconscious at the moment. You will, of course, need to be on your best manners. It would benefit all three of us at the moment.”

Chloe opened her mouth, giving a sideways nod, “Uh, oh-okay, I guess. Um.” The door by the bathroom whirred. She heard the metal slide and click, then the door swung open.

“Just follow the lights, please.”

Chloe tried to smooth her air dried hair. The hall outside had only a short lane of lights overhead. Instead of going all the way to the cell blocks. As she walked, the last door swung open.

She approached cautiously, staying close to the far wall to get a wide look at the room. Then she
She was glad that Lucifer’s room was like hers, almost an exact replica. Lucifer himself was on the
bed, belly down, shirt free. On the side furthest from Chloe was Caretaker, his beard bunched into
a rubberband. He had a cart next to him, something with wheels and drawers, an old-fashioned
brownish yellow thing with scratches, yet seemed functional enough with ample surface. The IV
drip pole and the smell of disinfectant had Chloe’s stomach flipping.

Chloe crept in, slippers giving quiet shuffles against the smooth floor.

Chloe swallowed as she inched forward, watching him clean blood from a scalpel with a clean
cloth, painting the white cotton a bright red. Caretaker set the glistening instrument atop his cart. A
computer tablet was propped on the cart as well. Leaning against the cart was a black, flat case of
some sort. The Detective switched her attention to studying Lucifer next, assessing the damage on
him quickly. He looked oblivious, hugging a pillow under his cheek with one arm and breathing
evenly. She imagined it was a good thing, considering his right wing was bandage free. Caretaker
had cut the feathery flesh open atop the ascending bone, the skin pinned wide open with two
surgical forceps. The towel underneath was blotched red.

“God… What are you doing to him?”

Caretaker didn’t look directly at her, instead checking the IV drip going down to Lucifer’s other
hand and checking his pulse. Satisfied, he started pulling out another pair of gloves from a box and
held them out toward her over the prone angel.

“Put these on. This wing bone is being stubborn and I underestimated how many hands I would
need to get it set.”

Chloe watched him closely, examining how steady the older man’s hand was as she took the blue
gloves. It was strange being in close quarters with him. And he's not calling someone else in to help
him. He's probably very confident he can handle me if I try to attack him, and probably... no one
else is here or they're only watching. In her gut, she felt like this was also some sort of test.

Caretaker wasn't being unaware of her, not at any point, even though he was busily maneuvering
things around.

She pulled the gloves on, letting her eyes dip down to the left wing. It was freshly bandaged, pulled
in to a tight fold. The ugly black sutures were gone, and more had been added to seal the hole the
cable had left. She followed the wing to the top of his left shoulder then to mid shoulder where the
bullet had been dug free. She’d only caught glimpses of the wound before. The holes were now
neatly stitched, and the skin no longer angry looking. Then she looked to the flesh pinned open
atop the wing.

“I have to put a plate in on his wing’s forearm,” Caretaker explained while setting out other tools.
“I was hoping to avoid it, but there’s no other way to keep it stable with his wing wrist in as bad of
shape as it is. With his other wing compromised, I can’t even pin the two together for one to bear
the other's weight for stability.”

“Wrist?”

Caretaker’s deep set, blue-gray eyes swept up to her curious gaze. “Well, yes, after some study, it’s
basically an arm in structure, though missing fingers.” Caretaker tapped at the tablet and turned it
about so she could see the skeletal illustration on the screen. “So, if you think in terms of an arm,
right at the base is the shoulder joint. The scapula is here.” He drew a line along where the wings
connected into the sleeping Devil’s back. “Just thinner and longer. Runs right on the inside of his
other shoulder blade. Then this here,” He ran his finger along the bone descending, “Is a humerus
bone. The dip down here is an elbow, then there are two bones running up, an ulna and radius, just
like any forearm, though proportionately longer."

He pointed to the right wing nearest her where he had flesh pulled open. “Which is where he has a fracture near the top. Radius is cracked in two, and I have to put in a plate and screws to keep it there, then keep the whole structure stable so it can heal.” He shook his head, grumbling. “His wrists were in awful shape. Bones rubbed raw and left in the open air too long from that damned cable. It was pierced in between the two bones there, and the little thumb joint at the very top on the right? Bent backward at some point. It was healing crooked.”

“Ah… Kay,” Chloe looked away from the bright red split and the glassy bone underneath. “So, what am I doing? I kinda chose a different career path from med school.”

“No worries, Ms. Decker. What I need is menial labor. Need you to hold the wing up. It’s heavy, and I need to screw the plate in on the inside area. So… If you will agree to a truce for the time being? I can get him patched up much more quickly.”

Chloe looked at him with an unhappy look. “Seeing as you know I can’t stitch him back up, yeah, truce. For now.” She shrugged a little. “Also helps that you… make a pretty good breakfast.”

“Wait till you see what I have baking for lunch,” he said, some mirth in his accented voice as he pulled the cart with him to her side. “Now… the way I need it held is up and bent, so the weight isn’t pulling on the bone while I get this plate attached.”

Chloe hesitated, looking at the wings, at the long feathers that tickled close to Lucifer’s back, to the prime feathers longer than her arm. I’ve not really touched them before…

“Oh, and don’t touch the long feathers on the end. They’re sharp. Cut myself a little already.”

Chloe swallowed while nodding. “Good to know.” She was careful with her gloved touch at first, feeling the give of the down on the brim. The feathers below these were wider than her palm, then finally the spearing prime and secondary feathers, rows of gleaming white.

Lucifer continued to breathe evenly. It felt as though she were invading his privacy somehow, touching the wings without permission, but he wasn’t going to get any better going around with a broken wing bone. She pushed her hands underneath the brim of the wing and lifted.

Caretaker wasn’t kidding. Lucifer’s wing was heavy. She had expected it to be about the weight of an arm. The wing muscle under her fingertips was thicker than his bicep’s, and there was the wide expanse of feather and flesh. It was also warm, a pleasant heat that sunk straight into her hands bones. Caretaker helped her guide the wing where he needed it held, instructing her to keep it steady. Then he set to work, quickly fitting the plate over the bone and affixing it.

Chloe watched him with fascination. He moved with fluid certainty.

“So, a doctor?” she guessed. While she was struggling to hold the wing still for her warden, she might as well get information.

Caretaker kept his eyes on his task, fastening the plate down. “Actually no. I watch a lot of youtube.”

“For doing surgery on angel wings.”

Caretaker’s eyes crinkled. “I’m no genius, Ms. Decker, but what I do have a talent for is figuring out what is needed and finding a means.”
Chloe went for more direct questioning. She was really feeling the wings’ weight. “So what’s your role in all of this, Caretaker? Though, of course that’s not your real name.”

“As good as anything to be called. It used to be the Caretaker, but the article dropped the more people forgot my old name. It suits me, so I don’t mind.”

“And that’s your role? Caretaking?”

He was pulling the flesh back together, picking up the curving suture needle and starting to make a row of stitches just outside the neat incision, carefully maneuvering around the feathers as he went.

“Yes. When people need held, I’m the sitter, so to speak. It pays extremely well.”

Chloe dropped her chin, staring at him. “You… take care of people’s hostages?”

“Hostages, ransoms, collaterals, witnesses who for some reason or other one doesn’t wish to kill but can’t afford them to see daylight again… I’ve been told I am the best in the business. But that is not so egotistical a statement when as far as I know there have only been three others in the world who have made a profession of it.”

“That’s… highly criminal.”

"Of course! But there are lines I do not cross. For instance, I can't abide outright torture, and there are certain acts that I find despicable. Those that employ me and expect me to break people are often disappointed that it's not included in my services. My job is primarily to keep my detainees alive, after all. I can't very well have them coming in and risking that and then blaming me for the results." He started on the second row of stitches on the other side of the incision. "This... will be my last job, regardless of how long it lasts. Jailing the Devil means I certainly won't be continuing this occupation."

Last job... Because they intended to keep Chloe for life. “So you’re… an independent contractor. You’re not really one of Pierce’s.”

“Correct.” He had two rows of stitches on either side of the cut, and now pulled on the threads carefully. The incision pulled together, closing so it was only a small red line. He started the delicate process of tying off the last of the threads. His voice was cautious as he went on. “That said, I have known that one for over thirty years. He was going by a different name then, yet he has not aged a day. I even saw him take a bullet. Went right through him. He fell down, and a few minutes later, got right back up.”

Chloe didn’t reply right away. Caretaker’s gaze swept her direction. “But you’re not surprised by that. I had thought maybe that man was the devil. How wrong was I?”

“It’s… all still pretty surreal to me,” Chloe admitted honestly. The wing’s weight wore on her arms.

“You seem to be handling it well. I must say, this one is rather entrancing. Devilish charm indeed, but the temper of a teenager when he’s woken up early.” Caretaker finished his work on the stitches, swabbing antiseptic on the wound before moving away from her. “He’s not going to be happy that I drugged his breakfast. But again, I have limits, and I wasn’t going to perform surgery on an awake subject, not even at their insistence. Go ahead and set that down for a moment.”

Chloe gladly set the wing down, slow and careful. She kept her hands under the brim, reluctant to leave the warmth there. She looked at Lucifer’s face, his dark, messy hair, his slightly open mouth and even breaths.
“I’m not about to bedazzle it for him, Ms. Decker. Let’s just get it on him and we’ll endure his complaints later.”

At his instruction, Chloe lifted the the wing into a fold, trying her best to be gentle with the injured limb while Caretaker slipped the black canvas over the top of the wing. The older man did his best to use his palm to smooth the feathers underneath before pulling on the straps on either side, carefully cinching the wing in. Chloe took in the extra cushioning he’d added, the neat sewing of the straps and the details. Apparently he had managed to measure the dimensions of Lucifer’s wing at some point. The canvas fit smoothly, sloping with the wings brim as needed.

Caretaker unraveled two other straps from it, these made of a different material, more like cloth but still thick and sturdy.

“These go around his chest and shoulder. Here. I’ll lift and you push it under him.”

“You made this in the short time we’ve been here?” Chloe asked while taking the wide straps from him while he moved to the other side.

“I stayed up pretty late, admittedly. But I can always sleep later.” Caretaker then slid his hands under Lucifer’s chest and lift a few inches. Chloe noticed he seemed to have no problem with the Devil’s weight. That stoutness wasn’t chub on his frame.

Lucifer, however, was rather surprised by being lifted.

The arch angel’s eyes opened, making a small sound. His left wing immediately raised. Chloe hesitated.

“Lucifer?”

Lucifer blinked, glassy eyed. He looked around the bed, spotted the pillow and reached for it, trying to pull it back to his head, mumbling incoherently.

“Ms. Decker, if you could…”

Chloe still watched Lucifer as she slid the strap under his lean torso. He apparently wasn’t in any state of mind to acknowledge them properly. As soon as Caretaker lowered him, the arch angel squirmed against the bed, making grumpy noises till his head was back on the pillow properly, both arms hugging around it. The left wing flopped down, limp. He was already asleep again.

The two humans around him waited. The breathing was even and deep, and the Devil was far from consciousness once more.
Caretaker shook his head, smiling. “Grumpy old fellow.” He fixed the straps, tightening them. The casted wing was now resting at a low angle, not quite setting on the bed.

“That should do it,” he said, prepping a cotton swab and bandaid.

Chloe removed her gloves. “So… now what?”

Caretaker looked at her cryptically. “Well, and it is your choice, but I was hoping you would be kind enough to stay with him while he wakes up.”

Chloe looked to the prone angel, barely noting mentally as Caretaker removed the IV drip and slipped a cotton ball under a bandaid and pressed it on. Lucifer pulled his hand back under the pillow as soon as it was released. He removed his gloves with a swift snap.

“You… don’t think he’ll be disoriented?”

Caretaker reached over Lucifer to take her gloves from her. “You might say something now and then. He seems very careful around you. Just keep in mind it’s only until you’re hungry enough to want lunch.”

Chloe was still considering even as Caretaker started to wheel the cart and IV pole away. The door he approached was the opposite from the one she had entered. She watched him tap at the tablet atop the cart. She heard the door mechanism whir. Chloe filed the information away in her mind, held her breath, watching, looking for any opportunity. Caretaker was watching her just as closely though, pushing the cart through first then backing out and closing the door behind him. The mechanism whirred, clanked, and she was locked in once more.

Chloe sighed. Not this time, at least. “Well, just you and me, it looks like.” She considered his prone, sleeping form, unmoving except for breathing, wings in bandages and casts.

The Devil should really not look so innocent when sleeping.

This situation was fucked up beyond measure. “So things I did today,” she mumbled out loud. “Helped do surgery on a devil wing. Now I can mark that off my bucket list. What a relief.”

Lucifer didn’t respond. Chloe stood there at his bedside for several long moments, then sighed at herself and walked around the bed. She stepped out of her slippers. “Hey, I know you’re probably still really out, but just in case, I’m sitting next to you, so don’t be alarmed.” She was oh-so-careful as she moved into the bed with him, sitting with her back to the wall. She eased her legs underneath the folded left wing, feeling the warmth soothe over her limbs.

Successful, Chloe let the weight of her shoulders rest against the wall, watching Lucifer closely.

It didn’t take long before he was stirring. Small, sleeping motions, little shifts in breathing. Then he sniffed noisily, turning his head on his pillow toward her. His eyes were still closed, and yet he gravitated toward her, left arm leaving his pillow to slide over her thigh. Chloe held very still, letting his hand slide across both thighs, even when Lucifer shifted further. His other hand came to rest on the hip closest to him and his cheek abandoned his pillow for her lap.

“Oh, you’re just going to… Okay. Okay, you know what? That’s fine.”

Lucifer said nothing, just resting with his arms loosely around her and his cheek snuggled into her thigh. His legs were still squirming, and after a few shifts one settled draped over her ankles.

Chloe remained unmoving, breath shallow and spine stiff. She had the Devil’s head in her lap, and
he was strong enough to crush her. “And… you’re apparently a cuddler when you’re sleepy? All right. Good to know. Just… no squeezing too hard.”

Lucifer breathed evenly.

Her work partner, who had always kept a fairly professional distance from her touch-wise after they became comfortable, was warm, half naked, and half draped across her legs. And he was the Devil, punisher of bad souls, prince of darkness, etc. and none of that mattered because he had just been knocked out for surgery, he’d been limping about on cracked bones, a fully broken wing, and he’d made an awful deal with Pierce, and here she was…

She made him bleed. He should want to be anywhere but around her. But that’s precisely what he had done for the last three years, trotting after her like some big, strange puppy, running off to do his own thing much to her exasperation mid-case, always trying to keep ahead of him and the criminals, and they always ending up catching the bad guy.

He had helped a lot of people lately.

Chloe slowly lift her hand, letting her fingertips settle against his dark hair. It was soft, uncombed, and easily manipulated underneath her fingertips as she started to guide it into some semblance of order.

Lucifer made a breathy sound and tilted his chin downward. Enjoying her attention, he was subconsciously asking for more.

He really is beautiful. At least this face is. The Detective continued combing his hair, encouraged by his soft sounds and the way he’d slightly turn his head each time for more. He inched closer, weight relaxing against her, entirely trusting and at ease under her touch. Do you do this with everyone? she wondered. Chloe circled her fingers around the thick collar on his neck, traced the shape of it. The device was much larger on the back of his neck, keeping her from being able to touch down the nape all the way. The green light matched the one on her ankle. She looked at the blank digital panel, the screws that required a special star-shaped driver, and the thick, rubbery material pressed against his long throat.

“We really have our work cut out for us, this time, don’t we?” she murmured softly.

Lucifer stirred, drawing in a deep breath through his straight nose. He turned up into her hand when she went back to caressing her fingertips against his upper scalp. His eyes blinked open, heavy lidded and sleepy.

“Hello there,” Chloe greeted, giving him a gentle smile.

Lucifer blinked more. The confusion quickly rippled through his relaxed features. “Hi…?”

“Are you okay?”

“Yes.” He answered immediately. He was moving his limbs some, testing where they were at. There was a tension in his frame as he realized how pressed against her he was. Which was backwards, she thought. He wasn’t supposed to be nervous of their proximity, was he? He looked entirely displaced, more stressed as he tried to put together why he was laying against her.

“Hey, hey, look at me, okay?” He did, dark eyes flying up to hers and locking. “You just had some surgery to fix your wing bone. Caretaker put you out for it, but I was here while he did everything, okay? You don’t need to do anything but relax at the moment, and let me know if you feel uncomfortable.” She searched his gaze, uncertain of herself. “Do… you feel uncomfortable? Do
you need me to move, or…”

His sleep roughened voice was swift. “No. No, Detective, I just… I didn’t want to be unseemly
with you.” He swallowed under the thick collar, looking to her for answers.

Chloe’s smile returned at that. “No, you’ve been good.” She returned to moving her fingers in his
hair. The effect was instant. His eyes fluttered shut and his head dropped against her lap, a quiet
sound escaping with his breath. “Like that?”

“Heavens, yes,” he breathed. His frame started to sink into relaxation against hers again.

“All right. I’ll keep this up. Are you still tired?”

“Mmhm…”

“Okay. I’ll stay right here. You go ahead and sleep.”

“Mmkay…” He sank once more, wings becoming slack against their bindings as gravity took over
once more.

Chloe let her spine relax, letting her thoughts wander, and the Devil slept on her lap.
The Abused Can Always Be Counted On To Always Do One Thing: Claw For Familiar Ground

Chapter Notes

Oh my, darklings... I just finished episode three last night, and I am so loving this new season. Definitely going to indulge myself this week.

So this is the first chapter where we see Lucifer in a definitely aroused state. So fair warning there. For my fellow aces or anyone who is sex-repulsed on fics, it's only the first bit and you can brush by it pretty easily without losing plot. Also, I still have no idea if this fic is going to get steamy or not. If it does, I'll try to leave a fade to black spacer for it and update the tags. Definitely have to add some more for this chapter.

Moving on! I know some of you were like, "Finally! Comfort!" Well... Sometimes growing to a place a person can heal requires a different kind of procedure. That can be a really sticky process, but man, does it help to have someone who has your winged back for it. So, without further ado...

Let there be angst!

Enjoy, goslings!

Pleasure was what tantalize him from his sleep, curls of goodness that tickled down his nerves from a light touch, alighting a craving in him.

It wasn't a grab like he was used to from others. This touch was barely there. Soft fingertips were drifting down his feathers, exploring the shape of his wing’s brim, and it felt good. Another brush and his feathers wanted to shiver under the gentleness, gooseflesh raising on his skin from the soft pet on his feathered limb. It wasn’t a sensation he was used to, and his lethargic mind wanted more.

Which brought his sleepy attentions to the warm body next to him.

That was not an uncommon circumstance. Lucifer was used to waking up with a few bodies piled around him, sometimes on him. He never minded. It was then a matter of trying to assess where his sexual partners were at that morning, seeing who was up for another round, who needed to sleep more, and who needed some hangover care or a cab. That is, if he wasn’t busy running off to a case with the Detective and letting his guests find their own way out.

The Devil’s sluggish mind did little to help him figure out his current circumstance, driven more by subconsciousness still. He inhaled, the aroma of the person immediately warming his blood with want. It was familiar, something sublime and safe, and he very, very much desired this one. He slowly pulled the hips closer, nose nuzzling into a belly. Lucifer allowed himself the luxury of rolling his hips once against the leg he was tangled around, the friction making him sigh from the gratifying warmth sparking in his nerves.

“Lucifer... Lucifer. Lucifer!”
Lucifer snapped awake. It took him only a precious few seconds to remember their current situation, and realized what he was doing.

“Detective!” He tried to sit up, but didn’t quite get his arm under himself, flopping down to the side instead, leg resting even higher on hers in his scramble. The arch angel tried to roll onto his back. This was how he realized her couldn’t move his right wing. At all, it seemed. Thus he was left resorting to wriggling sideways from her to keep his erection to himself. “Sorry! I’ve been told I’m a bit of a nympho when I wake up.” He looked to her, concerned. He wasn’t embarrassed about being aroused, but he certainly hadn't wanted to make Chloe uncomfortable with his state. “Didn’t mean to hump your leg. Well, I did, apparently, but I quite forgot my manners, is what I mean.” He chuckled nervously.

Chloe’s face looked troubled, her shoulders stiff and her eyes far too wide in a way that showed she really wasn’t okay. Her voice held a squeak at the start of her sentence. “Do you do that to everyone you wake up with?”

Lucifer raised his hands, eyes going to Chloe's hair, gaze taking it in with interest. “No, not everyone. Usually I’m a little more aware and able to assess what’s going on before I start trying to fire up anyone’s engines for a morning shag. Oh, Detective, I really like your hair like that.”

"Huh?”

"It's all natural and untamed! I’m so used to seeing it in a strict pony tail or braid. I mean, it's really fetching! You look like you just woke up from an early morning of comfortable and fairly tame seh-.

Chloe lift her palm his direction. “Okay, don't, stop there. For one, it's not morning. It’s after noon.”

“Oh. Right.” He looked around the room, as though something in his cell would give him a hint to the time of day. Of course there wasn’t, but if it was past noon, that meant he’d been sleeping most of the morning away after… After… He looked to the black cast on his wing, the fresh bandages, Chloe sitting so patient, if red cheeked, on his bed. “Did… Did someone roofie my morning shake?”

“Yeah. Apparently you asked for surgery without any sedative?”

Lucifer sat up, irritated and reaching over his shoulder to tug at the cast, looked down at where its weight braced around his shoulder and chest. “Maybe I did? I’m quite sick of drugs for the nonce. Why is my wing wrapped up like a tennis racket?”

“Don’t pull on it,” Chloe chastised, reaching forward to grab the side of his hand away from tugging at it. “You need time to heal the bone.”

“Well, I don’t like it. It’s about as flattering as this collar.” He pulled his hand back and tapped at the bomb strapped to his neck for emphasis. His eye spotted the bandaid on his hand and he grimaced and ripped it off, glaring at the cotton ball with its little spot of blood. He threw it off the bed. It didn’t go far, pathetically arching and soundlessly flopping on the smooth cement. Lucifer huffed, laying down onto his back, for the moment not caring that his wing and its cast were resting on Chloe’s legs now.

Chloe glanced at him. He saw he eyes dart down his torso, how they flew quickly elsewhere, a little wider.
Lucifer sighed. “Yes, fine, I suppose that is distracting. One moment.” He clasped his hands together around his nose, concentrating. He had a surefire thing to think about that would make his arousal flee like wolves were set on it. After a moment, he lowered his hands and made a sweeping motion downward. “Better?”

“That was… quick.” She looked to his hip area. “Can you just do that at will?”

“Sort of. All I have to do is think of my mother. Definitely a killjoy for me.”

Chloe looked at him, surprised. “You… You really do have a mother?”

“Well, yes. You’ve met her before, actually.” Lucifer folded his arms behind his head, stretching his aching legs some, bare feet flexing carefully. “She tried to get you to say I was a liar in court that one time, and then she nearly exploded by the beach when you-.”

“Wait, wait… Are you saying… Charlotte Richards? Is your actual mother?”

“Charlotte? Oh no, she’s not Goddess. Charlotte Richards was murdered right when my mother escaped Hell and she possessed her body for a while. That’s all.”

Chloe stared at him, her mouth working. It was evident she wasn’t sure what to ask first.

Lucifer breathed out, letting his chest sink down some. “Right. Let me start at the beginning, shall I?”

It took time, with Chloe asking questions to clarify pieces of information she did not have. Things like Amenadiel’s ability being time manipulation, that a piece of the sword was indeed what caused the mass stabbing case, that Lucifer was the only one who could light it and why that was (but thankfully he glossed over his struggle to do so). By the end, the Detective had fallen quiet, the edge of her finger resting on her lips and her eyes staring leagues ahead of her as he finished up the tale.

“So… now she’s gone. None of us will ever see her again. That’s when Charlotte came back.”

Lucifer gave a huff of unhappy laughter. “I guess she was always on borrowed time, our Charlotte. But at least it gave her a chance to do some good, to become a person who didn’t deserve Hell… Lucky, I suppose. But I’ll miss her.” He lapsed into silence with the Detective, waiting.

He was certain he was going to hear how he should have confided in her, how so much could have been avoided if the people had communicated better. Lucifer didn't want to hear it. But, honesty… He'd promised he'd try. So now to await the fallout.

Chloe took a steadying breath, her eyes still far away when she spoke. “That day on the beach. You were trying to protect me. From her. She was threatening to take me with her when she exploded because she knew that would make you give her whatever she wanted.”

“Of course it would.” Lucifer gave a weak grin, but let it fade. The sadness he felt weighed it down, too much for him to bring his usual glib confidence to bear. He looked down to where his hands rest on his bare chest now, over the strap that helped brace his wing. “She would have done it, too… Blazes. I don’t know how I will ever repay Linda. My mother nearly killed her because she was protecting my confidence. She didn’t deserve that.” He closed his eyes, shaking his head “It’s… actually fucking ironic, thinking of it. Dr. Martin is the reason I could light the sword at all, and she was also why I realized I didn’t want to start a war. Not really.”

“A war? With… your parents and your siblings? Other angels?”
“Oh, don’t get me wrong, Detective. I fantasize about my siblings getting their just desserts for abandoning me to my fate and deciding my heart was as black as the most foul demon. But… I can’t go through with it. I want to hate them. I just… don’t.” He made a stab at being playful, eyes opening to meet Chloe’s. “Would take too much work! I need that energy for partying and having the time of my life. That’s a way to shove it in their faces, eh?”

“Lucifer.” Chloe was tilting her head, as though looking at him from a different angle would allow her to see past his facade. Lucifer felt paranoid that it worked. “Your mother was going to kill your friends, a chunk of humanity, destroy your home, everything you have... just to get you to do what she wanted. That’s just...” She blinked rapidly, shaking her head. “That’s just mind boggling levels of abusive.”

...What? Lucifer immediately leapt to a light, casual tone. Something about this subject immediately made him dodgy. “No, it was just manipulation. She’s talented at it.”

“No.” Chloe looked at him until he met her gaze steadily, drawing him magnetically to her, willing him to pay attention. Lucifer did so, feeling trapped and like he needed to find some excuse to not meet her eyes. “What she did to you was wrong.”

Lucifer opened his mouth, his inner walls trying to fly up. When he felt those faltering, a pressure building in his throat, he moved instead, sitting up. It forced Chloe to lean back so his cast didn’t catch her in the chin. It made him flinch inwardly at his carelessness. “Oh, come now,” he grumbled instead. He turned in place, kneeling on the bed facing her. It hurt, his legs protesting. It felt worth it to be a safer distance. “To be fair, Detective, she was about to explode. She was desperate.”

Chloe narrowed her eyes at him. She didn’t move, just kept him in her direct sights, taking in every move he was making. He felt like paper. Lucifer used his left wing as an excuse to break eye contact, fussing with his bent prime feathers, pushing them behind himself to hang off the foot of the bed more comfortably. The cast on his right wing felt heavy, and the limb ached from the recent cut and metal plate, something new to get used to instead of the shifting bone.

It was far better than this strange pain welling up that he didn't understand.

The Detective knew when she had the advantage in a conversation, but she kept her tone gentle. “Lucifer, I get it. I do. I know parents can do both awful things and also wonderful things. The wonderful things still do not excuse the awful things they put their children through. She threatened everything you had. That wasn’t fair of her to do.”

Lucifer’s retort sounded lame, falling out of his mouth without any force. “Well, she’s Goddess, so…”

Chloe sighed, then moved. She winced when she did. Lucifer looked to her with immediate concern. Had she been hurting staying in that position for him? Slowly the Detective bent her legs so she was kneeling on the bed as well, hands braced on either side of her knees so she was leaning forward. “Lucifer. What she did was shitty, Goddess or no. You didn't deserve that.”

What?! Nothing about this conversation felt right, disarming him like whenever Dr. Martin would tell him his feeling were valid in some way he didn't expect. He crept a foot off the bed, tilting his frame sideways. A slight press of his weight reminded Lucifer that his legs were in no shape to try and pace and avoid the Detective. Words would have to do to fend her off, but he was coming up with no ammo except for cruel things he didn’t mean. Things like What does a human know?, or Shitty or not, she’s still Goddess, and What could you possibly know about what I deserve from her after the Hell I let her be in?
He swallowed it all down, eyes flying around at the walls.

Chloe lift a hand, that calming gesture she used when she knew someone was in flight or fight mode. “Hey… I know I’m pushing, but I…” Her eyes widened a little, shaking her head, her voice tightening. “Understand I had no idea what you were going through. All I knew then was that you were pushing me out, and it hurt that you didn’t trust me. I had no idea the danger I was in, or that you were in, and while I want to say I would have believed you if you told me who Charlotte Richards really was at that point… I honestly can’t say I would have.” She had his gaze caught again, and it stung to look at how honest she was being, like staring into too bright of light. “For that, I’m sorry. But you should never have been put in that position, especially by your own mother. Okay?”

He stared at her, feeling like he’d been punched on the gut. She was looking at him with more concern.

“Lucifer, talk to me. You look way too edgy. What’s going on in your head right now? One moment you were telling me what really went down and the next you started defending her, and now you look like you’re going to try to go through one of the walls, and you’re really not in any shape to do so. What’s wrong? I’m here if-.”

“But that’s just it, Detective!” Lucifer burst. The words came out loud. Like someone scared, he realized. “You’re not supposed to take my side! No one does! Not against them! I mean…” He laughed, and it sounded unhinged and broken, trying to find some semblance of familiarity in this cycle that Chloe wasn’t following. There were rules and expectations and she wasn’t damned well following it like a good person should. Shouldn’t she be mad at him about it? Still? He had hidden things from her, and he was- “You know who I am!”

“Yeah! Yeah, I do, Lucifer! And I’m not fucking sorry for saying your Mom was being shitty, because I’m on your side. If that’s how it all really went down, you weren’t the bad guy! Okay?”

He stared at her. “But Detective…”

“You weren’t the bad guy there. You were protecting your friends, and you’re… shit! How many years old? Never mind! I don’t want to think about it. Just… There’s a point you don’t have to do anything your parents want if it’s not what’s good for you, okay? I know.”

She was so adamant and fierce in that statement, Lucifer realized she did know. He still felt gutted, like she’d reached in and yanked out some fundamental truth he knew as how-things-were, showed it bleeding to his face and smacked it down at his feet. So he remained seated on the edge of the bed, eyes desperate on hers, trying to force the pain that came with her refusing to play the proper role and leaving him so wrong-footed it crippled him inside, pleading silently for a lifeline.

And Dad bless her a hundredfold, she gave it to him. She considered him, then released a long breath through her nose, tension leaving her shoulders. “Hey. Come here. I know what will make you feel better.” She pat the bed in front of herself.

He looked at the indicated spot, uncertain what she wanted.

“Just lay down,” she instructed, voice easy and coaxing.

It would be unseemly to refuse. And… he trusted her. So The Devil did as bid, crawling forward. She inched back some more. “Head right here,” she instructed.
Lucifer eased himself down onto his belly. Perhaps she meant him to be face up, but he was still feeling too exposed and open. So he folded his arms and rest his forehead against the bandaged limbs, making a small circle of darkness for himself to hide in.

Chloe put her fingers to his hair, nails pressing against his scalp and making a slow circle.

“Oohhh…” Lucifer breathed out, pleasure sparking down his nerves, his muscles unraveling and falling limp. His whole head felt warm as she spread her fingers, nails following the curve of his skull, back up to a point near the top of his head. “You can do that forever,” Lucifer whispered.

Chloe laughed, gentle and easing away the tension she’d caused. She did it so easily, pulled out his innards for painful exposure then putting him back together into a warm blob of ease again.

“Guess no one ever scratched your head much, huh?”

Lucifer chuckled. He felt wrung out. The past few minutes too emotionally serpentine to track himself anymore. “Oh, Chloe, usually if people have theirs hands in my hair, it’s certainly not to relax me.”

“She’s… doing this to make me feel better. Lucifer felt some concern wrinkle his forehead, safe to express where she couldn’t see it. He took a deep breath, tilting his head up to look at her. Her gaze searched his. “Well, I was being terrible prat, wasn’t I? I’m not used to having anyone who’s not a demon take my side of things. I mean… someone good.”

Chloe smiled a little, shaking her head at him, some fond exasperation that made the wreckage she’d rendered of his inner walls become swept away by some other wave. It still hurt, whatever this wave was, but it made him feel far less empty, so it was much more welcome.

“You’re more good than you think, Lucifer Morningstar.”

That wave pressed even harder inside his ribcage. His smile was tremulous. “You’re a hard hitter, Chloe Decker.”

“Been cracking lenses for a while now,” she said with a muted smirk.

“You can take a crack at me anytime.”

Chloe looked at him, the amusement fading in her blue eyes. Something tangled when they looked at each other, hooking deep into his core and pulling him closer, up onto his arms and leaning toward her. The charge went through them both, a dangerous handspan apart. The sensation froze them in space, both so close and both suddenly a little scared to move. Of what the other would do. Of what they themselves would do. Lucifer remembered the way she had tip toed up to him previously, the way her lips had been so soft on his, open, undemanding, gentle, and leaving him shuddering inside in such a different way than the invasive, sex-hungry kisses he was used to.

He wanted to feel that again, feel her breath mingle with his, hear the way she would draw her breath sharper through her nose when their lips touched, like he made her breathe rather than stole her breath away, like she felt just as alive as she made him feel. Lucifer looked at her uncertain gaze, felt his heart hammer.

He was the one who inched away, eyes ducking down then back to her expressive blue again.

“Thank you, Detective. For everything.”
She relaxed slightly, smile quirking briefly at her lips. “You’re welcome.” Lucifer watched her, trying to read her expression. He was sure his countenance was just as complicated and confused.

A soft hiss sounded over the intercoms. They both jerked and looked upward. “Lunch has been ready for near two hours now, and the three hours is up since he first woke. If the Detective would be so kind as to return to her quarters?”

Chloe ducked her head down, clearing her throat. “I... am actually really hungry.”

He gave her the out. Lucifer was feeling fragile and exposed still. Perhaps it was just as well. “Oh, dear, why didn’t you say so?”

Why does this feel like we’re both fleeing?

“Mm, I was occupied. Don’t worry about it.” She said it with an easy smile, and truly didn’t look like she regretted putting off eating. Chloe moved off the bed, and he felt wrong-footed again. Lucifer sat back on the edge of the mattress, giving her space to find her slippers. She looked at him firmly while she tried to maneuver her toes into the footwear. “You’re not to mess with your cast and you need to keep it on.”

“But…” She arched a brow. He gave a long suffering eye roll. “Yes, I’ll keep it on. At least it matches my other accessory.”

“Good. I’ll see you tomorrow. You get more rest.”

“Yes, ma’am!”

She glared playfully over her shoulder while he gave her a big grin. Then she was gone, and he felt a small pang of loss as she disappeared from sight. The door swung closed on its own, whirred, clanged... Locked.

Lucifer flopped backward onto the bed, bandaged wings feeling confined against his back. He whispered up at the lighted ceiling. “Dammit, Dad…” He covered his face with both hands, feeling his eyes water. He squeezed them shut. “I’m so f*cked.”
Hello darklings! I'm quite tired at the end of the day, so apologies for any typos. I'll try to get a round of editing done tomorrow, but I still wanted to get this out there.

Speaking of which, I have a very busy weekend ahead of me and I'm not sure when I'll be able to update next. Hoping this tides everyone over until Tuesday of so!

Enjoy, puddings!

Being trapped in a cell should not feel safer, and yet as the heavy door whirred and clanked behind her, Chloe felt like she could breathe again.

The Detective leaned back against the thick metal of the door. She was frustrated, slightly panicked, and, mostly, angry at herself.

She had rules dammit. Priorities. Things she’d promised herself.

Most of her rules when it came to Lucifer were very practical. Simple ones like, Don’t let Lucifer near any illicit substances at a crime scene, or Keep Lucifer away from any grieving family members. There were other rules she’d learned that helped keep boundaries where her partner was concerned. Don’t ask Lucifer about his family. Don’t touch Lucifer’s scarred back.

And of course… Don’t fall for Lucifer.

She’d made that a hard rule, underlined and in bold, in her mind after Lucifer ran to Vegas and came back with a ditzy wife. Chloe had almost died. She’d been vulnerable. They seemed like they shared deep feelings for each other. She’d reached out to him… And he had ran. Not just that, but cut off all communication with her so she had no idea where he went. Or why. She thought he had done it again the following year, ran scared of her once more. That had turned out to be a legitimate kidnapping, but even then Lucifer returned acting strange and walled up. So the Detective had boxed up her feelings as best she could. Again. Chloe had never wanted to let him close enough to hurt her. Again.

It just… hadn’t worked. The rule was still there. She just kept breaking it.

Chloe ran her hand through her hair, the naturally air-dried hair that Lucifer had looked at with sparks in his dark eyes, so unabashed of his shirtless state as he sprawled next to her on the bed. He’d been aroused and, as usual, completely unashamed. But he did know that touching was a boundary between them. It was one of their unspoken rules. Lucifer stood close to her, sometimes near enough she could feel the heat radiating through his expensive suits, but he rarely touched her first. Chloe was the one who would tap his arm, elbow or bump a shoulder into him to get his attention, and when she really needed it, initiate a hug. It was a silent rule between them.

He certainly didn’t snuggle up to her and roll his hips in a way that made electricity shoot through her with alarming intensity. To be touched like that after so long… by him… and the sound he’d made…
Chloe felt heat run to her face and elsewhere, and immediately turned into the shower area, stripping off her clothes.

*New rule,* she thought to herself as she turned on cold water and tested it with her hand. *No touching the Devil’s freaking feathers.*

That was what had started it. Chloe had sat with him laying warm and unmoving against her legs, her hips trapped in his loose arms while he slept for over two hours. Of course she’d become curious about Lucifer’s wings, studying what she could see of where they connected, the long feathers that tickled down his back, and the huge glide of prime feathers across the bed. The left wing’s contour feathers showed smooth and glimmering between the bandages. They were so lustrous, like snow on a bright day if she stared too long, captivating white shadow and brilliant fronds.

So yes, she’d finally given in, letting her fingertip barely touch the brim of his less injured wing. The smooth barbs that locked in silky sync with each other had bent easily under her finger, smooth as she slid along its length and watched it ripple under her touch.

Then the feathers had moved, raising on their quills. Chloe felt the new warmth emanating from them. Nothing like the blasting heat when Lucifer had been enraged. This was soothing, tingling heat. She let her fingers brush on the raised edges, just enough to tilt them the barest amount. It had made her smile.

The low moan deep in Lucifer’s chest was her first warning to his… stirrings. His arms started to tighten and pull her toward him, so strong and insistent, and then his face had lifted and he was drawing an inhale close to her belly button while he undulated his erection against her leg. It was... It had been so...

Chloe let the punishing chill of the water sweep over her as she stepped in, gasping, and thankfully her thoughts cut off from that moment to be replaced with *Fuck, that’s cold!*

She had much more important things to think on. They were trapped. They needed to figure a way out. Whatever tangled way she felt, it needed to go on the back burner until they managed to get free of Pierce’s clutches. Oh yeah, and he was the actual Devil.

She needed to get herself sorted how she felt about *that* way before she figured out how she felt about his body being so close and intimate with hers.

The detective blinked rapidly, cold streams of water dripping off her face. Then she turned the water to a more bearable temperature, letting her eyes close and thumping her forehead on the wall.

The problem with Lucifer being Satan was that the information Chloe thought she knew about the Devil and what she knew of her loony partner didn’t fit. Her partner had more issues than Archie, could be woefully inconsiderate of others, and he would do the weirdest things. His behavior changed day to day as he got some crazy idea in his head, fixating on his new experiment in behavior before thankfully reaching a saner conclusion, giving Chloe a brief break from trying to figure him out before it started all over again.

But that made *sense* of someone who wasn’t human and was learning human culture.

The more she examined that, the more she couldn’t believe that all of his growth and his surprising development for consideration of others was just an act to mask evil incarnate. Pierce had told her he was this wicked creature, and she just couldn’t see it.
You’re also a sucker for people who are hurting, she thought to herself.

It was enough to give the faint stab of doubt through her sure gut feeling. As usual when her gut couldn’t be counted on to lead her in the right direction, Chloe decided she needed more information.

When she stepped out of the shower, Chloe could smell food, and was again reminded of the fact that lunch was well overdue. She scrambled into clothes and sought out the food, which turned out to be a chicken pita wrap, a small bowl of savory chicken broth, and sitting on its own little platter…

“Is… is that baklava?” she asked aloud while she hurried into her seat.

To her surprise, Caretaker answered over the com. “I told you you should see what I had in the oven.”

“You make baklava… I don’t think I’ve ever had home made fresh baklava.”

Caretaker sounded both pleased and amused. “You’ll have to let me know what you think, then. It has been a while since I’ve made it. But I’ll warn you, that Devil a few doors down from you is trying to sweet talk me into letting him have the rest of it.”

Chloe already had her mouth half full of pita. “Mm. Don’t let him have it.” She swallowed hastily. “He spoils easily.”

“Ha! I don’t doubt that.”

Chloe chewed thoughtfully, enjoying the spices and vegetables crunching in her mouth. Finally when she was half way through her pita, she ventured, “Caretaker?”

There wasn’t an answer at first, but a half minute later his voice came over the com again. “Yes, Ms. Decker?”

“You… Got me a print out of the newspaper.”

“I thought you would enjoy it.”

“Oh, I did. But I was wondering if… If I could have some articles or… something on the Devil?”

“Ohhh, you’re wanting to research on your friend now that you know the truth.”

“Yes. Please?”

“Since you asked so politely… Give me some time to finish what I’m doing and I’ll see what I can find.”

“Thank you.”

Chloe enjoyed the rest of her meal in silence, eating slower now that she wasn’t in a hurry to fill her empty stomach. It helped ground her, her thoughts becoming steady and focused. By the time Caretaker slid the panel open, she was starting on the baklava, taking tiny slivers of the rich, honey-layered dessert. She might not be able to eat the whole square of it in one sitting, but it was divine.

She glanced through the open panel at Caretaker as he leaned forward and deposited not just a pile of freshly printed papers, but also coffee, something strong with her sides of cream and sugar.
Chloe pointed with her sticky fork at the dessert. “This? I don’t have words. It’s wonderful.”

Caretaker gave a full smile at that while he scooped up her empty lunch plate. “It’s the least I can do. I’ll leave you to your research, Ms. Decker.”

“Thank you.” *Do not become fond of your jailer,* she reminded herself weakly. That was a rule, too.

Chloe read, her coffee with far less sweetener than normal as she continued to steal slivers off the baklava. She spread the papers out, trying to determine the regions, the influences of war, churches, and religions, what was in the Bible, the Quran, the *Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost.* Her eyes skipped over the texts, piecing them together, their contrasts, and what she knew of the person a few doors down from her.

> How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground…

> Verily Satan is an enemy to you: so treat him as an enemy…

> I had no authority over you, but that you listened. Do not blame me. Blame yourselves…

> But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil… did not himself dare to condemn him for slander…

> The Devil is not as black as he is painted…

> Abashed the Devil stood and felt how awful goodness is and saw Virtue in her shape how lovely: and pined his loss…

Chloe pushed the papers away, laying her head down. Her coffee had become cold and the baklava was sitting too heavily in her churning stomach. Her legs were starting to cramp and her feet were cold. All the while she kept trying to fit the information together. There were some things texts agreed one, and some things that clashed, and the commentary and opinions varied vastly. The Detective had never been a believer herself, so some of the content just seemed too fantastical, like the Devil having three heads and stuffing people into his mouths, or being a red dragon, or the silly horns and goat legs. Other things she just didn’t have a good context, having never been interested in it. In some, Satan was just a tempter and a rebel, showing people’s desires, and it wasn’t his fault if they failed the tests. In others, he was a sinister menace waiting to ruin the world because he was butt-hurt over losing a war against the creator, so why not burn everything?

But the big question of course was—where did Lucifer truly fit in the scheme of it all? What was the truth?

> A red and black eye, intense with too many ruining emotions…

> “Fuck…” Chloe thumped her pressured head down on the table.

> “Trouble, Ms. Decker?”

Chloe sat up quickly, pushing her hair back as she looked to the com that Caretaker spoke through. “Oh, no, just there’s a lot of things here. Trying to sort through it all.”

> “Mm, yes, it is hard to keep straight what one religion thinks versus another.”

> “Yeah, it is. Though, don’t get me wrong, I definitely appreciate that you gave me varied sources. Just… some of these paint him as this awful beast thing, and others just, I don’t know, hint he’s
more like a teenager causing their parent trouble for not getting their way?”

“Ah... Would you like my thoughts on the matter?”

Chloe leaned back in her chair, scratching idly behind her ear. “Okay, sure. What do you got?”

“Simple, really. History is written by the victors.”

“That’s...” Chloe frowned to herself, brows pinching. “Actually a valid point. That’s one thing everything agrees on, that whatever the war or command... he lost.”

“Yes. People are always looking for a scapegoat. Every religion has one, a trickster that causes disasters and gets the brunt of punishment from their fellow pantheon. So I don’t pay too much attention to what people say he did or didn’t do. That’s best to ask him.”

Chloe thought about that. “I’m kind of scared what I’m going to hear, though. What if...” She reached up to her other hand as she rest her elbow on the back of the chair, fiddling her fingers together. “What if it’s something I can’t accept?”

“Only one way to find out, but even if that is so, he’s been alive a very long time. Thousands of years is a considerable span in which to change.”

Chloe smiled. “Careful, Caretaker. It sounds like he’s charmed you.”

“No denying that, though, never fear. Your share of the baklava is still safe, despite his efforts.”

Chloe snorted a laugh.

“I suppose,” Caretaker continued. “That it helps that I grew up in a region where many religions collided... Often violently with each other. I made an effort to learn about each one. Do you want to hear one of my favorite discourses concerning our feathery friend?”

“Yeah. I do, actually.” She leaned forward don the table, listening to the speaker eagerly.

“One of the mythos I prefer is the story of Iblis, an angel that was created different, made from fire. It is said that God made Adam and demanded his angels to worship him, and only one refused.”

Chloe nodded, remembering what she’d read. “Because Adam was made of clay and he was fire, so he said he was better than mankind.”

“That’s part of it. But what I always loved was the speculation around why Iblis refused.”

Chloe lift one arm to rub behind her neck, pausing and frowning. “Speculation?”

“Oh, yes, most everyone has a lot of opinion about God and the Devil. But I always find those about Iblis most intriguing. You see, Iblis was made different. It’s clear on that. It’s also assumed that it wasn’t just because he thought men beneath him, but because he refused to bow to anyone who wasn’t God. So there are two things here that make him stand out—Why did God create him different? And why, even though he fervently loved God and was a favorite of his, is he seemingly the only angel with any inclination to disobey?”

Chloe frowned, trying to follow Caretaker’s logic. “You mean that... angels have to obey?”

“In theory, they’re at least inclined to. Then you make one who not only can disobey, but wants to.”

Her mind chiseled at that factoid, trying to push it into something sensible. “You’re saying... Why
would God make one of his kids a troublemaker. Unless… he wanted a troublemaker, someone who could push buttons.”

“Indeed. That’s why many in other religions have much more sympathy for the Devil than Catholicism. It’s a conflict of nature, and a rather cruel one to instill. He’s unique, separate from all others, and when you understand that God could have created him in a number of ways, this was the one angel who got the unlucky die cast of playing the role of the reviled tester, accuser, tempter, and, ultimately, fallen.”

Chloe was quiet for some time, turning that over. She remembered Lucifer looking skyward so many times in annoyance, his paranoid remarks about his father trying to control him, his sometimes self-destructive nature because there were important matters of choice at hand. That… fit, she had to admit. Lucifer didn’t want to be controlled, and embraced being the bad boy, the pariah of society who was still everyone’s go-to for favors. But…

“Lucifer hates his father, though. It’s hard to imagine him as one of God’s favorites, and if he was, why would God make him the rebel? In theory.”

Caretaker’s question sounded like bait. “Does he hate him?”

Chloe stared at the speaker. “Well… He is pretty bitter, at least.”

“Perhaps not hate, then. I always liked the thought that the opposite of love is not hate. It’s apathy. What he feels is certainly not apathy.”


Chloe rubbed at her forehead, leaning back in her chair with a groan. “Dammit… I would pick the one person with this level of daddy issues. No wonder he’s such a flake.” She spread a hand upward. “And it’s like you said. Speculation. Who really knows if he was made to be the rebel or if he chose to be the rebel? From what I know of him, I’m sure he has no clue but wonders if he’s being manipulated into what his dad wants. His dad, who’s goddamned God… I thought my mother was bad trying to get me to go into acting.”

“All theory. But, I suggest talking to him about it.”

Chloe frowned. “That’s going to be a fun conversation. At least now I know more. Thanks for giving me material. Just wish I knew if it helped or made everything in my head worse.”

“Perhaps sleep on it.”

“What time is it?”

“Just past eleven. I just didn’t want to turn the lights off on you just yet.”

Chloe smirked, then left her chair, stretching her spine, hands on her lower back. “You know… You’re not all bad for being my villainous warden, C.T.”

Caretaker laughed. “I’ve yet to meet someone who is fully a villain, Ms. Decker, and I’ve met all sorts of bad apples. Good night.”

The lights were starting to dim. Chloe waved absently in the direction of the speaker, heading to the sink to brush her teeth.

Tomorrow… She would have to ask Lucifer some things tomorrow.
Nerds of a Feather Geek Together

Chapter Notes

Hello, darklings! Sorry this took so long to post! And yes, I know, super italic heavy chapter is italic heavy. Also, yes, there is some family angst at the beginning. Sorry. It will get better?

Next chapter it’s back to our locked up duo. Thank you for reading! Enjoy, gumdrops.

“I’m not going!”

“You don’t get a say, young lady! Go out to the patrol car! Now!”

Ella tried to look everywhere but at the two fighting family members, holding her camera and crime bag just outside the abandoned factory’s entrance. There was something terrible about listening to people you cared about arguing, and not sure how to break it up. It was also a family thing. Heck knows my family get into it like crazy. It still made her wish Linda was here to smooth over the feelings. Especially since Mazikeen was flipping her knife, glaring at Daniel. Detective Espinoza ignored her as he stared down with a red face at an obstinate Trixie, who was just as red faced with hot tears edging her eyes.

“Now, Beatrice!”

Her young voice scathed, a choked angry hiss. “Fuck this!” Trixie was a young sail of anger as she swept past her dad.

Dan rounded on her, pointing at her retreating back. “That’s it! You’re grounded!”

“Then find Mom!” she yelled back at him.

Daniel didn’t say anything to that. The abandoned factory’s lot echoed the angry slaps of her sneakers as she stormed toward the car. Dan rubbed at the back of his neck, then held out an arm as Maze started after Trixie. “No,” he said firmly, his voice a battle for control against parental rage. “You should never have brought her here. Anywhere! Near here.”

Mazikeen’s upper lipped bared from her teeth, her eyes wild and hard. Ella had enough. Her quick little legs fairly transported her between the dangerous bounty hunter and the angry cop.

“Whoa, okay! Okay, you know? It’s—it’s late, right guys? She shouldn’t be staying up so late? Right? I mean, she’s got school tomorrow and all. And-and Dan, you’re going to make sure she gets some rest and we’ll let you guys know everything we dig up here!”

Dan looked at her, as though she were an intrusive stranger for a moment. Ella didn’t like how that look stung. She pursed her lips, staring at him, trying to will a peaceful resolution while Mazikeen was far too still, radiating the type of stabby rage that Ella had seen made six and a half foot men pale.

The car door slammed from Trixie getting in the car. Finally Daniel glanced at Ella and back to Mazikeen, shifting his weight back on a foot with clear intention of leaving toward the car. “This
case belongs to the Feds now, and that’s it if it’ll keep Trixie safe. I’m not losing anyone else to that maniac. Clear?"

Mazikeen lift her blade across her body horizontally. “If you’re not going to help, get out of our way.”

Dan looked her up and down, then scoffed and turned to the car.

Mazikeen fold her arms, blade looking like an angry dragon spine on her shoulder to Ella. After some indecisiveness, the bounty hunter called after Dan, “I made sure she had dinner!”

He didn’t turn about. Ella looked after him, conflicted if she should say more, could say anything more, that would help smooth the ruffled feelings. Instead she looked to Mazikeen, who was no longer rigid with fury, but looking to the girl sitting in the car. Her young face was less angry now, and more twisted with hurt.

“He’s just worried, you know, Maze.”

“Yeah. I’d stab him otherwise.” Mazikeen’s mouth twisted as Dan got in the car. Then she lifted her palm, holding it wide and spread as though in a farewell gesture toward Trixie. The girl’s face smoothed some, nodding.

They waited as the car pulled away. Mazikeen’s hand lowered. Ella let her small shoulders sink. “Well, that’s that. Think he’s going to tell?”

“Let’s hurry up and get you your science swabby stuff done, just in case.”

“Swabby stuff? I kinda like that. I might—Dude! Your hand!” Ella hurried after Mazikeen, receiving very taciturn answers to her concern over the cut.

That was all forgotten once in the neglected factory. Mazikeen left Ella to “do her thing” as she went to make sure her duct-taped prisoners were still secured.

“What… the… *joder*.” Ella looked up at the dangling cables, camera hanging forgotten in her hands as she approached. Her dark gaze skipped over the grisly scene. *Don’t think too hard, Ella. Facts. Collect evidence and analyze. These are your friends. They’re counting on you. Channel your inner Commander Adama and get the job done.*

She did her best, taking pictures, swiping up blood, so much blood, puzzling over how the bolts had been ripped out of place under the winch and bolted in again. Some of the scene she wish didn’t make sense to her, and some of it didn’t fit into any sense, and it was driving her crazy, her mind gnawing at it like a feverishly chewing dog at a bone.

She was starting to venture to other parts of the building when Mazikeen came running in, her heeled boots sharp on the crumbling cement. “We gotta go. Now.”

“Now? But I still have all the other rooms to…” Mazikeen grabbed her wrist, hauling her into her wake with surprising strength.

“Feds,” Mazikeen announced. “Saw them coming from the roof.”

“Dan ratted us out?” Ella felt mentally knocked to one side. Dan had been so vehement before about finding Chloe, angry at the Feds’ intrusion. But now…?

“Doesn’t matter if he did or not. You got all that you need, right?”
“I hope so.”

“Good. Break for the car. We gotta hurry or they’ll compensate our stuff.”

Ella had thought she was done with praying, maybe even for good. When she jumped into the car and Mazikeen got behind the wheel, she found herself hanging on and pleading she didn’t die. *Shit!* *Where I’m going I still need roads, Maze!* *Dios mío!*

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Ella didn’t sleep that night, her mind too busy trying to put what she had seen into something that made sense. So she was heavy handed with the coffee on Monday. Mind jittery, she was having trouble concentrating on the other orders coming in from cases, still turning the new evidence over in her mind.

*Still the same specs as before. Same blood. Off the charts. Makes no sense.*

She absently made a second plaster mold of a shoe print. She was sure to drop things today. *Who says you can’t learn from Disney movies? Mulan was right. Always bring a spare cup!*

It was proven later to be a good idea when she swung about at some point and sent the first mold shattering on the floor. She made a disgusted sound at the mess, than stared at it for a while.

*Industrial heavy duty winch was pulled up from cement bolt and redrilled in with new, even deeper bolts. Cement floor was newly cracked, but may have already been compromised. Something dropped? Can’t make sense of the shapes.* She shook herself, getting the broom and dustpan to clean up her mess.

Later she was staring at work table absently, finger tracing a scratch in the table. *Cable had shaved against upper beams for a while. Cleanly cut, not broken. Welding burns fresh on the floor over the blood stains. Work was done so back bay door was accessible. Semi truck likely. Someone had swept areas by the table, but missed some chain links by the leg of a table. More welding? For what?*

“Ella?”

Ella snapped out of her daze, her whole frame jolting in surprise at Daniel as he flapped the file in her work space to further get her attention. “Ballistics are back on what they found. Take a look and see what you can make of that slaughter.”

Ella frowned, pulling the file closer, finally recalling what was going on. “Oh, this is related to the gang war massacre Southside, right?”

Dan shrugged, hands on his hips as he eyed the file. “Not sure it’s a gang war, necessarily. This was pretty clean. Someone hit these guys hard and without warning. Just… give it a look, right?”

“Will do.” Ella looked at the pictures, wishing she’d been the one to take them on the scene. *Smooth operation. Not even a proper gang fight, like… Great, now I got West Side Story stuck in my head. Ah well. When you’re a Jet, you’re a Jet all the way…*

She ended up agreeing with Daniel on the matter that someone came in hard and hit the guys, but she couldn’t give him any new leads on who she suspected, only who she didn’t suspect. The case didn’t match half the gangs' M.O.s that were active in L.A., but that still left too many possibilities
to go after anyone for questioning.

Ella made her way over to Lux after work, stopping to chit chat with the two body guards on her way up to the penthouse. There was a half pitcher of mojito in the fridge that she helped herself to a tall glass of. The forensics scientist pulled out the file where Mazikeen had hidden it in a clever compartment hidden among Lucifer’s bookshelves and spread the pictures out again on his heavy, leather-topped antique desk.

She should probably get a coaster for her glass. The thought pinged in her busy mind, then went away just as quick as she focused on the images.

*Haven’t gotten a hit on where those winches were purchased. Obviously new. Security was top of the line. Expert independent contractor’s work. Need to find them.* She closed her eyes, briefly rest the already sweating glass on her forehead to cool it and the pressure there. She took a deeper breath, then pulled the other images closer. These ones were harder to ponder objectively.

*C’mon Ella. Gotta be Vulcan-like here. Logical facts… Bullets all match the ones found at the scene where Pierce laid a trap for them. All bloody and impacted. So much for my ‘round-object-protecting-them theory. Large puddle of blood on floor. Does not match Chloe’s blood, nor weird out-of-spec blood. Still waiting for a ding on it in the data base to see whose it is. Had to be subtle, so Feds don’t find out. Blood swipes on table…*

*A bloody feather-looking swipe.*

Ella had researched on that as well, trying to match the feather to birds, synthetically made plumes, and was having no luck. She finally called in to a University, and through a chain of friends and name drops, was finally promised a call back from a Dr. Ledger, an ornithologist.

With that to wait on, Ella took a drink of her mojito, and started in on theories, trying to piece it all together, who was where, what, how. Something wasn’t fitting, and it was driving her nuts.

She was surprised when the elevator dinged and a surly faced ten-year-old entered the room, half dropping her backpack from her shoulder.

Ella looked at Trixie anxiously. “Hey, you’re not here with your dad?”

“He’s working, and I don’t want to talk about him,” Trixie grumped, heading to the fridge herself and popping it open.

“Ah, so… he has no idea you’re here, does he.” *Lookit this rebel brown-coat girl! Not like Chloe. No wonder why she likes Lucifer.*

Trixie gave her a look. Ella lift her palms up, silently letting Trixie know she wasn’t picking a fight. “Hey, I get it! I ain’t snitching on you.” Trixie’s face pinched in the slightest smile, a silent thanks. Ella looked back at the pictures, trying to make sense of things still while Trixie found sorbet in the freezer and started helping herself to huge scoops of it.

She settled on one of the tall stools at Lucifer’s bar. “What are you looking at?”

“Uhhh, pictures? From inside the warehouse that you weren’t allowed in?” Ella started to pile them up, so the gorier details were hidden.

Trixie’s mouth flattened briefly, a small hurt line. Her voice was just as small and hurt. “That bad?”
“It’s…” Ella looked at the pile of pictures, hands on her knees and pondering if she should lie.
“You know, not pretty!” She was a terrible liar, especially when this tired. “I’m having trouble
making sense of it.”

Trixie pursed her lips, spoon tapping at her sorbet despondently. “Blood?”
“A lot, but good news is none of it is your mom’s.”

Trixie’s mouth made another one of its brief movements. Again that sad attempt at a smile before
it fell again. “Lucifer’s?”

“Good question, but we don’t know. We never got Lucifer’s blood on file, so it’s kinda up in the
air.”

“His blood will be different,” Trixie stated.

“Because he’s different?”

“Because he’s Lucifer.” Trixie looked at Ella like she thought she was being daft. “You know?
He’s like Maze. They’re different.”

“Well, sure, everyone is different but…”

Trixie interrupted with her brows high. “Wait. You don’t know.”

Ella was feeling lost in this conversation. “Thaaaat, Lucifer is a method actor? Sure I do. He’s so
good, too! One of these days he’s going to nail whatever part he’s going for.”

Trixie was sucking sorbet off her spoon while shaking her head at Ella.

Why do I feel like she’s Mandy and I’m Billy right now?

Ella was about to question her further on it when her phone rang. She immediately jumped to her
feet, answering it quickly. “Hello?”

“Hello.” It was a woman with a Great Lakes region accent on the phone who sounded very no-
nonsense. “I’m Dr. Ledger. I was told a forensics scientist had questions for me. About feathers.
This was the soonest I could call back.”

“Yeah! Yeahyeahyeah! I’m Ella Lopez, with the L.A.P.D. Department. I had a blood imprint that
looks like a feather was laying on top of it at one point and needed some help identifying it!”

Ella got the doctor’s email address to send her photos. She could hear Trixie watching videos on
her phone, slumped with her lips stained with sorbet. There was a promise to be called back, and
Ella ended the call, waiting and pacing, her mind fretting over what she knew. She exchanged a
few texts with Dan concerning work and latest case he was gathering evidence on. She text Linda
swiftly after to ask if she was going to be at Lux later. Linda sent back that she was going to sleep
in her own bed tonight almost at the same time the phone rang.

“Hello?” Ella asked, starting her instant pace back and forth through Lucifer’s penthouse. She
could hear Trixie messaging on her phone.

“Ms. Lopez, your ruler isn’t closer to the camera than it appears, is it?”

“Huh? No, it was laying flat on the table right next to it.”
“Well, then you’re looking at a fake feather for sure.”

“Great. Any idea what company would make a feather like that?”

“I’m not certain. Whichever company did so had a good grasp of plumology. This feather is specifically designed to emulate a flight feather. It has the classical asymmetrical orientation of the shaft for a wind resistant leading edge common on the remiges.”

Just smile and nod. “Uh, right! Any idea what kind of bird they were trying to copy, then?”

Air puffed on the other side of the phone. “Something large, likely a raptor, maybe even a condor. But twice as large as any living bird.”

That doesn’t sound very scary. More like a six foot turkey! No, Ella, not that kind of raptor. Focus! “Why is that?”

“Well, because if you follow the blur of your smear upward, it looks like this was on something with over a meter and a half wing chord.” When Ella didn’t respond right away, she explained in exasperation. “That would mean a bird with over a five meter wing span. The only possibility for this size would be birds like the Argentavis magnificen, which is, of course, extinct. The wandering albatross has only a 3.65 meter wingspan in comparison.”

It’s a bird, it’s a plane, it’s an extinct bird model? “So… I’m looking for a big bird model. But not like for Sesame Street’s big bird more like—Possibly for a museum?”

“That would be my guess. Now I don’t know what time it is there, but it is rather late here. Good luck on your search, Ms. Lopez.”

“Oh, yeah, hey, you’ve been a great help! Thank you so much for…” Ella stopped, looking at the phone. “Hanging up on me. Yes. Thank you. Ay!”

Trixie looked up from watching her phone vids at Ella pacing. “No luck?”

“None. I’m totally out of ideas here! And I feel like the answer is right in my face, but I don’t freaking know what!”

“Maybe do something else for a while then and go back to it with fresh eyes. That’s what Mom does.”

Chloe… Man, I gotta figure this out so I can find her. “Maybe I just need something to eat. You want something, chica?”

“I think there’re still sandwich fixings in there that Dr. Martin brought.”

“We’ll start there. Heck knows we’ve cleaned out everything else in Luce’s fridge. Hopefully he’s not too mad about it.”

“He won’t be,” Trixie said matter of factly, finishing watching an AMV video before swiping at her messages. “He likes feeding people.”

Ella continued thinking while she started getting out sandwich fixings, listening to the ten-year-old sending links back and forth. “Sharing with friends?” Okay, so big fake feathers, bullet casings, my still missing big round object… Could that have had feathers pinned to it? Most of the things in there were antiques though. Extinct bird feathers? That’d probably be priceless. Why is there no regular mustard in here? All this fancy stuff… Nope, that one doesn’t taste good. Bleah!
Trixie nodded, entirely ignorant of her inner dialogue. “They’re trying to keep my distracted. It’s nice of them.”

“Pretty cool friends.” Oh, whoa, spicy mustard! Danger, Will Robinson! She smacked her lips, considering the bottle, then started spreading it on her bread while muttering, “Bring it, spicy.” If you wannabe my mustard, you gotta get with my bread!

“Yeah, they try. It helps.”

They lapsed into silence while Ella mentally tried to figure out more songs she could put sandwich lyrics to. She heard a familiar video come over Trixie’s phone. “British animal voice overs? Oh man, that’s a classic.”

Trixie smiled and shrugged a little. “I’ve seen it before, but I always rewatch it.”

Ell could hear the first bit of the video playing. "Nighttime… Daytime!!! Night tiiiiiime… Daytime!!!” She grinned. “Yeah, my favorite part of it is the sea lions going ‘Sabertooth! Wolverine! Saber…!’”

All thoughts came to a halt, Ella freezing in place.

Trixie looked at Ella, puzzled, then pointedly to the mustard she kept drizzling on her bread. “Um…”

Ella hurried over to her, leaning over the bar. “Waitwaitwait, hold the phone! Reverse to the beginning!”

“Huh?” Trixie was looking slightly alarmed as Ella reached over the counter to grab the phone, her fingers swiping over the video quickly.

The bird on the screen neatly fold its wings into a perfect circle, head poking down like it was a strange feathery umbrella. All the while the voice over continued. "Nighttime… Daytime!”

Ella made a surprised sound as her mind started to race. “No way… No! Hahahaha!”

Trixie stared at Ella. “Umm….”

“That’s it! But that’s… insane! Do you realize how insane that would be?” Ella waved her hands, and consequently Trixie’s phone at her wildly.

Trixie looked concerned. “It’s just a vid, Ell.”

“Wait, wait, if for some way out of bounds reason that’s possible… Oh! I gotta make a phone call!”

Trixie fumbled as her phone was tossed back at her, leaned over the counter to watch as Ella started her pacing once more, phone to her ear.

“Hello?”

“Uh, hey, Doctor Ledger! I just thought of something I still needed an avian expert’s opinion on! Bird feathers! How resilient are they?”

“Ms. Lopez, I know in Los Angeles it’s much earlier, but here do you have any idea what time it is?”
“Please, it’s important! Like, ballistics wise, what can a bird wing handle?”

“Ms. Lopez…”

“Like, say if you were hunting raptors… No, wait! Turkeys! If you were hunting turkeys! What kind of bullet would you have to use?”

“Why on earth…”

“Please! I know it’s late! I’ll leave you alone after this! Promise!”

“It doesn’t take a powerful shot to bring down a bird at all. On a turkey you just have to aim for the head.”

“Aim for the head?”

The doctor sounded beyond cross. “Yes, Ms. Lopez. Contour feathers on a bird’s body are not just for show. They act as layered armor and deflect bullets surprisingly well, as many a foolish hunter could easily explain to you. Find one of them to speak to. Good night!”

The phone went silent. Ella pulled her phone away, looking to the wall. “Well, holy shit.”
Lucifer was apprehensive, playing out conversations in his head while he waited for the Detective behind the bars.

It was Tuesday, their third day of being underground. They were captured seven days ago.

Seven days too long for the Detective, he had decided.

He’d been steeling his nerves all morning, lunch sitting uneasily in his belly, while he did his best to set his resolve and prepared to do what he did best. Ruin everything good.

Which would mean untangling himself from the Detective and their… whatever-all-this-was that he preferred to not name. Because he couldn’t escape, but she could, so whatever he wanted, he was going to have to bottle for now, because Chloe didn’t deserve to be stuck with him. So distance. Logic. Planning only. No more being vulnerable. It would just hurt more.

The Detective would be understanding.

Surely.

His heart had sunk somewhere in his chest to beat more frantically, like some anxious rabbit. It leapt up from its furtive hiding place the moment she appeared, a warm swoop as it winged up near his throat. Her hair was down, warm honey with a natural wave near the height of her neck. Her blue eyes planted on him, eyes that could look like the sea touched with sun in the right light, full of life and intelligence. She was smiling at him, ever widening as she neared. She was happy to see him, not a barest trace of falsehood in that honest expression.

Heavens above, he was so fucking fucked.

All the hard resolve had crumpled, sliding into ruin like so much sand. Still, Lucifer straightened his spine where he was sitting against the wall and grinned up at her. “Detective! Hello!”

“Hey, you.” She sat down close to the wall and the bars, athletic legs folding cross-legged. She was in beige scrubs today, something light compared to his dark gray and black set. Her hand reached up to touch the horizontal bar between them. “How are you feeling?”

Lucifer looked to where her delicate fingers rest on the metal. He wanted to touch her hand where it rest invitingly, fold her smaller fingers in between his like before.

He resolutely kept his hands folded on his midsection, palms guarding the turmoil there. He kept his smile up, willfully pulling on his I’m-fine mask.

He did not feel fine.

“Better! Much less raked-over-the-coals feeling and more toward happy gimp. That is part of the
advantage of being the Devil. I heal exceptionally well. How are you?"

“I’m glad to hear it.” She was, he realized. “I feel like C.T. Is trying to make me fat. I’m not sure what it’s called, but the round, potato pasta things for lunch...?”

“Gnocci,” Lucifer informed her. “I feel your pain on the fattening, but I can spare you some. You’re certain you don’t want to separate from your baklava?”

“I need the baklava.” She was being playfully serious, smile giving her away.

Yes, get on with it, before you start melting, you fool. “Ah, yes! Quite a chef, our warden. You’ll have to tell the others about him. Maybe they can dig up more about him.” A pause. “For when you get out, of course. Because you’ll be getting out.”

Chloe’s expression barely changed, but she tilt her head, and her eyes seemed to slice at his facade. Lucifer rubbed his fingers together, absently fidgeting as he went on.

“You see, I didn’t promise to not help you escape, I just... So we should focus on that first and foremost! I’ve a few ideas. I think I can get to that tablet without truly attacking or harming anyone. Oh, and I think I figured out what this place used to be, so that limits its layout some.”

Chloe’s eyes were laser focused on him. “Yeah? And what is this place?”

“An old fall out shelter.” Lucifer grinned, wiggling his fingers. “All the rage back in the fifties and sixties! They used to have parties in them to show them off! Well, some, I should say. Other people hid them, kept them secret. That way if the worst occurred, well, sod off, everyone else!”

“Fall out shelter... From the Cold War.” She finally looked around. Lucifer let his aching smile falter, then righted it when she looked back at him, all confident teeth again. “That makes sense. Pierce would know about them, wouldn’t he. But I wanted to talk to you about something else before we got into that. I had some questions.”

“Questions?” No, no, questions. “But Detective, we really need to focus on your escape. Now, these shelters were built with a grievous amount of ignorance. They were rarely shielded enough, and usually didn't have the necessary storage for the food and water needed to survive the length of...”

Chloe interrupted him. “I wanted to ask you about what happened. In Heaven.”

Lucifer looked at her, mouth still open. He closed it with a thick swallow against the bomb on his throat. “That? That was a long time ago, my dear. Now, the vents... They’re obviously too small, and there was usually only one way in and out of these things otherwise, so our only way out.-”

Chloe clapped her hands lightly together to interrupt him. “Lucifer.” She waited until she captured his gaze with hers, clear and resolved. “I want to focus on that, too. I do, but we’re not discussing that in ear shot of our captors, okay?” She looked him over, shrugged a little. “And beside, I wanted to know a little more about you. About... Why your father sent you to Hell.”

Lucifer felt the anxiety climb in his belly. “I’m not sure I want to discuss it.” When Chloe looked at him expectantly still, he rambled on. “Besides, that’s history. Quite literally history to you, and it doesn’t help our current situation. So, back to the matter at hand?”

The Detective looked at him, brow lifted and the first hint of annoyance around her lips. She was waiting him out, he realized, waiting for him to talk. He bit down on the nervous prattle wanting released. Finally he sat forward, wings dragging on the floor a few inches. “Okay! Fine. Abridged
version is I lead a rebellion. Started a war. It went poorly for me. Very poorly. So I was sent to Hell to be the wretched custodian for damned souls and demons. That was only until I had enough of that tommyrot and, thus, here I am.”

“Why did you start a war, though?”

“Because I wanted to sow chaos and discord. Why else?” He’s meant to say it lightly. Instead his words rumbled with bitterness.

“Lucifer…” Chloe’s voice softened, watching him solemnly. “You promised me honesty. I want to know your thoughts, not everyone else’s.”

That was unfairly disarming. Lucifer opened his mouth, closed it, then looked down at the hem of the black scrub shirt, down along his own legs. He uncrossed his ankles and folded them back the other way. “Choice,” he finally admitted quietly. “I wanted us to have a choice. You humans got it. Why not us? Then I discovered how precious few of my siblings had any clue what freedom meant, and how little they cared for the idea. Most vehemently rejected the notion outright.” The archangel leaned his head back, looking at the ceiling. “I was kicked out, condemned to Hell in the end. So long as it’s not one of them, they’re quite happy with it.”

Chloe was thinking. Concern pinched her brow. “Was… was there a trial or anything?”

“Trial? From Dad?” Lucifer laughed. It was unhappy, his voice becoming low and sibilant. “Oh, no, dear Detective. The verdict was given to my siblings and they saw it through. Unanimously. There was not one who…” He stopped. There was that sharp feeling under his sternum again. He took a breath, pushing the hurt from his voice. “No one, and I wasn’t given say. So…” He widened his eyes and grinned, pushing his hands down on the floor to scoot himself up straighter. “Lost more freedom than I gained in the end, but that was then. I’m still happier being here than there, so they can look down from above, shake their heads in consternation at my roaming the Earth, and shove their indignation up their collective arses.”

Chloe was blinking, looking perturbed. “Not… not one person in your family spoke on your behalf? Your entire family?”

“Only against me. Well…” He thought, distracting himself with pulling a leg underneath him. Lucifer was quite done with sitting prone, no matter how his legs protested. “If my mother is to be believed, apparently dear old Dad was going to utterly destroy me. She talked him out of it.” He grunted, clutching the bar with a slapped clang and pulled himself up to his feet. Chloe’s eyes followed him up as he went.

“That… sounds terrible. And sad.”

“Sad?” Lucifer looked down at her sharply. “Oh, Detective, I wasn’t sad.” He felt heat in his eyes, a hue of red washing over his vision. “I was furious.”

Chloe said nothing, swallowing. He didn’t like that expression. Lucifer willed away any Devilish features and concentrated on a few stiff steps, watching the floor as he planted one bare foot in front of the other. The pain was grounding, helped pull away from the scraping hurt unburied by the topic, this entirely unnecessary conversation. It left him feeling far too drained. His voice was weary as he walked on, the stiff, glassy pangs melting into a more mobile smother of fire through his leg bones. “It hardly matters. They got what they wanted. No one wanted a beloved sibling to sit the throne of Hell. Better a demon-hearted monster, someone who deserved it, rather than one of their pure, ideally obedient fellows.”
Chloe frowned, looking to the floor in thought. Lucifer walked the length of the cell to the other set of bars, turned about and started back to the other way. He flapped a hand out, letting it fall with a clap at his thigh in hopes of gaining her attention. “So, enough of that. As I was saying, fallout shelters weren’t known for being large, so I’m guessing that we’ve seen most of it, but they’ve obviously modified this for their holding lair, so thinking there might be additional passages for maintenance we can…”

“What do you mean by your siblings sitting on the throne of Hell?”

Lucifer frowned, stopping his pained pacing to look at her, trying to figure out what she was puzzling out. “What?”

“You said they were glad it was you rather than one of them. Why? Would someone else have had to do it if you hadn’t been forced to?”

Lucifer tilt his head, still wondering what his clever Detective was putting together in her mind. “Hell’s ruler must be a celestial being. Dad designated that directly so no demon could rule it.” He snorted softly. “That would be a disaster. Demons aren’t known for their restraint. I can attest to that.”

“Directly designated? Lucifer, why would he design it that way?”

“Because… that’s the way it is.” He motioned with his arms, exasperated. “It’s not like we can ask him what he was thinking! Dad is not known for being forthcoming.”

“That’s not a good enough answer for me.” She stood up, looking down at the floor, her hand near her chin as she thought. Lucifer stopped his own walk to watch her pace. He knew when she was dissecting a vein of information in her mind, knew when she was on to something. Even though he felt agitated at the subject, he couldn’t help but watch to admire. “You don’t design something with a power structure like that without having a clear intent of who you’ll plant at the head of it. And you said none of your siblings wanted it. They wouldn’t have liked any of their siblings being subjected to it. From what you said before, I think even you would have disliked your siblings needing to head that... that place. So, if you really want to not have a real rebellion over some shitty design, you need to create someone no one will mind overseeing it.”

Lucifer’s mouth was open, wanting to interject. He didn’t like where the Detective was heading with this at all. But she kept going, spinning in place on her slipper, both palms up as she contemplated the other wall.

“So all he had to do was… Wait. Are angels born? Or were you kind of like Adam—just made? Jesus, were you even ever a kid?”

Lucifer stammered, thrown a little by the sudden side trek. “Kid? No, there were never children among angels. We were made by him, formed outright. Well, both he and Mom, yes, but we weren’t born with chancy genetic code. We were designed, each one with different-.”

Chloe clapped her hands, wheeling on him and pointing, eyes wide. “See, that’s it! So for him, this was so easy to do! He had a direct hand in designing every angel, so he could easily construct exactly what he wanted! In this case, someone who would threaten Heaven’s comfort enough that it was easy for everyone to shrug and look away, and he got a chaotic, dangerous place still under celestial thumb where it couldn’t threaten any other place, right?”

The archangel stared at her, his mind feeling like stuck gears. When he didn’t chime in and continued staring at her in a lost manner, Chloe approached the bars, one hand wrapping around
one firmly. “Okay, maybe I’m way off base, but humor me. Would any… any of the other angels ever have considered, even had the capacity to, question God?”

“Capacity…? I… Maybe?” His voice sounded too high, even in his own ears. The Devil was feeling terribly ungrounded by this unexpected conversation, trying to keep up with her excited thoughts. It wasn’t as though these weren’t things he had pondered on before, but he didn’t expect to find someone turning up theories he’d tried to lay to rest centuries ago. A human at that, when humans were so very fond of vilifying him for near everything. The Detective isn’t just any human, though. “Well, they can question. Amenadiel has, so I’m not entirely unique for having that capacity. But, Detective, even if that’s the truth of it, it’s worse! That means that I really had no choice in wanting a choice, all the while it being impossible to ever have it! Why would I want to entertain such a thought?”

“Because I think that while you may not have had a choice in your design, I think you do now! You’ve grown over the last three years! I’ve watched it. You’ve learned, and-and you’re not who you used to be, but you’re still thinking of yourself as being the bad guy, and as I told you, I think you’re way better than you’re giving yourself credit for. And this whole…” She waved a hand sideways emphatically. Chloe’s voice started raising as she spoke, anger growing. “You trying to ‘subtly’ convince me to leave you here and save myself is part of it, isn’t it? You want me to abandon you, and I already told you, I’m on your side, and I’m not leaving you! So if we’re going to have any talk about escaping, we’re talking about how to do it together, because I’m sick-” She smacked the bars hard with her hand. “…of you running from me because you think that’s what is best for me!”

Lucifer flinched when her hand hit the bars, stunned for a few seconds before he recovered. He reached for anger defensively. Leaning forward, his voice's volume raised to match hers. “Don’t! You don’t have a clue of all the things I’ve done! Maybe I was designed for it, maybe not! How would you feel having to ponder that your whole existence and all your thoughts, feelings, and choices were a farce? Because you should! You think your existing and being able to tolerate me is normal? It’s not! You were placed here so that Dad had another means of manipulating me!”

Chloe pointed through the bars at him. “Is this over that miracle thing you talked about? Because if so, don’t you dare excuse your actions on-!”

“It’s precisely because of the miracle thing, Detective!” he said, his whole frame stiff. “I told you, I don’t ever want to take away your free will, but guess what! If your theory is right, that’s all Dad does! I want to keep distance from you because you deserve a chance to choose and be happy, and right now you don’t have that when I’m involved!”

“Bullshit! Your being afraid doesn’t have anything to do with what I choose! How do you even know what I want?”

“I don’t want to know what you want, because if I do, Dad wins, and I won’t have it!”

