It's All Part of His Plan

by Wordsaremagick

Summary

Don't read if you haven't watched Season 4; this story picks up where the finale left off. This is my take on how the characters will deal with the seemingly-impossible-star-crossed-lovers-drama, with many pieces of religious lore, gratuitous sex, detective crime fighting, and angst mixed in. It will take our unlikely lovers a little while to navigate the mess, but they'll figure it out. I hate when we never get the happy ending we yearn for, so my mission is to make it happen. I warn you though - I created cases purposely for the content and effect each had, but these touch on some very delicate issues. If you are affected by content relating to child abuse, molestation, drugs, or domestic abuse, please know that these are present. I've never had to write a trigger warning before, so I hope I made it clear enough to not unwittingly upset anyone.

*** in stages of revision ***

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Hot tears burned and distorted her vision with the effort to hold them back. But the panic continued to swell in her chest, trembling on her every word. She struggled to contain it, but the wave of fear continued to rise. “No, see, this - this is what I meant, Lucifer, when I… You can’t leave me.” The panic threatened to overtake her. “Listen, I am so sorry that… how I acted when I first saw your face, I-- it was stupid, and… Please.” Chloe swallowed hard, knowing in a dark corner of her heart with absolute certainty that this would be her only chance to say it. “Please don’t go. I… I love you.”

Lucifer’s expression froze before softening, and a small puff of incredulous laughter escaped him. His gaze was full of wonder, but shadowed. “You see,” he said, coming closer, “We were wrong about something else in the prophecy.” His hand reached out to softly caress her cheek with the care one would apply when handling something precious and dear, his gentle touch communicating longing, and awe, and regret. “My first love was never Eve,” Lucifer murmured, “It was you, Chloe. It always has been.”

Their kiss was sweet and innocent, in stark counterpoint to the devastation inside. If he could have stayed in that state of torture, finally holding her, but knowing it couldn’t ever be more, he would have, just for the painful ecstasy of touching her. “Goodbye,” he whispered, unable to help himself from touching her reverently one last time before his wings released and he disappeared into the night, leaving her standing alone on the balcony.

Chloe gasped awake, sitting straight up in bed and shaking. She had sweat through her clothes, and the icky moisture hit by the chilled air made her shiver. She couldn’t stop reliving it each night. His leaving her. Pulling her knees to her chest, she bowed her head and shoved her dampened hair from her face, concentrating on breathing deeply.

The first week it had been nearly impossible to sleep at all. A manic hope drove her to stay awake, vigilant, convinced he’d appear in the morning as if nothing had happened. The second week, a cold acceptance had crept into her. By the third, the numbed state she blindly stumbled through each day would melt into despair each night, haunting her with his image in her dreams. Sometimes her dreams built fantasies in which he had never left, where she was free to kiss him and love him, and nothing mattered - he was human or from the divine or neither or both. Then she would wake up to reality and her heart would break all over again. Other times, she relived their parting. It was an agonizing nightmare -- knowing he would leave, but still feeling the dizzying joy of hearing his love for her, his hands on her skin, his sandalwood and smoke scent surrounding her.

With every dream, she experienced that feeling of completion, like she was a puzzle piece finally locking into place. Into home. Then the feelings of faith and safety were ripped away once more, like the other times Lucifer had pulled away and put distance between them. Only this time, it wasn’t emotional distance. It was geographical. Beyond geographical.

In the past, he chose to return when he was ready, which she knew now had been in response to his becoming overwhelmed by his feelings. Fit in the context of all the stories he’d told her, what she’d assumed to be metaphors or delusions, she could see now how some experiences had freaked him out. In true Lucifer fashion, just as they had faced another emotional hurdle, he was gone. But she didn’t believe he could come back this time, because it wasn’t him choosing to go voluntarily. He felt he had to, that it was his duty, for the good of everyone.

Part of her was proud of his noble act because it was the most selfless thing he had ever done.
Lucifer, the Devil, narcissistic egomaniac, making the ultimate sacrifice, choosing to go back to the place he abhorred the most if it meant peace. Another part was selfishly screaming that it wasn’t fair - they had finally taken a step forward - she had come to terms with who he was, so why did she have to lose him now?

Why couldn’t she have had more faith in him? They lost so much time. She remembered when she’d struggled to compute who she knew he was with the version Father Kinley had almost convinced her he was. She recalled how he had launched himself in front of an ax to save her, and she’d realized the depth of his true nature. It wasn’t the personification of evil at all. That moment had shaken her to the core. If only… well, all the if only’s, what if’s, and why’s couldn’t change anything now.

Chloe pulled herself from the bed and stumbled to the bathroom, where she scooped cold water into her hands and rinsed her face. She had to get it together, if not for her own sake, then Trixie’s. She met her own eyes in the mirror. Dan was finally emerging from his grief, and Trixie needed at least one parent who wasn’t falling apart.

So Chloe did what she was good at; she buried her own grief, washed away the evidence, and dressed for work. Permanent shadows sat beneath her eyes, but the mask of composure was firmly in place. Trixie was safely on the bus with a packed lunch and a hug when her cell rang. Ella’s name flashed on the screen.

“This is Decker,” she answered, already heading to the car and clipping on her badge. Work was a good distraction as long as she could immerse herself in the case, leaving no room to miss her partner. God, was there any part of her life where she didn’t feel his absence? Without his banter and sly humor, work felt longer, darker. His effervescence, however inappropriate it had been, made life brighter and more interesting, and always uncovered important angles others didn’t see.

When she arrived at the crime scene, the stench of death was overpowering. It was clear this body hadn’t been discovered for several days. The complex wasn’t in the worst part of town, but that wasn’t saying much. Most hallways had burnt light bulbs and cigarette burns in the dingy carpet. Neighbors probably hadn’t known their neighbor well enough to be concerned until the odor, similar to rotten eggs, became unmistakable. The apartment itself was shabby-bachelor-chic, complete with mismatched furniture in dull colors and remainders of take-out, pizza boxes, and beer cans piled on the coffee table. The nicest thing in the apartment was his XBox.

Ella was collecting DNA samples when Chloe joined her beside the corpse of a young man in his mid-twenties. He was leaned back against the couch cushions, as if he had nodded off while catching a game. The incongruent placement of a silver bell cradled in the man’s hands prompted her frown. Squatting down to look, Chloe observed the man’s eyes had pinpoint pupils and there were no discernable wounds. “Overdose?” she asked.

Ella nodded, “We’ll know more after the autopsy is done and I run some tests at the lab. So far it’s looking like a toxin or overdose.”

“What’s up with the bell?” Chloe murmured.

Ella sighed and shook her head, “I dunno. Dude definitely didn’t have a butler. This looks like my brother Franco’s place after he left home.”

“Alright. What do we know so far?” Chloe asked as she stood up, studying the scene. It was difficult to determine if anything was out of place. She agreed with Ella’s assessment that the surroundings were typical of a young man who wasn’t particularly bothered with cleanliness or sanitation.
“Victim’s name is Jonathon Hopper. Twenty-four. Lived alone, but had a girlfriend. She found him this morning. It looks like he’s been dead for at least three days, but with decom and an unknown tox, I’ll need to know more before I have a specific timeframe.”

Chloe swept her gaze around the victim and the furniture around him again, taking a closer look. “I don’t see drug paraphernalia. If this was an overdose, where’re the drugs? It’s possible he was with someone and he or she removed them.”

“Yeah, but there’s no signs on the body of recent shooting, snorting, or stuffing. That’s why I’m leaning towards an ingested toxin, and likely not intended by the victim. Like I said, I’ll know more after the autopsy.” Ella stood, snapping off her gloves, and sighed. “Lucifer would definitely have a caustic remark about happy drugs if he were here.”

Noticing Chloe’s stiffness, Ella smiled apologetically. “Still no word from him, huh?”

“No, no word,” Chloe replied in a measured tone, looking away. Composure, she reminded herself.

“I’m sure whatever family stuff came up will be fine soon and he’ll be back like it was nothing, right?”

“Yeah, maybe,” she answered, noncommittally.

“Has he told you when he thinks he’ll be back?” Ella asked, packing up her gear and samples.

“Um, no. Not really,” Chloe took a deep breath, swallowing the lump in her throat. Ella was just showing her usual kindness and concern for her friends, but it was getting harder and harder to answer like everything was fine. “He can’t… call from where he’s at. I don’t know when - if, he’ll be back.”

Ella frowned in response, thinking, not for the first time, that it was rather strange that he couldn’t use a phone wherever he was. Where was he, the Amazon? And wasn’t he from England, anyway?

“He’ll be back, Chloe. He always comes back to you. The guy may have some serious intimacy issues -- and I mean feelings, not sex, obviously -- but he… well, he loves you,” said Ella.

Chloe’s facial expression didn’t change, not even a flicker, even though hearing Ella’s words was like a knife twisting in her chest. “I’m sorry, Ella. I just can’t talk about this, okay?”

Ella nodded, but Chloe was already walking away to meet the girlfriend of the victim, so she let the conversation drop. Poor Chloe, she thought. She was so good at burying her pain, but you only had to look again to see it plain as day. She was clearly miserable without Lucifer. Everything was so different without him. It was like walking around in two mismatched shoes, she mused. You could get to your destination, but it was rocky and unbalanced. Wherever you are Lucifer, Ella thought with a huff of annoyance, you’d better get your shit figured out and come home.

Had he been listening, Lucifer would have assured Ms. Lopez that he desired nothing more than to do just that. Unfortunately, the King of Hell wasn’t faring much better.

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The mangled remains of the demon once known as Dromos hung from a column, a visceral reminder of the King’s displeasure. Lucifer had made sure the ringleaders of the little rebellion had been tortured beyond endurance and then arranged to send a very clear message to the rest of the monstrous hordes: Disobedience would not be tolerated. Across the archway, Dromos’
ruptured limbs waved like a macabre banner. Being drawn and quartered was an old punishment, but stunningly effective nonetheless.

Asmodeus watched from the perspective of the parapet of Lucifer’s tower. The tower itself was built into the cliffside below his throne, where Lucifer would retire when he was not surveying Hell and its inhabitants. Asmodeus turned back to his King, who waited at the head of the stone table that dominated the great space. “It is done as you commanded. The remaining demons are being… extinguished,” he said, twisting his lips into a grim smile at his own joke. His was an austere face and the smile did nothing to warm it, matching the cold brilliance of his eyes.

“Excellent.” Lucifer did not move from his seat, but gestured for Asmodeus to take his place at the table. “I want to know just how this was possible,” he said, his voice deadly soft. “Just how was it possible that none of my trusted ‘generals’ knew Dromos and his little band of contretemps were frolicking on Earth?”

Asmodeus bowed his head and slanted a glance to his right, encompassing his brothers at the table. Belphegor, the shortest of them all, made up for his height with brawn, his body that of a seasoned warrior. If he was placed in the highlands wearing a kilt and a battle ax, he would fit perfectly. In fact, he had done so many times before. Mammon, the youngest and quietest, sat back in his seat with a carelessness that bordered on disrespectful. His frame was pale and gaunt, having inherited none of his mother’s seductive beauty. To his left, and seated the furthest from Lucifer himself, was Azazel, a man of Oriental features who rivaled Satan himself for height.

“We,” Asmodeus paused to allow the word to imply equal blame, “were busy maintaining our sectors of souls. We were unaware Dromos had abandoned his post, nor did we catch him when he slipped past our guard to recruit Squee and his friends.” The three remained quiet, no one gainsaying or refuting Asmodeus’ words.

“In that, you are correct, Asmodeus. You did not catch him. Or the others.” Eyes flashing, Lucifer lunged to his feet and leaned across the table to pin each of the fallen angels with rage. The force of his fist meeting the table sent sharp chips of stone flying. “I made my orders about possession very clear.” Lucifer felt his resentment rising. It was because of this carelessness that he had been forced to come back here and leave behind everything that had finally, for the first time, given him a sense of power. Not power or purpose as the Prince of Darkness, the warden of tortured souls. The power and purpose of using his life in the way he chose and feeling it was valued.

A nearly indiscernible cringe crossed Asmodeus’ face before he schooled features into a blank expression. The might of the Lightbringer had not diminished with his fall, and when Lucifer wanted to make a point, he made it ruthlessly and painfully clear. “It will not happen again,” he promised quietly.

Lucifer inhaled deeply and took his seat once more. “I will personally administer an eternity of torture to the next being that dares to defy me or fail to meet my expectations. Is that understood?”

Assents were quickly issued around the table. Asmodeus spared another glance for the displayed carcass while waiting for the chance to speak to Lucifer alone.

“There is only one way each of you can remain unscathed. Do not disappoint me. I will be watching very closely. You will all be very busy earning my trust. In fact,” he smiled without any humor, “I greatly advise it.” If he was going to be forced to dance to his father’s tune again, Lucifer thought bitterly, then they would damn well dance to his.