Chloe folded her arms, staring at him while her set jaw moved in angry little nods. “So, fuck me and what I want and think, right?”

“No!” He turned in place, hand to his forehead. “Just understand that what you want isn’t really what you want!”

Chloe’s nostrils flared. “You fucking ass.” Then she turned and strode away.

He stared after her, all the way down the hall. That was what he had wanted wasn't it? But, no, it wasn't, and he felt shaken and frightened of solitude without her once more. The fallen angel put his hands over his mouth and nose, turning in place. His heart was trying to hammer out of his ribs, his breathing far too shallow. “Fuck. Fuckfuckfuck.”

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Caretaker’s voice came over the com at one point to ask if he wanted to return to his room. Lucifer politely refused. He waited in the holding cell, seated at his spot near the bars and keeping his eyes trained on the dark, unlit hall anxiously.

He had time to think at least.

Mostly over his mistakes, but other things as well.

He guessed at least two hours passed by the time the lights flicked on. The archangel looked hopefully down the hall, leaning forward. The Detective was walking much slower than before, her energy subdued.

Lucifer wasn’t sure what to say, so he said nothing, waiting with partially held breath, eyes dancing over her face. She wasn’t quite meeting his eyes. Still upset, then. His fault, certainly.

“Hey. Caretaker said you were still out here. I… guess our three hours wasn’t up yet.”

Lucifer’s words were ventured gently, still uncertain of her mood and thoughts. “You don’t have to see me if you do not want to, Detective.”

To his surprise she sighed and sat down against the wall by him. She didn’t offer her hand, just stared at the far wall, her jaw clenched. He knew she was working up to say something. He bit down on his own trepidation and waited, letting her sort her words internally first.

“I want to explain what I’ve been going through. I think… that if you can see the affect your behavior has had on me, maybe you’ll understand why I was angry at you earlier. Well, I’m still a little angry. But mostly, hurt, you know?”

“You don’t have to explain to me,” Lucifer tried.

“No. I think I need to get this out. It’s important.” She closed her eyes, and to Lucifer’s dismay, a tear slid down her cheek. “The first time we started to become close, you ran to Vegas. You didn’t tell me why, or what you were thinking. You just went. What that told me was that… You didn’t really care about me. That the only grace you gave me was that you didn’t sleep with me when I was drunk and ditch me after. Maybe because you liked the work. But I wasn’t enough for anything else. No.” She lift her hand when Lucifer opened his mouth. “Just… listen. This isn’t about what you were really thinking or doing. This is how I felt, and I need to get this out, and it’s not easy, so just…” She nervously put her hand down in stalled jerks. Took a fortifying breath to continue.

It was torture, seeing her like this. He watched as she kept her eyes on the wall and continued, voice watery, her swallows thick in between statements.

“You came back with a wife. Acted like it was nothing. Like what we had almost embarked on was nothing. So it felt like such a slap to the face. I had hoped you just had a family emergency, because I knew there was something really screwed up with your family to give you so many issues.” She made a small laugh. “Didn’t have any idea quite the breadth of it then. I also thought maybe you were just terrified of intimacy. But a wife? That’s not fear of intimacy. It was more like
you were afraid of being pinned with a boring person like me. Because I’m not enough.”

She made another motion when he opened his mouth to protest, went on before he could get ideas to interrupt. “You see, it’s a pattern with me. I’m never enough for who I’m with to really… want me fully. To prioritize me. I know that’s selfish, but it always just made me wonder what was wrong with me to where no one could love me more than… other things. With Dan, it was work. Pierce… Well, Pierce just wanted to die at first. I don’t even want to talk about my highschool and college days. And then… Then there was you.” She looked up, smile tremulous and quickly folding into a crumpled expression of grief she took a few seconds to control.

“You were, tall, dark, handsome, and annoying as hell. One of my worse nightmares to work with, taking nothing serious, having no respect for authority or rules… Utterly insane… And I couldn’t help but like you. Because when it mattered, you would somehow pull through. And you started doing things. Things that I noticed you didn’t do for anyone else. You figured out how I liked my coffee right away. That I’m a sucker for fried sandwiches and lemon bars. You figured out when I needed to take point on cases. You respected me. Right from the start even. You know that the first day we met, you told me I was smart and had notable instincts, so I needed to ignore everyone, trust myself? You stood up to my ex when he tried to get me to back off the case, called him the moron and me the smart one. And…” She frowned. “No one had ever done that before. Even Dan when he said that I would make a good detective never… put it like that, or defended me. Then others, they see the face and blond hair, and try to treat me like a bimbo. You… didn’t.” She rolled her eyes. “Well, you still went on about the stupid hot tub scene, but at least you seemed to see more than that.”

Lucifer stayed quiet. Breathing hurt, and he didn’t trust himself in the least to say anything suitable in light of this raw confession.

“So I tried. I tried really damned hard to keep all my feelings away, to stay professional, to not think of you as more because I just knew you would be bad for me, that you wouldn’t be able to prioritize me, not over your fun lifestyle, not over your crazy little life agendas, not… I mean, what did I even have to offer, when you had so much going for you? Then I almost married Pierce, because I thought that… That was what I wanted. Someone who would woo me, who paid attention to what I liked, who gave me credit for the hard work I did, and was going to be steady and reliable. Then… I kept thinking about you, and realizing I couldn’t go through with it. It was more than my instincts pinging that it was somehow a bad idea. I can’t… marry someone while I’m so busy thinking of someone else, even though I really wanted to stop thinking about you.”

Lucifer could barely breathe. “Chloe…”

She wiped at her nose, shaking her head. “Now, your way of running is telling me I was designed to not have a choice but to like you, like you’re some wicked ball and chain forced on me. Well… you have a choice. A choice, Lucifer. You either decide you can’t live with the thought that it’s a possibility, and you tell me now, and we’ll work together to get out and we try to move on from each other after this, hurting us both. Or you get your head out of your ass, right now, and understand that no matter what is designed and what isn’t, my hurt is real, and how I feel is real, and I deserve better than… than what you’re doing.”

Silence fell. Lucifer watched her profile, feeling devastated by the hurt he’d wrought, seeing all the evidence of it in her reddened eyes and salty tear tracks drying on her face, the way her wringing hands trembled when they held still enough.

She seemed surprised when his hand reached to cover hers through the bars, trying to still the tremble there. He failed. His was trembling just as badly. She looked up, eyes wide and full of
apprehension and sorrow.

*No more walls.*

“Detective. Chloe. I know that you deserve someone far better. So much better and worthier.” He breathed deeper, voice coming out in a rushed whisper. “And less terrified. Because *I am.* I’ve never been a coward, but this… I’ve been so scared of losing you. I’ve never been so frightened in all my life as I have been this last week. And I didn’t mean to hurt you. I just want you to be free. Even without me.”

Lucifer felt shame bubble up with the emotions that wrung his words, made his next rapid blink fail in the attempt to hold the moisture back. “And I wanted to be free, too. I’ve always wanted to be free, be sure all my choices were my own, that I wasn’t being manipulated or forced into my role. But you’re right. I didn’t realize what I was doing to you. And I can’t keep hurting you so… *shit…*” He wiped at his eyes, looked up briefly. His brief huff of laughter was bitter, dying as soon as it began. “Good game, Dad. You’ve won. I surrender.”

He bit his teeth together, trying to still the emotions flooding him. They overwhelmed and drowned him instead, and he felt choked, a sledgehammer taken to his chest. His wings were shaking, his limbs nothing but tension before he let go, let himself feel it finally.

The Devil set his forehead against the bars, let the tears drip onto the cold cement. “*I surrender.* If it’s a cage, so be it! Cage me! I’ll go to Hell a thousand times, but please, please, Chloe… I’m *terrified,* and I don’t know what to do, or-or what you need, how to be it, nothing! I’m bad, I know, but I want to be good for you, but I don’t know *how.*”

He kept his eyes close, waiting to fall, for how he was going to fail next. Chloe’s hands fold around his briefly before releasing them. He heard her move. All he could do was try not to choke on his breath at the loss.

“Come here,” she whispered, breath shaking.

He opened his eyes, saw she had turned to face him. Her hand was reaching through the bars. Fingers passed over his ear, carding through his hair and coaxing him forward.

The kiss felt like taking a breath again after drowning, her lips soft and accepting on his. Lucifer, the Fallen Morning Star, Ruler of Hell, Heaven’s Rebel Son, Prince of Darkness, and Tempter of Souls, shuddered at her gentleness. He reached through the bars, finding that honey hair, soft and falling natural in his careful hold as he opened his mouth further to Chloe, kissing with firm desperation, releasing barely only to retake her mouth in a new hold and to hear her breath stammer with his.

They parted mutually, foreheads resting together as they breathed each other’s air. She kept touching his hair, and he returned the gesture, sliding his hand down her neck and shoulder, motions that soothed her as well as him.

“I’m sorry for earlier,” he whispered finally.

“Me, too.” Her hand stilled on his cheek. “No more running?”

“Promise… at least that I’ll do my best. With everything.”

She made a wet, but somehow happy sound. “The best is more than anyone’s ever been willing to give me before. It’s enough.” She sighed, eyes closed as she let more of her weight slide against the bars. “More than enough… You’re also a damned good kisser.”
“That… probably wasn’t my best kiss. Come here, love.”

Chloe lifted to meet him again, and Lucifer kissed her with all the tender affection he felt, all the love she deserved, gentle and reverent.

When they parted minutes later, it was with hungrier, smaller kisses, the two breathing unsteadily. They said nothing, eyes wide and open, full of so much, the charge between them a near-tangible pressure in the air. Chloe reached through, wrapping her hand with his. He squeezed her fingers between his.

“Good…?” Chloe asked, still uncertain.

“Yes... good.”
They talked.

Chloe loved the warmth of his fingers between hers, the gentle squeeze of a hand that could bend steel. His hair was messy and tousled, his eyes still red-rimmed. Bandages still wrapped his arms and feet, his right wing in a cast that rest against the bars, and he looked softer and more open than she could ever remember. His dark gaze was meltingly fond and vulnerable whenever he looked at her as they sat together near the wall, their voices hushed to create a little sphere of quiet intimacy as Lucifer gave her all the secrets she asked for.

She asked about Mazikeen, his right hand demon. He assured that if Mazikeen still lived, she would be turning L.A. upside down for them. She would also never harm her or Trixie, and Heaven help the soul that tried. She asked about his wings, what he’d said earlier about cutting them off. So he told her about waking in the desert with them, how he was sure his dad was manipulating him with them somehow. He spoke on losing his Devil face until he thought Pierce had shot her. She asked how he could change, how his wings could grow back, and he further explained Amenadiel’s theory, and how it seemed likely angels manifested their self-identity in unique ways.

“So…. Angels can morph. That’s pretty wild.”

“That makes me sound like a mutant. But. Not inaccurate, I suppose. The fact that no one has realized this until now just shows how little anyone else has adapted over time. So I’m sure everything is same-o-same-o in the Silver City. No need for change there.”

“Or decide that you’re any better than when you rebelled. So that’s why praying to any of them is useless.”

He tried to pretend that didn’t bother him, but she could see the ache in his eyes. “All except big old brother Amenadiel, who isn’t answering. So we’re on our own. No divine intervention here.”

“It bothers you, what they think.”

Lucifer rest his forehead against the bars, the sigh that followed heavy with a small head shake. “I won’t say that some of the claims are unwarranted, but between them and so many humans thinking I’m evil? I’m bad, but surely not that bad?”

“I don’t think so.”

That pulled a smile from him, eyes skipping up to meet hers again. “That’s all that matters, then.”

“Well, almost,” Chloe pursed her lips. She had wanted to keep her questions gentle, not wanting to
push too hard when he was so emotionally fragile. She knew his laying down of arms was no easy task for him, the angel who had struggled for freedom the most. It seemed to break something further inside the archangel, and the best she could do was assuage the damage done with her touch and words. Yet the Detective also wanted answers to questions that she might not get later, when he was more guarded. So she ventured the question. “What do you think?”

“What do I think? About me?”

Chloe watched him, waiting for him to process. At first he looked surprised, then indignant, then made a soft scoffing sound, looking away briefly before quickly looking back.

“Well, I’m fabulous, obviously,” he said tartly. “I mean, look at me.”

Chloe turned toward him, reaching through the bars to take his hand in both of hers. “Lucifer.”

That stripped his attempted armor away, dismay on his features as he searched her eyes. “Well, I… I’ve done things.”

“In Hell?”

He swallowed, looking down at their joined hands. Chloe thought that might be how a coyote looked at its leg in a trap. It was tempting to release him, let him retreat. But then he shook his head and answered. “No. More recent.”

Something in the last eight years, then. Chloe searched her memory. “Since you knew me?”

“Yes.” He rubbed a thumb over her knuckles, eyes remaining on their joined hands.

“…You said once that you had gone through Hell, shortly before you ran to Vegas…”

“Ah! That!” He latched onto the subject, like a drowning man at a piece of driftwood happening by. “No, I went to Hell because I died.”

“What?”

At her sharp inquiry, he looked at her, free palm lifting in a calming gesture. “Only for a few minutes! I had to go get that bloody antidote formula from that professor! He was down there, of course.”

Chloe’s mind flipped, trying to recall. Alarm made her voice raise. “You died when I was dying?”

“Well, yes, obviously,” Lucifer stated with his usual casualness when someone was questioning his actions and he didn’t understand why they were being excitable. “The horrible troll took the knowledge for your cure with him. So I went after him, got it, and after a little detournnnn-,” He bobbed his head, looking up. “-nnmade it up topside again! No problem. You got patched up, and here we are!”

She pulled him even closer to the bars. He looked slightly alarmed at her intensity. “Lucifer, you died?”

Rapid words hurried to explain. “Of course. It was the only way down. My wings weren’t back, yet. I had cut them off so I couldn’t just flit between the dimensions, so I had to take the long way like everyone else that time. So I put myself just a floor below you, induced cardiac arrest, got the formula, got revived-.”
“You-you killed yourself to go to Hell?”

“That is what I just said.”

“For me.”

“Of course.”

Chloe stared at him. He was looking at her like he was fuddled why she was having trouble processing what he’d done. So many words were fighting to come free, but finally she exclaimed, “There was so many things that could have gone wrong!”

“Oh, trust me, I’m aware. Mom of all people had to go down and get me back and we both were close to being stuck down there.”

“Wait, so you almost didn’t make it back?!”

He leaned back some, still studying her with that same addled expression. “Chloe, you’re repeating what I’m telling you an awful lot.”

She scrambled inwardly, trying to make sense of this news. “But… Did you think you were going to get stuck? And how? Isn't that, you know, your territory? Being the Devil?”

“It was. I went down, vulnerable and wingless, as well as feeling…” He stopped, looking away. “Well, anyway, time passes differently down there. Loops of it, and Hell has its own power, pulls on the psyche of whoever it can. It’s easy to get confused and lose your way if you have no proper divinity or Lilithian blood coursing through your veins. Even so, it all worked out in the end.”

Chloe was quiet, letting him stare at the far wall while she observed his familiar profile, the straight nose, his ever shadowed jawline, the even dark brow, and the haunted shadow in his grief-worn eyes. “Pierce… Cain said that only the guilty feeling go to Hell.”

Lucifer’s eyes flicked to her, then quickly away. “Well, I’m banned from heaven. Only one place after that.”

Chloe looked down to their hands. “But you were almost trapped down there. The way you talk about it… Hell doesn’t need your direction to be… Hell, does it?” She shook her head, eyes flicking back up to study him. “You went down there for me, even while you were feeling guilty over something you had done? Lucifer, I might not have gotten you back.”

Lucifer’s eyes were flicking back and forth, his throat working to keep his words steady. It made Chloe wish the bars did not separate them. “It was worth the risk, even with that hanging over my head. I’m not even sure you could easily forgive what I've done, Detective.”

Chloe kept her voice soft. “Try me.”

Lucifer faced her, something poignant welling in his eyes. For a moment, it seemed he might say, then he swallowed and looked down. “I can’t… talk about it. Not right now.”

The detective part of her wanted to push. The rest of her saw the pain in his eyes, and let it rest. She squeezed his hand, settling close to the wall again. “Okay. Later.” She attempted a smile for him. “Thank you for saving my life.”

He smiled weakly at her. “You’ve already thanked me for that.”
“Yeah, well, didn’t realize you had died to make it happen. So thank you.”

“You’re most welcome, my dear.”

“It… does make me feel like a bitch for thinking you didn’t care at times.”

“Oh, I’m not a paragon of expressing my feelings. You should talk to Dr. Martin sometime. She can tell you.”

“Mm, I bet. And you’ve had these feelings… all this time.”

Lucifer’s other hand rest atop hers. “Yes. Not that I had any clue what the feelings were at first. I’ve never felt this way before.”

“Never?” Chloe couldn’t hide her curiosity.

“Ever. So I had no idea what I was supposed to do with such emotions. By the time I realized what I was feeling, I found out about you being a miracle. Put a true wrench into the works.”

She made a thoughtful noise. “It’s just… so weird. To think that I wouldn’t have existed if your brother hadn’t blessed my mother.”

“I don’t like imagining you not existing,” Lucifer stated with quiet frankness. “Things would have been unpleasantly different had we not met.”

“Mm…” Chloe nodded. “You’d still be running a club, partying 24/7, and shacking up with three plus people a day instead of being busy running around L.A. with me, solving crimes?”

“Dull, I know.” His eyes sparked with teasing, the grin not its usual bright wattage, but there.

She smiled back, more glad to see him smiling than at his jest. Then she turned that over in her mind while Lucifer shifted to move his left wing, back arching as he stretched it before resettling. Her eyes followed the line of his feathers and torso. The Detective decided now was the best time to ask the question she had often wondered as any. “Can you… Handle that? Not being with so many people?”

Lucifer looked surprised at the question, brows hitching up. “Of course, darling. I love a good orgy, don’t get me wrong, but I don’t need them.” He pat the top of her hands. “You needn’t worry, Chloe. If you want me and just me, than that is worth far more than any other bed partner.” He glanced down, before looking up, the smile a little weaker. “Besides, it’s not like any of my previous partners in the last eight years have cared for anything further. It would be fun to explore, and you know I love new sensations.”

“Mm.” Chloe remembered all of those interviews. “They were pretty shallow, weren’t they? At first I had thought that you were the one who used them for sex, but… It was more the other way around, wasn’t it?”

Lucifer shrugged his less burdened shoulder. “I do like giving people what they want. It was always a mutually beneficial arrangement. There were a few people who were different, people who became… friends. Dr. Martin, for instance. She’s helped me immensely.” He laid both shoulders and wings flat against the wall, arm falling back against his belly. Chloe settled back as well, freeing one of her hands and adjusted their linked digits more comfortably. “I had started gaining other friends, too. Delilah, for instance. She’d come and see me, even though I’d already given her what she wanted. It made me quite fond of her.” He paused, thoughtful. "I was already changing back then. I cared about her perishing, when I was never perturbed at a human’s passing
before.”

He shook his head at himself, raising his brows at her. "Now I have even more I care about. Ms. Lopez, Charlotte--hopefuly she’s doing well--, that clever little urchin of yours, even Detective Douche. Candy, even though I don’t hear from her.”

Chloe gave him a look, couldn’t help how that picked at a scab on her emotions. “Your ex-wife?”

Lucifer laughed a little. “Yes, wait, let me tell you the whole story with Candy.”

Chloe listened, snorting at times, and at the end was simply looking at him in surprise. “So wait. You and Candy… never did it?”

“No, we did not! Shocking, I know. We were two friends helping each other out, but not in that fashion, and I had a plethora of complicated emotions I was trying to sort through.” Lucifer’s lips twitched up in a smile. “We also knew our marriage was going to be annulled from the start, so consummation wasn’t necessary. I mean, she introduced me to the joy of eating ice cream and drinking wine while wrapped in snuggies and talking about your problems to a girlfriend. That’s many things, but not sexy times.”

“Wow. And the second time you went to Vegas was because she was in trouble.”

“The least I could do. She flushed out my mother’s plotting brilliantly.”

“And… helped you avoid me.”

He sucked air through his teeth. “Not my best move.”

“No,” Chloe agreed, squeezed his hand through the bars. “But that’s because you were worried both of our feelings were false, and… you couldn’t explain the circumstance concerning your mother without me wanting to know more and… Who knows how that would have gone.”

“I still should have been more forthcoming with you somehow. I just didn’t want you to know the truth because… because I was worried you wouldn’t want anything to do with me. You’re sensible like that.”

Chloe rolled her eyes playfully. “Most of the time I’m sensible.”

She wished she could say that she would have weathered learning the truth in a different time and situation the same. But then she wasn’t sure she wouldn’t have retreated if the option were available. Especially if Chloe were still uncertain of how Lucifer felt.

She was certain of his feelings now, even if neither of them were saying the word aloud. The knowledge strung between them, an unspoken secret they shared.

"Hmm.” Chloe thought about Lucifer speaking of friends like they were a new novelty. “Okay, so, you were changing even before we met. Do angels not have friends, then?”

“Not really. We have siblings. Whole different ball of wax, that. Many angels view humans very disparagingly, more like father’s little ant farm with no appreciation for all they’re capable of. Even I was once baffled as to why Dad had such a fascination with mortals. Now… I understand.” He scoffed, eyeing the ceiling. “I’m sure he’ll be chuffed to bits to hear me admit that out loud.”

Chloe chuckled, hand squeezing his. “Well, I’m glad you can appreciate us ‘little mortals’.”
“Well…” He smiled, lift her hand toward the bars to sweep a kiss against the back of her fingers. “Difficult not to with you.”

Chloe felt her heart thrum under his attention, gazing back at him until her cheeks heated and she ducked her gaze. “So… You and I… when we get out?”

“Yes,” he whispered fervently. “Whatever you desire. However, I admit… I don’t know what you desire.” He made a nervous sound. “That’s… a little intimidating. I’m used to knowing exactly what people want. That doesn’t work on you.”

Chloe couldn’t help but smirk. It was ridiculous, that he would be intimidated of her. “Let’s start with a proper date then.”

“Excellent! I can do that.” His eyes lit up expectantly.

“Nothing too extravagant,” she cut in quickly.

He deflated some. “Oh.”

Chloe looked heavenward briefly. “Okay, you can be a little, but… check with Linda to be sure nothing is too over the top and please listen to her.”

His left wing’s prime feathers spread, the feathery limb lifting with his excitement. Sometimes he had such a boyishly gleeful nature, and while Chloe had always pretended it annoyed her, she did find it secretly charming. “So we need to get out of here as soon as possible, then!”

“Right.” She thought over what he said earlier. Chloe looked around the room, before she leaned in as close to the bars near his ear as possible, her voice nothing over a breathy whisper. “So, this is an old fallout shelter that’s been spruced up to hold kidnappees.”

Thankfully, Lucifer caught on that if they were going to plot their escape, they were going to do so as quietly as possible. The archangel turned his head, the sibilant, non-rhotic whisper a pleasant breath in her turned ear. It warmed her in other, distracting ways, but she kept her attention on his words. “Yes, and we have three things to be concerned with. Bomb number one,” he motioned to her ankle. “Bomb number two,” he tapped at his ungainly collar. “And bomb number three, which is surely somewhere not easy for us to reach.”

Chloe took hold of the matter in her mind, starting to turn it about and examining the information they had.” So fallout shelters were small…”

“Little more than underground closets with cots for the less well-off, but this obviously is one for either the rich or a corporation.”

Chloe shook her head before leaning closer again. “I couldn’t see when they pulled us out of the truck, but if that’s the case, we can assume there’s a building over us or an old house.” She thought. “So if I was going to keep the third bomb out of my captives’ reach, I would put it…”

“Above ground,” Lucifer concluded. “Certainly out of my reach, with my foolish vow of staying put.”

“Hey, no kicking yourself for that.” Chloe’s whisper hissed with admonishment. “You were in an unfair position. You can’t keep faulting yourself for everything when you’re in a pressing situation.”

Lucifer opened his mouth, saw her look, and closed it again. Chloe made a mental note that they
Lucifer’s chest expanded and he exhaled with the word “Right,” while looking upward before leaning in to whisper again. “And we only have one way in and out, most likely, unless there is the most remote possibility of further maintenance being added to the place. It’s a stretch, but something we should at least try to rule out.”

Chloe nodded. “So we know there are three rooms and these cells in the ‘back’ part where we’re at now, and not sure what’s the other direction past my room. There is a hall that goes toward the front that I passed. Then there are the doors in our rooms leading to the ‘front’.”

“Safe to assume that somewhere in the front or above us is where we are being monitored from. But we don’t know by how many people.”

“So far it’s only been Caretaker the past few days, but it’s not okay to assume he’s the only one here.” She looked down at her ankle, turning her foot to look at the bulky attachment. “We still have to find a way around these as well. If I were Pierce, I would have made sure we were somewhere less than a block length’s distance, because that seems about the range.”

“Definitely will be within the range. He wouldn’t risk you getting out of range and making me invincible. Now, only Pierce knows the code, but our devices at least have one. That means they can be disarmed. Likely for the maintenance or if he needed to change devices, batteries, who knows what else.”

Chloe nodded. “So we need to figure out the code, and we need to figure out where bomb number three is. Because he can blow us both just by releasing its switch if he chooses.”

“Do they teach you how to disarm bombs in Detective school?” Lucifer asked hopefully.

“They teach us what to do while waiting for the bomb squad.”

“Bollocks.”

Chloe frowned, thinking. “We need outside help.”

“Well, I’m afraid I don’t have my phone on me,” Lucifer murmured. “If we could even get reception in this blasted place.”

“But there is internet close by,” Chloe mused. When Lucifer tilted his head, she informed him about the print outs Caretaker had provided her with.

“So if we could somehow gain access to that…”

“Gotta get past the doors somehow,” Chloe stated, shaking her head. How?

Lucifer had become quiet. She looked at him, at the expression that said he was thinking or knew something he wasn’t sharing. She quirked a brow. He glanced around, then leaned forward. She did so, instinctively turning her ear to him. His whispered accent made her shiver inwardly again. “I have talents, m’dear. You just give the word. I can get you past any of their pesky doors.”

“Mm…” She smirked at him when she pulled back. “All right. I trust you. Just let…”

The intercom hissed. “Three hours has passed at this point.”

The two stared at each other, both reluctant and disheartened by the end of their free time. Finally Lucifer held a palm up, motioning down the hall. “It is getting close to dinner time. You should
eat. Keep up your strength."

“I know. Just... I know you're not far away, but I... miss you. Over there.”

His dark eyes warmed, his face less worn seeming as a new spark lit his gaze. "Oh, Chloe."

She swallowed, feeling even more awkward, cheeks warm. "Okay. Um, but first...” Chloe looked down the hall. She leaned up, and it was Lucifer’s turn to instinctively give her his ear to whisper into. “I’m going to go explore what I can before going back into my room.”

Lucifer’s hand gripped more tightly on her. “Be careful.”

“Don’t worry. Remember, the one guy said it would blink yellow if I was getting out of range of either bomb.”

Lucifer’s wrinkled his long nose briefly. “I am hardly reassured by someone who goes by the name of ‘Smudge’.”

“I’ll be careful.”

Lucifer searched her gaze, then sighed and nodded. “All right. I trust you.”

Chloe couldn’t help how her smile widened at those words, leaning forward to catch his lips with hers through the bars. Their noses bumped, which made them huff short laughs before pecking each other once, again, three times before they had the willpower to separate fully. She stood, was slow to slip her hand away from his, those long fingers hooking with the tips of hers for a brief second before they fell apart. She took a deeper breath, then turned and started down the hall, casting a look behind her. Those dark eyes followed her. She made one more assuring smile, then turned forward again to focus on the hall ahead.

She could hear Lucifer moving to stand behind her. Chloe could practically feel his anxiety. Ahead the lights clearly lit up to her door and no further, making the rest of the hall fathomless and black beyond.

Chloe stopped at the hall junction. With the direction she was facing, the path went to the left, toward the ‘front’. The way wasn’t lit.

“Ms. Decker, please proceed to your room,” Caretaker ordered politely from above.

The Detective took a breath, and turned to the left down the dark hall. She could see the way ahead faintly due to the wash of light from the hall. This ran right alongside Lucifer’s room. She looked to the right when the wall fell away, and after a moment of looking at the darkly shapes, she realized she was looking at a shower and a bathroom stall. Apparently not everyone they hold gets a comfy room like Lucifer and I. More for short term holds?

“Ms. Decker? You really should return to your room now. Please.”

She glanced up, continued on down the hall. She thought she could see a door ahead.

“Return to your room.” The lights went out. It was abrupt, no sound. Suddenly she stood frozen in blackness. “Now.”

Lucifer’s voice echoed through the dark halls “Detective?”

“I’m okay!” she yelled back. Chloe took a deep breath, eyes straining for what lay ahead of her.
She was blinded.

“Can you see?”

“Uh… No?”

It sounded like Lucifer was using strong language, but it was drowned out by Caretaker’s voice coming over the coms again. “Ms. Decker, turn around and proceed to your room.”

Chloe frowned, then shuffled to the side until her hand touched the wall. A deep breath and her other hand stretched out in front of herself, and she kept moving forward.

“Ms. Decker, I need you to return to your room. Please turn around.”

Chloe crept forward. She started to see a little from the faint green light on her ankle. She stopped to fold her pant leg up, then continued her slow progress.

“Detective?”

“Still okay!”

Caretaker finally stopped trying to order her to her room after the fifth time. By then she was to the end of the passage. Natural stone and old cement hung roughly on the wall to her left, and a heavy old door stood in front of her. A few tests showed it was locked. She sighed, looked around in the dimness, but could see no detail. She turned around.

Lucifer called again.

“I’m heading back! Nothing but a locked door that way.”

“You’re still okay?”

“Yeah!”

She made it back to the main hall, looking to the right where Lucifer and the holding cells lay. She couldn’t see the green light from his collar, which meant he was likely facing her.

“Oh, there you are,” the Devil stated.

Chloe squint his direction, but couldn’t make anything out. “You can see in this?”

Lucifer sounded indignant. “I would have a tough time ruling the darkness of Hell if I couldn’t!”

“Right. I still want to check the other way.”

“Be careful!”

“Lucifer, I’m not going to trip and die.”

“You had better not! Don’t fall down any holes, either!”

“Oh-Kay!” Chloe assured with an eye-roll.

A light turned on ahead of her, brightening quickly where it spilled out of the open portal of her room. Chloe paused just outside it’s threshold, the welcoming light spilling at her feet. The Detective took a deeper breath, and went on by, focusing her vision ahead as she slowly went down
the hall.

“Ms. Decker.” Caretaker’s voice sounded uncertain. “I feel I should inform you. I’m not the only one who has access to the camera feeds.”

Chloe frowned at that. “So who else is watching, then?”

“Need I explain?” His voice echoed in this part of the hall, giving it a bare, cavernous feeling.

Chloe continued feeling along the right side, her steps slow. The faint green light gave very limited vision. “I suppose you don’t.” The Detective had already gone this far. If Pierce was to be pissed, he was already going to be pissed.

She came to the end of the hall, looked back down. About halfway from her door. So the length of the hall wasn’t near a full block’s length, perhaps a hundred and fifty feet. It was like Lucifer said. Small, and easily within the limits. Chloe felt around at the end of the hall, but it was bare, rough stone wall under her carefully brushing fingertips. She passed to the other side, feet scooting until she felt the opposite wall, then started back.

She hadn’t gone far when she encountered another door, but this one was circular with a wheel in the middle. Like a safe, she realized. Chloe frowned, feeling around the smooth metal some before moving on. There were no other doors in between there and her room. She stopped to call down the hall.

“There’s a round door, like a vault? Down at the end, but nothing else that I could tell.”

“Oh, even I couldn’t see that without the lights glaring in my eyes. Well done, Detective!”

“Thanks!” Chloe hesitated, feeling awkward for what more to say or do. "I'll... see you tomorrow!"

Lucifer's voice sounded amused and fond. “Sleep well, darling.”

She nodded, eyes searching the dark for him, seeing nothing, but she still offered him a smile in case he could see that before stepping into her room.

The door shut, whirred, and clanked as it locked behind her. She put a hand to her chest, sighing, couldn't help the smile to herself as she thought about the way her partner looked at her and the warmth of his hand in hers. After all this time, she wasn't alone in how she felt. It was a brilliant, golden lining to their dreadful situation, and it made her feel hopeful and determined to get both of them out of this place as soon as possible, back to their friends, family, and each other. Chloe went to bed, her head so busy she had trouble sleeping.

The next day there was hell to pay.
Chapter Notes

Hello darklings! I go a step aside from canon here, and take a bit more inspiration from the Sandman comics, and I also love the visuals of the place from the series. hoping no one minds terribly, but I wanted at least one scene in Old Scratch’s stomping grounds. It will become relevant later.

Definitely more wump here. Also, I’m not a medic, so I’m sure I have some details wrong, but researched as best I could without spending too much time going down research rabbit holes. I tend to do that.

Anyhow, enjoy kittens.

The next day, Chloe was woken by the door to her room opening.

It wasn’t the door toward the back. It was the one toward the front.

The Detective lifted her head from the pillow to confirm her suspicion. The lights were on, and the door was silently open, waiting.

Sleep fell away. The detective scoot the comforter aside, feet swinging down over the edge of the bed. The bomb pulled heavily on her ankle. Keeping her gaze fixed on the door, she slid her toes into the slippers and stood. Chloe kept her steps careful and quiet as she made her way to the door and looked out. To the right there was stone, dry rough granite. The ceiling here was higher than in her room. High out of reach was a metal grate, pipes and thick bundles of cable running atop it like caged snakes. These turned and disappeared above her door. To the left was the passage she had been brought down, a bag over her head so she could not see at the time.

She passed the door to the cell that lay between her and Lucifer’s, stopping to look to the passage that opened up to her right. The grate above marched down this, another set of cables and pipes disappearing into the room between them. She moved on, stopping by Lucifer’s door.

Lucifer might be in there. She studied the door, heard nothing. When she tried the heavy lever, it didn’t budge. Chloe knocked on it, quietly. She cast a nervous eye toward the open hall junction behind her. She gave a few more urgent knocks and held her breath. Nothing.

Chloe’s apprehension climbed. A deep breath steadied her, then she continued on. The hall ended up ahead. To the left was another locked door. The one she had ran into yesterday, she realized. She traced her steps back to the junction, keeping an eye on the wires and pipes overhead, then followed the passageway.

It ended quickly in a sharp turn, opening into long hall to the left and another closed door before her, heavy duty just like the ones that kept her secure in her room. The hall felt too open, and she realized it was an effective bottleneck, allowing no coverage for anyone trying to walk down it. Two obvious cameras blinked on either side of the hall and two in the middle above a light that made the hall too sharply illuminated and her shadow too dark and sharp against the wall.
Just when she tried to reach for the door lever to try it, a whir sounded. Chloe jumped back as it clicked and slowly swung open. She wiped her sweaty hands on her pants and moved forward.

It was a tiny room with three doors, the one from which she entered, one closed to her left, and one open straight ahead. All were heavily reenforced security doors. Chloe looked quickly around before moving forward into the next room.

It was long and narrow, dimly illuminated by light from the left and a wall of screens directly ahead, nine all stacked in three rows. They showed different views of their cells and the bare halls. Chloe blinked at them, looked around at the counter, the empty chair, the refrigerator nearby, the filing cabinets stacked high on her left. There was no computer or keyboard that she could see. She stepped further into the room, her eyes immediately drawn to the wide pane of glass with metal grid lines waffling through it to the left. Something heavy and reenforced. Her mind barely filed that as she hurried the few steps to it and clapped her palm against the pane. “Lucifer!”

Lucifer was standing in all black scrubs, barefoot except for ace bandages, cast still over his wing. He had his bandaged arms folded, leaning his tall frame against a wall of a much larger, bare room with his ankles crossed, appearing entirely nonchalant. His hair was dripping wet, like he’d just come out of the shower, droplets having darkened the material of his shirt atop the shoulders and collar.

He immediately moved when he heard the thump on the pane, swift to stride from the wall to walk toward her. She was glad to see he wasn’t walking with nearly the limp he had been. He came up to the glass, pressing his palm against the pane next to hers, a grin lighting up his face.

She could see him say something, but she could barely hear anything. “What did you say?”

He tilted his head, and clearly mouthed, “What?”

“I said, what did you say?”

Lucifer looked annoyed, a string of words coming out soundlessly to her as he shook his head.

“WHAT! DID! YOU! SAY?”

He looked bemused, then laughed briefly. She couldn’t hear it. He waved a hand, mouthing very carefully, “Hell-lo!” to her, then pointed to her, mouth articulating “Chloe” carefully.

She couldn’t help but laugh back, reaching up to push her hair back. It was still a mess from sleeping. “Hi,” she said back. She felt calmer, seeing he was all right.

At least, she was calm until she heard the door shutting her in. She looked to it with alarm, then hurried over to it, grabbing its lever just as it whirred and clanked. She was locked in. She frowned at it. Lucifer was rapping on the glass with his knuckles, unable to see why she had darted away. She backed up, trepidation thick.

The TV screens hissed with static. Chloe turned to them, then stopped, cold running down her spine while anger heated her breath.

Pierce was on the screen, all nine of them making his image. He was sitting in what looked like regular room with white drywall, a cellphone to his ear. There was a slight delay between his lips moving and her hearing him. “Hello, Decker.”

She managed to drop all of her disgust in her monosyllable answer. “Pierce.”
“Heard you and Lucifer have been settling in well. Getting cozy.” The cellphone was being held away from his mouth. She guessed he wasn’t using it to talk to her. “And starting to be a little unruly. Not listening to your handler, poking around. I can’t tolerate that behavior.” He reached forward, pressing a few buttons. The overhead coms hissed, and his voice came over them. “So I want you to watch carefully what happens when you ignore your handler.”

Chloe held her breath, her gut churning before she instinctively looked to Lucifer. He was looking up, which meant he was able to hear Pierce as well. She could hear the faint clank and whoosh of one of the doors over the speakers, saw motion to the left. The door opened. Lucifer turned toward the sound.

The dart hit him in the right side of his chest, a black shaft and red feathery plume stuck in his flesh. He flinched, quickly plucked it out, glaring at it. Chloe inhaled, pressing her hand against the glass, heart rate jumping.

Three of Pierce’s men were entering the room, one setting the tranquilizer rifle aside for a handgun and holding back by the entrance. Another held a cattle prod, and the last a baton. Chloe recognized M and T, but the third with the gun she knew by face alone.

“What are you doing?” Chloe asked.

Lucifer was the one who answered, his accented voice sounding slightly tinny over the speakers. “Isn’t it obvious, Detective? This is punishment for us acting like naughty children. I know. I’m good at spotting punishment.” He flung the dart aside, straightening his shirt while stepping further from the glass, eyeing the two men fanning out to either side. “My guess is it’s probably more for snogging than anything.” Lucifer looked up, smile vindictive. “Quite worth anything these goons can dish out. And they know they can’t touch you, or I will rip their spines out.” His smile was malicious and manic. “So they get to waste their energy hoping to make me repentant.” He flapped his arms down to his sides. “Big spoiler on that, Cain. I won’t be.”

“I know,” Pierce answered. “This punishment isn’t for you.”

Lucifer looked confused briefly before M lunged at him with the baton. He jumped back, avoiding the swing, slid hurriedly to one side of the far wall to avoid the jab with the cattle prod.

“Lucifer!”

Lucifer didn’t answer her, his tall frame leaning back from a downswing of the baton, then gripping T’s arm to pull him past, twisting swiftly in between them to avoid M’s back swing. Lucifer backed up, the two parties reassessing each other. The Devil chuffed and smirked briefly before eyeing the men with hard anger. “I promised I wouldn’t hurt any of you fellows, not that I would hold still so you could beat the tar out of me.” He motioned with his fingertips. “Well, come on then. Been a while since I’ve danced.” He grimaced. “Though… I’ve had far handsomer dance partners. Yiïih.” He shuddered theatrically.

The two men came at him again. Lucifer caught both the baton and cattle prod against his bandaged forearms. Chloe saw him wince before he was tucking his wing in close to slide in between them, throwing them off balance once more. A swift stride of those long legs and he had a few paces between them once more.

That was when his steps first faltered. His hand went to his chest, a grimace on his face.

“Lucifer?”
“I’m fine, Detective.”

He didn’t sound fine. His words sounded strained, and by the next time he shifted sideways of the two men he was openly panting and clutching his chest.

“I’m sure you recognize the drug, Lucifer,” Pierce stated. “Though I admit, not sure how it will affect you being injected instead of ingested. It will be interesting to see the difference with the paralytic administered this way.”

“Drop dead, Cain,” Lucifer hissed. He was starting to move slower, laboriously lifting his hands and feet as he stepped back, blocking blows he couldn’t dodge.

“Paralytic?” Chloe stared, watching as Lucifer faltered further when the baton caught him across his wing brim and shoulder. “He-he poisoned you with a paralytic?”

“It’s fine, Detective!”

“It is not fine!” Chloe looked to the first murderer on the screens. “Pierce, stop this!”

Pierce only raised a brow, light flicking over his face from the screen as he watched.

A crack over the speaker had her whipping to the side once more. Lucifer was down on his knee from a blow, blood dripping from his mouth. He was trying to lift his hand to his lips, but it trembled and fell back down. He was defenseless when the cattle prod set to his ribs. The expletive he shouted was short, cut off as the baton whipped against his ribs with a solid thud. Lucifer fell down to his side, breathless on one elbow.

“Stop! Stop it!” Chloe slapped at the glass.

The men didn’t listen. They kicked the fallen angel hard onto his winged back. The cattle prod crackled as it found his belly, making his whole frame jerk. The baton snapped sharply against Lucifer’s weakly raised arm, sending the defense down. It cracked back against his cheek. Lucifer didn’t look like he could get a breath in between the assault to make any pained sounds.

Chloe’s vision blurred, hysteria high in her voice as she pounded at the glass, her hands smarting under the force of her hits. “Leave him alone! STOP IT! FUCKING STOP! PLEASE! STOP!”

They didn’t listen. Lucifer had stopped defending himself from the strikes, curling on his side.

Pierce finally spoke up. “Okay, that’s enough.”

Pulled the cattle prod away from the twitching archangel immediately. M took a final swat against Lucifer’s leg before looking up. “Let me take his knee out at least, boss!”

“DON’T TOUCH HIM!” Chloe screamed angrily.

Pierce’s voice was calm. “It isn’t a bad idea… Right, Decker? I could break both his legs. And his arms.” Chloe froze, feeling cold wash down her spine. "Or… I could break his back, so he’s alive but immobile. I could give him that paralytic drug over and over, or stick him in the vault without air, deprive his brain of oxygen until he’s little more than a babbling half-wit.”

Pierce paused. Chloe’s jaw was trembling, watching Lucifer writhing weakly on the floor, the way he struggled to pull in a full breath. “Do you understand what I’m saying, Decker? I can do far, far worse to him. He’d be alive, at a cost. How well he remains? That is up to you. Understand?”
Chloe watched Lucifer cough blood out of his mouth. His left wing trembled, but he looked utterly unable to move otherwise. He was struggling to inhale, bleeding knuckles flexing at his chest in weak spasms. She stared, choking with him.

Pierce slammed his palm down, the sound clapping harshly over the speakers. “DO YOU UNDERSTAND, DECKER?”

She flinched, then nodded. Tears spotted her shirt. “Yes,” she whispered.

Pierce’s chair creaked as he leaned back. “All right, then. Your actions decide how well off he is. Listen to your handler from now on. M. and T. Return.”

“He’s not breathing! Pierce, he’s not breathing! Someone…!”

Pierce was not concerned in the least. Instead he sighed. “Caretaker, make sure the Devil doesn’t die. I’ll be in touch.” The image flicked off.

Chloe looked around frantically. She went to the door, struggling with the handle until her hands were bruised. It didn’t budge. She went back to the glass. Lucifer had stopped moving, passed out on his side and ashen. Chloe cursed, frantically picked up the office chair. It slammed repeatedly against the glass without making a single mark before it broke into two pieces in her hands.

“Nononono,” she stammered, kicking the chair parts aside and hurrying to the glass to look on. “God, please, no. Lucifer, wake up… LUCIFER!”

Lucifer felt dizzy, the world flipping on him. Hot winds buffeted at his skin, searing at his senses.

A vast, black sea stretched out before him. Each wave undulated slowly, swells that lift backwards, uncurled with a dissonant moan of roaring water, and lapsed into dark wedges that died into smooth, dark ebbs before repeating their backward progress. Hands rose above the turbulent surface among the watery troughs before being swallowed again, like so many sick, skeletal fish. Ash fell like snow, so quiet like a stalking cat’s paws as it float among the stones that lift around the shore like swords. His bandaged feet felt the heat from the black volcanic glass under him. The surface of ripples frozen from a past magma flow.

“Oh…” Lucifer looked up, where the ash fell despite the absence of a sky and hexagonal pillars towered miles above him.

“Bollocks.”
Caretaker rushed into the room, his tablet in hand. The stout man landed heavily on his knee over Lucifer’s still frame and pulled him onto his back. Lucifer’s eyes were blank and half open. He checked his pulse, listened close to his mouth for signs of breathing. Chloe couldn’t hold still, too full of adrenaline as she watched, trapped behind the glass.

“Ms. Decker,” he announced while picking up the tablet. “I’m going to open the two doors. There should be a fridge where you are at. I need you to grab the medication in there. Just bring me the whole shelf.”

“Fridge! Fridge, shelf!” Chloe hurried to the appliance, opening it to see the assortment of bottles and syringes waiting there. She was so frantic she took note of none of them, simply pulling the rack out, balancing all of the items while moving swift and panicked. The door was already opening when she turned about, and she shouldering through it, nearly dropping some of the toppling bottles before she was in the small room with the three doors. She took an immediate right into the room to run to Lucifer’s other side from Caretaker.

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Lucifer crept forward along a wide wedge of obsidian jutting outward among the knife-like ridges. This wasn’t near the endless doors. This place was somewhere not far from the Forest of Suicides, near the Pit of Despair, the rivers of magma and blood running to this body of water…

“Sea of Sorrow?” He frowned, puzzling over his landing site. “Why here?” Lucifer narrowed his eyes, then looked up, suspicious. The time before last when he’d gone to Hell, he’d landed in a specific area for a reason.

Sssssshhh

Lucifer stiffened, glancing to one side, eyeing the steep cliffs and paths that wound among the jags of sharp stone in his peripheral.

“Well, by the pricking of my thumbs…” He turned, ignoring how the ground pained his feet, sharp and hot under his nearly bare soles. It wouldn’t have happened before. But I have only one unbroken wing currently. Apparently that makes me less than invincible.

But certainly not afraid. He watched three shadowy figures slither through the rocks, making ash swirl in their wake as he followed the tatters of black cloth, hair, and dark grey skin.

“Sisters, do you see what this is?”

“Let’s see, sister. White feathers, handsome face, sun-kissed skin.”

“I see a celessssttial.”

“But it couldn’t be. None of them come here, save our King.”

“But it couldn’t be our King, for he has abandoned us.”

“Abandoned ussss.”

Lucifer tilt his head. “Sisters three, is that you?”

The three swiftly came into focus, gliding in Hell’s gloom until all three stood before him. Black swaths of cloth float around their too-thin frames as though floating in water. One grinned pointed teeth at him. The other snarled through the stitches binding her mouth. The middle sister, tallest of
them, smiled perfect teeth his direction, all too aware of where he stood despite her blindfold.
“Greetings, oh First of the Fallen.”

The toothy one tittered before running her tongue along her fangs. Her black hair was in a high pony tail, showing off the scars where ears should be. The other sister merely made a raspy hiss through her stitches, wavy hair tangling across her face carelessly.

“Hello indeed.” Lucifer studied the three demonesses. “Since when do the Sisters of Despair run freely on the Shores of Sorrow?”

They started to move, and Lucifer tried to follow the hazy shadows their figures occupied. Their hissing voices echoed among the waves of heat. “Since our brother proved too weeeeeak.”

Lucifer felt motion behind himself, looked over his shoulder at the blindfolded sister, nearly as tall as he. She pressed close to his back. He could see the ichor that stained her cheeks, running from beneath the blind fold. “I’m sure our absent King does not mind?” She whispered so close in his ear, her long nailed fingers on his arm.

“I don’t.” He reached across and plucked up her hand by one of its far too bony knuckles. “But you seem to forget yourself, sister. Few are allowed to touch me. Last I knew… You were certainly not on the list.” He released her, showing his disdain plainly.

The Sisters all hissed laughter around him, echoing off the deep canyons of volcanic stone. “Oh yessss.” “Only the prettiest of Lilith’s for the Prince of Darkness.” “Darknesssss.”

Another sister was on his right now. Lucifer hadn’t seen her shadow move, but carefully controlled his reaction. “You feel different, Lord of Lies.” “Liessssss.” “Not as… Holy.” There was a hard smack against his broken wing, little more than a whip of those bony fingers. He winced involuntarily as it moved the bone, broken even down here. Cackling followed. The sister was gone by time he turned, and he immediately spun to face the three shadowy demonesses as they circled him, tall, quick, gliding.

“Poor little broken bird.” “Did you diiiiie?” “Does anyone else know you’re here?” “Ssss know you’re here?”

“Honestly… This is a big reason I left.” Lucifer rubbed at his temple, shaking his head.

The mouth bound sister pulled a blade free. It was a wicked thing, curved, dark with the faintest glint of coppery color along the metal that corroded the center of the blade like veins. Lucifer glared at her, his left wing spreading and his spine taut with authority and anger.

“Sisters, I won’t pretend to know what is in your disgusting little heads, but if you dare…”

“We like how Hell is without your eminence.” “Keh-keh-keh! Eminensssssss!” “Now it is the strongest, not the favored that rule.” “So we’ll bury you in the sea.” “In the sssseeeea!” “Where you will be silenced in the dark waters with the other soulsss.” “Soulss.”

The blinded sister flicked her hand downward, a chain ending in a ball with a spike like a scorpion tail falling to the hot ground with a thud that shattered the obsidian there. Behind him the earless pulled out two sickles. They were all the dark corruption of Hell-forged blades. “Now sisters.” "While he is weak.” “Weeeak!”

“Oh, you poxy blighters.” Lucifer bent his knees, grounding his bandaged feet and watched them sweep in.
“Lucifer? Lucifer, don’t you dare die!” she hissed at him while Caretaker took up some of the bottles, studying their labels quickly.

“Little late for that, Ms. Decker. As soon as I administer this, I need you to start giving him mouth to mouth. You know how to yes?”

“Yes! Yes, I know how!”

“All right. Focus.” The bearded man looked at her, voice stern and unwavering. “His life depends on it. So put it aside and work.”

He quickly found a vein in Lucifer’s arm and injected a drug while Chloe pulled in deep breaths, trying not to focus on Lucifer’s unfocused eyes and blue lips as she tilted his head back and wiped the blood from his mouth.

“Go,” Caretaker ordered. “I’ll be right back.”

Chloe immediately placed her hands over his sternum, one over the back of the other, started counting out loud. “One. Two. Three. Come on, Lucifer.” She leaned down, plugging his nose. She forced her breathing even, took a deeper breath, then sealed her mouth over his.

Lucifer ducked downward as a sickle went overhead, wing sweeping out to leg the sister as he spun away from the blade, twisted to the side as the ball and chain whipped past him. His left wing spread its pinions, willing their sharp edges to bear. They made a metallic sound as they clashed with the sword. Sparks ignited, unnaturally bright here in Hell’s darkness. Lucifer’s fist slammed into the stitched mouth. The sister stumbled back, hissing. The wing wrenched the other way, twisting the sword back. The chain swung around, the sister with the sword ducking away as it circled the archangel. Lucifer got his arm out to fend off the chain trapping him in. The heavy ball hit center in archangel’s chest, knocking the breath out of him.

The blade was rushing in toward his back again. Lucifer surprised the blindfolded sister by spinning into the chain further rather than away, holding up the ball to take the overhead strike. Only then did he whirl back around, keeping a hold of the ball and flinging it toward the stitch-mouthed sister the instant he was free of the chains.

She hissed in rage as she was knocked off her feet. Lucifer rushed back, putting distance between him and the sisters once more. He glared up at the blackness that wasn’t a sky. “If someone could patch up whatever is wrong with my body, now would be the time!”

“Heeheehee! Is the little Devil scared?” “Poor weak bird!” “Ssscut the wingsss off!”

The sisters rushed in again.

“C’mon, c’mon, c’mon!” Chloe leaned down again, puffing breath into his mouth. His chest rose, fell. She repeated. Rise. Fall. Stillness. She went back to pressing on his chest evenly.

“Any luck?” Caretaker knelt hurriedly beside her.

“No,” Chloe said, voice broken with distress as she leaned down to give him breath again.
“I gave him something to counteract the paralytic, but I don’t know how long till it starts to work. Until then his chest muscles can’t contract to pull in breath. Here. Use this.” Chloe turned, saw the CPAP mask and quickly took it from him. She fit it over Lucifer’s slack face, pumping at it. Every second left her feeling more despairing inside, feeling hope slipping through her fingers like water. Caretaker was giving him other shots, working swiftly at his arm, then he took over pressing on Lucifer’s chest.

“I told him not to give this to him. Told him,” Caretaker’s accent was even thicker with his quiet anger.

Chloe grabbed one of Lucifer’s hands. It was slack and unresponsive. “Don’t you dare leave me. Breathe!”

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At one time, Lucifer had scoffed at Mazikeen’s insistence that he train to fight with her. She had promptly slid in past his inadequate defense and sliced him across the chest. She’d yelled that just because he was an archangel that could defeat nearly all of Hell’s residents with ease, did not mean he was invulnerable. Her job to keep him safe was to make sure he could handle whatever Hell could throw at him. And she damn well threw near anything and everything at him, figuratively and literally.

Fun times.

Block, block, knee, backhand, elbow, duck, turn, blades and chains dancing around him, trying to land on him, and he didn’t have time to think, just rely on muscle memory and instinct that his faithful demoness had engrained in him while he was still young and far too prideful. He was still vulnerable, even the landscape hurting him. His feet stung. The hot air was hard to breathe. But he was still strong, still bright and fierce, and nothing the sisters had ever contended with before.

Lucifer skid backward, back thumping against one of the stone pillars when a kick landed in his chest. He shifted his head to the side just as the ball and chain cracked into the stone where his face had been. The sickle bearer made two swift cuts up at him, one catching along his jaw, a stinging swipe, but superficial. He swiped his arm against hers, forcing the blades to one side before launching a knee mercilessly into her thin abdomen. The sword flicked against his broken wing, and he leaned and snapped his heel into the other’s chest.

The two sisters stumbled to their feet, panting. The blindfolded one was still smiling, whirling the ball and chain over her head.

“You look like you’re getting tired, Dark Lord.”

Lucifer wiped his bandaged forearm against his mouth. “Just waiting for my ride up, is all.”

“You would still abandon us for the human world?” “Hsssshhhh...” “Perhaps we should go up and see what the fuss is about.”

Lucifer glared, red heat in his eyes. “You’re forbidden.”

“Only the King of Hell can forbid us.” “The throne sits empty.” “Sitssss empty!”

The demonesses attacked together again. Lucifer avoided the ball and chain, grabbed the hands of the demoness’s overhand swing with her sword, snatched up the hand of the other sickle, while his wing scraped against the other sickle blade. The ball and chain came back, wrapping around his compromised wing. Lucifer sucked in a breath as the sister pulled.
“I won’t allow it,” the Devil grit out, limbs shaking with effort of holding all three at bay. They started to laugh.

So he pulled the sister with the sword forward as he punched his injured wing forward. The ball knocked her directly in the temple with a sick crack. She dropped her sword, stumbling with her hand to her head as he wrenched the sickle bearer’s hand down. The wrist snapped. He released it and swung upward. Her teeth knocked together with a hard *clop* before she fell to the ground.

That left the blind sister. He grasped the chain, yanked on it. The sister released the handle, no longer smiling as the archangel freed his wing, ball and chain in his hands, whirling to one side with an angry whine of metal and wind. She backed up as he advanced, snarling. “You can’t stop us! We’ll go above! Hunt down all you savor! We will burn it! You will taste nothing but ashes! Hopelessness! Despair!”

“You are forbidden from entering my home.”

“You home? But this…!”

“Up there is my home, and you're forbidden from it!” Lucifer's eyes flared red, and he lashed out in fury.

The demonesses screamed.

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“H-he’s not waking up,” Chloe stammered.

“Keep at it. He’ll definitely die if he gets no oxygen. But I fear I’m going to have to take some drastic measures.”

“Drastic? Do you have a-a-a defibrillator?

“No, and he’ll probably like what I have even less.”

Chloe stared as he unpackaged a syringe. “Uh… That’s a big needle.”

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The last of the sisters wailed pitifully as he dragged her by the arm over the volcanic stone. He wasn’t sympathetic in the least as he adjusted his grip, then hurled the demoness into the sea. Hands grabbed at her thin frame, a final shriek cut off by the low moan of the black sea water swallowing her.

The former Lord of Hell pat his palms together. “That should hold you three for a while. I will return to deal with you. Later.” He looked upward. “But right now I have to go. I have a date! I’m not going to miss that.”

Lucifer stared up at the falling ash. He looked into the endless night and swallowed. “All right, Chloe.” Lucifer hoped and reached up, eyes closed. “Bring me home.”

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“Are you sure this will work?” Chloe asked as Caretaker pushed up Lucifer’s shirt and felt among his ribs.

“Honestly? No. But at this point, willing to try anything. Do you believe in God, Ms. Decker?”
“I… suppose I have to now?”

“Good. Then pray to him that this works.”

Chloe looked down at Lucifer's still face, removing the CPAP mask. "Come back to me. C'mon." She gripped his hand tighter.

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Lucifer felt ash kiss against his fingertips. “Come on, Detective…”

His hand stretched out into the emptiness, the above silent. The Devil held his breath briefly.

“Please.”

At first there was nothing. Then… He felt a hand in his and a pull.

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The needle punctured through his chest and into his heart.

Chloe felt Lucifer’s hand squeeze hers tightly as he sat up with a loud gasp. His left wing was flapping uncontrollably, and he immediately slapped his other hand to his chest, barely missing the syringe there.

“Easy, easy!” Caretaker said, pushing his hand down against the flailing wing.

Lucifer looked confused, dazed, trembling uncontrollably and beads of sweat forming as he pulled in gulps of air. “Ow… Ow…! That bloody hur—hh! Wha…?” He blinked down at his chest at the needle protruding there. He looked at them, terribly confused, up, around, his gaze flying like a panicked bird before landing on the syringe once more.

“Is this… Is this where I say ‘something’?”

Caretaker sat back. “Thank God,” he sighed in relief.

“Leave him out of this!” Lucifer panted, an edge of hysteria on his words. He motioned frantically to the needle. “Get this… Get—Need that… Haa! Out!”

Caretaker reached forward and plucked the syringe free. Lucifer winced, started to admonish when Chloe crashed into him, her lips on his. The angel collapsed back onto the floor with her hard.

“Mmf! Ow! Nnnn…”

“Sorry! Sorry,” Chloe pat at his cheeks, stared at him. “You scared the shit out of me! Don’t ever do that again!”

“All right! Uuugh… Chloe, that hurts, darling!”

“Where?”

Lucifer pulled in gulps of air, limbs trembling. “Oh, bloody… everywhere! No, no, don’t move.” He set a hand to her back, pat at her warily. “Stay there. Maybe you’ll—hh—keep my—hh—heart from popping out of my chest. Oi!” He tilt his head back, his wing flopped against the floor, leg bending up before falling flat again.

“Okay. I’ll stay right here. Just… breathe for me.”
Lucifer closed his eyes, nodding a little, unable to stop his body from writhing now and then, waves of tension coursing through his limbs. But he did as asked, and focused on breathing.

It was enough. He was where he chose as home, and that was enough.
Chapter Notes

Here, darlings, have a chapter with both Ella and Dan's POV! Sorry for the delay. I'm busily drafting up the next chapter, and hoping it will be ready for posting tomorrow!

Enjoy, devilings.

Wednesday morning found Ella sitting outside of the church on one of their marble benches. The morning light gentled all the structure's edges, a pleasant glow on its pale stone and manicured grounds with gentle hills, bushes, trees and curving walkways. It was quiet compared to most of the city, the traffic only a faint whine here and sirens a wan wail, as though the church sat behind a veil of otherworldly peace from the rest.

She should be heading to work to run lab tests. She should be busy getting results to detectives so they could finish up their cases. Catching the bad guys. Solving the mysteries. Making sure everyone at the department who needed a hug was getting their well-needed hug.

Instead she was sitting outside with dewy grass dampening her sneakers as she stared at the angel statues on the corners of the church and pondering the impossible “what-if”.

She had gone over the evidence she’d gathered again, and the good part was that things made a heck of a lot more sense. The bad part was that things made a heck of a lot more sense.

On one hand, she had faith, right? Well, she had been about to ditch it, still pretty mad that God let one of her friends get senselessly shot down, and possibly another three missing and/or dead. Even so, it shouldn’t be such a difficult concept that she could run into one of the things her faith stated existed without any proof. But on the other hand, running into it for some reason shook it just as hard.

There was a big difference between believing in something for the sake of the doubtless faith of it, and the reality stomping that the something that existed over there somewhere in faith-land was suddenly here in reality-land. And those things should not be here, where they could be physical, bring you coffee, squirm under your hugs, and take you on jaunts to Vegas to help save their ex-wife.

But then again, she used to regularly talk to a ghost, so… Ayayay, am I being crazy? Is this all just some insanity in my head?

Ella groaned, rubbing at her eyes. This is all getting Evangelion weird in my head. Maybe even FLCL weird.

She wasn’t aware someone was walking toward her until they were only a few paces away. She heard the manicured grass crush softly under even steps. She turned quickly, then blinked in surprise. “Agent Carney?”

He was looking up at the building, the agent’s spectacles reflecting the bright Californian sun. He was wearing jeans, his hands in the pockets of his brown jacket. He looks like a math teacher, not
“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” He didn’t take his eyes off the sculpted eaves. “I always liked attending church. Something about the building always made me feel a little closer to divinity. Perhaps because it showed humanity was capable of beauty, attentive to detail and ritual, and where else would we get such gumption?”

“You’re a believer?”

“Yes. Steadfast for many years. May I?” He motioned to the bench. Ella automatically moved over, not even thinking to refuse. He sat, easing his way down in the way of someone who had knee and back trouble. “You didn’t go Sunday?”

Gee, keeping tabs on me, much?

“Uh, no. I didn’t.” I was still too angry to go, trying to find some gray Jedi zen zone on my own.

“Mm… And you had a busy night.”

Oh, right. Shoot, do I lie? No, because I can’t pull off Garak! I’ll look like Simmons instead! “Um…” Cripes, now I’m going to look like Smallville’s Clark for hesitating, and that’s even worse! “Last night I was…” Say something! Anything! “Eating.” No, dummy, everyone eats! Be somewhere else! “Cheese…” You idiot! Go for at least a half truth then! “I was eating cheese at pizza, uh, a pizza place.” Oi vey, he is so going to Judge Judy my butt. Way to go, Lopez!

“Well, that might be true, but you were also at an abandoned factory trying to track down your missing coworkers.” He looked at her sternly over the rim of his spectacles.

“… Maybe?” She flung her hands up. Gig’s up.

The agent nodded. “I’m not bothered that you’re trying to find them. I am, however, bothered that you have been taking your samples and searches to the precinct.”

“Oh, that. Sorry, next time I’ll take them to my secret lab.” She snorted. Then looked panicked at him. “I-I don’t really have a secret lab! That was a joke.”

He was peering at her like, well, like a lot of people did when they weren’t used to her. “I’m aware that was a joke. My concern is more that you’re underestimating your opponent. If I know about your attempting to skirt notice while you continue investigating into Pierce’s whereabouts, someone else could very easily notice as well. Someone who works for him.”

“Someone… at the precinct?”

“Ms. Lopez, I don’t even trust that some of my fellows aren’t in his pocket. In fact, I’m fairly confident someone in our agency works for him.”

Ella frowned. “But… Um, you could also be, you know, one of his.”

A brief, small smile. “Now you’re starting to understand. I’m not, but you shouldn’t take my word for it.”

Her thoughts were darting in a dozen different directions. “Why… come out of your way just to tell me this?” She searched his face. “Why not just pin me for interfering with an investigation and move on?”
He quirked a brow. “Because then someone else would know you were at the scene, and that might not be healthy for you, Ms. Lopez.” He looked to the church again, eyes skipping over the stonework once more. “Part of my job is concerned mainly with the control of information. Who knows what, when, and where those who shouldn’t know things slip. I’m not the only one with that skill, however, so it makes my job all the more challenging when I parcel out information, have to judge who has enough pieces to make the proper leaps in logic, or… when I have to wipe an entire crime scene to protect other truths. Sometimes at the sacrifice of focusing on saving people in order to go after someone who is currently trying to turn Los Angeles into a giant mob war.” Those eyes were back on Ella, unwavering and piercing. “Understand?”

Ella felt something sink inside. “You’re not looking for them anymore.”

“The first 72 hours are the most crucial when trying to locate an abductee. Usually after a full week?” He breathed out his nose, voice gentling. “We’re looking for bodies, not survivors.”

“No,” Ella said firmly, looking down in denial. “They’re alive.”

“You have faith in that?”

“And-and evidence! At the factory—.”

“The factory was abandoned at least two days ago.”

“If anyone could find a way to survive, though—They’re alive,” she insisted stubbornly. “I gotta go with that. Until I have a reason not to, I’m not giving up on my friends.”

*That’s right. No matter what Lucifer possibly is, he’s my friend, and I know he considers me one. And Chloe is definitely one of my besties, so I am going to find the two of them!* 

The agent considered her. Ella jut her jaw out. He finally smiled, something small and amused. “All right, Ms. Lopez. But you need to be more careful with what you’re doing at the precinct. I’ll continue keeping your poking about to myself.” He stood, and Ella jumped to her feet as well. “Good luck, and… whatever you find, keep it to yourself.”

“That’s it…? No hand slap or anything?”

“Not at this time. I have much bigger fish to fry. But, while we’re on the subject. What else do you know?”

Ella was about to bubbly spill what she did know, but he was looking at her like an alert hound, so she stammered out a few nonsense syllables before finally settling on, “Uhhhh, Nada…?”

Again that small smile, but this time it reached into his heavy-lidded eyes. “Very good, Ms. Lopez. You’re smart. Even if you can’t lie for beans.”

“Yeah, I’m usually a little better about it.”

“No, you’re not.”

“Sigh. No, I’m not.”

He nodded, turning about with his hands in his pockets and walking away. The Zelda theme song started chiming from her bag. Ella quickly dug her phone out. “Hello?”

It was Dan. “Where are you? We have a body dump that needs a forensic on scene like yesterday.”
Dan paced around the scene in annoyance, looking for clues, but even the dirt had been swept up to the pavement despite the distance to clear any tire tracks.

Damn professionals.

Ellas was already down in the ditch, carefully balanced on her sneakers as she took pictures, a mask over her face to ward off the smell.

“What do you see so far, Ella?”

Her bright voice was slightly muffled. “Bleach baths, shots from different kinds of guns, bodies were definitely brought here and dumped from somewhere else in the plastic and tarp. Any belongings? Burned in that barrel over there.”

“Which is why our homeless guy found them. He spotted the barrel and wanted it. What else do you got?”

“Well, someone came back here twice to dump. See the three guys on the bottom? Dumped earlier, all together. I would say from the state of decay, six days ago.” She leaned to point at the topmost corpse. “Now, the small fry on top? Five days ago. Different bleach bath, different plastic wrap, and so far from what we can see without moving much, just a single shot to the forehead. The other guys were caught in what looked like a spray and pray bath of bullets.”

“Any ideas of the whodunnit?”

“Not yet. Gotta get a mortician’s report on all of these and try to get some identities. I’m going to get the barrel contents back to my lab as well. See what I can get there.”

“All right. Call me as soon as you know something.”

He started to walk away when Ella called after him. “Dan!”

“Yeah?” He turned. She was climbing up the steep cement embankment, using one hand while she cradled the camera close before she was on steadier ground to trot up to him. She looked fidgety and uncertain as she pulled down her mask, not quite meeting his eye. “What is it?”

“Have you ever… Ran into something you couldn’t make sense of, but when you considered the absolutely most crazy solution, everything clicked together on a case, but instead of being satisfying, it just made everything else make less sense?”

Dan nodded a little, though he wasn’t really following. Sometimes it was a little hard to with Ella. But he liked Ella, so he gave it a shot. “Sometimes… That happens when someone manages to deceive me during the first talk with them, and then I find out they’re this entirely different person than they represented.” He rolled his eyes, looking up at the bright sky with its few sweep of clouds. “Always makes me feel stupid when I realize the truth.”

“Yeah!” Ella nodded enthusiastically. “Like that! But bigger! Like… Makes the whole world kinda tilt on its axis kinda big!”

“Um. Okay?” His brow crumpled, waiting for her to go on.
“Like… Like let’s say someone was saying something obvious and truthful, but it was ridiculous, so you came up with some other explanation for what they were saying and doing, and then you realized that what they might have been saying was real this whole time and-.”

“Ella, have you been marathoning conspiracy documentaries again? I told you, you can’t get too involved in that kind of stuff.”

“Nonono, not like conspiracy theories. Just… something that really rattles your faith, I guess.”

Daniel couldn’t stop the bitter snort before it escaped. “Faith.”

“Yeah. I mean, like, like, why some people are who they are, or why God let’s all the bad things happen in the world, and, and, why he’d let good people get harmed during it, or, or like one of his own kidnapped and…”

Daniel felt salt in the raw wound of his emotions. Charlotte. Chloe. He rubbed at his nose, looking away before interrupting her. “Stop. Right there. Because if it’s a question of faith and God, I can easily tell you my thoughts on that. I am not faithful right now. You know why?”

His voice started rising, coming out like spilling acid. “Because my girlfriend was murdered, all right? And then the mother of my child was kidnapped, might be dead at this point, one of my good friends is entirely off the radar with no idea if he’s okay or mixed up in all of this, and my kid is really hurt and angry, and people keep telling me stupid things like ‘It’ll be okay’, or ‘She’s in a better place’, and, you know what?” His tone turned into a venomous whisper. “Fuck God. Because if there’s a God, that means this is all part of a plan, right? Well, it’s a crap plan and he’s a crap god if that’s the case! So no, I don’t have faith in God right now, Ella!”

Ella’s eyes were wide on him, her small frame still like a deer in headlights. Daniel took in a steadying breath, glancing around. Other people quickly looked away. “Look, sorry. But if you want to talk to someone about faith, I’m not the guy to go to right now, all right?”

She nodded, still far too wide-eyed. “Mm-Okay. Sorry. I’ll just… Go over there.”

Daniel was about to apologize further when his phone rang. “Espinoza.” He frowned, his brow creased in puzzlement. “…They’re wanting to talk to me? … Yessir. I’ll… Have a patrol meet me over there for back up.” He called over his shoulder. “Lopez, I have to go.”

“Look, I’m really sorry if I said something to make you-.”

“No, no, I'm not leaving because of that. Someone apparently just bashed up a business. It’s owned by the Russians, and they asked for me specifically to take their report.”

Ella looked concerned. “You’re going with back up, right?”

“Yeah. Don’t worry about me. Just focus on what you can find here.” He shook his head while hurrying to his car. “Whole city is going crazy…”

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The Russian Dan had spoken to at the funeral was talking on the phone when he arrived. Daniel couldn’t hope to follow the Russian language at all, but stood politely to the side, doing his best not to pay any attention to the tall, muscled goons that stood dutifully by the broken store door.

Finally the man exchanged the last pleasantries and hung up the phone. “Apologies, Detective. My mother can talk an ear off when she’s a mind to.”
Daniel searched his memory, pulling out the appropriate information he’d filed away. “She’s feeling better, then?”

“Yes. Miraculously.” The man gave a giant sigh, tone quiet. “A very expensive miracle, to be sure.” He looked up, grinning wide and too friendly. “The things we do for family, eh?”

Daniel nodded some, standing with his hands folded in front of himself. He glanced around at the bullet holes and shattered window. The smell of alcohol was almost dizzying, vibrant puddles of wine and strong liquor littering the floor with glass. Two people were busy cleaning it up at the end. Very little had been spared in the shop. “Your store clerk is going to live?”

“Yes, though I’m sure both of his knees will require surgery.”

“Do you know who did it?”

“I do, unfortunately. I wish I could say it was the Italians, even the damned Yakuza, but no… This was Sinnerman’s people. Sending me a message.”

“The Sinnerman?” Daniel was on high alert, watching the man with hawk alertness. “Charlotte. Chloe. Why would he be sending you a warning?”

“Do you believe in miracles, Detective?”

Daniel shifted uncomfortably. The Russian shook his head, waving the question away. “Never mind. You seem a sceptic through and through. But not only do I think this matter is of personal interest to you, I also know you’re not one of his. Plus, you are friends with a notoriously effective bounty hunter. Sorry! Bounty huntress.”

“What’s this about?” Daniel said, wanting to cut right to the matter for answers.

“The Sinnerman is hunting one of his own. I may have purchased something from him, not realizing he was a renegade. Now, they target me for information on the man. A man as far as I am concerned I have paid and owe nothing further to, nor want anything further to do with.”

“Who?”

“He was going by Brian Bertand. He came to me, begging for solace and help out of town. I refused. Someone heard of it, though. It was enough to receive this unfortunate message.” He glared at where the windows stood empty except for the smallest teeth of glass at their edges.

“This Brian Bertrand used to be one of his?”

“But no longer. Something the Sinnerman is notorious for, Detective Espinoza, is that you never cross him or fail to uphold your side of a bargain or favor. You don’t live long, and the last while you’re alive, you wish you weren’t.”

Daniel closed his eyes briefly, feeling his nostrils flare heatedly. “So why involve me?” He knew in his gut why, but he wanted to hear it.

“Because if this Mr. Bertrand is found, my mother may be safe.” The Russian came forward, grasping Daniel’s shoulder with a strong hand. Daniel narrowed his eyes, but didn’t react otherwise. “My mother. Do you understand? He threatened her specifically, because she lives due to this traitor’s actions. If the Sinnerman goes after her and I can’t keep her safe, the thought of what he’d do…”
“I get it. I’ll… see what I can do. Do you have any other information?”

Daniel waved to the other police units the go ahead to leave before getting in his own patrol car. He put his gun into the compartment and sat for a moment. Finally he rubbed at his mouth and chin, pulled himself together before starting the car and pulling out of parking.

He had driven a few blocks, letting his thoughts work over the problem while steering out of the worst of traffic before giving in and dialing on his phone.

The phone answered after hardly half a dial. He could hear the dull roar of traffic and a car engine in the background. “Mazikeen.”

“Hey, Maze. We might have just gotten extremely lucky. The Sinnerman hit the Russians and shook them up. They’re trying to find a turncoat, a Brian Bertrand.”

“I’ll find him. Where are you at?”

“I’m just leaving their liquor shop, heading back toward the precinct. Look, if this guy is running scared, we might be able to cut him a deal and get him to talk if he knows anything about Chloe and Luci-.”

**KRASH!**

The world spun sideways on Daniel, his body jarring painfully as the SUV t-boned his passenger side and sent his car whipping the other direction. He was still dazed after being so violently shook, ears ringing. His pulse pounded in his head. The adrenaline rushing through him so he couldn’t even account for what injuries he had.

“Ngh.” He felt at his temple, pulled his fingers away painted in red. He was still staring and comprehending when his door was wrenched open.

Those were not policemen reaching in to undo his seatbelt, and definitely weren’t good guys holding a knife to his throat.

“Shit,” he cursed shortly before he was yanked out of the smoking vehicle. The car slammed into his back as one of the men pushed him.

“Sorry to interrupt your commute, detective,” the tall, muscular man was saying. The other kept the blade to Daniel’s throat. “We’ll make this quick. What did the Russian’s tell you?”

“Mmn… That their store was bashed up.”

The man hit like a charging bull. Daniel was strong, was proud of how built his stomach was, but he was still bowled over by the punch and left gagging for air. A knee launched into his chest next, and he heard more than felt the car hit his back as he was shoved again.

“Did they tell you where to find him?”

*Play dumb! “Find who?”*

This time the hit was across his face. He tottered, was pulled by his shirt back upright.

“Bertrand, detective. Where is he?”
“I don’t know a-.”

The hits came in swift, numb pain spreading through his cheek and he thought he might throw up when his solar plexus was struck again.

“One more time. Where is he?”

He was just trying to breathe, blinking as his eye started to sting with swelling.

Hands again, this time turning him around and grabbing his hair. The roof of the car slammed into his face. He saw black sparks in his vision, gasping and groaning. He couldn't pull air in through his nose, blood clogging it. He didn’t even register that his arm had been pulled back until he heard the taller guy.

“We’re almost out of time, so looks like it’s time to play This Little Piggy. Take his finger off.”

Daniel yelled, struggling as he felt the blade bite into his pinkie, sawing into his joint with a searing hot pain.

There was the roar of an engine and shriek of tires. The hands left Daniel and he slumped down the car, legs buckling now that no one was forcing him up.

The goons were turning as one, pulling out guns. Daniel could hear and sense it more than see it. He turned, hand at his bleeding finger before the hot spike of anger focused him and he released the wound to shove his elbow into the smaller knife-wielder.

Shots popped near his ear, making the ringing pain in his head all the worse. The taller man screamed, while the smaller struggled with Daniel as he punched into his face with his uninjured hand. He was seeing spots still. It was mostly desperate blind fighting.

Thankfully there was a crack of bone, another scream behind him, and then suddenly Mazikeen was there, grabbing the knife wielder and slamming him hard into the car. Daniel stumbled back, and watched her slam the thug's head again. The man slumped over and Mazikeen let him slide off the car onto the pavement.

“Hey,” Mazikeen said, tone hard. She grabbed his arm just as he teetered. Daniel registered somewhere in his fuzzy mind that she was really strong to hold him up this easily with one arm. In heeled boots, no less. “Don’t pass out on me!”

“Yeah. Okay,” he agreed faintly. He had a hold of his wound instinctively again, trying to stem the blood flow. His whole body felt like a bruise, a prickling swelling in his face, each breath burning against his ribs. He didn't dare look at his pinky finger. The pain there was hot and stinging, throbbing down the whole digit. He could feel how much blood was slipping through his fingers.

Sirens wailed. *Oh, good… That’s help.* “I think… I think I need to sit.”

Mazikeen helped him down, more gentle and controlled than any petite, vicious bounty hunter had a right to be. His head lolled some against the car before focusing dizzily on the scene. The smaller knife bearer was still down, but the bigger guy was groaning, writhing on the ground with a knife hilt jutting out of his shoulder and blood running down his face. There was an arm bone sticking out of his shirt.

“Is he going to live?”

“He better,” Mazikeen spat, glowering at the man. Her next words were cold calm. “I might need
information out of him.”

“Glad I’m not him, then.” The world tilted in a sickening way, and Mazikeen yanked on his shirt to right him.

“No passing out.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he murmured, instead focusing on the police officer hurrying up. “Hey, Olsen. How’s it hanging?”

The officer didn’t answer him, instead calling codes for an ambulance as he guided him into lying down and getting his feet up. When the adrenaline started wearing off and all the other aches started making themselves known, Daniel decided that was probably a good idea.

"Mazikeen," he called. "Get out of here while you can. Go find this guy."

She nodded sharply. "I'll check in with you as soon as I have something," She started striding to her car. Officer Olsen called after her to not leave the scene. "Are you trying to boss me around?" Mazikeen snapped. "I got a job to do!"

"Trust me, man," Daniel said as he heard more sirens. "Just let that one go."

He tilted his head back on the pavement, and waited for the ambulance.
Shake, Rattle, and Roll

Chapter Notes

Hello, darklings! Some more whump and Lucifer dealing with after effects of all the meds. I was going to add more to this, but I realized with how much content is in the next part, I needed to separate them if I had any hope of getting a chapter up tonight. The good news is that we get two chapters from Lucifer's POV as a result.

So enjoy, dear hearts!

It didn't take him long to realize that Chloe was crying.

That made the Devil feel panicked, when he was already feeling the symptoms of panicking. Her weight on his chest while she sniffled and shook was far too heavy, but he couldn't bring himself to ask her to move. Instead he rubbed at her back with his scraped hand, mind frantically trying to think what he should do.

“Shh, (Hh!) don’t cry. (Hh! Hh!) Come on, please…(Hh! Hh!) No crying.”

Finally Chloe sat up, wiping at her eyes and nose.

Her voice was watery and strangled. “Almost lost you, you ass.”

Lucifer planted his hand on his chest. His breaths were far too fast and painful. “(Hh!) Here now. Though (Hh! Hh!) I felt better (Hh!) when I was (Hh! Hh!) dead.” He tried to smile, but it turned into a grimace, unable to control the full body spasm that made him writhe, breaths still puffing uncontrollably.


Tension coursed down his nerves, and his limbs flexed and shuddered uncontrollably. After being beaten with a stick and cattle prod, moving hurt, and he couldn’t help but move. His skin felt tight and prickly, and the Devil’s breathing was a frantic race of shallow gulps and his heart rate a painful pound. He felt like he was drowning and shaking apart.

It was too much and too wrong. Lucifer reached for his collar, the uncomfortable weight at his throat suddenly unbearable. Both Chloe and Caretaker’s hands went to his wrists. “Whoaaa, there.” “Lucifer, no! Don’t pull that off!”

“(Hh!) I wasn’t (Hh! Hh!) going to...!” Normally he did not mind people he liked in his space, but the fallen angel felt like they were taking all the air. He flopped his head back, his spine undulating as he fixed his gaze firmly on the ceiling and tried to breathe. His left wing shuddered, then flung outward. The bandages ripped as the limb freed itself. Small down feathers floated in the air as he slapped it against the polished cement. He slid some inches as his feet pushed against the floor. They were still holding his wrists.

“Mr. Morningstar, you’re experiencing side affects from the drugs. I need you to breathe slower. You’re hyperventilating.”
“Mm fine,” he mumbled between too-rapid of breaths. “Jus’… Jus’ need…” He struggled to not flail, his vision narrowing in as he tried to catch his breath.

Caretaker’s voice was stern and soothing. “You just need to wait about ten minutes. It will pass.”

Chloe was leaning over him. “Hey, look at me.” He felt a hand on the back of his head to help tilt his gaze toward her. His eyes skipped around at the blur before landing on the Detective, with her lovely sleep tossed hair, soft lips, and understanding eyes. “Look at me. I need you to breathe with me, okay? Close your mouth. In through your nose. Out slow through your mouth.”

He didn’t manage it at first, but it seemed really important to her that he try, so the Devil did. His wing continued weakly slapping the floor, and he insisted on laying his head back down. She scoot closer to him, hand leaving his wrist to his sternum, continuing to instruct him to breathe in that firm, genuinely concerned way he’d seen her execute so well in the field when talking people down from rash choices. Every expansion of his chest hurt his bruised ribs, but he supposed that must mean he was breathing deeply enough, so he let it hurt without complaint.

It seemed to take an eternity before he could get a full breath and his heart started to slow down. His body continued to tremble, but he no longer felt like he was going to fall apart at the seams. He just felt sore, and the cramp of muscles didn’t help in the least. He’d sweated through his shirt, he had blood on his face, and he felt disgusting and miserable. The lights were too bright overhead, so he went to drape his arm over his eyes. Lucifer felt something sting when he tried to put any weight around one of his cheekbones, so he let his arm flop back down and pulled his shivering wing over his face instead.

They moved and talked around him. He listened with only half an ear, just focusing on finding a less painful way to breathe and not throw up. Throwing up would hurt far too much right now.

“Give him a little room, Ms. Decker. At least until the worst of it passes.”

Chloe sounded concerned. “He’s shaking. Is… is that normal?”

Caretaker sounded apologetic. “Part of the cure for the paralysis is a medicine that causes seizures. Which means the paralytic is out of his system now.” He quieted. “It’ll pass, but he’s going to be unhappy for a little while.”

Their voices continued as a buzz over him. The Devil only partly listened, too caught up in his own misery as they talked. He grit his teeth as another convulsion rattled through him.

“I want to give him some acetaminophen, but I’m worried he would just vomit it up. I have that and some muscle relaxer pills that we’ll give him soon.”

“You have a lot of drugs.”

“I tried to ask for any drugs I thought would be useful, especially when they told me what they’d already used on him. Quite costly, but I’ve always preferred being poor and prepared than rich and not.” There was a pause. “Here, in case I’m unable to attend to him directly, let me explain what does what. I should also show you the proper way to draw a needle and the difference in dosage for injections and pills for him versus your average adult. He takes five times as much as a human. For instance, OxyContin. If you were to take just 40 milligrams without having a system tolerance, it could kill you. Him? 100 milligrams, and he’s happily high for about twenty minutes.”

“I believe it. What do the rest of these do?”

Lucifer made a note of some of the ones he would want to ask for later. There was an impressive
list. Chloe continued asking questions on what each was used for, the dosages, how to administer, and what signs she needed to look for as being too much. Lucifer was feeling much better and paying more attention by the time Caretaker left them to get some bandages.

“Mmf…” He waited for another wave of tension to pass from his muscles before he twisted onto his side. He had to fight with his casted wing to accomplish it. It made him wish he could fold the damned thing up already. “How long was I dead for this time?”

Chloe made a disbelieving sound as she looked at him with red rimmed eyes. “You… really need to not say that like it’s a regular thing.”

“Don’t worry, darling. Old hat. And what is it they say. Third time’s a charm?”

Chloe hesitated, then shook her head again before looking at him. “Malcolm?”

“Right prat, that one.”

“Amenadiel… covered that one up to me for you. Convinced me you had a blood bag and everything. But you didn’t.”

“He did what now? Ugh. Honestly, my brother’s meddling gets tiresome. His bloody fault that one was running amok anyhow.”

“What do you mean by that?”

Lucifer laid his cheek against the floor. It hurt, but the coolness felt good. “Oh, Amenadiel raised that shady cop back up from the dead so Malcolm could kill me. It was a way to put me back in Hell because I wouldn’t leave on my own.”

Chloe held her palm up, blinking like she had an eyelash assaulting her eye. “Whoa. What?”

Lucifer sighed. He wasn’t in the best of shape to explain something that happened over two years ago, but he supposed he needed to. Caretaker returned shortly when he started the story with a cup of ice chips, a bowl of water and bandages. Lucifer’s tongue and lips still felt numb, but the cold damp in his dry mouth was heavenly. He couldn’t stop his voice from shaking anytime a tremor wracked his frame, but he managed to keep speaking with as much dignity as he could muster while squirming around on his side. Caretaker’s prodding at his wounds and working to wrap his scraped knuckles didn’t help.

Chloe, as usual, was thinking. “I remember… I’ve seen you with bruises on your face. Even though I wasn’t around you recently.”

“Oh, yes, angels can rattle the teeth on another one quite well. But what’s a spat between brothers? We’re better now.” Lucifer paused to crunch on some blissful ice. “He’s better now. Though it would be wonderful if he’d turn up to help me.” He rolled his eyes heavenward to glare. The lights glared back. He flinched at them and pulled his left wing over his head to shade himself once more. His hand was trembling violently against the floor. He stared at it, irritated. “I hate this. All these interesting drugs, and I get the ones that make me feel miserable.”

“Apologies, Mr. Morningstar. Can you flex your foot for me?”

“Bloody… Yes, see! Foot flexes fine! Stop poking at me!”

“Lucifer, he’s just making sure they didn’t break anything.”
“I’m sure nothing but my pride,” he announced acridly. “Let me know when you can mend that.”

“Don’t worry about it, Ms. Decker. Irritability is just another side affect.”

“I’m pretty sure this could be normal for him,” she muttered.

Caretaker set a hand lightly on the archangel's side. “Can you pull in a deep breath?”

Lucifer didn’t care that he sounded like a petulant six-year-old. “I don’t want to.”

Chloe was pulling up his shirt. He made an exasperated sound, but let her look at his side. She hissed some, and Caretaker reached forward to prod.

At first it was just a harder ache where those fingers walked, but Caretaker prodded a spot, and that spot made the pain spike. Lucifer’s wing thumped the warden lightly in his wide chest, flinching and groaning. “Nope. Bad touch.” He pushed Caretaker away insistently with his wing’s wrist.

Caretaker’s palm pressed against his wing’s brim, guiding it down to the floor between the Devil and himself patiently. “I’m not sure if they’re broken or just bruised, but either way, he should really be in bed inclined.”

“Sending me to bed? Do I get supper at least? Never mind, I’ll just take myself that direction.” He rolled upward and planted a foot underneath himself, started to stand. He vaguely heard both of their protests. “I’m fine! Honestly, you two are being the worst mothuh-moth…” The floor was suddenly too far away and the room lurched as the vertigo hit him in a wave. His own voice sounded faint and far away. “Oh, dear.”

He wasn’t sure which of the two caught him or if it was both of them that eased him back to the floor. He curled up, folding his arms over his nauseated belly and tried to simply breathe and not vomit.

Chloe was right by him again. Her fingers carded through his sweat-drenched hair. “You just died. It’s okay to not be so tough right now.”

“Just… little overestimation of my stamina…” He managed a small, shaky laugh.

“It’s okay. Let’s give it a bit more time, all right?”

Lucifer wasn’t up for arguing, so he nodded. Her touch in his hair felt good and soothing. Why she wanted to touch him while he was such a weak, sweaty, bloody mess was beyond him, but it felt too nice to question.

The two started talking again. Chloe, as usual, was letting her curiosity guide her.

“You said you weren’t a doctor, but you know a ton about medicine.”

Caretaker gave a gruff laugh. “I got around a lot as a younger man.” He paused. “See, I had to get into countries that were often closed at the borders. Sometimes, they would allow relief aid in. Doctors, for instance. So I picked up enough that I could slip past security where needed, and kept picking up what was useful.”

“Why did you need past border security?”

“Simple. That was where the jobs and money were. I’ve worn a lot of hats during my life. Chef, artist, photographer, journalist, of course, doctor, and, underneath all of those, merchant, smuggler,
and spy.”

Lucifer huffed a breathy laugh. It hurt his ribs. He stopped with a groan.

“That’s… an interesting life.” Chloe noted. Lucifer heard her shuffle and felt her hand slide into his shaky fingers. He opened his eyes to look at their interlaced digits. He squeezed her hand back, feeling that warm thrill soothe at his tired heart. “How’d you come to work for the Sinnerman?”

There was a pause as the older man released a slow breath. “Burma. I had already run into the Sinnerman a few times over my life, and was careful not to owe him. But… I was on the run from several governments and I was on a job there. Things went sideways. I was able to get one message out. It reached him. But not until I watched twenty-four of the children I was trying to smuggle out be… Well. If you know anything about the Burmese government, you can probably make some guesses. Only myself and six of the children made it out by time the Sinnerman reached us. So I owe him seven lives worth of debt.”

Chloe didn’t seem able to muster an answer. Her hand had tightened on Lucifer’s. He rubbed his thumb over her hand, lift his gaze to her stunned expression with concern.

She always hurt for others. Her hurting was starting to make him hurt for her. It didn't make sense, but he wanted to wrap her up protectively, soothe the hurts that humanity's worst caused her.

Except he had no clear idea how to do that, so instead he kept running his thumb over the smooth skin on the back of her hand and saying nothing.

Caretaker continued, keeping his tone quiet. “So, you can probably understand why I was willing to take on the Devil to start clearing that debt. Not that I believed him when he told me what he was bringing me. Just… I’ve seen monsters, Ms. Decker. The Devil doesn’t frighten me nor has convinced me he is among the monstrous. So I intend to keep the two of you as alive and comfortable as possible, and I’ll use all of my skills to do so.”

*Keep the Detective here forever? No, we can’t do that.* Lucifer forced himself onto an elbow. He winced, but raised his gaze to their handler’s deep-set eyes. The language spilled freely from him as he pulled. “Is there no favor I can exchange to get the Detective out? Surely there’s something you desire?”

Caretaker took a deep breath, lips moving. Lucifer tugged harder, trying to pull something he could use from the man.

The answer surprised him. “You have nothing I want.”

“What? But surely…”

Chloe looked between them. “What are you two talking about?”

Caretaker chuckled, leaning over Lucifer to whisper in her ear. Chloe frowned. She looked down at Lucifer sharply.

The Devil groaned quietly, sliding down onto his side once more. “Well, can’t blame a Devil for trying,” he grumbled.

“Devil needs to try less,” Chloe stated. She peered at him, leaning a little to see under the curve of his wing. “How are you feeling?”

“Peachy,” Lucifer grumped. Her fingers moved through his hair once more, and he closed his eyes.
“My hair is likely a right mess.” He grinned, though it was likely but a shadow to his usual smile. “And it’s not even from wild sex. Imagine that.”

“I’d actually rather it be from wild sex right now.”

“Detective!” Now his grin did regain some of its usual wattage.

“I knew it was a mistake the minute it left my mouth. I meant I wish you didn’t get messy hair from being worked over by two thugs, nearly dying, and being in pain on the floor for over an hour.”

“Nearly? I did die. And has it been that long?”

Chloe looked at him, exasperated, but unable to help the small smile. “If you're able to sass, you must be feeling better. Let’s get you in bed.”

Lucifer looked to their warden, keeping his face and tone serious. “Mark your calendar, C.T. The lady wants me in bed.”

Caretaker smirked. “Ms. Decker, you’re a saint for putting up with this one. All right, let’s get you moved.... Slowly this time."
Lucifer’s pace back to the room was slow, but steady.

Secretly, he was relieved that he could walk as well as he could. It meant he was only bruised, not broken.

It also meant that he wasn’t slumping his considerable weight onto the Detective, who was stubbornly glued to his side with one of his arms slung over her shoulders.

Without her boots with their chunky heels, she barely came to his shoulder, even with her slippers and him practically barefoot. Lucifer caught himself looking down at the top of her head with amusement more than once. She was so bright and fierce. Her size rarely mattered.

But now, he could at least distract her and himself from their plight by teasing her. “Honestly, Chloe, if I fall, I’ll already be halfway to the floor even if you do manage to catch me.”

“Shut up,” she muttered. It wasn’t the first time she’d told him.

“I could walk on my own, you know.”

“Shut up.”

They had come to the end of the hall before the three rooms. “Will you be escorting me to my room, as well? We can stand there awkwardly and try to tell each other what a great night we had. I can make it truly authentic and fumble for a kiss.”

“You’re not going to your room,” she said stubbornly.

“Not…?”

She gripped his shirt and pulled him left. Lucifer went with some surprise and nearly overbalanced in the process. Chloe planted her feet, steadying him, but not before his ribs bumped against her shoulder. She hesitated when she heard him make an aborted sound in his throat and Lucifer stopped breathing for a few seconds. A shuddering breath later, he was being towed along again, doing his best to ignore the fresh throb pulsating amid the pain pasting his ribs.

“Why am I going to your room?” he asked, even as she walked him through the door.

Instead of answering, she left him standing a few paces in the center of her room. She immediately hurried to the door leading to the front and pulled it closed. It whirred and clanked shut even as she turned in a circle, eyeing the room thoughtfully. Lucifer knew when she was puzzling things out
and kept silent, well-practiced from working with her for three years. He liked watching it, the intensity in her eyes and the set of her jaw as she calculated. He turned to watch her as she went to one corner of the room, seemed to come to some decision and promptly took hold of the bed frame and started pulling.

“What on Earth are you doing?”

“I’m moving… this against the… wall in the corner,” she grunted out she tugged the bed around. She then hurried around it and pushed it snugly against the wall. Lucifer was too bewildered to even offer to help. The Detective stood by the bed, eyeing the angles of room critically before she seemed satisfied. “All right. Lie down.”

“In your bed. That you just moved.” He pointed at it, still uncertain.

“It’s the safest angle. No one will be able to get a clean line of sight to shoot you there.”

Lucifer looked at the two doors thoughtfully. It was just like his room, but reversed. The same table with a chair, the same panel that slid away to allow Caretaker to deposit food and drink, and the same bathroom set up in the small ‘L’ portion of the room. The door toward the front that they had just entered was now along the same wall as the head of the bed. Someone would have to step into the room to see the bed fully. The other door was much further away, and certainly not at the best angle, but he didn’t see that it’d protect him much.

“But…”

She came over to him impatiently, taking up his hand and leading him toward the bed.

Lucifer’s stomach dropped, reluctant and nervous. He wasn’t sure what the Detective was up to, yet, but he was feeling ungainly and confused. “I am terribly sweaty. Are you sure you want that on your bed?”

“Good point. Sit down.”

She said it with such easy expectancy of his obeying, that for once he did so without question. Lucifer continued watching her even as he carefully eased down on the mattress’s edge. Chloe was heading to the wash area. Water ran briefly. She hurried back with one of her towels and a wash cloth. “Let’s get your shirt off.”

“You want me to strip?”

“Lucifer,” she admonished, even as she came forward and immediately set to work at the back of the shirt to undo the clasps that held it firmly around his wings.

“Just a minute… Detective, what has gotten into you?” His attempt to lean away was punished with a tug on the shirt. He inhaled sharply and held still, a fresh pang echoing down his side. Soon she was working the shirt off his arms and over his head despite his confused protests.

She stopped then. Her blue eyes had fallen to his torso. It was that look of empathy again, hurting because others hurt, creating a crease in the middle of her brow. Lucifer didn’t like it.

So of course he grinned, eyeing her with what he hoped was a playful look. “Do you want the full monty or are the pants staying on?”

She looked up with some surprise. “Do… I mean it was mostly your shirt that you sweated through, but if…”
He felt a little more assured at least, confident he had a better idea of Chloe’s motives. He held his hand out for the washcloth. “They’re likely fine. Besides, with how you’re staring, perhaps it’s best I keep the rest of my stunning assets under wraps for now.”

Chloe shook her head. “No, Lucifer, it’s just… It looks bad.”

Lucifer glanced down. Dark discoloration and swells of red skin were mottling his frame and upper arms. He was sure it was the same under the bandages and pants as well. His face was likely not much better off. So he mustered up his most assuring smile. “Oh, they got a few good licks in, but I’ll be right as rain in no time! I’m sure it looks worse than it feels.” He beckoned with his fingers. “Now, unless you want to help with a sexy sponge bath? I’d be fine with that, if you are.”

Chloe frowned, handing the cloth to him. Lucifer felt again that sense of relief, like he was able to dodge some hazard that he didn’t want to identify. He started with his upper arms, gauging the pressure he was able to apply without hurting too much.

It didn’t take much before the bruises renewed their sharper complaints. He did his best, careful on his chest. Chloe in the meantime stood awkwardly, looking around the room and up at the vent as though she hadn’t studied it thoroughly in the past few days. Lucifer thought he would do fine, mopping up all the way to his explosive collar, but then when he tried to get to the top of his shoulder or around his ribs, the pain pulled him short. The muscles felt too hot and stiff to pull far one way or the other.

The Detective of course noticed. “Here. Let me rinse it off and I’ll get the rest.” When he hesitated she stepped further into his space, reaching for it. “Don’t argue. You should already be laying down.”

“I’m fine!”

Chloe looked at him with abrupt anger. “Stop that.”

He blinked, thoughts blank at the sharpness of her words. “Stop what?”

“Lying to yourself. You’re not fine. I can see that you’re not fine. You just got the crap beaten out of you, and it’s okay to admit you’re not a hundred percent and need help.”

“That’s… That’s not how I mean it.” He smiled, though it was cracked and weak. “I mean that I’m as well as I can be for the circumstances and I’m managing perfectly well.” He held his palms up. “Thus. Fine.”

“No,” Chloe stated adamantly. She grabbed the washcloth from him and marched off to the sink. Lucifer folded his hands, feeling awkward left in the wake of her irritation. He looked down again, caught the darkening purple marks shocking across his light skin. He curled one foot atop the other, took a fortifying breath and looked up when he heard the water turn off and the cloth being wrung out.

He had what he hoped was a blank mask in place as Chloe hurried back. She was rubbing at her forehead and her hand flew off to the side, looking upset. “I’m sorry. I’m not really mad at you. I’m just…” She stood before him, looking down over his bruises before meeting his eyes again. “Just… This is my fault you’re suffering like this, and I shouldn’t have gone off exploring when I knew Pierce could still hurt you, and you… stopped breathing and now you’re just… And it isn’t. It isn’t fine.”

Lucifer felt his mask slip. He couldn’t keep it in place when she looked so upset. Her being upset
made him feel like someone was playing kickball in his chest. His hands were up, though he had no idea what he was meant to do with them. “No, this isn’t your fault. This is some baboon who can barely swing a stick correctly’s fault! And look. Breathing Devil, right in front of you! No harm done.”

“No harm done? You were so paralyzed, you died! You can’t tell me this…” She motioned with her palms toward his abused torso. “That this was fun for you!”

“Well, no, but I’m okay.”

“I’M NOT!”

Lucifer leaned back, staring.

Chloe continued, her voice shaking. “I’m not okay… with this. I was not okay being forced to watch that. I was not okay when I was doing CPR on you. I was not okay with any of it.”

“Chloe…”

“Don’t you get it? I’m not okay with you being hurt! Ever!” She turned, rubbing at her eyes, spun back on her heels, determined. “How would you have felt, if it was me?”

Lucifer swallowed. “I… wouldn’t let them.”

“But what if, Lucifer! What if you couldn’t get to me and they were hurting me?”

The collar was nothing compared to the tight weight in his throat. He shook his head, words more breath than voice. “I wouldn’t let them…”

She made a disbelieving sound, pacing in a small circle, visibly gathering herself. Lucifer felt displaced, like he’d missed a step on a staircase and hadn’t landed yet.

“Chloe,” he finally started. He only gave a glance to be sure she was listening. “You know to get out of here, we may have to… do things that our captors aren’t going to like. We know what the likely result will be when that happens, but if it helps us to…”

Chloe was looking at him anxiously. She came up to him, and he tensed, uncertain what she intended. Both her hands were on his jaw line, touch feather light on the swelling on one side of his face. “Shh… Don’t talk…” her eyes skipped around the room meaningfully. “…like that.” She leaned in close, hugging him. Lucifer’s stiffened. His hand went to her back.

Her whisper was turned in close toward this collar, but audible to him. Barely. “When C.T. whispered to me, he told me to warn you. Pierce can read lips, and he has the resources to get translations for any foreign language he needs. But he can’t hear whispers. So we’re going to have a conversation about this. But quietly, and you will not be the whipping boy in whatever plan we make. She paused. Lucifer was still, digesting this information while trying not to react. “Pat me if you understand.”

Lucifer breathed deeper against his protesting ribs, than tapped his palm against her back. Chloe nodded, pulling back. She was still truly upset, wiping at her nose. Lucifer stared worriedly at her, still not at ease with her outburst. She pursed her lips, then moved to his side with the washcloth.

The archangel’s eyes flicked to her, leaning away when he realized her intentions. His hand was around her small wrist, quick but gentle with his pressure. She stared at him. He stared back, then cleared his throat. “Erm…”
The panel slid open. They both looked sharply at it.

Caretaker’s voice came through. “I know it’s not the best, but thought I should make something easy for his stomach.” There were plates with toast, one set unbuttered, and simple cream of wheat with portions of brown sugar, butter, and milk on the side. A carafe of coffee was set in, and then another clear tumbler full of amber liquid. “This will help rehydrate him after he sweat so much. And these…” A cup rattled with pills. “Are pain killers, anti inflammatory, and muscle relaxers. I would say have him take all of them. And last but not least…” He set a tin down. “Something topical. It’s amazing for bruises. Ms. Decker, will you see to it he gets some on the affected areas?”

“Thank you, C.T.” She was already heading over to the table. Lucifer stayed put.

“Quite welcome. Mr. Morningstar, I expect you to rest today.”

Lucifer rolled his eyes. “I’m…!” Chloe shot him a look like an arrow over her shoulder. “Fine, yes, I’ll be resting! I’ll cancel that morning jog I had planned.”

Caretaker huffed a laugh before the panel closed.

“Drugs and toast,” Lucifer announced. “That is my kind of breakfast.” He started to move.

“You stay put.”

Lucifer groaned in exasperation, but did as bidden. He decided it was just as well. After he had stopped moving for a short while, a stiffness had started to seep into his bruises.

Chloe brought him all of the food, setting the chair near the bed for them to use as a small table while they ate their cream of wheat, toast, and Lucifer gulped down fourteen pills. Chloe put the dishes back on the table when they were done, all except the coffee, cream and sugar. She then came toward Lucifer with the tin in her hand. She opened it and gave it a curious sniff.

“Mm… Not too strong or awful.”

Lucifer sniffed at it when she offered. “Not bad at all. A homemade liniment. Wonder what he has in it?” He reached for it.

She didn’t hand it over. “Hopefully it helps… Lie down.”

“Pardon?”

Chloe nodded sideways to the bed. “Lie down. We’ll start with you on your back.”

Lucifer stared at her, mind blank but wanting to protest. “I, uh…”

“Lucifer, I’m not trying to have sex with you or anything. For one, no way when we’re being filmed. For two, you’re in no condition.”

“Oh! Right, I figured. Anyway, I can just…” He reached out again to take the tin.

Chloe took her free hand and pushed his away. “You can barely reach your sides, and you definitely won’t be able to reach your back.”

The Detective was scooting off her slippers, and he watched, feeling some panic worm in him and trying to think of a decent protest. Her weight pressed on the bed as she climbed on, then started ushering him to scoot and bring his legs up. He did, feeling at a loss as she crawled further up the bed and took the pillow, laying it lengthwise and instructing him to lay back on it.
Moving hurt, and she had to step out of the bed and circle around his casted wing once he was settled. Then she was kneeling at his side, dipping her fingers into the liniment. She looked down at his long torso, took a deeper breath. “Just… let me know if anything hurts too much.”

He flinched at the first touch, his aching muscles cording under the cold. Chloe’s blue eyes flicked up to his face, then she pursed her lips and slid the oil down along his belly. She repeated the motion, gentle in her ministrations to work the oil deeper. Chloe’s hands were smooth on his skin, her touch carefully light so as to not aggravate his bruises. The cream was cool at first, a soothing sensation against the feverish welts.

“How’s that feel?” she finally asked.

“It’s cold at first. Then… warm.” He swallowed. “It feels good.”

“Good. It’s supposed to.” Her hand smoothed up his side.

Lucifer inhaled deeper. He felt snarled inside. He was used to touches for sex, a reciprocation of pleasure between two or more parties, but this was… something else. The Devil wasn’t sure what to do or how to feel about it. It felt too genuine, somehow too sacred to jest at Chloe’s diligence as she soothed his maltreated muscles, but at the same time he felt too out of sorts to be comfortable.

Chloe’s eyes remained fixed on her task, ever careful. She commented on how high the skin was raised on a particularly vicious welt. When Lucifer didn’t answer she looked up. “Are you okay?”

“I’m, uh…” *Fine* was perhaps not the best word.

Chloe’s smile was small. “Here. I know they hit your arms a lot.” She took one of his hands, mindful of the fresh bandages on his knuckles, then started unwrapping the gauze circling his forearms. The long white wrap uncoiled onto the blanket, and she looked over the livid red marks left from where the cables had cut into him as well as the newer bruises. “You weren’t kidding. You do heal fast.”

“It’s been itching,” he offered, eager to distract himself from how he felt.

“I bet. They always say that means it’s healing, right? Here. Let’s do the other one.”

The archangel kept his eyes down at her smaller fingers circling around his arm, easing the salve into the healing lines and dark bruises. Then she ordered him quietly onto his belly.

The moving made his slowly relaxing muscles tighten with pain once more, but the medicine was starting to do its work. Lucifer groaned as he eased his weight back down, chest and face against the pillow now. Chloe helped guide his free left wing over the edge of the bed, then settled on her knees near his hip. “Okay. Almost done. Then you can sleep, okay?”

He nodded, feeling unmoored once more. It was so terribly gentle. Where each trace of fingertips carried away the physical pain, another new pain swelled from deep inside, somewhere he hadn’t even realized a nest of it sat, heavy and dark. The brambles of it reached his throat, and he did his best to breathe evenly, confusion braiding with the ache.

He didn’t know why it hurt.

She rest a hand just along side his wings. There were no bruising here. She pressed, slow and steady. “…You really do have two shoulder blades.”

He cleared his throat before answering. His voice was marvelously steady when he forced some
humor into it. “Those have always been there. I confused the heck out of a masseuse once, before she got distracted by much more important activities.” A flash of realization shot through him. “Uh! That's where I've felt this before.”

“A… masseuse made you feel what?”

“No, not the masseuse. You, with this feeling.” He cleared his throat. “I recognize it now. The first time I tried to seduce you by showing you what I had to offer. You turned me down, and instead of ogling my excellent build like a normal person, you were interested in my scars.” He blithely went on. “The scars are gone now, by the way.”

“Lucifer.” Chloe seemed to be measuring her words carefully. “You were really unhappy that I touched those.”

“Well, yes, because you were confounding me. You were concerned about them, and no one does that, and you weren’t touching me because of… Because you were…” He searched for words. His throat blocked each attempt. “Anyhow, that’s where I felt this.” His voice was quieter and rougher, but he was hoping it came off as grumbling.

Chloe let a measure of silence pass between them, her hands continuing up to the base of the thick collar. Finally she spoke her thoughts out loud. “Because I wasn’t touching you out of lust, out of desiring something from you. I wasn’t touching you because I wanted something.”

That dark bramble seemed to shudder inside of him. “That may be it.”

Chloe’s hands ran lightly down the top of his shoulders. “Well, when we get out, you’re going to have to get used to it. I like touching people I…” She stopped before saying the word, just a tense of held breath. “…You know. And it’s not because I want anything from them. I just… it’s a show of affection.”

“Affection.” He tried to wrap his thoughts and experience around the idea. It was becoming difficult to think.

“Yes. And it’s not always sexual. It’s just a silent communication of… more.”

Lucifer was silent, wallowing in his trench of inner confusion, trying to parse the pathetic feeling ache deep down where the drugs couldn't touch. He heard Chloe shift, leaning over him. Her hair tickled against his back. Warm, soft, soft lips pressed between his shoulder blade and wings. That painful beast writhed in him. His arms tightened around the pillow, burying his face deeper in it to hide.

“Hey.” Chloe ran her hand back down the center of his spine. When he refused to move or react, she pulled back just enough to duck under his wing, crawling in under it and settling facing him. She touched his hair. “I know you’re not used to this. Do you need me to give you more space?”

His voice was muffled. “I don’t know.” He was so out of his depth, and he was drowning.

Chloe maneuvered further into his space. Her lips touched his temple, her chest pressed against his shoulder to be in close. Her legs were flush against his. For a moment he was trapped, tense and wanting to keep up his walls, keep the safety of that loneliness, but the lure of her ease with him, her offer for more pulled his inner tower apart. Lucifer shuddered and finally gave in to the urge to return her closeness, a trill like fear working through his core, silvery and cutting. He didn’t want to look her in the eyes, so he nudged downward, letting his feet hang off the end of the bed in favor of nuzzling in under her chin.
She smelled sweet, and he inhaled and squeezed her against himself with one arm, trying to seal away any space between them. She wrapped around him with such a welcoming ease, body soft against his hard lines. Her leg rest on his bruised thigh, but it felt far more heavenly than any complaining ache could measure against.

It was cutting that thorny ilk in him to pieces, scattering the ashes so he still ached, but not insurmountably so. His breathing was easier, relaxing into her embrace with a weary sigh. He felt and heard her kiss the top of his head, had a thought for how ugly his hair must be before dismissing it, deciding he didn’t care if he got to feel this.

This closeness and something even less familiar.

Peace.

The fallen angel fell asleep to the sound of her breath and heartbeat in his ear.
Linda stopped outside the hospital room to slow down. She didn’t need to go in frazzled looking. Even though she was. Which she reminded herself was a perfectly reasonable reaction to one of the people you knew getting badly hurt. Attacked, even.

With the practice that came with years of keeping focus on patients, she compartmentalized the emotions, setting them aside, and walked into the room to be a calm, reassuring presence.

Even with that, she didn’t quite check her reaction. She figured Dan would look bad, but she still wasn’t quite ready for how badly the thugs had bruised his face. Daniel was sitting on the edge of the hospital bed, pulling on his shoes with slow, pained movements. His eye was swollen completely shut, and his lips were still puffy. A bandage taped the corner of his head, and another over the bridge of his nose. His whole hand was thickly wrapped, and he looked like hell.

But he was alert, looked up and tried to offer a smile. She managed a smile back, mentally picked the most favorable reaction for Detective Espinoza as she slowly approached the hospital bed. She went for friendly, but not joking into unsafe territory or showing sympathy. “Hey. Heard someone gave you the good stuff so you couldn’t drive.”

He managed a small huff of a laugh before looking more serious. “Thanks for coming, Linda.”

“It’s no trouble. Honestly, it’s good to be a little useful,” she said honestly. “Did they already give you your discharge instructions?”

“Yeah, I just need to stop by at the front desk to schedule a follow up. Gotta go through all the hoops, since I was on the clock.”

“The joys of red tape,” Linda noted, giving him plenty of space to maneuver around the room when he stood and started gathering his few items. “Have you had anything to eat? It’s almost six, now.”

“I could really go for something. I’m starving at this point. I skipped on lunch.”

“Well, name the place and we’ll get it. I promised to bring something back to Lux for Trixie and Ella as well, but they were vague on what they wanted, so… Our pick.”

Daniel looked uncertain. “You know, maybe… Maybe I’ll just get something delivered at home. Ella and Trixie get along great, so I’m sure they can figure out what they want. They can put whatever on my card.” He looked at his phone, uncertain.

Linda considered him briefly. “Yooooou’re afraid of how Trixie will react to seeing you banged up.”

Daniel’s eye flicked up and down again before shaking his head. “The kid might have lost-.”
stopped, swallowed. “Anyway, she doesn’t need this on top of all that.”

“She’ll probably want to see you,” Linda pointed out. “What will you tell her?”

“Ah, she’s mad at me right now, anyhow. Doesn’t think I’m doing enough, or—or that I gave up, but you know, that’s not it. I haven’t. I just… I know how these things tend to go. But we have a shot of at least finding out what happened to them, and the narrow chance of maybe even finding them alive, after we’ve come up against nothing but walls.” He looked down at his hand. “And now I’m off duty, so I’m not expected at the precinct at all, which means I can’t keep a watch out for anything useful before the Feds scoop it up. I just gotta hope Ella and Mazikeen turn up something. So I’m useless again.”

Linda stepped closer to him, offering a careful smile. “I think… That it just means that she needs her father even more. And that you know this city like a book. And that we are better off together in all of this.” She paused before quickly adding, “I also don’t really want you by yourself at home, or someone coming to Lux while Mazikeen is away.”

Daniel sighed, then quirked as much of a smile as his injured mouth would allow. “I knew it. You just want me for my gun.”

“And your quesadilla dip. That’s to die for.” She touched him playfully on the shoulder. “Come on. What do you say to Italian? You can text Trixie on the way and maybe send her some pictures? People can usually accept pictures better than reality at first.”

Daniel brightened a little. “You know, all right. Pasta won’t hurt my mouth as much, and Trix loves breadsticks.”

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“Dan!” Ella was up and out of the expensive Italian leather sofas the moment the elevator opened. Linda was a bit thankful Daniel had insisted on helping carry up some of the food, since that kept the forensic scientist from pouncing on his sore body outright. As it was, she came dangerously close, skidding to a halt before looking at him with a wince. “Whoo, buddy, they really worked you over!”

“Yeah, but hey, it’s just a flesh wound.”

Linda didn’t get the quote, but Ella did, because she giggle-snorted. “Don’t!” she said. “I’ll start quoting the whole movie.”

Daniel lifted the bags of carry out up. “Maybe quoting the whole thing can wait until after dinner. Where’s Trixie?”

Trixie’s voice came from the kitchen area. “I’m getting you ice!” There was the sound of an ice maker running. “Ella said ice makes the blood vessels, um! Vaso-strictionate!” “Vasoconstriction!” “Yeah, that! Because the body likes to conserve body heat from the cold and thus will restrict how much fluid is leaking into your face!”

Ella nodded proudly. “Pretty much!” She bounced her weight from foot to foot, something tense in the lines of her face. Linda looked at her questioning, but didn’t catch her eye.

Trixie popped into view, a cloth that very likely held the needed ice in hand. She looked at her father with pursed lips, then looked apologetic. “Ella said frozen peas are better, but there’s none in the freezer. Sorry.”
“Oh, monkey, you’re fine. Thank you. I brought breadsticks. Come here and help me, eh?”

Trixie brightened at that, hurrying up to him to help him dig things out of the bags.

Linda also moved toward the counter, at a much more sedate pace than Dan and Trixie. She was glad to see that Trixie was handling Daniel’s injuries better than the man had feared. The anxiety was there, and Trixie couldn’t keep her eyes off his hand or the black eye and nose, but she wasn’t falling apart. So she turned her attention to Ella instead, who looked ready to burst at the seams. She decided to venture out a question to see if it was just excitement from food, Daniel getting hurt, or something else.

“So, how was work, Ella?”

“I found Chloe and Lucifer’s clothes!”

They all stopped to blink at her. She stood stock still, like she was just caught doing something bad, her shoulders hitched high and her hands spread to the sides.

Then she started talking. Fast. Linda had to focus all of her attention to keep up.

“The burn barrel that we found at the scene this morning! It had a lot of items burned in it, but one of the things that totally stood out to me was that there was, get this—a really melted down chunky boot heel, and mother of pearl. Chloe totally wore kicks with a chunky heel! I always wanted to try wearing them sometime, but her feet are bigger than mine. And the mother of pearl? Lucifer is a total fashion snob, and these were pretty thick, so the shirt they came off of was likely one of his fancy three-hundred-something dollar shirts! Whoever dumped those bodies was involved in their kidnapping! I’d bet a fat stack that those three guys on the bottom that we saw, Dan, were totally some of the people who got mowed down at Pierce’s trap! Oh, and the guy on top who was a day fresher? We got a ping back on his ID while you were at the hospital! Thank God (no really, thank you Big Guy!) for dental records! The dude had a rap sheet for all sorts of medical and prescription fraud! He was a back alley doc, and shot point blank in the forehead. You want my guess?”

Dan pointed the finger of his good hand, shaking it at the air thoughtfully. His bandaged one was busy pressing the makeshift icepack against his brow. “They needed to patch someone up, and then shut him up.”

Linda kept in mind that there was a child in the room who was very emotionally involved in this case. “Maybe we should wait to-.”

Trixie’s voice sounded loud and high among them. “That mean’s Lucifer’s alive!”

“Bingo, kiddo!” Ella said. She was the only one out of the adults who was not looking at Trixie with concern now that they had a chance to recover enough to react to Ella’s deluge of information. “You don’t call a doc to patch up someone on their way out, and you don’t take said doc out unless he saw something that needed hiding! If it was just one of the thugs that needed some back alley patching, they wouldn’t bother with witness clean up.” She raised her hands, practically shivering with excitement. “So guys, they’re keeping them alive! They gotta be!”

Linda frowned, the information feeling discordant to her. “But why burn their clothes then?”

“Probably ruined, and if Lucifer was injured, safest way to ditch it. Though no idea why they only burned one of Chloe’s boots. At least I think that was the case. It was all pretty melted down. They used a ton of accelerant on it all. No sign of her other clothes, though, not even a bra clasp. No cufflinks or Lucifer’s ring, either. Don’t think anything else he was wearing would have survived
“Why didn’t you call and tell me this?” Dan asked.

“Nope! Cellphones aren’t safe right now! Pierce might have a Fed or two working for him, so better safe than sorry. The more they think we’re clueless, the better. Oh man, that garlic bread smell is going to kill me.”

Linda looked around. “Where’s Mazikeen?”

“She let me know she got a hit on a credit card. Don’t ask me who she’s using to track that!” Ella hurried up to the bar and hopped up into a stool while looking wolfishly at the assorted food. Everyone else gravitated to the dinner as well, starting to pass containers to each other and sort out the plastic ware and, at the moment, holding conversation off on the subject around Trixie.

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It wasn’t long after dinner that Dan got a call from Mazikeen to meet her. Linda looked at him, concerned.

He had just finished saying good bye to Trixie when Linda approached him. “Are you sure you’re well enough?” she asked doubtfully.

“I didn’t take any of the heavy pain killers. I’ll be fine.”

Linda considered pressing, but realized there was no way he wasn’t heading out to handle whatever Mazikeen talked to him about. She finally nodded, letting him gather his jacket and keys and heading out. “Be careful."

“I will be.” He looked over at where Trixie was sitting, watching a movie with her headphones on already. “Got every reason to be,” he stated as he walked toward the exit.

“We’ll both stay with her until you come back,” she assured.

He shot her a grateful smile from the closing elevator.

Ella was still sitting at the bar. She looked at Dr. Linda thoughtfully, her hands dancing around, jittering. Linda was well aware of when someone was working up the nerve to ask something, so she made herself available by pouring some alcohol into a glass from one of the fancy decanters and sitting down. She took a sip, gave a thoughtful hum before looking to Ella expectantly with her hands clasped atop her knee, legs folded, and body language attentive.

Ella only took a few seconds to jab at her with an opening question. “You’ve… You’ve been Lucifer’s therapist for a long time, right?”

“I have, yes.” She readied her patient confidentiality speech that she had to give people so often.

“So… he’s told you a lot, and probably shown you things, right?”

*Oh, the joke that Lucifer would make at that, considering our relationship started off less than professional.* “He has,” she readily agreed, still waiting for the question.

“So, have you seen them?”

Linda tilt her chin down, looking to her for clarification. “Them?”
Ella held up her hands by her shoulders and made little flapping motions with them. Her eyes were wide with excitement, body brimming with a nervous energy.

“Oh!” Ella knew? When did Ella know? She studied her, puzzling that over. “I... Well, yes. Once.”

Ella’s energy brimmed over, out of her seat suddenly. “Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, how big were they? They must be huge! Like, way taller than me! Where do they go? How does he hide them? I’ve been thinking it over and they can’t just be invisible, because I’ve seen people pat him on the back and stuff! Can he fly with them?”

*Well, that confirms my suspicion of what she's asking about.* The questions were quite overwhelming, though. Linda blinked, mouth open for a few seconds before she ducked her forehead down further in brief thought. “Well, the time I saw them… Let’s see. I was sitting over there, and when they…..” She spread her hands. “Came out, they stretched far enough that he accidentally knocked over things on the table over there, and they easily brushed his piano over there. And they weren’t even fully spread.”

“So cool! Did they make a pop sound?”

“Pop sound?”

“Yeah, from displacing the air! Like did they snap into space or did they slowly come out?”

*Goodness, she is curious.* But then, Linda was starting to wonder why she hadn’t been more curious about the physicality of the wings herself. She supposed she had wanted to be careful not to focus on them too much and instead only focus on what they meant to her patient. “Oh, they just sort of made this… deep whoosh sound. They came out quickly, but no pop, just a gust of air? And they just,” she motioned awkwardly. “Shrank back to nothing when he put them away again. It was all very fast.”

Ella was pacing swiftly, almost an excited run on the polished floor. “Oh my gosh, he totally has bag of holding wing holsters on his back! Or like flat-space technology! Or like Steven Universe gems!”

“Erm…” Linda didn’t know what any of those things were.

“Yeah, so it’s a deviation from regular time space that allows something larger to compact into a tiny alternate space! Which means that makes him an inter-dimensional creature, which totally makes sense for an angel right? So he can probably do inter-dimensional travel, because of course Heaven and Hell have to be on different planes of existence! Oh man, I have so many questions for him when we find him! I wonder if he can see ghosts! I bet he can! Has he ever told you he sees ghosts?”

“No?” She closed her eyes, shaking her head. “How did you… find out about Lucifer?”

“Oh, that! Looked over all the evidence, and pretty much it was the only thing that made sense. Which…” Her enthusiasm flagged, concern in her dark eyes. “Means he was really hurt. Can… can angels die?”

This one Linda did know. “He can, I’m afraid, under the right circumstances.” She turned the matter over in her mind, then decided that they couldn’t really afford to keep such secrets under such dire circumstances. “Specifically when he’s around Chloe.”

“Eh? Okay, you gotta tell me everything you know!” Ella pulled up a stool and quickly perched on it, hands on the brim of her seat between her legs as she leaned forward eagerly.
“Okay. Some things I can’t get into because of patient confidentiality, but let me tell you at least what I know he’s capable of. It might give you some ideas on how we can track him down, and if they’re keeping him alive, how.”

“This is so cool. I mean, not the situation! It’s way far from cool, but oh man!” She took a hold of Linda’s glass and swallowed down its contents before slapping it down and looking to her eagerly.

Well, Linda supposed it was better than her own reaction. So she started to relay what she knew patiently.

The evening ended with Trixie wrapped up in a blanket on Lucifer’s bed asleep while Linda and Ella passed a bottle of liquor between themselves. Ella was sitting on the floor while Linda laid on the couch.

“Man, it’s all real,” Ella said. Not for the first time.

Yep!“ Linda handed the bottle over to her, both beyond tipsy. "And we are, somehow, personal friends with the first fallen angel.”

“Yeah. The big D himself.”

The two women paused, then burst into laughter.

“Oh, he’d love that!” Linda managed to gasp out, slapping at the couch.

“Don’t-don’t tell him I said that! Linda, you gotta pinky swear to me…!”

“Oh, I don’t think I could with any dignity anyhow.” She scooped up the bottle and took a sip. She had to tip it back pretty far to get to the meager alcohol left. She looked around at the room, eyes falling on the piano. It hadn’t been played in a week. Not properly. Melancholy settled in, eased from hiding by the drink. “I hope he’s okay.”

Ella smiled, one of those soft, sincere smiles. She reached up and pat Linda’s hand. “We’re going to find them. Maze is on it. Best bounty hunter demon ever.”

Linda smiled back. “Sorry. Just… He may be one of the oldest people in existence, but he’s so… rash. Sometimes just outright self-destructive.” She shook her head against the arm of the couch. “I worry how they’re doing. Hoping they’re hanging on.”

“Chloe’s with him.” Ella tipped her head back against the couch, smiling. “Those two, am I right?”

“Right? I know!” Linda chuckled. “I’ve been trying to guide him into telling her for ages.” Her thoughts sobered, pulling away her smile. “Now, I suppose she knows… Think she took it okay?”

“Hope so. I mean, she loves the guy. Whatever situation they’re in, the one thing you can bet on is that those two clueless lovebirds are taking care of each other.”

“… Is it wrong that I’m more worried about him taking care of himself more than Chloe? I mean, she’s the one who’s like us. Mortal and human, I mean.”

“Nah, I get it. She’s tough as nails and smart. If anyone can wrangle the Devil into not making a situation worse, it’s her.”

“God, I hope so.”

God. The two looked up at the ceiling at the same time, and sighed.
Hello, darklings! We are back to more digging at Lucifer, because Chloe won't rest until she shakes out all his emotional dirt.

Note: Breschau is an actual character shown in the Sandman comics that I borrowed for the fic. He's not of my own creation.

Enjoy, jelly beans!

How am I going to keep you safe? Chloe wondered.

Lucifer was still asleep, breaths even and soft. His lips were open the barest amount, his bruised cheek pressed into her pillow. Unruly hair scattered on his forehead and temple. The muscle relaxers and other pain medication had kept him deeply sleeping for the past six hours. Chloe had spent the morning and half the afternoon at his side except to change into fresh clothes and get the lunch that Caretaker had dropped off through the panel. More food, medication and water waited for when Lucifer woke up, and Chloe had gotten the warden’s quick assurance that he wouldn’t be ordering them to separate rooms just yet.

She mulled that over, what Caretaker had shown her and whispered. Caretaker, who had been tapping at the tablet subtly while they had talked about drugs over a gasping Lucifer, touching it as though just being leery of her trying to make a grab for it. He had been showing her how it worked, and that he wasn’t the only one who could operate all lights, doors, and coms in the place, and certainly wasn’t the only one with access to the cameras.

That complicated matters even further, and her mind worked at it like a puzzle, while at the same time she considered the archangel asleep in her bed.

It was a very different side to see, this less pristine, so human-looking side of him in disheveled sleep. He snored sometimes. Not too obnoxiously, and never for long before he’d move a little and stop. She could live with that snore.

She wanted to live with that snore.

Almost losing him had instilled an undeniable conviction in her. Chloe loved him deeply, a scary amount. Even though he was proud, old, a different species, and had a list of issues longer than his wing. Maybe one day she’d even get to tell him the word without him fleeing. Her eyes skipped over his long frame, the planes of his relaxed muscles, still easy to see under the dark bruises. He was so tall, his feet were hanging off the bed. The long prime feathers hung off as well. Both wings were currently pressed against the wall, cresting above his shoulder where they rose before framing the entire length of his torso, bare except for the two straps that kept his cast in place, all the way down his long legs and bandaged feet.

Beautifully crafted. And cruelly as well.

She gave the doors another leery look before laying back down next to him, scooting in close to his
frame protectively. The archangel moved just as he had before each time she laid close to him, gravitating into her space, arm lifting to squeeze her in before he relaxed again, hand loose against her back. Lucifer’s breath was soft against her crown, and he fell into deep slumber again. Chloe loved it so much her chest ached. She shifted against him, leaving a kiss on his jawline, just above the detestable collar before she nudged to rest close to his cheek.

She knew he was waking up when she rest her hand on his side and he made a small sound. It wasn’t a happy sound. She tilt her head back, looking at the small pinch in his brow. “Hey,” she said quietly. “Need more pain meds?”

“Mm…” He wasn’t quite awake yet, then. When he did move again it was to give a sleepy stretch. He froze mid motion, breath halting. A few breathless seconds later he curled inward and groaned.

“Yeah, you need pain meds.” Chloe moved to get the medication.

“No.” Lucifer’s eyes opened, alarmed. His arm tightened around her, his voice sleep rough. “P’ease dun go.”

Chloe looked at his dazed, edgy eyes. She thought she should feel alarmed. She didn't. “Lucifer, I’m not going far,” she assured. “I’m just getting you some more pain medication.”

“Mm?” He blinked at her, looked around briefly. “Oh.” Chloe could see he was a little more awake now. She waited for him to think through the cloud of sleep still in his gaze. “Right,” he finally noted, arm lifting so she could move freely again. “Sorry.”

“You’re fine. Are you hungry?”

“Thirsty.”

“Bring you back some water.” She scoot her feet into the slippers, looked back at him briefly. He was watching her with sleepy eyes, his blinks slow, jaw still slack. She wondered how many people got to see such a sleepy Devil. She remembered when she had woken up with a hangover in his penthouse with no memory of the previous night. He had been sitting primly in his robes in a chair at the end of the bed, offering her espresso or booze with far too much energy.

Being able to bring him a drink instead warmed her inside. When she came back to the bed with water and pills, Lucifer tried to sit up. His eyes widened, and he sank back into the bed with a groan. “Ohhh, that’s astounding,” he murmured.

“Want help up?”

“No, just wasn’t expecting it to be quite so… Mmm.” He visibly rallied himself with a few short breaths then tried again, grimacing as he pushed himself up to his hip with both arms. He was shaky when he managed to the edge of the bed, feet venturing over the edge until they touched the floor and he settled more comfortable. He gladly took the tumbler of water and started draining it.

“Leave some for the pills,” Chloe reminded him mid drink.

“Mm!” He stopped quickly, held his palm up expectantly. Chloe handed the small cup over. Like before, he surprised her by pouring them all in his mouth and immediately swallowing water.

“Don’t choke,” she chided.

He finished draining the tumbler before answering, forearm lifting to wipe at his mouth. “Mm-mm. Mastered my gag reflex eons ago.”
Chloe looked at the ceiling. “I should have expected that answer, and yet…” She shrugged, taking the tumbler back. “Hungry? There’s a sandwich and this really good noodle salad left. Or if you want something warm, I can see if I can—What are you doing?”

Lucifer was standing, a laborious act with his beaten body. He motioned vaguely with his hand. “Need the loo.”

Chloe raised her brows and nodded once. “Go ahead.” If I hear that door start to unlock, I will have time to step in the way if needed.

To her surprise, Lucifer pushed against the backdoor. When it didn’t move he thumped his forehead against it lightly, left wing sagging.

“Lucifer, the bathroom is right there.”

“Fine,” he grumbled, disappearing into the washing area.

“Were you seriously going to go back to your room to go?”

“Yes,” he called.

“Even though I’ve seen you naked… how many times?”

“This is different.” He sounded as pompous as could be.

Chloe rolled her eyes, but instead of arguing went to the table to uncover the food for him. She snuck a bite of his pasta salad for herself when the sink started to run. She could hear him sloshing around for a while, was about to ask what he was doing when the water finally turned off and he came out, dabbing at his wet hair with a towel. He was still moving gingerly anytime he had to raise his arms, obviously forcing himself to move past the point of comfort.

“How bad do you feel?” Chloe asked, carrying the plate over to the bed.

He followed her lead back to the mattress, situating the towel across his shoulders to continue capturing stray droplets. “I don’t suppose you’re going to let me sly my way out of an answer, so I feel like I’ve been beaten with a stick, but the more I move, the less awful it is.” He sat down, one eye squeezing shut before he settled. “And I don’t really mind. It’s… interesting.”

“Interesting?” Chloe looked at him, incredulous.

“Not everyday I have bruises that take so long to heal. Usually by time I wake up, they’re gone.” He took the plate when she offered it to him, scooping up a big forkful of pasta. “How long was I out?”

“Mm, little over half the day.”

“Good thing I had nothing else scheduled, then,” he jested lightly.

“Lucifer,” she said slowly, trying to sort her thoughts. He glanced her way, wary as a skittish street dog as he wolfed down bites of tangy pasta and olives. “You seem very tolerant of pain.”

He swallowed his bite. “I know a lot about pain.” He kept eating, as though hoping the subject would be dropped.

“From Hell?”
Lucifer eyed her sidelong as he finished chewing his current bite. “Yes, in Hell.”

He didn’t like this subject. He put aside any decorum in favor of lifting the plate to his mouth and quickly scraping the last of the noodles and their sauce into his mouth. Once done, he set the plate down on his knee and picked up the sandwich, eyeing its contents.

“What all did you do in Hell?”

“Detective,” he said in exasperation. “The place was wholly unpleasant. Why are you curious about it?”

“Because it’s a big part of your past and who you are. So I want to know what you…” She motioned awkwardly. “Went through.”

There was that confusion in his dark eyes again. He looked away from her to his sandwich, picking it up and considering it. “Well, most people are curious about who is down there and what just desserts they’re getting.”

“I’m not interested in them. I’m interested in you.”

He shifted, seeming to feel awkward at such a doubtless statement. “Well, to assuage any fears you have, I wasn’t being tortured down there. But I know a lot about torture. It’s… what I did. Dad’s orders. Punishment for my failed rebellion.”

Chloe frowned. “Not your pick of career, I gather?”

He chuckled mirthlessly. “Far from it. It was a punishment. Plain and simple. A job. I don’t go around, stealing unfortunate souls that I’ve forced to do bad things. Everyone down there is there because their guilt begs them to be punished. I was there to see it through and keep Hell in some semblance of order, keep rules in place among the denizens.” He bit into his sandwich, chewed slowly to figure out all the flavors. Then bit into it again while Chloe thought it over.

“And you were good at it. Punishing them.”

Lucifer nodded, his mouth still full of sandwich.

“Because, in theory, you were created with the idea that you would fulfill that role.”

Lucifer stopped chewing briefly. He remembered himself quickly and kept eating without reply.

“You said your father, that God, ordered you to the task. If… If you had not rebelled, and God had ordered you to do it… Would you have?”

His next swallow seemed strained. A flash of emotions manifested. Anger, disgust, agitation, until finally he looked wholly disconcerted. He glanced around at the far wall, as though it had answers to his inner turmoil.

Chloe laid her hand gently atop his shoulder. His eyes flew to the touch, then down quickly. “Probably,” he finally agreed, quiet and unhappy. “And… He probably would have ordered me to do it regardless of my rebellion, wouldn’t he have. You said it yourself. He’d placed a throne only a celestial could hold in Hell.”

“That’s… kinda what I’m thinking, yeah,” Chloe agreed. “But I’m trying to figure out how your gift plays into it.”
Lucifer chewed, more thoughtful now. He still looked troubled, but he was thinking. “My ability to pull out people’s hidden desires, you mean.”

“Yeah. That helps figure out people’s motives great out in the field, but why would that be needed in Hell?”

The archangel looked down at his sandwich as though it had lost all flavor to him, but he shoved the rest into his mouth anyhow. Chloe waited. When he looked done eating, she pulled the plate away and set it on the nearby chair. She still looked at him expectantly.

Lucifer searched her face. A sigh, and he started answering. “It was actually very useful. For example… When I first came into power in Hell, things were still tumultuous. Many of the demons weren’t exactly happy about my presence. So they suggested I go to this soul they had trouble breaking, see what I could do, what I was capable of.” He paused. “A test, I suppose. So I followed some of the most powerful, darkest entities to one of the barren fields of flame where a single soul was bound to a giant block of hot stone, pierced and pulled in the most torturous positions with hooks and chains, in absolute agony.

“I almost dared feel sorry for him. Then when he saw me, he started to speak, and the more he spoke,” Lucifer gave a snorted laugh. It was an angry sound, his eyes hard. “The angrier I felt.” His tone lightened, glancing her way. “He was boasting, you see. Was screaming how he was Breschau, how merciless he was, the tortures he had committed while laughing, the villages he had set to ruin, what he had done to stranger and kin alike, child and elderly, to his own mother even. The most horrible, monstrous things. Then, I understood why he wasn’t breaking. He was proud of all he’d done. He knew he was meant to be there, but he wasn’t sorry.

“So I approached him, and asked him what he desired. Do you know what he told me, Detective?” Lucifer looked at her, and Chloe held very still under those fierce eyes. “Infamy. He wanted to be known as the most terrible beast in existence, wanted to be remembered with horror throughout all human history.

“So I left him without a word, and I took a trip topside. I searched the countryside, asked questions, investigated the few writings available, sought out what people knew of this man. The job wasn’t hard, because it turned out there was so little. No one remembered him. There was only a brief mention of him in stone writing, and I destroyed it. I returned with the pathetic bit of slab with me, the only thing with his name. I threw it at his bloody feet, and announced that this was the only mention of him, and it wasn’t even concerning his deeds. He was forgotten. His name held no fear in the land of the living nor dead. He was nobody, and all his wretched deeds had been for nothing.”

Lucifer reigned in his tone, looking away. “That. That was what broke him. And I will never regret making that wretch weep during the ages that followed.”

When Chloe didn’t speak, his shoulders and wings sunk, looking to her with concern. “I… understand if that makes you think less of me. But understand that I don’t enjoy giving punishment to those that don’t deserve it. Just the ones that do. I never asked to be a torturer! I would never want that. But you’re right! I was given all the tools to torment people in the worst ways. And I had to rule demons, and that takes being clever and understanding the art of bargaining. They’re a different breed of unkind creature, and I had to make sure they followed my edicts or suffered the consequences. I’m not sorry for that. I’m not! Perhaps I should be, but I’m…”

“Lucifer,” Chloe interrupted him, reaching out to touch his hand. Her eyes were earnest on his torn gaze. “I do not think less of you. I’m just taking it in. It…” She took a deep breath. “Explain so much. Why you do certain things. Why you had to learn kindness. Why you… don’t know what to
do with kindness.”

Lucifer was holding his breath. He looked vulnerable again, waiting for a verbal blow to fall. Chloe took both of his hands in hers, scooting closer to him. She kept her gaze locked with his, trying to will the fallen angel into understanding her thoughts. “You were given that responsibility for too long. No one should have been made to carry that one burden. That’s an awful job. And demons? That meant… you were surrounded by people who were either trapped in their own guilt or, well, Mazikeens.”

Lucifer’s smile was shaky, but he gave one an attempt anyhow. “Maze was the best of them.”

“But she’s still not great with empathy. She tries, but…” Understanding she’s a demon makes her attitude make so much more sense. “So keeping that in mind, that you only left Hell in the last eight years…” She squeezed his hands. “You’re doing so much better than most people would have. That would have utterly broken most people, or turned them into something-.”

“Monstrous?” he cut in bitterly.

Chloe felt her jaw harden as she stared him down. “Something. You’re. Not.”

Lucifer leaned back. “You don’t know,” he argued. “Why are you so sure that I’m not?”

“Because I’ve worked with you these last three years, and I refuse to think that all those moments of compassion, of growing, of learning about people, was an act.”

“There are things I did in just the last three years, though…!”

“So I’ll tell you again what I told you before.” Chloe looked at him, determined. “Try me.”

Lucifer stared at her, stuttered a syllable or two then looked away, brow crumpling. Chloe could see him closing down, like a clamp on a hemorrhaging vein, forcing the flow of his thoughts and emotions down. She looked down, sighed.

“Let’s get some more of the topical on you. It should help.” She gave his hands another squeeze. He didn’t return it, large hands simply settling back on his thighs when she released them. She scooped up the plate and returned it to the table, picked up the tin before returning to him. She let the slippers fall off, rubbed at the heavy anklet with her other foot, then climbed onto the bed behind the despondent Devil.

He tensed when he heard the tin open. She could see it in his wings and shoulders. She looked at where the drifting feathers that lay parallel to his spine cascade and bent against the bed. A few were bending the other way, and she shift her hand under them, letting their slight weight drift over her palm as she lowered her hand, righting their direction so they wouldn’t pinch. Lucifer inhaled, stopped his breath with a short, pained sniff through his nose.

“Your rib is probably broken, you know.”

“Nothing for it if it is.”

She didn’t have a good argument against that statement. Instead she scooped her fingers into the salve and started applying it to the muscles along either side of his spine. He might not have been beaten here, but she didn’t think it would hurt. She watched how his skin softly dipped under the press of her fingers, felt the way the surface changed where feathers started to grow. When done, she moved to face his side, sitting cross legged as she eyed a bruise as big as her palm along his ribs.
“I’m going to guess,” Chloe said carefully, “That demons never do anything for free.”

Lucifer’s rib muscle jumped when she slid over it with salve. “That’d be correct,” he confirmed.

Chloe went with the suspicion she felt. “So you’re probably just wondering what I want?”

“If it’s to confuse me, mission accomplished.”

“Maybe I think you deserve good things, too. And I’m okay with being the one to give you some good things. Even though… situation means I can’t give you much, but I’d still like to-.”

Lucifer’s statement came out of his mouth like steel against a table. “I killed my brother.”

Chloe stared at him. Lucifer had his eyes closed, brow pinched downward and mouth a set line. She still had her hand on his ribs, unmoving.

“So don’t…” He stopped to get his words under control. “…tell me what I deserve, Detective. I’m quite certain kindness isn’t on that docket.” He held his hand out, started to take the tin from her.

Chloe tightened her hand around it at the last second. She didn’t care that it made her fingers sink into the liniment. She pulled her hand back until his grip fell from it, then dipped her fingers into it, touched his ribs a little harder than intended. He sucked in another aborted breath, releasing a groan in his throat.

Chloe uttered a quiet apology, fingers spreading and sliding along the dark bruises. “…Will you tell me what happened?”

Lucifer was starting to shy away. Chloe gripped the brim of his wing to stop him. “Stop. Look. If it’s too difficult to talk about, okay. But I need to know the circumstance before I give that anymore thought. I can tell that this is probably what you felt guilty over, and that… That doesn’t a monster make. So… Please. If you’re able.”

It took patience to wait him out, giving him the quiet space needed. She broke her silence only to order Lucifer to lay down. She covered the other side of his ribs, worked it into his forearms. He looked everywhere but at her, fighting himself inwardly. Finally, he started to talk, and told her about Uriel.

Chloe listened. He started with her seemingly accidental car wreck all the way to Lucifer stabbing the sword through Uriel. She kept lightly rubbing oil into his skin, even though he certainly had plenty, his skin shining with it.

“I have never killed anyone before,” he softly concluded. “And I didn’t just… kill him. I wiped him out of existence. Utterly. He’s just… gone. I buried his body under a tree… Didn’t know what else to do.”

Chloe set the tin aside. “Thank you for telling me.” She looked down at him, at how raw and tense he was, how sad it all made him. She touched his unbruised cheek. Lucifer closed his eyes and leaned in against her palm. She moved to lay down, considered how to do so with Lucifer’s wings. He opened his eyes, saw her intention, and started to inch over to his side. The movements still made his breath shudder. Finally he had scoot close enough to the wall and pulled his wing behind himself so that she could lay close again, both on their sides facing each other. She placed her cheek against his chest, smoothed her hand over his arm, just trying to relay comfort in touch.

She kept her voice quiet, calm. “I remember how you were the next week. You… tried to get a sniper to shoot you.”
Lucifer’s voice was small and strained. “I was having a bad week.”

“Lucifer, you don’t deserve to be punished for that, no more than I do for shooting Malcolm. He was going to murder people. Sometimes that means shooting first.”

“But he was…”

“If he had threatened you like that, I would have shot him first, too. Or anyone. He was acting on his own, not even on your Father’s orders, and he was going to kill me, your mother, probably Mazikeen…” She shook her head, pushed herself up on her elbow so she could look at him. “You can mourn that you lost your brother, that you had to be involved in it, but you don’t deserve punishment for it.”

Lucifer looked lost, searching her, casting around for argument. It made Chloe hurt for him, that he wanted so badly to deserve retribution for things that were beyond him. “We used to pick on him…”

“Murder is not excused by a bad childhood.” She pat his chest. “Otherwise, you would be putting Sweeney Todd to shame.”

She did get a small laugh at that, but his expression fell again into painful retrospection. Chloe lay back down, still facing him, her cheek laying on her own arm.

“Sometimes,” he said finally. “I think if I had remained in Hell, none of it would have happened. If I had just listened to Amenadiel, just kept following orders…”

“You had been in Hell for eons, Lucifer, without a word from God. I’m surprised you stayed put as long as you did.”

Lucifer was silent, his thoughts hiding behind a blank expression, like a curtain drawn across a stage. Chloe considered him thoughtfully. “Why did you? Stay put for so long?”

Lucifer made a scoffing noise, rolled his eyes. It took him a few breaths to answer. “As stupid and foolish as it is, I wanted approval. I kept thinking, if I stuck it out someday, surely…” His smile was self-deprecating. “But that day didn’t come. I realized it would never come. I’m never going to be the angel he wants me to be, no matter how hard I try. This is all there is, and all he gets. So I left, and decided Hell was someone else’s problem.” Lucifer rubbed his hand over his face.

“Assigns you next?”

“It will probably be Hell again.” Lucifer grimaced. “Demons down there are getting unruly, starting to get ideas about defying rules. But…” He looked at her, smiled small and hopeful. “I’ll take what time I can get. Even if it is with the most confounding, stubborn woman in the world. Nay, especially with the most confounding, stubborn woman in the world.”

“Because of me.” She felt alarmed, a hook pulling her stomach. “You’d do whatever is asked because you won’t risk me.”

His agreement was a quiet whisper. “Yes. I can’t.”

Chloe felt how her brow pinched in concern. He was quick to give hushing noises, lifting his hand to her cheek. “Shh, none of that. If… If you really can accept me, all of me, all the bad I’ve done, then… Any time we can get, Chloe, I’ll take. But I’m walking into this knowing I’m going to lose you someday, that you’re going to go to a place where I’m banned. But that’s not until that day
comes. So—if you can live with that uncertainty, then we find our way out of here, we go on our date, we see where that takes us.” His eyes searched hers, hopeful and fearful in equal measures. “Deal?”

How could she say no to that? She couldn’t. Her throat felt tight. “Deal.” Then she placed a hand on his chest. “But! We fight for as much time as we can, and you definitely have to stop your suicidal tendencies and self-flagellation. Is that a deal?”

Lucifer blinked. “I’m not suici—”

Chloe could feel her eyes stinging. “You’ve tried to use other people, but it’s the same! You… You tried to get a cop to shoot you when you thought I didn’t believe you about killing the preacher. Then there was the sniper. And now you don’t care how much Pierce hurts you, didn’t even seem to care that he killed you for a moment. So that’s part of the deal. You… stop using other people to punish yourself.”

“Chloe…”

That soft, breathy way he said her name made her heart stumble on itself. She met his gaze. “Deal?”

He was quiet, that same bewilderment as before that softened into something warm and magnetic. She met him halfway. Their lips softly came together, the two breathing deeply before kissing more firmly, lips releasing and recapturing. She touched his cheek, and his left wing came over her, pulling her tight against himself, the heat of the feathers sinking into her back made her gasp and melt against him. Chloe’s heart was hammering by the time they pulled apart, feeling slightly dizzy with how her body and emotions thrummed.

“Deal,” he said. He leaned close to whisper, his wing lifting over both of their heads. “And I really… really want that date. So, how are we getting out of here?”

Chloe smiled, pecked at his chin. “Well, here’s what I know…”
Hello Darklings! This is just a short chapter to tide you over, and it's going to be the last calm one for a while. Enjoy, doves!

Inevitably, they did have some disagreements.

“No,” Lucifer whispered, irritation creasing his brow.

“Lucifer, it’s just for this one time and this one situation,” Chloe whispered fiercely back.

“I won’t.” He looked stubbornly away to his wing where it hung over them, jaw set.

“It’s important, Lucifer! I can’t leave here without you, so just this one time.”

“No. I won’t lie or break a vow.” He fold his arms over his mostly bare chest, resolute.

Chloe looked like she wanted to shake him, but instead she touched her temple like she was warding off a headache. “Okay… Okay, but why? Is it because angels can’t, or-.”

“Tuh-HA!” Lucifer burst. Chloe flinched at the sudden loud noise. “If that was true, Amenadiel would have fallen a long time ago. As well as quite a few of my siblings. You know how many times I had to settle quarrels between them and try to figure out which of them was fibbing before I rebelled?”

“You… played peacemaker with your siblings?”

“Part of what I did in the Silver City,” Lucifer said lightly. “Before I was the Devil, I was one of Dad’s, mm, peace keepers of sorts." *Samael. Accuser. Poison." So I’d let my siblings entertain me with their shenanigans, to a point, but when a third party was needed for intervention, I would convene and work out who the injured party was, and what favors were owed in recompense.”

Lucifer frowned, looking at her. “That’s why I don’t lie. They can accuse me of all sorts of things, and let them. I’m not ashamed and would do it all again. But as often as they may claim I’m evil or monstrous, that is one thing they can all agree on: I am not a liar or oath-breaker.”

He shook his head, continuing on, now that he was well into the heat of the subject. “And humans…” He made a sound of disgust. “Father of Lies? That’s more retaliation for people not liking how I can get them to speak the truth about their darkest desires. Easier to claim *I’m* the one fibbing and influencing them, I suppose, than someone owning up to the fact that they like to bugger sheep, or whatever other sordid thing they never wanted their fellows to know about! Now, if they wanted to call me sly? Sure! Master of Manipulation? Jolly good. Prince of Omission? By all means! I would wear that one with pride! I could get behind all that! In front, too. But Father of Lies? *Psh*!”

Chloe had the edge of her finger resting on her chin, eyes narrowed thoughtfully. “So… That’s actually a really big part of your self-identity.”

“Yes.”
“How… how would you view yourself, if you were to lie?”

Lucifer blinked, ready to retort with a disingenuous remark. However, it was an interesting question, so he gave it some thought and answered honestly. “Why, loathsome.” When she didn’t ask further, he elaborated. “Two-faced, vile, disgusting, weak. I hate being lied to, so I suppose I would…” He thought, trying to think what he would feel. It would be very foreign, but he’d seen the emotion enough times in Hell that he was sure he had a good idea of how it may feel. “Ashamed.”

Chloe’s gaze rest intense on the collar, obviously not really seeing it. “Good to know.” She shook her head a little, then spread her hand. “Okay, you’re right,” she agreed quickly. “You can’t directly break your vow.”

Lucifer had been ready to argue further. He opened his mouth, paused, closed it. He narrowed his eyes at her. “As much as I’m happy with you finally agreeing with me, you’re acquiescence is rather sudden.”

“How would you view yourself, if you were to lie?” Lucifer repeated.

“I’m drugged right now. I can’t be expected to think of everything.”

“Because you’re an angel, and you mutate based on how you view yourself. And if you see it as weak or something to be ashamed of, you would probably morph into being just that, and we can’t afford that right now. We’ll have to work around it.”

Lucifer blinked again. “Oh.”

“Those discerning blue eyes flicked up to his. “That… never occurred to you, I gather.”

Lucifer scoffed. “I can help you as much as I want, and as discussed, I can wreck this place, even if I don’t intend to leave.”

“And I know enough about all the drugs to knock you unconscious and drag you out if I have to… It just has to be done carefully. These three rooms are figure eights, and the back is accessible from the one hall in the front. Neither of us are bullet proof right now, so that hall in the front? It’s going to be a dare. One guy could take us out with a handgun. There’s no cover there.”

“Well… There’s a little cover,” Lucifer whispered. He spread the wing hovering over them further.

Chloe considered, then stubbornly stated, “Last resort. I’d prefer you to make it out bullet free if we can.”

Lucifer continued stretching his left wing, flexing it experimentally. “If you make it out, worth it. Overall, we both know it’s very unlikely bomb three is somewhere easily accessible. You have to make contact with the others, and then we have to hole up and wait for back up.” He spread the spines holding his prime feathers, turning the feathers carefully. The wrist still hurt where the cable had been, but most motion brought only a bearable soreness. Especially compared to his freshly harmed ribs.

Chloe was staring at the moving wing. Then she closed her eyes, shaking her head. She whispered more to herself than him, he suspected. “It’s still so full of holes. It took hours to get here. I’m still not sure how long I fell asleep. We’d have to hope our guys can get to you before Pierce.”
Lucifer felt that fond warmth as he touched her hand, grazing over the back of it with his thumb affectionately. “Chloe. I can take whatever they throw at me if they do make it first.”

Chloe lifted her hand from under his, pointing at him. “It’s not what you can handle. It’s what I can handle, and remember, I cannot handle watching him pull you apart.”

“We keep in here, he’ll likely find excuses to do so anyway.” He wrapped her hand in his again, attempting to soothe now that he’d caused upset. “We discussed this. We can’t wait. We have to risk it.”

She breathed out of her nose, frowning, eyes falling to their joined hands.

She looked far too unhappy. He quickly aimed for distraction. “And then, date! Do you like boats? You don’t get seasick, do you?”

Chloe closed her eyes. “Ohh, you’re incorrigible.”

“Mostly! I just have so many ideas, things I want to try! Actual dating!” He couldn’t curb his enthusiasm into whispers any longer. “I will get to wine and dine you, take you to events, start the whole dance of seduction for an entire day, start building anticipation for anything you carnally desire after granting you anything you fancy!”

Chloe’s mouth was open. She closed it self-consciously. “Um, people usually just… you know, movies…? Share some popcorn…?”

Lucifer looked at her critically. “Well, someone’s not been treating you with all you deserve then.”

“I’m just not sure if… I mean, that’s…”

“You would look stunning in a proper evening gown as well. Perhaps Dior? Mm, no. Pamella has some beautiful pieces you would be stunning in.”

“I… don’t even know who that is.”

“Lahav owes me a favor! I bet I could-!”

Chloe’s eyes were wide. “Stop. Stop talking. You are making me way too nervous and we’re not even out of here yet.”

“Oh? Nervous, why?” Lucifer looked at her more closely. She was rather red, now that he considered her. He frowned, uncertain what he’d done wrong. He couldn’t think of anything. What was he missing? His stomach twisted at an unpleasant thought. “You… do want to, yes? Go on a date? Because if you don’t want to, the last thing I’d want is for you to do something that you didn’t wa-.”

“Yes. No, yes, I didn’t mean to…” She stopped, tried again, this time setting her other hand on top of his. “Lucifer. I want to. I’m just not used to… fancy. I’d be really far out of my element.”

Oh. Good, so that wasn’t a no. He mulled that over. Detective’s comfort zones… Hmm. “I suppose I can make some adjustments,” he agreed slowly. “But, darling, you do know you deserve the absolute best, yes? More than anyone I’ve ever met.”

She was even redder. She ducked her eyes down. “First things first.” She lowered the conversation back to a whisper. “We need to escape, so need your focus on that. I want to give you one more good night of healing. Then we can discuss that.”
He wanted to take a deep breath. His ribs would bother him too much, though, so the archangel settled for a huffy, shallower one. “Tomorrow?” he whispered back.

“Yes. Tomorrow. We give it a shot.”

“All settled then. A good night's sleep, and then off we trot.” He moved to sit up. Chloe came with him, pushing up on her forearms while he struggled against his complaining muscles. "Nnyeah, that's uncomfortable. What time is it, anyhow?” He scratched at the scruff on his face.

"Probably getting into the evening."

"Are there any more drugs?” He was certainly feeling all those bruises at this point.

"No, just what Care-.

Caretaker’s voice came over the coms. "Medication is waiting back in your room, Mr. Morningstar, if you will make your way that direction. Dinner will be served soon."

"Heh. Speak of the me.” Lucifer moved to get off the bed.

Chloe was looking at him with wide eyes. "You... You don't have to..."

Lucifer wobbled to his feet. He could still feel the drugs making him light headed and numbing his extremities. His limbs felt sluggish. He stretched his left wing out for balance, then considered the feathery limb. "I've been asleep for most of the day, but our three hours are coming to a close like I thought. I imagine C.T. isn't counting this morning's mishap as part of our time?"

"That would be correct."

"Thank you, sir." He turned to look at the Detective. "But we still get our three hours tomorrow. They don't dare let us miss on that, or I'll be allowed to get up to some real mischief."

She still looked too concerned, her mouth moving in broken off starts of words as she made her way off the bed.

"Detective? Chloe, what is it?” He took a step into her space, bare inches separating them as he looked down at her in concern.

"I'm just... worried. About something happening to you and me not being there..."

His heart thrummed with renewed warmth. That she would be so concerned over his well-being. It was mystifyingly endearing, but he didn't want to cause her upset. "Oh come now." Lucifer took up her nervously moving hands, capturing them close to his own chest. "We're complying by the rules, and you've been an excellent nurse. You don't even need the sexy outfit. But if I don't go, we're going to cause more irritation. And we both need rest." For tomorrow.

Chloe nodded at him, her thumbs rubbing with nervous motions over his hands. Finally she took a deep breath. "Okay."

"Mr. Morningstar? If you could." The door whirred and clicked, swinging open.

"That's my cue to exit. Good night, Chloe."

"Get lots of rest."

He nodded. When the door closed behind him in the hall, he felt cold, as though the sun had been
shut away from him. Lucifer touched the door, sighed, then started his slow, aching trudge back to his room. Tomorrow. He was sure it was going to be a storm, whatever happened.
One thing that could always be counted on for humans was that when they got hungry, they sometimes got very stupid.

That’s how Mazikeen found Brian Bertrand, aka Bernie Bernstein, aka Barry Bearing, etc. The man came out of his hiding hole because he wanted food, and he made the stupid mistake of using a card. Must have been out of cash.

She had to admit, he was hiding well. This area was known for the high vagabond population, graffiti and trash liberally spread, a few gang lookouts in the area as the sun started to set. Overall not an area for the easily robbed.

Felt like home, in many ways.

Mazikeen finally spotted her quarry, something in her gut pulling her to her prey. The way he walked, the too big hat, the too nice of shoes, the way he could afford a bag of gas station groceries swinging on his arm, even the shifty way he looked around as he scoffed his pre-packaged sandwich and kept glancing at her car made him stand out to her. He looked wan, unbathed, and shaky. She finally got a good look of his face, his brown beard scruffy from not shaving. Fairly bland looking, a little on the thin side, but a fit man in his late twenties.

That was her guy.

Mazikeen pulled up to him as he was licking his fingers, rolling the passenger window down. “Hey. Know anyone looking to make some quick cash?”

“N-no.” He started walking faster.

“You sure?” she asked, keeping the car slowly inching along to keep up with him. “Involves something fun.”

“Oh, no, maybe try someone else.”

Well, she tried being charming.

Mazikeen shrugged. Then she swung the car smoothly into park while hopping over the seat, yanked the handle, and kicked the passenger door into him. He stumbled with a curse. Mazikeen was already out the passenger window, lithe, leather-clad body unfolding and grasping him by the collar before he could recover from his stumble to start running. She yanked him back, supporting his spine over her knee as she wrapped her arm around his head. The groceries spilled, oranges, jerky, and granola bars scattering on the pavement. She grinned, danced her nails on his exposed throat as he flailed.
“You’ve been a hard louse to find,” Mazikeen purred. “Took me almost eight hours until you fucked up.”

“Let me go!” he gasped.

“Ohh, I intend to. But whether I let you go on your own two feet, on broken legs, or over a ravine? Your choice, Brian. Or whatever your name is.”

“You got the wrong guy!”