At his dismissal, Belphegor, Mammon, and Azazel stood to leave, the picture of respectful subservience. Mammon avoided eye contact, which Lucifer considered to be a smart move. Azazel
dared to meet his eye, but paused only minutely on his way out of the room. Whatever Azazel was chewing on, he was unsure whether or not to speak up. Which was fine, because Lucifer didn’t care to hear it.

The obsidian stone of the table eerily reflected a light that wasn’t present, while the walls of rock seemed to emanate nothing but darkness, obscuring the space of the room until it was both cavernous and confining. Lucifer dominated the space without speaking or moving, eyes fixed on the fallen angel before him. He settled back in his chair and steepled his fingers, waiting.

Silence stretched while Asmodeus considered his words. He truly did not want to agitate Lucifer further. His wrath since returning had not abated in the least.

Finally, he spoke in a quiet tone. “The demons became restless after you did not return. It was only a matter of time before they tried something. They need direction, a handler, at all times.”

“You're excuses fail to redeem you, Asmodeus. In fact, your words only serve to emphasize your ineptitude.” A hard edge accompanied his words, “Of course, the demons need to be controlled. Their natures require it. You failed to control them.” Lucifer’s head tilted to the side and pinned Asmodeus with a stare like granite. “Remind me why I haven’t disposed of you?”

“Yes. I failed. That is my point, Lucifer.”

“Oh, is it?” He answered with mocking brevity.

“The demons aren’t intelligent enough to rebel on their own. Someone suggested it.”

“Yes, I know. The good Father Kinley.”

“Of that, I’m not sure. He may have said enough to Dromos to give him a clue about your extended absence. Or... maybe someone connected the rest of the dots for him, encouraged him to bring others into his scheme.”

“What are you suggesting, Asmodeus?” Lucifer’s tone was bored, but Asmodeus felt his master’s attention sharpen. Good, he thought, though he did not allow his satisfaction to show.

“That perhaps someone else helped Dromos, or dropped enough not-so-subtle hints to encourage him to attempt to replace you with the child. The priest only wanted you to return to Hell. He knew nothing about the rules of your kingship.”

“How good of you to tell me, Asmodeus.” Lucifer gave no other inflection or reaction. “Don’t you have some place to be?”

Asmodeus followed the veiled order, and for an indeterminable amount of time, Lucifer remained at the tower parapet, turning thoughts over in his mind. He considered conjuring himself a stiff drink, perhaps a smooth bourbon. But it would only be a pale facsimile of the real thing. The problem -- one of the more monumental problems -- was there was no need for anything, so though he could will most things into existence, it was never enough to fulfill his own desires. Hell wasn’t just a place of torture for despicable souls. It also tortured him. It was essentially a permanent state of nothing. No hunger, thirst, exhaustion… The only thing in never-ending supply was boredom. Loneliness. At least in the past he had Maze for company, and knew she had his back. Who were his allies now?
In Holes and Corners

Chapter Summary

In which, the case moves forward, and so does Chloe's relationship with someone.

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Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The conversation with Hopper’s girlfriend, Marcella, didn’t reveal much useful information. According to her, Hopper worked in a local restaurant as a server and didn’t have any living relatives. They hadn’t been dating long, about three months, so she didn’t know much of his history. No recent arguments or problems that she was aware of, and she had only met one or two of his friends, a Robbie and a Mike, but had never heard their last names.

Chloe tossed her notepad onto her desk and sat down. She’d have to do a little digging to find more about the deceased’s life. Waiting for the computer to run his information, she looked up to see Dan approaching.

Offering her a mug of coffee, Dan asked, “Here, how you like it. Need any assist on the case?”

“No, thanks. I got it,” Chloe said.

He waited awkwardly, but Chloe kept her eyes on her paperwork until he finally headed back to his desk. Chloe released the breath she was holding. He was hovering, and it was kind of him, but it was more irritating than helpful. Like Ella, he was concerned about her from Lucifer’s departure, but his was borne from relief that Lucifer was gone. Dan’s response to the news had been a succinct ‘Good riddance’.

The computer screen filled with a picture of Hopper’s driver’s license and the database scored a hit on his name. Chloe read through the file of priors, not really surprised to find a history of drug charges. There hadn’t been an arrest in a few years, but notes showed he had been a suspected dealer for the Padres, a smaller but slippery gang. It was likely the victim had fallen into old ways and overdosed accidentally.

The girlfriend hadn’t seemed to know about the drug charges, or she’d been withholding on purpose, but Chloe doubted it. Marcella had been correct about Hopper’s lack of family, however. He had no living relatives; his last family member was an older brother named Damen, who died eight years ago in a suspected gang-related shooting. It was likely the victim had fallen into old ways and overdosed accidentally.

The girlfriend hadn’t seemed to know about the drug charges, or she’d been withholding on purpose, but Chloe doubted it. Marcella had been correct about Hopper’s lack of family, however. He had no living relatives; his last family member was an older brother named Damen, who died eight years ago in a suspected gang-related shooting. It was likely the victim had fallen into old ways and overdosed accidentally.

Without further information about the cause of death, the only avenue open for questioning was the victim’s work. Chloe pulled on her jacket and headed out.

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Chloe dropped her keys into the bowl in the hall. It had been another long day with no further leads into the “Boy with the Bell”, whose coworkers had nothing useful to add. At the bistro
where Jon worked part-time, she’d questioned two other servers, a manager, and the two line cooks and dish-washer. They all said the same thing: Jon went to work, did his job, and left. No altercations with patrons or staff, and nothing suspicious about his recent attitude or routines. Only the manager had seemed disgruntled with the victim because apparently Jon had called in sick for the last two shifts, which had made the dinner rush a frenzied mess. Frustrating, but not motive for murder.

She had a meeting with Ella in the morning to get a report on lab results, so there was that. Another open case was closed today, a vehicular homicide that had been wrapped up thanks to traffic cam footage of the car fleeing the crime. She’d stayed late to finish the paperwork, wanting to keep her mind busy. Once the folders were stacked and her desk was clear, Chloe forced herself to head home.

At this point, all Chloe wanted was a shower and sleep. Dan had already picked Trixie up after school, which unfortunately left Chloe with a whole lot of silence. No distractions from her thoughts here. When would she stop feeling this void, she wondered.

She was just closing the refrigerator door when movement caught the corner of her eye. Chloe couldn’t help jumping when she turned to find Maze standing by the breakfast bar with her arms crossed. “God!” Chloe gasped, putting a hand to her chest. “What are you doing here, Maze?”

“I still have a key, remember?” Maze didn’t move a muscle, just watching her, so Chloe opened the fridge again and took out a half-empty bottle of wine.

“Want any?” she asked, getting two glasses from the cabinet.

“Sure.”

She poured them each a full glass, finishing off the bottle. Chloe took a sip of her own and offered Maze hers. “So you didn’t answer my question, Maze. Why are you here?” she asked.

Maze finally moved, and with a sigh, took the glass of wine and a seat at the counter. She was decked out in all leather today and her boots thudded when she planted herself on the stool, her posture saying she expected she’d have to kick ass at any moment. “Checking on you.”

“What is with everybody? First Ella, then Dan, now you? I’m fine,” she said, stressing the word. Everyone was treating her like she was two steps away from a nervous breakdown.

“I promised him I’d check on you, Decker.”

Chloe took a minute, sipping the red, and framing a reply. “I don’t need you to check on me. I was fine before Lucifer, and I’m fine… after.”

“That’s a few too many ‘fines’,” Maze said.

She realized, then, that Maze wasn’t braced for a fight. Her tension was stress. Stress over her? Her irritation diminished some. It was hard to stay mad at someone who genuinely cared. And for Maze, Chloe knew, that was a lot. She felt more than a little guilty for forgetting how loyal Maze really was, when she’d freaked out about the demon thing.


A surprised laugh popped out of Chloe’s mouth. “Thanks. Really.” One thing about Maze? She was brutally honest.
They finished their wine in companionable silence. Maze stood up to go.

“Hey, wait…” Chloe cleared her throat. It really was worse without anyone to talk to, and even if Maze didn’t get the emotional parts, she did at least get the situation.

“Yeah?”

“I know you moved in with Linda, but… I don’t know, I was thinking, if you wanted… you could move back in.”

“Move back in?” Maze echoed, her poker face on, revealing nothing.

“Yeah, y’know… Home,” Chloe said, suddenly not sure if she was making a mistake. Maze might not want to come back, or even think of this place as hers anymore.

Impassively, Maze asked, “You sure that’s what you want?”

“Trixie really misses you. And I do too,” Chloe realized.

“So you’re not worried I’m going to hurt her anymore?” The demon’s voice was cold with sarcasm.

Chloe met her eyes, hoping she’d see her honesty. “I’m sorry about that. It was a lot to take in. And everything threw me, y’know? It was a big adjustment, seeing you’ve lived your life with all these preconceptions and then finding out they’re not at all what you thought.”

Like how she’d forgotten Lucifer’s true character because of all the world’s preconceptions about evil and the devil. They’d overshadowed the things about him she knew to be true. That he cared more than anything about justice, and the right to make one’s own choices, and the responsibility of owning up to one’s actions. That he was a good man. She’d been taking his poor personality traits and seeing them as an expression of evil, instead of realizing those faults made him… human.

On many of their cases, she’d been amazed at his inability to understand or care about others’ feelings, his complete lack of tact when needed to soften the sting. It had only dawned on her during the past few weeks that during those cases, he’d been learning about feelings. Jealousy, selflessness, guilt, regret… love. Knowing what she knew now, Lucifer had been experiencing some emotions for the first time to a truly human degree, and it even humbled her when she realized the extent of what that meant. A celestial being, one who lived by an entirely different set of rules, trying to adapt to human measures, and even caring enough to stand up for those who needed justice. No wonder he’d said he didn’t care what others thought of him.

Except for her. He’d cared very much what she thought, and had shown her that time and time again. Chloe remembered once, being very aggravated with his egocentric myopia, asking him why he was still there. “Because it matters to you, Detective,” he’d said, “And therefore it matters to me.”

She’d made the same prejudiced mistake with Maze. The demon-warrior was a little intense at times, and like Lucifer didn’t possess an ounce of tact, but for the people in her circle, she was willing to lay down her life to protect. Maze needed to know that went both ways.

“I know you’d never hurt us,” Chloe said, her voice quiet and strong.

Maze regarded her cooly for another minute before finally shrugging. “Okay. I’ll come back. I’m getting tired of being at Lux 24/7 anyway.”
“Why 24/7?” Chloe frowned. “I thought you were still at Linda’s.”

“I was. But Lucifer left the club to me to deal with. And with Amenadiel at Linda’s too, it’s getting kind of awkward. I mean, at this point, they’ve already hooked up and made a wriggly-screaming thing, so it’s just a matter of time before they knock boots again.”

Chloe nodded slowly, “Right.”

“And Charlie has plenty of protection with Amenadiel there anyway,” Maze continued. “So I’ve been giving them, y’know,” she made a face that communicated her disgust, “privacy, and staying over at Lux a lot.”

She knew better than to say it, but it sounded to Chloe like Maze wanted Linda and Amenadiel to get back together. She would have expected Maze to make some salacious invitation for a threesome, but she wasn’t trying to have sex. And giving her friends space while also running the club and retreating to the penthouse sounded lonely, something Chloe understood all too well right now.

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When Chloe entered Ella’s lab first thing in the morning, she found the petite forensic pathologist with her back to her, oblivious, and bopping to whatever was in her earbuds, a mug of steaming coffee cooling on the counter. “Ella!” she called, not wanting to startle her. Ella continued dancing, bending to examine something in a microscope.

“Ella!” Chloe tried a little louder.

“Wh--” Ella yanked one earbud from an ear and looked over her shoulder. “Oh! Hey!” Ella pulled the other earbud out and waved Chloe in.

“Hi Ella. You said last night you have results back? What did you find?” Chloe asked. She was hopeful the new information would point her in the right direction. Busy working meant she was too busy to think about herself.

“Yeah,” Ella reached for the file and tossed it, open, onto the table. “You were totally right about the cause of death being an overdose.”

“Great. Which one? Heroin? He was booked a few times for possession before.”

“Uh, nope,” Ella answered, popping the p. She smiled like she had a juicy secret.

“Coke?” Chloe guessed.

“Nope.” Ella’s smile grew.

With a sigh, Chloe asked, “Are you going to make me keep guessing?”

Ella wiggled a little with excitement, but quickly deflated at Chloe’s look. “Okay, okay! It was just sooo good. You’d never have guessed.”

Despite herself, Chloe smiled. Ella was a spot of quirky sunshine in an otherwise dour world. It wasn’t just anyone who could work day in and day out on the tragic and stay optimistic. And Ella’s energy was easily infectious. “Alright, what was it?”

“So, I said it was an overdose. But not exactly a drug,” Ella paused for effect, “A poison!
Arsenic! It’s so old school.”