“Nah, I think I…” Tires screeching alerted her. She looked up as an SUV swung onto their street. She pouted. “Definitely have the right guy.”

Brian-or-whatever-his-name-really-was started cursing in a panic as she swung him toward the car. “Get in, or else,” she ordered. She didn’t wait for him to obey, kicked his leg out and shoved his ungainly stumbling frame into the passenger seat. She slammed the door shut, slid over the hood and into the driver side. The car was out of park and peeling away before her door was shut. The SUV was only a few car lengths behind as she got up to speed.

Brian was still situating his limbs awkwardly to sit straight in the seat, his head pulled back by the g-force of the quickly speeding car. “Who are you?” His voice was annoying high.

Mazikeen glanced in the mirror then glared ahead as she accelerated toward the corner, pulling away from the SUV’s bumper quickly. “Your worst nightmare from Hell, if you don’t shut up and let me ask the questions.”

Usually people took such statements in stride since it was far too common for humans to threaten they were something more hellish and monstrous rather than the squishy mortals they were. Brian didn’t. He froze, his blue eyes too round as he stared at her. “Oh my God. You’re her. You’re his demon.”

Mazikeen slammed the brake and spun the wheel, swiftly punched the gas again. The car slid into a right angle before gunning down the next road. When Mazikeen next glanced as Brian, he had a foot on the dashboard, face even paler and his hand white-knuckled on the ‘oh-shit’ bar.

“I don’t belong to anyone except me,” she corrected venomously. “Where’s Lucifer?”

“I don’t know.”

Mazikeen turned the car into another tight turn, the back fishtailing briefly before it righted its course and roared down the road. The SUV’s tires squealed behind them. “Maybe we should stop and ask your friends back there.”

“No, I…” Gunshots popped behind them. Mazikeen heard a ping of metal. She snaked the car into a serpentine motion. “I really don’t know!” Brian shouted, looking behind in panic.

Mazikeen immediately reached over, shoving his head down. She couldn’t get information out of him if they shot him in the head. “Stay down, and start talking or I boot you out.”

“What’s it matter? You can’t protect me, even if…” More gunfire. He jerked, turning his head, but this time didn’t look over the seat. “Look, I don’t know where he and his friend are. I ditched the operation before the truck even showed up to take them away.”

“From where?”
“Uh, old factory.”

“Been there.” Mazikeen spun the car into a hairpin turn and started down a narrow road the opposite direction of the van. She reached over, popping the door again and grabbed his collar, shoving him partly out the door.

Brian scrabbled for a hold on the car frame. “Wait! Wait! I do have other information! I just need protection! And I know people who might know where they’re at!”

Mazikeen nodded once, then yanked him back in. He scrambled to shut the door. “That’s more like it. Hold on while I lose our tail.” She glared at him. “And no fucking praying.”

~~~

Hours later and a few stop offs to drop off paper notes and switch cars, and the two were waiting in a darkened room. The hotel was decrepit and seedy, a mildew smell and other stale body odors lingering in the air. The demoness stood by the door, waiting, while Brian sat cuffed on the bed, looking miserable.

It was near midnight when she heard steps outside the door. She tilt her head. Brian tensed, started muttering to himself in fright. Mazikeen recognized the step and stride, but uncurled the knife from under her forearm as she cracked the door open anyhow before the raised knuckles had a chance to knock.

“Hey,” Dan said.

She unhooked the chain and let him through. Neither commented on his bruised face. Dan glanced at the man with his unswollen eye, then her, annoyed. “Was the scavenger hunt to find you really necessary?”

“Yes,” she said, flat and certain. “You made sure you weren’t followed after getting my note and cash to get here?”

“Yeah. Not an amateur, Mazikeen.”

“Because an amateur wouldn’t get right in their traceable patrol car and try to come here? When Pierce was a police lieutenant and likely has guys still working for him in law enforcement still?” She arched a brow.

Dan opened his mouth to reply, then sighed. “We can’t be sure that he does.”

Brian started stammering. “H-he does! He has people everywhere, man, everywhere!”

Dan studied him closer. “I gather you’re Bertrand?”

“That’s one of the names, y-yeah,” he agreed.

“So not your real one.”

“No point giving you one,” he said miserably. “Once I’m found, won’t be a gravestone to put it on.”

Mazikeen tilt back against the wall, keeping an ear out while she let Dan speak. She’d already inquired and knew what she needed to know from him. It was terribly easy getting information out of someone running scared. Even if she really didn’t like the information she was given.
“If you’re so afraid of Pierce, why did you turn?”

“Because I’m an idiot. I… thought he was going to be busy with his new campaign. I didn’t want a part of it. I mean, cleaning up the world of criminals? That’s just impossible. And trapping the Devil? That guy almost killed me with a single kick. So I took the goods and ran. Knew I could make a fortune off those damned things. But… yeah. First time using one, they immediately were on my trail. I was hiding out with the homeless, trying to figure out how to get to where I stashed the money and get out of town.”

Dan was obviously parsing all that information. “Clean up criminals? But he is a criminal.”

Mazikeen leaned away from the wall, hip sinuously leaning as she looked at Brian. “My theory is that Pierce is running scared. Mortality’s given him the jitters. Trying to buy his way into a little slice of heaven.” She grinned sharply. “It doesn’t work that way.”

“Mazikeen, can you not… Mazikeen right now?” Dan asked.

Mazikeen’s face hardened. She nod her head toward him. “This guy will give you all you need to help put Pierce and his scummy buddies away. But he needs protection, and no one can be trusted at the moment. So you’re babysitting.”

“What?” Dan looked at Mazikeen, then at Brian, then back at her. Mazikeen just raised both eyebrows and nod her chin at Brian. “You can’t just tell me to-."

“You’re the only one of us who is off the clock right now, and I have to track some…” Mazikeen wrinkled her nose. “Smear-guy down. There’s a complication that we need to handle before we find Lucifer and Chloe, or Pierce can blow the two up.” She leaned forward, looking Dan in the eye. “So you’re going to watch him while I hunt this geek down, because they’re alive, and we’re going to clean this fucking organization out.”

Dan looked at her, then back at Brian. He cursed. “Dammit, Maze. I gotta let Trixie know, figure out arrangements for-.”

Mazikeen snatched his phone out of his hands just as he started to open it. “No communication. There’s a reason I had you disable your GPS, dumbass. I’ll let the others know what’s going on. But right now, keep this whimpering asshat alive. He can fill you in on everything.” She slapped another phone in his unbandaged hand. “Use this to contact me. Stay out of sight.”

Dan made an incredulous scoffing noise as she scooped up her bag and sauntered for the door. “There’s pizza on the counter and plenty of cash. You two boys have fun.”

~~~

Mazikeen nodded to the extra security guys in front of the elevator and made her way up to the penthouse. She stopped when she arrived to survey the scene. Trixie was asleep in the bedroom area, and Linda was passed out on the couch with a blanket over her. The only person awake was Ella, who enthusiastically bounced to her feet. She was already in a t-shirt with a NASA logo on it and boxers to sleep, large glasses on her face.

“Maze! You’re back!” She pattered to the kitchen area. “We saved you some pasta! We weren’t sure what you liked, but there’s alfredo or extra meaty and mushroom sauce, and, uh, no breadsticks! Trixie sorta went to town on those things. Linda and I were lucky we got any.”

“No thanks. I got what I want over here.” She immediately went to pour herself a glass from one of the decanters. “I’m surprised you’re still up.”
“Brain’s going,” Ella said as she set containers down and started digging out the dishes needed to heat the leftovers up. Apparently since Mazikeen didn’t have dibs, she felt the need for a midnight snack. “Been mulling things over. Um, since I kinda… Do demons need to eat?”

“Depends on what,” Mazikeen said, not missing a beat but giving Ella a look.

“I guess… that kind of makes sense? I mean, because unless there’s like agriculture or something down in Hell, I guess you guys couldn’t, and while I can totally picture there being demon farmers, I really can’t picture you as a farmer. Maybe more raising meat sort, which then makes me wonder what kind of meat it would be, and that just brings up all sorts of unpleasant images and I-.”

Mazikeen stopped sipping her booze, giving Ella one of her I’m-being-patient-by-not-smacking-you-on-the-head looks.

“-Should stop talking! Right! I guess that’s not super important? Uh, anyhow, what did you find out? What’d you and Dan do?”

“We got one of Pierce’s guys, the one who defected. I volun-told Dan to watch him and keep him alive for now. But we have other problems.”

Ella listened attentively while eating pasta and Mazikeen gave her a swift, abridged version of the situation. Mazikeen wasn’t sure when or how Ella found out ‘the truth’, but decided she didn’t care enough to ask, and right now it was useful that she didn’t have to tell her why the precautions Pierce was taking with the two made sense.

Ella had a drink by the end of it, gulping a shot down before speaking. “That’s… a doozy. And we have no idea where they’re at?”

“Trust me, he would have said if he knew.” Mazikeen poured herself another drink, annoyed. “But doesn’t fix what to do when we find them. Fuck knows Pierce isn’t going to give us the codes.”

“No… Buuut! If we can find the programmer, he might be able to do something to extract them!”

“Yeah, this piece of Smudge that helped put the damned bombs on them. Going to break his legs.”

“That sounds familiar. Smudge…Smudge… fudge! I’m not sure. I’ll reach out to some of my peeps. I bet if he’s anywhere, he’s probably on the dark web if he does crazy custom stuff like this for crime organizations.”

“Just be careful. Brian-or-whatever-the-fuck-his-name-is said that Pierce has people everywhere.”

“Already been warned, yeah. Just… really hope we can find them soon.”

“I’ll find them. Just because he’s not my boss anymore doesn’t mean he gets to go off and die like a dick.” The demoness stretched, then started stalking toward the bed. “I’m going to catch some z’s. You’ll fill Linda in in the morning? After you give her something for a hangover.”

“Yeah, I can do that! Do… Do demons need to sleep or do you just sleep because you wa-?”

“I’m sleeping because I’m tired. Don’t make me smother you with a pillow, Ella. I like you.”

“Eheh, you.. wouldn’t really, would you?”

Mazikeen just gave her a look. She wouldn’t, but she really did want to sleep.

Ella got the message. “I’ll ask you that when you’re less tired. Good night! Sweet-um… Hellish
dreams or whatever!”

“Yeah, yeah. Night.”
Hello, Darklings! We're back to our duo once more as they attempt to escape their confines! Of course, not everything goes smoothly, but these two at least know how to work well together. Even though Lucifer is very... Lucifer.

We also finally get an honest desire from C.T. and now know what he wants! I know that question has been burning at everyone a while now!

Enjoy, ducklings!

Lucifer set his hand on the door, feeling out the mechanics of it. It was quite clever, complicated. Even though it was meant to cage him, he couldn’t help but admire it.

These security doors were just the opposite of any magnetic door he had ever ran into. Most doors sealed with magnetism used it to keep the doors shut. These only opened if the magnetism could pull on the moving parts inside, which were impressively thick metal bars that fell into deep niches in a gear-like arc. With the power off, the arc rolled into place and sealed the door. Tough to break, even with his strength.

So it took both of his tricks. First, his fabulous ability to manipulate locks. Second, his other less used skill, at least on inanimate objects, but one that thrilled him all the same.

*Turn on anything... That gift is probably from Mom. Thanks Mum, in whatever new universe you are creating.*

The door whirred under his hand, his fingertips trembling with tension. Then a final clank and he pulled the door open to Chloe’s room.

Then immediately held his hands up guardedly. “Wait! It’s me! It’s me!”

Chloe huffed at him, then set the chair down with a noise of exasperation. Her voice was an intense hiss. “Scared the hell out of me, Lucifer!”

“Oh, that’s impossible, Detective. Not a bit of Hellish nature in you.”

Chloe breathed out. Her hair was still pillow mussed, her eyes puffy from sleep still. “What time is it?” Her pupils were very wide. Lucifer leaned down, but her eyes didn’t follow him.

*Oh yes, she can’t see without the lights.* “Very early, I’d wager. I figured we should get an early start!” He rubbed his hands together eagerly.

Chloe was rubbing at her forehead, face pinched in a familiar way that said he was somehow annoying her.

It was unfortunate for her that he found that expression adorable. His impish nature was rarely discerning.
“I thought we would be waiting until, you know, our visiting hours.” She waved her palm in the air tiredly.

“No, we’d be watched then! This way it might take them a bit to catch on to our mischief.”

She pointed toward her open door. “And you could always open the doors that easily.”

“Well, now that I feel better and can walk okay, yes.”

“And you didn’t think to mention to me you planned on sneaking into my room before dawn.”

“It wasn’t a given?”

“No.”

“Oh.” A few seconds passed as he stared at her awkwardly. He clapped his hands together to break it. “Well, you’re up now! Carpe diem! No time like the present!”

“Gawd.. Just… let me brush my teeth and… stuff.”

Lucifer realized that was probably sensible, considering he’d done the same when he’d finally kicked restlessly out of bed. “Right! I’ll just wait out here.”

She groped along the wall to the bathroom. He listened to her fumble with items for a moment. Lucifer finally pointed to one of the lights above.

It fizzled into life. He kept careful attention on it, not letting it brighten too much, just enough for her to see. Lightbulbs tended to break easily. Chloe mumbled a thanks, moving more confidently in the flickering light.

Lucifer kept half his attention on the bulb, pacing away to give her privacy. The arch angel went to her table to fiddle with the items there with his unoccupied hand. Finished cross word puzzles, a dull, nubby pencil, a tumbler of water. He picked up a stack of papers curiously, glancing through them. His eyebrows raised, making an interested noise as he started to glance through the articles, reading snippets here and there.

When Chloe finally came out of the wash area, he grinned brightly at her, shaking the papers in one hand. “Doing research on me? You know, you could always just ask me anything you wanted to know. I will be an open book for anything Devil.” He looked back at the pile critically. “Besides, much of this stuff is hogwash.”

Chloe walked up to him, lips an unimpressed line as she pulled the papers from him and set them aside. “I had time on my hands. But you’re right. A lot of it seems way off. You’re not like this at all.”

Lucifer felt his smile crease his eyes.

“So…” Chloe folded her arms. “You still remember all the ands-ifs-buts we discussed yesterday?”

Lucifer nodded enthusiastically. He let the light flicker out and pointed at one above the door leading toward the front area, immediately stepping to it. Chloe stood where she was, arms folded and watching with interest. Lucifer glanced at her, then set his palm against the metal. Shivering fingers curled as he manipulated the devices and power. A whir and clang, and he was pushing the door open. He started to bow, stopped halfway with a graceless sound of pain. The light above flared brightly before sputtering in dim chaos. His voice came out in a pained rasp. “Nn, after
“Are you sure you’re up to this?” Chloe asked with concern, even as she started to step out.

“We’re already doing it. It’s like what they say about Hell. If you know you’re going for one thing, may as well take the scenic route and enjoy all the sins.” He grinned.

Chloe breathed out, her shoulders still tense. “Balls to the wall, then.”

“That’s the spirit, Detective!”

They walked to the front of the center room between their cells and took the right down the hall. The archangel pointed ahead, focusing on one light at a time to light the Detective’s way. Lucifer used to be able to keep up with Chloe so effortlessly, his longer legs able to cover distance at a leisurely pace compared to her energetic, goal-oriented steps, but now he struggled with the speed. She noticed him lagging behind and instantly slowed down to let him catch up to her side. That was different, too. Often she was comfortable taking point with him often just a step behind her. As much as the Devil was exasperated at his sore body slowing him down, the gesture warmed him as they made their quiet, silent way in the dim, flickering light.

They saw the doors ahead that led into what Lucifer and Chloe had dubbed the Observation Rooms. To the left would be the long hall.

“Ready?” Chloe whispered.

“Absolutely,” he agreed, feeling a feral edge in his grin.

“Okay. Keep the lights off here. Take the cameras out.”

“With pleasure.” He lowered his hand and the lights flickered out.

He felt Chloe tense by him, the Detective now blind. But she still bravely forged forward, hand in front of herself. Lucifer moved to her left, taking her hand in his. She relaxed some as he led the way.

He paused by the cameras in the middle of the hall. A squeeze was all he needed to get Chloe to halt. He released her hand, planted his bare feet firmly, then sprang up. Hot pain shot down his abused side, his still healing shoulder, and bruised arm muscles, but he simply held his breath and bore it. The frame of the cameras was surprisingly sturdy. They held his weight. He reached up with his other hand, grunting with effort as his rib protested, then squeezed his hands around each lens holder. A sharp shove, and the cameras snapped apart. A yank, and he pulled their shafts free, sending their lenses clattering to the floor.

He dropped again, giving a shuddering gasp. The drop shot new pain up his legs and through his feet, but it was nothing compared to his ribs. Chloe groped for him, getting a hold of his arm.

“You okay?” she whispered.

He felt the heated throb in his frame, the painful way his heavier breath made a sharp stabbing sensation in his side. “Mm, I’m thinking I may be more masochistic than sadistic. That does tend to make one feel alive,” he whispered brightly back.

“Let’s not talk about sado-masochism right now,” Chloe’s hushed voice ordered.

“Later?” Lucifer asked, teasing and hopefulness both in his question.
“Focus,” the Detective insisted.

He nodded, taking her hand in his and leading the way again.

This part was the real test. If they could just get past this long hall…

His collar beeped first.

Chloe pulled on his arm, as though afraid he wouldn’t stop. But of course he did. He sighed. “Light in the back yellow now?”

“Yeah. Damn it.”

“Yours is still green?”

Chloe pulled up the leg of her pants to look at her bulky anklet. Still green. She stepped forward experimentally.

It turned yellow and beeped at them.

Lucifer looked how far they were down the hall. About three fourths. “Which means bomb number three is above and back there somewhere. Clever asshole, Cain.”

“Someone must have carried it above ground while they were dragging us down there. All right.” Chloe breathed. “Disappointing, but now for plan B.”

“I would so prefer us investing in Plan B for entirely different reasons. This way, my dear.” He led her back down the hall.

“Is… Is sex constantly on your brain?”

“Chloe, I have not had any sex other than with myself for over a week.”

“With yourself-Lucifer! You’re being recorded!”

“I know!” He was shamelessly gleeful. “I put on an excellent show. Award worthy porn material, if I say so myself!”

“Oh my Guh-grrreif.”

“Thank you for catching yourself, darling.”

“Okay, focus. Pipes and wiring. Where do those stop?”

Lucifer looked up, eyes following. “Looks like… they go up here.” He stopped right in front of the door leading into the Observation area.

“How big is the gap up there?”

Lucifer released her hand, leaning to try to get a look. His ribs panged him. He ignored his nerve’s protest, keeping his breaths shallow. “Mmm, hard to see from here. All the pipes and cables bend and pile there.” Lucifer felt at the wall, experimentally set his toes against it, testing the friction. He stepped back, bent his knees, wing unfolding and balancing on his foot pads.

“Great. Well, you’re tall. You should be able to get me up there and I can try to move the grate and-.”
“Hup!” Lucifer jumped, hips twisting, and leaped off the wall, hands catching the grid. He used the momentum to swing his feet upward, slamming into the criss-crossing metal. He barely caught the edge of the new opening with his toe, levering himself in while muttering “Owowowowow!” A twist of his frame, and he was balanced over the open gap, belly down and groaning openly. “Ooonngh! That stings... I’m up!”

“Yeah, or you could just do that. Are you all right?”

“Yeah, just… Quite a squeeze up here.” It was. His wings were flat against the ceiling and he couldn’t set his legs and arms at right angles. He started crawling forward alongside the pipes and cables. His rib felt like a hot knife with each breath, but the rest of his battered frame was feeling better with each motion, blood pushing through the bruises.

“What’s it look like?”

“From your view below? I imagine I look great. Pity you’re night blind.”

“The hole leading up, Lucifer.”

“I could still make an innuendo out of that,” he said with a chuckle. But then he was looking up at where the cable and piping went. He clicked his tongue once. “No dice. Even you couldn’t get your shoulders through here.”

“Okay. Damn. Plan C.”

“You mean Plan C.T.”

“Get down here, Lucifer, and help me look for hidden cameras.”

“So bossy,” he playfully grumbled, even as he started to crawl backwards to return to her.

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Caretaker arrived minutes later.

They heard him before they saw him. He was actually jogging in his hurry, his own feet in a pair of hard soled slippers as he came down the hall. He had a small flashlight shining red light to see the way as he came down the hall. His dimmed tablet was held close to his chest in the other.

Lucifer glanced around the corner, able to see him clearly. He and Chloe held their breath, waiting. Caretaker paused before rounding the turn. The red light shone steadily on the wall.

“Mr. Morningstar, if you could step out so we could talk about your behavior? You and Ms. Decker have caused some upset.”

Lucifer spread his hand upward.

The lights all flared brightly. Lucifer moved immediately, rounding the corner and looming over Caretaker, staring in his eyes.

Caretaker froze as Lucifer pulled on his psyche hard.

“Hello, C.T.” Lucifer smiled his most charming. “Let’s have that talk. I’m sure there’s no harm in that?” Lucifer pulled the flashlight from his hand.

Chloe was still blinking as she came around the corner and swiped the tablet from his hand.
“Right to the point. Tell me. What do you desire? Even if I don’t have what you want, what deal can I offer you?”

“What I desire, foolish Iblis, is to help you, but without me or my kids being tortured and killed.”


“Well, they’re grown now. The children I smuggled didn’t exactly have homes to go to, Mr. Morningstar.”

“Well, she has a small urchin of her own! We have to get her out.”

“All right, let me go and listen. Hand me the device.”

Lucifer released the hold on his psyche before snatching the computer from a surprised Chloe and handing it to the stout man. “Hey!” she protested.

“Sorry, a moment, darling.”

Caretaker took hold of it and started tapping at it quickly, then planted his thick thumb against the screen. There was a quick scan, and then he was pulling up another window. He was keeping his thumb over the tablet camera as he worked, Lucifer noticed. “As soon as he catches on that I might be compromised, he’ll head this way. No matter what happens, don’t let him put you in the vault. If that happens, he has no plan to remove you from there, and I can’t say what will happen to the Detective.”

Caretaker continued holding his thumb over the camera, even as he turned it toward Chloe. He pointed to the email address field that was open. She inhaled sharply and typed into the field.

“Can you get away and help us get our friends here?”

“The Sinnerman is not so foolish. There are no vehicles here, no internet except through this tablet, which he can take administrative control of. I’ve not even a phone here. The other bomb is in a safe that I can’t get into.”

“Because he wanted all bases covered in case you turned.”

“Or if you managed to hypnotize or kill me, precisely. Us talking alone is a gamble, if he has ready translation available. Let’s hope he-.”

Pierce’s voice came over the coms at the same time the lights came on. All three of them blinked in the brightness. “What’s going on, Caretaker?”

To Caretaker’s credit, he didn’t even flinch and immediately addressed the crime boss. “I’m trying to convince them to return peaceably to their rooms. They know I won’t give them any food and water until they cooperate.” He tapped at the tablet, then sent the email.

Pierce sounded more than annoyed. “I’m not sure your gentle approach is what is needed here, Caretaker.”
Caretaker glanced down at the tablet, turned it so the two could see it. The screen was black except for an eye on it. Pierce had taken control of the system.

*That was close.* “Fuck off, Cain,” Lucifer said blithely.

Caretaker answered that as well. “Mr. Lucifer is a little upset that he is not able to fully hypnotize me.”

“Good.” Pierce's voice went low. "Decker, what did I warn you about earlier?"

Chloe looked up at the nearest speaker. She looked paler. She didn't answer.

“I just want you two to be aware that you have brought this on yourself. Caretaker, return upstairs and remain there for back up.”

“Very well, Sinnerman.”

Caretaker looked between them, his heavy shoulders tense. “*Good luck, you two. They can be here in five hours. Be prepared.*”

“You as well.” Lucifer turned, taking Chloe’s hands in his and came in close to her ear. “Shh, I need to do that one thing we talked about and I’ll explain what’s going on.”

Chloe nodded mutely. Her whole frame was tense. They watched as Caretaker hurried back down the hall.

“All right,” Lucifer said once he was out of sight. The Devil looked back up at the grate overhead where it was opened.

“Be careful,” Chloe said. “This could kill you if you're not, remember.”

“Oh, Chloe, I know my way around electricity. Tesla and I used to have all sorts of conversations about it.”

Chloe shook her head. “Why am I not surprised?” She stood back as Lucifer leaped upward into the grating again, folding his wings in close as he crawled back to the wires. He selected them carefully, ignored his protesting muscles as he turned in the tight area and took a hold of the cables.

He braced his foot against the upper edge of the vent leading up with its pipes and cables, and started to pull.

At first nothing happened, then cable and wire started to give way. Lucifer growled through his teeth, pulled even more as sparks and electricity buzzed jarringly loud above. One final pull and the cables gave way.

The whole facility downstairs hummed one final time before everything turned black and silent.
Cloak, Dagger, and Drugs

Chapter Notes

Hello, bats and kittens. I hope I caught all of my errors, but I'm so eager to post, I'll take my chances. The crew is getting into gear! ... Well, except Linda. Linda's not there yet.

Enjoy, darklings!

Edit: I should not post when so sleepy! There were a lot of things that were just absolutely clumsy and awkward to read! I fixed them. For those who don't want to reread, it's fine! Nothing plot wise truly changed, promise. :)

Daniel gave up sleep around 2:30 a.m.

The throbbing in his finger wouldn't stop, each heartbeat its own special agony as it made the pain spike in pulses down the tiny digit. It was such a tiny digit, and yet now it was crowding all his senses with its intense pain. The ice pack he rested his hand on wasn't helping only minutely at this point.

When the detective moved, Brian sat up with a sharp inhale from the floor between the bed and the wall. That was where Daniel had planted him, figuring it was safest for the both of them at the moment. He didn't trust the younger man at all, but Brian hadn't complained about both hands being handcuffed to the base of the bed frame.

Daniel had given him all the available blankets and a pillow for him to rest. Fat load of good it was doing either of them. The guy was too high strung to sleep, sure at any moment he was going to be found. Anytime a car started or pulled in or Daniel moved, he was anxiously sitting up.

He was also raving freaking mad, as far as Daniel was concerned.

Daniel had asked to be filled in. He hadn't liked what he heard. The urge to snap at the younger man had barely been quelled, the detective wanting to shake him until sense came out of his mouth. Healing feathers? Wings? Lucifer--perverted playboy, mayhem-loving-metrosexual, drug- and-alcohol-addicted, carried-too-much-cash, got-away-with-everything--that Lucifer being an angel? It was all ludicrous, and Daniel wasn’t sure what the guy’s testimony was going to be worth.

But at least Chloe had been alive the last time Brian had seen her. He was able to confirm that much. Even if there was a bomb strapped to her foot, and they didn’t know where she was. It gave him enough hope to feel dangerous. So their witness needed to stay alive, and Daniel was going to do his best to see it happened.

Which meant being rested and alert, and he wasn’t that at the moment.

Daniel looked to where Brian had sat up to stare at him over the mattress as he put his wallet in his jeans pocket. “It’s okay,” he assured. “I just gotta get some pain killers.”

Brian continued to stare at him for a few seconds before his gaze darted down to Dan’s bandaged
hand. “You sure?”

“Look, they tried to cut off my finger and half succeeded sawing through my knuckle. I need something to help with the swelling if nothing else. The ice alone isn’t cutting it.”

“We need to stay out of sight,” Brian said lamely.

“You need to, yeah. I’m not public enemy number one right now. You want something?”

Brian hesitated, then quietly asked for a soda and chocolate bar.

“No problem. Behave while I’m out.”

“I’m not going anywhere,” he assured, eyes still wide.

Daniel believed him. The guy was too damned scared. Daniel made sure the door was firmly locked behind him and started the three-block walk to the nearest gas station.

~~~

He ended up returning with more than just chocolate and soda. He had purchased some chips, donuts, gum, and a few turkey wraps as well. The distraction of divvying up the goods between himself and Brian was welcomed as he waited for the ibuprofen to kick in fully.

The knock at the door was not a welcomed distraction.

Brian stilled like a terrified rabbit. For a second, Daniel did too before his street instinct had the detective acting. He motioned for Brian to duck behind the bed. He didn’t check to see if Brian obeyed, balancing his weight in his knees as he stood and pulled his handgun free from its back holster. Daniel stealthily leaned up against the door frame, risking a quick look out the peephole.

Agent Carney knocked again even as he looked.

*What is he doing here?* There was a moment where Daniel weighed his options. Agent Carney called out. “Espinoza, I know you’re in there. We need to talk.”

Brian hissed from the other side of the bed. “Don’t do it, man.”

Daniel closed his eyes, then peeked out the window. No one in his direct vantage. No one waiting in the cars he could see. The detective thought of several creative curses mentally before he slid the chain and unlocked the door. He stood behind it as Agent Carney stepped in. As soon as he closed the door, he had the gun at the FBI agent’s head, just above the eyeglass's temple.

“All right, talk,” Daniel demanded.

Agent Carney lift his hands slowly. He didn’t bother with a greeting, voice cool. “You were spotted on the cameras. You and your charge need to move.”

“What, want us out of the room so one of your buddies can snipe us?” Daniel chanced a quick glance through the curtains again, bandaged hand pushing them aside and quickly flipping them back.

“I came here alone. This case is too important to trust to any of my peers currently.”

“How’d you even know to look for me?”
“Because we were looking for Mr. Bearing as well when Ms. Smith caught him. Which was fortunate. However, she returned to Lux alone just a few hours after you had left. So we knew to find him, we needed to find you.”

Damn. “Was it Pierce's men or you she had to ditch when she found him?”

“Since I was late to the scene, I imagine it was Pierce’s men. They, however, seem to be as aware of you and your friends’ movements as my people are. Suspicious, that.”

Daniel pressed the gun further against his temple. “And who’s to say you’re not Pierce's, huh? You came alone. That's suspicious enough.”

“That’s true, and I’m afraid I don’t have any proof to offer you.”

“Well, that’s too bad. Looks like-.” Daniel stopped, his ears picking out the sound of a vehicle. Cars had come and gone, and he’d paid them only the necessary, small mental notes. This vehicle was moving fast and stopped in a hurry outside, down by the office.

Agent Carney had heard it as well. “This is the only hotel within easy walking distance to the gas station. If the front desk person was as forthcoming with the room information to them as he was to me, they’ll be here in seconds.”

Brian piped up from his place behind the bed. “No, you’re one of his. Shoot him, man!”

“I’m not…! One of his,” Agent Carney stated vehemently. He looked to Daniel, forehead now to the gun. “Think. If I wanted to take you out, I could have easily snuck in shots through the window, came in and cleaned out anyone surviving. It would be quick and dirty, but done, with nothing on camera to show in this place.”

Daniel flexed his hand on the gun handle, glancing toward the window again.

“There would be no need for me to get you outside. In fact, I'd avoid that, because then there would be possible witnesses. If those men that are out there find you? They will kill you both. That is if they don’t take this poor bastard away alive to cut him into pieces like I’ve seen the Sinnerman do to people before.”

“I can’t trust you,” Daniel said.

“I'm not asking you to. But if you trust the two we can hear running toward this room? We’re all dead.”

They were out of time. Daniel motioned to the door. “Then you answer it.”

The agent stiffened, but then nodded, turning about with his hands still raised just as a fist rapped quickly on the door.

“Open up! FBI!”

Agent Carney squint at the door. “FBI? Zimmerman, is that you?”

The voice on the other side paused. “Who is that?”

“Carney. What are you doing here? I was already responding to this location to investigate.”

“Do you have Bearing in there?”
“No.”

There was a pause on the other side of the door. Daniel’s gut immediately screamed that things were about to go sideways. Just before they heard a shotgun racking.

Both detective and agent dove to the side.

The shotgun blast shook the door and slugs cracked through overhead. Another deafening boom sounded from another shot, peppered with handgun fire. Daniel immediately rolled, handgun out and shooting at the base of the door with three shots. There was a scream from the other side of the door. Agent Carney had taken out his own firearm and was ducking under the window as shots fired through from a handgun. Glass shattered. The curtains danced as holes ripped through them. Brian was making short yelping sounds. The air was chaotic sound, a cacophony threatening to overwhelm the senses.

Daniel was glad that the agent was able to act. As soon as there was a break in the shooting, Agent Carney aimed over the window with his arm and fired. It wasn’t until he’d fired two shots that he glared over the window sill and took better aim. The shot hit its target, creating a cut off gurgling sound.

Daniel was crawling on his belly to the side for the shelter of the door frame. Another shot gun blast blew through the bottom of the door. Daniel felt the sleeve of his jacket get winged. Agent Carney stood and swung his firearm to the side and shot. There wasn’t even a cry this time. Just the sudden drop of a body on the walkway.

A car alarm was going off outside. The air was ringing. Smoke snaked through the air. Daniel finally released the breath he’d been holding.

“We clear?” Daniel asked.

“They’re down,” Agent Carney said, even while he kept a watch out and reloaded his firearm. The air rang with tension and smoke. “Go get your ward. I’ll bring around my car. God damn these two.” He unlocked the door, checked around the corner one more time as he clicked his revolver's chambers closed. The agent kept his head low as he ran out.

Daniel caught a glimpse of one of the hostile men just outside the door laying with his head in a growing puddle of blood. The detective hurried around the bed to where Brian was whispering what might have been a prayer, if prayers were allowed a litany of curse words in between pleas for holy intervention. “You shot?” he asked. He had to holster his gun to work with his bandaged hand better. Brian’s shaking hands didn’t make the task of removing one of his cuffs any easier.

“Don’t think so?” Brian looked down at himself, just to be sure.

Daniel hauled him to his feet and toward the busted door. Once by the wall, he pulled Brian to one side as he glanced around the corner, checking for any other hostiles before leading him outside. He scooped up the dropped shotgun. Agent Carney was only seconds away now, an older Honda speeding across the lot.

A door opened a few rooms down. Daniel looked at the wide-eyed tenant. “LAPD! Get back inside!” The person squeaked and the door shut immediately. Agent Carney stopped right in front of them. Daniel pushed Brian into the backseat, ordered him to lay down so his head was low.

Agent Carney was complaining as Daniel sat in the front seat and shut the door. “I’m getting too old for this shit. Diving around from bullets? My chiropractor is going to give me an earful.” He
was speeding out of the parking lot. “Espinoza, is Bearing hurt?”

“Fortunately, no.” Daniel glanced in the backseat. “You’re still good, right?”

Brian gave a shaky thumbs up from where he lay. “I just… realized I left my soda back there,” he said lamely.

“Yeah.” Daniel looked ahead as Agent Carney blew past a stop light. “He’s good.”

“Let’s keep him that way.” The agent sped down a side road past the back of stores. "In the middle console is some aleve. Mind getting me two of them?"

Daniel managed to find it among the napkins, pens, a tablet, and three cell phones. "Here."

"Thanks." He popped them in his mouth. "You can have some if you want."

“Uh, no, I just took 800 milligrams of ibuprofen.”

“Well, then, if you need antacid, there’s some in there, too. City’s enough to give anyone an ulcer lately.” Agent Carney dropped the pills back into the console. Only then did Daniel see frustration growing on the agent's face. the slap he gave his steering wheel was nonetheless restrained as he shook his head. “Can’t believe it was damned Zimmerman. Worked off and on with that bastard for nearly seven years. His record was perfect.” He checked his mirror and turned down roads that would lead them to the freeways. Behind them a siren wailed and faded into the night as they sped on.

Daniel looked over his shoulder, searching for tails. When he next looked ahead, he could see Carney was looking sideways at him. “So. Trust me now?”

“Getting there,” Daniel said. “But not quite yet.”

“Good. Here’s what I’m planning, and you tell me if you disagree.”

~~~

4:37 a.m., Thursday in Los Angeles found Daniel and Agent Carney walking into one of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s field offices with a very nervous Brian between them.

Brian had protested the entire car ride over. Neither man paid him any attention as he sullenly went along now.

Truthfully, Daniel still had his own misgivings about it. He'd voiced them. Agent Carney had rebutted his complaints and they wound up here anyway. So now the three men walked up to the secure doors, waited for the agent to swipe his badge, then checked in with security. Carney spoke quietly about their business with the guards, then guided the two on.

“This way, gentlemen,” he stated, not even bothering to quiet his tone as he led.

Daniel supposed there wasn't much point. It was far too early, so the halls echoed their steps with forlorn abandonment. “I still don’t like this,” Daniel muttered.

“If there are more than those two under Pierce’s thumb in the agency, they won't expect their target to be here, nor would they dare try to confront us and expose themselves in a building with armed security.”

“Still could have gone to the precinct.”
“No,” Carney said with an edge of impatience. “We don’t know if he has someone there, and they might not be so careful about trying to apprehend our witness.”

Daniel breathed out. “Still don’t like this.”

“Noted.”

Daniel reminded himself again why they were doing this. Charlotte. Chloe. So he kept watch by the door as Carney sat Brian in front of a computer screen.

Soon they were clicking through pictures, searching the database.

Brian shook his head. “Uh… no… no… Um, no, that’s not him.” They kept clicking through.

Daniel shifted impatiently. “Uh, he’s pretty skinny. Can you narrow it down more by tattoos? He has a lizard tattooed wrapped around his forearm. I’m not sure what he has on his back, but part of it goes up on his neck, orange and blue. Gaged ears… Glasses. Wait.” He pointed at the screen. “I think that’s him.”

“Doesn’t have the tattoo you mentioned.”

“His hair is shorter here and it’s no longer green, so this is an older pic,” Brian said, but tapped his finger on the screen. “But that’s him. That’s Smudge.”

Agent Carney leaned over to read more on his profile. “Tyler Mathers. Picked up on hacking charges, but was young enough to avoid prison. That came with stipulations. Including that we keep track of all his online activity.” He tapped at the screen. “That’s his current address.”

Daniel breathed out. “Good. Let’s go.”

“First, let’s make sure we can get our ward somewhere safe. Wouldn’t hurt to get some back up, either.” Agent Carney tapped a few buttons, checked his phone, then all three of them were leaving the building as swiftly as they’d entered.

"Can we... Can we stop for some food?" Brian asked.

The two sighed at him, walking on.

~~~

A few stops later, and Daniel entered Lux with Agent Carney in tow at 6:40 a.m.

“Anybody awake?” he asked, his less-swollen eye searching the area. Linda was on the couch with a blanket. Maze was in Lucifer’s bed curled near Trixie like a cat, still in her leathers. Ella was the first to make an awake appearance, rapidly trotting from the guest bedroom.

“Dan!” the small forensics scientist greeted brightly. She was wearing a too-big Invader Zim t-shirt and My Little Pony pajama bottoms, huge glasses on her face. “You’re back! With-uh-you!” Her eyes were wide on Agent Carney as she pointed.

Maze was squinting, lifting her head from the pillow. “What the fuck are you doing back? And who the hell is that?”

“Maze, remember Trixie,” Daniel immediately admonished, disliking her foul language use around his daughter. Trixie sluggishly rubbed at her eyes, but then rolled right back over to sleep more.

Linda hummed something in her sleep, but didn’t wake.
“It’s not even 7 a.m., Dan,” Mazikeen said gruffly as she slunk away from the bed. She moved carefully around Trixie in order to let her sleep despite the sudden commotion in the penthouse. “You couldn’t keep track of B-guy for more than eight hours?”

Agent Carney spoke, hands in his jacket pockets. “The person of interest is currently safe. We moved him to another location, with someone I know won’t give him up for anything.”

Mazikeen glared at Daniel. “What did you do?”

“I…” Daniel flung his hands up in exasperation. “I needed something for the pain, okay? You didn’t tell me I’d need to be gone all night, so I hadn’t taken any of my pills with me.”

The cursing that came out of Mazikeen’s mouth as she approached made Agent Carney’s brows shoot up. Daniel felt a little better toward the guy when he tried to come to his rescue. “It wasn’t really his fault. The people who were tracking him were some of my fellow agents.”

Mazikeen turned her head to him. Her knife flashed out, resting near the agent’s throat. Daniel wondered where she had kept the curved blade hidden. “Yeah? Then why should we trust you?”

“Oooh, Maze, think of Lucifer’s carpet!” Ella said, small hands up and eyes too wide. Agent Carney hadn’t flinched. His hands remained in his pockets as he watched her steadily through his spectacles. “Because I know the truth, and want to protect it as well as liberate your former employer. My main goal is the Sinnerman. I’ve been on the case of the man who could not die for over twelve years, and would love nothing more than to bring him down for his crimes. Which means I will do whatever I can to keep Mr. Bearing alive so he can testify, as well as find Lucifer and Detective Decker so they can do the same.”

“Thought his name was Bertrand,” Maze argued, stepping in closer. The knife remained at the agent’s throat. Even shorter and barefoot, Mazikeen dripped a predatory menace that always impressed Daniel.

“One of his many aliases while he was working under the Sinnerman. But to the heart of the issue. There are two people in Marcus Pierce’s custody, and they may be alive, and seem especially good at putting bad guys way. So I suggest we stop dancing around each other, and I’ll tell you what I know, and you can choose to let me know what you know. If you like what I have to say, we can go after the person who calls himself Smudge. If you don’t like what I have to say, well… Perhaps you may or may not find Lucifer Morningstar so he can complain about what you’ve done to his carpets.”

Mazikeen glared at him for a few seconds. She still glared as she pulled the knife away. “All right. Talk.”

Daniel rolled his eyes at Mazikeen before moving to get his much needed pain killers. He struggled a little with the pill bottle against his bandaged hand.

Ella fidgeted, hands wringing together. “Um… I’ll… just go brew some coffee.”

“Most appreciated, Ms. Lopez.” Mr. Carney sat in one of the seats. Linda smacked her lips and shifted on the couch, still passed out. “We know that a semi truck left the abandoned factory with a 53’ trailer, but we lost track of it just shy of Bakersfield. We’ve pinned down a few locations of where it’s not, but nothing helpful other than we believe they intended to keep heading North. So now, we have to hope Smudge, or rather Tyler Mathers, can direct us where we can find them.”

Daniel took the pills dry, swallowing them down quickly. He could hear the coffee pot brewing.
faintly. He really needed some after being up all night. He picked up his phone. His actual one, not
the burner Maze had tossed him. There were notifications on it, one very recent.

Maze stalked around the chair the agent sat in. “So, you want me to go with, see if I can shake the
information out of this unfortunate stain.”

Daniel stared at his phone screen.

“It will probably help. You would be the expert on extracting it. I understand you have years of
experience on these matters.”

Daniel looked up from his phone. “I don’t think we need to get the location from Smudge.” He
turned his phone screen around to show them. “This is Chloe and mine’s joint email account. We
kept it even after... never mind! Point is, got an email.” He pointed with his bandaged hand. “And
that? Those are coordinates.”

The room was silent, staring at him.

Mazikeen moved first, marching over to the bed area to grab her shoes. “I’m going,” she
announced.

Ella was almost dancing in place as she hurried up to Daniel to look at his phone. "By Grabthar's
Hammer! You think it's really them?"

Daniel moved aside so Mazikeen could sit down on the steps. “Yeah, I do. It has to be, right?
Maze.” He looked at the demoness strapping her calves in. "What about the bombs, Maze? We still
need to have a way to dismantle those.”

She looked sharply between him and Carney as she stood from the steps. “You two go after the
human splotch. Maybe he'll know how. I’m going after Chloe and Lucifer. You still have that
phone I gave you?”

“Yeah.”

“Good. Call me when you have information. Where are the coordinates to?"

“Uh...” Dan started typing on his phone.

Ella spoke up excitedly. “I think it's North of Sacramento somewhere!”

Daniel looked dismayed at the coordinates. "That’s like a six to seven hour drive.”

Mazikeen scoffed. “For you it might be a six hour drive.”

Ella waved her hands. “I’ll go with you!”

“What?” Mazikeen looked at her sharply. “No way. It’s going to be dangerous.”

“But if things go badly, I’m the best chance at helping them not blow up! Plus I’m really great at
getting by locks. Hang on, I’ll get dressed!”

Agent Carney was on his phone. He stood up from his seat, turning his screen toward Mazikeen.
“I can book you a flight to Sacramento now and get you past security. That will be faster. It leaves
in forty minutes. Can you get to the airport in that time?”

“Can I?” Mazikeen’s voice dripped sarcasm. “Dan, have him send that flight info to my phone.
Ella! Hurry your butt up, we got a plane to catch!”

Linda snorted in her sleep. “No, nn heathens,” she mumbled. “You don’t puh bananas inna less there’s peanuh buh’er.”

All three of them looked down at her briefly. When the therapist said nothing further and continued sleeping, they resumed their animated preparations.

Carney addressed Daniel. “You and I can handle Smudge. I’ll contact my people on the way over, see what back up I can get.”

“All your asses up, then,” Mazikeen said impatiently while checking the contents of her duffle bag. They nodded once, heading to the elevator and disappearing. The demoness looked at a knife thoughtfully, put it back into its sheathe and into the bag. She turned her head. “Ella!”

Ella hurried out from her room carrying her sneakers and a pair of socks. Jeans were draped over her arm. She was still in her pajama bottoms. “I’ll dress in the car! We gotta make a stop on the way to the airport.”

“A stop? We’re in a hurry!” Mazikeen stood, anxious.

“It’s some gear from when I… You know, never mind! We just gotta stop by at my brother’s shop. He’ll have everything I need.” She didn’t wait, bustling past to the elevator to push the button.

“Whatever,” the demoness grouched, stalking after the woman still half in pajamas.

“All right! Autobots, roll out!” Ella stepped into the opening elevator. ”Bye, Linda!” Ella called brightly as the elevator doors were closing. “There’s coffee made! You’re watching Trixie!”

The elevator sealed shut as Linda snorted awake on the couch, looking around in confusion. She sat up, put a hand to her temple. “Mm…” She could smell coffee brewing, but aside from a sleeping Trixie, the penthouse was abandoned.

“Huh. Where did everyone go?”
Waiting In the Dark While the World Scrambles Outside

Chapter Notes

Hello Darklings!

I said I was going to have everyone here in last chapter's comments, but I'm going to wait on Linda and Trixie! This chapter was already quite long, and I'm out of writing spoons for the night. O.o Apologies for any typos or word mix ups.

Also, this chapter contains some making out. Enjoy, dearies!

Mazikeen was grinning.

Ella looked over at her with concern from her window seat on the airplane. She’d been a little worried about Mazikeen being stuck in close proximity with people, but the demoness seemed just fine.

More than fine, especially considering how not fine their fellow passengers were.

The tall man in front of them grunted as the woman trying to nap tilt her seat back yet again on his legs. There was a woman trying to soothe a crying toddler, who had an ungodly shriek somewhere behind them. There was a guy in the middle of the plane who had his headphones on full blast, lip synching, and sometimes outright singing, profane lyrics, badly out of key. There was a nervous flier sweating bullets and without the greatest hygiene sitting next to a woman who seemed to be finding any excuse possible to complain to the hostess. An elderly couple were talking very loudly to each other, both hard of hearing, even as three young teens tittered and made general nuisances of themselves while the bored parents ignored their antics. Ella was also feeling extremely sympathetic for the person who was keeping their sick bag close in hand, looking increasingly green around the gills.

“I’m kinda surprised,” Ella admitted. “I thought that being on a plane, you’d be ready to murder people.”

“Are you kidding?” Mazikeen stated, looking gleeful at the miserable people around them. “I love flying economy class for just this reason.” She popped a peanut in her mouth, chewing energetically as she watched several passengers cringe as the toddler let out an especially spine-jarring shriek. “This is some people’s personal Hell, you know. Being stuck on a plane forever. Ahh!” She shook her head while grinning. “Makes the flights never boring.”

“I gather it's a demon thing?”

“Definitely my thing,” Mazikeen clarified. Then she broke into another grin as the person who’d been trying to hold their breakfast down lost it. Noisily.

Ella considered, then nodded. “All right. Different strokes for different folks. I guess I don’t have to understand it, just respect it.”

“Damned right. Besides, good little distraction before I go break people.” Mazikeen nudged her, none too gently. “Give me your peanuts.”
The house was in a surprisingly well tended cul-de-sac, manicured lawns and prim residents with bright paint resting in peaceful rows among shading trees. Daniel hurried up onto the porch with its wind chimes, motioning to Carney to count down before he kicked down the door.

Carney gave him a look with his heavy-lidded eyes, reached forward and tried the handle. The door clicked open. He swung it forward, raised a brow Daniel’s way.

The detective nodded, hand on his hip and his bandaged one tossed forward in a silent way of saying ‘or we could do that’.

Carney slipped in first, keeping his body at an angle as he took in the interior and let his eyes adjust. Daniel followed, handgun out and pointed at the floor.

The house had pleasant, homely decor inside, kept mostly neat but with obvious signs of lazier living. A cup left by the armchair near a book, magazines in a stack on the hall table with junk mail someone probably intended to go through and never would. There were DVD cases stacked by the TV, and the bookshelf was disorganized in a way that Daniel knew would drive Chloe crazy.

There was a dull, metal noise in the kitchen. Both exchanged looks and followed the sound of quiet singing. It was in a high, breathy falsetto.

“Ooh I love my ugly boy-so rough and tough, don’t care-about-anything but me. Yes, I just love him cause he’s so crazy, just craze-hee about me!”

They both stared at the skinny, young man with his headphones on, wiggling in front of the toaster as he tried to pull a toaster strudel free, stopping to shake his tender fingers a few times before managing to get it onto a small plate with its twin. He was dressed in a t-shirt with Deadpool riding a unicorn and too big of sweats. His hair was a wild stack atop his head. Bright, tattoo colors climbed his neck, stopping just at his hairline. Gauged ears and the glimpses of his forearms let Daniel know this was definitely their target.

Agent Carney put his hands on his hips under his jacket, staring as the young man continued semi-dancing in the kitchen. Daniel was just blinking at the strange sight. Smudge, or rather Tyler Mathers, continued singing in rough, high pitches. “-love my ugly boy, rough and tough, don’t care about-!”

The man turned with plate in hand. His eyes widened through his glasses. “… But me?” he finished. He pointed at the two men standing unexpectedly in his home, mouth open in a wordless question.

Agent Carney held up his badge. The young man squint at it through his glasses, than made a rough sound of dismay, head thrown back theatrically. “Come on, man!” He was still keeping his voice quiet.

“We have some questions for you, Mr. Mathers.”

The young man’s eyes widened as he frantically motioned, holding a finger up to his lips. A voice came from the direction of the hall. It was nasally woman’s, by the sound of it.

“Tyler? Is someone here?”

“Shitshit. Uh! No, Ma! Just watching a video on my phone!”
“Oh, okay. Hey, I’m about to get ready and head out to work. Did you want a ride to that internet coffee place?”

Smudge looked at the two anxiously. “Uh, you know, I think I’ll just stay home today.”

There were footsteps. “You sure? I got a coupon for those new caramel crumb frappes if you want it.”

Smudge looked at them desperately. “She’ll freak if she knows you guys are here.” He motioned frantically toward the stairwell just outside the kitchen, urging them up it even as he hurried up himself. He was still motioning at them to follow.

Not the situation Daniel thought this would be, but he followed after the agent and hacker upstairs, even as Smudge called to his mother that he was going to stay in his room for a bit.

“Oh, okay, sweetie! Text me if you need something!”

The upstairs room occupied nearly the entire house’s length, the highest parts of the ceiling curved with the A-frame of the roof. There was a beaten armchair in front of a TV at the far end, a messed up bed crammed in the corner, a laptop on a desk with a few empty soda cans and wrappers. It was long and narrow, only half the width of the house. Daniel looked around at the benign room before setting himself by the corner by the stairs to guard.

Smudge sat himself in his computer chair, spinning it about to face them. The toaster strudels rest on one of his bony knees while he fiddled with one of the frosting packets. “So, how can I help you two?”

Agent Carney cut past the pleasantries. “Sinnerman.”

“Uh… Kay? Who?”

Daniel had to hand it to Smudge. Aside from a few tenses, he was good at feigning ignorance. “Look, don’t play dumb,” he said impatiently. “We have everything we need to put you away for years.”

“Oh, do you?” Smudge had a packet open and was now focused on making neat, frosting zig zags across one of the strudels. “And what is that, exactly?”

Carney paced over to the center of the room, his eyes moving over the anime posters briefly and looking at the mess of a closet. “He’s not wrong, Tyler. We have three witnesses, all that place you at a crime scene where you abetted with kidnapping, torture, murder, and creating illegal explosives. All of this and you could be tried for terrorism, on top of proof you worked with a known domestic terrorist that we’ve been after for…” Carney huffed a chuckle. “Many long years.”

The frosting packet crinkled as Smudge forced out as much of the white gooey substance as he could between practiced fingers. The zig zag he created was neatly done. Daniel always ended up with gloppy smears on his strudels the few times he’d tried them. The smell was reminding him how long it had been since he’d eaten.

“Mmm, yeah, no idea what you’re talking about. Plus, you guys obviously don’t have a warrant. I could call you out for trespassing. Have you-.”

“But you won’t,” Daniel interrupted. He glared at the young man so calmly frosting his stupid toaster pastries. “Because you don’t want him to know we’re on to you. Did you know a Dr. Bose,
Smudge? … No? He worked for the Sinnerman, too, did some back alley doctoring for him on one of his kidnappees. When he was done with the job, Marcus Pierce put a bullet in his brain and dumped his body with three other guys that worked for him in a ditch. All to keep word from getting around.

“So let me tell you how this is going to go. One, you don’t give us anything, and you hope that Pierce doesn’t realize we paid you a visit and have someone come into your house to splatter your brains against the wall. Or two, you help save your own ass by cooperating with us, putting him away while saving your own skin.”

Smudge was meticulously frosting his other pastry, a tension in his jaw, dimpling his snakebite piercings further as he worked. “Not sure what you two are getting at. I definitely don’t murder people, though.”

Agent Carney spoke quietly as he turned in the spot near the TV, his hands in his jacket pockets. “If those bombs go off, you may as well have. But that was the cost of your favor to him, wasn’t it?” He shrugged his round shoulders. “It was something I noticed about your file. It’s not uncommon for hackers as clever as you to have repeat offenses, try to skirt the system, or go into crime to make their money. Your record after your juvenile offense? Clean. Spotless. Or more… blank. You did something, Tyler, and you needed help. Course, someone who knows their way around the Dark Web like you? You easily found the person who could make it all go away. But when you owe the Sinnerman? It doesn’t matter if it’s putting a bomb on an innocent person or not—you don’t get the option to say no without him taking back what you owe and then some.”

Smudge put the empty frosting packet atop the other on the corner of his desk. “Listen,” he said carefully. “Assuming that your insane prattle is true? You two have no idea what you’re messing with.”

“You’d be surprised,” Carney noted. He picked up a book from the armchair. It was a current year college textbook. “Engineering. How close are you to your degree?”

“Going for my Master’s this Fall.”

“Well, you’re not a dumb man, Mr. Mathers. So how do you justify it? Putting bombs on an innocent detective and a fellow who also gives out favors?”

Smudge snorted. “Please. The type of favors those two do? Night and day. Lucifer was a kitten compared to the kinds of things the Sinnerman would clean up.” He looked up, pointing at each of them with his strudel. “Which all things considered? Surprising. You’d think it would be the other way around.”

Daniel straightened from the corner. “So you’ll help?”

Smudge rolled his eyes. “Well, you jackasses are right on some of your points, and being involved in that? Kinda fucked with me, and I’m a practicing Catholic. But… I still need some serious amnesty if I’m going to help you guys.” He bit into his strudel, strawberry and frosting smearing on his pierced lip.


Daniel looked to the kid with all his gothic hair and piercings. He shrugged. “All right. So, first things first, we need to save lives if we’re going to keep your ass out of prison.”
Smudge looked between them, swinging his chair one way then the other as he chewed. Some decision made, he stood up, shoving half the strudel into his mouth and wiping his hand on the sweatpants as he made his way over to his closet. He stopped just before reaching it, plate in one hand, pointing at them with the other. “One other stipulation. No one, and I mean no one… Tells my mom about this.”

Daniel and Carney exchanged looks, then nodded. They both looked on curious as Smudge pushed past his hung trench coats and shoved his toe against a part of the wall.

A thin panel sprung open, just wide enough to admit a person. A string of multicolored LED lights lit up. Carney nodded at Daniel to go in. The detective figured it was because he was the thinner of the two, and if anyone came to the house, they were sitting ducks upstairs. Someone had to stand watch.

Daniel ducked in, squeezed through, then straightened up. “Wow.”

“Just remember you’re sworn to secrecy, man,” Smudge said as he entered what was his proper computer room. It was only the size of a very lavish walk in closet, but it was lit up with computer towers under a thin counter piled with work projects. Four big screens took up the end wall and a thin work table full of odds and ends and gadgets. The computer hummed to life and Smudge sat down to it.

“Quite an enterprise you have here,” Daniel said, eyeing some of the gadgets in the works on the countertop.

“Hey, getting a doctorate isn’t cheap, and I can’t pole dance to save my life.” Smudge started to type swiftly at the split keyboard. Files started to rapidly open up. “The bombs I designed are pretty tight as far as being locked down. So I have to work backward on the programming a bit to see if I can figure the numbers that, uh.. What’d you call him? Pierce?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah, Pierce—to figure out the numbers he used. Now, mind you, the code doesn’t entirely disarm them. It just allows them to be removed if maintenance is needed without them going off. Proximity and the dead man switch will still ignite them.”

“Are you… are you connected into them right now? Can Pierce do the same?”

“Sort of. I designed him some pretty interesting software and programs. Didn’t realize why he was going to such lengths till I saw what I was dealing with.” He typed some more. A black screen with bright paragraphs of numbers and symbols started scrolling through on one of his screens. “Uh, it’s just going to take me some time. Some hours, probably.”

“He can’t… Uh, I mean, If Pierce gets wind that we know where the two are, he can’t just blow them up with the press of a button, can he?”

“Ehhh, no. I didn’t design it for that. He’d have to use the switch. There’s a button on that which can blow the two bombs without detonating the switch itself. But the deadman switch blows all three. I’m going to go after the anklet bomb’s coding first. It’s going to be the easiest one to remove anyway. The one on Satan is sealed chemically, like, melded together, so it will need cut off. Sinner-guy said it had to be that way because of something about locks… I dunno. I try not to think about it too hard.”

Daniel thought the way he worded that was strange, but he just nodded. “Yeah, if you can get the
one off of Chloe Decker first, I’d prefer that.”

“Mr. Mathers,” Carney said, looking in through the narrow entrance.

“Dude, call me Smudge.”

“Very well. Smudge. Are you able to tell where Pierce is at currently?”

Smudge paused. His pierced brow lifted thoughtfully and he started to type on another screen. “Actually, yeah. I did all the security on his places, you know. But, uh, I got paid money for that.” He called over his shoulder. “Just so we’re clear. Installing security isn’t illegal.”

“No, it is not,” Carney agreed.

Daniel was being impressed by the swiftness of Smudge’s bony fingers over the keyboard. He slowed down only to bite into his second strudel, a thoughtless seeming eating that he suspected Smudge did often. Finally he pointed. “Got motion at the small airport. Can get you the specs.” He craned his neck back to look at Daniel. “Point of no return. You go after him and he still somehow touches a hair of my mom’s head, I will make your life utter misery.” He grimaced briefly. “That is, if I’m not skinned alive or end up dumped in a pig pen.”

Daniel looked excitedly at the security footage on one of the screens. “If I can get you a swat team together, can you get them this feed?”

Smudge pointed at Daniel, looking at Carney. “It’s like he’s doubting me! Give me your phone number, oh intense one.”

“I’ll stay here with him,” Carney said.

Daniel shot his number down to the kid. “You sure?” Daniel asked, even as he started to squeeze out of the hidden room.

“I still have to work out a deal with him on what kind of amnesty we can likely manage, plus I’m pretty good at spotting if someone is turning on me. I’d rather be down here with him. You’ll be more use there working with your department on the ground.”

Daniel nodded.

“Espinoza?” Carney inquired as he managed out of the closet past him. Daniel looked at him to show he was listening. “You see him, don’t hesitate to the take the headshot. Repeat as necessary.”

“I just need one good shot,” Daniel said. “Trust me, it’s personal for me. I won’t hesitate.”

Charlotte. Chloe. He then turned and hurried back downstairs, already calling on his phone to the precinct.

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Lucifer hummed thoughtfully. “You know what sounds really good right now?”

“What?”

“A glass of Bulleit Barrel Strength bourbon. Neat. Oh, I’d be a heathen and put it in a tumbler glass at this point.”

“Lucifer.”
“Or some traditional Pernod Absinthe. No need to water it down. Just drop the sugar cube in and let me at it. Makes a fine dessert.”

Chloe tilted her head up where it lay against his shoulder. They were sitting against the wall atop the bed in Chloe's room, hands tangled, legs pressed close. Chloe had insisted he take the pillow to lean against for his ribs. “Okay, serious question. Are you an alcoholic?”

She heard Lucifer turn his head to look at her. “What? No! Goodness sake, that would be very difficult for me to keep up with the habit if I was. Do you know how much I have to drink to become well and truly drunk?” Lucifer sniffed. “I just like the taste.”

“I just always figured you liked having a tipsy buzz all the time. You were constantly sipping out of that flask and it would piss me off so much.”

“Nope, I was only sipping for the flavor and to wet my throat. Have you tasted Los Angeles water? And if I’m going to drink something at room temperature, it’s not going to be mere water.” His tone turned petulant. “Besides, I wouldn’t get drunk on the job.”

“You arrived drunk one time.”

“Buuuut didn’t get drunk during.”

Chloe reached across to pat his chest lightly. “It’s okay. I understand the circumstances now, so you get a pass for that day.”

“Why thank you.”

“Just wish you’d told me what you were going through.”

Lucifer sighed. “I’ll… try to do better.”

The dark was quiet and velvety around them. Chloe was enjoying the comfort of being with him as she tried to push the tension of their situation to the back of her mind. If she half-pretended they were just out on another stakeout, albeit closer, more comfortable and open with each other than ever, she even half-succeeded. It made her heart feel equal parts happy and morose.

Three years she had tried to shield herself from feeling too deeply for the damnable man. Now she felt the two were at a place where they could start to work on being them, all truths opened and paged through between each other, all feelings evident, and… it could be snatched away in seconds.

“What about you?” Lucifer asked. “What do you miss right now?”

Chloe’s heart gave a painful shift. “Trixie. I really miss my daughter.” She swallowed, tilted her head up again. It didn’t matter that she could barely see his outline from the green light of his collar. “Do you think she’s okay?”

Lucifer’s thumb caressed the back of her hand. She loved the smooth tickle of it. “I think,” he said in a manner that showed he was picking his words carefully. “That she is likely worried about you, misses you as well, but isn’t about to give up on you coming home to her.” He paused, nudged her back with his wing. “She’s got your stubborn tenacity. So do a lot of your friends. They won’t rest until you are safely back with them.”

Chloe smiled. “Thanks, Lucifer. But you know they’re your friends, too. They’re looking for you, as well.”
He didn’t seem to know how to respond, a few small starts in his throat before he settled on, “Well, away from topics like that! What else do you miss? Nothing sad. Think of something like ice cream, or the beach, or… sex!”

Chloe snorted a laugh, but then she hummed thoughtfully. “Music,” she decided. “I really miss music.”

“Ohhh, that’s a good one, Detective.”

“I would have thought that would be a given thing for you to miss, too.”

“Well…” Lucifer shrugged, the motion small so he didn’t jar his sore ribs. “I’m used to having to go without. There’s not really any good music down in Hell. Nothing that usually appeals to me, anyhow. It was a big reason I liked to sneak topside now and then. Not only did I love the parties, but the really good gatherings always had music.”

Chloe squeezed his hand. “Sorry you didn’t have good music down there.”

“Oh, it’s fine.” He quickly brightened his tone, moving away from serious topics as usual. “I know! I think I can fix your missing music problem, right here, right now.”

“Oh?”

“I just have to think of one that will work… Something from the nineties…” He was tapping his chin. “Or… Ooh, what about something from the eighties?”

“Which one?”

She could tell Lucifer was watching her closely, a sense of his eyes on her despite her inability to see his face. He answered by starting to sing, voice light and breathy. “Hast du etwas Zeit für mich? Dann singe ich ein Lied für dich.”

Chloe sat up from the wall. “Oh that’s, um! Red balloons! But that’s not, uh, English?”

Lucifer stopped with a chuckle. “I am not singing the English version. You get the proper 99 Luftballons version in German.”

Chloe rolled her eyes, but she was smiling. “All right. Let’s hear the original German version.”

Lucifer started again, this time his voice stronger, his tongue enunciating the foreign words with confidence and easy breath. His mouth was that soft sibilance and precise consonants that Chloe loved to listen to, but now he was singing, and it was skilled and lovely, and she felt herself blushing under having that masterful voice singing for her.


“What?” She couldn’t help the laugh that came out, even as Lucifer clapped and hummed how the song went.

(Clap!) “Mm-mm-mm-mm!” (Clap!) “Mm-m-mm-mmmm!” (Clap!)

Chloe shook her head, feeling silly as she started to clap with him. He hummed all the bars, then
announced suddenly. “Okay, double time now!”

Chloe only missed the first clap as he sped up the percussion twice as fast. He sang on with gusto. “Neunundneunzig Luftballons! Auf ihrem Weg zum Horizont! Hielt man für Ufos aus dem All, Darum schickte ein General! 'Ne Fliegerstaffel hinterher, Alarm zu geben, wenn’s so wär! Dabei war’n dort am Horizont! Nur neunundneunzig Luftballons!”

Chloe couldn’t help the grin on her face. They were trapped with no way out in the dark, afraid for each others’ lives, left wondering how awful fate would be to them, and the Devil was singing her a German eighties song. It was ridiculous. And it was perfect.

Instead of humming the the next part when he slowed the clapping, Lucifer talked animatedly instead. Chloe leaned away from the wall, trying to see his outline as he spoke. “It’s such a catchy song, but you know this song is about senseless war, right? Ninety-nine years of devastation because nations overreacted to a bunch of latex and helium. Story of the song is a general thought he saw a UFO, found out it was just a bunch of red balloons, put on a light show for no reason, made the neighbors nervous, and kaboom! World War! And the ending is-.”

Chloe kissed him.

Before most of her kisses had been feather soft, aching brushes of skin that were just as much fear as want. This one was a jubilant press of lips on a surprised Devil, ushering an inquiring sound from his throat. She kissed him with repeated presses that were quickly met back with just as much fervor. He sat forward to better meet her, mouth firmly claiming hers back. She placed her hands in his hair, felt his hands slide around her waist and up her back, and the touch felt heavenly. She arched up onto her knees, now above him as she moved her mouth on his. She was smiling stupidly throughout, and she couldn’t care less when she felt how he was smiling back between each new press.

They finally rest their foreheads together, Lucifer chuckling as she hummed happily. “I need to sing to you more often.”

“I think you do, yes. In as many foreign languages as you want.”

“Does it for you, hm?” He sounded immensely pleased and mischievous at the same time.

“Your voice always has.”

“Oh? Is that why you never minded me sitting by your desk going on about anything and everything trying to distract you from work?”

She clicked her tongue. “Yeah? Okay, yes.”

She could practically feel Lucifer’s smug grin in the dark. “Mmm, definitely going to keep that in mind.” He dropped the volume of his voice, so it was husky murmur. “The things I could whisper in your ear…”

Chloe shook her head, feeling that tremendous fond feeling. She pushed her fingers up into his hair, and like so many times before, the effect was instant. Lucifer breathed out, tension leaving his shoulders as he did and he leaned his forehead against her collar bone. She continue circling her nails on his scalp, enjoying the sound of his breath deepening with simple pleasure under her fingertips. Chloe loved this, the wordless connection they could now easily build, that feeling of their guards laying down to enjoy the peace of each other.

The kiss he planted right atop her sternum made her fingers still, her next breath lifting her chest
higher. Lucifer’s lips lingered, reverence and adoration evident in the simple gesture. His inhale to take in her scent made Chloe’s breath catch as he brushed his lips higher on her throat. A wordless intensity charged the air around them, made the quiet a pressure of unspoken words on their skin. Lucifer’s palms were warm as they slid up her back. Slow, purposeful fingertips drift on the planes on either side of her spine, spread, descending.

It made warm pleasure spread over her skin. Chloe couldn’t remember the last time someone had touched her back like…

Oh. Yes, she did. When Lucifer had wanted her to show him her back. To make sure she wasn’t sent by his father to destroy him or something. He’d slid his fingers between her shoulder blades, smooth and searching. It had given her gooseflesh then. It made her skin tingle now, nerves that had been waiting for touch for far too long igniting.

“Chloe…” He was now wrapping those long, insanely strong arms around her, squeezing her close to his bruised torso. His arms then lowered, a silent communication as he eased her down from her knees. Her legs settled on the outside of his, hips close to his, gravitating onto him as though she had done so hundreds of times already. Her lips parted, allowing her to take in her shallower breaths easier. Chloe was profoundly aware of how intimately pressed together they were, that electric pressure buzzing away all other sense with how overwhelmingly close she felt with him and all the ways she wanted to connect and trust him.

When he kissed her she felt light headed. When she welcomed his tongue against hers, something sharp slid through her nerves and core, her blood thrumming and skin alive. She knew she whimpered, something soft and helpless. She didn’t care when his tongue slid against hers again, guiding her into a slow rhythm. He was massaging over her back, his breaths painfully deep for his ribs as they found a rhythm that made her want to shake apart as they started to kiss with more heat and eagerness.

Thump.

Lucifers’ wing circled her instantly, a clap of rushed air as he broke off the kiss. Both of them sat tense in each others’ arms, listening, trying to check their too-fast breathing. Chloe turned in his arms, groping around till she found the edge of the bed and the chair there. The small flashlight they had taken from Caretaker clicked on. Red light shone dully toward the panel.

The Devil had mangled all the latches and metal around the sliding panel, making it impossible to open without forcing it with tools. He’d then pulled the table and bed apart from his room to add to the barrier. It had been both fascinating and intimidating watching him twist the metal around like so much putty to make the barrier stay as needed, ready to block any projectiles attempted their direction.

They heard another quiet shuffle outside the room. Then nothing.

“It’s fine,” Lucifer whispered finally. “They’re not through yet.”

“But they are here.” She felt her heart drop and clicked the red light off. Blackness with phantom sparks were all she could see.

Lucifer pulled her back to him. Their moment was shattered with reality, and he didn’t try to resume it. Instead he maneuvered her to sit sideways on his thighs, wing wrapping over her once more as he slid his hand up and down her back, the other hand pushing her head gently under his chin, kissing atop it before running his palm down her arm and holding her.
It was comforting and hurt at the same time. His touch reminded her that he was terrified of all the emotions he felt for her, and now he was just as afraid of losing her as she was him, and neither were brave enough to voice it. Chloe bit on her lip and turned her forehead into his chest as he sat back again, listening to his heartbeat slowing to a calm rhythm under her ear.

The two waited in the dark, and listened.
Daniel looked over the screens in the van, eagerly directing people to move in. His finger ached, but he ignored it, pushed through his tiredness with coffee and adrenaline as he organized the strike. One of the SWAT team members handed him a phone.

“Espinoza.”

“It’s Carney. I understand everyone is moving into position?”

“Yeah, if we can just have Smudge’s feed, now.”

He heard “Done!” announced over the phone in the background.

Daniel looked over the screens as new video flickered to life. “These guys are definitely packing for a trip.”

“And they fueled one of the planes already,” Carney stated. "If we’re going to make a move, it needs to be done now."

They were arguing again in fierce whispers.

Chloe was frowning “We can’t remove it.”

“I heal fast,” Lucifer insisted.

“It’s a broken bone. You only had the plate put in three days ago.”

“Right, there’s a plate keeping it in place! So the bone won’t move so long as I’m careful, right? That’s what it’s for.”

“Okay, there are many things you are, but careful is not one of them.” “Uh!” “And you don’t need to break your wing worse right now.”

“But you said yourself we need every advantage we can get. These aren’t on my back to look pretty, Detective. So come on, chop chop! Cast needs to go.”
“No! I don’t need you hurt worse.”

Lucifer made an irritated sound. Then whispered rapidly. “Okay, how about a deal? If I can’t move it, I agree that the cast should stay on. But if I can, it might help, so we need to have it out of the cast.” When she was stubbornly silent, he pushed on. “Listen. This is not me being masochistic or trying to push my limits, I promise you. But this could defend my right side if we need it, which it can’t do while pinned in this contraption. I mean, even if it does break more, I’d much rather have a broken wing we can deal with later than being shot in the torso.”

He didn’t add he’d much rather be able to protect her with both wings. He somehow felt that argument would get nowhere with her. Just like his argument to quietly surrender himself so she wouldn’t be harmed had gotten nowhere.

Honestly, he wasn’t sure they had other options, at least none that would keep her safe. He would just have to submit himself to whatever Pierce had planned when the time came, despite her protesting, and hope help arrived soon.

When she still didn’t answer, he goaded. “Come on, Detective. I’m the one who acts on spurious emotions. You know I hate being the logical one, so please, put me out of the misery of being rational. It’s not any fun.”

He so loved that he could see her in the dark. Even though she couldn’t see, she still rolled her eyes.

“Fine! But only if you can move it without it hurting much.”

“Just if I can move it,” he insisted. “Injury is better than death, you must realize. Ugh. All this reasonability is going to give me as stomach ache.”

“And you give me a headache,” Chloe jabbed back, but her whisper had softened now with agreement. She started to move from the wall, so Lucifer moved eagerly as well. He scoot his aching frame to the edge of the bed while the Detective set up the flashlight so she could see. Lucifer fussed with his wings, maneuvering his prime feathers in front of the mattress so they draped against the floor. He wordlessly held his shirt out of the way. Chloe took a breath and started to undo the straps.

As the first slid away, it took the tension against his ribs and shoulder with it. His right wing sagged in relief where it had been held constantly after his surgery two days ago. Lucifer moaned in satisfaction. The incision site still smarted, but it was just another pain among the many he’d suffered during the past eight days. Hardly noteworthy, in his mind.

Chloe undid the outside straps that held the edge of his wing in a tight fold, then lift the whole device off the top of the feathery limb with care.

Lucifer sighed in further relief as he allowed the wing to spread some. Moving the aching muscles felt good, pushing blood into the limited limb. “Oh, that’s the stuff,” he murmured. The Devil rolled his shoulders, both the ball joints of his arms and his wings, shrugging them upward. Then he spread them in unison, slowly testing his right limb as it extended.

It touched the wall before he stopped. He could feel a strain in the ascending radial bone, and yes, pain, but he could move the limb.

“Okay, you win. You can move it,” Chloe observed. “You really do heal fast. Do you have any idea on your actual range before it gets too uncomfortable?”

“Let’s see.” Lucifer stood up, holding his breath to brace against the jolts of pain thrown by his
abused body. He paced to the center of the room, then carefully extended once more.

His left easily lift horizontally to brush the corner of the room. His right trembled when he tried to stretch it out fully. Lucifer could push the elbow out to its maximum angle, skin and muscle pulled taught in a straight line on top. When he tried to force his injured wrist and prime feathers onto the same even plane as the rest of the wings, the trembling increased. He half lifted the prime feathers before the strain forced him to admit silent defeat. He lowered the wing with a hard breath.

“Well, getting there,” he said, trying to hide his own disappointment. He entirely ignored the hot pain fresh in the bone.

“They’re really beautiful.”

Lucifer looked over his shoulder and wing at the Detective. In the red light, her pupils were still very wide, her face free of tension as she stared in wonderment. “Ah, yes, I suppose two really is better than just one for admiration. Still…”

One more test… He tried to fold them away. His left wing shrank and disappeared easily, battered but not crippled. The right one folded, becoming smaller, but then it trembled at only a third of the way, felt as though electric shots were stabbing through it, and shot right back up to normal size. Lucifer gasped, stumbling to the right with the wing’s weight as the limb collapsed onto the floor, feeling unpleasantly numb.

Chloe had gasped as well. “Lucifer!” She was by his side in an instant, hands up like she wanted to touch him, but wasn’t sure if she should.

“Well, that didn’t bloody well work,” Lucifer groused, trying to regain his balance. It was a tad difficult, considering he was now light headed.

“What… what happened? Your other wing just… and this one is…” She motioned to where the other laid collapsed on the floor.

Lucifer looked down at the indicated limb. The floor looked like the deck of a boat at sea, but he kept himself from swaying with it. “I’m not sure. Backlash, I think. Feels like I stuck it in a light socket.”

“And… and your other wing… Is it…?”

“Oh, it’s just folded.”

Chloe was blinking at him. She still had her hands up, as though uncertain where to put them. “How does that work?”

Lucifer realized she hadn’t seen him fold his wings before. Of course it would spur her curiosity. “Oh, well, they’re infused with divine energy. Which is not of the earthly plane.” When Chloe stared at him, he continued. “So Earth rules don’t apply to them. Meaning the way you perceive the rules of space and time don’t exist. Makes for a convenient travel method when crossing planes, and comes with their own little pocket of space to tuck them away when… You know, Detective, I have a much nerdier sibling who would chat your ear off about the whole theory behind it all and how it works, but the important thing is that my left is healed enough, but obviously my right isn’t.”

“You said before that… that you could use them to travel? I mean, across dimensions? That’s why you couldn’t go to Hell prior by your usual means, because you had cut them off.”
“Well, yes. One reason I had hoped the bone was healed enough, as it would have given us more options. Apparently divinity is picky and requires all bones to be in working order to pull off that trick.”

Chloe looked down, nodding in thought. “Or you would have done so at the factory.”

“Precisely. Popped down and popped back up to hand them all their teeth. Unfortunately, Cain is too aware I can do that trick.” Lucifer tapped at the thick bomb on his throat in irritation. “And he knows I won’t blow you up. So even if I could, I wouldn’t.”

Chloe nodded again, accepting the information. She was getting better, Lucifer realized, at just absorbing things without overthinking them when it came to him. “And they do make an effective shield, don’t they?” She started to pace across the room. Her bare feet made small patting noises. Lucifer watched her, letting her turn information in her mind. “Okay, just no more tying to fold that one into your… back pocket.”

Lucifer snorted a laugh. “Agreed.” He looked down at the limb. It was feeling like pins and needles now. He rolled the joint, slowly dragging the feathered limb off the floor.

“What about your face? The Devil one? That-That is kind of multi-dimensional, too, isn’t it? I remember a long time ago, with Jimmy… And then right before I shot you. I caught a glimpse of it, but you hadn’t changed. It was in a reflection. I later just thought I’d imagined seeing a glimpse of something, but… I didn’t imagine it, did I?”

Lucifer thought back. Oh, yes, the first time a gunshot had truly hurt him. He’d been quite confused. “No, you didn’t imagine that.” He briefly looked to where Chloe used to wear the necklace he’d made of the bullet, gifted as a birthday present. He had waited for months to give it to her.

She had stopped wearing it when her and Pierce had become engaged. It had hurt, but he had told himself if friends were all they could be, he’d be content with that, even if it meant that someone who could make her happier would shove him out in a dozen small, stinging ways.

Now he hoped Pierce didn’t have the necklace. He would have to see what he could do to get it back if so, along with his ring.

“So you can actually use your face without actually… changing, right? Does it do more than just scare people from the sight? There’s more to it, isn’t there?”

“My Devil face?” Clever Detective. “There is, yes. I’m a fairly primal creature, I’m sure you’ve noticed.” He walked back to the bed, deciding he’d rather sit while she paced. His wing felt cumbersomely heavy. “So desire, carnal appetites, and yes, fear are all things I can reach out and pluck on people’s mental strings. Some people, it’s easier. Some, not at all. Sociopaths, for instance. Utterly wasted talent for someone who can’t feel guilt or fear. But for everyone else, the face usually takes on an aspect that the individual finds disturbing. For instance, some people see the eyes differently, or perceive the face without skin, or...”

He stopped. Chloe noticed his look and froze, too, ceasing her pacing as Lucifer tilt his head. He frowned, eyeing the front door.

Chloe’s voice was back to a whisper. “Can you tell what they’re doing?” She’d learned Lucifer could hear better than she could.

“No,” he whispered back. “Whatever it is, it’s further toward the front. Banging on something. But
not sure what.”

That bothered them both, not knowing what people were doing outside of their cell. Every noise set them on edge. Chloe gravitated back to the bed by him. She still had the flashlight on, red light bathing them at a sideways angle. He automatically turned his palm up and her hand found it without looking, fingers sliding together comfortably.

“Okay, so your face, just like your desire stare… That doesn’t count as harmful, right?”

“It shouldn’t, no.”

“Okay.” She was staring at the wall, internally debating. Then she snapped her gaze to him, quick and certain. “Let me see.”

Alarm coursed up his belly. “What? No!”

“Lucifer, if you use it and I freak out, it won’t do us any good. We have to see how it affects me.”

Lucifer was shaking his head, making negative sounds. Chloe continued, turning more his way.

“It’s possible it won’t even affect me. Your desire mojo doesn’t. If so, that’s a great advantage. We could use that!”

“You don’t want to see that, surely!”

Chloe fumbled inwardly for words. “I don’t know. I mean, it’s you. But I won’t lie. Your face it... it is pretty scary. But-but it’s designed to be! You saw yourself as scary, right? So that’s how it morphed into what it is? So yes, I want to see it, and I want to be sure how it affects me.”

*And what if it makes you run away?* “Chloe, my face was partly covered and you were some distance from me, and I was restrained. This... this is very different circumstances, so I don’t think it’s a good idea to-.”

“Lucifer.” The Detective looked at him sternly. “Show me your Devil face.”

His throat closed up briefly. He shook his head again, then forced the words out. “I... can’t. Won’t. I don’t feel monstrous right now. This space... it’s been ours, and-and you’ve been more than kind to me, far more than I deserve. I just don’t want to mar what may be our last short while together with-with that.”

Chloe looked at him, that searching gaze with her wide pupils. “Lucifer,” she finally said, in a tone that said she was going to spell things out to him so he understood. “It’s still you, and even if it scares me at first, it won’t for long. And I’m going to make sure we have a long time together.”

“Chloe...”

“No, you need to stop talking like this is our last few moments. Anything could happen, and we need every advantage. So show me.”

Lucifer stared at her, took a deep breath. He didn’t want to see how she’d react. He wasn’t even sure he felt monstrous enough right now to use his other face. She watched him, patient. He nodded, started to focus inwardly for the coals of rage inside. It had cooled so much during the past three years...

There was a buzzing sound and they were both dazzled by bright lights flickering on overhead.
Both Chloe and Lucifer blinked and stared upward at the humming lights.

“Oh, bollocks…”

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Mazikeen had her arms folded in the parking garage, her hip and bottom lip jutting out at an angle as she watched Ella work.

“So…” She finally said. “Childhood hobby?”

“Something like that,” Ella said with a shrug as she wound a final wire under the car’s dash. She grinned as the car started. “Ta da!”

The demoness quirked a scarred brow, smirking as she scooped up their bags from the pavement. “I gotta admit. It’s pretty hot.”

“Thanks! I tend to agree. Hot wiring is hot!” She started sliding her small frame up eagerly into the driver seat.

She nearly got a lapful of Mazikeen as the taller woman pushed her way into the black Charger’s driver seat. “Move over.” Ella made some distressed sounds, but she climbed over the stick shift and ended up with her back against the other door as the demoness tossed their bags in the back seat. She slid her leather-clad legs in and shut the door. A quick adjustment to the mirrors and she was backing out. The car lurched as she slammed her foot against the clutch and jerked the gear shift back, the tires leaving black streaks behind them.

They were heading North on the freeway when Ella called Dan’s phone.

“Hey, we landed and are heading toward the coordinates. Did you find Smudge?”

“Yeah, apparently there’s a way to deactivate the bombs enough for them to be removed. He’s working on getting the codes extracted, but it’s taking time. Agent Carney is staying with him while he works on it. I’m going after Pierce with a team now. Going to do our damnedest to apprehend him here in L.A.”

“You’re only going as support, right?” Ella asked with concern. “You’re kinda not a hundred percent right now.”

“Yeah, don’t worry about me. Look, gotta go.”

“Oh, okay, I’ll talk to yooooou after you hang up on me sometime.” She looked at her phone, disappointed.

“They’re going after Pierce?” Mazikeen asked.

“Yeah. Smudge is apparently cooperating, and there is a way to get the bombs off without them exploding if he can figure out the coding. Which is great! I’d rather not have to cut wires and pray if I don’t have to.”

“Hopefully he leaves me some of Pierce’s ass for me to grind into the dirt,” Mazikeen said with a dangerous curl of her lip.
Ella pulled her legs up to sit cross legged. She considered Mazikeen for a moment, before the
demoness glanced at her, irritated. “What?”

“You and Lucifer… Were you guys ever…?”

“What?”

“Lovers?”

Mazikeen snorted. “See, using the word ‘lovers’ just shows that you know shit about demons.”

“Oh. So, what were you two exactly?”

“He ruled Hell. I was his body guard, assassin, his top correspondent. He and I have also had a lot
of sex. A. Lot.”

“Oh. Okay. Demons don’t really do intimacy or relationships, do they?”

“Nope.” Mazikeen wrinkled her nose. “Neither do angels really.”

“So, Chloe and Lucifer? That’s pretty unique?”

“Yeah.”

“What do you think of it?”

“Psh! What do I…?” Mazikeen glanced over. Ella was looking at her with open expectancy.
Mazikeen stared ahead at the road for a few seconds, sobering on the thought. “At first, I wanted to
kill her when I learned she makes him vulnerable. He kept blowing off my concerns. Like he does
so fucking often.” She shrugged. “But I’m over it. He’ll do what he wants, and I’m free to make
my own decisions now. Just… I was pissed he wouldn’t take me home when I asked. Said he
didn’t want to be alone or some bullshit like that.” She shook her head. “He better hope no other
demon gets wind that he’s gotten so damned sentimental. Just a damned big weakness.” She threw
another look Ella’s way. “Why are you so damned curious anyhow?”

“How could I not be curious, Maze! Actual angels and demons exist! And you guys are supposed
to be mortal enemies, right?”

“Immortal enemies, but yeah, the books got that part right.”

“And Lucifer is an angel, but he was around demons all the time. And you’re a demon, and you
were his, like, awesome warrior secretary assassin. But what made you want to serve an angel in
the first place? And for so long?”

Mazikeen perused those distant memories, all sarcasm fading from her features. *Lucifer running
his thumb over her marred cheek, careful against the exposed tendons and bone, dark eyes full of
fascination. “Oh, Mazzie, you’re exquisite.”*

That day Mazikeen knew her loyalty was locked. Lucifer was her terrifying, angelic, and devilish
lord. That had always been a truth Hell had tried to test repeatedly, only to find that those two
refused to betray each other.

But there was more to it as well. While they only ever verbally defined each other as Ruler and
Right Hand, they were the closest to friends that each other ever had. That was why when she had
come to the surface and Lucifer had started to leave her out of his confidence, it had… hurt. She
wasn’t used to feeling like that. Nor was she used to the sentiment she had toward Amenadiel. Or how fond she was of Trixie, how she admired Linda, how she liked Chloe, how… Ugh. The human world, damn it all, managed to pick everything that made her a strong demon apart. The connections were stabbing holes through her armor, like shrapnel through tin.

Meanwhile, Lucifer had been, well, Lucifer, and entirely oblivious to how she felt about his actions. Mazikeen had done what many demons did. If he couldn’t understand how he’d made her hurt, she’d make him hurt. Except… now she realized she hadn’t wanted that. Not at all.

Demons didn’t have souls, so there was no permanence to stick guilt and regret to. But thinking back on how their relationship had rapidly changed, how rapidly he had changed, how she had changed, she could see her missteps. She was done moping over them. Demons didn’t deal that way. Their relationships were entirely based on tit for tat, favor swapping, and, of course, eye for an eye.

She definitely wanted to pluck an eye or two from Cain. Damn the bastard for using her. She squeezed her hand tightly on the steering wheel, the cut across her palm stinging anew.

“Maze?”

She jerked out of her thoughts. “I guess it was because he was the first person to value me or some shit,” she announced snidely. “Besides, being right hand demoness to the top dog in Hell? That came with so many perks, including first dibs on who to torment.”

Ella nodded slowly with an open mouth. “Ah… kay. Right. How… what’s it like?”

Mazikeen gave her a sidelong look. “It was Hell, Ella, Heaven’s dark mirror world. Anything soft and sweet gets ripped apart and divided up in ugly shreds to the victors. There’s nothing like… this.” She waved her hand to indicate the trees and neatly cut grass they were whizzing past. “Everything is hard and sharp. The heat is suffocating and squeezes through your skin, or it’s a black cold that bites into your bones. There is no rain, no sun or stars, not even a sky, really, just the ash-fall from the fires.” Mazikeen got a wistful look on her face. “There were some places so silent you could scream your throat raw and not even hear yourself, others where that’s all you can hear, screams and screams echoing around. There are demons trying to outsmart each other in their cut throat games, and all the guilt-laden souls laid out in their realm like tormented candy.” She sighed. “Thinking about it makes me homesick.”

Ella stared at her. “Uh… right… Kinda sounds like primordial Earth.”

“Huh.” Mazikeen shrugged. “I guess? I’m not quite that old.” She pointed a long nail Ella’s way. “And no, I can’t really tell you how old I am. Time moves different in Hell.”

“Shoot.” Ella leaned back in the seat and put her sneaker on the dash. “That was my next question.”

Daniel hated being left on the back lines. He understood he would be a hazard out there, and that SWAT would definitely be better off with trusted team members, but it didn’t make him grind his teeth any less when he started to hear the gunfire going off.
He looked at the screen anxiously, pointed. “There’s Pierce.”

Pierce was stalking among the crates, taking calm, even shots at the SWAT team members and forcing them to stay in cover.

“Come on…” Daniel waited, hoping someone would get a lucky shot, or that Pierce's team would mess up and permit a gap in their defense.

Then Pierce retreated, stalking toward the plane while a few men stayed behind to cover his retreat.

“Nonono, he’s getting in the plane…”

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Chloe thought quickly, looking up at the lights. Now she understood what Pierce’s men were doing. They’d been repairing the power Lucifer had ripped out, not wanting to go after the Devil in the dark or try to find a way to get past the heavy duty doors.

Lucifer was standing, his eyes distant in a way that showed he was listening to something beyond Chloe’s hearing. “Company soon, if I’m not mistaken.” He turned to her, his eyes passing down her frame and back up, offered her a bittersweet smile. “Well… I imagine we know what’s going to happen next.”

He’s so tall. Chloe looked him over, seeing all the damage he had, the sag of his wings and shoulders. Six foot three of Devil, and supernaturally strong. But he looks and is built like a human, save for the wings. He’s human enough.

Chloe felt how tense her frame was. She swallowed, then nodded, flexing her hands. One. Two. Three. “Okay, help me with the bed.”

“The bed?”

Chloe didn’t wait for him. She started the pull on the frame, angling it out so the corner of each end touched the wall, leaving a triangular space behind it. She then rapidly threw the pillow and blankets into the triangle. “Okay,” she ordered. “Get over here and flip it on its side.”

“Detective, this isn’t going to stop-.”

“Lucifer! Trust me and just do it!”

She hadn’t meant to snap at him, but it did at least surprise him into obedience. He picked the bed up with one hand, easily knocking it onto its side. The bang was startling.

“Now wha-? Detective!” he complained when she started pushing him toward the corner.

“Don’t argue with me right now. Get behind there.”

“That bloody hurts,” he whined, even as he did so.

Chloe could hear movement outside the front door. They were out of time. Lucifer stilled in the corner, holding his breath apprehensively as Chloe stepped behind the bed as well. She kicked at
the pillow on the floor, took a deep breath as she eyed his wings where they brushed either wall. The archangel was looking down at her, lips parted, looking like he wanted to say a thousand things. “Chloe, I…”

She gripped Lucifer’s shoulders. He went quiet as she met his dark eyes that she loved so much. “I want you to remember one thing.” Lucifer searched her face, looking far too sad and anxious in equal measures. She pursed her lips, then pushed him over just a few inches. He went, blinking when she let go of his shoulders. “I’m doing this for your own good.”

Lucifer’s mouth open, head tilting.

Chloe turned, put her fist against her palm and elbowed him in the bottom of his solarplex. One.

Lucifer was not expecting it. All the breath left him as he doubled over. Chloe steeled herself against how rotten she felt and used her lower center of gravity to circle the outside of his leg with hers and twisted her hip and knee. Two.

Lucifer went down, knee landing square into the pillow she’d placed there. Chloe didn’t wait. The next step was tricky. She grabbed the surprised archangel’s arm in both her hands, locked his wrist, pushed his thumb up and bent his elbow up over his shoulder. Lucifer tilt back against the corner with a sharp sound in his throat. She snaked her other arm in, locked her thumb against his, then turned so she was facing out, her back to him with his thumb and wrist still locked tightly against her arm and grip at the small of her back. Three.

Lucifer made a pained sound. She eased up on his thumb some. “Sorry, sorry. You okay?”

“No,” Lucifer squeaked. The rest came out in a rushed gasp. “But I think I’m aroused. What on Earth are…?”


Lucifer’s anxiety clearly spiked at the three guns aimed their way. “Detective.” Lucifer tried to move. “Detective, don-Ah!”

“Sorry,” Chloe whispered again, pressure firm on his thumb. She was certain if Lucifer truly wanted to, he could get out of the hold quickly. If it meant hurting her.

He wouldn’t hurt her.

Chloe took deep breaths, trying to keep herself calm as she looked at the men circling in and Lucifer struggled for leverage. They couldn't get too close because of the toppled bed.

“Move,” M demanded, trying to get a shot on the archangel grimacing on his knee behind her.

“No,” Chloe said firmly, brow lowering.

“We don’t want you, just the beast,” M stated, still trying to get a shot around her.

Chloe narrowed her eyes, voice low. “You’ll have to go through me.”

“Chloe!” Lucifer was starting to twist. His own wings were hindering his movements. He finally managed to turn enough to grasp at her fingers. Chloe pulled up on his arm behind her back,
placing pressure on his wrist. “Augh! Dammit, Detective!”

“Hold still, Lucifer,” Chloe commanded.

She expected the voice to come over the coms. It still made her stomach flip when Pierce’s flat tone sounded over the speakers. “Decker, move.”

“You’ll have to make me.”

Lucifer was tying to get his knee under himself. “Detective, listen to him! You can’t shield me fro-mmmnn!”

Chloe had heel kicked the inside of his knee and redoubled the pressure on his thumb to keep him down. He slapped at the wall, both with his hand and his left wing.

“Sorry,” she breathed out, keeping her eye on the men, readjusting her weight to swivel and meet them when they tried to fan around to the other side. She glared at them the entire while, keeping herself close to the Devil.

“Want us to rush her, Boss?” T asked.

“Stand by.” Pierce instructed.

“You okay?” Chloe whispered behind herself.

“No,” Lucifer hissed back. Chloe felt his hand on her fingers again, frantically trying to push hers off. Chloe tried to maintain her grip, but Lucifer was starting to succeed despite her efforts. She was still watching the men as they paced side to side, trying to figure out if they could get an angle at the Devil.

Pierce’s voice came over the coms again. “You have become a serious pain in my ass, Decker. I’ll give you one last chance to walk away from him, or you go down with him. You have until the count of three.”

Chloe’s heart lurched in her chest. She wished she felt braver, didn’t feel the wash of fear. She knew her course of action, though, and still shook her head. “I won’t let you touch him.”

“One.”

Lucifer sounded like he was pleading with her. “Chloe…!” The Detective forced herself to squeeze her grip as hard as she could on his too-warm hand. She heard him bite down on a groan. The sound made a guilty knife slide through her guts, but she still held on, even as the lights flared brighter overhead, the illumination painful after so long in the darkness.

“Two.”

Lucifer was struggling to get a foot under himself. Chloe’s resolve went iron hard when M lunged forward a step. She planted her center mass in front of his gun. M glared at her, even as the lights flared far too bright overhead again. A few of them popped and darkened. “I’ll shoot through you,” M threatened.

“M,” Pierce warned.

Chloe tilt her chin up. “No. You won’t,” she said firmly.

Lucifer was trying to stand up, pulling her arm and hand with, fingers prying at her last stubborn,
sweating finger. Her hand ached from strain. More of the lights flared and audibly popped as they went out. The archangel growled behind her, something guttural and inhuman. The remaining lights were blaring.

“You won’t dare.” Chloe continued. “Because if you miss, if you don’t take him down the same moment, or if you dare so much as nick me trying to hurt him…!”

Lucifer broke her hold. The brilliance crescendoed, and lights burst, popping, glass cracking, and leaving a sudden quiet dimness behind. Only a few of the lights remained on the far edges of the room, sputtering for life. She could hear the men shuffling in the fallen dimness, uncertain as their eyes adjusted.

“There will be Hell to pay,” Chloe breathed.

“Hold your fire! Decker!” Pierce’s tone was full of warning.

Red. She could see red washing across the room. She felt more than heard the wings circling in around her as Lucifer rose to his feet. Chloe held her hands up and out, gently bracing them from coming around her completely. They were uncomfortably warm, almost too hot against her human palms. A glance to the side and she could see glowing fissures between the wing feathers, fiery colors illuminating the fronds.

“Decker.” Pierce was still trying to get her to step away.

Chloe felt the hand on her waist. The Detective didn’t have to look down to know it was red skin against her belly. She took a deeper breath, pulled her will together, then stepped back closer to the tall body that emanated heat like a fire at her back. Lucifer’s other hand spread atop her sternum, a warm brand protecting her heart. She still kept her hands out against the wings. The palms were turning a painful red, but adrenaline made it not matter. Chloe kept her gaze on the men, seeing them stare toward the red glow. They were backing away.

“That’s three, Decker.”

“Don’t.” Adamant. Inhuman. A voice like stone and dark thunder. The sound shuddered through Chloe and sent her hair rising. An instinctive fear washed down her spine and dropped cold in her belly. She held very still as feathers bristled on either side of her angrily. “You. Dare. Touch. Her.”

So that’s the Lord of Hell. Now Chloe could understand how the man had kept order among demons. Her glib, goofy, erratic partner was, indeed, the Devil.

Pierce made a frustrated sound. “Men, fall back. I’m currently on my way and will take care of the situation. Permanently.”

All three were too eager to go. They backed out, guns trained toward the towering inferno of restrained rage hovering protectively behind the frailer mortal. The door closed. Whirred. Clanked.

Chloe could hear Lucifer breathing close to her ear. The few surviving lights made pitifully dim, erratic flutters. The Detective closed her eyes, swallowed and drew her hands from the wings.

She was slow to turn to face him. Red hands slid lightly about her frame. Chloe tilt her head up, breath tight in her chest.

Black eyes with glowing red irises stared down at her. “Detective.” His voice was back to normal, that precise non-rhotic accent thick with displeasure. “I'm upset.”
Ella answered the phone when it rang. She didn’t even get a hello out before Daniel started speaking. “Ella! Pierce managed to get out of L.A., and he’s heading Chloe and Lucifer’s direction.”

“Oh, well, we’re way ahead of him.”

“No, you’re not. He’s on a private jet loaded with guys, and pretty sure they’re not going to stop in Sacramento. So you need to get there and get out before he reaches the place, because everyone he took with him is armed to the teeth.”

Ella looked over at Mazikeen. The demoness’ jaw set and she planted the gas pedal to the floor.
Linda sipped her third cup of coffee, watching Trixie as she spooned three heaping scoops of sugar into her own heavily-creamy coffee and stirred.

_Not my circus. Not my Monkey._

Besides, she was confident the studies on how coffee affected children had been exaggerated. “So you don’t need me to call the school or anything?”

“Nope.” Trixie dragged the cup to herself, leaning down to sip at the edge where the liquid teetered dangerously close to spilling over. “They're aware what's going on. I’ll get Dad to stop by and grab my homework. There won't be much. It's end of the year. Besides, if I’m at school I won’t know what’s happening.”

“That’s perfectly reasonable,” Linda agreed. She looked at her phone, eyeing the latest texts. “I hope everyone is doing okay.”

The phone ringing and vibrating against the expensive marble countertop made her jump. She snatched it up, looking at the caller id. “Speak of the, well… Demon.”

Trixie smirked. Linda put the phone to her ear. “Maze, are you all right?”

“Yeah, but we’re almost to the coordinates and Dan’s phone is busy. Is he at the penthouse?”

“Ah, no, it’s just Trixie and I here.”

“Dammit. Tell him he needs to call me. We need that fucking code. Ella’s getting jumpy about playing with bombs.”

Linda could hear Ella complaining in the background. “Ay! Excuse me for getting jitters! It’s not like I can pull a Dark Star on them, and they’re strapped to my friends!”

“She has a point, Maze. I’m nervous and I’m not going anywhere near them.”

“Whatsoever. If you see Dan, tell him to give me a call.”

Trixie raised her brows as Linda looked at the phone after Mazikeen hung up. She jumped when it rang and vibrated again. She swiped at the button. “Hello?”

“Linda, it’s Dan. Can you get a hold of Mazikeen? I just got off the phone with Agent Carney and wanted to give her an update, but her phone is busy and went to voicemail.”
Linda and Trixie traded a look.

Several texts and calls later, Linda and Trixie had a group conference call arranged.

“Okay, just so we’re clear,” Linda announced. “If you need to contact any one of us, call into this conference number with the code in your texts, or just text to the group chat I created. If you stay on the line, just mute yourself when appropriate.”

“Thank you, Dr. Martin.”

“You’re welcome. You’re… Agent Carney?”

“Yes. I suppose we haven’t truly met yet. You were asleep when I stopped by earlier.”

Linda felt mildly embarrassed. “Well, hopefully I’ll meet you when I’m more conscious in person, soon.”

Mazikeen cut in. “Linda, save the fucking pleasantries. Has the smear gotten the codes we need yet?”

Linda was tempted to chide Mazikeen, but Agent Carney responded, unperturbed. “They’re being worked on. I’m keeping an eye on him.”

Dan spoke up then. “Uh, great. I’ll check back in to the local authorities up North to see if they can back you and Ella up.”

Agent Carney responded, “Afraid not, Detective Espinoza. We need a specialized team to handle the situation there.”

“A specialized… We don’t have time to put that together! Pierce is on his way there now, and the two of them won’t stand a chance against how many people and firepower he’s bringing!”

“I’ve already arranged what I can. I’m sorry, but this can’t have a team of local law enforcement on it.”

Mazikeen huffed on the phone. “I don’t need any support anyhow. I just need the damned codes.”

Ella’s voice sounded small. “I… wouldn’t mind more back up?”

“You got me,” Mazikeen stated firmly. "Speaking of which… What is that you’re wearing? A baseball t-shirt with… an octopus?”

“It’s a kraken.”

“Huh… Guess it is. Take it off.”

Linda blinked. No one else said anything either, simply listening to the two arguing.

“What, no! This is a lucky shirt!”

“And it’s not nearly badass enough for this situation, so take it off and in my bag is…”

“Maze! Watch the road!”

“I would if you’d just get out of the flimsy piece of cotton and into-!”
There was a brief sound of tires shrieking. “Oye! Okay, okay, shirt’s coming off! Just drive and I’ll get the bag!”

Linda looked to Trixie, who had a hand over her mouth. Linda was quite certain she was trying not to laugh.

There was another unfamiliar voice echoing through someone’s phone. Linda guessed it was Smudge by process of elimination. “Ladies, normally I’d be all about listening to this, but genius at work?”

Daniel sighed. “God, we’re so screwed.”

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Red and black eyes. Craggy, red skin. A hairless head deep with scars. His wings were a ripple of dark fire seething under feather and skin, brighter where he was still healing and feathers were still growing back. The break in his right wing was a black, charred line marring the ripples of light.

Chloe was sweating from the heat as she stared up at the Devil, her lips parted and her eyes wide as they flicked over him, over his wings, back to his glowing eyes.

“Lucifer…” She didn’t know where to go after that. She swallowed.

“How could you…!” The wings shivered, feathers raised high.

Chloe flinched minutely at his harsh tone. She hurried to explain, gaze dropping to where his hands were curled like claws. He was holding the one she had manipulated closer to his middle, where she had elbowed him. “You said it yourself. An injury is better than something worse.”

“And if they had shot you! What then!” The aggressiveness in his body language was intimidating. He will not hurt me, she reminded herself. “I knew they were going to shoot you, kill you, or take you away. So I did what was necessary.” Lucifer made a sound, like a breathy growl. His fingers were flexing. “I’m… sorry for hurting you. I didn’t enjoy hurting your hand and ribs, I just couldn’t…”

“You think I’m upset because of my hand? Break my fucking hand! I couldn’t give a damn about that!”

Chloe looked to where his hands curled. It was easier than seeing all the rage and pain in his face. Yet he wasn’t angry about the physical pain she’d put him through. “Then…?”

“LOOK AT ME, Detective!” She did, startled gaze flying up to him. Lucifer was glaring. It was fierce to see, with his marred brow. He bit his words out, yellowed teeth gnashing on each word. “Do I look like I need protecting? I’m the Devil! I don’t need-!”

Chloe hated that when she argued she tended to cry. She was still shaking from adrenaline, upset for him and at his ire with her. Tears spilled when she stared him down. “YOU are my partner!” She repeated herself, words weaker as her eyes danced over the Devil’s face. “YOU are my partner. And yes, you’re the Devil, but they were going to shoot you, and I can’t lose you, not if I can stop it.” She wiped at her tears angrily, gaze fixing back on his.
Seeing her tears seemed to take the hot billow of rage out of his sails. He stared down at her, red and black eyes reptilian still. Chloe searched the unfamiliar face, trying to see past the red skin and scars, try to see the Lucifer she knew. Some things were still the same. Nose and ears, even the eye shape, though the coloring and the sharper angle of the hairless brow made it more difficult to see the tells she was used to finding. But they were still there if she considered the foreign features more carefully. A certain hold in his bit-together teeth, the edge of his eyes, even the flare of his nostril.

_I’m upset._

He was _hurt_.

She sniffed hard before continuing. “You’re… not angry that I nearly broke your thumb. You were afraid I was going to get hurt… and you’re hurt because you feel like I betrayed your trust.” Chloe closed her eyes, releasing a breath. “You… feel like I lied to you.”

When she opened her eyes, she saw that had struck the correct note. The Devil was staring at her, aghast. The eyes were no less red and black, but the inferno that seemed to light them was now a glitter of the pain that had spurned his harsh tone first. His feathers were no longer trembling, and he was leaning back from her, blinking at her as though she were a strange, new creature he hadn’t seen.

“Lucifer.” She took a second to steady herself. She ached for him when he was like this, all bristling edges trying to push people away when he was vulnerable feeling. She tried to step closer.

The Devil backed away from her, tall frame thumping quietly into the wall. The fire was simmering out in his wings as he looked away, face a fearsome, hard mask, as though he could make her go away by ignoring her.

“Listen, I would have liked to have told you what I intended to do. But I was afraid you wouldn’t have gone along with it. I was afraid I’d have to watch you get hurt or killed, and I… would rather you be angry at me and never speak to me again than watch that. I think… I _know_ were our positions reversed, you would have done the same.”

Quiet settled between them, full of only their breathing as the honestly sat between the apologetic and the hurt. Lucifer’s brows were bent back, his breathing shallow. Chloe’s eyes traced the gruesome scarring that ribboned along the edges of his temples to his ear. It looked like he had been burned, baked till his skin was broken leather.

Her question was quiet. “Does this face hurt?”

He blinked again, eyes swiveling back to her. “Hurt?” he repeated.

“Yeah, it’s…” She reached up. He flinched. Chloe pursed her lips, pausing. He looked like he wanted to sink into the wall to get away from her, but at the same time couldn’t look away from her. Chloe half expected Lucifer to snatch at her wrist like he had before. This time he seemed to fight himself away from the impulse, holding so still even his red and black eyes fixed to non-moving points. Chloe touched the side of his face softly. His cheek felt fever hot under her still-stinging palm. The skin was just as bumpy and ridged as it looked, rough and callous under her trailing fingers.

She felt at the deeper scar on the corner of his head. “This doesn’t hurt?”

The Devil swallowed thickly. “No… Not physically.”
“And this is how you see yourself?”

Lucifer was trying to breathe evenly. She recognized the discomfort and hurt feeling from before, when she’d rubbed oil into his skin. The nod he gave was barely there. He tried to quirk a smile, fall back to humor to hide under. “Not my prettiest side.”

*He needs honesty right now.* So Chloe took a breathe, and gave him that. “No, it’s really not.”

Lucifer scoffed softly, seeming to retreat into the familiarity of that reaction. Chloe didn’t allow him to, pursuing him before he went far. “You said you were furious when you were abandoned to Hell. But, Lucifer, if this is how you see yourself, you were also hurt. You look like you were burned and cut all over.” Chloe reached up with her other hand. That panic was back in Lucifer’s red and black eyes, trying to lean from her, but in the corner, he had nowhere to go. His black-nailed hands lifted, open and threatening near her wrists, but he didn’t grab her as the Detective’s thumb skated over his cheek bone.

“You weren’t just angry and feeling monstrous. You felt hurt and betrayed, didn’t you.” She kept her hands firm when he tried to turn away. “And I just made you feel the same, and I’m sorry. Lucifer. I’m sorry I made you feel that way. But I am not sorry for fighting so I wouldn’t lose you.”

That shiver was back in his cooled wings, but for an entirely different reason. His voice cracked as he finally touched her wrists, but not to grab or push them away. “I could have lost you,” he finally said, slumping against the wall as all remaining fight left him. A final sizzle passed through his skin, and she felt it shiver under her hands as smooth, beige skin, stubble and hair took the place of rough scars. “Don’t you see, Detective? …Chloe. I’m the Devil. If something were to happen to you, I would never be able to see you again. I couldn’t... go to you.”

The red skin and burning were gone, leaving the dark haired and dark eyed angel leaning back in the corner, looking wrung out and aching. Chloe kept her hands on his cheeks. “Lucifer, it’s the same if you die.” Chloe moved into his space, forehead leaning up against his. “This was our best chance. We need to fight for our best chance, no matter who has to stand in the way.” When he was quiet, she pressed gently. “Okay?”

“Okay…” He cleared his throat, sniffing, then tried to force his usual devil-may-care air into his tone. "But I get to hate it.”

Chloe laughed with him, unhappy and short. “Agreed. We can both hate it.”

She slid her hands down past the awful collar on his neck, down to his arms. She noticed how Lucifer still breathed shallowly, thought about how she’d elbowed his torso when he already had so much damage on his ribs. “Come on. Sit down. We’re going to stay in the corner. Best defensive position right now.”

Lucifer did so, glad to get off his feet. He was holding his hand, rubbing at his abused joints in a testing manner. Chloe knelt close to him, alert to the exposed angles of the room as he flexed his hand. “I really don’t deserve you, you know,” Lucifer finally whispered.

“Well, I’ve seen what you think you deserve. We’re just going to have to agree to disagree.”

He gave a short laugh. He held his less abused hand out. Chloe slipped hers readily into his much larger one. “All right. What’s the plan now, Detective?”

“Now?” Chloe pulled in a deeper breath. “We wait.”
Mazikeen didn’t like the situation the instant they came around the hill and saw the small valley. Once it was probably a rich little farm or ranch. Now barren fields lay all around the house, the topsoil long eroded to only offer home to hardy shrubs. The paved road was a gray, featureless strip cutting a straight line through the dirt toward the dwelling. A few stunted cedar trees huddled around the building, little siblings to the much healthier dark green tufts clinging to the softer hill slopes around them. They were too scattered to offer much in the way of cover.

There was no way to approach the house without being seen if anyone was on the lookout for company.

The house in question was a simple, but large cabin with a covered deck wrapped around two of its sides. A single rocking chair sat on the porch near the door. No paint adorned the logs, just well varnished wood. A few, small structures dotted the land around it. A grayed, broken husk of what was once a barn lay a stone throw from the house. Remnants of an old rock wall traveled between the two. The newest structures seemed to be the solar panels on the roof and the three wind turbines towering over the single-story structure. Two of them were turning steadily, while one didn’t at all.

Mazikeen frowned, the car balked atop the hill as she studied the terrain.

“Not very promising.” Ella noted, obviously thinking along the same lines. She was wearing a leather vest now with fishnet sleeves. The neck was high, and a metal ring hung at her throat at the zipper's zenith. It was a little too big on her tiny frame, but Mazikeen was pleased to see her in it. “I don’t see any vehicles, though. Maybe… no one’s guarding?”

“Pierce will have a guard,” Maze declared. “Something. It won’t be that simple.” She lift her chin, mouth slightly open as she looked between the house and the half-collapsed remains of the barn. “There isn’t any vegetation going from the house to the barn. You’d think something that wore down would be left to the elements. Pretty sure there are tracks there.”

“You can see that far?”

The demoness gave her a look.

Ella sat back, smiling while nodding to herself at the surreality of it. “Cool. You’re like Supergirl.”

Mazikeen frowned, shaking her head. “I can’t… shoot lasers out of my eyes.”

“Wait.” Ella’s face lit up. “Does that mean you’ve watched Supergirl?”

“I’m not admitting anything that’s going to make you geek out. Situation. Focus. There’s probably a vehicle in the half-ass tumble of splinters over there, or one could easily be hidden behind the cabin. Also notice how off grid this fucking place is?”

Ella went right back to studying the valley. “Pretty impressive, really. That looks like a well or pump house, with the coils of wire just sitting around it? And those are… underground vents! See? They’re the little stove pipe looking hats sticking in the ground.”
Agent Carney’s voice came over their phones. “Underground facility would make the most sense. Back up can be there in an hour.”

“Pierce will be here by then. We gotta go in now.”

Ella nodded nervously, her dark pony tail bobbing. “Okay, yeah. So, what’s our move?”

Mazikeen huffed through her nostrils, staring down at the house. “Looks like we’re going to knock and see.”

A chorus of “be careful!” clogged the phone speakers.

“Yeah, yeah. Grab my duffel out of the backseat again, will ya?”

Ella’s mouth twisted to one side. “You do know how heavy that thing is, right?” When the demoness shot her another look, Ella just obeyed, muttering in Spanish.

When they neared the cabin, Ella was wide eyed. “Okay, this isn’t nerve wracking at all. Are you nervous? I’m not nervous. No. Mierda. I’m way nervous!”

“You are going to stay in the car with your gun and only peep out to shoot if you’re approached by anyone hostile.”

Dan spoke up. “She’s correct, Ella. You’re the only one who might be able to figure out any locks and how to get them out, so you can’t go down.”

Linda spoke up. “Plus, we’d all be very upset.”

Ella perked up. “Aww, I love you guys, too!”

Mazikeen heard Trixie’s voice pipe up. “You stay safe, too. Give them Hell, Maze.”

“You got it, kiddo.” They were almost to the house. Mazikeen unplugged her phone from the charger. “Everyone mute unless you really need to say something. I gotta concentrate.”

Agent Carney sounded. “Good luck.”

Multiple murmurs gave similar sentiments, and then the phones went quiet. Ella looked at the leather vest with all its pockets, finally dropped her phone into one on the chest. Mazikeen unceremoniously stuffed her phone against her breast so only the tip of it was peeking out.

She kept the car hood facing the cabin when she parked, more confident that the engine would protect Ella if she needed to duck under the dash. The forensics scientist was holding her breath, looking at the house. Mazikeen kept the engine running, sheathed a few more knives in her belt as she stepped out of the car, eyes alert for signs of movement as she palmed two throwing knives, flat of the blades against her wrists.

The person who opened the door and stepped out on the porch wasn’t what she expected. He was an older man, with a bushy beard and sharp, sunken hazel eyes. He was built stout, forearms thick and shoulders wide, but wore very civilian clothes, a faded button shirt and khakis.

“What do you want?” He had a well enunciated California accent. “I don’t take visitors, and I don’t have a delivery scheduled.”

Mazikeen didn’t see any weapons on him. She glanced instead to the windows and door. “I’m actually here to pick a few things up.”
“As you can see, not much here.”

Mazikeen was about to retort, but she saw the man’s hand move in front of his wide belly.

Three fingers sideways. He pointed with his thumb once to the window on Mazikeen’s left, then angled to point just to the side of the door, and one to the right window. He then made a gun with his fingers. He continued talking all the while. “So if you’re thinking about trying to rob me, you’ll be seriously disappointed. Now scram.”

*What are you playing at, human?* Mazikeen saw the movement in the window, the black shiny barrel of a gun. She quirked a scarred brow. “And if I don’t?”

The stout man actually smiled. “Well.” He planted his thick hand on the top of the rocking chair’s back that rest just outside the door. “If you don’t…” He abruptly picked up the chair and sent it crashing through the window left of Mazikeen.

Mazikeen raced toward the same window, even as the one to the right shattered from gunshots. At the same time the stout man was swinging the door closed hard as another man stepped out and tried to aim a rifle. It butted the man back quickly, then the stout man flattened himself as much as he was able to against the wall as shots continued to fire from the other window.

Mazikeen was diving through the broken window the chair had gone through just as the man inside was trying to recover. It was darker in the cabin compared to the bright daylight outside, but Mazikeen was an experienced blind-fighter. Her blade flipped out and she stabbed it through the man’s forearm. The gun hit the floor. The two other guys swung their firearms her direction, one by the door, one standing a pace back from the window. The demoness’ hostage shouted as she twisted the blade against bone and tendon, swinging her body behind his as he was forced in front of her.

Shots fired. Flesh thumped. He gave an aborted shout near her ear. Heat curled through her core at it.

Damn, she loved the sound of the dying.

The door opened, a thick arm snatching in for the rifle, pulling it down and to the side, and the other man partly out of the house with it. With only one target left unoccupied, Mazikeen flung her other knife out. It thunked when it sank into his shoulder, making his shot fire wide. Mazikeen wrenched her blade from the dead human shield’s arm and raced forward. She clotheslined the man down, and he was still falling as she crouched down and swung her blade into the back of his knee.

His scream sent new thrills down her spine, her belly fluttering with excitement. She turned, kicking the twice-stabbed fallen guy’s gun away and stalking to where the stout man was wrestling with his opponent. They had the rifle between them, both fighting to control it. Mazikeen’s unexpected ally shoved on the rifle and crunched the other man’s nose in. Mazikeen reached him before he fell back, grabbing the broken-nosed’s collar and flinging him backward forcefully into the table.

“Oh.” The older man was panting. “Thank you for the help.” He had an accent now, something southern slavic.

“Who the fuck are you?” Mazikeen asked, keeping her eyes on him even as her heels clicked across the wooden floor toward the man rolling amongst the broken table pieces with a groan.
“Ah yes. Introductions. I’m Caretaker.” He didn’t flinch at all when the demoness kicked the fallen man pointedly in the face. He went limp with unconsciousness. The other man was screaming about his leg, cursing and calling Mazikeen a number of unseemly names as she approached him. “Mazikeen, I presume? You must be here for the Devil and the Detective. Pleasure to meet you.”

Mazikeen grinned, even as she set her foot atop the hilt protruding out of the thug's shoulder. The names he called her broke off into a breathless sound of pain. “Pleasure’s mine right now.” She licked her teeth briefly. “Where are they?”
Hello, darklings!

This chapter might be a rough one for some of you. However, we get to see some people being Big Damn Heroes. I'll try to get the next chapter out asap so you're not left too long in suspense. Um. No spoilers. We can always discuss in comments after.

Also, please feel free to correct Ella's Spanish if I got it incorrect, and I will definitely make the needed edit.

Much love, sugarplums! Enjoy.

Ella stared at the safe.

Mazikeen looked between her and the safe, shifting her annoyed gaze back and forth. "Well?"

"Well." Ella glanced up from where she knelt on the office floor in front of the steel box that was three feet tall. It was smoothly embedded into the wall, cement raw around its edges. "This is a custom made dual lock safe."

"So can you get into it?"

Caretaker was busily pulling levers above the windows. Rough slats of wood fell down behind the glass. Each one made a hard clap of sound as they fell, the cabin getting increasingly dark as the sunlight was blocked out. "We will have to somehow. The dead switch bomb is in there, and the two can't come aboveground without it. They will walk out of range."

Mazikeen scowled "Can't we just drag the whole safe out of the wall, then?"

Caretaker shook his head as he passed the room's door. He was loading bullets into one of the guns he’d taken off their two gagged and bound bad guys. "I kept valuables for rather unsavory sorts. My having vaults that are hard to get into is the reason the Sinnerman came to me in the first place. You would need to dig that one out of the wall first, and we haven't the time."

Ella glanced at the office's entrance as he passed by again. "So you are like a goblin running a Gringotts for criminals!"

Caretaker's voice echoed distantly from his kitchen. "I haven't the foggiest what you mean, Miss. I'm a keeper and I take care of things!"

Mazikeen motioned with both hands to the vault. "So even if we get this shit hunk of metal open and get the bomb out, how are we supposed to get it to them without going out of range?"

"Two options," Caretaker announced, slightly out of breath as he hurried back from barricading his kitchen area. "We can either coordinate with them to walk toward the entrance at the same time with the bombs, which is what they did upon arrival. Or! We have the option of dropping it down to them." He flashed a brief grin through his beard. "We'd just have to hope the drop wouldn't
detonate anything.”

“We'd have to have it out before Pierce arrives and somehow coordinate with them to walk when we do,” Mazikeen asked impatiently. "That's sketchy. Where can we drop it to them?"

Caretaker was setting up ammo on the floor by each window, planting the two hand guns by each. “Straight that way from the back of the house toward the barn. You can’t miss it. Our Devil ripped out some of the cables, so they had to open it up for maintenance and did a hasty job of dropping new wires down to restore the electricity.”

Ella pursed her lips, then started to dig into her tool kit. “Okay, so I need to break both the combination lock and the key lock.” She put on a pair of safety glasses. “In super limited time, then we can run it or drop it down the shaft and hope it doesn’t explode. All right.” She nodded more firmly. “All right!” She looked skyward. “You better be with me on this one, Big Guy. You gave me this brain for a reason right?” She of course didn’t get an answer, but she didn't wait for one. She started pulling the tools out of the dirty duffle she had recovered from her brother’s shop.

Their phones both sounded. It was Agent Carney. “We have one of the codes.”

Mazikeen pulled her phone out of her cleavage eagerly. “Give it to me!” She pointed to Ella. “You, dig that other bomb out of there.” She pointed to Caretaker. “You, don’t let anything happen to her, or I’ll—.”

“You’re a demon, Ms. Mazikeen. I don’t need to imagine to understand any threat from you is serious.” Caretaker pointed. “The entrance to go below is in the barn, down the ramp. Go.”

Mazikeen jut her chin out, nodded firmly and took off, talking into her phone. “What’s the code?”

Ella turned her own phone down to where she could barely hear it. Her lock picks were freed from their tool kit, the forensics scientist intent on going after the key lock first. She listened to Caretaker moving around making preparations behind her. The last thing was him entering the room and noisily dragging the heavy desk away from the office area. It ended up tilted against the front door. Length wise. He was securing it with rope to two metal loops bolted on either side of the door.

When he finally came back into the room, he set up by one of the shuttered windows with the rifle, pulling a slat aside to look through a narrow gap toward the road.

“You are astonishingly well prepared,” Ella noted. “Either you’re a crazy paranoid, or you have been expecting bad company for a long time.”

“The latter, I hope. Crazy paranoids are a dime a dozen.”

Ella was pushing at the lock mechanisms, carefully manipulating for the motion of miniature metal pieces she needed. “…Why did you agree to help us?”

“Hm. I suppose one could say I chose the better of two evils. But I don’t think so.”

Ella blinked. “You… chose the worst of two evils?”

“No, not what I mean, Miss. I mean I just chose the good one. People are rarely fully evil. And our friend below… He could have threatened torture, maiming, friends and family. He could have turned on his promise and hurt me. He could have cursed at us, or manipulated his way free somehow at Ms. Decker's expense. He never did.”
“Well, I gotta tell ya, Lucifer can be pretty threatening when he wants to be.”

“Oh, yes, I have seen that. But you know what he always asked whenever I brought him meals?” Ella glanced up from her work expectantly. “He always asked how the Detective was doing. Oh, one could think he was being possessive, but I’ve seen what possession feigning as love looks like. What those two have... It’s not that.” Caretaker paused, expelling an audible breath. “If the Devil is capable of love, than I can believe there’s hope for us bad people after all. We just have to make better choices, even if it changes all the rules people think they know about us.”

Ella smiled. “That’s… actually pretty great.” Then she smiled wider for a different reason as her tools made a distinct clicking. “Guys, I got the first lock.”

Linda unmuted her phone. She could hear Trixie whooping in the background. “That’s great, Ella!”

“Yeah! I just need to… Um...” Ella paused, listening. “Is… is someone’s phone humming?”

Caretaker answered for her. “That’s not on anyone’s phone, Miss. That’s a plane.”

Ella looked back at the safe, her eyes wide. “Oh, estoy con la soga al cuella.”

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Lucifer watched Chloe rub the liniment into his aching thumb. Her fingers were small, careful as she did what she could for the sprained joint.

When she had suggested it, he hadn’t argued. There was still a piece of him that felt uncomfortable with it, but he was starting to accept that Chloe simply liked helping him feel better. It was part of her goodness. She expected nothing in return. She didn’t even want sex. The Detective was the one person who was entirely immune to his charms, so everything she did with him, for him, was entirely of her own volition. And she still wanted to.

She chose to touch him and care for him. Even after she knew and saw all of his hideousness.

The Detective ran her fingers up his arms, letting the soothing oils sink into his skin and muscle, gentle on the still healing cuts mottled with bruises. Lucifer felt the tangle in him try to stir to battle against the confusion of it all, only to collapse in on itself.

That inner beast in him was too hollowed out, too tired of fighting.

The fallen archangel watched as she dipped her fingers into the tin, then moved her attentions over to the other arm. He remembered the touch of her fingers on his face, the way her eyes had plead for his understanding. How she’d apologized for hurting him when he hadn’t understood why he’d been so upset at what she’d done fully himself.

Lucifer lift his eyes to her face. Chloe’s lashes were low over her blue eyes, intent on her careful work. She had her hair pulled over to one side over her shoulder, a light curtain framing the curve of her cheek. Part of her neck was beautifully exposed in the dim light. She looked soft and attractive, so wonderfully graceful and composed. His heart felt too large for his chest, the bomb too tight on his throat.
I love her. So much.

She glanced up at him, offered him a small smile he readily returned. “Better?”

“Yes.”

She looked at him closer, smile fading to concern. “Are you okay?”

No. And yes. Lucifer opened his mouth, wanting to tell her, to say the words. The other, terrified part weakly tried to get a claw hold on his tongue before his heart spilled out. She was watching him so attentively. Both of her hands were resting on his. The archangel turned his hands upward, palm to palm with her. “Chloe, I…”

BANG! BANG! BANG!

They both jumped. Lucifer’s wing was sheltering Chloe without a thought, the messy, white feathers pressed close against her back. They held their breath in the silence that followed, both staring from the corner toward the door.

Lucifer leaned a little, listening. He could hear a muffled voice, sounding angry and impatient. The banging came again, three hard knocks. A frustrated exclamation, and a different rhythm to the banging started.


By the third banging round, he was forcing his sore body to struggle to its feet. “I know that song!” he exclaimed.

“That’s… Queen’s We Will Rock You.” Chloe sounded entirely baffled.

“Precisely!” Lucifer said, a hope fluttering dangerously in his chest as he stumbled over the toppled bed toward the door.

“Lucifer, what if it’s Pierce and his men?”

Lucifer laughed, feeling giddy. “Do you really think any of them would use one of Brian May’s songs to get me to open the door?”

“Okay, point. But, Lucifer…!”

He was already setting his palm against the door, forcing the power and manipulating the locks to move. Finally the door clanked and he was pulling it open.

Mazikeen stood with her arms folded, chin lowered and frowning. Lucifer stared at her. She looked him up and down, weight tipping her hips the other direction as she scanned his injuries.

“You look like shit.”

“MAZIKEEN!”

She made a surprised sound when he hugged her, ignoring all the pain for all the joy he felt as he picked her up. “You wonderful awful demon! You’re alive!”

Mazikeen sputtered, her hands pushing at his arms in a bid for freedom. “Luce-Fucking-You-I’m pissed at you is what I am! Put me down!”
He did so, still grinning widely. Mazikeen tottered on her heels briefly, then leaned forward and punched him in the arm. "You've had us worried sick!"

"Ow!" Lucifer grabbed at his bruised bicep. "Maaaze!" he complained.

"Oh, yeah, you're squishier right now," she grumped, but didn't apologize. Instead she spied Chloe. She pushed his wing aside and rushed past him. Her hands grabbed the Detective by the upper arms, her eyes wide with concern. "Chloe! Are you okay?"

"Yes! Mazikeen, Pierce said he'd killed you." Chloe hugged her, and the demoness hugged her right back. "I'm so glad you're all right."

The demoness didn’t hug for long, pulling back with a smirk. "Takes more than a dozen men to bring me down. I'm fine." Mazikeen leaned back, scanning over her until her eyes landed on her anklet. "And I have the code to get that off of you."

Lucifer had trailed after the demoness back into the room, still holding his arm. He leaned forward eagerly. "You can remove her bomb?"

Mazikeen was already crouching down by Chloe’s foot, pulling her pant leg up to study the device. She fished her phone out of her cleavage, speaking into it. "Hey, guys, I’m about to remove the bomb." She paused. "Guys?" She looked at her phone. "Shit. Must have gotten disconnected when I came underground." She shook her head. "Never mind. Cross your fucking fingers and toes that Smudge isn’t playing us hardcore…" She reached for the small buttons on the cuff.

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Linda’s voice sounded frantic on the phone. "Maze? Maze! If you can hear us, Pierce is there now!"

Ella winced as the rifle fired again, but continued drilling into the safe. She just needed enough holes so she could hear past the sound dampening around the lock. Caretaker was taking careful shots at the approaching men, doing his best not to waste any bullets. The firepower outside was much louder, constant cracks of rapid fire battering into the cabin.

Daniel was trying to get her attention. "Ella, are you all right?"

"No, I need everyone to mute now so I can get this last lock!" She tossed the drill aside in frustration.

The phone went silent. Caretaker set the rifle down and hurried toward the far window, trying his best to keep the men from flanking the cabin. Gunshots continued popping and cracking as Ella pressed her headphone close to her ear, enhancing the sound on the stethoscope like sensor even further as she pressed it over the holes. She took a deep breath, trying to block out all other sound, everything else trying to crowd her head.

*I have one job. One task. I just have to listen.*

The gunshots fell into the background as she narrowed her focus. The sound was so loud in her ear it stung her eardrum. *Click. Click. ...Clack...*
She heard faintly in the background as Caretaker moved to another station, shots coming more rapidly till the gun in his hand clicked. He moved over to the rifle again, shoving more ammo into it before taking quick aim.

\textit{Click. Click. Click. Click.... Clack.}

The rifle clicked, out of ammo. Caretaker leaned over her. His accented voice was quiet, but urgent. “Miss? We have to go.”

\textit{Click. Click. Click. Click. Click.... Clack.}

Ella opened her eyes, releasing her held breath. She pulled the headphones from her sore ears while her other pushed on the button.

The safe door swung open. The bomb sat directly in the middle in the cradle that held the dead switch down, a heavy black casing with a long handle on one side about the size of a water bottle.

She looked up at Caretaker’s bearded face, grinning. “I got it!”

\textit{BOOM!}

The front door exploded. Caretaker fell to his knee over her. He was only stunned for a second before his meaty hand grabbed the bomb inside from its cradle, hand firm over the switch. He instantly hauled Ella to her feet. “Movemovemove,” he ordered, quick and quiet.

Ella had to struggle with the heavy vest to reach her small colt mustang, just managing to pull the handgun free as they hurried out of the office, smoke stinging their eyes and powder hot in their nostrils. Men were trying to push past the wreckage of the desk still partially blocking the exploded door. Gunshots fired. Ella thumbed off the safety and fired back. Three shots, and Caretaker pulled on her arm, hurrying her through the kitchen area, immediately pulling her left as bullets whizzed by.

“The backdoor is barricaded. This way.” He pulled her into a small bathroom, shut the door and locked it.

Ella stared at him, nearly stumbling over the bathtub rim. Her breaths were coming in fast panicked jerks. He lumbered across the small room like an angry bear to the small window. The muffled sounds of men calling to each other as the shots died down was too loud outside the bathroom door.

“You’re bleeding!” Ella exclaimed.

Caretaker didn’t even spare a glance her way or bother to check on the two shots in the back of his thick shoulder. Blood turned the right side of his shirt increasingly red. Instead he pushed the wood up from the bathroom window, checked outside quickly. “This way. You can fit.”

“What about you?”

“Miss.” Caretaker looked at her sternly with his deep-set, hazel eyes. He lifted the bomb held in his hand, stepping so his back was to the door. “You \textit{have} to get this down the maintenance shaft. Do you have something to hold the handle down?”

“Um…!” Ella looked with wide eyes, then quickly grabbed at her ponytail with one hand. She pulled her hair tie out hurriedly and started to wrap it just above his hand. His knuckles had been scraped as some point. His hand was steady compared to her shaky ones. "Okay, there!"
Caretaker released the handle, both of them watching carefully. The hair tie held, the handle pressed down tightly.

Someone banged on the door. She turned and fired through it. There was a shout of pain on the other side. Four shots Click. She looked at her gun and cursed in Spanish.

The thick man handed the bomb over to her, taking her empty firearm away and setting it on the bathroom counter. He crowded her over to the window. “Foot,” he ordered. “Soon as you’re out, keep your head down and run alongside the wall.”

Ella put her small sneaker into his large hand. Then he was boosting her up.

Shots fired through the bathroom door.

Ella cried out as Caretaker’s frame jerked and he grimaced. Then she gave another surprised sound as he pushed her.

She hit the rough ground outside hard, breath knocked from her and the bright light of outside glaring into her eyes. Her elbow burned, and her wrist twinged. Shots were still firing in the house. People’s voices were a loud cacophony coming from her phone in the leather vest’s breast pocket. She’d lost her headphones somewhere in the fray. She still had her safety goggles on.

You have to get to the shaft.

Ella looked around wildly for the bomb. It had landed right by her. She grabbed it up and scrambled to her feet. Her lungs burned as she rushed along the stone wall. There weren’t anymore gunshots, at least, but she heard men calling. The small scientist came to the end of the wall, looking at the distance to the pump house and the coils of wire still on the floor. People were trying to get her attention still on the phone.

“Hang on,” she panted. She wasn’t sure if she was talking to those on the phone, her friends below her, or to herself. “Just hang on.” She took a deeper gulp of air and sprinted.

No shots. She made it. She thumped into the side of the pump house building to stop, then scrambled over the top of the shaft that was open. Wires and pipes snaked down into the small opening, disappearing into the darkness below. Ella checked to be sure her hair tie was still tight, and…

“STOP.”

Ella froze, wide eyes staring up.

Pierce was walking along the wall, handgun held steady in front of himself.

Her former boss. A person Ella had once fanatically admired. Who had sometimes been nice to her. Was now aiming at her with the same gun he’d killed Charlotte with.

“Put it down,” he ordered, all steel and calm in one, his eyes cold and expectant.

Ella held her palm forward, her other hand holding the bomb up over the opening. “Don’t shoot!”

Pierce hesitated, eyes narrowing on her. Other men were gathering behind him. He held a hand up to halt their progress. They did so, not moving, only aiming and watching.

“Ella,” Pierce said, lowering his gun. He had his other hand even with the ground now, blue eyes
watching her closely. “You don’t have to die here.” Ella’s small hand adjusted its grip on the bomb nervously. She was still breathing too fast, her palms sweaty. “Just put that on the ground, and I’ll let you walk.”

Ella felt time slow. *He’s lying.* She could hear her pulls of breath and pulse heavy in her own ears. Could feel the breeze in her loose hair, see the bead of sweat on Pierce’s temple. Could hear the wind turbine turning high above her, reaching into the sky and catching soft breezes to feed the electricity below. She looked into the deep hole that went down, down, to the friendly Devil with his quick wit and Chloe with her clever mind and determination to protect the innocent, a person of steel and softness all in one.

Ella took one more breath, and straightened her fingers.

The bomb plunged into the darkness below.

Pierce released an exasperated breath. His jaw clenched in frustration as he raised the gun and fired.

The shot hit Ella in the chest and knocked her small body off its feet. Pierce glared toward the barn remnants, already walking. “We’re going below. Reload all your weapons.”

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Linda stood up abruptly. “ELLA!”

Trixie was staring with wide eyes at the phone, barely breathing. Then she heard Linda make a small sound in her throat, and looked over just in time to see her collapse to the floor.

“Linda!” She was down on the floor in an instant.

Everyone else on the phone was silent.
Hello, my dear, dear darklings!

... I don't have any preamble for this chapter. Enjoy.

All three of them held their breath as Mazikeen pressed the tiny buttons on the bulky anklet. Chloe could feel the end of Mazikeen’s high ponytail brushing against the top of her foot, the small pressure of the cuff around her ankle as the bounty hunter pressed at it.

There was a second where nothing happened.

A beep. The green light blinked. The cuff clicked. Mazikeen released a breath and tugged on it.

The anklet released easily and the bomb was off and in the daughter of Lilith’s palm.

Lucifer looked skyward. “Oh, thank Dad!” Chloe had no warning when he pulled her into his chest with one arm and kissed the top of her head.

She couldn’t help but feel equally relieved and elated. Their chances had just increased. She pat at the solid chest, backing away before looking to Mazikeen expectantly, then to Lucifer’s thick collar that still rest heavily around his neck.

Mazikeen made no move toward it. Chloe frowned. “What about Lucifer’s?”

Mazikeen opened her mouth, then lowered her gaze and shook her head. “I only have the code for the one. But if we go to the surface, I can call and see if they made any progress on that ugly yoke’s code.”

Lucifer rolled his eyes. “You’re too kind, Mazikeen.”

Mazikeen smirked at him. “You take that back.” She nod her head toward the door. “Now come on. They’re supposed to be dropping the third bomb down, then we gotta hightail it out of here before Pierce shows up.”

“Pierce is on his way?” Chloe felt alarmed at that. Lucifer still had a bomb strapped to him. Pierce was closing in on a place that had only one entrance and exit. Their chances had dimmed in her mind considerably.

“Unfortunately.” She led the way out. The thump of her heels echoed down the corridor.

Lucifer’s hand wrapped around hers, fingers slotting in between. His eyes were sparkling with manic excitement, a grin on his face. “Let’s get you out of here, my dear.”

Chloe took note of his not saying ‘us’ or ‘we’. He truly meant just her. Chloe felt even more apprehensive. He still intended to stick to his promise.

Of course he would.
Mazikeen was waiting for them already at the passage leading toward the front. Her dark eyes flit down to their joined hands. She grimaced. “Hand holding, now?”

“I like it,” Lucifer announced haughtily.

“Whatever. I guess it’s about time you two got somewhere. Just… I haven’t had breakfast or lunch, so keep the sap down.”

“No promises,” Lucifer quipped happily.

The utility lights caused their frames to cast long shadows along the walls. Chloe’s slippers shuffled on the floor. Her leg felt strange without the weight of the cuff on it. Lucifer’s bare feet gave quiet pats alongside hers as they followed the hurrying demoness. The Detective did not miss how his right wing listed lower then the left, the dragging feathers hissing softly where they trailed on the floor. Lucifer also did not move as quickly, but at least his pace kept steady.

And he was in high spirits, enough to look down at her abruptly. “Have you ever been to Italy? France? …What about somewhere tropical?”

Chloe fought to not roll her eyes. “Lucifer, later.” The archangel made a small utterance of disappointment. Chloe questioned Mazikeen, a habit formed as a way of pulling Lucifer’s attention back to a case’s details. “You said they were dropping the third bomb down to us?”

“If Ella was able to get the safe open, yeah.”

“Ms. Lopez is here?” Lucifer felt giddy as they walked on. “Oh, I’ve missed that little bundle of optimism!”

“That must mean they’re going to drop it where you pulled the electrical out, Lucifer.”

“Should be,” Mazikeen agreed. “I checked where all the cables are earlier, but it wasn’t there yet. She’s had more time, so fingers crossed.”

“Good. We need to make a stop there anyhow.”

Ahead as the turn to the left and the door leading into the observation areas. Chloe saw what looked like a mass of tentacles at the turn.

Lucifer saw it, too. “Uh! What is that mess?”

Chloe mentally agreed. The wires that had once been neatly coiled above in the ceiling grates were down, cables hanging limply in the corner haphazardly. They had been spliced and heavily taped. Lucifer looked it over critically. “Oh, Caretaker will have a fit at this hack job.”

Mazikeen checked down the long corridor to their left before looking up at the messy cascade of wire. “Your bearded guy up top? Yeah, he’s been helpful.” She took one thick coil of wire in hand, pulling it to one side and leaning. “I don't see..."

There was a small thump. Mazikeen released a short guffaw. “Nevermind! I see it.” She bit her lip, leaning again to examine at a new angle. “Looks stuck on some of the cables, but I can probably shake it down if I can’t reach it.” She planted her hand into the toppled grate, starting to ease her weight up.

“Good. I need to get some drugs for Lucifer.”
Lucifer released Chloe’s hand to give delighted little claps near his chest. “Excellent! I want the good stuff!”

“What?” Mazikeen dropped back down. “Why are we giving him drugs?”

When Chloe succinctly explained Lucifer’s promise to not attempt escape and thus why he wouldn’t simply walk out of there, the demoness glared. Lucifer tried to smile winningly at her, giving a nervous chuckle.

Mazikeen still slugged him.

“Ah! Hellfire, that’s my other arm!” Lucifer clutched at his bicep. “Oh, it’s going numb…Hnn…”

“You blithering idiot!” Mazikeen growled at him. “Now I have to drag your ass out!”

“Can we pretend I’ve agreed and apologized and get on with it without adding to my bruises?!” Lucifer testily responded.

“I don’t know! Can you not make a stupid deal that-?!”

Chloe was in between them, pushing at their shoulders gently. “Hey. Not the time. He’s been through a lot, so cut him some slack, Mazikeen.” The demoness fell silent, but she still looked thunderous. Chloe redirected their attention elsewhere. “Now, can you get the bomb? Lucifer, doors, please.”

Lucifer sniffed. “For a lady, certainly.”

Mazikeen stuck her tongue out at him the moment Chloe turned toward the door. Lucifer returned the childish gesture, stopping just as Chloe snapped a sharp look up at him and gestured for him to do his thing. They smirked at each other one last time before turning to their tasks.

Honestly, these two were millennia old, and they still…

The archangel rubbed at his tender shoulder once more before pushing a few dangling wires further from the door. His palm smoothed over the cool metal surface, breathing in concentration. Chloe felt that strange charge that seemed to thicken around him as his fingers trembled against the metal. Lucifer had it open in a handful of seconds, swinging it outward. He even tried to bow, sweeping his arm out gallantly. It would have looked like effortless gentry were it not spoiled by his sharp inhale and freezing when he bent over his rib to far.

Chloe spared a glance upward. Mazikeen was already well into the scaffolding to retrieve the bomb, navigating the treacherous tangle as easily as a gibbon. Chloe's anklet bomb dangled easily from her arm as she moved, contorting to twist and look up to study how to best get at the third bomb.

That’s… an actual demon. Her roommate all this time was literal hellspawn. And liked camping on the couch and watching TV with her kid.

Chloe pushed the thought aside to deal with later. She took over holding the door from Lucifer so he could advance. The small room held two other doors. The one to the left would lead to the larger observation room where Lucifer had died yesterday. Chloe pointedly did not look that direction. Instead she watched him manipulate the door that would lead into the room with the filing cabinets, fridge, and screens. It whirred, clanked, and he was pushing it inward, looking to her expectantly.
“Um.” She motioned awkwardly at the door she held. Chloe didn’t want the first one closing just for Lucifer to have to do his trick again. That probably took energy to do.

Lucifer read her body language readily, making a silent ‘ah’ as he turned to face the door, palm pushing against it. He moved his left wing slowly, giving Chloe plenty of time to stoop under it so it could brace the other door outward above her.

“Got it. I got it,” he assured when she didn’t release it immediately.

Chloe pursed her lips, then ducked under the wing and toward the room with the screens.

It looked the same, minus the chair she had broken against the glass trying to get to Lucifer. Chloe pulled the fridge open. Drugs were set on the counter as she read the labels.

“You know,” Lucifer said from where he braced against the doors. “You don’t really have to drug me. Not that I wouldn’t like it, but you can leave the other two bombs with me and walk out.”

“You’d be vulnerable,” Chloe muttered, pulling an unused syringe from its package and setting it down. She was trying to decide on the best combination for the Devil.

“Chloe, that would only be until you’re far enough away. After that, I’d be fine.”

Chloe stared straight ahead, her thoughts circling the information. He was right. So long as they stayed a certain distance, even if Pierce showed up and trapped Lucifer underground, he wouldn’t be able to hurt him. But it required walking away from him and after coming so close to losing him yesterday, she…

Mazikeen dropped heavily from the grating. “Got it!” she said triumphantly, holding the bomb high in her hand and grinning. She walked toward them confidently.

Lucifer pushed the door open wider with his wing for her. “Well done, Mazi-!”

Chloe saw Mazikeen tense mid-step. The demoness was already shifting her weight and frame defensively as her eyes narrowed and teeth bared.

The spray of bullets was deafening in the barren corridor.

Chloe felt her chest stop. Lucifer released the doors immediately. “MAZZ!”

Mazikeen fell and scrambled. She didn’t cry out, just snarled. Lucifer snatched her outstretched arm, wing snapping over her. Feathers and blood spit up from the limb in the brief instant it was exposed in the corridor before he curled his wing back into the small entry room. The demoness was swept in with it into his arms. The Detective dropped everything and rushed to the door between them, holding it open. Chloe couldn’t hear the noise Mazikeen made, but she could see the way her teeth parted angrily. The cacophony of gunfire was too loud.

The door to the corridor swung closed, muffling the ear-splitting ballistics. Mazikeen kicked at the wall furiously before relaxing to pant against Lucifer’s chest. She still had a tight grip on the third bomb.

“How bad…?” Chloe asked breathlessly.

Lucifer was already looking, studying the dark holes that were overspilling with dark blood that lined Mazikeen’s left shoulder, arm, and leg. There was a bullet hole in her hip that he prod at.
The gunfire had stopped. Chloe clearly heard the garbled words that came from Mazikeen’s mouth. They were inhuman in quality, low and raspily growled out.

Lucifer continued prodding. “That’s an awful thing to say about your mother’s nethers, Maze,” he said in distraction. He then looked up swiftly to Chloe. “Nothing vital!”

Chloe had a second of relief. She then heard the whir, ice dropping down her spine. Her whisper was rough. “Lucifer.”

The Devil and demoness noticed the door whirring as well. They stared in silence for only a second before Lucifer scooped under Mazikeen’s arms and hurriedly pulled her backward into the same room as Chloe. Mazikeen kicked their door closed with her good leg just as the other clanked and started to swing outward.

“Shit,” Chloe proclaimed, kneeling down by Mazikeen. Nothing vital may have been hit, but she was bleeding. A lot. She started to search the drawers around them for bandages.

“Detective?” Lucifer asked. She looked up, realized he was looking for direction, what he should be doing. Letting her take point.

Chloe whispered while throwing gauze and ace bandages down to the floor by her knees. “We need to barricade the door. Lucifer, work on that.” She knelt over Mazikeen, studying her wounds as she unwound a package of bandages.

“I’ll be fine,” Mazikeen groused. “Survived worse. Though it’s been a while since I’ve felt a sting like this.” She relinquished her grip on the bomb as Chloe took it from her and set it on the counter above them.

Lucifer was mentally measuring the items in the room, and finally looking at the corner of the entry and the fridge.

“I know you’re tough, Maze. This will just slow the bleeding.” She was quick to start working on tying a tourniquet around the demoness’s thigh.

“Are you getting friendly at a time like this?” Mazikeen asked, flashing her a teasing grin.

“You two,” Chloe quietly chided. She tied the bandage down. Hard. The demoness tipped her head back, her inhale a hiss and teeth snapping together. She released a low noise in her throat when she breathed out and slumped against the filing cabinets, eyes closed.

“Damn,” Mazikeen uttered.

Lucifer was pulling the fridge out from its place against the wall. It was a good pick, heavy, wouldn’t give, and would wedge against the counter and door well. He grimaced with pain the entire time. Chloe looked at the back of his left wing. Red had clawed its way through the feathers once more, some beads of scarlet still rolling down to patter on the floor.

“Lucifer, your wing…” She fastened more bandages around Mazikeen's arm.

“Yes, yes, I got winged in the wing,” Lucifer said. He grinned despite their harrowing situation. “It’s had worse. I can still move-.”

“Drop something?”

They froze as Pierce’s voice echoed loud over the speakers.
Lucifer stopped pushing on the fridge. His spine was apprehensively straight as he turned to look at Chloe.

Her breath sounded far too loud in her own ears. They both looked down at the same time at Mazikeen’s bare arm. Chloe looked to the bomb on the counter, to the one wound on Lucifer’s neck. “Where’s the anklet?”

“I have it right here,” Pierce answered for them.

Chloe felt the world narrow and shift, ready to dump her into an abyss. Lucifer’s voice was soft. “Oh…”

“Now, Lucifer. I’ll make you a deal.”

Lucifer closed his eyes. “…Fuck.”

Chloe felt like her chest was collapsing, unable to move as she listened.

“Deal is, you can step out, die on your feet. Or I simply start walking.”

Lucifer opened his eyes, gaze flying around the room. The rest of him was so still. “So.” He swallowed against the bomb on his throat. “Either way…”

“Either way, yeah.” Pierce agreed.

Mazikeen’s breath hitched. It seemed far away. Chloe felt the precipice yawn wide, ready to swallow her up. Dark eyes met hers, and Lucifer released a breath, the tension leaving his face, replaced with a mask far too calm and accepting.

“…I’m dead.”

Chloe’s inhale felt like a knife. She tried to speak a denial, but her voice couldn’t manage past the knot blocking her throat.

Lucifer didn’t take his eyes from her, even though he continued talking to the first murderer. “Why the option, though?”

Pierce answered readily enough. “Simple. I’m not sure how much the explosion would destroy your wings.”

“… You still want the feathers,” Lucifer concluded, accented words calm.

“And I will get them. I know you won’t risk exploding next to Decker.”

Lucifer didn’t answer. He was still watching Chloe. She was still trying to breathe, trying to reject the reality that was far too harsh for her to accept.

“I’ll give you until the count of ten to say your good byes. After that, I walk away.”

Breathing burned. Chloe’s vision blurred. She wasn’t aware when she’d come to her feet, but reality snapped into place, no longer able to reject the problem in front of her, thoughts flying and prying at it frantically. “No, th-there-there’s gotta be something…!”

“One.”

Lucifer’s long stride closed the distance between them. “Chloe…”
She looked panicked around the room. “No, I just need time to thin-to think of something!”

Lucifer’s hands slid up her biceps, leaning down to look her in the eye. That non-rhotic voice she loved was still far too calm and factual. “I have to put distance between us. Now. Before this goes.”

“Two.”

She shook her head, blinking against the tears flooding her eyes. “No, Lucifer, I can’t…!”

She struggled against his hold. He gripped her a little more firmly. “Chloe!” She looked at him, eyes wide and streaming. The Devil bumped his forehead against hers, voice barely above a whisper. “Please, Detective…”

“Three.”

“I’m going to try to take out as many of them as possible. Stay here. Wait for help. Chloe…” He gentled, touching her cheeks to stop her head shaking. “You’ve been the greatest thing to ever happen to me. But right now, let me do what I can to keep you safe.”

“Four.”

“You go to Trixie.” “Lucifer, you can’t…!” “You live.” “They’ll shoot you…!” “That’s my final wish. Please.”

They stared at each other. Chloe felt the world collapsing around her.

“Five.”

Chloe’s lip trembled before she clenched her teeth. Her fist thumped into his chest. He winced. Her voice was wrecked. “No… No deal! Lucifer, no deal…! Please…!”

He let her beat his chest, then folded her up, smothering her in arm, chest, and wing, and that scent that was so distinctly him.

The words in her ear left her breathless. “I love you. So much! But I have to go. I have. To. Go.”

“Six.”

She clung back, squeezing him painfully hard. Her mind was working furiously, even as he placed a hand to her hair, breathed in her scent, eyes closed.

“Seven.”

The Devil released her, even when her hands tore at his shirt for a grip. His hands came to her wrists, pushing her back gently. Chloe gulped, struggling to breathe as Lucifer released her, her hands left in open air.

Her mind was screaming that this wasn’t the correct answer. She watched Lucifer pick up the third bomb in his hand as her thoughts held her petrified, careening through possibilities. *Pierce will kill us. If he takes out Lucifer, he can get to us, or simply let us thirst to death.*

“Eight.”

Mazikeen was looking far too upset, exchanging looks with Lucifer. Her former king opened his mouth, then didn't seem able to think of what to say, so finally he simply nodded to her.
Once Pierce is done with us, he’ll do what he does as the Sinnerman. He’ll go after our friends. Our family. Only Lucifer’s deal with him kept him from going after them before.

Mazikeen nodded once in return.

“Nine.”

Chloe was taking steadier breaths, her hands held in front of herself. She wasn’t looking at them anymore, instead looking down at her hands.

_We have to stop him here. Now. Mazikeen's down. The only one who can do that…_ She nearly tilted sideways, taking in a deep breath as she tottered over to the counter.

The door was whirring as Lucifer forced it open. “Mazikeen. Drop the fridge when I’m out. Keep her safe until help arrives.”

Mazikeen wasn’t paying him any attention. Chloe kept working, ignoring the way she could feel her roommate staring at her. “Chloe…?” The demoness grunted as she tried to sit up. "Chloe, what are you doing?"

Chloe took a deep breath, then turned. Lucifer was leaving, stepping into the small room before he would step out into the hallway to certain death. She felt angry at it, at his willingness to give in, to give up. It exploded in her voice as she called sternly to him.

“LUCIFER!”

The Devil turned as the door started to swing shut behind him.

Chloe pulled the needle from her arm and lifted the now empty syringe for him to see through the closing gap.

She saw Lucifer pale.

“New deal.” She kicked the fridge over with all the rage and determination in her belly.

“Detective-NO!”

She heard him slam into the door just as it shut.

“… Ten.”
Lucifer hit the door hard, hands slamming and torso pressed against it. The bomb in his hand clattered to the floor.

“Detective? Detective!” He frantically unlocked the door, forcing the mechanism hastily and shoving at the barrier between them. It barely budged before it hit the obstruction. He rammed his shoulder into it. Once. Twice. The third time he gasped a sound of both pain and frustration. His rib and injury-taxied body created black sparks in his vision. Lucifer grabbed at his hair, looking around the tiny room wildly. His lungs weren’t big enough. He pushed his hands against the other door, muttering to himself in distress.

The door violently flung open as soon as he unlatched it, panting as he careened to the mesh-enforced window. He slammed into it, unable to stop with his momentum. His rib felt like a knife was slicing through it. He did not care. “Chloe!” he yelled, palms smacking against the pane forcefully.

Mazikeen’s blood left smears of red where his hands planted. He could see the two in the room. Chloe was sitting on the floor, slumped against the cabinet. Her skin was shiny with perspiration, her movements unnatural and jerky, but she was talking. He couldn’t hear a word of it. He smacked at the glass again rapidly.

“Chloe… Chloe! Don’t you dare…!”

Her eyes met his briefly. Her pupils were such tiny pinpoints. Then the top eyelids slumped halfway closed and she tipped sideways.

Mazikeen caught her. The demoness had lunged across the floor with her one leg, her teeth grit as she pulled Chloe into her torso. The Detective was absolutely unresponsive. Her skin had become bone white. She was slipping away.

“Nonono, don’t you…!” Lucifer reached for her. The archangel’s palm trembled against the glass separating them, stretching for her essence. He could feel the fragile moor of her life teetering, those strings that kept a soul snug in its mortal frame becoming precariously thin. He was losing her.

He pushed. Still the Devil couldn’t reach her. He gave a fraught cry and punched at the glass. His knuckles split. Blood spattered against the pane. The first fallen teetered back, chest lifting and falling too rapidly. His steps raced in a circle, mind in panicked shambles.

He looked up desperately. “DAD!” Lucifer circled back to the glass. “Please, something! ANYTHING!” His palms pressed back on the glass.

He couldn’t feel her.
Lucifer felt shock wash down his nerves. Mazikeen was holding the Detective’s head close to her chest. She looked at Lucifer. The head shake was a small thing. Lucifer’s shock swiftly turned to denial, flooding up with rage. He punched at the glass.

The fist went through it.

Lucifer stared at the hole his arm had made, breaths painful. He turned his hand upward. Chips and shards scraped against his forearm, the broken wire mesh tried to catch unsuccessfully at his skin.

The lights above flared. Agony wrenched though his chest. His vision blurred and his breath shuddered painfully.

The lights burst. He didn’t hear the pop and burst of glass. The roar in his ear deafened him briefly. Everything went dark, and he didn’t know why or care.

“…Lucifer… Hey! Lucifer!”

He blinked. Liquid heat fell from his eyes. Mazikeen was staring at him. When she realized he was focused on her, she spoke, slow and clear. “Go after Cain.”

Cain… Cain. This was his fault. But Chloe…

The collar at his neck beeped. Lucifer closed his eyes. Cain was getting out of range. He could not let anything detonate near Chloe and Mazikeen.

The Devil’s whole frame shuddered. He turned, pain and fury in his glowing eyes as he stormed away.

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Someone pulled on her hand.

Chloe felt surprised a that, a sense of vertigo overcoming her before something solid struck the bottom of her feet and she fought to regain her balance. Her eyes were open now. She blinked, straightened, uncertain what she was looking at.

It was the dark of twilight, gray-blue above and deserted black and dark gray stone and sand below her. It stretched fathomless distances, disappearing in a haze beyond what she could see. She turned in a slow circle, searching, then saw the glimmer of something dark in her peripheral, spinning to look at the figure standing there.

A woman with olive skin was watching her. She wore a black robe with a pair of gold fish clasps. The dark bob of hair, winged eyeliner, small chin, and her shortness made her seem entirely unthreatening. Her lips pulled to one side in a funny way that said she was feeling much more awkward about this than the Detective was.

She lifted her hand from her robe, giving a small, awkward wave. “Hey.”

“Hi,” Chloe replied, uncertain. Then she looked around again. She remembered the last moments very fuzzily, but she narrowed in on her current problem. She needed to get back. She just wasn’t sure how. “I-I’m sorry. I need to get back to somewhere.”
“Oh! That!” The young-looking woman took a few steps closer, hands out, talking rapidly. “See, I kinda had to pull you out of there quick because Lu was tying to grab your soul. He reeeally didn’t want you to die. Freaked out a bit. Like, I haven’t seen him spaz like that in, well, never.”

Lu… She means Lucifer. She squint at the person. “Are you…?”

The woman nodded. “Yep! Little sister, right here. And, lucky you! I’m your ride. Just thought I’d introduce myself first. Azrael’s the name. But you can call me Rae-Rae. Nice to meetcha!” She held out her hand. “Anyhow, let’s get going, Chlo. Can I call you Chlo?”

Not what she expected of one of his siblings. But then, she had only ever met Amenadiel. Chloe shook her head, distracted. “Um, yes? No, I mean no. I can’t go. I need to get back to him.”

Azrael held her hands up, looking up at the bare sky overhead. “Look! I’m not taking you to the Silver City or anything, okay, but I got orders!” Chloe jumped when two dark wings whipped into existence at her back. “So really. Can’t waste time.”

Chloe didn’t see many other options. She held her hand out and let the Angel of Death take hers.

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The voices were loud over the phone. Agent Carney and her dad were talking quickly. Trixie wasn’t listening, upset as she shook Linda’s shoulder. The therapist didn’t move, on her side on the floor. She looked to the phone, feeling lost.

“We’re blind! Can’t you do something?” Her dad sounded angry.

“Smudge is seeing what he can do, Espinoza, but from the sound of it, both Mazikeen and Ms. Lopez are disconnected. My people have an ETA of thirty minutes. We can’t do anything until then.”

“Dad!” Trixie shouted. “What do I do?”

“Trixie! You can’t listen to—you need to hang up the phone!”

“No, Dad, what do I do with Linda?!?”

“Linda? What happened?”

“She passed out!” Trixie couldn’t keep the tears from coming, but she forced herself to not curl up. Instead she smacked at the floor with her hand before her face crumpled up entirely at how wrong everything was. “What do I do? Tell me what to do!”

Daniel switched modes immediately. His voice lowered, from concerned, frustrated officer to the detective who dealt with emergencies and knew when his child needed him to be calm. “Okay. I’m here, Trixie. Is she breathing?”

“Uh…” Trixie felt at her Linda’s chest. “Yes!”

“Did she hit her head when she fell?”

“I don’t know.”
“Okay, she needs to be on her back. Is she?”

“No.”

“Okay. Roll her onto her back if you can, and find something to prop her feet up. If she doesn’t start to wake up soon, I’ll need you to call 911, okay Trix?”

Trixie looked with a panic-numbed mind for only a few seconds before the orders sunk in and she started to move. “Okay! Don’t hang up!”

“No, I’m here, Trix. I’m here. Talk to me about what you’re doing…”

~~~

Ella blinked up at the sky, half wondering if she was dead.