“Arsenic?” Chloe repeated with a frown.

“Right. So,” Ella pointed to a paper in the folder showing names and numbers with decimals, although Chloe couldn’t identify what a single one of them meant. “There’s a certain level of arsenic that’s totally normal and non-toxic. We all come in contact with it from time to time. But our victim was fed massive doses within a short time period. And it also explains why it took his neighbors a little while to smell him. Decomposing slows down. It does a whammy on the organs. He would have been in awful shape… stomach cramping, diarrhea, vomiting…”

Chloe nodded, and gestured that Ella didn’t need to continue. “That checks with the manager’s complaint about Hopper taking off work for being sick. And why no drugs were found on the scene. But how’d he get it?”

“I inspected his stomach contents. Arsenic compounds, hops, and yeast,” Ella listed.

“Beer? His, what, beer was spiked?” Chloe asked.

Ella shrugged. “It sounds like it. And it makes sense, because there’s already a low level of arsenic in most beers, so it might not have changed its composition by much. It’s actually a lot like that old movie.”

“Movie?”

“Well, it was a play, but then it was a movie. Really old, black and white kind of deal, but a total classic. My abuela was really into Cary Grant…” Ella saw by the look on Chloe’s face that she was getting off topic. “Okay, right, not relevant.”

“It’s okay,” Chloe assured her. “How’s it like this movie?”

“Well, Cary Grant is visiting his aunts with his newlywed wife. And while he’s there, he finds out his aunts have actually been killing old guys by serving them spiked wine. They had an inn or something,” Ella squinted, trying to remember.

“Why?”

“Uh… I don’t know. They were nice old ladies… except for the whole murdering thing. And they didn’t do it all the time. The plot is really that he finds this out while there’s this actual really bad guy there, and he’s, like, trying to keep everybody alive and not freak out his new wife. But, y’know, I don’t want to ruin it for you, if you ever see it.”

Chloe’s face was blank as she replied, “No worries.” She paused, her mind stuck on the method of poisoning. “So you said the aunts used wine, right? Put it in his drink?”

“Yeah. But we know that’s how our victim got it too. It was with the beer in his stomach.”

“So then how did the arsenic get in? Someone was with him and slipped it in, like with the spiked wine?” Chloe postulated. She looked thoughtfully at the coffee mug in Ella’s hand.

“Hmm,” Ella answered, considering the possibility as well. “I would say yes, except it doesn’t look like one massive dose. Like I said, it looks like considerable amounts over a few days. Would he have had beers with the same person each day and not noticed anything in his drink?”

“Good point,” Chloe replied, then shook her head. “Well, it’s worth going back to the apartment
and looking again, see if we missed something.”

“Do you want me to go with you?” Concerned big, brown eyes stared back at her.

“No, no, I’ve got it. I’ll bring you anything I find,” Chloe said quickly. God, she didn’t need a babysitter. Did people think she couldn’t work solo anymore just because… She cut the thought off and gave herself a mental shake.

She was nearly through the doorway when she remembered another question she had. “Hey Ella? Did you find any prints on that bell the vic was holding?”

“No a one, not even the vic’s. Wiped clean.”

“Meaning,” Chloe said, “The poisoning was premeditated and the killer staged it and wanted us to find the bell… The question is, what does the bell mean?”

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The gates of Hell were, in fact, real. It was quite a journey to reach them, however, otherwise many more souls would attempt escape. Not only did one have to navigate the labyrinth of tunnels, it also meant a punishing climb, surviving the Lake of Fire, and finally locating the gates in a void so dark, one could wander in it for eons without finding them. It was engineered to be as near to impossible as was… well, possible.

For all that, however, some souls managed it. After all, what was a millennia of aimless wandering when you had eternity to suffer?

The trek was not much of an ordeal for a being with wings, however. Lucifer scornfully dusted off the arms of his coat. Flying up meant an ascension through drifting ash, and he refused to look like the grate of a chimney. With a sweeping motion of his wings, Lucifer shook any remaining ash from the feathers and allowed his wings to fold into his back. As he’d endured their presence, his old pride for their soft luminescent glow had returned. His wings had once been the most beautiful in the Silver City, when he had been the Lightbringer and made the stars shine for his father’s pleasure. Long, long before his fall and servitude here, in the darkest, grimmest, most wretched place in existence.

He studied the frame of metal. It had taken some time for him to find the gates necessary. It’s not like this place was Heaven, with people frantic to get in. He really hadn’t cared if some souls managed to break loose from time to time. Whatever havoc that resulted on Earth hadn’t concerned him in the least, and at times, had even been amusing. Poltergeists, ghouls, banshees… all based on tortured spirits, desperate and determined enough to escape Hell, only to find there was no relief. It was impossible to become corporeal again. Except for Eve, apparently, when her soul had slipped past the gates of the Silver City. Special circumstances were most likely due to her being one of the first human beings ever created.

No, what had finally convinced him to install a barrier had been the overwhelming influx of souls. All the fun the poltergeists and other nasties got up to generally resulted in horrific spikes of destruction. More effort needed to be expended to deter souls from escaping in order to maintain control.

Stalking up to the portal, Lucifer gave the bars a firm tug, testing their give. It was the only way in or out, even for him. Perhaps it was just paranoia. Asmodeus was getting beneath his skin. It wasn’t the first time Asmodeus had become carried away with an idea. It was put him in Hell in the first place, after all. Regardless, Lucifer had returned to this wretched place to protect the…
everyone, and it wouldn’t do for him to make such a sacrifice and then find the little derelict deviants sneaking out of the house after curfew. If there was even a morsel of truth to Asmodeus’ ridiculous theory, it would be pertinent to stay vigilant. Who knew what else had been suggested, and to whom, on his payroll.

As much as he wanted to dismiss it all as nonsense, there was an annoyingly niggling worry that continued to plague him. If there was still a possibility hell on earth could be released, he had to prevent it. Otherwise, his return was for nothing.

Lucifer had turned away to leave when a flash of silver caught his eye. Glinting in the consuming darkness only a few feet from the gates lay a double-edged knife. He picked it up, turning the blade to catch the light. Runes embedded when the knife had been forged from hellfire glowed back. It would seem, Lucifer thought, someone had been in a hurry. Perhaps there was some credence to Asmodeus’ dire warning after all.

Chapter End Notes

Sincerest thanks to everyone who has commented, bookmarked, or given kudos. I really appreciate it. In fact, I couldn't wait to share some more of the story and find out what you think. I definitely am not going to be able to post every day, but as I said, I'm already a few chapters ahead, so I'm too excited to hold back. Things are a little slow-rolling right now, but I promise it will pick up!
That afternoon, Chloe was finishing getting Dan up to speed on the Hopper case. Bringing in the beer cans had revealed the killer had drugged the entire 12-pack the victim had. Both the emptied drinks and those in the fridge had been tampered with. It appeared the killer had used a syringe to inject the arsenic into the beverage and then covered the holes on the bottom of the cans, trusting that the victim would never notice. It was disturbingly genius - who ever checks the bottom of their cans?

Finding the method of the poisoning answered some questions, but didn’t do much to unearth the killer. They were hitting the 48-hour mark since the deceased’s death, and Chloe needed a fresh perspective, and sometimes putting all the pieces in front of someone helped her see new connections.

“So what I conclude from the way the beer was tampered with is the victim must have known the killer, but the killer engineered it so that he wouldn’t be anywhere near Hopper when he became ill and died,” Chloe stated.

“Smart,” Dan sighed, tapping his fingers on the table. “So what clues does this give us about the killer’s identity?”

“Hmm,” Chloe considered, “He’s intelligent, obviously, and knew the vic well enough that he would drink enough to become fatally poisoned. He either gave the victim the case of beer after injecting it, so he was someone the vic trusted, or swapped out whatever Hopper had in his apartment.”

“Showing that either way, this was someone who knew him pretty well, and most likely had regular access to his apartment,” Dan reasoned.

Chloe reviewed the list she’d made of people involved in Hopper’s life. “Okay, people most likely to drink with him… The girlfriend… Friends from work? Wait, the girlfriend said he had two close friends. Robbie and Mike.” Chloe looked up at Dan. “But no last names. I found them in his cell phone, but they haven’t returned my calls yet. Tech is working on getting me their addresses if they’re linked to the numbers. I’m stalled for now.”

“Not necessarily,” Dan said thoughtfully. “What if they were friends from work? Do you have the names of his coworkers?”

Chloe shook her head. “No matches,” she sighed. “But maybe someone from his work remembers his friends coming by? I’ll ask the girlfriend for visual descriptions and check with his workplace too.”
Okay, sounds good. Want me to take one of them for you? I'm between cases,” Dan said.

Chloe was about to tell him no, she had it. But she was sounding like a broken record, and she knew it. Part of it was that she didn’t want to look weak or vulnerable, or see her friends look at her with pity, but beneath that lurked a darker truth. She didn’t want to have someone else stepping in where Lucifer would be. Taking his place. Because that would mean their partnership was really over and he was really gone. Never to come back. There was still this ridiculous little kernel of hope that their story hadn’t ended there, on a cold balcony. But the more she held onto that little bit of hope, the more it hurt. It was like trying to hold on to fire with your bare hands. You needed its heat to survive, but hanging on to it did more damage than good.

It was time to start accepting the truth.

“Sure. Meet you at the car,” Chloe said, and left her desk, refusing to look in the direction of Lucifer’s chair.

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“Hi Scott, Chloe Decker, Dan Espinoza, LAPD. We have some followup questions about Jon,” Chloe said, greeting the manager she’d spoken to last at Trax Kitchen.

“Yeah, hey. Dinner rush is gonna start soon. Can we do this quick?” Scott waved them to his office at the back of the kitchen and tossed his clipboard on the desk. “I don’t mean to sound rude, but it’s our busiest time.”

Dan stepped forward, “Sure, man. We need to know any servers who were closest to Jon. Maybe hung out outside of work. Also if you had any Robbie or Mike on your staff in the last couple of months.”

Scott frowned, appearing to be thinking back.

Around them, the bustle and noise increased as the kitchen came to life. Wait staff came in the back door, laughing as they clocked in. Some headed to the break room to stash their belongings, while a few struck up a conversation with the line cooks. The sounds of knives rhythmically pounding chopping boards, the sizzle of oil on the griddle, and the whoosh of refrigerator doors added to the cacophony.

“Well,” he said slowly, “I don’t know about any Mike or Robbie. There was a Michael who used to work here, but he didn’t go by Mike. I don’t think I’ve had anyone else by either of those names in the last six months, and Jon only hired on here maybe two months ago.”

“And any buddies who might have shown up here to see him?” Chloe asked, knowing it was a longshot.

Scott shook his head in the negative. “No, sorry. Didn’t notice. His girlfriend came in once or twice. I think he was the friendliest with Luis.”

“Where can we find Luis?” Chloe asked.

“He should be prepping for his section right now,” answered Scott. “But, hey, can you keep it quick? Dinner rush, y’know?” he shouted as Chloe and Dan left the office.

Luis Romero was checking the empty tables in his section, finishing restocking condiments and packets when Chloe and Dan approached him.
“Hi, Luis?” Chloe held up her badge, “We have a few questions for you.”

The young man, a twenty-something Latino server, barely looked up from slicing lemons and dropping the pieces in the bin next to the ice tray. He expertly split another lemon in five seconds flat. “Yeah? I got to finish stocking or I’ll be behind all night.”

Dan offered a friendly smile, “Sure, dinner rush. We get it. We just need some info on your friend, Jon.”

“Well, I wouldn’t say we were friends,” Luis gave a one-shoulder shrug, not even looking up from his task.

Chloe and Dan exchanged a look. He was pretty cool about Jon being dead. Maybe they weren’t really close after all.

Chloe nudged a step closer, “Sorry. Hey. Look, I know you’re busy, but I need your focus for a few minutes, okay? Jon, someone you worked with, saw every day, is dead. I need a few minutes of your attention so I can, hopefully, find the person responsible.”

At that, Luis looked up, a chagrined look on his face. “I’m sorry. You’re right.” He straightened to his full height and made eye contact with her, “How can I help?”

“Thank you. We,” Chloe gestured at herself and Dan, “were under the impression the two of you were pretty friendly.”

“Well,” Luis sighed and rubbed the back of his neck, “I mean, I guess. We didn’t really hang outside of work, but we were cool when we had shifts at the same time.”

“So you wouldn’t know a couple of his other friends? Mike or Robbie?” Dan asked.

“Sorry, no, man,” Luis shook his head, “Didn’t meet them. But could be the guys he saw sometimes on the dock.”

Chloe tilted her head to the side, “So he met up with guys out the back regularly?”

Luis looked a little uncomfortable, “Uh… yeah. Look, I’m not saying I ever bought any, okay? But every Wednesday and Friday, 3pm, Jon would head out to the dock for a break. A couple times I saw some bags and money exchanged. I don’t know what was in the bags, but it doesn’t take a genius to know he was dealing.”