She was breathing. She could feel the ground at her back. Those were good signs of being alive, right?

She pulled in a deep breath. Pain bloomed in her chest. Ella squeezed her eyes shut and groaned. “Joooooooooder…!”

Okay, if she was feeling pain, she was probably alive.

She breathed shallow, waiting for the dark spots to recede from the corner of her vision. She tilt her chin up to look down at herself. She immediately flopped her head back on the ground with a grunt. It took her another moment before she was brave enough to try it again. Ella tilt her head up and felt at her chest where it hurt most.

Her phone gave a broken sound under her fingers. Ella rest her head back again, fumbling for the device clumsily before she fished it out of the pocket. Bits of plastic and screen protector came with it. She held it up to the sky, staring at the hole blown through it.

“Oh, warranty is so not going to cover that.”

Another few seconds and she felt at her chest again, feeling in the fabric until she felt where the bullet had squashed itself against the kevlar. She couldn’t dig it out, but she could feel where it stopped. She released a breath, head flopping back again. “Dios mío.” She pat lightly at her chest just under the large metal ring at the collar. “You are my new lucky shirt! Whew!”

Thank God for Mazikeen. Thank God for a demoness? Was that right? She wasn’t sure.

The sound of a plane engine starting broke her from her dazed musing. “Okay, gotta get up. C’mon, Ella!”

The scientist was still slow getting to her feet, looking around for danger as she went. “Son of a… that hurts,” she complained to no one, finally getting her short legs under her and straightening. “Okay. I’m okay. Heck, I don’t even think it broke anything. Yeah, that’s…” She squint toward the house. “Well, great. Might be hallucinating.”

The window going into the bathroom was white, the bright illumination stinging at her eyes. She frowned, trying to figure out if it was a product of her still-shocked mind or if it was real. It could
be. She was dealing with angels, demons, immortal humans and…

“Lucifer. Chloe. Maze. Gotta… gotta get my friends. Ow… Because we’re just too pretty to die. Coming guys.” She started toward the broken barn, tottering unsteadily the first few steps with her hand to her bruised chest.

~~~

Pierce retreated as soon as the lights started to flare unnaturally bright. He ordered men to take up positions behind him while he held the anklet tightly. The tablet was handed over to L, orders barked quickly into his headset to start the jet.

The men remaining in the hall listened to the exchange over the speakers, the Devil getting increasingly more desperate and hysterical sounding.

The lights went blinding, their hum a whine that nearly drowned out the speakers. The clangor of the bulbs bursting and glass cracking was immediately followed by blackness and silence.

The speaker sounded garbled, burst and making the voice especially tinny. “kshh… Go after Cain.”

Guns raised, men straining to see in the dark for the imminent danger. Faintly they could hear the door whirring and a clank.

It exploded off its hinges, the metal rupturing and clamoring away from one powerful kick. Then the Devil was in the hallway. Dark flames rippled among feathers behind the tall, narrow frame. The head turned. Two red eyes focused with predatory intensity on the men. He didn't pause. He started advancing with swift strides.

The fear preceded him like a silent scream through the mortals in the hall. Some stood paralyzed. Some backed away. Others fired.

The bullets thudded against the target. The dark-haired archangel flinched, raising a forearm in front of the bomb at his throat, the same that held the dead switch bomb. His wings curled in closer, letting the bullets batter at him briefly before he rushed toward the annoyances. Flashes of gunfire made chaos of the scene as Lucifer grabbed the first assault rifle he reached, flinging the weapon away and smacking the palm of his hand sharply into the man’s sternum. He went flying back. Lucifer wing smacked another against the wall, knocking him senseless. He ducked under the rapid bursts of another. Grabbing his shirt and throwing him upward.

The thug smacked the roof just as the first struck man landed into a fellow in a tangle. Lucifer had already moved beyond him even as the man fell from the ceiling behind him. Bullets continued pelting him, panicked men trying to back away. The nearest one tried to drop his gun to surrender. The Devil snatched his arm and gave a single sharp squeeze. The man screamed as flesh hissed, the hands burning. The bone snapped. The man was smacked into the wall. The archangel spun into the next three men, wing, elbow, and opposite arm taking them down in quick succession. A grab and a man screamed as he was flung down the hall behind him.

He was to the end of the hall. Now it curved and rose upward. Men were still trying to retreat while gunfire hammered deafeningly down the concrete passage. The red glowing eyes relentlessly neared, hardly slowed as another man was flung up to smack the ceiling and Lucifer’s wing cut downward and snapped a man’s leg the wrong way to send him down screaming. The hall was sweltering hot, full of smoke and chaos.
“Grenade!” someone called.

The first fallen snatched it out of the air. A quick glance as what he held and he dropped the dead man switch bomb and clapped both hands over the grenade. Wings folded in, flames smoldering out and leaving the hall blinding black.

The explosion was a muffled bang, a bright light flashing around the wing edges. Lucifer was flung back, hitting the wall and falling to the floor.

~~~

The ground shook under her sneakers just as she reached the outermost boards of the barn. Ella gasped, holding her hands out for balance.

Nothing.

“What was that?” she asked no one. “There better not be graboids out here.”

She faintly heard gunfire, yelling and screaming. Ella looked down the packed earthen slope that led down to a heavily armored garage door. She was thinking of approaching it when it whirred and started to open. She inhaled sharply and scrambled back behind the boards, ducking down. She tried to keep her rapid breathing quiet as she stared through a narrow gap.

Pierce was running by with some men. “L, close the door,” he ordered.

‘L’ tapped at a tablet and door started to shut. One of the four men looked back in alarm. “Our men…”!

“Collateral damage,” Pierce said quickly. “Get to the jet. Bring out the heavy artillery to slow him down.”

The men started to run ahead, hurrying to obey.

Ella waited until they were past her, watching them race toward the business jet waiting near the cabin. She swallowed thickly and stole out of her hiding place and down the ramp.

~~~

Lucifer picked himself up slowly to his knee, snorting out his nose to clear it of the smoke. He touched at the bomb on his throat. It was still intact. His ears were ringing.

Two shots thudded into the corner of his head. They knocked him sideways into the wall, and shots kept firing, hard against his face still bruised from the beating he’d received yesterday. When the trigger clicked, he glared up at the man, eyes lighting up red again.

“Oh dear Go-.” Lucifer came up swinging. The man went down, blood instantly bubbling out of his mouth where he’d bitten his tongue. Lucifer kicked him against the wall. The Devil leaned over, touching the wall for balance, panting. Red eyes glared at the floor, searching. He picked up
the third bomb again, started to the next knot of men.

“Monster!” More shots fired into him. Lucifer clapped his wings forward. Heat and wind blew the men off their feet. He marched forward, bare feet stepping over the prone. He kicked the face of a man trying to come up again. Another started shooting from the floor. He stomped the arm, breaking it, and punched downward. Then the Devil continued wading through the fallen, downing anyone who rose against him.

There was one last person at the door, scrabbling with his fingernails, screaming to be let out. When the Devil loomed over him, he turned, cringing against the wall.

“Mercy! Mercy!”

The Prince of Darkness didn’t spare him a glance. He grabbed him about the face and tapped his head against the metal barrier. The man slumped, unconscious.

Lucifer looked at the armored door, red eyes narrowed. The archangel raised a first, teeth baring, and struck.

~~~

It had gotten quiet. Ella was looking for a switch when she heard a small thud from the door. She jumped, looking at the center where it had sounded.

She screamed in surprise when the door buckled outward loudly. She fell on her butt, scrambling backward as another bang forced the door out further, and the third finally split the metal. There was a pause, and then two hands snatched either side of the opening and wrenched it open further. Bars and metal wailed and squeaked in protest before a bare foot kicked the chunk of metal outward.

Ella stared at the red-eyed angel forcing the metal away. When the rent was large enough, he stopped and stooped to pick something up before stepping out of the gap. The wings had to dip and squeeze through. Then the tall frame straightened, the Devil heaving for breath as red eyes swerved back and forth over the too-bright sky before looking to the small scientist.

“Lucifer…”

He looked terrible. Not in a terror-striking way only, but battered. There were small cuts and bruises on his face, mottling his arms darkly and blotting his torso, which she could see through the few remaining shreds of his shirt. Otherwise he was only wearing a pair of draw string pants, holes and rips littered in them. His hair was in wild disarray.

But worse was that his face looked desolate, like he was in too much pain to properly react to anything. He was still staring at her, face blank, eyes glowing red.

Somewhere in her mind Ella had identified that her friend was the Devil, and she’d stamped it in as a fact, having settled in her mind that the police consultant who liked to bring her donuts was the ruler of Hell.

It was another thing to see it.
Yet somehow, ridiculously, she realized she had felt more afraid of facing Pierce than seeing Lucifer like this. Even with his huge wings that took up most of her vision, his torso bare to expose muscles that were monstrously strong, and his eyes glowing an alarming bloody hue.

Ella picked herself up to a knee slowly. “Lucifer? Hey buddy, you okay?”

He blinked. The red was suddenly gone. “Ms. Lopez!” He was darting forward and stooping down, pulling her to her feet by her arm. His hand was alarmingly warm, and Ella squeaked at how easily he lifted her weight. “Chloe! She’s not breathing!”

Any alarm she felt she shoved aside. “Chloe’s hurt? Where?!”

“Down there!” He pointed behind him. “First door on the left! Go!”

“I’m going!” She started toward the hole he’d ripped in the metal door. He was walking away. She looked after him in alarm. “Wait, where are you going?”

His voice was a deep growl that made her gut recoil. “To stop Cain.”

Ella nodded, wide-eyed, and ducked into the darkness beyond.

~~~

The wind rushed in her face, deafening in her ears and blurring her vision. Chloe squeezed her eyes shut. Then opened them in surprise when it stopped. The abruptness left her imbalanced, stumbling from Azrael before managing to regain her footing.

The Detective straightened and looked up, blinking.

A door.

It was no grandiose thing, but pretty and intricate. It arched at the top, against gray and white brick. Broad, polished, yellow wood framed reliefs full of beautiful carvings of birds, fish, animals, and creatures that were somewhere in between. Some had human faces, limbs, or torsos mixed with other creatures, all among swirls of water, forest, and cloud. Chloe’s eyes skipped back and forth over the detail quickly, her observant mind picking at it quickly.

Azrael spoke behind her. “Well. Go on.”

Chloe looked back at her questioning. What lay beyond Azrael stole her wonder and breath.


There were so many.

She may have stared forever if not for Azrael. The Angel of Death bounced on her toes, eyes rolling low before she finally spoke up. “Chloe. Time? Not to push you or anything, but… you know. Pushing you.”

Chloe nodded dumbly, then turned back to the door. The stars were still seared in her eyes as she turned the handle.
The door gave way easily, cracking open before halting. The Detective glanced inside for movement, saw nothing, and stepped in.

At first her star-dazzled eyes couldn’t see, the walls too dim. But she could smell, and it smelled of candles, paper, ink, and aged leather. There was a sense of space, nothing alarmingly vast, but not small either.

Chloe glanced over her shoulder at Azrael. She waved her forward encouragingly. Chloe looked ahead into the dark room and continued.

The door creaked shut behind her, swiftly locking away the starlight.

Chloe blinked as light breathed to life in the chamber beyond. Old fashioned lamp posts circled the room, each holding three lights that danced around each other evenly in their glass spheres. Soft lamps with stained glass shades were sentinel to tabletops and corners. In the center was a chandelier of intricately woven metal, little circles of light simply hovering among the web of iron. Sometimes the illuminations changed place with one another, or they would drift to occupy a different niche.

She took in the room, lips parted at the shelves of books and carved wood. It was beautiful.

Before her was a semi-circular, split-level chamber, bookshelves built into the dark wood of the curving wall. A ladder with polished brass wheels and rails waited for use to reach the higher volumes. There was not a single gap in the library’s wall unoccupied, full of leather tomes and leaflets that gleamed in the soft, golden lights, spines all colors and sizes. There was a second story above the curve accessible by floating steps, showing even more bookshelves and standalone aisles brimming with reading material under floating lamps of light that lazily bobbed in midair.

The dark polished, detailed wood of the study reminded her of Lucifer’s in his penthouse. Except Lucifer’s was meticulously tidy, and this one wasn’t. Stacks of books, papers, quills, pens, scrolls, and paper rolls took up every available surface. It smelled of age, cedar, fireplaces, and ink. It was wonderful, spiced with old knowledge and creativity.

The Detective stared upward at the moving chandelier lights as she moved further in. Light and color drew her gaze to the glass above the lighting fixture that allowed the starlight to enter. Galaxies gleamed overhead in their seemingly frozen spirals beyond the dome of glass, which was clear in the center with a wide grid of metal arching through the panes. These gave way to stunning rings of stained glass of all colors.

Chloe nearly tripped on the steps leading down into the lower split-level of the room. She gripped the polished railing, having to lean over the piles of books occupying the edges of the stairs. A glance at the titles on the topmost books revealed a language she didn’t know. She moved on, watching her feet more closely.

The lower level had two work tables and a heavy writing desk planted atop a circular ornate rug. It felt plush under her slippers. Gravitating toward the desk, her eyes danced over strewn papers and books, some open and overlapping each other. But in the center just before the empty, high-backed chair of gleaming upholstery and brass buttons was a cleared space. Only two books occupied the little clearing amongst the chaos, one open and one closed.

The Detective leaned over, turning the heavy, thick tome toward herself.

It had an ombre cover, white at the top, turning into red that darkened toward the bottom till it was black. Silver, ornate letters embedded its cover.
Samael

She traced the embossed lettering with her fingers, then looked to the much smaller book that was open on the desk. The page looked half typed, and the next was blank. She turned the next page. It was blank, too. And the next. She closed the book and turned it to look at the cover.

It was plain, white leather in the middle, with pale orange and red edging. The lettering was in gold.

Chloe Jane Decker

The Detective was still staring at the cover when she felt something behind her. The papers on the desk fluttered, the floating lights swiveled swiftly, and the hairs on the back of her neck raised. It felt like electricity jolted up her legs, planting her feet as though they were in cement.

Behind her came a British accent from a throat with the barest rasp. The greeting was spoken gently. “Hello, Chloe.”

Even before he spoke, Chloe knew who it was. She knew the instant she had felt the presence at her back. She stared straight ahead, swallowed to clear her suddenly dry throat.

“Hello, God.”
By the Teeth

Chapter Notes

Hello Darklings! Final showdown all! Enjoy!

Chloe started to turn.

God’s tone was still gentle. “Oh, don’t look at me, child. There’s only so much a human can take.”

Chloe looked straight ahead without question, focusing on the shelves behind the desk. She didn’t even glance to the side.

God shuffled behind her. She could hear papers moving. Likely something he was holding. “Ah, I apologize. It’s so hard to not order sometimes. However, this makes a great demonstration. You can’t fathom trying to look at me now, can you?”

Chloe frowned. She didn’t want to look at him anyway, so what…

His non-rhotic accent was soft and playful. “Think it through.”

Chloe did, circling around the thought mentally. She didn’t want to look, but now that she was focusing on the matter, she realized she should want to. Yet God had snuffed away the curiosity to do so. She had obeyed an order so easily because now she wanted to not look at him.

She looked ahead at the books, frowning. It made her thoughts strain thinking about a possibility she couldn’t do when her thoughts were so insistent on dismissing the idea as something she didn’t want to do. “Um… Okay, that’s messed up.”

“Yes, it is!” he agreed, seeming quite happy she had caught on so quickly. “I’ll try to be very careful with the words I use going forward. Enforcing my will was a thing I reveled in once upon a time, but it’s no longer what I want.”

She listened to him turn, steps quiet in the plush rug at their feet. A soft rush of sound, and he relocated. He was now over by some of the shelves, simply gone from where he was and in a different place in the library study. His voice sounded distant, more muffled from facing away.

“It makes interacting with most of my children complicated. When a mere suggestion, mm, pushes any individual listening, it compromises their potential as an individual. Even a discussion, a… submission of my opinion, a note of my idears, and it impresses into their thoughts, starts gravitating their will to mine. It requires a great deal of subtlety, therefore, to request something when my creations respond so readily. One could say slavishly so.”

Chloe tilt her chin when she heard him relocate again, now at a different shelf across the room. She could hear books sliding and paper being flipped. “So I’ve withdrawn from them. It’s ultimately the only way to not impose my will on theirs. Even here and now, with you, this is but a small aspect of my being interacting with you, and I could still influence you greatly. So, it’s still dangerous.”
The Detective turned those facts over in her mind, but she hesitated to speak. She wasn’t sure how one was supposed to converse with God.

“Please, feel free to speak, child.”

Chloe looked down at the carpet patterns, slippers traversing around the desk. She, of course, did not look toward where God was busily rummaging in the shelves. “You said most of your children…”

God’s pause was heavy. “Ah, yes. Samael.” He sighed, and disappeared again. He was in the high level that the floating stairs ascended to. Chloe turned and looked at the steps and how they hovered right along the shelves, marveling at their surreality. Then God was back, this time almost directly behind her. She started and stiffened. His presence was so alarmingly heavy. He was fiddling with the papers on the desk.

“Samael was so brilliant and fiery. Passionate, devoted. Do you know, I made him without a default to love me? Yet he did anyway. That’s… absolutely amazing that someone loves you because they choose to, isn’t it? I suppose that’s why I favored him so much. Plus the resilience I gave him to my will.”

Chloe saw out of the corner of her eye as he slid the Samael book toward himself, flipping through it. “Unfortunately, whenever you introduce something into a system that is different, the system will often take the new element as something threatening and will try to reject or utterly destroy it. The new variable has to persevere before the system realizes it cannot dislodge the new stimuli and thus has to adapt. This has driven the crystallized structure of evolution for symbiotic and predator-prey relationships for millennia.”

“…Lucifer was your new variable.”

“It was necessary to force the system to adapt.”

The book was set down, and God relocated. Chloe felt like she could breathe a little easier. He was over at one of the work tables now, sitting and scratching notes. Chloe paced the other way along the desk, carefully facing away from him. “Because you needed the system to adapt.”

“I did.” God smacked his lips quietly in thought, the pen’s moderate scrawling halting for a moment. “See, at first I designed an environment that coordinated and provided all comforts necessary. There was absolutely no conflict. Then, my wife became envious of my little project and started to add her influence. At first I was furious, but then something fascinating started to happen with the model. Everything started to grow. Adaptation… variety… innovation and maturation in mortals that they never achieve in a safe environment.” His tone lightened. “It’s… rather like a group of muscles. Without needing to do anything, muscle is essentially nothing but fibrous jelly. It takes work and effort to build it into something firm, supportive, shapely, and capable.”

The scratching of the pen continued. “Thus, her influence remains. It would have been a pain to pry it out of the model at that point of planning, anyhow, even for me. But I did put a caveat to it. A choice.”

“What choice?”

The pen continued its soft scratching. “Well, given a choice between innocent paradise or the perils of a challenging system, you can imagine that no one would choose the latter. Comfort breeds a certain laziness and an empty sort of contentedness, as well as a lack of appreciation for the absence of hardship. It doesn’t make paradise a bad thing, but not necessarily a good thing either.
So everyone in such a system is content to follow the rules, having little to no curiosity for the possibilities and rewards available in any other model. Now, one of the rules, in order to allow humanity to grow and make its choices without celestial influence, was that angels were forbidden from amour with mortals.”

“… But Lucifer… um.” She wasn’t quite comfortable enough to say that Lucifer rather reveled in his carnal appetites. Especially not to his Dad. To God.

“Yes, he was made with quite a sexual craving,” God agreed mirthfully. “His mother’s influence, I believe. She could be quite mischievous when it came to the making of our children.” His voice lowered, distracted. “Now where did I put…? Ah! There it is!” There was a snatch of paper off to her left. God had moved again and was now flipping through a book, pages making a soft crinkling noise.

“So, he…” Chloe motioned awkwardly to the side.

“Made perfect forbidden fruit.”

Chloe frowned, her brow pinching. God went on thankfully with explanation.

“Ah, right! You probably are more familiar with the fable concerning an apple laced with knowledge of good and evil. It wasn’t that. A mistranslation, however a rather amusing one. No, I had set laws forth, and it was simply that the laws should be obeyed between both peoples. Of course, Samael did not adhere to such regulation.”

Chloe nodded to herself. “You used him as a catalyst for humanity to decide to not obey you.”

“Yes. I wanted it to be their choice, but they needed to really know what they wanted, to be given the new ideas of what was possible, what they desired, what they could do. I thought it would take a few generations, to be honest. I keep telling myself to not underestimate my creations, and yet! They still manage. Eve simply was so easily intrigued by the possibility of getting to decide what she wanted, rather than being told her role.”

“So Eve and Lucifer…”

“Like fireworks.”

“You… used Lucifer to break the law between angels and humans. You knew he would because of the nature you crafted in him.”

“Successfully so.”

Chloe blinked, worked up all the nerve to speak her next words. “God. You… forced him into a position to become the most hated among both humans and angels.” She turned, enough to catch a glimpse of dark shoes. “How… How could you do such an awful thing to him?”

~~~

Lucifer could see Pierce and his men near the running jet plane as soon as he cleared the ramp. The jet plane was turning to line itself up with the road away from the parked charger and cabin. He narrowed his eyes, folded his wings in close as he started to run toward them. Bare feet crunched
heedless across rock and packed earth.

He felt the bullet before he heard the crack of the rifle. It knocked him onto his back. Hard. Lucifer gasped in a strained breath. He rolled to his side and half turned so he could see what hit him.

L was laying on the ground, a rifle with a long barrel propped up by two metal legs before him. His hand moved over the bolt to lock in the next bullet and eyed down the scope of the Barret M82 at the prone Devil.

The next shot hit him again. Lucifer barked a sharp sound of pain, body pushed across the dirt as his frame folded in over where his lower chest had been struck. His rib screamed at him as he shuddered and fought for breath. He released the third bomb briefly to clench his fist as he glared toward the shooter with red eyes.

These weren’t mere little .22’s they were peppering him with. An anti-material .50 BMG round was enough to even make the Devil balk for how hard it slugged into the immortal. The jet plane was almost lined up with the road, and with Pierce on it. He could see him at the door of the jet plane, looking on. Another mortal was on the ground preparing an RPG. Lucifer grabbed up the bomb again and struggled to his feet.

The next bullet hit him just under the collar bone. The archangel’s bare feet skid before he lost his balance. Lucifer’s palm hit the dirt, wings arching to keep himself from falling flat. The point of impact knocked the breath out of him again. He glared toward L, breathing out a growl before he started running again, zigzagging to make himself a more difficult target.

The next bullet missed him, but not the next. It caught Lucifer atop the thigh, pushing his leg out from under him so he went down again. He breathed in dirt and coughed, blinked to try to get his bearings once more. The business jet’s door was closing, the plane would be able to start its run soon. The second man was aiming the RPG at him. He struggled to get up. L had him in his sights, both men ready to shoot him down so Pierce could get away.

Rapid handgun shots fired.

L’s head jerked to one side, frame rolling to lie still as the rifle barrel dipped away. The stocky man that had emerged from the cabin continued marching ahead, shooting the man with the RPG. The man cried out and the rocket-propelled grenade shot off course, whizzing off to Lucifer’s left.

The Devil didn’t bother looking behind himself as it collided into the base of one of the wind turbines. It exploded, and the whole windmill shuddered, teetering over its collapsed leg before starting to fall. Lucifer was on his feet, jogging toward Caretaker, panting. Caretaker was making sure his shots truly downed the men before looking up at a dirty, half-naked Devil.

The stocky man's clothes were soaked in blood, but he looked like he was moving well enough. Lucifer was too dazed to think clearly. The bomb on his throat felt constricting, breaths difficult, and his feet weren’t moving so smoothly across the ground as he approached.

“Where’ve you been?” Lucifer asked snippily as the wind turbine gave a mighty crash off to the side. His whole frame felt like Amenadiel had kicked him against a mountain too many times. His ribs stabbed sharply with each breath.

Caretaker scoffed, glancing to the Devil before looking at where the jet plane was receding from them. “Bleeding to death in my bathtub trying to figure out how to get your feathers to work! Is Sinnerman on the plane?”
“I have to catch him,” Lucifer wheezed.

“Yes, we do.” Caretaker turned on his heel. “Car, now,” he ordered, starting off at a jog. The Devil was quick on his heels.

~~~

Ella couldn’t see far down the hall from the narrow gap in the metal door. She nearly tripped on the legs of the man slumped against it. She pursed her lips, checking that he was breathing, then searched his pockets. There was a cellphone. She tapped at it, saw it was thumb locked.

“Going to borrow you, okay, buddy? You just stay asleep.” She pushed his thumb against the print reader, then quickly swiped to turn on the light. She looked down the passageway, hearing the faint sounds of groaning.

“…Okay. This is very Residential Evil here. Don’t like.”

She still went, hurrying down the steps and the curving hall. It was hard to breathe, heat and smoke entering her lungs with each pull. Prone men were strewn about in varying states of unconsciousness in the passage. Many were moaning in pain. One was curled up by the wall face down, sobbing. The scientist paused when she saw one man who looked particularly still. Ella leaned down to touch her fingertips to his pulse.

It was still there. “Wow…”

They were all alive.

Lucifer hadn’t killed a single one of them.

“Just… all of you stay down,” she said while trying not to trip on the injured and unconscious. The hall turned and straightened out, and she shone the light high as she jogged toward where she could finally see an open doorway.

It went into a small room with two doors. The one straight ahead was open a crack. The thick locking mechanism had been bent so it couldn’t recede back within the heavy metal. Ella tried to push at the door. It didn’t budge. She slapped at it. “Chloe? Maze?”

“Ella?”

Ella’s heart leaped. “Maze! Is Chloe with you?”

She could hear the demoness moving, then a heavy scraping sound of something large being moved. Maze spoke, her voice breaking some. “I did everything she said, but it’s not working! I’m good at killing things, not saving them!”

Lucifer had said she wasn’t breathing. Ella’s heart squeezed anxiously. “Is she…?”

Mazikeen was forcing the door open. The corner of it jammed against the toppled fridge there. “She’s dead, and I don’t know what to do!” the demoness snapped.

Ella stared at her, seeing the bandages soaking through with blood and the way she couldn’t place weight on her left leg. She made a small sound, and looked past her at where Chloe lay on the
floor. Her heart sunk to her shoes. “How long?” she asked, even as she scrambled over the corner of the fridge into the room.

“I don’t know! Too long!” Mazikeen leaned over, holding up a small bottle. “She… she said to inject her with this after, but she’s still not waking up!”

Ella knelt down by Chloe, checking for signs of life. She shook her head, loose hair flying about her shoulders. “Oh, no you don’t, sister. You’re not leaving us like this.” She started on CPR. “Maze, tell me what you know. What’d she take?”

~~~

God sighed. It made all the loose papers in the office flutter, the three lights in their posts swiveled swifter for a few seconds.

“I know what I did, what I made him into, and that it hurt him.”

“Hurt him?” Chloe shook her head, incredulous. “He hates himself. He thinks nothing of being hurt or… killed even. He sees himself as a monster. He thinks others should see him as a monster.”

God moved, to the left, upstairs, down near the desk in rapid succession. He sounded agitated, but trying to seek understanding. “I didn’t want that.”

“But you did make it happen,” Chloe insisted. She turned his direction, though her eyes fixed on the floor. “You were always going to make him the cause of mankind losing paradise, the Ruler of Hell, your tormentor for those who felt guilty enough to not go to Heaven. He’s been shunned by his family, been friendless except for a demon, and… and… he doesn’t know how to be loved. You put him in this… awful place…”

God was silent for moment. She heard one of the leather chairs at the tables creak as he settled into it. When he next spoke, it was plaintive. “I… tried to give him the tools to combat the environment I knew he would find himself in. Magnetism, charm, looks. Being generally desirable to others. For a while, it was enough. Until he realized his very own siblings saw him as evil. For his own kin to forget all he’d done when younger…” God released a breath. “I can do so much, but I would have utterly had to manipulate the will of all of his siblings for them to visit him, for them to assure him that the job he had taken on, the intent behind his rebellion, and all the times they’d appealed to him for help and he’d assisted them was appreciated. But were I to do that, I would be proving why he needed to rebel in the first place.

“I wish that had been different. I could see how much he would help them change, evolve. But you’re right. Their minds are quite made up, and he is outcast. Only Amenadiel has interacted with him, and look how that one has evolved and blossomed!” There was a small laugh. “He’s become so humbled, so caring, and now understands that doing what is right is so much more than obeying laws and following someone else’s ideas. It’s made him capable of love, love with a human… It makes me so proud, you know, and none of that would have happened at all were it not for Lucifer pointing out his own self-righteous hypocrisy. Now they’re truly brothers again.”

"But so many others hate him..."

"Oh, not so many do. There are quite a few who simply don't know how to connect. They never developed the skill that he's learned in the last three years. Learned mostly... Because of you."
God moved again. Chloe could see something in her peripheral, dark hair and a black sports jacket sleeve. She held very still, eyes trained straight ahead to watch the lights lazily circle each other in one of the lamp posts’ spheres. “While he has made Amenadiel evolve, look how much you’ve helped our Morningstar learn and grow! It’s been brilliant, watching him work out new truths, forge new paths for himself. … Do you know that both times he has prayed to me since his exile to Hell has been to save you? That should say a great deal, considering how angry he is with me.”

He disappeared once more, now in the high shelves. Chloe turned, leaning back against the desk for balance while God called out from above. “It’s an interesting phenomenon. No matter what scenario I create, if you exist, you two find each other. It’s like he can sense a gap in his existence and it’s always when he feels compelled to leave Hell behind and seek something for himself. That attraction doesn’t happen often, and I’ve never seen it for two people of completely different species before. I have an interesting theory how it developed, souls that synch up and drift together, but for now, I’m content to know that for whatever reason, you, Chloe Decker, and he are always meant to cross paths.”

Chloe looked up at the chandelier and its many galaxies. The question gnawed at her, even though she wasn’t sure she wanted the answer, thought she should be asking more important questions than this one. Still, it was the one that came out. “God… Did you make me for him?”

She could feel God’s eyes on her, and the quiet stretch of time as he considered her and she held her breath.

~~~

Lucifer was so frustrated with his wings that he ripped off the car’s roof while Caretaker figured out how Ella had hot-wired the vehicle. Caretaker only raised an eyebrow at the shriek of metal overhead, then started the car.

The collar and third bomb beeped. Lucifer hopped into the seat over the door, wings trailing behind himself. “Unless you’re wanting to be caught in an explosion, I suggest you drive.”

“Working on it, Mr. Morningstar.” Caretaker yanked at the stick shift with his bloodied hand, the tires squealing as it lurched out of park, and then he was wheeling it after the quickly distancing jet. “They’re almost at take off speed.”

“Just get me up to them.”

Caretaker glanced at him. “Your wing is still broken.”

“Well aware! Don’t care! Get me there!”

Caretaker floored the gas petal, pushing the mile rater past the hundred mark.

~~~

Mazikeen was right. The drugs she’d given Chloe to battle the overdose weren’t doing enough.
Ella frantically tried to resuscitate her friend, pumping more drugs into her and breathing into her mouth, pushing at her chest. The room around them was dark and stuffy, the only light the glare from the back of the cell phone on the floor.

“C’mon, Chloe! Don’t E.T. on me right now!”

“What can I do?” Mazikeen asked.

Ella’s thoughts went everywhere. “Uhhh you can…” She stopped, looking at the distressed demoness with wide eyes. “Give me a knife!”

“A knife?”

“Preferably one with an insulated handle!”

Mazikeen blinked, but then she pulled one free by her hip. It had a leather wrapped handle. “This work?”

“Perfect! Okay, hand here! Need you to take over on CPR.” Ella gave her quick instructions before leaping to her feet. “Just don’t break her!”

“Where are you going?” Mazikeen called after her, sounding panicked.

“Going to try something! Keep pushing!”

Ella scrambled out of the room, then to the corner where all the wires hung. Her eyes danced over the wires quickly, identifying their circuits and seeing where they were taped. “Okay, I need you, and you! Hang on, Chloe.”

~~~

God’s question was gentle. “That worries you immensely, doesn’t it?”

He was on the same level as she was again, standing nearby. “It would mean that you don’t really exist as a free creature, someone who could determine their own destiny.”

When Chloe didn’t answer, he gave a quiet sound. “No, Chloe, you’re not designed for him in the way you’re thinking. Amenadiel allowed your mother to be able to carry a child, and I gave you one precious, discerning gift, but otherwise your genetics, your choices, everything that makes you you is not by my direct interference or design. I don’t even make you love him. That’s all you.”

Chloe normally would have questioned the truth of such a statement, but it felt like he spoke truth. She had a distant thought that she didn’t think God could lie. “A gift?” she finally asked past the knot in her throat.

“Yes. I am fully aware that he would question your feelings for him if you were affected like everyone else by his magnetism and desirability. So I made you immune. I… hope you find that small interference okay.”

Chloe felt a tear fall down her cheek. She nodded. “Y-yeah.” She sniffed, smiled tremulously. “But… I’m wondering why you’re here, talking to me about all of this, when I’m dead, and… He-he’s not going to forgive me for that.”
God’s voice was quiet and soothing, the non-rhotic a soft rasp. “I think you’d be surprised what he’d forgive you for.” He then hummed thoughtfully. “But yes, you’re in quite dire straits aren’t you? And he… Oh, which scenario is this? Let me think…”

Chloe had to look swiftly away when God reached for Lucifer’s book on his desk. He flipped at the pages swiftly, tapped at a page. “Oh, yes! You both have had a very eventful week in this reality. I had better send that message off, or you won’t be the only one dead.”

Chloe frowned. “Wh… what do you mean? What’s ‘this reality’? Is Lucifer okay?”

God was grabbing up parchment, muttering to himself that he needed a blank piece of paper. She heard paper rip and being folded as God spoke. “Well, no, he’s not really. And I mean that I am testing out this reality. I do get to manipulate the fifth dimension when desired, after all. It does make me miss the Goddess though. She was much better at keeping track of these things than I am.” A pen scratched on the piece of ripped parchment.

“Wait, you… you mean Lucifer’s not okay?” Chloe asked, alarmed.

“Well…” Chloe saw a paper bird flash by at the corner of her vision, winging away up toward the chandelier and disappearing beyond. “You know how rash my brilliant, fiery son can be, yes?”

“God…” Chloe felt increasingly uneasy.

“At any rate, I have but one message I would like for you to relay…”

~~~

The jet was taking off, lifting into the air. Pierce felt some of the anxiety in him settle. He could get away. Regroup.

But... He looked down at the anklet in his hand. It had beeped yellow, but then was green again. He frowned, brow pinching.

His thoughts were interrupted by the plane lurched to the side violently, the anklet falling to the floor. He recaught his balance and looked as the pilot gripped the levers with white knuckles, forcing the plane level once more. Pierce settled into the other pilot seat. “Keep it level.”

“Sir?” The one remaining man looked at him with far too much white around his eyes.

Another slam, and again the plane had to be forced on course again. Pierce flipped switches as he heard metal shriek. His pilot gasped panicked breaths, than hurried out of his seat.

“What are you doing?” Pierce demanded, looking over his shoulder at the other.

He was pulling on a parachute and didn’t answer him. Pierce was about to snarl another order when the plane’s wing dipped again, nearly tossing him out of his seat. He focused on the controls, flipping switches. His copilot ran toward the back, giving panicked sounds with each breath.

There was a rip of metal, and the cabin pressure suddenly popped, deafening wind roaring inside. The man screamed briefly before the sound was whipped away but his hasty exit.

The first murderer flipped one more switch then grabbed at the weapon at his back. He turned
swiftly in his chair, bracing his forearm against his wrist.

There was a dull thunk of flesh, and the archangel with furiously glowing red eyes and hand nearly to Pierce's face was halted in his steps. Lucifer looked down at the first murderer, then to middle of his own torso. The blood red glow left him, leaving his dark eyes shining with pain as he made a choked exhale.

Lucifer had ran right into Mazikeen’s stolen demon blade.

~~~

Ella knelt by Chloe again. She’d ripped the phone case apart to help dampen the electricity. Mazikeen’s eyes were too wide as she sat back.

The scientist looked skyward as she held the live wires. “Big Guy, really need you now…”

She took a breath and touched the wires diagonally around Chloe’s heart.

~~~

“Please, if you would, tell him that all I need is for him to find a way to sort things in Hell so evil does not come to the living. That’s all I ask of him. And I want him to know I am... so proud of who he has become.”

“God?”

She felt the warmth of God smiling. “No more orders from me. For anyone.”

Chloe closed her eyes as God approached her. His presence was overwhelming her senses. Tears squeezed from between her lashes.

“It was nice to meet you, my child. Now... You have people who need you and are fighting for your life. So... ” He touched the center of her chest. Chloe felt a jolt. “Go.”

~~~

“Forgot I had this, didn’t you?” Pierce said. He went to twist the blade. Lucifer made another pained sound. His strong hand pinned over Pierce’s and the handle.

The pressure was bone breaking. Pierce snarled at him, pushing further.

Lucifer grit his teeth, his frame shuddering with agony. He glared down at Pierce. That was when the criminal saw Lucifer bring the dead man’s switch bomb to his mouth. His teeth snapped around the hair tie that was pinning the handle down.
The Devil grinned. Pierce’s eyes widened. The archangel pulled on the bomb. The hair tie snapped in his teeth and the archangel opened his hand.

A metal *snkt* heralded the activation. The dead man switch bomb beeped. Lucifer’s collar beeped. The anklet bomb at Pierce’s feet beeped. All lights turned red.

Pierce scowled. “Aw, shi-!”

*BOOM!*

~~~

Chloe’s frame jerked. Ella pulled the wires away immediately, staring. Chloe’s head rocked to one side, then she coughed, and breathed in raggedly.

Mazikeen gave a startled laugh. “It worked!”