“And he had regular customers, apparently,” Chloe surmised.

“Yeah. Sorry I don’t know who. They looked like teenagers, if that helps.” Nearby, a chatting couple was seated at a table and handed a set of menus by the hostess. Luis looked impatient to get back to work.

Chloe looked back at Dan, who nodded back that he had written down the information. “Okay, I think that’s all we need for now. We’d appreciate if you don’t leave town in case we need to speak with you again.”

“Sure, yeah,” Luis answered, already grabbing a lime.

They walked away, heading back the direction they’d come from the kitchen. On the way, Chloe eyed the black aprons the servers had tied around their waists. Each was sectioned into three compartments, and many servers had order books and straws tucked inside. Carrying a few small
bags would have been no problem, and easily concealed. If Jon carried a wad of cash, no one would expect anything other than a normal server carrying bills for making change and tips.

“We need to talk to the manager again and see if Jon had a locker or anything here. Maybe we’ll get lucky and there will be evidence of his drug deals that can point us in the right direction,” Chloe said. “I’ll talk to him. Can you check out the dock, see if there’s anything around that seems out of place? Who knows, maybe there will be security cameras in line of sight.”

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The fire that burned in the Great Room did not look like any fire seen in the human world. It did not glow orange or red, but instead the blue often seen at the base, the part that blazed the hottest in the flame; it’s inner core. It cast an eerie, ethereal glow on the table of the Great Room where Lucifer sat, idly turning the dagger in the center of his palm.

He was careful not to exert pressure, as he was aware this dagger, unlike mortal weapons, could harm him. Any weapon forged in the flames of Hell had the power to kill any being, regardless of immortality or divinity. It was one of many weapons he had fashioned early in his relocation to the underworld. To survive, it had been necessary to have weapons that could dispatch immortal beings.

Lucifer had not been the only angel cast out of Heaven. Only the first; and the only archangel, sired directly by God.

His brethren had been no more pleased than he, and many did not welcome his sovereignty over them. He had created Hellfire and steel that could contain its destruction in his battle to preserve dominance. Many of the lesser angels who had taken his side in the rebellion fell soon after, and resented him for their fall, which was ironic since the war had been about free will. And yet, though the other angels had argued for free will, they had not taken their punishments as consequences of their own choices, but as faults of his. Ergo, because they supported him, their punishment was his fault.

In truth, at first he secretly accepted his share of blame. But after fight after fight, his own fury took precedence. He had never asked for a war, never asked for or expected support, so how was he to blame for their situation? That was his father’s doing, just as his own punishment was. He was justified in his quest for free will, and he would not be sorry for it, nor would he be anyone’s scapegoat.

Soon it wasn’t just the lesser angels who had fallen with him that resided in Hell, but also those who had broken their oaths to God. Angels, deemed the Watchers, failed to keep their posts as sentinels over humanity. Bored with their tasks and amused by the inferior creations, the Watchers had descended to Earth and shared with humanity secrets of warfare, the heavens, and magic. Once humanity began tearing each other apart, God had punished the angels responsible.

They were also the angels responsible for siring the Nephilim. Because their unions with mortal women had created havoc and they had interfered with humanity without Dad’s permission, and they too were punished with eternal torment. Divinity in a human body could either result in great benevolence and morality, or savage might and desire for power and dominance. These creatures, who so outweighed the limited powers of humanity, had either risen to Earth’s skies as the seraphim, or fallen to its depths as the nephilim.

These became the first demons, who multiplied, and fought each other like jackals. As damned souls began to fall into the fires, the demons found direction for the first time in their miserable existence, using their strength and rabid natures to torment the guilty, betrayers, and murderers.
The dagger he held in his hands was not one carried by mere demons. It had been carved especial, a gift to a son of the nephilim, born from Lilith, the woman created as equal to Adam and punished eternally for her disdain and disobedience. After her eviction from Eden, she became fueled by the bitter resentment she harbored towards humankind, the creatures God forgave again and again. She had resided in Hell for eons, deriving pleasure from their suffering.

Lucifer studied the carved surface again, testing the sharpness of the blade. Its presence by the gate was suspicious indeed. He would hold on to it for now, take a study of the creatures around him. If there was subterfuge being planned, he did not want to show his hand too soon. It was better to let it unfold and see what pieces were in play.

His jaw tightened, and as he stared into the fire, the blue flame reflected in his eyes. He would not allow anything to threaten the peace he was desperate to achieve. He would keep the Detective, and any of the others he cared about on Earth, safe or die trying. Or at least he would, if he could die. If feeling like he was dying counted, then he should earn credit. Every moment he was down here hurt, somewhere in the vicinity of his chest.

He wasn’t sure how much time had already passed there. It might have been weeks or months or years. But if he had to feel this dichotomy of bruising weight and hollowness at the mere thought of the Detective forever, he would, if that was what it took.

Chapter End Notes

Continued thanks for all the kudos and words of encouragement! I'm incredibly grateful for your kindness, and so amazed at how many people seem to be reading this. Here's to hoping it keeps (or grabs) your interest. Still a lot of angst here, but it's a necessary evil.
I Can Dream About You

Chapter Summary

Chloe finds some direction, while Lucifer considers the case.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

No further leads came up from the restaurant, so Chloe turned the investigation to focus on the murder weapon, such as it was. Arsenic was not as easy to come by as it once was, mainly due to its prevalent history. Unfortunately, that did not make it any easier to link to a suspect, which she didn’t have. A firm suspect meant she could investigate the purchase of arsenic, either as rat poison or obtained elsewhere, even through the Dark Web. She was playing Marco Polo in the dark trying to bring the two together.

Statistics generally showed that people closest to the victim, spouses or other family, were responsible in homicides. That only left the girlfriend, Marcella, but Chloe couldn’t find a motive there. Finally, the friend Mike had called back, and was due to come in for an interview. She would have to circle back to Marcella again as well, try to get some more solid information.

Chloe shut the file folder with a little more force than was necessary, hating that she felt stagnant. For now, she had nowhere to go in the case. Added to her frustration, the new acting lieutenant was questioning her close rate, and asking all kinds of questions about her erstwhile civilian consultant. She had no way to answer where Lucifer was, or when he’d be back, or why their success rate was so high compared to now. She was a good detective, she thought angrily. Lucifer had just been able to add a new dimension to their investigative work. It didn’t mean she was useless!

She packed up to go home for the night, quickly shrugging into her coat and pocketing her keys. She had a movie night planned with Trixie and tomorrow they were going to help Maze move back in to the apartment. Trixie was beside herself with excitement, which boosted Chloe’s mood.

When she got home, Dan was waiting with Trixie. He lingered before leaving, clearly wanting to talk. Sending Trixie to her room to change into pajamas, she turned to him.

“Thanks for getting her dinner. Sorry I was late. I was wrapping up some paperwork.”

“It’s fine,” Dan assured her, stuffing his hands into his pockets.

Silence awkwardly filled between them. Then he said, “Trixie said Maze is moving back in.”

Chloe nodded while hanging her purse and coat by the door. She pulled the elastic band from her ponytail and let her hair fall freely, using her fingers to shake it loose. “She is, yeah.”

“Is that a good idea?” he asked. “I mean, she’s not always the best role model around Trixie. Pot brownies, remember?”

“I think it’s a very good idea,” Chloe said.
Dan frowned, but she continued, “Maze is… well, Maze. But she loves Trixie. She made some mistakes, but that doesn’t mean she should be punished forever for it.” The force of her statement stunned her for a moment. Lucifer was still being punished, wasn’t he?

It was odd that with his absence, she was coming to understand him better than she ever had before. When he had been here, she was too consumed with her own feelings and struggle to process the things she saw. Now she was really seeing him underneath the careless playboy exterior or forbidding King of Hell.

Dan pulled his keys from his pocket. “I trust your judgment Chloe. I just hope Maze lives up to it. I worry what Trixie will learn from her. Do we really want her to be influenced by the things Maze does?”

Chloe briefly thought about some of the things she knew Maze had done around her daughter, and her knives and other sharp objects. She inwardly grimaced. Yeah, she understood his concern. But they managed it before with no one getting hurt. Rules would be in place, and she knew Maze wouldn’t do anything that would jeopardize Trixie’s safety.

“It’s happening, Dan. I think it’s best for everyone, actually,” said Chloe with finality.

Dan, looking like he wanted to question her further, opened his mouth to reply. Chloe cut him off with a smile. “It’s late and Trixie and I have a big day tomorrow. See you later?”

“Yeah, okay. I’ll see you Monday,” he answered, and left, shouting another goodbye towards Trixie’s room on his way.

“Bye Dad!” she shouted back, and moments later came running into the living room in pink frog pajamas. Swirly print on the front of her top read “I used to be a princess.”

“Hey Monkey,” smiled Chloe. “Ready to watch a movie?” She threw a bag of popcorn in the microwave and grabbed her favorite soft afghan. It was handmade, knitted by her maternal grandmother, Penelope Decker’s mother. Wrapping Trixie and herself in it, she breathed deeply, remembering how she had done the same as a child when her mother had dropped her off with Grandma to be at one convention or set or other. Grandma had been a source of calm in her mother’s whirlwind, and always centered Chloe when she was feeling pulled apart in different directions.

She snuggled into the couch with Trixie in her arms, grateful for these little moments. The timeless tale of Beauty and the Beast began unfolding across the tv screen, and she allowed herself to be lost in the fantasy of redemption and love that could transcend any obstacle.

It wasn’t long, however, until Trixie had drifted off. She had seen the movie at least a hundred times, and it was her current obsession. Chloe kept watching until the end of the movie, content to just hold her daughter. She finally picked her up to carry her to bed, realizing with a twinge of sadness that this would be one of the last times she could. Trixie was growing up too fast.

She dropped a kiss on her forehead and quietly exited the room. Chloe changed into an oversized t-shirt and climbed into her own bed. It was hard to shut her brain off though. It kept puzzling over pieces of the investigation. She stared at the ceiling, trying to find an angle, a connection, a motive, anything. So far, nobody in the victim’s life appeared to have a motive. There were the mysterious friends and the girlfriend to consider still… And what significance did the bell have…

They were in Lux. It began like the evening Lucifer had surprised her with a private prom. He had
been so sweet. It was unbearably romantic, just because of the thoughtfulness he’d put into it. Lucifer had a ridiculous amount of money and could afford anything to impress a woman, but it was nothing compared to this… This was meaningful and special and just for her. Around them, music pulsed and gold confetti floated down, though more subdued.

She was in his embrace and it felt magical. She hated dancing; she was always terribly self-conscious and figured she looked like a deranged ostrich in a group of swans. But it was different when he pulled her in close because she couldn’t think about where her feet should go. She could barely think at all. He kissed her then, like she wished he had, while they danced, his lips gently coaxing her to return his kiss. The pressure of his mouth became more urgent, heated, and her lips parted in response, inviting his tongue to slide seductively against her own.

Her dream departed from the memory and shifted to his penthouse. Lucifer was still holding her, but instead of dancing, they were falling…

She landed on cool, silky sheets. Her hands ran up his shirt, fisting the lapels of his coat, and pulling him down to her. He followed her directive with a soft chuckle, sliding a knee between her legs and covering her body with his. The position locked her in place, keeping her from holding his hardness between her legs. She needed the pressure of his body against her. Closer, she thought. She needed him closer. She had an awful feeling he was going to slip away.

He teased her lips with soft touches of his mouth, brushing lightly against her lips and then pulling away. Chloe ached for the fullness of his kiss, and she couldn’t help the soft whine of disappointment that escaped her. Lucifer smiled in satisfaction and rewarded her with a lush kiss, driving inside the silken warmth of her mouth and stroking her tongue with his. Her response was immediate and fierce, their kiss rapidly becoming an erotic dance for dominance.

She needed more. Chloe released the front of his jacket and swept her hands along his arms again, now pushing the material off his shoulders. At her insistence, Lucifer shrugged from the jacket and let the costly material drop to the floor in a heap, forgotten. His lips left hers again, trailing down her neck to playfully nip her collarbone. She gasped in surprise, the brief sting bringing a new wave of heat. His hand swept up her leg, caressing as it journeyed to her center. Her hips instinctively lifted to meet his touch, his fingers brushing too-lightly against her dampness, and, oh, her pants were gone, wasn’t that nice, and ---

The alarm on the bedside table pulled her, disoriented, from the fantasy. She slapped the button to silence it with one hand, keeping her eyes closed. Maybe if she didn’t open them and just stayed nestled in the covers, the dream would come back and resume where it was so rudely interrupted.

But, Maze is going to be here soon, her foggy brain reminded her. Chloe moaned, resigning herself to the end of a particularly lovely dream. Reality called. And it would be just her luck (again) if Maze let herself into her bedroom while Chloe was having a wet dream.