Ella grinned, sitting back on her heels and holding the wires carefully away. She swallowed past the lump in her throat as she looked at Chloe, still passed out but clearly breathing once more. Her eyes swept upward. “Thanks Big Guy… Thank you.”

~~~

Lucifer was falling.

He hated that sensation. Falling among fire and debris. It reminded him too much of a more terrible time. Everything hurt, inside and out. Any moment he would slam into the ground and wake up in Hell and he wasn’t sure how he could bear it again.

The hands catching him surprised him away from the edge of unconsciousness. Giant wings flapped downward heavily, and he felt a lurch as his descent was slowed down.

Lucifer cracked his eyes open to see a familiar, swarthy face and bald head. “Amenadiel?” he croaked.

Amenadiel didn’t answer until they were on the ground, wings giving smaller, swift flaps to ease them to the world’s surface once more. The elder angel knelt, gentle as he set Lucifer down. His hand supported the back of his neck to keep him upright.

“Lucifer! What happened?”

Lucifer grinned, tried to crack a joke. It stopped when a cough racked his frame. Blood spewed out of his mouth. His hand grabbed at his middle, around the painful hilt of the blade still embedded in his belly.

The Devil looked up at his angelic brother, watching his frame and dark wings doubled against a too pale sky. Darkness was eating at the edges of his vision.
“Bollocks…” he managed weakly before fainting.
M.I.A. Devil and the Rag Tag M.I.B.

Chapter Notes

Hello Darklings!

Firstly, apologies on this being late. Secondly, I tried to do several things with the scenes directly following the big showdown, but it wasn't working well. So finally stopped fighting it and threw in a transition scene with a little more angst before we get back to the comfort part of this hurt/comfort roller coaster. Thirdly, I will try to look this over for typos tomorrow and edit, as I am quite cross eyed at this point.

Thank you for your patience, dear ones!

Chloe woke to the sound of walkie talkies, sunlight, men talking, and hard boards against her back as she was set down. Cloth slid out from underneath her. She grimaced, feeling a nauseating amount of pain in her head. Her chest hurt with each breath, the skin on it stinging, and everything felt uncomfortable.

She lolled her eyes to the left, watching two men walking swiftly away, the light stretcher carried between them. One was in a suit, the other in a jacket, jeans, and a baseball cap. Everything looked too sharp and narrow. Chloe blinked, still feeling dazed and cotton mouthed.

She was outside. The sky was dazzling bright, marred only by a faint pillar of smoke. She tried to remember the last time she'd seen the sky. Not since Pierce had walked her around to gauge Lucifer’s vulnerability to her, she realized. Seven days ago. It was strange to realize how much she'd missed it. Her gaze swerved along the horizon, taking in the details despite her discomfort. The eaves of a cabin took up her vision to the right, and to the left were two cars and a black SUV.

People were busy, relaying messages, organizing and assigning tasks or hurrying around to perform said tasks. There weren’t many of them, maybe six. There were bodies laying on the ground. Chloe’s gaze almost skipped over the still lump on the ground before fixing on it, registering that there were more unmoving bodies strewn about. Chloe swallowed thickly at that, her throat squeezing at the sight.

There was a scuffling to her right. She tilt her uncooperative neck until she could see who was nearby.

Ella was smiling down at her as she knelt on the porch boards next to her. “How are you feeling?”

Chloe looked up at the perky scientist, feeling something silvery slide through her dim emotions. She opened her mouth to greet her, but she inhaled too deeply. The words locked up in a grimace. “Mmf,” Chloe answered.

Ella gave her a sympathetic look. “Sorry. I, uh… sort of electrocuted you. And you had CPR on your chest and stuff, a boatload of drugs, so, yeah, hey, I’m glad you’re even awake!”

Mazikeen piped up to one side. “Ella and I kissed you. Fat lot of good it did.”

“It’s CPR, not kissing,” Ella said. “You don’t kiss dead or dying people.” Mazikeen huffed a laugh.
“...Okay, maybe you do.”

Chloe rolled her head to look at Mazikeen, even as the demoness mused. “Huh… If it’s a soul and not the body you have sex with, does that still make me a necrophiliac?”

“Uhhh, think it actually makes you a spectrophiliac.”

“That’s a thing? Hot damn. Though, I probably invented a lot of the ‘philiacs.”

Mazikeen was laying on her side atop a towel with her cheek propped up in her fist. The demoness was entirely uncaring that she didn’t have pants on, and her black panties didn’t cover much if the tiny string Chloe could see on the hip was any indication. Her eyes were half-closed as she let Caretaker wrap pads of thick gauze around the bullet wounds on her leg. Her arm was already fully wrapped. A number of bloodied towels and a stainless steel bowl with a wet cloth hanging off its side rest close at hand.

Chloe watched as Caretaker poured antiseptic into one of the wounds. Mazikeen hissed air through her teeth, but nothing else. She still felt sympathetic for the pain, that she'd been shot helping them. She looked to Caretaker next. At first Chloe thought Caretaker was wearing a shirt with an odd red design on it. Then she realized he was covered in blood.

Ella spotted the movement as Chloe tried to sit up with a concerned sound. “Whoa there, gal pal! You just stay lying down.”

Chloe did so, partly because Ella looked like she might push her down if she didn’t listen, and partly because the attempt to sit up made the pounding and nausea worse. “C.T…?”

Caretaker glanced up from his work to offer her a quick smile. “I’m fine, Ms. Decker. It only looks bad.”

“How… Whose blood is it?” She tensed, hoping he wouldn’t answer with her fear.

“It’s mine. But don’t you worry. I’m fine now.” He gave a small smile, raised his brows while looking down at his work. “Our devilish friend lost quite a few feathers during his stay. I managed to slip some into my keeping without the Sinnerman noticing. Glad I did.”

Chloe’s stomach still clenched up, the nausea making her feel clammy. “Sinnerman… Pierce, is he…”?

“No longer a problem,” Caretaker assured.

Chloe didn’t feel all that assured, wanting to question further, but Caretaker was addressing Mazikeen. “This one could be quite troublesome.” He was up to Mazikeen’s hip now, prodding carefully at the bullet hole slowly weeping dark blood. “Where does the pain stop when I apply pressure? Does it go past your hipbone?”

Mazikeen bit into the side of her hand, giving a thoughtful hum. When he let up, she scowled and glared over her shoulder at him. “Hey, I didn’t tell you to stop!”

Caretaker blinked. “Well… I… will just pack that with gauze for the time being, Ms. Mazikeen.”

“I’d rather you dig the bullets out,” she grouched, slumping her cheek onto the heel of her hand.

“I’d rather not,” Caretaker replied easily, unruffled.
Ella shrugged and jabbed her eyes their direction. “Mazikeen just has flesh wounds, by the way, but says she’ll be fine.” Ella leaned forward, whispering. “Between you and me, though, I think the blood loss has made her a little loopy.”

The Detective gave a non-committal nod, trying to swallow some moisture into her throat while her eyes danced about. Chloe still had questions clamoring, but one important one shoved the others down to a buzzing din in her brain. She couldn’t see who she was looking for, the person she was seeking since she opened her eyes. “…Where’s Lucifer?”

“Oh…” Ella looked to Caretaker. Caretaker’s lips thinned. Mazikeen’s bottom lip pushed outward, her eyes dark and thunderous.

“Where’s Lucifer?” Chloe’s tone was insistent, demanding an answer.

Caretaker released a slow breath. “His brother took him. Lucifer stopped Pierce from escaping in his jet, caused an explosion. I’m sure he detonated all three bombs at once.” He cleaned up the blood around the wound. “He didn’t come out unscathed, I’m afraid. He had a deep puncture wound to his midsection. The other angel fixed what he could before taking him away. He didn’t want to expose any other humans to them.”

Mazikeen wrinkled her nose. “I’m going to kick Amenadiel’s fucking ass wh-heh!” She dropped her head down, hands clenched into fists. Caretaker was stuffing a neat roll of gauze into her bullet hole. “Nngh…”

Ella winced in sympathy. Chloe continued looking at them, pleading silently for answers.

Caretaker spoke quietly as he focused on smoothing bandaging tape over the hip. “He was unconscious, but breathing when they left.”

Chloe’s voice sounded small even to herself. “Did he say where he was taking him?”

“Home.”

Chloe’s mind blanked. Two thoughts split and raced in two opposite directions, leaving her unable to act or breathe. Her mouth moved pointlessly.

“I’ll get you a pair of pants,” Caretaker murmured at Mazikeen before he stood, moving like it hurt his knees, and head into the cabin.

Chloe closed her eyes, listening to him move away. Her thoughts were still trapped, chasing each other’s trails uselessly. Ella finally ventured past the quiet. “I’m sure he’ll be fine. It’s Lucifer. I mean, he’s been through Hell and back and been fine. Quite literally.”

“…Not all fine.” Chloe mumbled.

“Huh?”

Before Ella could ask her to repeat herself, a middle-aged woman with a short hair cut, weathered face, and shrewd, narrowed eyes came striding up to them. She had been the one ordering people around the most, constantly with a walkie talkie or phone to her ear. She walked and leveled her gaze in a way that screamed military, not taken away from in the least with her khakis and simple black t-shirt. Everything about her seemed small, rough, and sharp, from her elbows and knees to the way she chewed on a piece of gum.

Said gum was gnawed to the side so she could speak clearer. “Detective Decker, good to see you
awake. Agent Redholm. We’re almost done with clean up here. After the last sweep I’ll have a unit take you three to the hospital for medical attention.” Her gaze darted over to Mazikeen. “Goes without saying why we can’t take you to a hospital, even though you look like you could use it the most.”

“The fuck I do,” Mazikeen sassed.

Agent Redholm only chewed her gum hard a few times in response before her gaze pinned on Chloe. “I apologize for not being able to get you care right away. Unfortunately we have to keep public servants and civilian emergency response workers away until we can call it clear, and we’re limited on available manpower in the area. We’ll get you all taken care of, though.”

Chloe felt slow and stupid, her normally easy grasp of facts and unspoken statements absent. She looked at the agent, puzzled. “I don’t… What branch are you with?”

The gum was rolled over to the other side for chewing. “I’m SPD on a normal day, SWAT on a rough day, and days like today?” She made a soft scoffing sound, looking around. “The entire team here consists of agents within the government with specialized clearance to deal with unnatural matters. We monitor activity, assess threat levels, as well as keep knowledge obscured from the public.” She shot her gaze at a young man approaching. “Head underground and help with triage.”

The younger agent nodded without a word and hurried away.

“Oooh, so you guys are like Men in Black!” Ella said in excitement.

“We’re not nearly that well equipped,” Agent Redholm rebutted. She swept a wiry arm outward. “As you can see. I’d even call us a ragtag bunch at best. But we get the job done.” Her eyes flit away. “Most days.” Before anyone could say anything to that she looked to Caretaker as he came out with a pair of neatly folded black scrub pants. “You should get into some fresh clothes. I don’t want to explain to anyone why you look like you walked off the set of Carey.”

“Yes ma’am,” Caretaker agreed mildly. He handed the pants to Mazikeen. She looked at them with distaste but started to shuffle them on.

The agent nodded to Mazikeen. “We’ll need to get a separate unit to transport you. If you go to the hospital with them, can’t easily be explained why we’re not admitting you for medical attention. I just need to know where you want to go.”

Chloe listened to them discussing logistics without paying attention. Her thoughts strayed, still feeling far too drug-hazed and pained, her mind not up to speed from being dead. Finally she interrupted. “I need a phone.”

Everyone paused to look at her. Chloe kept her gaze up on the eaves. Her head was pounding. Ella was first to speak. “Um, mine’s a little broken.”

Mazikeen had managed to wiggle into the pants. She still managed to make them look good. “Who are you calling?” she asked, but in a rare show of knowing when her friend needed something right away, she had fished her phone out of her top, unlocked it, and was handing it over.

Chloe didn’t answer, looking through the contact list. She frowned at it, scrolling through the largely inappropriate labels until she reached the one she needed. She tapped it, put the phone to her ear and held her breath.

Trixie answered almost immediately. “Maze! What happened? Did you find her? Is Ella okay?”
Chloe gave a soft sob that was half a laugh. “Hey, Monkey!”

“Mommy!”

Redholm gave a softer smile to the group. “I’ll get your travel arranged,” she said quietly. She moved away, giving them privacy as they listened to mother and daughter reunite over the phone.
Hello Darklings!

So, as usual, I underestimated how many chapters there would be, and so this denouement will be a bit longer after all. So have a chapter with some Linda and Amenadiel POV.

Enjoy, gumdrops!

Linda removed her glasses to wipe at her eyes, moving toward the kitchen to give the girl more privacy. Trixie had ran in her excitement, hardly even able to put words to all her emotions. That had only lasted seconds. The eleven-year-old was now slumped against the wall near the guest room, crying in her mother’s ear about how she wasn’t sure if she’d see her again.

It was far better than the waiting.

The last hour in particular had been awful. She’d woken up, confused, her memory slow to return as to why she was in Lucifer’s penthouse. Or why she was laying on the floor. When she’d recovered from fainting, she learned that Carney and Daniel were still blind and had no information of what happened or if Ella was okay. Daniel had tried to insist she go to urgent care in case she had hit her head. Trixie had kept looking at her like she might pass out again, the child putting on a brave face that did nothing to fool Linda.

There had been nothing any of them could do. All she managed was to apologize for passing out and finally hung up the phones to await news.

She was making herself some strong tea when the phone rang. She set the pot aside, steps quick to scoop it from the counter. “Hello?”

“It’s Carney. Just got off the phone with the team up North.”

Linda’s heart lurched in fear. “Is Ella…?”

“She’s all right. She was wearing a protective vest and only has a bruise for it.”

“Oh, thank goodness. The others. Are they…?”

“Chloe Decker is being moved to a hospital in Sacramento, but the team doesn’t think she’s in any immediate danger health wise, despite her close call.”

“Yes, she’s talking to her daughter now.”

“Good. Mazikeen Smith has a number of gunshot wounds, but all are treatable. Since she can’t go to the hospital, she is being transported back to Los Angeles with a person who assures he can treat her with no trouble. The person in question will remain under guard, as he’s being held in custody.”
“Custody? Who is it?”

“Goes by Caretaker. He apparently was working for Pierce and turned on him to help the two. Unfortunately, that doesn’t change that he’s a criminal element, and witness to events we don’t want known to the public.”

“Oh. You mean… with Lucifer being…”

“Precisely. It’s going to be a mess with how many eye witnesses we’re going to have to keep separate and work into psychiatric prisons as it is. But not why I called. We lost eyes on Lucifer Morningstar. Our understanding is that he was grievously injured during the confrontation with Marcus Pierce. One of his… kin showed up. We were hoping you had heard or seen anything.”

“One of his kin?” Linda’s trepidation crept into her tone. Her friend, her patient, was hurt, and possibly at another angel’s mercy. If it wasn’t Amenadiel… The last one that had shown up beside him had tried to kill his mother and Chloe. “Ohhhh, well that could be either… okay? Or bad. Do you have a description of the…”

..Whoosh…

Linda turned to face the balcony, her mouth open. Agent Carney was talking. Linda stammered something to interrupt him. “I… gotta go.” She hung up the phone even as he tried to inquire, setting it down on the counter. She bustled quickly to the glass door, opening it.

Amenadiel was standing with a face speckled with blood, unhappy tension around his eyes and mouth. His dark wing bent under his brother’s head to help support where the Devil lay far too limp in his arms.

Linda felt her world narrow with a barely constrained panic. Lucifer looked awful, covered in soot, black smudges, and blood. The few straggles of burnt tatters hanging on him barely afforded him any decency. Red coated his belly and his chin, blood having drained out of his partly open mouth. His wings were pinched in to his back by Amenadiel’s arm, the feathers nicked and rumpled, ash clinging to the feathers. They were nothing like the pristine brilliance she had seen once briefly. He smelled of smoke, and not campfire smoke, something acrid and harsh.

“Oh my god… Is he…?” She held her hands inches from him, afraid to touch him, afraid he’d be stiff and cold.

“He’s alive. If just.”

Amenadiel moved to enter the penthouse, careful with his burden squeezing him and their wings through. Linda hurried before him, clearing the way to the bed and straightening the top blanket. He laid Lucifer down, holding him up with one hand to push his wings to the sides before easing his head onto a pillow.

Lucifer was oblivious, deeply asleep, but he was breathing. Linda could see his bare chest lifting and falling now.

“Wh-what can I do?”

Amenadiel’s wings folded, rapidly diminishing until they disappeared altogether in that strange inter-dimensional way. He sat down on the edge of the bed, weary and care-weighed. “We should clean him up. Some towels and water.”

Linda looked at him, really looked at him. “Do… you need a drink?”
Amenadiel looked to her, as though surprised she was asking after him. Then cracked a smile, some of that warmth seeping back in his eye. “Yeah, I think I do.”

~ ~ ~

Amenadiel felt somehow responsible.

He didn’t yet know how his brother had come to such maltreatment, who was responsible, or what he needed to do to fix it. But he knew he hadn’t been here, and had he been, maybe none of it would have happened.

The past was the past, though, and he might have held time once in his hands, but he’d never been capable of reversing it. For now he was simply glad to see Linda so he wasn’t alone with the daunting task of cleaning up blood and ash while assessing the less-life threatening injuries. She seemed just as glad to not be alone as well, her eyes a mix of worry and genuine empathy.

He’d missed her. It made him glad to see her again. She was on Lucifer’s right, the windows letting in the slanting afternoon sun through the black sheer curtains, alight in her fair waves of hair.

“It’s good to see you again, Linda.”

She looked up, smiled, warmth in her brown eyes. “It’s good to see you, too, Amenadiel.” She pointed to the prone figure between them. “Though, wish it was under better circumstances.”

“True,” he agreed with a wry chuckle. The worst of the blood on Lucifer’s solar plexus and belly was gone. He draped one of the towels they’d gathered over Lucifer and worked on getting rid of the inadequate remnants on him.

“… We were worried about you.”

Amenadiel shot her an apologetic look. “Sorry. I was taking Charlotte home.”

Linda’s expression crumpled with faint sadness. “Oh, Charlotte. Is she…?”

“She was very happy to be there.” Amenadiel had been so pleased to show her through the gates himself, standing aside while she spoke ecstatically to an excited Eve. He finished getting Lucifer into the black sleeping shorts he favored, sliding the towel away.

“I’m glad she made it to Heaven.”

“She died saving me from a bullet. She deserves to be there.” He fished out the cloth from the bowl, wringing it out. “I’m still not sure who wanted to shoot me, though. Does it have to do with all this?”

“It does,” Linda verified. “Pierce was trying to shoot you.”


“That I’m not sure. I was hoping you knew.” She hissed in sympathy, pressing her cloth carefully over the skinned knuckles of Lucifer’s right hand.
Amenadiel tried to clean more of the blood and ash from Lucifer’s face. There was still a dark mark around his eye, on his cheek and edge of his jaw. Bruises, he realized, not some smudge from the jet explosion he’d been in. There was a time he’d felt nothing but fury and indignation at Lucifer, looking down at him every time he had to hurry his brother back to Hell before he was an even worse influence on the humans he interacted with. At one time, he would have even gloated and been ugly content that Lucifer had been so thoroughly beaten. Now all he felt was concern, unhappy that he had suffered.

He was about to ask Linda what had happened, who had hurt Lucifer, and how. That was when he learned there was another unexpected human around.

“Lucifer!”

The ten-year-old had bounded up the steps of the split level up to the bed, then stopped short, her mouth open, poised as though recovering from a near slip on the floor. Her phone hung forgotten in her hand. She was staring at the wings, far from lustrous but no less impressive where they rest half-folded on either side of the passed out Devil.

“Whoa!” Her eyes were wide.

Amenadiel blinked at her. “Hello, Beatrice,” he greeted, unsure what else to say, how to cover, realizing quickly he couldn’t cover anything. He and Linda waited, both staring and tensed for her reaction.

Again, Chloe Decker’s daughter surprised him. She’d done so when he’d first met her at the hospital while he was guarding Chloe Decker from being moved for Lucifer. That was when Trixie had told him she thought he was good, and had hugged him.

Even the youngest humans had so much to give and teach him.

Instead of continuing to stare or having any sort of melt down, she shot looks to both adults standing around Lucifer. “Is he all right?” There was a sound on the phone, someone frantically trying to get her attention. She put the phone to her ear. “Mom! Yeah! He’s here! … Uh, no, he’s sleeping and looks…” She looked to the two adults for help.

Linda mouthed ‘Okay’ to her, nodding encouragingly.

“He’s okay? He’s just really dirty.” There was more chatter. Trixie looked to Amenadiel. “Yes, he’s here.” The voice on the phone quieted. Trixie’s brows raised, her eyes on Amenadiel. “Mom says you scared the shit out of her,” she dutifully informed.

Amenadiel blinked. Linda covered her mouth, making a sound he suspected was a surprised laugh.

Trixie shuffled as she listened to the voice on the phone, opening her mouth a few times to speak, not able to get a word in, so she waited. Her eyes kept looking over the wings, scouring over them with curiosity and interest. Finally at the end of whatever her mother said, the girl nodded, said okay, and held the phone out to Amenadiel.

“Mom wants to talk to you.” She whispered dramatically after. “She’s a little drugged.”

The eldest angel raised his brows with an ah, taking the phone. “…Hello, Chloe.”

“Amenadiel! Hey, I’m… Trixie said Lucifer is there? That he’s okay?”

“Yes, I’m… sorry that I scared you by taking him away.”
“Caretaker said you said you were taking him home, and I was afraid you meant... somewhere else.”

The angel felt a faint twist of shame at his carelessness. “Ah, no. Sorry. No. He has made it clear that this is where he feels he belongs.”

She sounded a bit breathless, words not as careful. He could hear the sound of an engine humming in the background. Likely she was on the road, then. “Is he really all right? What happened? How did—how did get so hurt even when I wasn’t—I was far enough away...?”

“Pierce had a demon blade on him, one of Mazikeen’s. I’m not sure how he got it, but weapons forged in Hell can still harm angels.”

Chloe made a sound. “I forgot... They had said... Over the phone... How bad is he? Really?”

She certainly wasn’t as clear-headed as she usually was. Amenadiel took a breath. “His life isn’t in danger, and he shouldn’t have any trouble recovering, especially with my help. But there’s a lot of damage. Healing with divine energy will make him sleep. How are you doing, though?” Lucifer would want to know if he woke up anytime soon.

“Mmfine, just... I feel better. I had a headache after I came back... back from—where were you? Lucifer said he prayed and you didn’t answer. Why didn’t you answer?”

Amenadiel felt his brow pinch. Lucifer had prayed, and he hadn’t been there. “Chloe, believe me, I would have, but I was in the far realms after I took Charlotte to Heaven. There was a problem with some demons and souls escaping Hell. Father let me know about it, so I took a team to deal with it before the Eternals got involved.”

“Eternals?”

“They’re... Just trust me that they’re nothing even we celestials like being on the bad side of. But I’ve been back in the Silver City the past few days. I would have heard him. I didn’t know anything was wrong until...” He stopped, feeling the weight of the paper next to a demon’s blade in his robe’s pockets.

“Oh. So you weren’t ignoring him. I’m glad.”

“No. Never.” Amenadiel looked down at the Devil still deeply asleep. Linda was wringing out another washcloth, explaining quietly to Trixie that she was getting the ash off of him and that they’d need to get another bowl of clean water soon. “I mean, Lucifer can be a wholly self-absorbed ass at times...” Chloe made a choked little laugh. “But he’s my brother. All the bad and good that comes with him. I would have came if I knew.”

Chloe was quiet at that.

“Chloe... What happened?”

“Oh, that’s... a long story, one I’d prefer to only have to tell one time.” Her tone had changed, words slurring. “Thank you for watching him, Amenadiel. I know... I know he’s snarly when it comes to accepting help, but I know he appreciates it.”

“We’ll see how he feels about that when he wakes up. I’m just glad I made it in time.”

“Yeah, I’m... real glad you got God’s message... in time... the paper bird... thing...”
Amenadiel felt like his belly had fallen into ice water. “... Chloe? How do you know about that?” All he could hear was breathing and the car. “Chloe? ... Chloe?”

There was a soft scrabbling sound and then he heard another voice on the phone. He recognized who it was after a few seconds. Ella. “Hey, sorry, big guy, she fell asleep. They gave her some pain medication because her headache was making her sick. Can’t have that in the car! We’re almost to the hospital, though. Can we call you back?”

“Yeah. Yeah, that’s fine. Please let us know how she’s doing.”

“Will do, Amen!”

That nickname never worked right, but it didn’t stop Ella, and she didn’t give him any time to protest before the phone went dead. He swiped his thumb on it, looking to the two humans on the other side of the bed. They were looking over Lucifer’s wing, Trixie down at the long flight feathers, and Linda at the brim with a puzzled frown.

“Oh, don’t touch those,” Amenadiel warned Trixie when he noticed her outstretched hand posed to touch. “They can be sharp.”

“Amenadiel…” Linda was frowning, very lightly touching the wing. “Angel wing bones aren’t made of metal, are they?”

“No. Why?”

“Because there’s… um… sticking out of the, uh, feather skin here.” Trixie was leaning over, trying to see. Linda looked up at him, confused and concerned. “Why is there metal under his skin?”

Amenadiel leaned over Lucifer to look. Linda picked his wing up so he could see and stopped short. They both made surprised sounds when they saw how the bone bent, the metal plate that had broken loose from the bone pushing out further into view.

Trixie bit her lip before announcing the obvious. “Thaat’s a problem.”
Lucifer slept. And slept.

When he did start to come around, he did with short glimpses into the waking world, pieces he would later remember only if he sought to pluck them from his foggy memory.

He remembered hearing Amenadiel’s deep, smooth voice. He heard Linda’s gently purred r’s and clear enunciation. He even heard Trixie, her young pipes a little too close to his ear. None of them were who he hoped to hear.

At one point he awoke coughing, his throat too dry. Linda coaxed him into drinking some water. He’d looked around for someone else, felt a sadness hollow him out. It ached worse than the rest of his body, which was just skin over soreness. He’d returned to sleep ignoring their quiet questions. It hadn’t been hard, exhaustion dragging him under with the barest effort.

The next time he woke, his wing was hurting. Or rather, it was hurting more than usual for the past two days. It was being cut into. He opened his eyes, muzzy as he tried to figure out what was occurring.

Caretaker said something to him. Lucifer still tried to move, to pull his wing away from the irritating stinging. Voices protested this, a confusion of sound and too many bodies looming on all sides of him. He was about to lash out to regain some space and air when someone’s hand squeezed his.

The Devil paused. It was much smaller than the hand he was used to, but somewhere in his subconscious he now associated the gesture with comfort and reassurance. So he squeezed the hand lightly back and let gravity take a hold of him again, sinking back into the mattress and waiting for them to finish what they were doing. He didn’t care anymore what it was so long as they finished quickly.

He did his best to remain still and to not squeeze the fragile hand in his any harder. He broke out in an uncomfortable sweat as the incision was opened up. Lucifer’s breathed out a hiss, head rolling back with discomfort. Something was pulled from his wing bone, out of the incision. The Devil grimaced. Strong hands squeezed on either side of where his broken wing stung and sang with pain the most, pressing bone back in alignment.

The warmth that pressed into the fracture was divine. Literally divine. Lucifer felt all the tension drain out of his muscles.

He didn’t remember how the rest of the day or night went.
He awoke feeling groggy. There were voices in his penthouse, the smell of coffee, sausage, eggs, and something freshly baked. Lucifer rolled his head to look to his left, blinking. Linda was sitting at the bar talking to Amenadiel. They both had cups of coffee in hand and were smiling fondly at one another. He listened, and could hear Trixie and Caretaker’s voices echoing from his kitchen. There were two men he didn’t recognize lounging around, and a third by his elevator standing guard.

Lucifer struggled to sit up, glad no one was paying him any attention at the moment. It was pathetically difficult. Still when he flexed his toes and moved his arms, he felt different. Better. His legs didn’t feel like glass shards any longer, his wings didn’t hurt when he moved them, and the stripes on his arms were completely gone. He stayed sitting up, taking deep breaths. Nothing hurt from his chest expanding. His ribs were fine.

From his new position, he could see there was another person on the couch, but barely, their feet covered in a blanket. Lucifer felt hopeful, carefully guiding his feet off the bed, wings trailing after. He flexed the right one carefully. Nothing hurt. The muscles on his wrists and around where his wing had been broken felt tired, but there wasn’t even an ache left. Lucifer took a breath, remembering the jolt he’d felt the last time he’d tried folding his wing. He tried anyway.

They smoothly folded.

With their weight gone from his back, he judged he could stand. Lucifer did so, careful with his balance, feet flexing against the cool stone of his floor. He looked around dazedly for his robe, found it hanging on its faithful hook and slipped the black satin over his shoulders before peering out, searching for who he hoped to see on the couch.

His heart sank when he saw Mazikeen sleeping there instead. There were three empty booze bottles on the coffee table next to her and she was heavily bandaged.

He looked around again, listened, hoped, and felt the hope bending, stressed close to breaking. Lucifer stood ready to have his heart decimated if that frail hope were to shatter. His breaths were stressed pulls, everything too sharp and difficult.

Amenadiel was the one to notice him first, coming up out of the barstool with alarm. “Lucifer…!”

The Devil watched Linda turn and stand out of her seat as well. “You’re awake!”

He looked between them, looked around the penthouse, as though he could have possibly missed her. As though she’d just be sitting in the chair, or out on the balcony, or he’d hear her from the kitchen any second laughing with her daughter. Another look, and the hope bent a little more, everything in him tensed and starting to crack.

“Where’s the Detective?”

“Are you okay to be standing? You look like you’re—,” Linda started walking toward him.

She stopped short when he opened his mouth next, the question propelled with the stress building inside.

“WHERE’S THE DETECTIVE!”

Amenadiel was also trying to approach him, his hands up in adjuration for calm. “Lucifer, you’re healed, but you still lost a lot of blood.”
“Amenadiel, I swear…” He started, feeling the red glow in his eyes, anger starting to press against the thinning thread of hope like a hot iron. He leaned against the wall at the top of the stairs for support. “If you took her, if she’s…!” The words became stuck. “If Chloe’s…!”

“No, Lucifer, I didn’t. She’s…”

“Lucifer!”

The red vanished from his eyes as Trixie came running up to him. He was still confused as to why she and Caretaker were here in his penthouse.

“Just a minute, I gotta…!” She had her phone out, pressing on the buttons.

Chloe, more than a five hour drive away, was sitting in a hospital bed, the remains of her food on a tray. She hadn’t eaten it. Ella had found them much better Mexican food for a brunch, so Chloe had feasted on fish tacos instead. Ella had then turned on her untouched hospital food after deciding she was still hungry, and was now digging noisily at the bottom of a jello cup with a plastic spoon. The Detective herself was nearly to the bottom of a bag of fresh tortilla chips and the thick salsa they had come with when the phone rang.

She hurriedly chewed up her chip, wiping the salt and oil off on her hospital gown before answering the phone quickly. “Hey, Monkey, what’s up?”

Back at the penthouse, Lucifer was still trying to puzzle out what Trixie was up to when she yelled “Hey!” excitedly into the phone. “He’s up!” She held out the phone to him.

Chloe froze, breath held, waiting.

Lucifer stared at the phone stupidly. Trixie bounced it, indicating for him to take it, her brow pinched.

Chloe waited, listening hopefully. She couldn’t hear anything. “…Lucifer?”

Across the room, Ella paused mid-spoon-lick, her eyes wide and round as she listened.

He heard her voice, tinny and small. His large hand took the cell carefully from the much smaller one, as though the device were made of spun sugar.

He swallowed before putting it to his ear. “Detective?” he asked, hopeful and strained.

Chloe burst into a smile. He sounded okay. Not croaking or whisper weak. “Lucifer.” She couldn’t think of what else to say suddenly, her mind becoming uncharacteristically blank. “Um… Hi.”

The Devil exhaled the breath he’d been holding. The strength in his legs went with it. He sat down on the step, a little clumsily, since he wasn’t paying any attention to where gravity was setting him. “… Hi.”

She waited, giving him a little bit of mental space. She glanced over to Ella. She was still staring with her tongue pressed against the spoon. “Um…” Lucifer still didn’t say anything, so she pressed on. “How are you feeling?”

“… Better.” He leaned his shoulder against the wall. It was soothingly cool through the satin of his robe. “Much better now.”

“Good,” she said quietly. “I’m glad. You’re healing okay?”
“I’m a… Suppose.” He licked his lips, eyes dancing over the stone pattern on the wall without really seeing it. He didn’t notice at all how quiet his penthouse had become or all the eyes on him, his focus entirely on her voice. “Where are you?”

Chloe glanced around her room. “I’m still in Sacramento at the hospital.” She heard Lucifer inhale, hurried on. “I’m okay, it’s just, you know, standard procedure for anyone who has been kidnapped and held hostage, especially for a length of time. They kept me for observation overnight. Pretty sure everything checked out okay. They’re busy scheduling me for a follow up with my regular doctor in L.A., getting my records transferred over.”

He didn’t interject like she thought he would, so she went on. “It’s a mess because so many agencies are involved, and it’s considered a domestic terrorist attack. Also means I’m dealing outside of my jurisdiction here, so Sacramento is having to talk to Los Angeles and both of them have to talk to the FBI and the other government agency. I already had my initial counselor visit, and he’s trying to help me get released on grounds that its best I’m at home with family right now, which, honestly,” she gave a small, nervous laugh. “Couldn’t agree with that more.”

Lucifer tilt his head back against the wall. He pressed his bare toe on the opposite wall across from where he leaned atop his steps in distraction. “Oh. I see.”

Chloe pursed her lips, nervous at his faint response. Worry was swelling into anxiety. She glanced side to side, waiting for him to say more. He didn’t. “Lucifer. Are you sure you’re okay?”

Lucifer took the question into consideration, trying to sort how he felt. There was so much. Relief, even a little silvery slice of happiness that she was all right. Yet that was only one of the many, many ingredients in the stew of emotions he could feel stirring in his belly and chest. She was too far away, and he didn’t like it. He couldn’t see that she wasn’t lying too still in Mazikeen’s bloody arms, not breathing. He looked down at the back of his hand where it rest on his knee. The skin was whole again where he’d bloodied it against the glass. But that didn’t fix it. Fix what was welling up in him.

“No.” His voice was rough. He cleared his throat, tried again. “No, I’m not okay.”

Chloe felt her initial excitement crumple entirely to the feeling of anxiety. “I… Lucifer, what can I…?”

“I’m mad at you,” he blurted.

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“I’m mad at you,” he blurted.

Chloe nodded her head to the side. She cast a look at Ella, who now at least had the spoon in her mouth, but was still staring and listening on. “I… guess I can understand that. But the situation…”

Lucifer leaned away from the wall, feet panting firmly on the bottom step as he leaned his forearm atop his knee, glaring at a point on the floor as though he could turn his eyes into a magnified sunbeam and smoke a hole through it. Everything in his gut was rolling, clawing its way to the surface, like lava through too thin a crust of earth. “No, scratch that. I’m not mad.” He bared his teeth. “I’m bloody furious! How dare you!”

Chloe sat back in the bed, stunned. “I… how dare I?”

“Yes!” Lucifer wasn’t sure when he’d gotten to his feet, his other hand waving angrily. “Yes! How dare you pull such a foolish stunt! You’re a fragile, easily killed human! You know how few of you cross the threshold and come back?! DO YOU! It’s waaaaay in the tiny thousandths because death is not a fickle lady! What were you even thinking?”
Chloe’s spine straightened with indignation, her brow lowering. “Thinking?” She gave a coughed sound of indignation. “I was the only one thinking! We’d all be dead if you had gone running gung ho down the hall! Did you think Pierce was really going to let Ella, Mazikeen, and I out of that place alive after he finished you off?!”

“I was trying to protect you!”

“Oh my Goh-ugh! I didn’t need your protection right then! I needed you to trust me and to not blow up!”

“Well, ha!” He glared up at the ceiling, pacing over to his piano. “I’m blowing up now, aren’t I! You might not have come back! At all! Then what?!”

Everyone in the penthouse moved away from the heedlessly prowling Devil.

Ella grabbed the remaining chips and shoved some haphazardly in her mouth, unblinking as she watched and listened.

Chloe spread her hand, making chopping motions at the air. “What other option was there? Even if I hadn’t made it back, it gave you, Ella, and Mazikeen a chance! It. Was. The. Logical. Move.”

“No! Nooooooo—we are NOT excusing your reckless actions on your blighted boring logic! Because…! You…! To Hell with your logic!”

“Well, to Hell with your selfishness! You’ve died, oh wait! Let’s see now! Three times! And you were about to do it again!”

“You did it on purpose!”

“Yeah, so have you! Except for the time with the paralytic poisoning, you have pretty much walked right into deadly situations without a care, so it is rich that you are accusing me of being reckless!”

“I’m the Devil! I can be-!” “No, bullshit! You know what?” “—reckless if I want! It’s what I do--” “You’re mad at me, but I’m mad at you!” “And because I’m fine with dying—” “Because you were fine with dying—” “If it somehow saves you because—” “Before I got a chance to tell you that—”

“I love you!”

The following silence was only broken by their breathing.

Ella didn’t move a muscle, chips half-crunched between her teeth. Everyone else in the penthouse held their breath, watching the Devil slowly catch his breath, his anger bleeding out of him. Three hundred and eighty miles away, Chloe did the same, the angry moisture in her eyes turning into something hurt and anxious, waiting.

Finally Lucifer moved to sit on the nearby piano bench. “Sorry,” he said quietly.

“Yeah. Me, too.”

“I get to hate it,” he reminded her.

“Yeah, you do.”

“But I don’t hate you. At all.”
She managed a small smile. “I know.”

Lucifer leaned onto the piano, robed forearm resting on the glossy black surface. He felt drained and weak, like a listing ship left in the vast ocean after a harrowing storm. “I guess… I’m not really so mad at you, either.”

“That’s good. I really don’t like you being mad at me.”

“I don’t either. Sorry, dear.”

“Me, too.”

When Lucifer remained quiet, Chloe gently prod. “What do you need right now?”

“I…” He clamped his lips stubbornly together. “I’m fine here.”

Chloe’s tone remained gentle, but lift in that prodding warning. “Lucifer…”

He thumped his head against the edge of the piano. It didn’t hurt. He wanted it to. It’d mean she was nearby. He mumbled his answer.

Chloe frowned, trying to piece together the mumble. “Sorry, what?”

He mumbled again.

“I still couldn’t…”

“I said I want you here!”

“Ohhh, okay.” Chloe smiled, something soft and warm soothing over the knot of turmoil in her chest. “I miss you, too.”

Lucifer sniffed. Chloe was kind to not acknowledge it sounded wet. His voice warbled, but strengthened as he fell back on humor. “Well, what’s not to miss? Especially when I have this handsome mug.”

Chloe snorted a small laugh. “Ass.”

“I have a handsome ass, too!”

“Oh, go-good grief,” she corrected herself. She looked up at the door. A nurse was standing there with a clipboard. “Oh, hey, I think they’re here with my discharge papers.”

“You’ll hurry home?” he pressed hopefully.

“Of course. Trixie’s at the penthouse, right? I’ll head straight there.”

“Excellent.” He lifted his head suddenly. “Detective! We can have our date!”

“Aaaand that’s my cue to let you go.”

“But, Detective!”

“Bye Lucifer. I’ll let you know when I’m on the road.”

“Think about what you want for dinner, darling. Or where! You know I can get us in just about anywhere!”
Chloe rolled her eyes, but she was all smiles when she clicked the phone off and turned her attention to the nurse.

The nurse was pretty confused at Ella exploding into an excited flurry of movement, dancing in place and pumping her fist with a squeal.

Lucifer looked at the phone screen in his hand, resting his chin in the crook of his elbow atop the piano. He’d fully expected Chloe to end the call there, and grinned when she proved him right.

A few seconds later he felt a tug on his robe sleeve. He straightened, remembering suddenly that he had guests. Very unexpected guests, but guests nonetheless. He looked to Trixie questioningly.

She had glee barely suppressed on her face. Her voice came out in an excited whisper. “Are you and Mom *dating* finally?”

“I… Uh…” He looked around. Caretaker, Amenadiel, Linda, a now awake and sitting up Mazikeen, and three strangers were looking on, also eagerly awaiting his answer. “Well…” He looked to the phone again with another fond smile, handed it back to Trixie with a smirk. “We’re certainly working on it. Now.” He pointed toward the bar. “Be a dear and get a Devil that big amber filled bottle on the shelf over there…”
Good Things

Chapter Notes

Hello Darklings! I had combined this with another scene, decided it didn't work, so separated it out again. What can I do? Just let the chars drag me into doing what they want, obviously, and just try to keep it organized!

This chapter is basically a sleepy Lucifer stumbling around in his doubts and Linda being oh-so-Linda. (I heart her so much.) Next chapter will have Chloe and Lucifer back in the same room again finally!

Enjoy, ducklings!

Lucifer only managed to take a few refreshing guzzles of alcohol to clear the rusty taste in his mouth. He remembered setting the heavy bottle down atop the piano next to the purple-cased phone.

The next he recalled anything was Caretaker’s thick hand shaking his shoulder. He snorted awake while sitting up, looking at his surroundings with woolly eyes. He rubbed at his face, sniffed through his nose and blinked up at the bearded man.

“You fell asleep, Mr. Morningstar. It didn’t look like a comfortable position.”

“Oh, did I now? Ah well.” He glanced around. Everyone was watching him, even the man guarding the door and his two mystery guests seated near Mazikeen. He looked at the piano top. The phone and whiskey were gone. Well, fabulous. Lucifer rubbed at the back of his neck, grimaced at the feel of grime in his hair. With that he announced he was dirtier than the back of a chimneysweep’s neck, lifted himself up with as much energy as he could feign and strode in the direction of his well-loved shower. As he went, he demanded fresh coffee to be waiting for him when he got out, not directing the order at anyone.

He just needed to convince himself he wasn’t fleeing all the scrutiny.

Blood and soot down the drain, healthily lathered and hair cleaned, Lucifer quickly made himself as immaculately groomed as he could in a hurry and with his tired thoughts jerking to strange, half-awake places. Manscaping would have to wait, but he did trim up his facial hair and fixed his hair into its product-tamed side part. He picked up the eye liner, decided he couldn’t be bothered. Nor could he with buffing his nails. He did dab on his favored cologne. The familiar scent of it was somehow comforting, familiar in a way he hadn’t realized he’d missed.

He looked at the darker circles on his eyes, shook his head at his own reflection before applying eye brightener underneath to cover the weariness settled there.

After that, he needed to settle on clothing, which was a much harder chore than it should have been. With unknown company out in his penthouse, casual wear would not do, but nor would being dressed to the nines when they should be trying to impress him, not vice versa. He selected a white shirt, a vest of black, charcoal, and light gray, and plain gray slacks. He sat down on his cushy bench seat to try to pull on shoes.
Time slipped on him. He finally jerked himself back to awareness from staring off. He decided the shoes were too much of a bother, so he slipped on socks instead and left the polished oxford’s discarded on the floor.

Cuffs buttoned closed and collar straightened, he checked himself in the full length mirror for flaws. Lucifer straightened the vest, and took a deep breath as he stared at his reflection.

He was paler than he liked, but he didn’t look like someone in need of help. He practiced a smile. It didn’t reach his eyes and felt ill-fitting on his face.

Fine. No smiling. He likely wouldn’t need to anyhow.

Lucifer wandered back into the living space, checking his cuff buttons just to look too busy to meet anyone’s eye. He glanced up, taking note of the motion in the room. Caretaker was up by his bed with Trixie, the two working to put clean sheets on it. Mazikeen was scowling at her phone. Linda was standing at the bar with a cup of coffee. She turned from Amenadiel to hold it up for Lucifer, other hand steadying the mug underneath.

Lucifer made a beeline for it, taking it quickly. “Lovely!” He didn’t bother to see how exasperated they were as he focused on getting a decanter of whiskey and pouring a more than generous amount into the steaming black brew.

“Mr. Morningstar? If I could speak with you?”

Lucifer glanced toward the more youthful man who’d left the chairs to approach the bar. He was the only one in a suit. Linda was giving the younger man a hard stare, which caused Lucifer to feel leery. So instead of replying, he arched a brow while sipping his coffee, looking at him with an expression that clearly said he was waiting.

The man looked around the room. “In private. I need to debrief you about the latest events that took place during the past eight days.”

*Most certainly not.* He was far too wearied to tell *that* story right now. Lucifer coughed a laugh, purposely being facetious. “Oh, there will be no debriefing of me. I just put pants on. Besides, that privilege I believe is solely a certain Detective’s at the moment.” He frowned to himself. “At least I think so.” He flipped the fingertips of his free hand up. “Debatable, anyhow.”

The man didn’t catch on that he was jesting, because he cleared his throat. “No, I mean--.”

Linda interrupted him. “I believe I was already clear about having my patient interviewed with any agency so soon after his ordeal.”

Lucifer looked to Linda with surprise. He tried to decide if he should be offended rather than pleased feeling at her interference. He settled on pleased.

The man turned to her with a frown. “I have orders. We need to match his story up with…”

“Pardon,” Lucifer interrupted, fingertips stretching toward the man. “But if the Doctor says it’s best I wait, I like her a great deal more than you. So no questions right now unless my therapist says so.”

“Mr. Morningstar, I…”

Lucifer shot him a look, the one he reserved for demons who were particularly trying his patience. Even bone tired, he could still manage that. It was enough to quell the man into ending his started
statement with a low nod and his backing away to take a position by the elevator. Lucifer watched him go while sipping on his liquor-strengthened coffee.

Linda turned to him, the tiny woman giving him that neutral, open expression of hers. “That said, I would like to speak with you, if you’re up to it.”

Lucifer frowned. “I really need to look at the books for Lux, make sure everything is in order. I also need to get a new phone. I’m sure my messages are an electronic bedlam at this point. Oh, and food! I have a great caterer on call who is fine with short notice.” He started to turn away. “Unexpected guests and all that. Where is the urchin’s phone? I need to…”

Linda’s hand was gentle, but no less insistent on his elbow. Lucifer may as well have had an iron ball and chain on his arm, stopping short of trying to walk away, unable to find the will to try to dislodge her. When he turned back to her with a sigh, she gave a tight smile, motioning toward his balcony.

“Oh, very well,” he said with as much casual exasperation as he could muster, even while trepidation made his shoulders hitch a little too far. He looked at the ceiling with his beautiful, dark tree chandelier as she led the way, trailed after her with coffee in both hands.

It was a nice day outside, the sun high and warming straight through his shirt sleeves. The wind whistled quietly against the glass guards of his balcony. Linda turned to shut the glass door behind them, motioned to the white-cushioned chairs that were turned toward each other on opposite sides of the patio table.

He wished he didn’t feel so grateful to be off his feet. There was a nervous energy skittering through his nerves, and he was too tired to really act on it or try to head the conversation. The doctor eased into her own seat, crossed her legs in that way that showed her shapely calves. Her brown eyes focused on him attentively, waiting.

Lucifer realized he was rubbing his fingers together and stopped. Finally he blurt out, “Really, Doctor, this is unnecessary. I’m quite all right.”

Linda quirked that tiny nod of hers, eyebrows raising oh-so-slightly. When he said nothing, she pressed her lips together, and started stating the blaring facts. “You and Chloe were both kidnapped. You were detained for over a week. Somehow. You returned with a plethora of injuries that shows your captor took full advantage of your vulnerability. And you just showed more emotional vulnerability and honesty in a single phone call than I have ever witnessed from you.”

Her tone was so patient and calm, but as usual prodding the sore spots he didn’t like. His glib attitude vanished, and he realized to his annoyance that he was tapping his finger on the edge of his chair. He slid his tall frame to the side, resting the edge of his jaw against his knuckles, stretching his legs out and ankles crossing in a very Devil-may-care fashion. It gave him a few seconds to decide the least raw subject to tackle. “Well, I did promise the Detective I would be more honest with her.” He grinned. It wasn't too convincing. “So, see? I can be taught. All is well.”

Linda gave a slow nod. “Mm.” She sharpened her gaze through her spectacles on him. “Lucifer, it’s normal after an experience where you feel powerless to try to reclaim control of your environment.”

She gave a pause to see if he’d volunteer anything. Lucifer wanted to scoff, was proud of himself for not doing so, and instead watched his own fingers run along the sun-warmed arm of his chair.

“It’s also normal to try to put up a front and pretend you’re fine when you’ve been in a situation
where vulnerability could be exploited and used against you.”

He started to sit up. “But I am…!”

He paused, Chloe’s voice clear in his head. *Stop that.*

Lucifer didn’t breathe for a second. His lifted hand faltered, and he slowly sank back into the chair. “… fine.” The word had lost all conviction. He touched his fingertips to the pressure between his brow, eyes closed.

Linda considered him quietly, gave him a few seconds of precious respite before she inquired quietly. “Will you tell what you are thinking about right now?”

Lucifer lift his fingers from his forehead in a sulky motion, then sighed and sat up straighter in the chair, tugging absent to straighten the vest. “I’m not sure how to word it,” he mumbled. He reached for his coffee, pulling it toward himself with both hands. A sip, and he attempted to stumble through it for his indulgent therapist. “If it were just me, it wouldn’t have mattered. None of it. But the Detective… Chloe… wasn’t fine. I was fine with not being fine, but she wasn’t fine with that. And that made me… not fine.”

“… Because Chloe was distressed when you were hurt?”

Lucifer submitted a slow nod, looking away to the cityscape, watching how the sun rays cast narrow shadows between the buildings scattered about like so many children’s blocks. “I didn’t mind. I just couldn’t…” He stopped, tried again. “I didn’t want her hurt, but it still hurt her. I don’t like that no matter what I did… It didn’t matter, because it still dismayed her so. She’s so good. So brave and self-sacrificing, and she wanted to protect me… She did protect me.” He looked to Linda, held his palm and curled fingers upward. “Me.”

Linda gave another of her slow nods. “You. The Devil. Because she knows now, doesn’t she?”

Lucifer nodded, gaze roaming wearily among the leaves of his plants. Someone had been watering them. They looked healthy and vibrant, about the opposite of how he felt currently. “She does.” He set his coffee down again, propped his elbows up on the arms of his chair, slumping as he huffed out a breath, eyes skyward. “And she still said she loves me.”

She had *said* it. He was still staggered by that, trying to wrap his mind around it while his thoughts tried to dismiss it at the same time.

“And you…?”

“Oh, we both know how *I* feel. And it all… Just… I almost lost her so many times…” He let the back of his neck settle against the rim of the chair’s back, hands flexing on the chair’s arms. “I don’t care about anything else that happened, but losing her… I realized that I’ll fall over an edge and I don’t know how I’ll get back, or even if I’ll bother trying. I don’t know how I’m going to manage it… When it…” He took a breath, leaning up again, unable to sit still for too long in his chair. “Cain made me think he shot her once. She… saw my Devil face then. She *saw* and heard everything I screamed at him, everything I promised I would do to him to make him suffer. She still protected me. She bloody *died* for me. Why?”

Linda let the silence following the question stretch. Lucifer leaned forward, hands clasped on the table, thumbs running over his knuckles. He felt tired, miserable, and raw, unable to answer his own question with the obvious yet still inconceivable answer.

She had *said* it…
When Linda realized he couldn’t offer more on the subject, she veered away from it rather than pressing too hard. “Okay… Can you tell me what happened with Cain?”

Lucifer shook his head a little, but still answered. “I killed him.” Desperation to explain flew up immediately after, sitting up eagerly to plead with her. “I didn’t do the things I had threatened! Nothing so awful. I meant to capture him alive, even! I just… I ran right into the bloody knife! Do you know that? Cain just had to hold the thing up and let my brashness do his dirty work for him! So I went ahead and detonated the bombs. I just… I didn’t feel like I had much of a choice at that moment! I didn’t want him to return and hurt her!”

“Lucifer, you were in a situation where-.”

“Like that matters, Doctor! It’s his rule! We’re forbidden from killing humans! At first I thought it would be great to find a way to kill Cain to rub that rule in his face, but now…! Now, everything I have to lose is too much, and I’m going to lose it, aren’t I? He’ll see to it!” Lucifer slumped again, this time forward onto the table gracelessly. He vaguely noted his arm pushing against his coffee cup. It thankfully slid rather than tipped. “Not that it’d matter…”

“Why wouldn’t it matter?”

Lucifer shook his head. “I had the very stupid thought that if I didn’t kill Cain, if I showed I was better, and if I tried to do the right thing maybe… Maybe if I begged and did everything he asked, I’d be allowed to see her. Maybe only once, but… something.” He smiled bitterly at himself. “I wasn’t fully in my right mind. It wouldn’t matter to him.”

“Why do you believe it wouldn’t matter to him?”

“Because… Well, I’m me.”

“And you are…?”

“I’m… Well, I’m not good. Definitely not a good son.”

“So… because you think that, you believe you don’t deserve good things?”

He smiled, trying to muster up his usual grin, and only able to come up with something half-broken. I surrender… “ Doesn’t matter what I think anymore… That’s why I want to keep busy right now. I just want to not think about when the inevitable happens, or… or how the Detective will feel about things now that we’re not imprisoned.”

“…You think Chloe will change her mind about caring for you?”

Lucifer ran his finger along the smooth glass surface. “I don’t know, now. I just know that… I don’t get good things, and Chloe… is beyond a good thing.”

His therapist allowed a moment of quiet to pass between them. He didn’t look up, just watching the way the light reflected vague shadows of his fingers against the glass top. “Lucifer.” Linda scoop forward on the edge of her chair, hand touching the tabletop. “I know you’re tired. It’s okay to rest after what you’ve been through. But before I send you back to bed-.”

“I want to be awake when she gets here,” he protested. It sounded whiny even to himself.

Linda waited till she was sure he was done interrupting. “Before I send you back to bed, first, I want to tell you that this situation and the things done when desperate are not your fault. You survived, and that’s all anyone can ask of you when you were in constant danger.” Lucifer's brow
bent, trying to puzzle that over in his broken thoughts.

After a pause, she continued. "I also want to tell you, not as your therapist, but as your friend, that we all wanted you back because we not only think highly of you, but we care about you because… you’re a good friend. No matter what you think of yourself, we believe that."

“But I’ve-.”

“Mm-mm. What you think of yourself doesn’t change what we think of you. It’s what we believe, and I hope that someday you can look at how you think of yourself, and understand it’s okay to have been wrong about what you defined yourself as, or decided what you deserved.”

Lucifer didn’t have an answer for that. He felt numb, thoughts dashed to pieces and unable to marshal up a proper rebuttal.

“… Lucifer? What is it you’re feeling right now?”

He breathed in, breathed his answer out. “Tired.”

“Okay. More questions can wait. Let’s get you back in bed.”

He stared at his fingertips against the glass still. At some point she had moved to his side and touched his arm. Lucifer drew in a deeper breath, head jerkily coming up. He stood with her guidance, her soft hands warm through his shirt sleeve. He wavered when he stood, but she kept him steady, guiding him back into the penthouse, back toward his freshly made bed.

She unbuttoned his vest for him, pulled it off before pulling the covers up for him. He stood, watching her in a daze.

He hesitated when she started to guide him into laying down. “Linda?”

“Yes, Lucifer?”

“… I don’t want to be the Devil anymore.”

“I’m glad you feel that way, Lucifer.”

With that he didn’t bother fighting the weariness, letting gravity settle his frame against the expensive mattress, and went back to sleep.
Dear Darklings,

I am getting better! Here! Have a chapter to celebrate! We still have a few to go!
Thank you for your patience while I lazed about in an antihistamine daze!

Much love! Enjoy, precious things!

A night of sleep later, Daniel had gone from exhausted to merely tired.

Carney had kept him busy yesterday on errands with no sleep, mostly with paperwork needed between the Sacramento and Los Angeles departments, and also between the FBI and hospital. He’d contacted Chloe and had done all he could to help his ex-wife on his end to be released and transported home. Ella had been a great help there, handling any heavy lifting needed so Chloe had to do little more than relax after being imprisoned for over a week.

Eight days. She had disappeared on a Wednesday afternoon. It wasn’t until yesterday, around noon on Wednesday, that she’d been recovered. He still didn’t know what she had endured, what all had happened to her. She had assured him she was fine, just burned from some electrocution, but that was in Chloe’s clear ‘I’m trying not to worry you over the phone’ voice.

He had known better than to push it. She was the one who had been through it after all, and certainly didn't need more after the call from her mother. They both had suffered through a tearful lecture. He imagined Penelope wouldn't let him forget his purposefully keeping her in the dark anytime soon.

Daniel had his own appointment with a doctor that morning, assessing if his finger needed surgery. Thankfully the specialist assured that even though his pinkie was broken and the ligament torn, with some immobilization and caution, he should regain full motion of the littlest digit. Daniel liked that the dark blue cast gave his finger protection while leaving two fingers and his thumb free to move. He was rescheduled to hopefully be fitted into a smaller, removable cast in a few weeks, but for now, with an eight hour sleep and proper pain medication, it was manageable.

In the meantime, he kept his focus doggedly on the case, attempting to piece together what had happened North of Sacramento. He was frustrated with how often he kept running into ‘classified, ‘confidential’, and even ‘top-secret’. The Sinnerman’s organization had apparently been international as well, because even the CIA meddled some with what paperwork he could and could not see. It made an annoying amount of red tape.

The case also left a lot of people and bodies to be processed. The FBI and Sacramento police department were handling most of that mess. But it left two people of interest in Los Angeles that needed to be taken care of.

Tyler Mathers, aka Smudge, had received the amnesty he had been promised, and was fully cooperating with authorities and offering them even more information on organizations. He was fully the FBI's responsibility now, Carney having spent his time seeing to his terms to remain out of
prison.

Which left Daniel and Carney handling Brian’s transfer today.

The basement apartment they were retrieving Brian Bearing from made Daniel feel like there were bugs under his skin. He couldn’t place it, but there was something not right, yet nothing he could see explained the feeling. Carney handled discussion with the resident of the home, thanking the pale woman with copper curls piled atop her head and languid gaze with excessive politeness. She had a strange, slow way of moving, as though underwater all the while, slow to turn and look as Daniel escorted Brian out, the hand-cuffed man looking as exhausted as Daniel had felt yesterday.

It startled him when the gowned woman snatched her hand out, startling quick. Brian jumped, her hand on his arm. She gave him a smile that Daniel would never label as friendly. “Hope you enjoyed your stay, little one.”

“Th-thanks, lady.” Brian was squeezing closer Daniel, as though he could protect him somehow from the thin woman. Daniel just cleared his throat, giving a nod to her. She released her grip, and he was allowed to escort his charge unhindered up the stairs, down the hall and into the welcomed sunlight. Only then was he able to shake the spidery feeling from the back of his neck.

“Man, what time is it?” Brian asked. “All I’ve been doing is sleeping.”

“Around 4.”

“Oh… Thursday?”

“Friday,” Daniel corrected, even as he opened the back of the car door for him.

“Well, damn. I’ve slept a lot.” He still seemed bleary as he scoot into the backseat.

Carney was coming out by time Daniel settled in the passenger seat. Brian was already asking questions. “So is it… is it safe? Is Sinnerman…?”

“He’s been confirmed as dead,” Daniel relayed to him, just to put the younger man’s nerves at ease. “His remains are still being scraped up in Northern Cali right now.”

“And… Um… The two he had?”

Carney had settled into the driver seat, grunting a bit as he shifted his weight around behind the wheel. He answered for Daniel. “Chloe Decker is on her way home. Lucifer Morningstar is already home.”

Brian’s eyes widened. “H-He’s out?”

Daniel could see Carney watching their charge through his rearview mirror. “It seems rather obvious he can’t be held, so of course he’s out.”

Brian sat back, looking even paler than before, and he had already looked an unhealthy shade after coming out of the basement. Daniel watched him over his shoulder even as Carney started pulling out of their parking spot.

“You okay?”

“Just… Um, I was so scared of Sinnerman finding me, but… I, uh, hadn’t thought about what that guy’s going to do. Fuck, I should have ran at the start of all this…”
Daniel frowned, rolling his eyes. “We can handle Lucifer. I’d rather you focus on-.”

“No. No, you don’t get it, man. The things we did to him. We pinned him up like a fucking butterfly, left him hanging without food or water for days, full of bullet holes and all. He only got enough care to survive. No one in their right mind would forgive that. Shit, let alone Satan.”

Daniel didn’t know what to say to that. He had been angry at Lucifer for not saying who Pierce was, had withheld information from them that might have saved Charlotte’s life. So he’d focused on Chloe, and his want to save her rather than Lucifer. At the same time he hadn’t wanted something so ill to befall the guy. But then, Brian had spouted off a lot of stuff that was just plain unbelievable, because surely if all of that were true, Lucifer would still be in a hospital, not at home.

“You are going into protective custody as it is, Mr. Bearing,” Agent Carney noted while pulling out into traffic. “That’s all we can do. Let’s just hope he doesn’t get an inkling to hunt you down.”

“Not that he could,” Daniel quickly assured. He looked to Carney. “Right?” When Carney didn’t answer, he scoffed. “I mean, I know Lucifer has connections, but surely not that high.”

Agent Carney’s brows rose. “Well, I think you’d be surprised how high Mr. Morningstar’s connections go.”

Brian slumped in the backseat, worrying at his bottom lip with his fingertips. Then he sat straighter with new energy. “Wait! I know where something of his is! Uh, something he’d probably want back. Do you think he’d bargain to leave me alone if he had it?”

“Possibly,” Carney agreed. “What is it?”

“A ring.”

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Trixie was waiting on the sidewalk when they reached Lux. Chloe almost didn’t wait for the car to stop, and certainly not until it was in park before she was hurrying from the backseat.

She had promised herself she would give her best effort to not cry. She was already breaking it on sight, and even more as she scooped her exclaiming daughter up and squeezed her hard. Trixie squeezed her just as hard back, her cry at how she’d missed her turning into blubbering. They wept together, not caring who saw. Chloe pressed kisses to her head, smiles lighting through her tears.

“I’ve missed you, Monkey. You okay?”

Trixie said something positive, even though it was racked with crying. Chloe rocked her, trying to soothe even while trying to regain her own composure. “I’m here, baby. We’re okay. Everything’s okay now.”

Trixie sniffed, letting herself be calmed as the minutes passed. She was heavy in Chloe’s arms. She wasn’t about to put her down. Ella took care of getting their bags out of the sheriff’s SUV with one of Lux’s bouncer’s help before waving goodbye to their ride. It was still fairly early in the evening, so the line that was usually outside the club wasn’t present yet.

Finally Trixie pat at her mother’s shoulder, pulling back some. “We made you lemon bars.”

“Oh, that actually sounds really good right now.” Chloe adjusted her onto her hip, starting to walk toward the doors. “Thank you. So you like Caretaker, huh?”
“Yeah. He’s been looking after Lucifer. I’ve been making sure. He even let me watch him do surgery on his wing!”

Chloe stumbled on her reply, before nodding and making as positive of an “ah!” as she could. She sidestepped the issue by simply noting Caretaker was a good doctor, then asking her who all was at the penthouse while following Ella and the bouncer.

When the elevator opened, the smells of coffee and baked goods, both sweet and savory, welcomed them in. Chloe instantly looked around to take stock of who was present, but her first priority was looking to the bed first.

Lucifer was laying on his back, sleeping soundly.

It was stupidly relieving to see him, even though she knew he’d be there. His wings were folded away, his frame narrow under the blanket. He had long, white shirt sleeves on, one of his hands resting over his torso and the other resting on top of the blankets at his side.

He looked all right.

The doorman swept his gaze over her quickly, then away. There were two other men in the chairs, one in a suit and one in jeans and a jacket, playing cards on the table with Mazikeen, who was holding both of their attentions. Perhaps that was because she was wearing a slit skirt and halter top that showed a great deal of skin between bandages.

The demoness glanced up, flashed a wide grin at Chloe. She seemed all right, too, considering she was laying on her good side and was still wrapped in gauze. Caretaker had taken care of extracting the bullets last night, and Mazikeen had assured she’d heal quickly. It was still assuring to see her in good spirits.

Amenadiel and Linda had both been reading at the round table by the bookshelves. They both set the books down and stood to greet her even as Trixie slid down to run to the kitchen.

Linda hugged her, even as Amenadiel looked her over, searching for injuries. While Linda was busy hugging Ella and murmuring how she’d scared the crap out of them, Amenadiel gave a nod. “You look well, all things considered.”

Chloe shrugged, feeling self-conscious. “A few electrical burns, but that’s it. Lucifer unfortunately got the brunt of everything.” She shifted, nervous as she fold her arms and looked toward where he was unmoving on the bed. “Is he…?”

“Resting,” Amenadiel assured in his deep, smooth voice. He looked to the bed as well. “There… was a lot of damage. Everywhere. The healing fixed the injuries, but it doesn’t replace the body’s need to rest after everything it’s been through. Still, my brother should be all right.”

Chloe met Amenadiel’s eyes to convey her sincerity. “Thank you, Amenadiel. It doesn’t…? Are you okay, after healing so much?”

Amenadiel seemed surprised by the question. He smiled then. “A little drained, but I’ll recuperate quickly.” His expression changed, a mixture of faintly disturbed and curious. “Chloe, about what you said earlier, about the paper bird…”

Chloe nodded, taking a deeper breath. A quiet non-rhotic accent. Three lights dancing in glass. The smell of leather and paper. Millions of stars, swirling galaxies. Feeling so infinitesimal. “That’s… a little jumbled, but I remember that I have things to tell Lucifer.”
Amenadiel’s brow pinched. “Is it… bad?”

She wasn’t sure. It’d been spinning in and out of her brain, keeping her on edge still despite her imprisonment being done. “I’m still deciding on that. But it’ll wait until he’s, you know, awake.”

“Ms. Decker,” a voice said from the side.

Chloe looked to her former warden. He was handcuffed, but didn’t seem to mind. His eyes crinkled happily above his beard. She smiled back. “Hello, C.T. Has he been giving you any trouble?”

“Much less than prior. He’s mostly been unconscious, however, and instead of drinking proper fluid, took several shots worth of whiskey.”

Chloe shot the bed an exasperated look. “Not surprised. We’ll have to see if we can get some proper fluids down him.” Chloe’s eyes lit up as Trixie came out of the kitchen holding a baked treat in a paper towel. She didn’t have to pretend to be pleased at the sight of the lemon bar. She crouched down to take it, carefully. It was still warm. Its buttery crust was crumbling. “Thank you, Monkey.”

“She’s got quite the knack in the kitchen, and been a great help.”

Chloe looked to him with concern. “Have they talked to you about…?”

Caretaker raised his brows, glancing toward the men who were stationed in the penthouse. “Not yet. Mainly the understanding is I’m here to see to the medical care of two non-humans before I’m processed for sentencing—Seeing as right now I’m the only one with any known experience with them, and I was able to provide history on Mr. Morningstar’s condition.”

“I can try to talk to them, see if…”

“Ms. Decker,” he interrupted, quiet but firmly. “Your only job right now is to enjoy your lemon bar, and rest.” He glanced toward the bed. “Supper will be done in about half an hour. I’ll bring you two a tray?”

Chloe’s resolve melted into gratitude at his understanding. “That… sounds good. Thank you, Caretaker.”

“I want to eat in bed, too,” Trixie announced, in a way that said she knew she wasn’t likely to be allowed.

“We’d have to check with Lucifer on that first, Monkey.” Chloe then brought the lemon bar to her mouth. It was soft. The shortbread crust broke apart and melted, while smooth lemon zapped her tongue with zest on the first bite. It was good, and another reminder that she was home and safe. She took another bite, talked past it, manners be damned. “Mmmat’s good.”

“Is that…? I want one!” Ella stated, hurrying off to the kitchen to steal one.

Trixie was quick on her heels. “Wait! I haven’t had one yet!”

Chloe looked around, trying to abstain from fidgeting in place uncharacteristically. Mazikeen slapped her cards on the table gleefully. “Three of a kind!” The two men groaned. Caretaker gave her one last smile before turning to make sure the two rambunctious ladies didn’t wreck the kitchen so close to dinner. “Only one each,” he was already stating. Amenadiel and Linda stood, the same knowing look on both of their faces. Chloe finished off her lemon bar quickly, brushed her hands off with the paper towel. Linda reached forward and took it from her, giving her an encouraging
nod. Chloe gave her a grateful smile before heading up the stairs onto the split level the massive bed rest on.

Lucifer hadn’t moved at all during the commotion. He was breathing deeply, his lips parted. Chloe felt an overwhelming fondness well up, her worries soothed at the unblemished skin, free of bruises and cuts. She was careful putting her weight on the edge of the bed, not wishing to disturb him. Toeing off her cheap sneakers, she turned and scoot up close to him atop the blankets, squeezing close so she wouldn’t fall off the edge.

With the collar finally off his neck, she could admire the line of muscle where it connected into his shoulder, the bump of his adam’s apple and the dip before his collar bone, visible through the unbuttoned top of his shirt. The Detective rest her fingertips atop his sternum, feeling his breath move his chest under her palm before running it up to his throat, up to the side along his jaw, finger parting around his ear.

Lucifer made a soft sound. His whole frame seemed to shudder out of its repose from the touch. Blankets were hopelessly rumpled as he turned toward her. His knee slid atop her thigh, nose nudging at her hairline. Chloe felt warm trills dance up her spine when his arm wrapped around her and pulled her tight to him. The squeeze felt good, over too soon. Only then did he settle again, breath warm on her crown and arm loose against her back. He melted further when Chloe started scratching lightly at the scalp above his neck, another breathy sound as he bonelessly let his weight rest against her.

It made her wish she had thought to get under the blankets first. The warmth of his arm and leg was enough to melt away the car ride’s tension. She pulled back to look at his face, still running her nails slowly through his dark locks.

Eventually his eyes started to lazily slide open. There were a few false starts, but finally he hummed and his dark eyes focused on her.

Chloe couldn’t help the smile. “Hey, you.”

“Mm… Hey…” His smile was still sleepy, giving it a dozy edge. He ran his hand up her back, onto her shoulder and down her arm. It was warm and left goosebumps in its wake. He blinked again, looking more alert. “Hey.”

Chloe just smiled, mirroring his hand and tracing it on his arm and shoulder. He sniffed, glancing about, then back to her, seeming confused at her presence. “How long was I out?”

Chloe schooled her face into a serious expression, looking him dead in the eye. “Three years.”

Lucifer blinked, his mouth opening. Comprehension glittered in his eyes a second later, and he snorted a laugh. He looked at her, shaking his head. “You’re such an arse.”

Chloe grinned, leaning in to peck him on the lips. He made a surprised sound, hand lifting to her cheek. He hesitated just short of kissing her again, lips barely touching. Like he was waiting for her to change her mind. Chloe slowly pressed in close again, her kiss tender. She shared assurance and affection as she pulled him into the moment with her, fingertips tracing each other’s faces, hands smoothing each other’s hair back as their lips opened furthered. It felt welcoming and new. It felt safe and daring all at once. It soothed while her heart sang, trills of sensation spiraling down her nerves and through her belly.

It felt like being home with a loved one.
They pulled away, a silent agreement when they toed the line of letting heat and closeness carry them away. It didn’t stop him from groaning low in his throat in a way that made her interest shoot through her nerves. They rest their foreheads against each other, feeling warm and pleased.

“Hi,” she breathed. She followed it with a short, breathy laugh, realizing how stupid that sounded.

It helped that he said hi back to her, just as dazedly. His eyes flicked over her face, fingertip trailing along her jawline. “You’re okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. You?”

“Good. Real good.” Another pause, something surfacing in his eye to wreck the fuzzy happiness he’d had. “And… are we good?”

Ah. That was doubt she was seeing. Chloe bit back the dry remark she wanted to retort with, realizing humor might not be the best thing right now. So instead she groped between them until she found his other hand, fumbled until he moved it enough she could slot her fingers between his.

“You’re okay?”

“Yeah, Lucifer. We’re good.” She flicked her eyes down briefly before meeting his again. “You still want that date, right?”

That had been the right thing to say, the doubt blinking out to be replaced with eagerness. Even if it wasn’t his usual energetic enthusiasm, it was no less genuine. “Oh, I have to decide what we’re going to do still! So many choices.”

“Yes. And… we also have some things we need to discuss.” Lucifer opened his mouth to question, and she went on. “And you need to drink something other than whiskey and eat a proper meal.” She started to sit up.

“Whiskey doesn’t count as a meal?”

“Nope.”

“Blast. I suppose if it makes you happy then, I could tuck in. Something does smell good.” He was slower to sit up then she was. Chloe didn’t miss that his arms shook when he tried to put his weight on them, leaning back onto his elbows and looking like he was trying to rally himself into sitting up the rest of the way.

“Lucifer!”

She heard sneakers dashing up the steps. Chloe tried to warn Trixie off. “Oh, honey, don’t-.” Far too late. The archangel’s eyes widened as the child launched onto the bed, clambering partly over Chloe in a way she was fairly used to, but in a way he surely wasn’t. Her small hands planted into his chest. He collapsed right back down with an ‘oof!’ flattened even with her small weight.

Trixie was far too enthusiastic to pay his groan much heed. “You’re awake! We made you food! We’re going to serve you dinner in bed! Like breakfast, but later!”

Lucifer kept his eyes trained on the ceiling. “Marvelous,” he wheezed.

“Trixie, let Lucifer up, please.”

She leaned back, and after a few deep breaths he tried to sit up again. Trixie talked the entire while.

“We made flatbread, and we’re going to make cinnamon rolls later for the morning! We’re eating stew with a lot of different spices in it and chicken peas!”
Lucifer grimaced as he righted himself. “I’m quite certain you mean chickpeas, child.”

“Yeah, those! I thought I wouldn’t like it, but it’s pretty good. I helped make it.”

Lucifer squint at her suspiciously, now scooting himself back against the stone facade at the head of the bed. “Did you wash your hands?”

“Caretaker said I couldn’t help if I didn’t.”

Caretaker’s voice lofted over the energetic child as he came toward the bed with the tray balanced easily in his thick hands. “With soap as well. Time to move, Ms. Trixie. You and I will eat at the bar.”

Chloe mirrored Lucifer and sat back against the headboard, feeling mildly embarrassed to be served a meal like she was in the hospital. It smelled far too good to complain about, so she let Caretaker set their glasses of lemon water on the stand just to her left and they both accepted the tray atop their laps. Lucifer’s legs were thicker than hers, so she had to bend her knees up slightly so the bowls of thick stew rich with spices and fresh flatbread balanced evenly.

Lucifer squint at Caretaker’s wrists. “What in the… Who did this?” He reached forward and snatched the handcuff chain in his grip, scowling.

“It’s just a precaution, Mr. Morningstar.”

“Uh! I think not!” Lucifer reached forward with both hands. Chloe held the tray to keep its balance and watched as they clicked under his hands. He pulled them off easily. “We only use handcuffs for one thing in this penthouse! I’d also prefer you to have your hands free so you can make me a dessert without having to rely on the urchin’s questionably clean paws for assistance.” He tossed the handcuffs to the side. They clattered between the curtain and the bed.

Caretaker only shook his head and muttered something in that language Chloe couldn’t understand. Lucifer made a peevish sound, but then he was distractedly eyeing the food, spoon snatched into hand.

“Now this is what I’m talking about! I’m famished!” Lucifer picked the bowl up, having none of Chloe’s inhibitions about being served a meal. He started to eat with no finesse, eagerly devouring large spoonfuls. Chloe ate much more mindfully, blowing on spoonfuls and enjoying the flavors. She didn’t begrudge her partner’s wolfing in the least. Lucifer hadn’t eaten since the breakout. She ended up feeling full with still a third of her bowl left, which she scoot encouragingly to the hungry police consultant.

This felt nice, sitting close to him. His body heat seeped into her side. There were no bars between them. There was no cold floor under their feet or fans forcing air through overhead. She wasn’t listening for the whir and click of locks. Lucifer was awake and looking truly on his way to recovery. She could hear Trixie telling everyone else animatedly about the food.

For the first time in so many days, the high alert in her brain turned fully off. She was back in L.A., surrounded by some of her closest family and friends. Lucifer’s cologne was soothing, and his poorly concealed theft of her flat bread made her smile. He was smiling, too, kept stealing looks at her when he thought she was distracted with the happenings on the lower level. Fond, endearingly nervous looks.

They had a lot to work out and discuss. But right now, they had survived, and she was happy to be home. She leaned to the right, into his warm, solid shoulder. He leaned his cheek atop her crown,
pausing in his eating to shift to accommodate her in his space. Chloe sighed, eyes closing, breathing, and relaxed.

She fell asleep to the touch of Lucifer’s fingers brushing her hair back from her temple and his fingertips resting in her open palm.
Deals and Promises

Chapter Notes

Well, Darklings, I had so many drafts of this chapter, it took a bit to finally get it all fit into one, but here it is! Next chapter will be the Conversation. Hope you're looking forward to it! (or dreading. Either or.)

Enjoy, little demons!

Amenadiel watched from the bar as Lucifer touched Chloe’s hair, letting her nap against his shoulder.

He’d never seen his brother look at a person like that. Never in all of their eons.

Like he cared more for someone than life itself, even when they made life so precious it scared him.

“Is he going to be all right?” he finally asked.

Linda took a deeper breath. “It’s going to take time. They’ve been through a lot.”

Amenadiel nodded, watching them as Trixie approached the bed. Chloe woke, talking sleepily to her daughter. Lucifer made exasperated sounds, pointing at her. Then the prior Lord of Hell was scooting over and pulling the food tray with him. He was still sitting up while Trixie untied her shoes and scrambled onto the bed. Chloe lay down fully, and the mother and daughter laid there talking while Lucifer looked on, chewing on the last of the flatbread.

He’d known for a long time that Lucifer loved Chloe, but it still surprised him when he saw those unselfish gestures from him. Lucifer had changed so much. All for the better.

“I know you can’t share what you talked to him about,” Amenadiel said carefully. “But do you think he’s finally ready for… them?”

Linda had given him a sharper look through her glasses when he’d started his question, and he knew she was prepared to give him her confidentiality speech. But then her brown eyes softened, and she smiled as she watched Lucifer smirk and snark at something Trixie was saying to the both of them. Between them Chloe was laughing quietly.

Linda nodded. “Yeah. I think he’s finally there.”

“About time.” Linda chuckled. He looked at her, feeling his own nervous warmth welling up. “You’re sure you don’t want me to go to the doctor’s with you tomorrow?”

Linda looked skyward. “I’m just getting a lab drawn, Amenadiel. I’ll be fine.” She gave him a pointed look. “I’m getting it done so everyone else will relax more than for me, you know.”

Amenadiel sheepishly picked up another piece of flatbread. “Okay, I get that.”

“After that I have appointments that I really have to keep with my patients. So I’ll want you here to
keep an eye on things.” She was watching the bearded fellow who did surgery on Lucifer’s wing head to the bed to take the tray and empty dishes from Lucifer.

“Mmhmm.” Amenadiel frowned as he watched Caretaker head toward the kitchen. “I haven’t figured that one out yet.”

“Nor have I, but I do think he was telling us the truth earlier about everything that occurred and the state Lucifer was in when he received him. It’s awful to think about.” She looked to Amenadiel. “Just… I will feel better if you’re here watching him and those three.”

“I like those three even less,” Amenadiel noted, glancing over at where Mazikeen was trying to convince the two men to start betting their clothes. The man at the door looked on disapprovingly. “They’re way too close-lipped.”

“Agreed.” She looked to him. “I do want to go to my own home to sleep tonight. Will you be staying here?”

Amenadiel nodded. “Yes.” He caught her eye. “I don’t know if I’ve said it, but thank you for everything you’ve done for him. And us, really.”

Linda’s smile was assuring. “I chose this madness. I don’t regret it.”

Amenadiel couldn’t help being glad she did.

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There was twenty minutes of respite after food was cleared until the elevator opened and two men walked in.

Lucifer recognized Daniel immediately, though something had happened to him, his hand in a partial cast and his face as much of a mess as his own had been from his two beatings. He didn’t recognize the older man, but the door guard and two seated with Mazikeen certainly did. One in jeans and a jacket popped entirely out of their seat with a surprised, “Sir!” at him.

Someone Lucifer realized he recognized, now that he could see the profile of the man better. No wonder that one had stayed hunkered in his seat while the fellow in the suit did all the talking.

“You’re fine, Gable. Sit back down,” the older man ordered.

Daniel was making a beeline for the bed the instant he spotted Chloe and Trixie. Lucifer only received a cursory glance, nothing more. Still angry then, he noted mentally. Chloe sat up to give him a partial hug, exclaiming quietly about his eye and hand.

Lucifer did not bother with such subtleties. “Daniel, what on earth happened to your face?”

Daniel shrugged, glancing up, but then looking back at Chloe. “Long story.”

“It’s terribly unsightly.”

Daniel’s lip pulled up, sarcasm thick. “Uh, thanks.” He looked Lucifer over. “And you look fine, I see.”
The club owner gave his cheshire cat smile. “I always do.”

“Great.” Daniel didn’t sound happy about it.

Lucifer made a noncommittal sound, instead his interest immediately on the man hanging back on the lower level, watching Chloe, Trixie, and Daniel’s exchange. He decided he was suddenly quite done with having unknown people in his living quarters while Chloe and Trixie were trying to recover from being apart. “You.” He snapped his fingers to pull the heavy-lidded gaze to him. He made a beckoning noise, fingers flexing quickly to demand him to come forward.

Daniel turned to the fellow as he approached. “Oh, uh, this is Agent Carney with the FBI. He’s the one overseeing the Sinnerman case and delegating everything between the departments.”

Lucifer smiled winningly at Agent Carney. “Pleasure, sir.” He reached his hand over Chloe to shake the other’s. Chloe was looking at the man with interest. Lucifer was sure her gaze was noting all the small details, from the tough but inexpensive watch and the scars on his knuckles.

“Mr. Morningstar. Detective Decker.”

Chloe shook his calloused hand, smiling in greeting. “Thank you for everything you’ve done on the case.”

“I’m just glad you’re alive.”

He didn’t look at Lucifer when he stated that. It was solely meant for her. Lucifer decided he didn’t mind.

He looked at Lucifer once more. “I was hoping to speak to you in private sometime soon.”

Lucifer grinned and spread his hands. “Why not now?” He looked to Daniel, touching his fingertips his direction. “Detective Espinoza, why don’t you help yourself to some dinner? It’s quite good. The urchin can help you find it.”

Trixie was sitting up. “I want to stay!”

Chloe thankfully intervened, explaining to her daughter that the adults needed to talk. She started to move off the bed as well, but Lucifer lightly touched her on the shoulder. His eyes remained on the FBI agent. “She stays if she wants.” It wasn’t permission, it was stating a fact. Whatever this agent had to say, he could say it in front of the Detective.

Chloe looked to the agent, then simply sat up and made herself comfortable. The agent gave a sideways nod, then glanced to Daniel, silently communicating for him to go on. Daniel seemed disgruntled to be dismissed, but he went with a frown and a nod, towed along by an eager ten-year-old explaining what she’d helped make.

Lucifer motioned to the chair sitting in the corner of the bed area. Agent Carney seemed to weigh his options, glancing to Chloe, back at Lucifer, seeming to give the room a listen. He finally dipped in his step and conceded toward the chair.

Only when he was comfortably seated did Lucifer give him his colder, calculating look, still smiling all the while. “So, Mr. Carney! How can I help you?”

“I’m hoping I can help you.”

Lucifer gave one of his negative chuckles. “Nn-nn. Not how this works.” Lucifer grabbed his gaze,
and pulled on the mind. “Tell me, what do you desire?”

“Oh, must you…?” Carney’s voice went fainter, his gaze captured.


“I… want…. I want…” Carney frowned, shifting in his seat and clamping his mouth shut.

“Complicated I see. What do you desire? I know you’re dying to tell me. Come on, Mr. Carney… You can tell me.”

It came out of the agent in a rush. “I want to retire soon and forget things like you walk among us.”

“Oh!” Lucifer sat back. “I see you’re very aware of the score then.”

Agent Carney looked annoyed. “It’s my job. I’m FBI full time, and every now and then, I deal with strange occurrences, paranormal activity, and supernatural entities like yourself.”

Chloe’s brows had raised. Lucifer was glad to have kept her close.

“And the three lounging around my living room are yours?”

“Not mine, per se. I’m just the senior officer in the field.”

Lucifer leaned a little to look out at the seating area, tone bright. “That would explain why I recognize one of the fellows. He was stationed here to watch me, wasn’t he?”

Agent Carney gave him a deadpan look. “Yes, until you compromised him.”

Lucifer’s eyes gleamed, unable to help his grin widening. “Oh, yes, I compromised that one three times. He has strong… hips.” He remembered himself an instant later, looking down at Chloe quickly. “Not that I’d compromise him again!”

Chloe gave a slightly uncomfortable shift of her shoulders, but her look was steady. “It’s fine.”

Lucifer wasn’t convinced it was, but this only distracted him from the agent watching on. He was addressing Chloe now. “At any rate, our branch, as you might guess, doesn’t have a great deal of manpower. Part of my job is to keep an eye out for promising recruits.” He motioned to the Detective. “Usually that means finding people who know there are things that go bump in the night already.”

Chloe looked at him, did a slight double take, her eyes widening and chin lowering. “You… you want me to be part of your organization.”

“You wouldn’t be watching the Devil, Detective Decker, but we would call you in if needed for items that are within our jurisdiction. It has a few perks with it, along with a pay raise. Untaxed, of course.”

Interesting. We could have an inside look at this supernatural watchdog organization. Hmm… Lucifer turned that thought around in his brain while Chloe halted on her words, and finally responded with, “I… would have think about it. And probably discuss further about all the implications.”

“Of course. I’m just happy to not get a no right away.”

Lucifer looked expectantly, but when he didn’t get the man’s attention right away, he made an
offended sound. “What about me?”

“You?” Agent Carney gave him a piercing look. “You’re the reason I transferred to L.A.”

“Oh, because that’s my-!”

“It is your fault.” Carney looked away to the sheer, black curtains. “Not that I’m entirely ungrateful. It beats being on duty in Louisiana. Damp swampland isn’t to my liking. California climate agrees with me more.” He looked back. “Anyhow, part of my business is assuring no one finds out there are things out there, or among us, and that includes them finding out what you truly are, Mr. Morningstar.”

Lucifer tilted his head. “Well, that cat’s out of the bag for a lot of people. How do you intend to keep that under wraps?”

“We have all of Pierce’s men in custody. They will be going to a federal prison, kept away from outside contact. They won’t be able to spread the word. I also have two parties who are going to testify to put them away who are under gag orders to not speak of your true nature to anyone or their amnesty will be removed.”

Lucifer turned that information over in his mind. He’d like to find out who those two were. But later. “So. Why come to me at all, if you have it all handled?”

Agent Carney shuffled a bit, like he knew this part of his proposal would sink. “We’d like to secure a promise from you that you won’t go around showing your devilish nature to anyone openly.”

Lucifer grinned. “Oh, it’s a deal you’re wanting, is it?” Lucifer grinned. “Well, the Devil is in the details. Why should I agree to hide myself?”

“Not hide yourself,” Agent Carney stated. “Just not showing your supernatural nature. If you want to live here, say you’re the Devil, run your club, solve crimes, that is fine by us. We’ve watched you do so for the past eight years and you haven’t raised too many concerns. Plus you helped bring down a man who was stated in our files as being someone who couldn’t be taken down even if we tried. So, the deal we want to make is simple. You don’t be flagrant about being the Devil, and we leave you alone. The minute you start showing proof to people you’re the real deal, we step in.”

Lucifer looked to Chloe. She shrugged a little. Lucifer thought it over, then put in, “I’ll amend that if it will prevent death or major injury for someone, especially my group that is here, I won’t hesitate to do what is necessary. Otherwise, I suppose I can keep proof of it quiet.”

“Good. We appreciate your cooperation, Mr. Morningstar.”

“But.” Lucifer waited until the agent’s attention was fully on him again. “You have to give me something as well. You just leaving me alone? That’s not a change in what you have been doing.”

Agent Carney had a look on his face as he flopped his hands down over the arms of the chair that said he was too old for this shit. “Fine. Depends on what.”

“What happens to Caretaker at this point?”

“That depends. I’m not even sure who-.”

“CARETAKER!” Lucifer called. Chloe flinched by him at his sudden bellow. He touched her arm in silent apology. The two of them waited while the man came out of the kitchen, drying his hands and calling cooking instructions back at Ella. He set his hand towel on the piano bench as he went.
“Yes, Mr. Morningstar?” he asked. He pointedly did not look or turn toward Agent Carney.

“I’m trying to see what I can do concerning your situation, but a little more information is required.”

Caretaker released the breath he’d been partially holding. “Mr. Morningstar, there really is no need to bargain on my behalf. I’ve done a number of sins in my lifetime that I am fine with paying. I have no reason to hide any longer.”

“Yes, one reformed bad boy to another, though, I’d like to decide what you deserve. That’s definitely more in my jurisdiction than yours.” Caretaker didn’t argue with him on that, at least, and Chloe only shot him a complicated look. “So who are you, really?” He motioned to Agent Carney. “This gentleman wishes to know.”

Caretaker’s lips pressed. “I’m actually honestly surprised Paul doesn’t know who I am already.” He turned to look at the Agent directly. “But then, that was… twenty-one, twenty-two years ago?”

Agent Carney frowned, then leaned forward in his seat, squinting at him. Then his face slackened in surprise. “Babić!”

“Ah, see?” Caretaker was grinning and shaking a finger at him. “I knew you’d remember.”

Lucifer and Chloe looked at each other, looked back, both trying to understand what was happening.

“That really is you under all of that beard! Last I knew they’d lost track of you when you headed North out of Burma. I thought the Russians had gotten you.”

“No, I found a way of slipping by them. Your intelligence probably hit the same false trail I left leading North. Recently I was retired up in Vancouver until I got the call to renovate my latest means of making money to hold these two.” He motioned to Lucifer and Chloe. “Fortunately, they were too much of a handful for even the Sinnerman.”

“So…” Lucifer pointed between them. “You two are already acquainted?”

Caretaker smiled, eyes twinkling. “Paul and I had a run in when he was still working in intelligence back East. I told you one of my means of business back then was smuggling and information. Mainly, I smuggled people over borders. That wasn’t just people who wanted out of their countries. I was also good at getting agents in and out when needed.”

“You were damned expensive,” Paul Carney cut in.

Caretaker, or Mr. Babić, shrugged his round shoulders, his tone light. “I rarely lost anyone.”

Lucifer eyed the two. “Riiight, so… What would your organization do to him?”

Carney considered Caretaker, thinking. “Agencies around the world have been after Mr. Babić for some time. However, cooperation with our government, considering the information he knows, I’m sure he’ll be treated very comfortably.”

Lucifer thought that over, then nodded. “Then I’ll propose my deal.”

Agent Carney blinked once, watching Lucifer with eagle intensity. “I’m… not sure you have anything to offer us.”
“Of course I do. King of Hell, here! So if you notice anything unruly that you suspect is demonic activity, you come to me and I will quickly solve the matter. Especially if the demon is causing trouble here. I’ll be happy to punish them accordingly. In return…” He turned his palm up toward Caretaker. “Give this man a proper job. Locking him away when he has so many skills to offer is a damned shame, and you should be considering his capabilities better.”

Chloe cleared her throat. “Especially for assisting with witness protection and medical needs, and he already has experience with your agency’s supernatural interests.”

Lucifer couldn’t help his smile as he looked at Chloe approvingly, feeling that new ache under his sternum. This ache was nice. It was more like his heart was too big, rather than cut.

Agent Carney looked to Caretaker. Caretaker lift his brows and shrugged, smiling almost sheepishly. “As it happens, we do have a few men needing some witness protection services. But I’d have to get it passed by my superiors.”

Lucifer turned his grin on the agent once more. “Excellent! Let me know how they respond when able. Now if you would be so kind, the Detective needs her rest and has things to think about. We’d rest better without your three men watching us.”

Carney stood. “They’re here to watch Mr. Babić, not you, Mr. Morningstar.”

“Oh. Well, whose job is it to specifically watch me, then?”

Agent Carney looked toward the ceiling, a long suffering breath taken. “Mine.”

Lucifer laughed. “Well!” He continued chuckling. “I hope you like running!”

“Don’t get me wrong, Mr. Morningstar, I’m sure you will give me trouble, but I chose you over all the other assignments they tried to hand me.”

Chloe looked curious. “What were your other choices?”

“A witch doctor or being a neighbor to a suspected shapeshifter. Neither in regions I prefer.”

“Ugh, yes, those are both unsavory!” Lucifer agreed exuberantly. “I’m certainly much better company!”

Chloe was just shaking her head, stare a thousand yards. “This is my life now. Jesus.”

“No Jesus here, darling,” Lucifer assured. “You lucked out and got me, instead.”

Chloe smirked, looking at him. “The Devil.”

Ow. His smile sank with the feeling in his chest. He managed to right the smile, but that feeling stayed low. “Well… But it’s not all bad! I make great coffee, for instance.”

Chloe’s teasing expression faded the moment she’d noticed him falter. “Oh, Lucifer, I didn’t mean that as a bad thing!”

Carney tucked his hands into his jacket pockets, interrupting before they became too lost in their discussion. “I will keep my men off your floor, and we’ll be checking in to assure Mr. Babić doesn’t leave your premises anytime soon.”

Lucifer was glad to be pulled away from the serious way Chloe was looking at him. “If you must.”
Carney nodded to him and Chloe once each, then made his way down the steps with Caretaker. He called to his men that they would be leaving the premises. The three men burst into action, hurriedly grabbing their few items. Mazikeen yelled at one playfully that he owed her money and his pants as they beelined to the elevator.

Lucifer folded his hands in his lap, watching Carney speak to Daniel, Ella, and Caretaker, exchange introductions with Amenadiel and Linda, even shaking Trixie’s hand. He supposed if the agent was going to be his new handler it was just as well that he knew the people close to him. He would have to figure out how he felt having the government watch him when his mind was sharper.

Chloe was still looking up at him. “Lucifer, I really didn’t mean it badly.”

Lucifer glanced down at her, then back over her head to assure the strangers were leaving. He felt too exposed to look her in the eye for any longer than that. “Ah, I’m being silly. Don’t worry about it, love.”

Chloe was still looking at him in a way that clearly told him she was going to worry about it. But she finally simply reached to his folded hands, wrapping hers over them. That did get him to look at her, his smile jumping back into place briefly.

“I have something I need to talk to you about,” she informed. “A lot of things, really. But I really want us both to be rested when we do.”

Apprehension grabbed his guts in a fist. He tried to not show it. Perhaps she was having second thoughts. Perhaps she was going to ask that he give her space and time. Perhaps a reminder that he was the Devil was…

“So, until tomorrow, I was hoping… it would be okay if I stayed the night?”

That hadn’t been what he expected. He must have been blinking stupidly at her, because she lift her other hand, words blurting. “I mean, not for that! I mean, Trixie will probably want to stay here, and-and I’m not saying I don’t want to do that! Please don’t think that! I just really wanted to sleep with-next! I mean I wanted to sleep next to you! But-but if you don’t want to, I don’t—you can forget I asked! It won’t—I won’t be…!”

His heart ached again. *Fuck me, she is beautiful when she blushes.* “Oh, Chloe…” He reached up to touch her cheek, stilling her stammering. “Even I know there’s such a thing as time and place.” When she gave him an inquiring look, he skipped his eyes upward briefly. “Yes, I know, hard to believe. Don’t tell anyone.”

“Oh-okay. So…?”

He leaned forward, lips close to her temple. His words were low so she knew they were for her ears only. “And when you decide you’re ready for a different kind of stay over, we will be sure we are alone without interruption, and that you don’t need to work the next day, preferably two, because I assure you, my dear, I intend to discover everything you desire and more.”

When Lucifer pulled back, she was holding her breath, and her face was aflame. He pretended not to notice, smiling happily at her, turning his hand to scoop hers up to kiss the back of it. He closed his other hand atop hers. “And I would be pleased if you stayed. To sleep.” He gave a long-suffering sigh. “Yes, even if the little urchin insists on being glued to your side. I understand she’s been sleeping here anyway. There will be no way to decontaminate the mattress.”
Chloe did smile at that, even though her cheeks remained pink. “Thank you, Lucifer.”

He still felt apprehensive, but he’d promised no running, and she did look tired still. Lucifer could wait for whatever bad things came tomorrow, especially because she chose to stay with him. “For you, dear, you’re most welcome.”
Lucifer did get out of bed to see to his guests and take stock of his home. This left Chloe to visit with Trixie and plan a trip to the school Monday so they could see what homework Trixie needed to catch up on before the fast-approaching end of the school year.

There was freedom for everyone to breathe and try to return to some normalcy. With Pierce no longer a threat, it also meant people felt safe to return to their homes for the weekend.

Linda was the first to leave. She came to hug her first, telling Chloe she was glad she made it home. Then the doctor made Lucifer promise to show up for their appointment, even as he was pulling out extra bedding from the linen closet. The therapist then sat and talked with Mazikeen, checking on her best friend for the third time that night. Mazikeen managed to convince her to fetch her another fifth from Lucifer’s bar before Linda left, the doctor looking intent on going to bed as soon as she made it home.

After her was Ella, lingering only long enough to get a fresh cinnamon roll and another packed to go with her. Lucifer didn’t manage to escape the hug from her, looking at his ceiling and patting her atop her head. When Ella rocked a little and murmured that he was a big, squishy angel, Lucifer made an indignant sound and disentangled from her. He was still huffing about how he was not squishy while Ella gave Chloe a hug, roughed Trixie’s hair fondly, then hurried on out, a jolly skip in her step.

Daniel was last. He paused his conversation with Amenadiel as soon as Lucifer was distracted in the kitchen to come and talk to Chloe before leaving. She could hear the club owner haughtily announcing that he ruled the kitchen here, and if he wanted to help with dishes, he’d damned well do so. Chloe could hear Caretaker chuckle, and soon they were trading jabs in that foreign language to one another.

Daniel shuffled nervously on the steps. “Hey Trix, can you give your mom and I a moment?”

Trixie frowned briefly, but then her young face smoothed. “You’re lucky I want another cinnamon roll,” she announced, rolling out of bed without another word or look and running toward the kitchen.

Chloe watched her go, feeling a small loss that her reassuring presence wasn’t close, but amused at her energetic pace. She then turned her attention to Dan, smiling at him as he sat down on the edge of the bed.

“How are you feeling? Really?”
Chloe inhaled. “You know? Relieved, but still feeling the, um, surrealness of it all.”

“I’m glad to see you in one piece.” He hesitated. “Will you… Will you be all right?”

Chloe looked at him, seeing all the questions he had, the reassurances he needed. It was already stuff she’d spoken to a trauma therapist at the hospital about, so the subject was easier to breach. “Yeah, I will be. They didn’t physically hurt me.” She looked away, tone harder. “I mean, emotionally, yes. I was afraid I wasn’t going to see Trixie again. And Pierce…” She couldn’t find words, just breathed out an angry sound before she contemplated it further. “… The scary part is I don’t think he ever saw anything that he was doing as wrong. He thought trapping me in a somewhat comfortable environment was generous, even though he was essentially taking the rest of my life away.”

“Chloe.” She met his serious gaze. “There’s no way you could have known. The guy was good at pretending to be something else. He fooled everyone. He headed a police department for crying out loud.”

“I… know that logically. But it was very personal, Dan. And I wish I could say absolutely everything he did was an act, but… I don’t think it was. But knowing that doesn’t help. It just makes me feel… ashamed for not realizing the rest of it, for not knowing somehow.” She shook her head, eyes closing. “It’s just hard to think that the person I was with and the person who did all these heinous crimes, who was fine hurting Lucifer in front of me—that those two were ever the same person.”

Dan looked doubtfully toward the kitchen. Lucifer had exclaimed that he couldn’t believe Trixie didn’t know Ella Fitzgerald and was now brightly singing “A-Tisket, A-Tasket” at her, voice echoing over the sound of dishes chinking against one another. “Well, he seems to have weathered it fine.”

Chloe shook her head. “No, Dan. They… You know, that’s not for me to tell, and I’m not ready to talk about it right now.” She looked toward where she could hear Lucifer start into the upbeat chorus. Trixie was laughing. “Through it all, he just did what he could to protect me.”

Dan swallowed, and she could tell he was working himself up to asking something awkward and possibly offensive. “Um, you’re… You know, that’s not for me to tell, and I’m not ready to talk about it right now.” When Chloe looked at him, he stumbled on. “I mean, you’ve just been in a harrowing situation where you two had to rely on each other and—.”

“No, Daniel.” She looked back toward the kitchen. “We just love each other.” It made her gut swoop to say it, but it was also truth. “We have for a long time.”

He nodded, that disapproving-but-would-respect-her-decision look on his face. “Just… Be careful. He knew about Pierce.”

Chloe slid her eyes back to him, smiling bitterly. “Ohhh, trust me, he got it verbally from me with both barrels for that, but… You know, he actually tried to tell me Pierce was bad, started to, and I…” She shook her head, feeling exhausted, tired at how many wrong steps had been taken. “I stopped him, because I didn’t believe him and thought he was just… I guess he figured no one would listen to him without other proof to back it up.”

Dan blinked. Chloe could see things shifting in his head. “Oh.”

It wasn’t the whole truth, but it would have to be enough for now. She didn’t have the energy to navigate these waters currently, but she didn’t want Daniel to stock ill will toward Lucifer, not
when he’d already been through too much. Chloe gave him a sympathetic look. “Sorry. About Charlotte, that you got hurt… Everything.”

When Daniel stared off, trying to keep his inner walls strong, she reached out to touch his shoulder. “And thank you, for everything you did for me. That helped make everything so much easier.”

He shifted, swallowing. “Anytime, Chlo.” He blinked rapidly, wrestling with his own hurts. “I was… really worried about losing you, too.”

“I’m still here.” She blinked heavily. “Tired, but here.”

He leaned forward, hugging her. “You get some rest. I’m glad you’re back.”

“Thank you.” She leaned back. “Is it okay if Trixie stays here with me tonight? I gotta go to the apartment tomorrow first thing, check on things there, but then I can drop her off? I… There’s some things I have to talk to Lucifer about in private.”

“Yeah. Yeah, sure! She’s pretty much already told me she’s staying tonight already.” He shrugged, smirking. “It’s like she has stubborn genes or something.”

Chloe gave a small laugh at that. She was aware the singing had stopped, and only then noticed that Lucifer was standing, barely seen around the stone-facade wall. Daniel noticed him at the same time, gave him a nod as he stepped down. “Have a good rest,” he bid, not directed at either of them.

“You as well,” Lucifer said, carefully neutral. He watched Daniel head toward the elevator, stopping to say bye to Amenadiel first. Only then did the archangel make his way up the steps.

“Well! I think I have everyone sorted. Mazikeen is staying on the couch, Caretaker is taking the guest room, and Amenadiel is saying he’s not tired. You look like you’re ready to nod off again. Come on. Let’s find you something to sleep in. Do you want to rinse off in the shower first?”

“Just… need to brush my teeth. Something to sleep in would be nice, though.”

Lucifer smiled, a gleam in his eye. “Want one of my shirts, again? You do look rather fetching in them.”

Right. My birthday. Where he ran to Vegas to help Candy and I sort of stole his clothes, bed, and Linda and I drank an unhealthy amount of liquor. Lucifer hadn’t been mad about it in the slightest. Chloe had fallen asleep, and in the morning it was apparent he had been up all night quietly cleaning around his passed out guests.

She had liked how his shirt felt. She shifted to move off the bed. “I… can probably be convinced. They do have really nice fabric.”

“Of course they do! Right this way, darling.”

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After she’d brushed her teeth, she wandered back to the bed listening to Lucifer arguing with Mazikeen to move so he could put a sheet on the couch, insisting he would not have blood on his
furniture. Mazikeen was grouching that it wouldn’t be the first time she’d gotten blood all over his furniture, so he could stuff it. Caretaker looked mildly disturbed at this, just waiting for the old friends to finish their sniping so he could change the demoness’ bandages before turning into bed himself.

The big sleeves nearly covered her hands as she climbed under the blankets. Soon Trixie joined her, having stolen one of Lucifer’s undershirts for herself. It was still huge on her. She wiggled in under the blankets, and Chloe happily wrapped her up, talking quietly with her about tomorrow’s plans until they both lapsed off into slumber, still listening to Lucifer banter with Mazikeen quietly.

She woke to the very slow press of the mattress. Lucifer’s careful crawling into bed likely wouldn’t have woken her at all, but she had been keeping a small part of her mind alert for when he came to bed. The penthouse was silent and dark now, so she could hear every quiet shuffle and the slide of his tall frame against the sheets.

Lucifer was staying on the far side of the bed, laying on his back and a space between them. Chloe didn’t like that. She gravitated toward him, toward that muscle-melting warmth he emanated, feeling pleasure at the heat against her still-stiff back muscles and the feel of his frame.

As though that were all the permission he needed, he turned to her, his touch still light as his arm circled her belly and his knees fit into the bend of hers. She gave a sleepy hum, pleased, pressing back against him to remove as much space between as possible. He kissed the top of her head, and she fell to sleep again with his breath in her hair, happiness thrumming in her chest.

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Chloe was already awake when Trixie’s cellphone’s alarm went off on the stand. The girl grumped, so Chloe had to reach over to turn it off.

Perhaps that was best. It spared her having to think too hard about how to disentangle from Lucifer’s hold and some of the affects morning sleep had on some of his anatomy.

She glanced over her shoulder. His eyes were half open, but slipping closed again. Chloe felt her heartbeat stumble as she sat up and he made a sleepy negative sound, curling his arms around her hips. “Sorry, I’ve got to get up.”

Another negative hum and squeeze to her waist. Chloe smiled down at him, at his being so sleep-rumpled and his relaxed face. She touched his hair, petting at the dark waves. His grip slackened further. She then turned her attention to getting Trixie to stumble out of the bed, following her before Lucifer got a hold of her again. His hand did quest around at the empty space she left, until he got a hold of her pillow and hugged that to his chest instead. His breaths were deep and even once more as the Detective helped her daughter dress in yesterday’s outfit.

Amenadiel was sleeping in one of the chairs. Mazikeen had woken at their movement, lifting from her pile of blankets to hug Trixie on her way out. “Catch ya later, tiger.” They bumped knuckles in their special handshake, ending in the gruesome tongue-out hissing and running their thumbs over their throats together. Chloe was still not used to that.

“Hey, Decker,” Mazikeen said, her tone quiet. “Did he squish you last night? You know if you give him a kick or elbow, he’ll move off.”
Chloe opened her mouth, closed it, disconcerted. “Um, I don’t mind it. We gotta run. See you later, Maze.”

It was strange being home after being absent for over a week. Chloe checked over everything to be sure nothing was out of place. She opened the fridge, quickly decided that was another day's problem. She showered, got into a fresh change of clothes, called work to get assurance that she was not expected in for a while. That bit of business handled, she helped Trixie pack fresh clothes and drove over to Dan's.

Dan was looking even better than yesterday, seeming to have finally gotten a full night's sleep. He got a hold of Trixie's hand after they had hugged each other tight, promises exchanged to text soon to let them know if she would come pick her up or if they should come to the penthouse again.

When she was walking back to the car, Trixie stood at the open doorway with her hand firmly fastened in her father's uninjured one. "Let me know how your talk with Lucifer goes!" she called, her eyes gleaming.

Chloe tried not to blush. She hadn't told Trixie what she needed to talk to Lucifer about, just that it was important, private stuff. She should have known Trixie would assume it was on adult matters.

She wished that was all it was. Chloe took a deep breath when she settled back in the driver seat, collecting herself before heading back to the penthouse.

When she had left, it had been sleepy and hushed. Now it was late morning, and the penthouse was bright and busy.

There were three people standing around the middle of the floor. Amenadiel had moved out to the balcony with a book, and Mazikeen was laying on the couch looking bored. Lucifer was on the phone, pacing energetically in one of his black suits that fit him illegally well. Chloe watched him, interested. She had seen him at the precinct and out in the field, but she realized she'd never seen him doing the job of running the club's business before.

Lucifer noticed her right away, flashing her a brilliant grin in greeting. He paused to sign a clipboard, talking brightly in the phone. “No, I need that order by tomorrow. Do you realize how much of my clientele order top shelf here? … Well, if you can at least get the tequila for me—that’s what’s mainly low, and the rest by Saturday afternoon? … Yes, I understand I’ll need to pay for two deliveries. That’s not a problem. Can it be done? … You’re a peach, Fred! Put the orders in.” He paused to thank the person holding the clipboard, marking a few more items before the person went past Chloe to the elevator.

Next was a courier with a package for him to sign for. Lucifer accepted it and signed off, sending the man on his way even while he was on the phone. His gaze skipped over to Chloe again, keeping track of her. “Hello Darcy dear! Calling back as promised… I’m doing splendid! But in need of a new phone… No, I didn’t accidentally drop it in the margarita blender again. Honestly, that happened once! … No, wasn’t the hot tub, either. I still don’t regret that. … Well, I’m sure it was stolen and destroyed. Can you do your magic and I’ll send a courier to pick it up? … You're the best!”

Caretaker was at her shoulder, quietly watching as Lucifer signed a number of orders and checks for his supervising bartender atop the piano. “He’s been at this all morning, shortly after you left. He went through his ledger and has been a general storm since.”

Chloe nodded, arms folded as she leaned against the bar. “I admit, I haven’t watched him do this much.” She smirked Caretaker’s way. “It’s pretty nice, seeing that he can be a responsible adult.”
Caretaker chuckled. “I imagine. Do you want coffee?”

“Please. I’ve been running without.”

Lucifer was still filling out checks, talking more quietly with Lux’s supervisor when his head shot up. “Mazikeen! Why am I paying all this overtime to the bouncers?”

Mazikeen was on the couch, looking bored. “Because everyone else was scared Pierce was going to get them in their sleep. Duh.”

“I had that handled! I-it-oohnevermind!” He scowled as he signed the checks. “Here you are, Patrick. That should handle payroll, plus your own bonus for overseeing things so well in my unexpected absence. Let me know about the DJ. I’ll have the business card paid in full tomorrow at the latest. And be sure Gary gets me a copy of those receipts. I swear, if that man is the reason I’m audited, I’ll hang him by his ankles.”

Patrick smiled while gathering the papers. “You know he’d just like that.”

“Point. Probably better I ignore him as punishment instead. I think that’s everything, except that I have to call my contractor because some demon,” He glared over at Mazikeen. “Forgot how to be housebroken and stabbed a bunch of holes in my wall!”

Mazikeen bristled. “Can I have my phone back now?”

Lucifer scoffed and tossed it to her. She caught it one handed and immediately started swiping at the screen, still bored looking.

The elevator dinged one more time, and this time it was the man in the suit who had been standing watch over Caretaker. He had a yellow envelope in hand. Lucifer gave the man a sharp look, motioning over to Caretaker. “He’s still here.”

“That’s good. But I also came up to deliver this to you, Mr. Morningstar.”

Chloe watched curiously as Lucifer strode up to him, accepting the envelope with a doubtful look. His look changed to one of elation when he shook out the piece of familiar jewelry. “Oh, I’ve been missing this!” he exclaimed, fitting it back onto his finger. He looked at where the black stone glittered on his hand, eyes gleaming like a happy magpie. “Where did you find it?”

“One of Pierce’s men who had turned told us which pawn shop had it. He’s hoping you’ll agree to leave him alone in turn.”

Lucifer touched the ring, turning it on his finger. “Hm. I’m curious, but I didn’t intend on hunting anyone down. He’s quite safe so long as he continues helping to put away all the sorry sods that Caretaker didn’t manage to shoot.”

Chloe watched the man shift. Lucifer looked at him shrewdly. “What? Go on, you look like you’re itching to say something.”

“I was just wondering… You really didn’t kill any of them?”

“Nooo, just Pierce. Only human I’ve ever seen to the demise of. Will that help you sleep better tonight?”

“Suppose so. I’m trading back east. All things considered, I suppose it was nice to meet you.”
Lucifer shook his hand. “Well then! Good luck back East!”

The man turned, nodding at Chloe. “Detective.”

She nodded back, watching the man go. By the time the elevator closed, Caretaker had a large mug of coffee with cream and sugar for her. He had already moved back into the kitchen by time Lucifer approached her.

Chloe held her hand out to him. It soothed her considerably that he took it without hesitation, his eyes warm on hers. There was still a tense line in his shoulders, soon explained by his next question.

“You wanted to speak to me, my dear?” His tone was so casual. The hold of his body and even the way his thumb moved restlessly atop hers silently voiced his apprehension.

“Yeah.” She pursed her lips, looking down at his polished shoes and back up. “Yeah,” she repeated more firmly. “Should we…?” She motioned out to the balcony.

He poured himself a full highball before walking outside with her. Amenadiel looked up from his book, and at Lucifer’s sharp nod rose without a word. Lucifer’s older brother gave Chloe a smile and squeeze on her shoulder in greeting, then the glass door closed behind him and the two settled into the chairs, alcohol and coffee resting on the glass tabletop between them.

“So…!” Lucifer said, still feigning at casual and not worried.

Chloe wasn’t fooled in the slightest. She felt guilty, realizing he must have been fretting over what she wanted to talk to him about all night long. “So… Where to start.” She took a sip of coffee and stared over the Los Angeles skyline. The pale sky turned hazy gray on the world’s edges. “I met your sister. Rae-Rae? She’s nice. Weird. But nice.”

Lucifer’s look was complex, not responding right away. “She is an odd duck, isn’t she? I haven’t seen her since, well, since I was kicked out.” He flipped his hand up. “At any rate, glad she didn’t take you anywhere!”

“Well, that’s just it. She did.” She held her breath, still trying to figure out how to best approach the subject. None came to mind. Chloe looked to Lucifer. “I talked to you father.”

At first Lucifer’s face was blank. Then confused. “Oh?” Then a blink, and the apprehension was back in full force, crinkling his brow. “Oh!” Just as quickly the apprehension smoothed into something else, his shoulders dropping. “… Oh.”

Chloe recognized that look. It was the same when someone was processing news that someone had passed and it stunned them before devastation sunk in. She could see Lucifer doing the same thing, his eyes skipping back and forth, and something inside started to wreck.

“Lucifer, listen to me, before you start…”

Lucifer looked up sharply. “It’s Hell again, isn’t it? Is that what he wants?” His voice dropped, low and bitter. “Where else would he order me to be?”

“Lucifer, just let me finish telling-.”

Lucifer was out of his seat. His hands went to his hair. “…! We just got home! Fuck…!”

“Hey! Stop and listen to me!” She was out of her seat now.
Lucifer flung his arms outward, voice raised. “It bloody figures! Of course, just when I thought I might be happy, noooo! Of course not! Can’t have that! What the fuck did I expect?!”

“*Lucifer!*” Chloe reached for him.

His palms were up. “No, don’t touch me right now! I’ll just—I can’t right now!” He stood, tense as wire ready to snap, eyes wild-edged.

“Okay.” Chloe at least had managed to make eye contact with him, her hands still up. “But I need you to listen. He didn’t tell me he was ordering you back to Hell.”

Lucifer blinked at her, and she was glad to see some of the feral edge in his eyes fade. His dark eyes were still hurt, though, his voice small as his fingertips folded down. “He didn’t?”

“No.” Chloe did her best to keep her body language open, her tone gentle. There would be other times to chastise him over his jumping to conclusions, but at the moment he looked far too brittle.

“Now… Will you sit and listen to what I have to say?”

She waited him out, watching him process. He still looked like he was wrecked inside, but he finally nodded and when she backed up, he made his trepidatious way back to his seat. He gulped down the contents of his high ball glass and leaned over the table, waiting anxiously.

Chloe resettled in her own seat, watching him closely. “Okay, first, he said he’s not giving out orders anymore.”

Lucifer looked at her, alarmed. “What? Chloe, are you certain you didn’t dream this?”

Chloe narrowed her eyes. “No, I didn’t dream it!” When he looked doubtful still, she went on. “He kept disappearing all around me, like… like time and space didn’t have any meaning to him, and it freaked me out! We were in a library, or… or a big study and the lights just sort of float and moved… The universe was outside and… Look, I know it sounds crazy, but I *know* I talked to him. That’s a fact I can’t get out of my head, and I’ve tried!”

“Okay. Okay, I’m sorry.” He did sound sorry. Lucifer touched the table between them with his fingertips. “So… what did he say, aside from no more orders?”

“Well, it’s not an order, but he said that he’d like for you to sort things in Hell to prevent evil from coming to the living.” Lucifer made a bitter sound. Chloe continued before he could interrupt, though her tone softened. “And he said that he’s so proud of who you’ve become.”

She thought Lucifer had been staggered when she said she’d talked to his father. It was nothing compared to the shocked look he gave her now. He was frozen with astonishment. She reached out and touched his hand. That broke his stunned state. He laughed, an unhinged burst of sound. His eyes skipped everywhere, back at her, searching her gaze. The mirth drained from him.

“You’re… not lying.”

Chloe felt hurt for him again, her hand squeezing his. “No, I’m not.”

Lucifer searched her gaze further, blinking rapidly. Finally he tilted his head up and looked toward the sky. He looked entirely lost, like someone had pushed his world over. She saw the strained way he swallowed, the way his chest rose too hard.

She was out of her seat again. This time he didn’t deny her touching him, welcomed her into his space to lean his forehead against her sternum. He breathed out a shuddering breath, and her
fingers were in his hair, down along his shoulder, soothing him as best she could, and feeling like she couldn’t do enough as Heaven’s Fallen’s buried his face in her chest and tried to catch his breath.

Lucifer said nothing over the next ten minutes. When his breathing evened out, and he did speak, it was to sniff and apologize weakly.

“Sorry, dear. Not what I expected to hear today. Or ever.”

“You’re okay,” she soothed. “What do you need right now?”

Lucifer gave a watery laugh. “More to drink.”

“You know? We can do that. Let’s go do that…”

They could discuss Hell later. Right now, her partner needed a break, and everything else could wait.
Hello darklings! Have a chapter from Amenadiel's PoV. Hope you like how I'm rounding off some age old issues here. Yeah, Lucifer's a little staggered... He'll be all right. Probably.

Enjoy, sweet things!

Amenadiel had set his book down the moment he heard yelling.

His dark eyes stayed focused on the balcony, seeing the few glimpses of the two, Lucifer’s frantic pace, Chloe leaving her seat to chase him. The yelling died away, and he was left with silence.

He waited to hear a bitter bark of laughter from Lucifer, or sharp, cutting remarks to be shot toward the sky like venomous arrows. He thought he’d see more wrath. That was the usual thing for Lucifer when it came to their father, and he figured the discussion must be about him. Chloe had said she had things to tell Lucifer.

Seeing his brother look dejected when they finally reentered the penthouse was not expected. Nor was Chloe releasing his arm so he could hurry to his bar to fish out a bottle of Bacardi. Amenadiel stood, drifting to stand by Chloe. Her arms were folded around her middle as Lucifer popped out the spill guard and tipped the bottle to his lips. Worse, Chloe didn’t look disapproving of this in the least.

“What happened?” he finally asked quietly as the bottle’s contents disappeared steadily down Lucifer’s throat.

“I, uh… relayed the message from your dad. He’s… You know.” She looked like she felt helpless, watching him. "Upset.”

“Ah.”

They watched as Lucifer grimaced, setting the nearly empty bottle aside. He looked among his shelves, pulled a decanter of scotch to him and sniffed. He poured himself a dangerously full highball glass and gulped it down. Then he smacked his lips, looking like a pleased crow with something shiny, and took both glass and decanter with him to the piano.

They moved aside for him, watching as he set the glass atop the shining black surface before he pushed up the keyboard cover and settled on the bench. He took his time pouring himself another glass while his one hand played at the keys in distraction. Half of that glass gone, he finally set both hands on the keys and formed his meandering melody into “Mad World”. He didn’t sing, just played, his eyes still red-rimmed and his hair mussed as the melancholy notes stole away the silence.

Amenadiel didn’t like seeing Lucifer like this, brittle and vulnerable. Lucifer had always been strong, using evasive comments, scathing sarcasm, and fiery anger. He was usually the first to use humor to scuttle a serious situation, much to Amenadiel’s annoyance, since his brother’s humor ran
the gamut of perverted, dark, and more terribly, puns.

Lucifer certainly didn’t cry or walk like his own weight was too much to handle.

It had been easier when Lucifer was the untouchable Devil without soft spots, partying and antagonizing him before he’d go running back to Hell, often laughing at Amenadiels’ vexation. It had just been a duty for Amenadiel to oversee—keep the Devil in Hell.

This person was not the Devil of yore. There was too much of a person there now, a brother, a friend even, with too much of a heart that could be hurt. To Amenadiel’s dismay, he didn’t know what to do for his brother, just that he wanted to help, and he wasn’t sure he had the means.

Caretaker was standing by the bar now, watching with quiet concern. Mazikeen was sitting up on the couch again, mouthing things back and forth with Chloe. The Detective finally retreated back to the demoness, speaking quietly with her. Mazikeen shot a wary look at Lucifer, focused on him while her roommate explained. Amenadiel watched as Lucifer played one-handed and tossed the rest of his glass back. For lack of knowing what else he could do, Amenadiel stepped forward and poured the decanter, filling the glass once more.

Lucifer finally acknowledged him when he scooted the glass toward him. He managed a faint smile, reaching for it in a way that showed the alcohol’s effects were striking and he had to focus to not spill.

“Dad said he’s proud of me,” Lucifer finally announced, fingers back at the keyboard.

That surprised Amenadiel, his spine straightening. “That’s… Luci, that's good, isn’t it?”

Lucifer didn’t seem to think so, shaking his head. His glazed eyes shot up to Amenadiel’s, his frame not so steady as his hands wandered up to the high notes. “Why would he say that?”

“Why? Well, he’s…”

Lucifer continued, as though Amenadiel hadn’t spoken. “What does he want? Is-Is he playing at something? Manipulating me to-toward one of his ploys? Why would he give me a message like that?”

“Luci, it’s okay…”

The piano keys struck discordantly under Lucifer’s stiffened fingers. “No, it isn’t!” He was yelling now. “It’s not at all! Because I realize that’s all I ever wanted to hear, and I hate myself for it! How dare he…” He looked at his drink atop the piano, the anger turning stony on his face as he focused on getting his long fingers around the glass. His voice was calm, stare miles away. “... How dare he.”

Amenadiel didn’t know what to say. Nothing seemed right. Lucifer continued staring at his glass, turning it and watching the light sparkle in the amber liquid. Finally the older angel sat down on the bench by him. Lucifer scooted over enough to give him room, still staring at his glass. Amenadiel reached into his robes’ pockets, removing first Mazikeen’s knife and setting it atop the piano. Then he pulled the paper out. The bird was wrinkled some, but still a vague shape of wings.

Lucifer glanced over as Amenadiel started to unfold it, his chin resting atop his outstretched arm. “Whazzat…?”

“My last order.”
Lucifer watched blearily as Amenadiel untwisted the thin wings and smoothed the paper flat. A tear of paper, with many folds creasing its surface and thin, hastily scrawled ink marching across it. Amenadiel slid it over to him.

Lucifer’s head rocked a little as he pulled it closer to him, tilting as he looked at it. “Oh. Yeeees, it’s… Been a while since I’ve seen the writing.” His lips thinned, brow pinching as he focused on the words, trying to piece them together.

“It doesn’t help that Dad’s handwriting isn’t the neatest.”

“No, it doesn’t.” Lucifer moved his mouth, still trying to puzzle it out. Finally he straightened and pushed the paper away regretfully. “Afraid I’ve been in Hell too long, brother.”

Amenadiel felt a sharp sadness at that, and foolish that he only now had the epiphany of how much had been ripped away from his younger brother. He knew that Lucifer had been removed from their society for eons. He knew he had spent thousands of years living in a realm that was Heaven’s dark mirror, a corrupted underworld of demons and torture. He knew he’d been cast out with his clothes alone. He knew no one had visited him, and certainly no one took anything to him from his homeland. Of course Lucifer hadn’t had access to their writing any longer. The entire culture was no longer his. No one had given him any means to keep a hold of it.

He should have realized all of that. His heart was heavy as he pulled the paper to himself. At least Lucifer had a gift for tongues. Amenadiel could do that much. He spoke the lyrical language, reading for him, his voice smoothly uttering the graceful syllables of angels. “This is my final request to you. Please save Samael. Make haste. Thank you for all you’ve done, Amenadiel.”

Lucifer made an ‘ah’ sound, pulling the glass toward himself. He paused before sipping, looking confused. “Dad sent you?”

“Yes.”

Lucifer set his glass down without drinking. “Well. Color me confused.”

“You’re tipsy.”

“Mm, color me that, too.” He looked toward the couch, where Chloe and Mazikeen were watching. “Detective! Maybe you should tell us… tell us how that visit of yours went.” He started to move off the bench, focusing on his long limbs so he wouldn’t topple.

Chloe nodded, blue eyes watching Lucifer intently. “I’ll tell you what I can remember.” She waited until Amenadiel and Lucifer had settled into the chairs, Lucifer kicking off his shoes to pull his feet up, and a drunken Devil and Heaven’s eldest listened.

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Caretaker served them lunch on the coffee table of the living room while they discussed all the implications. Lucifer was still sobering in his chair, but was at least contemplative as he nibbled at his wrap and soup. Chloe told them as many details as she could remember, all the while Mazikeen taking advantage of her thigh as a pillow while she sipped at a bottle of bourbon.

Amenadiel considered the new information, leaning forward with his hands clasped to his chin.
“So, all this time… Father has been silent so he wouldn’t enforce his will on us.”

“Trying not to be a tyrant.” Lucifer huffed a laugh, leaning over precariously to stir his soup in distraction. “It would have been nice if he’d simply told us that. What a git.”

Amenadiel shot a look at Lucifer. He still didn’t like how disparagingly Lucifer spoke of God. “But he did leave an order for you to prevent evil from walking the Earth.”

Lucifer rubbed at his prominent nose and eye. “The demons have been getting restless. Had a brief run-in with them this last week.”

When Amenadiel gave him an inquiring look, Lucifer flipped his hand upward. “I died for a little bit. Met a few of my denizens. They talked about making a trip topside, and I took steps to discourage it. Nothing to say others aren’t getting the same ideas, however.”

Amenadiel nodded, comprehending. He remembered what Caretaker had relayed. From having to cut the cable out of Lucifer’s wings, his delirious, exhausted state, the things Pierce’s men had done while he was in captivity under his care, including the poisoning. It hadn’t broken Lucifer, but it had definitely widened the cracks in his armor. Amenadiel was not happy with what he saw. Not because of what Lucifer was like under the shell of humor and anger, but because it must have been there all along and he’d never bothered to see past the facade to understand his brother.

The eldest fold his hands together, pushing his emotions down to focus on the matter. "I also had to recapture some and return them to Hell. It's undeniably in a state of unrest."

Chloe looked to Lucifer, her eyes full of complex emotions. “So what ideas do you have?”

“Well…” Lucifer tipped his head back on the chair, slumping and stretching his long legs out until his heels touched the floor. “It’s not like I can leave it if it threatens you and Earth. I’ve become quite attached to both.”

Chloe’s tone hardened. “But you’re going to see what you can do without leaving entirely.”

“I’m… I don’t know what…”

Her voice was adamant. “You promised me we’d fight for all the time we could get.”

Lucifer opened his mouth, then closed it, smiling. “I did promise that. So… Yes, I think we’ll need more information.” He started to stand out of the chair. “Once I’ve recovered a little more, Amenadiel, perhaps we could…”

Whoosh! Amenadiel and Lucifer were both looking toward the balcony at the familiar sound.

They hadn’t even finished turning their heads when the glass shattered, startling everyone as furious, bar-patterned wings rushed in.

Lucifer was slow to react, still tipsy. Amenadiel thankfully wasn’t, standing up and intercepting the smaller angel before she could reach Lucifer. “Remy!” he yelled, surprised and admonishing both as he pushed her spear to one side. The thrust missed Lucifer. Barely. Lucifer glanced to one side as the blade passed dangerously close to his eye and back at her. He didn’t even seem alarmed.

“Move!” the new angel yelled, still furious and trying to get past Amenadiel’s blocks.

That only lasted until she had a snarling demon on her. They crashed into the bookcase, books toppling as Mazikeen set her curved blade to the angel’s throat. Chloe was up as well, looking just...
as thunderous as she placed herself in front of Lucifer.

“Give me a reason,” Mazikeen snarled through her teeth.

“Mazikeen, easy,” Lucifer ordered lightly before leaning over to see his seething sister on the floor. Her dark hair was a mess, her wing ready to slug into the demoness. Her attention was swift to fall on Lucifer as he grinned at her. “Remiel! Long time no miss!” He motioned toward his broken balcony door. “Mind telling me why you felt the need to bust through my rather expensive doors?”

“This is your fault!” she spat at him.

“Uhm…!” Lucifer rolled his eyes. “What isn’t, these days? Now can we let you up or are you going to be feral and keep trying to kill me?”

She grimaced, saying nothing. Amenadiel shook his head at her, displeased, but moved to help her up. Only then did Mazikeen flip her knife aside with a sharp, whip of sound and rolled away from her. The demoness was slow to get up, red spreading through her bandages. Remiel was to her feet in an instant.

“You!” Remiel snarled, standing and glaring at the archangel, but with Amenadiel so close between them, she didn’t move to attack again.

Amenadiel was trying to think how to further disarm the situation and figure out why Remiel was here to attack Lucifer, Lucifer who had his hand on Chloe’s shoulder, looking much more sober and his eyes glittering coldly, when Caretaker waded through the tense encounter.

“Ms. Mazikeen, let’s get you seated. I’ll see to your wounds as soon as I’m able. Mr. Morningstar, you’re all right?”

“Just dandy,” Lucifer stated, voice scathing with sarcasm. “Just waiting for my unexpected guest to spew her accusations and kindly leave.”

“You’re the reason he’s left us!” she bit at him.

“Who?”

“Father!”

Lucifer leaned back on his heels. “Oh! So he’s gone?”

Amenadiel was asking the same thing, though with much more alarm in his tone. “He’s gone?”

Remiel turned to him, the anger fading to something closer to panic. Her grip was hard on his shoulder. “I and the other grigori can no longer sense his presence anywhere! Some say they received final messages saying he would no longer be giving orders! What does that mean?” She shook her eldest brother’s shoulder, spear thumping against the floor. “What do we do? Amenadiel, tell us what to do!”

Amenadiel could only stare at her, mouth open and nothing coming out.

Lucifer was even less helpful. “Oh, dear me.” He set his hand to his cheek, amused. “Dear old dad is no longer bossing you about, and you all haven’t the slightest idea what to do with yourselves!”

Chloe looked up at him, gently admonishing. “Lucifer…”

He looked down at Chloe and sighed. “Oh, very well. Remy, what does this have to do with you
trying to stick a spear in my eye?”

Her feathers bristled as she glared at him again, pointing the tip of her spear his direction. “You’re the one who wanted this! This is all your fault! Because of your rebellion!”

“My…” Lucifer blinked, hand lighting on his chest. “But that was…”

“You shouldn’t get what you want!” she snapped, whirling away. She stormed back out to the balcony, glass crunching under her boots. All in the room watched as those hawk-like wings spread and she launched swiftly away from the penthouse.

Amenadiel felt a new weight settling in his chest. “I suppose I better head home and see if I can calm things down.”

“Yes, do that, before any other siblings try to prod me with sharp objects,” Lucifer snarked.

Amenadiel turned, palms spreading at him in frustration as he backed away. “Well, I hope you’re happy at any rate. Looks like you won after all.”

“Won…?”

Amenadiel made a frustrated sound, turning away.

He wasn’t too surprised to hear the startled guffaw coming from Lucifer, nor at how it turned into peals of uncontrolled laughter as he spread his wings and shot for the Silver City.
Hello Darklings!

Okay, so... I am crap at judging chapters and how many I'll have. Obviously. I ended up splitting this one so you wouldn't have to wait so long for a nibble. Hopefully it makes for a nice breather? Yes? Also, Linda being great. I always like writing that. I will not apologize for the centaur reference, even if it's mainly Katadactyl's fault.

Still heading toward the finish line! Enjoy, my little octopi!

Linda entered the penthouse Friday evening to arguing.

Mazikeen was talking heatedly at Lucifer from the couch, who was trying to talk over her, while Chloe was standing to the side with hands up trying to get only one of them to talk at a time. Caretaker was standing at the bar with an elbow against the surface, sipping a cup of tea. Linda couldn’t decide if he looked mildly entertained or exasperated. Or both. Perhaps both.

Linda watched as the three made it nowhere in their discussion before finally venturing a question. “Is everything okay?”

There was a pause as all three looked at her in surprise before they started talking all at once. Chloe tried to assure they were fine, while Lucifer exclaimed loudly it wasn’t fine because Mazikeen was—and this was drowned out by Mazikeen cursing and saying he wasn’t listening to her, to which he escalated his voice about how he heard her just fine, but he didn’t want to…!—Chloe hushed him with a repeated “Stop, stop, stop” while Mazikeen said he was being a series of expletives that finally faded away into a grumble.

The demon and archangel glared at each other while Chloe looked to Linda, clearly pleading for help.

“Ah.” Linda pressed her lips together, nodded her chin down. “So… What are we discussing? Uh, let’s…!” She motioned before all three could jump in. “Chloe, maybe you could explain?”

Chloe looked in exasperation at Lucifer as he folded his arms and snorted. “We’re trying to figure out a plan for Lucifer to keep Hell in some semblance of control without him having to leave permanently.”

This took more explaining for the therapist to understand, and then she started delegating the conversation. She could only pretend to follow Lucifer and Mazikeen’s debate much of the time, having no context for all their discussion of Hell’s dynamics. Apparently there were territory disputes between demons, of which there were several kinds of demon, and some rather powerful dukes and generals who oversaw different sectors of Hell. These were obviously a prickly and sensitive lot, and maneuvering around the politics was proving to be a headache.

Ella came in, encountered Caretaker first and hugged him. “There’s my favorite cinnamon roll maker!” Caretaker seemed bashful under her jubilant attentions. Then Ella was trotting to the
seating area, leaning over the back of the couch. “So what are we doing?”

This was explained to her, and she looked excited. “Creating a new Hell government? That sounds great!”

“Except,” Linda held her palms up, one to the prone, bandaged Mazikeen and the other to the Devil leaning against the wall, brow pinched in agitation. “That Lucifer and Mazikeen can’t agree on how to move forward. There are a lot of moving parts, and different deals among them to consider. It’s difficult to keep track of who has what geographically, who won’t work with some, and the different scenarios he might encounter when he gets down there.”

Chloe dropped her forehead into her doubled fists, looking stressed. “There’s got to be a way to make it work.”

“Oh, you know…” Ella’s sympathy was plowed aside by excited, wide eyes. “I think I can help! But I need… Uh…!” She held up both her indexes. “Give me a few to get the stuff and come back here!”

Caretaker spoke up. “A break seems advisable. Dinner will be ready soon as well.”

“Save me some!” Ella said, already running back to the elevator.

Lucifer seemed glad for the breather, making a frustrated sound and wandering to the bar to get himself a drink.

Linda was glad to be caught up on the days events with everyone. Yet even after a dinner of pasta and vegetables in a light sauce, Lucifer remained broody, and finally retreated to the balcony with a pack of cigarettes. Chloe looked uncertainly after him, then to Linda, another request for help without words.

“Want me to…?” Linda asked.

“Please,” Chloe said, keeping her tone low. “He’s kinda been thrown for a loop today, and I think this is all getting to him.”

Linda internally agreed with Chloe. Whenever it came to family, it was rarely good for Lucifer's state of mind.

Her heels clicked as she made her way out to the balcony. The tall archangel was leaning against the rail, a fresh cigarette lit as as he stared at the darkening horizon striped with hazy red and orange. He didn’t turn to greet her, just took another drag before letting his loosely held cigarette dangle over the rail.

Linda stood at the rail with him, her hands on smooth metal and eyes on the dizzying view. “So. I gather you didn’t mention to the others what you told me.” When Lucifer stayed quiet, she prompted. “About what you no longer wanted.”

“What’s the point, Doctor?” His voice was low and despondent. It was better than his waspish tone he’d used with Mazikeen, but only because it was more honest. “It doesn’t matter what I want. People want me to be the Devil. Maybe even need me to be the Devil. That’s not going to change.”

Linda gave a thoughtful hum. “Maybe not. But how do you want those who know you best to see you?”

He sighed, looking out at the horizon, before trying a weak attempt at humor. “Well, tall, dark, and
handsome, of course.”

Linda looked at him with a small smile and raised brows to show him she wasn’t taking his humor bait. Finally his smile faded as he made a small scoff in the back of his throat, flicking ash and watching it float away, swept into a breeze and scattered sideways. Fading sunlight caught the lighter gray flakes.

Linda studied his profile, then made a soft click of her tongue as she looked out at the buildings and the stark shadows hunching on their Eastern walls. She sorted her words carefully before speaking. “I know… you’ve had a very tumultuous week, and these decisions facing you are not easy. I would prefer you to take time to sort out how you feel about what you’ve been through, to take time with what you’ve realized after surviving your ordeal. Is this something that cannot wait?”

“Afraid not, Doctor.” He straightened and pat at the rail with his free hand. “God has abandoned Heaven, and the Devil is roaming the Earth. Demons won’t restrain themselves, especially once that news reaches them. And if I must be the Devil to protect people here… Well, I can be as monstrous as need be.”

“Because that’s what ruling Hell entails?”

“As much as I’d like to argue with Mazikeen, she’s unfortunately right. It does take that at times.”

Linda let a pause pass before asking her next question. “Did you not want Chloe to know?”

Lucifer released a breath, turning to face her and set his hip against the rail. “… I suppose I hoped it wouldn’t come up. That wasn’t really my intention to hide things from her, but… there we have it.”

“… And you feel exposed by it, afraid she might change her mind about how she feels about you.”

Lucifer tilt his cigarette to her. “Points for the Doctor.” He tuned back to the rail, the cigarette lighting brightly as he pulled smoke deep into his lungs. Linda watched from the corner of her eye as he let smoke roll out of his mouth, inhaled it through his nose again, then breathed out plumes of smoke from both nostrils.

“Well. The good news is your reaction is fairly normal.”

“Is it?” He was looking a mix of hopeful and anxious at her.

“Yes. You have had a lot of things you took as fact in your life turned upside down. When that happens, people feel unsettled, so they seek something familiar, something that fits with the patterns they once knew. So you keep looking for the other foot to fall.”

Lucifer’s brows lowered. “Well, in this case, more like the kick to swing.”

Linda inspected the city’s sprawl below. Finally she released her own breath. “I don’t have too many friends,” she admitted. “In fact, you know all of mine.”

Lucifer looked at her with some surprise at this turn in the conversation, turning his frame toward her attentively.

“Most of the people who tried to befriend me I quickly caught on just wanted free therapy. Ones before that, I lost in the divorce.” She gave a small laugh, trying to lighten the statement. “So I want you to know that I’m going to tell you this as your friend again, not your therapist.”
paused, making sure she had his full attention. "I know you associate the Devil with being monstrous..."

“Most do.”

“… But some associate lawyers as liars. Or bankers as crooks. Prostitutes as immoral. Or, well, even I’ve been called a quack.”

“You are not!” Lucifer defended, scowling down at the city as though he might spot the person who said such a thing and throw something at their head.

“I know. It’s… ignorant opinion. Even though we know many people are not these things, they get an ill label tied to their profession.” She settled her elbow on the rail, facing him. “Do you know what else I’ve noticed? You call me Doctor, especially during a session.”

Lucifer looked uncertain, fingers pinching the last bit of cigarette burning dangerously near his fingertips. “Is that…?”

“I like that you do,” she confided. “It’s respectful, and understanding that in certain spaces, I am doing a paid job to assist your emotional and mental well-being. But when I need a friend,” She shrugged lightly. “You call me Linda.” She leaned back against the rail with both elbows, nodding toward the living area behind them. “You do the same with Chloe. You always referred to her as the Detective, but lately, she’s been Chloe, because she’s more than your coworker and partner now.”

Lucifer considered that, distracted. Then he winced and dropped the cigarette butt, shaking his fingers and sticking them into his mouth.

Linda chuckled a bit at him. “And yes, having friends can be scary, and vulnerable.” She reached up to take his hand out of his mouth, examining where the cigarette burned him. She blew on the fingertips for him, trying to cool the burn briefly before continuing. “And I know you’ve been burned. But to us?” She looked up at him, shaking her head a little. “You’re always Lucifer. Being the Devil… it’s a job. A role thrust upon you without your asking. But it’s not you, and it’s not everyone’s opinion of what that title entails. And it will never change that you’re our friend, and more than a role or public opinion, or what history has painted your story throughout religious mythos and entertainment. Okay? Lucifer?”

He looked like he wanted to retreat at that, looked down at their hands, debating on how to deflect. To Linda’s pleasure, he did neither, finally sighing and patting her hand with his other. “…Thank you. Linda.”

“You’re welc-.”

They both started as Ella’s voice piped up from where the glass door had yet to be replaced. “Yeah, we love you, you big fluffy!”

“Guh!” Lucifer frowned at her. “I am not fluffy!”

Ella grinned, standing next to an amused Chloe who was trying to hide her smile behind her sleeved wrist. The scientist then held up a box. It was heavy, causing her to lean back as she shuffled it against her chest. “I got the stuff!”

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The discussion was much less heated and more excited an hour later. Lucifer had pulled the round
Lucifer had one of the figurines, posing it around on the map. “See, I don’t want the duke anywhere near the throne, but I also can’t have him near Ardat Lili if I end up bartering the swamps to her. Those two have no problem sending their minions into skirmishes. They probably have been already.”

Mazikeen pointed with the same hand she was holding a bottle of fireball. “You’ve still got to give some concession to the yōkai and the drekavac.”

Lucifer set the figure down, looking at her in horror. “No, not the drekavac!”

Chloe clasped her hands together. She was sitting right next to him, the chairs pressed close together now. “What are dreke… kav?”

“Drekavac,” Lucifer said, lips pulled in utter distaste. “They’re awful little creatures! Half-sized little vermin, and they’re loud, snotty, slobbery, they leave fingerprints all over, especially on the walls and ceilings, and they bite!”

“Wait.” Chloe squint at him as the elevator door started to open. “You’re saying there are demons down there that are like chil-?”

“Mommy!” Trixie ran up to her, dropping her backpack as she launched over the arm of the chair to hug her.

“Hey, Monkey!”

Daniel strode in, looking confused at everything set up. “We’re playing something?”

Trixie’s attention was on all the maps and miniatures next. “DND!” She happily announced, then looked to Ella who had a Forgotten Realms player handbook in her hands. “Can I play? I want to be a centaur!”

“What?” Lucifer interjected. “Oh, no, if anyone is playing a centaur, it’s going to be me, so I can say my character is hung like a-oof!”

Chloe winced. “Sorry. Didn’t mean to elbow you that hard.”

“Oh… Quite all right. Though…” He crossed his legs, straightening his jacket busily. “I may need to use the shower soon.”

Chloe looked at him in confusion. “But you showered earlier. Why would…?”

Mazikeen spoke up, blunt and to the point. “He likes that. A lot.”

Chloe looked confused for another beat before looking wide-eyed at Lucifer. He just grinned, unabashed. She mouthed something at him and he held up his palms and shrugged.

Mazikeen continued as though they weren’t having a complicated conversation with each other in silence. “But unless you two are going to seal the deal, which for the love of everything unholy, please do, because we’re all going crazy watching you two dance around like-.”

“Hey, hey,” Daniel interrupted. “Can we not talk about that around the kid? Or, hell, me?”

Trixie wasn’t paying any attention, instead babbling about how she’d always wanted to play but
only read about Dungeons & Dragons online. She had a monster manual in hand, flipping through it happily. “If I can’t be a centaur, can I be an orc?” Trixie asked Ella excitedly.

“We’re mostly just world building, kiddo. But hey, have you eaten? There are leftovers, and after I can help you build a character. It’s been a while since I ran a mini-campaign.”

“Yes! And I’m ten. I can always eat,” Trixie announced, happily heading toward the kitchen where Caretaker was sure to give her a hearty second supper.

“Wash your hands!” Lucifer called. He made a despairing sound when she pointedly didn’t answer.

"Pay attention," Mazikeen said. "How are you going to get Asmodeus on your side? None of this works if you can't smarm that bastard. If he goes, at least five others will automatically follow his lead."

"Right." Lucifer turned his attention back to planning. "I don't want to go to that one with charm alone."

He dropped his hand over the side of the chair as he talked. It was comforting when Chloe's fingers fell into their familiar niche between his and she and Ella started throwing in ideas, their new, clever perspectives helping them look at different variables. Linda mostly listened, but would ask questions on personality and offer insight into character flaws and likely motivations when she could.

It was a reminder that he wasn't alone in any of this, and the Devil could find a sliver of peace in that.
Kisses and Nightmares

Chapter Notes

Hello Darklings! So, warning, there is definite frustrated making out and arousal and sexual suggestions in this chapter!

There is also a bad dream scene, which somehow turned out to be from Trixie's POV, but ah well, I think it works.

Enjoy, little ravens!

It was the early hours when people drifted for home with promises to return the next evening to reconvene on planning.

Mazikeen limped to the guest bedroom with another fifth to keep her company. Trixie decided she was staying the night once more, and despite Lucifer’s grumblings, she was again crawling into his bed to curl up next to her tired mother. Chloe spent the night cuddling her daughter and wrapped up in arms that could bend steel.

Sunday morning they came to collect Caretaker.

It was expected and planned. Lucifer still groused about it and made snotty comments to the FBI agents. Caretaker in the meantime assured him there were plenty of baked goods and leftovers, and that he’d be fine.

Lucifer and Chloe thanked him again for helping to save their lives. They stood side by side and watched while he was led into the elevator in handcuffs between four escorts.

The bearded man smiled at them. The elevator doors slid closed, and they wondered if they would ever see him again.

When Lucifer stalked into the kitchen, eyeing how clean and tidied it was, he looked morose. Chloe didn’t comment on it.

Lucifer did have a few people to meet with down in Lux later that day. Chloe let him get on with the business of running a business and preparing for an absence. Trixie, bored and tired from staying up till three a.m. the night before, wandered back to bed and fell asleep watching videos on her phone. Mazikeen had yet to surface. It made the penthouse feel empty and abandoned.

When Lucifer came upstairs an hour and a half later, he caught Chloe by the models, picking up pieces and staring intently, deep in thought.

“Hello, there!”

She looked up, saw that he was smiling widely and holding two poco grande glasses in hand near the bar. “Patrick made a new house special,” he announced.

She smiled and set the miniature down, sauntering over to accept one of the glasses from him. The drinks were light blue on top, darkening to a nearly black purple at the bottom.
“What’s it called?”

“The Hell-Bent. Definitely one to take slow, despite the taste.”

Chloe stirred the straw some before sipping it. The flavor of blue coracao lightened with rum and smooth cherry spread over her tongue. The flavors balanced well, neither biting nor too sweet. Patrick definitely knew how to mix. “Mm… Not bad.”

“Wait till you drink it down some,” he said with a grin, sitting in the stool next to her with his own drink. They sipped quietly together, commenting on alcoholic beverages. Finally he looked around. “It’s finally quiet.”

She took a deeper drink. “Still a lot to plan tonight before you leave tomorrow.”

“Nothing we should have trouble with tonight.”

Another drink. She pursed her lips, struggling inside. The loudest sound was the wind outside the broken door.

“I don’t want you to go,” she announced.

“Chloe.” He didn’t seem to know what else to argue after that, so just settled on, “It won’t be for long.”

She set her drink down, eyes flicking over his face. Unbruised, his stubble trimmed, hair glossy and unruffled. Those dark eyes were studying her back, seeming at a loss. She wondered what he saw when he looked at her. “But what if something happens to you down there? What if something keeps you from coming back?”

“Oh, darling.” He set his drink down, took up her hand and pulled her to him. She went willingly into the comforting heat of his chest, the spread of his hands across her back. Even sitting down on the stool, he could easily set his chin atop her head. It made her feel small.

“Listen, I know you’re used to seeing me all… fragile and bruised up like an old peach! But in Hell, I’m a very different creature. …Chloe, they can’t hurt me, and I’m very used to avoiding weapons that can sting.” He touched her cheeks, tilting her gaze up to his. His accented voice was low and serious. “Down there… I’m the monster that scares the monsters. Not one of them will stop me from leaving, and if Hell’s Gates were to shut, I would rip them apart to return to you. Believe me?”

She did, giving small nods. His shoulders relaxed some, thumb light against her cheek. Chloe closed her eyes, leaning into his palm briefly. Her palms went to his chest, felt the way his breath deepened under her touch. She looked down at where her hands rest on the surface of his button up shirt, the jacket lapels brushing against her wrists. She looked up, searched his gaze. His lips were parted slightly, and his eyes were a mix of want and disquiet, still looking nervous but too helpless to retreat from the intensity between them.

It was one of those moments, where something silently rose around them, linked them, pulled them together like water. Her hands circled his neck and pulled him to her lips.

He made that quiet sound in his throat before kissing her back, one hand in her hair, the other sliding down her back. Chloe kept her kisses gentle, appreciating the softness of their mouths touching, savoring how their breaths caught loud in their ears between each press. It felt close, loving, and heavenly. His hands explored the smooth planes of her back, and it took only the lightest pressure again her waist to bring her flush against him. She ran her hands from his neck,
down the hard planes of his chest and belly, down to his thighs on either side of her hips.

The groan he made under her fingertips and the warm roll of his spine made something that was both a twist of alarm and pleasure uncurl through her belly. His tongue ventured a tantalizing touch against hers. She pressed against him further and met that small venture with her own.

His hands were sliding over her back, down her hips. His tongue was moving against hers in rhythmic glides that were making her nerves crave more. She gasped and finally broke for breath when she felt his hands slide under her shirt at the small of her back, hot fingertips against bare skin making her dizzier.

He groaned, head falling atop her shoulder. “Darling. Love.” he pleaded, whining into her neck before pressing a kiss firmly into the smooth corner of her shoulder. It made her shiver. His voice fell low with want. “You’re making this all very hard on me.”

Chloe laughed breathlessly. “Did you just…?”

He answered her with a press of his hips against her belly. Chloe bit her lip, head tilting back, able to feel just how strongly she affected him, remembered how she was intimidated by his size. “Yes, because I mean that in every sense of the word!”

It sobered her some, able to think through her passion, the leeriness of privacy and time and place pressing in again. They were in the penthouse. Which had no lock on the elevator. Where Mazikeen was occupying the spare room. Where Trixie was asleep on the bed. She started to laugh at the ridiculousness of it. “Sorry… I… Yeah, I really shouldn’t get you wound up.”

“Yes, you should be sorry!” He squeezed her one more time to him, sighing into her neck before releasing her reluctantly. “Mm, that aches.”

Chloe looked at him with concern. “It… it hurts?”

“Oh, not much, and I certainly don’t mind.” The look on his face was nothing short of delighted, so she believed him. “It’s rather enticing, actually. But I should go and take care of that all the same.” He looked up at the ceiling. “Mm, I’ve taken so many showers lately.”

Chloe considered how many showers he’d taken. Then realized he took one that morning, one that had taken time, and her imagination gave her a very explicit thought about what that might look like, and…

His smile faded, replaced with concern. “Chloe, you’re quite red. Do you want me to not say? I understand if you don’t want to know.”

“Maybe… Maybe I…” She swallowed.

Lucifer was watching her closely. It dawned on him, and he looked both excited and wondrous all in one, his words breathy. “Oh… Chloe. Do… Do you want to join me?”

“I… Uh…” Yes. Yes, I do, even though I’m nervous and I don’t have much to offer and you’re so experienced and…

Whoosh.

Lucifer’s eyes scrunched closed. His mouth clearly moved in a snapped fuck, then he mouthed it a few more times for good measure. He glared toward the missing balcony door. “Never mind, boner is officially gone!”
Amenadiel balked just over the foyer, eyes a bit wider as he looked between them. “Am I interrupting something?”

“Yes!” “Oh, no, no.” Chloe bit her teeth together, looking apologetically at Lucifer, who chose to down his remaining drink at that moment. She turned back to his brother. “Sorry. What did you need Amenadiel?”

“A better sense of timing!” Lucifer cut in. He then set to downing the rest of Chloe’s drink as well.

Amenadiel rolled his eyes, stalking forward in that slow, powerful way of his. “I just needed some peace. Home’s rather… tumultuous at the moment.”

Chloe nodded sympathetically. Her face still felt far too hot, and she felt awkwardly exposed and caught. “I can imagine.”

Lucifer snorted. “Have you told everyone what to do, yet?”

Amenadiel shook his head. “Mostly just to continue their duties they had for the time being. I’m honestly not sure what else to do.” He looked to the seating area, puzzled at all the maps and terrain. “What’s all this?”

Lucifer did perk up at this, since he was excited about the project. “Ah!” He motioned with his palm while standing. “Neo Hell!”

Chloe smirked, arms folding. “Not going to go with Ella’s suggestion of Hell 2.0?”

“Nonsense! It’s not a program, but new and improved is a given! After all, it’s my structure. Not Dad’s.” Chloe shot him a look. “Okay, our structure. But I’m the one who has to pull the plan off.”

Amenadiel was still looking puzzled at it all, turning to face it directly with his hands behind his robed back. His brow rose. “Is that a… a red dragon on the little Game of Thrones throne?”

“That’s me!” Lucifer pointed happily. “And that’s the Throne. Of course, the surrounding area holds the Towers and Doors, and then we have the volcano, the pit, the swamps, the sea over here.”

“And these… tiny figures?”

“Notable demons and their holdings. Obviously.”

“And that’s… that’s an eyeball with tentacles.”

“That represents that damned tosser Azazel. What else would I represent him with?”

“Ah… What is all this for?”

Lucifer took a long suffering breath, then launched into explaining.

After the rapid explanation, Amenadiel stared at him. He blinked hard, raised his palms at Lucifer. “You’re changing all of Hell?”

“Yes!”

“The entire power structure. You’re… It won’t be a monarchy any longer.”

“Correct! Down with dictatorship! It’s so past century! Gotta keep up with the times!”
Amenadiel made a chopping motion with each word. “You’re destroying an eons long establishment. And replacing it?”

“That is what I said.” Lucifer looked to Chloe. “Honestly, did I stutter when I explained this?”

“Luci, you can’t just…”

“Oh-ho! Yes, I can.” He grinned, striding energetically to face Amenadiel. “I can do what I want. I’m just going to be a little less irresponsible about it, now. Really, you should be glad!” Lucifer clapped him on his shoulder. “I pull this off, no one else will need to lift a finger to keep Hell in line in case anything happens to me!”

Amenadiel looked like he still wanted to argue. His eyes skipped over the model, trying to figure things out, trying to comprehend the dismantling of a monarchy that had existed for all of human history. “Lucifer… I don’t think you can… I mean, this… Would the demons even accept this?”

“That’s going to be the maneuver of the century, now isn’t it? We’ll see. Don’t worry. I plan on praying to you to bail me out if things go particularly sideways, but, come now, it’s me.” He pressed his fingers to his own chest, giving that wide, confident smile. “I can charm even the most beguiling of snakes. They’ll fall in line, brother.”

Chloe hoped he was right as he pulled Amenadiel to have a drink and talk about the plan further.