She was wide awake by the time Maze came in, having showered, dressed, and served breakfast. Maze entered the apartment with a duffel bag slung behind her back and dropped it the instant she saw Trixie at the counter, who was still finishing her bacon and eggs.

“Maze!” Trixie leapt down and wrapped Maze, who had dropped to her knees, in a fierce hug. “I missed you so much!”

A free, unabashed smile passed Maze’s face. “I missed you, too, kid,” she said, absorbing Trixie’s hug and looking at Chloe with gratitude, although she quickly hid the sign of vulnerability.

Chloe smiled at both of them, knowing she’d done the right thing. “Your room’s all clean. I, uh,
freshened it up. Vacuumed. Do you need a hand bringing anything in?"

“No need,” Maze answered, picking up her duffel again. “Amenadiel is coming with the rest. He insisted,” she said, rolled her eyes, and started for her room.

“Oh,” mumbled Chloe. She felt a little uncomfortable seeing Amenadiel after everything that happened with Charlie. She hadn’t even gone to see Linda or Amenadiel since Charlie’s kidnapping, feeling somewhat responsible and guilty. Logically, she knew she wasn’t to blame, but she felt she had contributed to the mess as a result of her crumbling relationship with Lucifer. She didn’t want to look in their eyes and see the recrimination she felt already.

There wasn’t any time to make up an excuse to make herself scarce, though. Amenadiel appeared in the open doorway, easily hefting two extra-large boxes of Maze’s gear. Linda followed him in, moving a little slower with the weight of Charlie’s car seat. She sighed with relief and put him down by the couch.

“Why does that thing triple his weight!” she exclaimed. Then, “Hi Chloe! I hope you don’t mind I tagged along.”

Chloe pasted a smile on her face, “Of course I don’t mind. It’s great to see you. All three of you!”

Linda took a seat on the couch and patted the cushion next to her. “Come keep me company will you? I’m starved for adult companionship. I’ve been cooped up for what feels like forever. I’m actually excited at the thought of going back to work.”

Chloe laughed a little at that, though the reminder of Linda’s enforced confinement had guilt pooling low in her stomach, and joined her. “I remember that feeling,” she said, “Although, I only lasted a day or two back at work before I missed Trixie so much I could barely concentrate.”

“I believe it,” the doctor sighed. “Knowing in advance about separation anxiety doesn’t lessen its effect any.”

She was quiet for a moment, adjusting Charlie’s blanket. Fondly, she tucked the blanket from Auntie Maze more securely. The baby was dozing peacefully, fingers curled adorably around its border. “I’ve been meaning to say,” she began.

And here it comes, Chloe thought. Was Linda going to tell her she wouldn’t forgive her for what happened to Charlie? Or even worse, was she going to ask how she was holding up? Either sounded absolutely awful.

“I’ve been meaning to say,” Linda continued, “I think it’s wonderful you invited Maze to move back.”

Chloe couldn’t help blinking in surprise. Really? No are you okay without Lucifer, or how are you doing, or even a y’know, you could have kept this whole thing from happening if you hadn’t been a spineless pathetic idiot?

At Chloe’s stunned silence, Linda smiled warmly and explained, “It meant a lot to her. I know she doesn’t show it; she’s too tough for that. Words don’t come easily when it’s about her feelings. But to know you welcomed her and cared about her… She might be a demon, Chloe, but that’s just where she came from, not who she is.”

“Yeah, I… I figured that out.” About both of them, she didn’t say, though she finished the sentence in her mind.
Linda gave her another smile, as if she knew exactly what Chloe really meant, and reached for Charlie when he stirred. She cooed at him, deftly unbuckling the harness, and cradled him against her shoulder, “Who’s a beautiful boy? So good for mama, aren’t you? Did you have a good nap?”

She glanced over at Chloe, “Thank God for car rides, puts him to sleep in a second. I was also hoping,” she said, changing the subject, “that maybe we could all hang out soon. You know, the tribe catching up? I wouldn’t mind a small evening out, myself.”

“That sounds… really nice actually,” said Chloe, warming to the idea. Maybe that was what she needed. Get out, get her mind off things.

“Perfect! Maze and I will figure it out. You let Ella know,” Linda beamed.

Yelling preceded Amenadiel as he came down the stairs then. Rolling his eyes, he called over his shoulder, “I know it’s a gift for Charlie, Maze. But I really think it’s best for you to hold on to it until he’s old enough… like maybe twenty or thirty years…”

“Are you serious!?” Maze stormed after him, brandishing a small sword. “It’s perfect for him to start with!”

Linda stood up and intervened smoothly, peering at the object in the demon’s hands. “What kind of knife is that, Maze?”


“That’s lovely!” Linda said, smiling placatingly. “It’s going to be perfect. When he’s ready to use it responsibly… Right?”

Maze crossed her arms and sighed, “Right. Fine. I’ll hold on to it.” She treated Amenadiel to a final glare and turned around to stash the blade in her room.

Chloe chewed her lip, then called after her, “Uh… locked cabinet?”

“Yeah, yeah,” came the dismissive reply.

“Not to worry,” Linda reassured Chloe, “Maze and I had a long talk about human development, and when a child could handle a weapon with the proper respect.”

Chloe chuckled, imagining Linda as a teacher with a blackboard, lecturing Maze on the stages of human development while the demon slouched at a desk.

Amenadiel approached them, smoothly transferring Charlie into his arms. He turned to Chloe, “How are you?” he asked warmly.

“Uh, fine,” Chloe strove to look and sound casual and normal and not like she wanted to hide from life. “Totally fine here.” Smooth.

“Amenadiel, can you put baby Charlie in the car? I’ll be just a minute; I need to finish talking to Chloe.” Linda nudged Amenadiel out.

“Wow, you are really good at managing people,” Chloe observed once the large man was out the door, shaking her head in awe.

Linda grinned, stuffing her hands in her back pockets, “That’s why I’m a therapist.”
They made their goodbyes, Chloe assuring Linda she would talk to Ella soon about a night out, and when Linda slid into the car, Amenadiel asked, “How is she?”

“She’s a strong woman,” she answered. “Chloe is used to shouldering the brunt of others. She doesn’t take for herself. She’s hurting, but she’ll be okay.”

Amenadiel glanced at her and asked, “Did she tell you that?”

“Of course not,” Linda drawled wryly. “She’ll talk to me when she’s ready.”

“Hmm,” mused Amenadiel, taking Linda’s hand in his own and pressing an affectionate kiss to her fingers. “Strong, stubborn… sounds like another woman I know.”

Linda smiled a bit shyly, leaving her hand in his. Nothing about their relationship had been determined yet, and it was a whole lot more complicated than it had been, but there was still a strong current on both sides. She was unsure what to do with hers yet, but for now, this was good.

Chloe was cleaning up after dinner, hours later, when it suddenly hit her. Oh damn, she’s good, Chloe thought with reluctant respect. She managed me too.

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Business as usual for the Devil, Lucifer thought darkly. If variety was the spice of life, his was akin to a tasteless lump of mystery meat. Every day, if you could even call it that, was the same. Hence, his little vacations. They sustained him. His hedonism in the human realm was in direct proportion to the starvation he endured here. Then life became an all-you-can-eat-buffet of sex, drugs, and parties (often orgies of all three), and he could gorge and binge himself, tasting each dish, sampling every pleasure. Sometimes many, many times.

But getting back to business wasn’t working this time. Though he went along with his old routine, overseeing the prisons the damned constructed for themselves, observing their pain, administering punishment to the conscienceless, he felt increasingly frustrated. Part was due to his bitterness and reopened wounds. But he also felt like there was more to be done. He’d become so desperate, he even visited Hitler and Henry the VIIIth to spice things up, but to no avail.

Restless, he spent long stretches of time aimlessly wandering through the maze of halls. On these sojourns, he looked in on various inmates of his prison, wondering what it was that felt so incomplete.

He stopped now at the door of a woman who had killed herself. She was a young thing, having barely stepped out of adolescence. Lucifer watched as she went through the motions of her suicide, her darkest hour relived over and over. The note that she cried over laid next to her on the floor. She swallowed a second handful of pills from a prescription bottle and curled up on her side. “I’m sorry,” she repeated dully, over and over. “I’m sorry… just make it stop… Stop touching me, please, I’ll be good… I’m sorry…” Fear bled from her eyes, as she waited helplessly, disgusted and hating herself for taking this path, but too beaten to do anything else.

Torturing the guilty had at least always appealed to his sense of justice, and the retribution gave him satisfaction. But he couldn’t look at the tormented creatures anymore without wondering if there was more to their stories. He had never considered the bigger picture before working with the Detective, and now he couldn’t help his desire to know if those who had been wronged had ever been championed.

Was this girl really deserving of this fate? Or was she an innocent who had been pushed beyond
endurance? Could her fate have been different, had someone been there? The Detective would not only have cared about stopping the injustice, she would also have seen the chance to do something more for the living. The living didn’t matter here.

He was different, he realized. It was he who had changed, and this place could not. Deeply perturbed, he asked himself, If he was relegated to Hell but could not preside as it’s Lord, then who was he here?

Lucifer stood by her door for awhile, lost in his thoughts. It came as a surprise then when a voice spoke at his side.

“You usually do not spend time with those who are in tortures of their own design,” said Azazel. “Too little creativity for you.”

“True,” Lucifer agreed. “I much prefer to add a personal touch of flair and dramatic irony.” Must have inherited my sense of humor from dear Dad, he thought. His father, all-seeing and all-knowing, knew every punch line before it happened. Irony was the grandest joke of all, always at someone else’s expense, and God held the punch line.

He let the silence grow, using it to his advantage. As the Detective knew, it could be a powerful tool of intimidation. He had the sense Azazel had been waiting to say something to him since his return, and Lucifer was nothing if not obliging.

The problem was that Azazel was entirely comfortable with silence. His capacity for patience knew no bounds. Lucifer recalled this a little too late, but was determined to wait him out.

He considered whose rooms were under Azazel’s watch. This area of Hell’s denizens were those who blamed themselves for deaths, their own or others. Many suicides repented here, but also substance abusers, politicians, and soldiers. There was one soul in particular that Lucifer wondered about. Did the Father Kinley find himself responsible for the deaths his machinations had caused?

Lucifer’s eyes narrowed as he looked at Azazel consideringly. Had he also spoken with the priest? It would have been simple enough for him to do, and learn quite a bit in a little conversation. It could be worth pursuing that lead at a later date...

Azazel was looking into the young woman’s chamber and did not seem to notice his master’s study. “It never fails to surprise me, the cruelty humans inflict upon each other,” he finally said quietly.

Without thinking about his response, Lucifer replied, “They are capable of much, be it cruelty or loyalty, imagination or hope.” In Hell, he was surrounded by the worst of their souls, and amused himself with their toys when he went to their world. Their imaginations were limitless, though slow to conceive. He’d invented the Kama Sutra long before it was practiced, for one thing.

But his last years on Earth with the Detective had also shown him parts of humanity he had never understood or respected before. He’d seen how strong emotions made them, and the depths those emotions could go. Images of Charlotte and Ms. Lopez flickered briefly before he turned his thoughts away.

“You are different from this last vacation of yours,” Azazel observed.

Lucifer’s eyes burned red, though he kept his voice deadly soft. “Different how, Azazel?” he questioned.

“I mean no disrespect,” he replied mildly, his patience again not rising to the bait. He continued, “I
only meant that you have never looked on them with sympathy before. Pity, perhaps.”

“Sympathy!” he scoffed. “I assure you, I do not.” The devil could not be sympathetic. He was the master of punishment, not time-outs!

“You do not feel for them? Wonder if their suffering will ever end?” Azazel asked, his dark eyes not wavering from Lucifer’s, despite the flames contained within the orbs. But Azazel’s gaze was not challenging. Was it… searching? What was Azazel playing at?

Lucifer sneered, “Oh, is that what you believe? This is all just penance and my father will forgive them with open arms and rainbows?”

“Of course,” he answered simply, shrugging as though it was obvious. “Don’t you?”

“Why would I?” Lucifer hissed, provoked. “Why would you? Have you forgotten why you are here? That He sent you here?”

“No,” said Azazel. “This place, too, is my punishment.”

The fallen angel gave his master a wry smile. “I taught them weapons and war, so I must witness what my tutelage has wrought for an eternity, until I am forgiven. Eventually.”

Lucifer regarded him with angry bewilderment. Azazel was a delusional fool, he thought. Lucifer knew there would never be a time when he was forgiven, nor did he want it. There was a time he had asked, waited, and prayed for it. If he was honest with himself, he had even begged his father, and no reply had ever come. He had been left to rot here, and when he’d tried to leave it all behind, God had ensured there was no escape for his rebellious son.