~~~

The group convened again that night, slurping on bowls of pasta and garlic bread while they prod and solidified what steps needed to happen. Amenadiel had pulled a stool over to watch and listen. Chloe didn’t miss how interested he seemed in the process, the ideas she could see sparking.

After midnight Lucifer called a halt, the plan hammered out as well as he thought it could be, and everyone was tired and distracted. Ella wandered out first, looking slaphappy from lack of sleep. She was followed by Linda. Mazikeen limped away to the guest room, denying Amenadiel’s offer to help with a grin, saying a few bullet holes weren’t stopping her. Trixie was already brushing her teeth, and Lucifer just sighed, realizing he’d be sharing his bed with the squirmy child again and finding her another shirt to sleep in.

That left Chloe and Amenadiel sitting on the Italian furniture. Amenadiel was thinking, hand to his chin.

“Penny for your thoughts?” Chloe finally asked.

“I… think it might actually work,” he finally admitted.

“It better,” she said, scooting to the edge of her seat and looking at the piles of notes left on the tiles that represented one of Hell’s labyrinths. “Kinda need him home after he sorts everything.”

“I’m glad you two have finally come together, Chloe. You’ve always been good for him.”

Chloe smiled, feeling shy of the sentiment. She motioned instead to the maps. “So! Does this give you some ideas?”
“A lot, actually.” He nodded. “Of course, this type of structure won’t work for the Silver City, but I understand why this system has to be harsh.”

“And Mazikeen approved,” Lucifer piped up, striding behind the couch. “Demons can be tricky to punish. Some just love the pain. An incentive and structure that encourages power struggles is always best.”

“We’ll need something more just and honest for Heaven,” Amenadiel agreed.

“Oh, good, so you’re considering it.” Lucifer’s smile was wide. “You could always form an interesting democracy. Or the city has a number of geniuses I know I didn’t get downstairs, so you can consult with them for what they think will work best.”

“Consult with humans on what will work best.” Amenadiel smiled, amused. “That might drive home my point that humans are not nearly the hapless little creatures our siblings think.”

“Excellent! You work on that! Though, before you go… A word?”

Chloe watched Lucifer lead him out to the balcony, his tone quieting. They stood outside, and Chloe couldn’t hear them, but their faces were serious. The Detective watched intently, curious. Finally Amenadiel spread his dark wings and with heavy flaps ascended from the balcony. It was fascinating to watch, even surreal. Chloe had seen Lucifer’s wings a great deal during their imprisonment, but had never seen him fly.

“What was that about?” Chloe asked.

Lucifer straightened his jacket in distraction. “Just asking for a favor. We’ll see what he can manage. Now… It’s past good detectives’ bedtimes. Time to kip down for the night.”

~~~

Trixie liked being able to sleep in the huge bed. It made her feel like a princess, with its sheer drapes and fancy stonework, and how its floor was higher than the rest of the Penthouse. She found the entire place neat, but different. It didn’t have the same breezy, warm feel as Grandma’s, or the homely feel of the new rental. It felt more like a piece of palace had been perched atop a building, sophisticated, adult, and with artful lavishes to detail.

She liked how the orange light from the bar made the floor beyond the steps glow, and how the city lights filtered through the thin curtains and made it so it was never dark. Not that she could be very afraid with her mom finally close, or with the actual Devil curled on the other side of the bed like a large protective dog.

Eventually she would find it in her to be unselfish enough to let them sleep alone. Right now Trixie wanted the assurance that her mother was really home and safe.

Maybe that’s why when her mom made a distressed sound, it woke her instantly. She listened as her mother mumbled, then jerked in her sleep. Trixie moved slowly, sitting up on her knees. Lucifer at some point had rolled onto his back, snoring quietly. Her mother’s brow was pinched, tossing her head again. It was hard to tell what she was saying.
“Stop it…. You’re killing him…”

Trixie leaned down to shake her mother’s shoulder. “Mom? Mom, wake up.”

“Stop… Stop….! LUCIFER!”

There was a whip of sound, and Trixie’s vision was filled with white in the same instant she was knocked off the bed.

The floor was hard against her back and elbows, but she was too surprised to really note the bruising, adrenaline rushing in her system. She barely stopped before toppling down the stairs, sitting up and looking behind herself in alarm before looking at the bed.

Lucifer’s giant wing had enfolded her mother entirely from view, white feathers bright like moonlight. He looked dazed and confused himself, looking around for danger, blinking at where Trixie was laying on the floor, before turning his attention to how distressed her mom was.

“Chloe? Chloe, shshshhh… I’m right here. You’re safe.”

“They were *killing* you,” she blubbered. “I couldn’t do anything…!”

“No, no, no. I’m just fine… Look, look, see? Breathing and whole.” The bend of his wing dipped to touch the back of her head, hands taking her wrists to turn her to him fully. “…See?”

Trixie decided it was Hell having to listen to your mom cry and being unable to do anything about it. Lucifer continued to make shushing noises, and while it must have been a minute, it seemed to take forever before her mother was breathing evenly. Trixie stood by the bed, uncertain, her mind blank on how to offer her any comfort.

Lucifer looked to her. “Urchin, are you well?”

Trixie shook her head. “I just… fell.”

She should have known the Devil would be able to tell that she was lying. He stared at her for only two seconds before comprehension made concern riddle his face. He was sitting up, wings folding. It was fascinating, how quickly they shrunk and disappeared. They didn’t even tear his clothes.

“Oh, no, Beatrice, I’m so sorry. You’re sure you’re not hurt?”

Her mother was looking over her shoulder at Trixie now. “Why, what happened?”

“I’m fine,” Trixie assured, walking the length of the bed and climbing back on near the foot. She tried to reach for the most assuring statement she could. “Your wing is just really strong!”

Lucifer was looking to her mother now, voice pleading. “I swear, Chloe, I would never—never ever—to such a thing on purpose. I didn’t mean to—I couldn’t live with my—”

“Lucifer, shh, I *know* that. It was an accident. Monkey, come here.”

Trixie let them fuss over her, both hissing when they spotted an abrasion on her elbow. Lucifer insisted on wrapping it, despite it being a scrape Trixie often inflicted on herself on a weekly basis. They both told Lucifer he didn’t need to sleep on the couch when he said he would, and easily won the argument between the both of them. A drink of water later, and Trixie was settled back on the pillow she’d claimed lately as hers.

She was nearly asleep again when she heard Lucifer whisper. “*Still can’t sleep*?”
“No. Sorry, am I keeping you awake?”

“No... Here. Let’s try something that helps me when I’m feeling restless.”

Trixie laid very still, pretending to sleep as the two of them moved off the bed. A minute later she heard the piano, quiet keys tinkling while Lucifer spoke quietly. Her mother uttered something back. He hummed thoughtfully, then, started to play something with a complex opening melody, descending in a melancholy fashion. It changed to something lighter. He played it slower than the original song, so it took Trixie a moment to recognize “Iris”.

She turned her head to look toward the piano. Her mother was looking down, watching Lucifer’s hands on the keys. She was still in one of his big button up shirts, and she was leaning against his shoulder, looking content as she hummed along.

Trixie wasn’t too surprised when she heard the piano stopping some time later and she glanced over to see the two turned to each other, kissing slowly. Trixie smiled to herself, feeling as though she’d seen something secret. She felt much better when she rolled over to fall sleep.
Hello Darklings! I ended up splitting some of the chapter off after all. Still pondering if I’ll have the next bit stand alone or be part of the epilogue. Hm. Choices... But that's tomorrow's problem!

Warning, there is some harsh Hell stuff here, including allusions to torture, beatings, uh, other unpleasantness, nudity, as well as mention of war crimes and atrocities, including child casualties. Nothing detailed on that front, but stand warned anyhow.

Oh, there's also pining. Be warned about that, too.

Enjoy, pumpkins!

Lucifer left Monday night as planned.

“How do I look?” he asked, standing on his balcony. He was in a black suit, a white silk kerchief in his pocket, impeccably groomed. He kept playing with his cufflinks, a nervous motion keeping his hands busy. Los Angeles’ city lights glowed behind him, a yellow-orange light from below with a starless black above.

Chloe reached up to fuss with his collar. It didn’t need it. She held her breath briefly when she looked up at him. “Good…”

“Just good?” He looked slighted.

Chloe pat at his chest. “Okay, you look very fine.”

“That’s better!” When Chloe didn’t respond and kept her hand on his chest he became serious, reaching down to cup her hand. “I wish I could tell you for certain how long this would take.”

“Me, too,” she uttered.

“Time moves differently down there. But I will hurry back.”

She closed her eyes, nodding, and tried very hard to keep the hurting in her chest down.

Lucifer’s warm hand was on her jawline, tilting her face up. His lips brushed hers. It didn’t make the hurt less. It just spilled free.

“Oh, Chloe… Shhh…”

She went willingly into his chest when he pulled her to him, sniffed against the expensive fabric. He kissed the top of her head, smoothed her hair, finally brushed his thumbs along her cheeks.

“Sorry,” she stammered. “I promised myself I wouldn’t be difficult about this.”

“Hopefully when I return I’ll find a way to make up for all the times I’ve caused you this.” He lightened his tone, leaning down to look her in the eye evenly. “And we’ll have a date. Don’t
forget.”

The laughter broke through her tears. “I won’t. Ass.”

“A fine one!”

She pulled back, sleeve wiping under her nose. “You better get going.”

He straightened, looking down at her with a mix of hurt, reluctance, but also somehow happy. His accented voice was soft and sincere. “You know. I really… Really love you.”

She smiled at that, voice cracking some. “I love you, too. Hurry home?”

He nodded and stepped back. The wings whipped outward, white and brilliant on either side of his tall, dark frame. The disturbed air pushed her hair back. “Good bye. For a little while.”

Then he seemed to fall, and simply wasn’t there anymore. There was just an echo of powerful wing beats.

Chloe stood staring at the empty place on the balcony where he’d been for long moments. Finally she wiped at her eyes, and walked through the still empty place where a balcony door had been.

Mazikeen, Linda, and Ella all looked at her expectantly.

She nodded, pulling her resolve together and folding her arms tightly. “Now we wait.”

~~~

The narrow column of volcanic stone towered above the endless stretch of the towers. The ash storm churned overhead where Hell’s gate was an ever present maelstrom above. Lucifer landed on his feet atop the throne, one foot on the seat, the other on the armrest as he surveyed the dark kingdom below.

He touched his chest, where his shirt was still damp with human tears. A deep breath.

He’d be hurrying home. He’d promised.

*Best to get the show on the road then.*

Lucifer pulled in a deep breath, wings spreading wide as he pulled at Hell’s power. The realm tensed until the air seemed to tremble in acknowledgement of its returned king. The sound he released was nothing more than a low vibration rather than a cry, but it reverberated throughout the realm, echoing and echoing and echoing to the far reaches at the bidding of its master.

The Devil had returned to Hell.

~~~
Chloe went to work Tuesday morning. She threw herself into it. Hard.

It kept her from thinking too hard on the sympathetic looks Ella threw her, or Daniel’s inquiry on Lucifer’s sudden ‘business trip’, or people who welcomed her back and asked where the Consultant was, the station obviously missing his charismatic presence.

It did nothing to keep her from staring at the empty chair beside her desk at times, or rubbing the smooth metal of the bullet necklace weighing on her collar bone once more.

Chloe had pulled it out of its jewelry box the first morning after sleeping at the rental again. The Detective had spent a good minute checking the mirror to look for cracks that she only felt on the inside. Confident no one could see through her facade, she’d gone to work and grabbed all the cases they’d let her have.

She shook her head to stop staring at the chair, then snatched up some of the contacts that she needed to interview to see if she could narrow down her suspects.

If she kept herself going, she wouldn’t have to focus on how it felt like a piece of her was missing.

~~~

The tower where Lucifer chose to hold court was tall and jagged, a series of tunnels and stairs that circled and bored through it to end at the plateau. Spiked, dark columns rose above in immense arches, brushed pale in their crags with ash. Hell’s avians roosted there, black and rough feathered, bare-headed creatures with jagged beaks and glowing red eyes that stared with interest at the proceedings below as their talons scratched over stone. Several of Hell’s record keepers lingered by the pillar bases, waiting for orders or coming and going with paperwork and reports the returned king had demanded.

There were others as well. Some demons awaiting miserably for judgement. Some hellish regents lingered, hoping for time to have a word with the Devil, some nervous, some gleeful and sly. The three sister demonesses were among them as well, sitting on the floor by the table with chains around them. They were still dripping sea water, their skin almost bone-white and wrinkled from being submerged for so long, flesh darkened only by the multitude of scratches criss crossing every viewable surface. They’d been ignored thus far, and huddled anxiously close together, dreading when that would end.

The throne was a stark line against the dark, stormy sky behind the chair Hell’s ruler had occupied as of late. Though not now. Now he stood before the ebon conference table, a broken, unconscious demon dangling from his fist, holding it up and to the side while he glared at a kneeling demon lord with eyes a bloody glow.

The Lilim accent turned his words into low, echoing rumbles, his skin burning with fury. “The rules were in place for a reason. Yet you continue to let your denizens break them with no regard to my orders?”

The demon bowed his head low, spidery hands spread wide. “I assure you, my king, I was not aware rules were being broken.”

“You should have been.” His eyes were furious coals as he growled out his words. “This one had a soul out of her room that was only to be here for her guilt alone, not on the List for further
punishment. She was among those not to be touched. Why were you unaware of this?"

“The… soul in question is here because of the guilt of poisoning her own children. Surely that’s cause for…?”

“So you were aware.” His voice rose, enraged. “Were you also aware she poisoned them because her city was being sacked and she didn’t want them to suffer?!”

The court all held their breath, waiting. Some licked their teeth hungrily.

“My lord, I…”

“You are unfit to rule a single clod of ash!” He dropped the lord’s minion and spun away, addressing the other demons. “Strip him, decide among you who wants to torment him. Bring me all of his titles he was granted. We will redistribute his holdings and power among those who can keep their subjects in line.”

The demon lord started to stand, voice shrill and plaintive. It was far too late. His fellow demons fell on him from all sides. Lucifer ignored the chaos, the cruel laughter that drowned out the screams. The carrion birds croaked above at the commotion, staring down hungrily.

The archangel circled the table, sitting down in the chair and propping his feet up on the edge of it. A record keeper scurried forward, a hunchbacked creature in huge robes. Lucifer took the correspondence, looking it over and pointedly ignoring the beating that had started to devolve into arguing over who would get to keep the former lord and who could best torture him. It went on for a few minutes before Lucifer looked over, rubbing at his eye tiredly, annoyed.

“Argue. Elsewhere.”

The demons immediately quieted, unwilling to test his temper. It had been short before. Since his return it had taken very little to incur his wrath. The group dragged the whimpering demon and his unconscious minion away, leaving streaks of dark blood on the floor.

~~~

Chloe watched Mazikeen limp back and forth. It had been four days since Lucifer had left.

“I should have gone with him,” Mazikeen gnashed, her blade flipping back and forth in her hand.

Chloe stared at her phone, pondered returning to Lux to see if he might be there. Again.

“Maybe it’s just taking some time…” Chloe was trying to convince herself, staring around her kitchen and sipping at the tea. It was supposed to help with nerves and sleep. It didn’t feel like it was working at all.

“Maybe. That idiot just better be watching his back.”

Chloe pursed her lips, finally looking to Mazikeen with concern. “You don’t think that maybe he’s choosing to stay down there?”

Mazikeen halted her restless limping to give her a puzzled look that bordered on offended. Chloe hurried to explain.
“I mean, with… He’s able to do what he wants down there without restraint. I just worry that… maybe he’ll realize it’s… Not boring. That he will like being the Devil again.”

Mazikeen shook her head, pointing her knife at her. “You’re doing that stupid thing people with feelings do, and you’re not stupid. So stop it.” She continued flipping her knife, voice softer. “He hates it down there. Always has. I used to think he was okay with it, but… Not after seeing how he is here.”

The demoness rolled her eyes. “Besides, you’re here, and you’re both gooey…” she gestured awkwardly, corner of her lip raised as she appraised the Detective. “Gross, emotional magnet globs to each other. He’ll be trying to hurry back.”

Chloe felt her brows hitch. “Uh… Okay. Thanks. I think.”

“Anytime, Decker.”

~~~

Dear Dad, he was tired.

The wine here was awful.

The assassination attempts were awful.

The company was awful.

The bloody paperwork was… well. Inconvenient.

Nothing compared to how hollowed out his stomach felt, or how his heart felt like it was constricted in his chest, like it’d been turned the wrong way and was expected to keep functioning.

At least when he’d been in Cain’s cage, he’d been able to see her.

Truthfully, he was aware he was pining. He was never going to admit it out loud. Instead he rubbed at his eye and looked up as several record keepers hurried in with books. He motioned beside his chair, and they started piling them there, the stack alarmingly rickety but holdings its precarious balance. They left as silently as they came, leaving him to write his responses to Hell’s denizens, continuing to pluck at the needed strings to get everyone to dance how he needed.

Lucifer was writing his last response, several parchments spread before him when four demons rushed up the stairs, dragging someone between them. They shoved their package on the floor, all grinning. Lucifer glanced over at the naked human soul. There was a black bag over his head. The muscular frame was twisting on the floor to sit up, untangling himself from the released ropes.

Dromos, an especially large brute of a demon in leather and spiked armor, grinned and bowed with his fist to his chest. “As ordered, my king.”

Lucifer continued writing. “Thank you, Dromos. Prompt as always. Could you drag the sisters from where they’re huddling behind the pillar over to about, mm… there?” He pointed off the corner of his desk.

“With pleasure.” The brute strode over to the far edge of the court.
Lucifer waited until he heard the human manage to remove the black bag from his head, heard him gasping for air. He dipped the quill, tapped it against the inkwell, and continued his neat, looping cursive.

“Hello, Cain.”

The first murderer was still catching his breath, glaring at him. “Lucifer.”

“Mmhm. Sorry for the bagging. Tit for tat and all that.”

“I invented that move, you know.”

“Oh, I don’t doubt it.” Lucifer signed his name, then scoot the letter away to dry. He picked up two yellowed rib bones and set them on the paper edges to keep the parchment straight and from blowing away. Then he clapped his hands together, leaning back in his chair. “So! You’re a new arrival, with a, heh, breathtaking history.” Lucifer slapped the volume of books stacked by his chair. They were chest high. “Makes you quite the special case.”

Cain started to stand. “So, what, you came down to Hell just to personally see to my puni-nnf!” A demoness had slammed the butt of her spear into the back of his knee, forcing the nude man back down once more.

Lucifer’s eyes glittered, cold and unamused. “Oh, you have a significant history, but no, I’m not down here for you. You’re not that important.” He stood, straightening his jacket and tone lightening. “I’m in the area for other business that needed my attention, but thought I’d see to you while here.”

Dromos was dragging the sisters over, all three tangled in their chains together, hissing with discomfort. He let them fall in a heap in the place Lucifer indicated.

Cain was still looking over at the miserable demonesses as Lucifer lifted the topmost book from the pile, one with fairly fresh leather binding. “Now… You already know how Hell works? People come down here for what they feel guilty over. But… Once they get here… We get to decide who needs further punishment. For example, dictators who order genocide and torture rarely feel guilty for their crimes against humanity. Often, they feel guilty for failure, or, cheating on their wife, or going back on one of their self-inflicted rules. Seldom for the stuff they really should be punished for.”

Lucifer motioned to himself, voice low and sibilant. “That’s where I come in. Punishment needs to fit people’s crimes… Not just what they feel guilt over. So, I get to oversee it. The reason you are a complicated case? Mm…” He set the top most book down on the stack, patting it lightly. “Theeese are all yours. The disadvantage of living throughout human history is that you had a very, very long time to be a bad boy.”

Cain’s blue eyes glanced at the stack of books, then back to Lucifer. He scoffed. “As though anything you do to me down here can be any worse than what I’ve endured over a thousand lifetimes.” He tilt his chin up. “So come on. Do your worst. You know you want to.”

Lucifer sighed. “See, that’s just it. I have to be fair.” Lucifer put his hands in his pockets, leaning forward slightly before advancing in slow steps. “As much as I would like to personally see to your punishment, that’s not what I’m here for. My job is to order the correct punishments to the crime and in the proper amounts, no matter if your offenses were personal to me or not.” He quirked a small shrug. “I know. It’s very annoying to me right now.”
Cain rolled his eyes. “How heartbreaking for you.”

Lucifer stalked past him, looking up at the rolling storm of ash overhead. “Well, on the bright side, I don’t have to see your face much. On the other, I have to see that you’re… comfortably situated. And you’re right. Not much I can do that you’ve not been through. Thankfully, we excel at being creative down here. Sisters…”

The three demonesses looked up as one, still shackled and grim looking. Or at least two of them looked. The blindfolded one merely tilt her face his direction.

“You’ll be condemned to the very Pit you once ruled, in one of its bottom most layers. You excel at despair, misery, and, most charmingly, applying slow pressure and layers to your torture techniques. Thus it seems improper for me to send you without company and a little misery to feed on.” He folded his arms, turning to face them. “This one is yours. If you want to redeem yourselves, I would like to see this soul remorseful for his wrong doings.” Lucifer’s smile was grim, his eyes burning red as he approached them. “Let it not be said that I don’t award ambition.”

They all three started to babble at once. “My lord!” “Oh, dark king, the first of murderers!” “Generoussssss.” “We will not fail you.” “Our suffering shall be his threefold.”

Lucifer touched the chains, the locks falling from them. Lucifer helped them stand, much to their confusion. “I expect no less. Before you’re thrown into the Pit together… Do me a favor and take his tongue?”

Cain tried to stand again. “You son of a bi-!”

The three sisters had already fallen on him. Lucifer walked away with his hands in his pockets, ignoring the sounds of struggling behind him and Cain’s agonized cry of anger and rip of flesh. Lucifer was already consulting with his hunch backed record keeper and reviewing what was next on his schedule.

It was almost done… Almost… Soon he could go home.

~~~

Linda stopped by at the precinct under the premise of bringing lunch to share with Chloe. The Detective had thanked her, then quickly left when she got a text to follow a lead.

Ella joined her at the bottom of the stairs. “Well… How do you think she’s holding up?”

“Not very well,” Linda admitted. “So about how we expected. But there’s not much I can do if someone doesn’t want help yet.”

Ella frowned, nodding, her dark ponytail bobbing. Then she shrugged, looking at another detective. “You know, while you’re here, though, you might talk to someone else who’s been off kilter?”

Linda followed her gaze over to where Daniel was staring at a wall, an open file on his lap, looking lost and sad. He was still not released for full duty yet. Linda imagined after the rush and distraction of finding Chloe and bringing her home, he was now having to process through his grief.
It was a hard road to go alone.

Linda managed a small smile to Ella. “I’ll give it a shot.”

She paced to his desk, and after exchanging timid greetings, she sat down in the chair as Daniel leaned back in his, the two talking.

Ella smiled to herself, then wandered back to her lab, humming a Barenaked Ladies song to herself.

~~~

Negotiations were finally making progress. His head hurt, and he was tired, but excited as well as the deals started being hammered out, things slowly coming together.

“So we’re all in agreement to this distribution of power? You three will rule whenever I am absent, and in tandem with me when I am here. You each will oversee seven, and they will in turn oversee the twenty-one under them.”

The three demons nodded.

“As you’re aware,” Lucifer continued. “I will hold no lands or titles, but my veto of any laws added or changed will need overthrown by you and the twenty-one beneath you unanimously in order to pass. Yet, my role is mainly as enforcer and handling disputes, as well as appointing those to power when needed.”

The curvy, bone-pale woman among them reached forward, tapping a metal claw adorning her fingertip on the parchment. “This law, though… With the death penalty. Who would oversee the executions if any demon goes to Earth?”

Lucifer’s eyes glinted. “I will.”

The demon wrapped head to toe in robes with orange eyes and swords crossed on his back tilt his head, creaking voice inquiring. “My king, you’ve never killed anyone before. At most you only ever delegated the task to let someone decide for you if death was justified.”

“That’s changed.” At their silence, Lucifer tilt his weight back on his heels, grin unpleasant. “Oh, I love how you all think Earth has made me soft. In the past three years I have banished the Goddess, slain a brother, and killed the oldest cursed human walking the Earth. You think I will hesitate to slay a demon if they dare break this rule?”

Without waiting for reply, he leaned over the parchment, finger tracing over the new penalties, voice nearly a purr. “And I should remind you, I expect the regents and lords to enforce these rules, and help their subjects understand the severity of breaking them. Because If I have to deal with them, I will also deal with their superiors.” Red filled his vision as he raised his gaze to them. “We agreed that this is the cost of power.”

“So it is,” the woman agreed. “The Triumvirate understand this pact.”

“Very well. Let’s sign, then.”

The three pulled out blades, sliding sharp edges along their skin. Lucifer used his own teeth to nick
into the edge of his wrist. All four bent over the contract and signed in blood.

There were only a few things left to do…

~~~

The Detective was staying late at the precinct.

She frowned at the pictures they’d taken of the crime scene, trying to figure out what she was missing, her exhausted mind feeling like the clues were dull and fuzzy edged, nothing fitting together like it normally did for her.

She was surprised when she realized someone was standing next to her desk. She gasped, then laughed at herself. “Sorry, was… way focused.”

“I could tell,” Daniel said, trying to keep his tone light. “Anything I can help with?”

“No.” She set the file down. “I just keep thinking that Lucifer would have been able to get the answer out of the suspects that I wasn’t able to get.”

“He does have that annoying charm to him.”

Chloe rolled her eyes, smiling. “Yes.”

“Chloe… He hasn’t ran again, has he?” When Chloe looked to Daniel for clarification, he motioned awkwardly. “I mean, like… Vegas?”

“No.” Chloe shook her head. “No, definitely no. It’s nothing like that. He… just had things he needed to deal with. He promised he’d be back.”

“Okay. It’s just… It’s almost been two weeks.”

She hated how he spearheaded her own fears, but she forced herself to not openly contemplate them. “He’ll be back, Dan. Just… gotta give him some time.”

He nodded, still looking doubtful. “All right. Just… Let me know if you need anything? Maybe… Maybe talk to Linda?”

“Oh, trust me, she’s been keeping tabs on me,” Chloe replied with a sardonic smile.

“I meant more professional like.” Chloe quirked a brow, and Daniel took a deep breath. “I’ve started to see her. Ella kind of pushed me towards it. She’s good. Course.” He chuckled. “If she’s able to deal with Lucifer, I’m pretty sure I’m nothing challenging.”

Chloe laughed at that. “That’s true. He drives me insane at times.” She looked toward the chair. “But… he’s gotten better.”

“I guess that’s all we can try for, right? Getting better?” He pointed to her. “But you’re not excluded from that. You gotta rest.”

“All right.” She closed the file. “I should go home and make sure Mazikeen hasn’t blown up the microwave again anyhow.”
Later, she found herself unable to sleep again.

She kept waking up to bad dreams, to feeling far too cold without the warmth of another body. Honestly, it had only been a few nights, and she was already too attached to the feeling of having Lucifer wrapped close, his ridiculously tall, strong frame making her feel safe and secure.

She felt silly. She felt lonely. She felt sad.

She stumbled out of bed to try some more of the tea.

Like before, it didn’t help.

The next night she drove to the Penthouse.

The door had been fixed, the wall repaired. Everything was neatly in place. There were no sheets on anything.

The place still felt bereft without Lucifer.

He’d been gone for twelve days, and she was unable to lie to herself any longer. She was worried sick.

The Detective made her way over to the bed where they were able to spend a few precious nights together, sleeping and away from danger. She finally paced to his wardrobe and selected a shirt.

She still didn’t sleep well, but she rest a little better with the silky fabric against her frame and his pillow under her cheek.

~~~

Lucifer was vibrating inside with excitement, despite how exhausted he felt as he addressed the congress of demons one last time. He leaned against the table, dark eyes skipping manic over the newly inaugurated Triumvirate and the lords and dukes beneath them.

“No questions? Everyone understands the new order of things?”

There were nods, some uncertain, some firm, some interested in the new structure and already scheming how to take advantage of it.

“Excellent.” He clapped his hands together. “Then I will take my leave of you for the time being. I will be dropping in at least once an Earthen year, and surprise visits when needed. A reminder that only the Three are allowed to contact me directly.” He put his palms together to indicate the prayer they could use to gain his attention. “I’ll be wroth if that contact is abused.”

There were utters of agreement.

Lucifer looked behind him, at the narrow column of stone that stood above all others below the maelstrom. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have one task remaining.”

The demons stiffened as bright white blared in their vision, wings unfurling. A few heavy sweeps, and the snowy white carried the archangel upward, steadily ascending to the throne.
The archangel didn’t sit. He bobbed in the air with heavy wing beats. The previous ruler looked at the stark throne with its hard, unadorned stone, face blank as he beheld it. Then he backed up, lifting further into the air.

“What is Lord Lucifer doing?” one of the demons wondered.

“It’s not obvious yet?” a demoness answered, her smile sharp as she watched.

Heaven’s first fallen snapped his wings and shot at the throne.

The bang against stone where his foot connected was heard as a dull echo throughout the Towers. Gravel scattered down from the throne. The column stood fast, but shaken. Lucifer’s wings whipped at the air, retreating a charging distance again. He shot downward, a whistle of speed as he rocketed into the stone and the foundation of the throne trembled. Six more times the demons watched as their former king struck at the stone, flames lighting in his feathers as chunks of rock slid free, and finally, an ear splitting crack clapped like thunder in their ears.

Lucifer winged backwards, watching the cracks continuing to spread, lacing down the column as the stone groaned. Heaven’s First Fallen was breathing hard now, flying further away. The swirl of clouds were gloomy and chaotic overhead, his wings brilliant. Flames licked through the feathers, and his eyes glowed white as he dipped his wings in like a falcon and broke for the precariously tipping throne.

It was with a fierce battle cry that echoed with breaking stone that the throne shattered under his final strike. The seat of power blew apart, chunks arcing away in a rain of chaos. The entire top down to the narrowest point in the column splintered. Stone slabs slid from their eon’s long firmament and plummeted far below in massive crashes.

Lucifer, the Morningstar, Lightbringer, and King of Hell no longer, lit in a crouch atop the broken column before the stone had finished falling. The glow in his eyes was slow to dim and the flames among his feathers became gentle tongues like candle light rather than the white inferno they were. He grinned, catching his breath as he looked down at the shattered pieces of throne below.

He straightened and looked to the horizons of the newly changed world, then looked upward.

It was with a look of glee that he winged upward, leaving Hell behind for freedom.
Hello Darklings!

So here is the last chapter before the epilogue. But fret not! After a break, I already have ideas on what to write next, and it ties directly into this scene and will pick right back up from this point. Think of the soon to come epilogue as a, mm, preview of sorts!

As you can see, this scene is a reflection of Season Four's first episode, which on this timeline would start just a week after this scene, if my calculation is correct.

I'm so happy I started this fic back in April, and for all the showered kindness and wonderful comments! You all kick so much ass! Thank you!!!

Enjoy, goslings!

Ella looked up from where she was bagging evidence from the body as Chloe approached, her sharp eyes looking over the scene. They were in the hillier area surrounding the San Fernando Valley, just able to see the peaks of downtown’s towers in the hazier distance. Her boots crunched on gravel as she made her way under the crime scene tape, blue eyes taking in the balcony above.

“What do we have, Ella?” she asked as she looked over the body. A petite blond woman in a sundress, smeared in dirt and skin scraped. No shoes. Well manicured toes and fingers, some expensive looking bracelets, and a very bloodied face.

“Fell from the balcony above,” Ella said, standing and pointing up at the house atop the steep slope. “But pretty sure the fall didn’t kill her. She’s got a nasty depression fracture right here on top of her head that I don't see the slope causing. Someone smacked her atop the skull up there, and then she fell or, more likely, was pushed over.”

“Have you been up in the house yet?”

“Not yet. Team’s doing a sweep, trying to see what they can find. Neighbors say they don’t know who our unfortunate tumbler is, just that she doesn’t live here. No sign of the owner. Place belongs to a guy named George Hickerton. From what I could tell at a glance, he hosts a lot of online gambling sites, and he’s been questioned before for hosting illegal gambling. Always managed to squirm out of actual charges, though.”

“Would explain how he can afford the house.” Chloe started walking away toward the winding road, Ella trailed after, calling to one of her teammates that she was done collecting evidence. Once to the road, she looked up to the house’s garage entry where an officer was talking to a couple and writing their statements down. “Are those the neighbors?”

“Yeah. Their dog found the body this morning. They live far enough away, though—said they didn’t hear anything last night.”

Chloe thought to herself while ascending the hill toward the house. It was already hot outside. She
looked to the garage when they approached it. “Was it open when our guys got here?”

“Yeah. Running plates now to see who the two cars are registered to before we disturb them.”

Chloe was glad to step in under the shade, leaning down to look into the cars for anything obvious. “Usually visitors park to the right and the owner parks closest to the door. Both pretty pricey models…” She frowned, looking toward the open entry into the house, watching a forensics team member walk by. “Unless he had another vehicle, though... And she didn’t have her shoes on… Could mean a lot of things.”

“Yeah. Comfortable in the house? Guy was picky about his rugs?” Chloe heard a car engine roar, looked away in distraction while Ella went on. “Maybe ran out of her flip flops? Her feet are too neat to be one of those barefoot enthusiasts, so going to depend where we find her shoes, but should be pretty easy to tell hers apart from… umm…”

Chloe was staring out of the garage, looking at the people milling around, her arms folded over her ribs and her brow pinched.

Ella watched her, smiling sympathetically. “…Looking for him again?”

Chloe jerked her gaze back to her, seeming about to deny. Ella just raised a brow, letting her know she was fully caught. She sighed, anxious, arms unfolding.

“I’m just worried. It’s been thirteen days. Even Mazikeen thinks he’s long overdue. And I keep… You know, getting these bad thoughts, but-but at the same time, I know he promised.” She shook her head, ponytail waving. Ella was nodding, then her eyes widened, staring over her shoulder. “I’m just… afraid of holding on to a false hope, you know? I mean, it’s foolish really, thinking he’ll just stroll up…”

Ella opened her mouth to interrupt her. Chloe turned by instinct, hearing swift steps. Steps from a familiar long stride. Her mouth opened.

There he was, tall, impeccably dressed, fussing with his cuffs, smiling widely as he stopped at her side. His tone was bright and vibrant as he glanced between them. “Hello! Sorry I’m late! What do we have?”

Chloe stared at him. “Lucifer…”

Lucifer looked to her, his smile turning his dark eyes into crescents. That accented voice fell to a soft huskiness. “Hello, Detective.”

“Oh my god! I mean devil!” Ella exclaimed, colliding into him with a hug, camera squished between them. Lucifer oofed, patting her.

“Yes, yes, hello Ms. Lopez.”

The short forensics scientist pulled back quickly, looking him over. “How’d it go? Are you okay?”

Chloe stared at him with her heart in her throat while he tried to ward off Ella’s touching him to look for injuries. She could see there was a hairline scratch on his cheek healing under his eye, but nothing else seemed off except that his eyes were red-lined with weariness, frame brimming with nervous energy. He hadn’t put on his usual eyeliner, his hair was so freshly washed that his collar was damp with it, and…

Chloe couldn’t help but smile. “Lucifer, you have…”
“Mm?” He let her pull on his jacket, leaning down so she could reach his ear better, one eye squeezing shut as she wiped at the bit of shaving cream there where he’d shaped around his ever-present stubble. His aftershave was fresh and heavenly smelling.

*He must have been in such a hurry... “You... just got back?”*

He was now touching his ear, looking a little embarrassed and making sure he hadn’t missed any more. “Well, yes. I think maybe just a...”

“And came out here immediately?”

“Well, I was going to the precinct, and I got pulled over for speeding, but your fellow officer was happy to find where you were at for me from dispatch and of course I-mm!”

Ella made a delighted *ooh* as Chloe pressed her lips to his firmly. Lucifer’s shoulders sagged, tension draining from him as he gave another shakier “*Mmm...*”

It wasn’t a short peck. She kept her arms wrapped around his neck, keeping him bent down to her. His hands were already at her back, kissing fervently, mouths parted and breaths sharp and shuddering as they embraced.

When she separated from him, her smile was so wide it hurt.

“Detective!” Lucifer said breathlessly, then his gaze softened, breathing out and setting his forehead to hers. “Chloe...”

She beamed up at him, happiness shattering away the last of her anxiety at having him close again. “Welcome home.” She smirked, pulling back, tilting her head toward the door. “Ready to get to work?”

There were delighted sparks in his eyes as he straightened his jacket. “With pleasure, Detective!”

She grinned, feeling giddy as she grabbed his hand. He squeezed hers, letting her tow him around the cars while filling him in on the ‘boring case details’. Only once among their coworkers did they untangle their digits, but their shared grin didn’t stop as the newly energized Consultant and Detective went to the balcony and started talking over possibilities, looking around for any objects that would be used to murder their poor victim.

Ella watched, unable to stop her own smile. She glanced up, uttering a thanks, then followed after them with her camera ready.
Hello Darklings!

Here we are! The final chapter. This one may seem strange, because it's cut up with the inner musings of a third party. (I'm sure the identity of the third party is obvious). Instead of using "~~~" to separate scenes, I use these musings to skip around in time instead. If it's confusing, let me know, and I'll see if I can find a better way of organizing it!

Oh, and there's a bit of off-screen love-making in this chapter. Just a heads up.

Thank you for being on this ride with me, little devilings! Until next story...! Enjoy.

And so we come to the end of our story. Or really, the end of but one chapter, and the start of another.

Chloe watched in amusement as Lucifer wolfed down his second sandwich at the restaurant’s outside table. She nibbled at hers, and it was only when he was down to chips that he had his mouth free enough to speak and answer her questions.

Sometimes it’s very strange, where we start a journey, and where we think it will end, only to find out the path takes several new directions beyond our wildest guesses. Things we thought we’d never see, or experience, or the people we meet are all beyond our planning. Often, that is one of the richest aspects of life.

Chloe listened with her hand on her chin as Lucifer energetically reviewed how restructuring Hell went.

“I mean, there was a whole civil war going on by time I got down there! The Nakaras were hit the worst, but the yaojing are not only numerous, but very clever with warcraft. Even with three demon clans trying to overthrow them, they were handling themselves exceptionally.”

“What are the… Yow…?”

“Oh! Yaojing are demons—just ones that handle Asian arrivals. As you can imagine, that’s a huge sector down in Hell, considering the human population that comes from that side of the world.”

“Does… Hell have, like, cultural areas, than?”

“Very much. The living bring their experiences and knowledge to Hell, and Hell warps and provides what it needs for the new souls accordingly. It’s not organized by any means, creates a big ramshackle of new technology and ideas. Certain areas definitely culminate different cultures and items. Thus, different demons are attracted to different areas and mold to the expectations souls have for their punishment.” He munched down a few more chips. “One of the things that sets the yaojing apart is that they are particularly clever torturers. Ancient China had some rather radical techniques that they perfected and expanded on.”
“Oh, wow. Okay.” Chloe nodded, looking at the table uncomfortably.

_Sometimes it’s two very different individuals that find the strongest connection. But with differences come the challenging need to find understanding and compromise._

Lucifer quieted, opening his mouth, closing it, starting again. “I apologize. I’ve been down there for some time, and I get… desensitized.”

“Oh, no, sorry.” She leaned over and touched his hand. He turned his upward, fingertips resting warm on her wrist. Chloe took a deep breath. “This is going to be a thing. You’re going to have your business trip once a year, maybe more, and I’m not going to like it, or like everything I hear, because it’s an awful place. But I don’t want you to feel like you can’t share these things with me, especially when I ask. I just have to get used to it.”

“But these things about me and Hell make you uncomfortable, and you feel bad when people are hurt, and you hurting is, well, it’s the last thing I want.”

“Lucifer. If I avoided seeing people hurt, I wouldn’t be a detective.” She squeezed his hand, catching his dark brown eyes with her blue to offer her sincerity. “I can’t change that Hell exists. Or that people go there from their own guilt, whether they deserve to or not. I can’t help that demons thrive on hurting others. But I can trust that you’re never going to let it get out of hand, and that people who don’t deserve the worst are spared the worst.”

Lucifer smiled tremulously. “Very well. I’ll… Just try to leave out the details?”

“That’s a good middle ground. So, tell me how things went with Asmodeus.”

“Oh, I lucked out with him! He was having trouble with one of the yōkai generals, so I smoothed that over, and he was so grateful, he just…”

_Yet, if people love each other enough, if they care enough, they find ways to communicate, to not hurt each other, or at least strive to hurt each other the least they can. That’s beautiful. And confusing. And messy. And humans are constantly evolving and changing. It can be a lifelong endeavor, sometimes the most difficult to understand another, and often the most rewarding._

Chloe’s phone buzzed. She dug it out hurriedly, and Lucifer looked expectant as she answered it. “Decker. Yes…. Where? … We’re on our way. Thanks.”

“Did they find our guy?” Lucifer asked eagerly as she tucked her phone away.

“Yeah, let’s go.”

Lucifer grabbed up the remains of her sandwich and stuffed it into his mouth while dropping a ridiculous amount of bills on the table. He hurried after her happily.

_It’s how people grow. By testing their edges against others, discovering their own shape, redefining it to be better. The fortunate ones find others to help them grow, who make them want to grow. It’s these connections that make life so immeasurably valuable. Of course, love is messy. Sometimes love is understanding you’re not the best person to help someone thrive, or too many mistakes have been made. So all you can do is hope for their happiness and wish them the best._

Lucifer stopped mid-step, looking around.

Chloe had already unlocked the patrol car and was looking back at him expectantly. “Hey, you coming?”
“Yes… There was just… Something…” He looked around the restaurant plaza one more time, then shook his head. “Ah, it’s nothing!” He hurried up to the car and opened the passenger door. “Let’s go catch a bad guy!”

Sometimes seeing how they grow makes that heartache fully worth it.

The woman stopped by at the older man’s table inside the restaurant where he was staring out the window with a small smile as the car pulled away. “Need a refill?” She motioned with her coffee pot toward his cup.

“Oh, yes, please. Thank you.”

She smiled at him, taking in his dark hair with gray peppering, hawk nose, and brown eyes. She poured the dark liquid. “Are you British?”

“I’ve a name in Britain, certainly.” He pulled the cup to himself. “It’s quite good, isn’t it?”

“The coffee?”

“Yes. And everything.”

“Are you a writer?” She motioned to the paper.

“I definitely like to create.”

“Well, you’re in the right town for that.”

“Oh, yes. But I won’t be staying long. Thought I’d travel around. See the world. Meet people… I think I have a lot of growing to do yet.” He smacked his lips quietly, drawing in a deep breath. “I… don’t suppose you know where I might get a bus schedule?”

“You know?” She smiled widely, tipping her head. “For you, I’ll dig one up. Just gimme a few.”

“Thank you, Claire.” He smiled as she drift back among the tables, then turned back to his notebook.

Family can be so complicated. Some we’re born with. Some we choose. Yet when things go awry between either, we only have a limited time to set things right if we can from mistakes made. Sometimes the hurt runs too deep. Sometimes forgiveness can’t be given, perhaps isn’t even deserved. But sometimes… Sometimes…

Amenadiel returned some time later to the Penthouse. Lucifer was at his desk balancing his ledger when Amenadiel knocked. Lucifer had been surprised more at his knocking then his arrival. He beckoned him in.

“Hello, Brother. How goes it in the Silver City?”

“Settling down, slowly but surely.”

“Just down here to escape some of the madness, then?”

“No… Actually.” Amenadiel stood by the desk, hands behind his robed back. “I talked to our siblings on your request.”

Lucifer’s pen stopped moving. He pressed its button, the click loud in the silence. When he sat back, he didn’t ask, just looked at Amenadiel expectantly, his eyes grim as he awaited less than
hopeful news.

“They’re… considering. Nothing solid yet. Someone will probably arrive to speak to you, to see what truth they can assess of your sincerity.”

Lucifer was surprised. “Well. You must have dug deep to sway that argument.”

“Believe me. It was an argument. But… not as much of one as I feared it would be. Heaven may very well need a tribunal soon, and no one can argue with me that you being reinstated your old position would dissuade a great many wrong-doings, and no one is eager for the job.”

“That’s because, as I can attest from experience, it’s not a fun one. But if it allows my banishment to be lifted…” He held a palm up, smiled as much as he could manage. “I now have reason to fight for that as much as I need to.”

“I understand. I do.” He turned, seeming intent on heading back skyward.

“Brother? Before you go, Linda said she needs to speak with you as soon as possible.”

The warrior angel frowned, puzzled. “Did she say why?”

Lucifer pulled a face. “I was hoping you would know what it was about. She said it was important. That’s all.”

Amenadiel nodded, obviously deciding an excuse to see Linda was no hardship. “All right. I’ll go see her.”

Lucifer went back to writing in his ledger. It wasn’t until Amenadiel left that he sat back in his chair, hand to his mouth as he stared out of his windows, lost in thought.

The things we do for love… Thankfully some of the things we do are also full of joy and enthusiasm.

Lucifer burst into Linda’s office with a folder in hand on their first therapy session since his return. He didn’t give her a chance to say hello, just started spreading out the folder contents on the table, shooting ideas for dates at her, beaming as he tried to wrangle an opinion from her.

New relationships bring not only challenges. They also bring new joys. New beginnings. Sometimes… new life.

Lucifer slid into the seat next to Amenadiel at Lux. “Brother, why are you still here? Thought you’d be on a cloud again by now.”

Amenadiel hesitated before taking his next sip. “Linda’s pregnant.”

“Oh!” Lucifer leaned over and refilled Amenadiel’s glass. “Are you sure it’s yours?”

“Luci, Linda’s not like that. You of all people should know.”

“Relax, brother! I just meant, a celestial impregnating a human, tha-how is that even possible?”

“And if it is, how has this already not happened to you?”

“True…” Lucifer sipped his drink, hummed thoughtfully. He turned toward Amenadiel. “Maybe there’s another explanation.”
“You think Linda’s an angel in disguise, don’t you. I’ve been wondering the same thing. Maybe she’s not even human!”

“Or,” Lucifer cut across him before he could continue. “Maybe when you lost your wings, you became as mortal as it gets. Maybe you became more human than you realized.”

Amenadiel looked deflated as that possibility sunk in. “Thah… That probably makes more sense.”

“I hope so.” Lucifer pulled out his phone, texting on it worriedly. “Otherwise I need to make sure there are precautions when the Detective and I finally have our date. What’s a polite way to ask if someone is on birth control?”

And sometimes, despite all the odds, all the differences, all the past mistakes, love finds a way.

The room was beautiful, small and cozy. The smell of coffee and the sound of eggs being whisked woke her. Chloe stretched in bed, listening and feeling dazedly happy before she leaned over to see Lucifer at the stove, garbed in his black robe, humming as he poured the eggs into the sizzling pan.

“Cooking?” she asked sleepily, starting to sit up.

Lucifer turned in surprise and immediately beamed at her. “You’re awake! Yes, I thought we could use a bit of brekky.”

“I am pretty hungry.” She sat on the bed’s edge and pulled on the white robe from the stand.

“Oh, if you wait there, I’ll bring it to-.”

Chloe tried to stand. She gave a small squeak as her legs buckled. She had to catch herself on the bed once more.

“Darling!” Lucifer had abandoned the breakfast and strode across the room to her, but Chloe was already righting herself and laughing helplessly.

Lucifer shook his head, laughing with her as he took hold of her hands to keep her steady. He leaned down to touch his forehead to hers. “Still wobbly-legged from our nocturnal activities, I see. All right?” he asked quietly.

“Yes, more than all right. Now be a good man and help me toward the coffee.”

There is still so much to see, to do, ways to grow and mature, to be kind, to accept kindness. The greatest thing we have is that time is experienced in linear fashion, allowing us all to enjoy the moments, one by one, to be present and appreciate the sensation of living. We all have stories, all have truths to tell. May we grow fearlessly and unapologetically toward better ends. If the Devil can do so, surely any of us can.

The End.

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