Once upon a time, Azazel had been known by mankind as the Red Dragon. He had been thrown from the heavens like his distant cousin, though much later, for having corrupted humans with the knowledge of warfare. Whereas Lucifer had been proving a point to his father, Azazel had been merely playing for his own amusement. He found it likely that was why he found it easier to accept his punishment, and believed there would one day be a reprieve. Someday he would rejoin his fellow angels in the Silver City, and he knew Lucifer would too; he was sure of it. But he knew from experience how far Lucifer’s temper could be tested, and judging from the glower being discharged his way, it was time to be about his business.

Azazel issued a nod and departed, continuing his rounds. Like the parody of a doctor checking in on his patients, thought Lucifer.

What rubbish. Forgiveness. What has Azazel been smoking down here, and where can I get it, he huffed.

Chapter End Notes

First, for those of you celebrating the 4th, hope it’s a good one! I put up a longer chapter this time, since I may not get the chance while out of town. I'll still be writing as much as possible, but will have to drop down to posts 2 or 3x a week. It's been so exciting to share this with you, and like I said, I'll happily keep going as long as it's being enjoyed! Secondly, sorry for the sensitive topic and additional angst. Lucifer's thinking like a
Detective down there, though!
“Detective Decker, an M. Woodfell is waiting for you in Room 4,” Officer Chovinsky reported as Chloe checked in.

“There was a wonderful you,” answered Chloe, and detoured to her desk to collect her files. The interview with Jonathon Hopper’s friend Mike was first on her list today, and she hoped it would shed some much-needed clarity on the baffling case. The longer it took to find solid evidence, the less likely the case would be resolved. Unresolved cases weighed heavily on Chloe, who could easily identify with the lingering pain and uncertainty left with a family when a culprit was not apprehended. It also left her with a suffocating sense of failure, that she had not upheld her oath to serve and protect. She wasn’t only letting the victim or his or her loved ones down, she was also letting herself down.

Chloe drained her coffee and disposed of the carry-out cup on her way. Upon entering, however, she blinked and double-checked the sign above the door.

No, right room. Interesting, she thought, and schooled her features to not reflect surprise. She was actually grateful for her background of childhood and adolescence of acting. It came in very handy in her line of work.

“Michael Woodfell?” she asked, as she approached the table.

The dark-skinned woman seated across from her swept her chestnut colored hair behind one shoulder. Her black dress spoke money and elegance, and simple but tasteful jewelry winked at her throat and earlobes. “Yes. Michelle Woodfell,” she corrected smoothly.

“I see,” answered Chloe, taking her seat. “I was under the impression you were a man. You were listed as ‘Michael’ in Mr. Hopper’s contacts.”

Michelle’s smile was friendly, “I imagine it was. Physically, I was still a man until recently.”

Chloe gave her a quizzical look, asking, “Then why not have your chosen name in his phone? Was he not accepting of your decision?”

“No, no, he is. Jon was… always a good friend. He stood up for me a lot growing up, when I wasn’t sure what was going on myself,” Michelle’s gaze was distant before it refocused on Chloe, as though revisiting a long-ago memory. “But it probably never occurred to him to change his phone. Half the time he still called me Michael out of habit. I didn’t really care. He knew who I was and was good with it.”

“You said ‘growing up’?” Chloe asked.
“Yes,” Michelle confirmed, “We grew up together, since middle school actually.”

“So, long-time friends… You would know if Jon was going through anything strange lately? Any problems going on in his life?”

Michelle was quiet, but Chloe sensed in her hesitance there was more she was not saying. She pushed further, “Why did it take you so long to return our calls, if you were so close?”

Michelle’s eyes dropped to the table, staring at the shiny surface as if it could explain it all to herself as well. Finally, she answered, so quiet Chloe had to strain to hear, “We weren’t speaking recently.”

“I thought he was a good friend?” Chloe was careful to use Michelle’s own words. It kept the chance to confuse or change stories to a minimum because it did not allow for interpretation. Either the person meant what they said, or they didn’t.

“He was. But that didn’t mean he always made good choices. I… thought he was making bad ones, and we fought, and hadn’t talked in almost a month.” Michelle looked up then, reclaiming her eye contact with the detective, and Chloe could read the honesty and remorse there.

“So when we called about his death? You took a long time to respond.”

“At first, I couldn’t believe it. I thought it couldn’t be real. Jon was just… I don’t know, in trouble or something,” she shook her head. “And I was angry, because I knew, I knew, he was going to get mixed up in something bad.” The woman’s eyes asked for understanding. Guilt swam in them.

Chloe felt sympathy for her, but kept it from showing. Ms. Woodfell appeared genuine, but until all the bases were covered, Chloe needed to remain cool and alert. There was still so much missing information in the case of this man’s death, and because the victim’s beer could have been poisoned far in advance, it wasn’t safe to rule anything, or anyone, out.

“What was he doing?” Chloe asked.

She didn’t reply, just lifted a shoulder in an unconvincing shrug. “I didn’t agree with his life choices, that’s all.”

“Such as?” Chloe questioned again. Could really have used Lucifer’s mojo-desire-thing right now.

Michelle Woodfell remained quiet. Instinctively, Chloe was sure of the veracity in the woman’s answer, but she had to probe deeper. There was something she didn’t want exposed, either for herself or her friend. Time to try another tack, Chloe thought. The desire to protect a friend from trouble could be dismantled if there was a need to defend a friend’s distorted image. “These bad choices, you said they led to a fight between the two of you. Did things become heated?”

Ms. Woodfell’s eyes widened in alarm, “You mean like violent? Oh my God, is that-- was it--” she stumbled putting the words together to depict what she imagined was a violent death. “Did he suffer?” she asked in a near whisper, aghast.

When Chloe didn’t immediately respond with an affirmation or denial, Ms. Woodfell leaned forward in her chair, saying, “It wasn’t anything like that. I swear! We had words, and I said some horrible things, and he said some mean things, but it was just an argument!”

“Arguments can escalate pretty quickly,” Chloe said impassively. “In fact, sometimes they don’t become physically violent at all. Sometimes anger simmers and leads to more premeditated actions, rather than a flash of brutality.”
“What do you mean?” Ms. Woodfell asked, looking puzzled.

“Maybe some of the things Jon said to you hit, I don’t know, below the belt? Antagonized your most vulnerable spots?” Sorry for going there, she thought inwardly.

“No, it was nothing like that,” she took a deep breath and released it on a sigh. “It was the drugs. I was upset he was mixed up in it again. He told me it was none of my business, that I’d made better for myself, but that didn’t mean he did.”

Chloe gestured for her to continue, “We know he was dealing, and had a history of it. You believed he would get hurt?”

Ms. Woodfell nodded, “When we were in school, it was small stuff. His brother kinda pushed him into it. He ran into the law a couple times. After his brother died, he straightened up. Got through school, got a job, got admitted to college. For awhile he was okay. I thought he was just figuring life out. But I found out he was dealing again, and I begged him to stop. That was what our fight was about. He said he couldn’t have better, that was all he could do. I was so mad, I just gave up trying to convince him,” Michelle’s eyes filled, and she visually crumpled.

Now that the dam had been opened, the words rushed out. This happened sometimes, with people who carried pent-up emotions about a victim. Once they let themselves unload, the relief opened them up. Since the beginning of the interview, Chloe had sensed the woman’s need to unburden, but couldn’t from guilt.

“If I hadn’t given up,” she sniffled, “Jon might still be alive. He was making bad choices, but he wasn’t a bad person. I shouldn’t have shut him out like that.”

Her wet eyes came up again and met Chloe’s head-on. She wiped away the tears under her eyes. “Detective Decker, Jon wasn’t a bad person. He had a bad life growing up and made bad choices because of it, but that didn’t make him bad. He didn’t deserve to die from it!”

Her words hit Chloe right below the sternum.

Swallowing hard, she covered up her own reaction by handing her a box of tissues. “Here,” she offered gently. “I understand what you mean.”

“You do?” she blotted her eyes.

“Yeah.” Probably more than anybody, she thought.

“Jon’s family was all messed up. Mom was an addict, dad in and out of jail, and not any good for anyone when he was out. Jon’s brother started dealing just as a way to keep them afloat, and then he dragged Jon into it. Jon wanted so much more. It’s like he just couldn’t escape it,” she looked down at the table again. “Maybe he could have if he’d had people to rely on.”

Chloe needed to get the conversation back on track before her own thoughts became too personal. Luckily, Ms. Woodfell did it for her. “Do you think his death could have been related to his dealing?”

“My instinct says no. It seemed more personal than that. Do you know if Jon was involved in a gang?”

“No, Jon was way against that. It’s how his brother died. A gang shoot-out. Jon typically sold pot, maybe some pills. Nothing heavy,” she shook her head decisively.
“There was another close friend of Jon’s, a Robbie? Did you know him?”

“Yeah, Robbie. We went to college with him before Jon dropped out.”

“So you guys all went to college together?” Chloe asked. “The three of you still got together and hung out?”

“Not as much as we used to. My work picked up. I’m a design consultant. And Robbie is on the fast-track.”

“We haven’t been able to reach Robbie,” said Chloe.

“Probably not. He’s been in Hong Kong for like three weeks,” she said. “He does some crazy communication managing thing for export companies? I don’t know.”

“You’re sure he’s been gone for that long?”

“For sure,” answered Michelle, retrieving her phone from her purse and pulling up Facebook. She handed the phone to Chloe. “I don’t know if those are enough proof, but he’s posted stuff since he went.”

“Thank you,” Chloe scrolled up and down the page casually. She’d pull up his profile again later to double-check and confirm with his employer. She looked up from the screen and said, “I imagine you probably all hung out before Robbie went out of town. Got some beer?”

Chloe handed the phone back and Michelle shook her head. “I don’t... think so. I’m a rosé girl myself. But, we were all pretty busy. I mean, Robbie and I were, with work.”

“When’s the last time you think you all saw each other?”

“I really couldn’t say. Probably closer to two months ago. I know I saw him a few weeks before I confronted him about the drugs.”

“Alright,” Chloe offered her a hand to shake, “Thank you. I may be in touch with you again during the course of the investigation.”

“Of course. Anything I can do,” Ms. Woodfell shook her hand before leaving.

Chloe dropped back into her chair at her desk. The poisoning element of the homicide was really doing a number on pinning down a suspect. Alibis weren’t going to be tremendously useful when the murder weapon could have been planted anytime in advance.

She didn’t really believe Michelle or Robbie fit as probable suspects. There was just no obvious motive. Poisoning was personal, but also vicious, and there was no indication of that level of passion. If Jon had been pressuring them for money or threatening their livelihoods, perhaps, but she hadn’t uncovered any indication of those. The character illustration was not painting him as the type. Chloe made a note and starred it for later research. When she looked into Robbie’s employment, she could ask a few questions about trouble at work, and she’d do the same on Michelle.

She doubted she’d find anything on Michelle, in any case. She felt in her gut the remorse in her eyes had been too real when she spoke about giving up on her friend. Chloe was a firm believer that people were responsible for their own futures, but she also knew the value of having support. Someone to believe in you when you weren’t sure you could believe in yourself.
Her thoughts turned to Lucifer again. Michelle’s words had been a lance right through her heart. They had both done their friends a disservice. The circumstances we grow up in continue to influence the way we think and the choices we make, but making bad choices sometimes doesn’t sum up a person’s character as a criminal or villain. Chloe tried to move her mind from the parallels between the victim and Lucifer, but failed.

She hadn’t trusted her gut with Lucifer until it had been too late and the damage was done. Her head had been filled with everyone else’s take, people who didn’t know him like she did, who made her doubt him and herself, and she’d let her head overrule her instincts. Her gut had always told her who Lucifer was - someone she was safe with. Why hadn’t she gotten rid of that stupid vial… maybe that night could have gone so different…

Head or heart, she thought. Maybe our hearts already know, and our brains are just struggling to catch up. Michelle’s heart knew her friend was a good man, but her head convinced her otherwise, and now she blamed herself for not listening.

Chloe’s own heart was saying she needed Lucifer back. She could survive without him, but she didn’t want to. He brought color and fun into her world when she needed it most. He balanced her, kept her from being too sensible and melting into the scenery.

Her head was saying it was impossible. He made a choice, an important, virtuous choice for everyone, and he couldn’t take it back. Even if he could leave Hell -- her mouth curved in a smile, how UNREAL she was thinking about Hell like it was a few counties over, Hell being a real place not a concept of immoral behavior -- how would their lives even work? Be compatible in any way?

That was her head trying to rationalize again. They were compatible. Their personalities complemented each other, bringing her his carefree, vibrant vivaciousness, and him some sensibility, some grounded perspective, and she had to believe that wasn’t inconsequential. They fit together, as improbable as it may seem, for a reason.

So what was her heart telling her to do? Break him out? Summon him? Was that a thing - praying to the devil? ...Was that kind of thing bad for the soul? Stop it, she told herself. This whole thing is because you had a distorted view of good and evil.

Where was he right now? What was he doing? She tried to imagine what Hell was really like. He’d made jokes over the years. Hot, of course. Dark? Was the whole thing fire? Her mind fixated on the image she’d committed to memory when she last saw him. Handsomely disheveled, strong and whole after their ordeal at the church, suit a little rumpled. White wings --wings!-- practically glowing, and as improbable as they were, somehow such an obvious extension of him she wondered why she’d ever doubted their existence before. She tried to picture him there, interposing his form in a dark, shadowy place filled with smoke.

A peppy voice pulled her from her reverie, and Chloe registered Ella was waving a hand in front of her face, “Hola?!! Chloe?”

Shaking her head, Chloe immersed herself in reality. Around the precinct, officers were busily working, booking, and answering phones. Ella stood in front of her desk, a concerned but friendly smile on her face. “Back with us? Where did you go?”

Hell, apparently. “Nowhere,” she said.

“Ooookay,” she stretched out the word. “Are we still on for tonight? I’m ready to shake my groove thang!” The petite young woman shook her hips.
“Absolutely,” Chloe promised. “I just need to go home and change.”

“Okay, awesome! I brought some stuff, so I’ll get ready and meet you there?”

“Good. I’ll text you guys when I’m on my way.”

“Are you sure you’re okay going to Lux? I mean… y’know…?” Ella bit her lip, looking worried.

Chloe smiled, she hoped reassuringly. “Of course I am.” Honestly, she knew her friends thought she was insane for wanting to go there, under the circumstances. But she couldn’t envision being anywhere else. Wasn’t that messed up?

Ella checked her watch, “I just have a little more to do. I can’t wait for tonight! You’re gonna love my dress. Sex. Ay. And I expect you to be a hot mama, right?”

She rolled her eyes, “Sure.”

She got up to leave, but once Ella walked away, she bent over her desk, turned the page of her notepad, and added another note. She added two stars and underlined it.

*Find how to get Lucifer home.*

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This high up, the ash that accumulated on the ground looked like dirty snowdrifts. Anytime there was movement, the ash kicked up and blew down the corridors. Lucifer watched tiredly from the balcony of his room. He felt drained, like his insides had been sucked dry. That was probably happening somewhere in the pits.

He turned at the knock on the door and frowned. He had already spoken with several demons today, as well as Asmodeus and Belphegor, on issues. Belphegor had given him a headache. It wasn’t that the burly fallen angel was stupid, per se, just too lazy to figure anything out himself. It required hours of repeated explanation. No, you can’t visit the same cell every day. Yes, you do need to make sure the demons are doing their jobs. It was ridiculous. Was this the level of incompetence while he’d been away?

Hadn’t that dimwit traitor Dromos said something about Hell having gotten worse? He would question Asmodeus on it later. It must have been terrible if demons were complaining about it.

“What is it?” he said, and took a sip from the tumble of bourbon he held. The action was more for the comfort of habit than for taste. It didn’t matter how fine a vintage he willed; it never satisfied. Another damn reminder.

The door opened, and a stunning pale-skinned beauty with incandescent red hair sauntered in. Her hips rolled with a subtle sway as she walked, emphasizing the curves her sharply contrasted blue dress barely concealed. Selena approached him with a mischievous smirk. “My lord,” she breathed.

“Selena,” he said by way of greeting. “I would say it’s nice to see you… but that would imply that I find being here at all enjoyable.”

Selena’s mouth turned pouty, purposefully designed to draw his attention to her plump, red lips. “I know you have been unsettled since your returned,” she purred.

“Oh, how’s that?” Lucifer quirked a sardonic eyebrow. He loved when demons tried to appear
“It’s all anyone has talked about. Everyone whispered when you left that you were bored, and then when you didn’t come home,” Selena came closer until there were only a few inches between them.

“And you’ve come to relieve me of my ennui, is that it?” he drawled, and finished his drink, such as it was.

Selena dipped her face, a practiced move of seduction, and looked up at him through her lashes. “Of course,” she answered, either not picking up on his sarcasm or dismissing it.

Well, it would certainly give him something to do. If he wasn’t so damn tired…

She took his silence as an invitation to continue, “I know you’ve favored Mazikeen, but I recall a time I was your favorite. I could be again.”

Lucifer remained impassive and she snaked her arms around his neck, pressing her body along his. He waited to feel some interest. He put his hand on her hip.

Mazikeen had been a favored partner of his, true. But he had also made her to be his protection. There were always shifting alliances here, power struggles, and sometimes threats against him. Being the most powerful, he didn’t worry, but had seen her strength as a necessary precaution. Maze was tenacious.

Selena, however, was one of the children of the nephilim. A sensual creature sired to inflict pain on mortals who desired her. She was another of Lilith’s demon spawn, but used her beauty as a weapon to lure her victims, whereas Mazikeen used her cunning. She only used her body for fun.

Her hands roamed across his chest, and one slowly swept down to his belt. His hand, at her waist, tightened its grip.

*I love you.*

Lucifer shut his eyes. Selena trailed her hot tongue up his neck, then forcefully nipped.

*You can’t leave me.*

Ignore it. But against his eyelids, he saw his Detective, hair lifting gently in the breeze. Her eyes begging him earnestly and fighting to contain her tears.

*Please don’t go.*

This madness had to stop! He couldn’t spend eternity thinking about her like a lovesick idiot. And just because parts other than his cock ached for her didn’t mean he couldn’t use it. He was bored and he was angry, -- nay, furious -- and his temper needed an outlet. He felt an overpowering need to crush and destroy, and if Selena was present and willing, then so be it.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the shorter look at Lucifer's side, but he has some thinking to do. Maybe next chapter we'll flip around and start with his perspective?
 Didn't have much time to proof or revise, so please forgive any errors. I've been sneaking in times to write when I'm not busy with family or being dragged to 4th parties. I did get to channel my inner Lucifer and use a flask though.

Thanks again to everyone's support, and pretty please feel free to leave me some comments/feedback!
Distractions

Chapter Summary

In which Lucifer goes to see a woman about a demon, and Maze gets Chloe suitably drunk.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Selena’s tongue swept sensually over his lips until he granted her entrance, her kiss wet and lewd, designed to suggest how else her mouth could be used. Lucifer half-heartedly reciprocated, one hand still resting at her waist, and the other gripping the nape of her neck. She gave an excited whimper in response to the restriction. Where Lucifer’s touch was minimal, hers was expansive in contrast. Her hands roamed freely, searching with a confidence that spoke familiarity. Nimble fingers trailed to his cock and brazenly grasped his semi-arousal through the fabric of his slacks. He didn’t react with so much as a moan.

Selena wasn’t deterred, however. If she wasn’t succeeding at capturing his interest, the lithe succubus would have to step up her game. She licked her lips at the prospect, enjoying the challenge. Generally, Lucifer was open to anything his sexual partners were interested in, and Selena possessed an impressive scope of methods to arouse in her repertoire, so she was confident she could find the right button to push. If open advances weren’t titillating enough to induce his desire, then she would stimulate his interest with a more dominant approach. Take him in hand, so to speak.

Abandoning her caresses on his shaft, she ran her hands up her own body, lingering on her curves. She knew he liked to watch. With her left hand, she palmed her generous breast, kneading through the skimpy material. She brought his hand up from her waist to join her own at her other breast, encouraging his touch with a squeeze. He was slow to take the hint. She bit her lower lip and moaned, dragging the neckline of her dress down to free her breasts to his gaze.

“Alright!” Lucifer exclaimed, and grabbed Selena’s wrists. He retreated a step, out of her snaking hold. “I’m sorry, darling. This isn’t going to work.” His tone was regretful, but not unkind. It wasn’t her fault he wasn’t responding with his usual enthusiasm.

Selena narrowed her eyes, more than mere indignation flaring in their soulless depths. Then her annoyance slid away so swiftly he wasn’t sure if it had been there at all.

He should have known she wouldn’t be put off so easily. Instead of backing away, she gracefully moved to her knees before him. She didn’t try to tug her wrists from his hold, instead leaving them imprisoned above her.

“Tell me how you would like me,” she prompted. Her voice was low and she interjected a note of begging. His groin was eye-level with her current position, and dauntlessly she leaned forward to mouth him. Instead of her eroticism stimulating him, he felt more uncomfortable.

It wasn’t Chloe’s voice echoing through him this time. It was his own telling her, finally, after so many botched attempts and frustrating obstacles, he loved her. Even though they were apart,
somehow this just felt wrong. A sick feeling twisted low in his stomach. It was as though, from both of them bringing their feelings into the open, this felt like it was soiling, dirtying, what they had. He couldn’t bear it. As much as he wanted to forget and pretend there was no reason to be… faithful?, he couldn’t. Their words had left an indelible mark that felt an awful lot like commitment.

The only time he’d tried commitment before was with Eve, even if their monogamy was a little loose at times and often included others. Until his desperate attempts to make her dump him, he had taken their relationship seriously, humbled by Eve’s affection and acceptance of him. When Chloe had said she loved him, it had the same effect. Those feelings, and the words that represented them, were too precious to him. He couldn’t treat them as though they were nothing. The realization was a refreshing blast of cool air in the oppressive heat. Some of the tension within him eased.

Lucifer pulled Selena to her feet and gave her hand an awkward pat. “Ah… that’s okay. Thank you anyway, darling.”

Rather than making a dignified exit, the demon gave him a look of insulted incredulity. “You don’t want me?” she asked disbelievingly. Without waiting for a reply, she moved towards him again, and he took another quick step back to avoid her touch. She tried for a suggestive smile and purred, “I’ll let you do anything, my lord. You know I only want to please you.”

“I said NO,” repeated Lucifer, feeling a coil of cold suspicion stealing through him. Something was off here. He was accustomed to his orders being followed without question.

“Why are you pushing this?” he asked.

“But… Lilith told me you wanted…” Selena said with a look of complete bafflement. “Is this… a game?”

Lilith told her, did she? He should have known. Everywhere he looked was coming up Lilith. Enough was enough! Lucifer pinned her with a look of fury and growled, “You will leave now, Selena. You DO NOT disobey me!”

She flinched from the force of his anger and backed up so quickly she stumbled and averted her gaze to the floor. “I’m sorry! I only wanted to please you!”

While demons fed on violence and fear, got turned on by it even, and were drawn to his power like moths to flame, it was another thing entirely when he turned his rage on them. He had the strength and force to rip them apart in a heartbeat.

Selena grimaced, recalling what happened to Dromos. The look on Lucifer’s face said he’d have no problem rendering her body to shreds if she didn’t get out of his sight. She disappeared out the door right before Lucifer picked up the whiskey glass he had been drinking from and heaved it at the wall. It shattered and the impact left a small crater.

Please him?!? How could he possibly be pleased while he was detained in this Hellhole, pun intended! He was not prone to violence for all that the world named him the embodiment of evil. He was actually quite restrained, used force only when necessary, and on those occasions he had lashed out on Earth, he had been mindful that the brunt of his full power would decimate a human. Throwing a murderer through a glass wall? Tossing a fiend across the span of a room? Mere drops of what he was truly capable of. But in that moment, he didn’t hold back. What was the point?
His fist landed on the iron table the decanter and glass had sat on. It instantly caved under the pressure, the metal squealing sharply in protest. He picked it up effortlessly in one hand and sent it spinning into the opposite wall, where it remained, wedged like a frisbee in the stone facade.

He glared at the ceiling, unsatisfied. “I’m not happy. I’m not happy at all! But I bet You are!” he snarled.

“This is still all a part of Your twisted plan, isn’t it? It wasn’t enough to torment me on Earth by letting me think I could actually deserve her! No, You had to use her. Use her to manipulate me. You knew I’d love her and that I’d willingly come back here to keep her safe, even if it destroyed me!”

He continued to lay waste to the room, splintered wood and shards of glass flying. He crushed a glass pitcher in his hand with such force that it promptly disintegrated and fell from his palm like grains of sand. In an odd moment of reflection, he registered that his heart felt the same way. All his secret hopes, dreams he hadn’t allowed himself to acknowledge, no more substantial than sand in the wind.

He spoke to the sharp splinters of glass, harmless to him now, though his words were still directed to the all-powerful, all-sadistic entity above him. “What twisted cruelty is this, Father? There is no pleasing You is there? I did what You wanted. I’m playing Your stupid game. So make this stop! Stop this damn bloody feeling of being torn apart inside! This- this hollowness.”

Lucifer laughed then, cynically and just this side of sane. Azazel’s words came to him. He could hear Azazel saying with resignation that he was serving his punishment by seeing all the inhumanity mankind perpetuated because of him. Was this his punishment then, for not returning to Hell when he should have? An eternity of feeling a broken heart?

What a pathetic sap he was. Oh, how the mighty have fallen, he thought. Again!

He looked around him at the wreckage. If he was going to be here, he wouldn’t put up with any insurrection. And if sex wasn’t going to grant him any relief, then some good old-fashioned torture and dismemberment might do the trick. It was time to pay a visit to Lilith and remind her who was boss.

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Chloe studied her reflection in the mirror, slipping on a pair of silver earrings. Her dress was an incandescent blue, the silvery sheen not bold enough to sparkle, but bright enough to catch the eye when light glanced just the right way. The silver in the earrings played on the sheen, making it a tad more pronounced.

She’d even gone to the trouble of giving her hair a few minutes with a curling iron to intensify the natural wave. A quick coat of mascara and a subtle coral lipstick brightened up her face. It was a marked difference from the pale, sallow, and tired look she’d been sporting the last several weeks.

For the first time since she’d woken up and realized Lucifer was really gone, she felt like she could breathe. It was like the moment she’d been honest with herself and determined to bring him home, a weight had been lifted. She felt… hopeful. She had a demon and an angel. They would find a way.

Tonight she would give herself a break from the guilt and the sorrow, she promised herself.

Lux was pulsing with its usual ambiance and excitement when she arrived. Desire and excess hung
richly in the air. Maze had really been working like a demon (ha! she thought, with only a momentary sense of insanity) to keep the club pumping. She descended the staircase, making her way through the crowds of bodies to meet Ella, who was standing on her tip-toes and waving excitedly.

“Maze got us a VIP room!” she shouted over the music. Her skin-tight gold dress flashed from the overhead lights as she practically towed Chloe behind her, on six-inch heels no less. The “room” was actually more of a plush seating arrangement designed to afford privacy and comfort to exalted guests. Chloe recalled seeing Lucifer lounge there more than a few times.

“You look amazing, Chloe!” Linda called over her mai-tai.

“Thanks, you do too! Where’s Maze?” she asked.

Linda handed Chloe a margarita from the table, saying, “She said she had some business to take care of first. Well, she actually said she had to break some skulls, but I think it was just an expression. I hope.”

Ella picked up her glass and clinked it against Chloe’s in cheers. “That woman is intense! But, man, can she make a great drink. Double-down on the tequila!!!”

Chloe sat down next to Linda and leaned a little closer to ask, “How many of those has she had?”

Ella heard her over the music anyway though Chloe had no idea how. The volume was so high, she felt like she was vibrating. She sipped the margarita she held. Holy shit, that was strong!

“Just enough to get this party started! You have to catch up!”

Chloe leaned over to Linda again and grinned mischievously, shooting a quick look at Ella, whose back was turned to them as she checked out the crowd. “I can literally hear her talking in exclamation points.”

“I heard that!” Ella sing-songed. Then the petite brunette clapped her hands in unbridled excitement. Maze was coming their way with another tray of drinks, which she carried effortlessly without breaking her confident stride.

The alcohol and the music and the good company coalesced into a comforting haze. She was with her tribe. A ragtag team of doctors, demons, and detectives. She giggled at herself and considered she might be the tiniest bit drunk. Chloe had lost track of what number drink she was on because every time she thought she finished one, a fresh new one seemingly materialized in her hand. Still, it couldn’t be that many.

“Oh my gosh!” Ella exclaimed, “I have the best idea!”

“We are not getting matching tattoos,” Linda said.

“No, no! We should play a game!” she insisted.

“Spin the bottle? I’m down. But in that case, we should move upstairs,” said Maze.

“No, I mean yes, we should go upstairs. I can’t dance anymore. I think my feet fell off,” Ella looked at the floor as if expecting to find the bloody stumps laying there.

Chloe agreed, the music had gone from sensual and invigorating to downright painful. She could forgive herself for a headache in the morning from drinking, but she really didn’t want one now
from the music.

They managed to collect their belongings and fall into the elevator, although Ella got distracted on the way a few times. Maze disappeared to give some directions to the managers and said she’d meet them upstairs.

Maze hadn’t changed anything in his penthouse, Chloe realized, as she stepped off the elevator. She could almost believe he was just downstairs and would return home any minute. It took a sharp yank to her willpower to derail that line of thought. She wasn’t going to succumb to sadness. She was out with the girls.

She took a seat on the couch opposite Linda and Ella and caught a glance of Maze. The demon was looking at her with an expression of… worry? Or was it fear? It was hard to tell. She’d never seen Maze afraid before. Before Chloe could think too hard on it, Maze looked away and dispersed another round of drinks, these from Lucifer’s private selection. By this point, they were all so pleasantly buzzed that drinking the liquor straight-up didn’t faze them in the least.

“So what game? That one in the closet?” Maze asked.

“Noooo. Knock it off, we’re not getting sexual. We should play Never Have I Ever,” Ella announced.

When Maze looked quizzical, Linda explained it was about taking a drink to affirm you had done whatever it was the person whose turn it was said she hadn’t done. Somehow Maze followed the convoluted description and deadpanned, “So you’re just trying to get me drunk.”

Ella laughed good-naturedly while Linda and Chloe shared a look over the rim of their glasses. Neither knew exactly how old Maze really was, but there was no denying she had probably done everything in the book, twice, plus a few more.

“I’ll go first!” Ella chirped. “Never have I ever been outside the U.S. Now if you have, you take a drink.”

Maze, Chloe, and Linda dutifully took sips from their tumblers. Linda gave a very delicate shudder. “Smaller… smaller sips,” she mumbled.

The play rotated a few rounds before landing on Linda. She searched her foggy mind for something to say. “I’ve never… kissed a girl,” she said.

Maze joked, “I thought we weren’t going to get sexual,” and took a drink. Then several more.

“What?” She asked.

Chloe laughed. “Maze, you only have to take one. It’s not based on how many times you’ve done it!” She took a sip, as did Ella.

“Naughty Chloe! When did you kiss a girl?” Linda giggled.

“Filming Hot Tub High School. The first time, anyway,” she added demurely with a playful smirk.

The girls squealed with laughter and then Linda turned to Ella. “And you?” she asked.

Ella shrugged defensively. “You’d be surprised what goes down in a Catholic girls’ school. Lots of experimentation there.” Maze snorted in amusement.

It was Maze’s turn next. “I’ve never…” she gave the matter some thought before saying, “I’ve
never cuddled after sex.” The girls unanimously drank to that one.

The evening began to wind down as they played more rounds and sipped on their drinks more slowly. They confessed all sorts of things, just as many innocent as wicked, and some downright hilarious. Ella had never been on a plane, but had hot-wired and stolen a classic Thunderbird. Maze had never been on a rollercoaster, though she did have sex in a funhouse once. Linda had never met a celebrity but could ride a bronco, and Chloe had never had a one-night stand and could execute a pretty impressive handspring backflip, although it didn’t come close to rivaling Maze’s. As Maze had predicted, she drank the majority of the time, but she also came up with the best Never’s on her turns.

Chloe was relaxed, the buzz dissipating into a nice mellow. She came back from the bathroom to find Ella passed out and sprawled across Linda in an undignified, but completely adorable, manner. Maze and Linda were talking about something related to Charlie and whether or not he’d really smiled at Amenadiel or just had gas. Maze put her money on the latter.

Maze looked up suddenly and saw Chloe returning. She took a deep breath and quickly stood up, coming over to Chloe, and leading her back towards Lucifer’s room.

“What are you doing Maze? No sexy funny business, remember?” Chloe nervously half-joked. Honestly, the sudden ferocious intent coming off Maze was giving Chloe the shivers. What had lit Maze on fire all of a sudden?

Maze only gave her a look over her shoulder that said, “Please!” Chloe followed behind, feeling déjà-vu being pulled around. Maze halted at the top of the stairs and gave Chloe’s shoulder a gentle nudge. “You should sit.”

Unease washed through Chloe, noticing for the first time that Maze looked genuinely uncomfortable. She sat cross-legged on the edge of Lucifer’s mattress and offered the demon an encouraging smile. “What is it?” Then an awful thought hit her and the smile leached away. “Did something happen? Is someone hurt?”

“No, nothing like that,” Maze answered, pacing. She nervously rubbed her hands together. “Okay!” she stopped and turned to face Chloe. “I haven’t been sure how to tell you. I’ve been trying to figure it out for weeks… and you’ve been so upset, I just didn’t want to add to it,” she finished on a whisper.

Chloe was puzzled. Maze, so considerate of feelings? What in the world could have been so concerning?

Maze went to the safe embedded in the bedroom wall, and punched in a code. Chloe remembered that safe. On another night, a different drunken escapade, she’s tried to break into it, determined she would discover some of Lucifer’s secrets. Then he’d come home and surprised her by opening it himself, the only item in it her birthday present.

She touched the necklace tucked under her dress, tracing the outline of the misshapen bullet. His feelings for her had been the secret in the safe.

Now, Maze opened it again and Chloe peered curiously at a file folder. Maze joined her at the bed and dropped the file onto her lap. “Here,” she said softly. “He wanted you to have this, but I didn’t know how to tell you. I didn’t want to hurt you more.”

Chloe’s hands froze in midair when the folder landed, and she stared at it like it was a snake. She couldn’t explain the ice-like foreboding that chilled her veins. At her continued silence, Maze
sighed and left the room.

Slowly, Chloe gingerly opened the folder and read the letter on the top. Her breath began to burn in her lungs. She flipped through the pages, scanning their contents, but soon her vision was too blurry to read more. Secured to the inside of the file was a key, stamped with its lockbox number. “No,” she said.

“No,” she repeated louder, and jumped to her feet, unceremoniously dumping the folder on the floor. “I don’t want it.”

She stumbled away from the bed to find Maze downing a freshly-poured drink and Linda standing by the couch, looking at her sympathetically and expectantly. She had carefully slipped out from beneath Ella and adjusted her on a pillow when she’d heard Maze come back. “Chloe,” she began soothingly.

Chloe walked past them and out onto the balcony, where she nearly collapsed into a cushioned chair. Staring at the night sky and the splash of stars, she breathed with care and control. The burning in her throat eased some but didn’t go away completely.

The soft hiss of the patio door sliding registered behind her, and the form of a woman joined her, settling silently into the chair beside her. She didn’t say a word, just listened to the sounds in the night air, the far-away echoes of the city, and watched the stars.

Chloe turned to her, laid her head on Linda’s shoulder, and did what she had kept private from everyone she knew. She burst into tears.

Chapter End Notes

If you’re feeling frustrated that Lucifer and Chloe are still apart, I’m sorry. You probably wouldn't believe it, but I'm frustrated too. I had a nice little plan here, and they keep going their own way. To think I was worried he’d get out of Hell too fast! I promise it's coming soon, right after our regular programming of angst. I think I'm going to keep up the pace writing. I'm too invested in these crazy kids.
What We Left Behind

Chapter Summary

Both Chloe and Lucifer get a surprise.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

She cried until she couldn’t cry anymore. She wanted to cry more, but it was like her body had run dry. Her throat was on fire, she could barely breathe, and behind her forehead lurked a menacing migraine. Through it all, Linda rubbed a soothing hand up and down her back, patiently waiting for the storm to break.

The sky was just beginning to lighten, the way the black seems to retreat right before the onset of dawn. The weaker, more distant stars, were already fading from sight by the time the tempest quelled.

Finally, Linda asked, “Do you want me to go? You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want.”

Chloe considered. No, she didn’t want to talk about it, but if she didn’t, it would eat away at her. Here she’d been spinning a fantasy that she could bring him home, and he’d already… She closed her eyes and breathed harshly. “Did you know?” she asked.

“Know?” Linda looked confused.

“Did you know, and that was why you wanted us all to go out? So Maze could tell me?”

“Oh. No, sweetie. I wanted us to spend time together. We all need to step back once in awhile, let it all go for a time. I didn’t know what Maze was going to tell you. She only said she was worried tonight,” Linda squinted at the sky, “Er, last night.”

“So you don’t know what he gave her?” Chloe asked, wiping her eyes and nose unsuccessfully. She must look dreadful, she reflected dully, but couldn’t sum up any energy for vanity.

Linda got to her feet, “Hang on a sec. I’m going to grab some tissues.”

While she waited, Chloe closed her eyes and rubbed them, not caring if her makeup further smeared, and then massaged at what felt like a heavy rock above her eyes that always accompanied a hard cry.

Some light murmurs were exchanged at the door and Linda handed her a handkerchief. Of course. Lucifer wouldn’t have tissues, but the turned-out gentleman ensemble would be incomplete without monogrammed squares of white linen.

With a mumbled thanks, Chloe took the proffered handkerchief and did her best to clean her teardrenched cheeks and blow her nose. “He wrote me a letter. Right around when he and Eve broke up. It was like he knew something was going to happen,” she said.

“What did his letter say?” Linda asked.
Chloe nibbled on her bottom lip, mentally rereading certain lines that had killed her. “He must have added to it right before he left,” she whispered, mostly to herself. “And he left me a house. He left me a freaking house.” Like a house was going to make her feel better. Was he serious?


“Stupid!” Chloe bit out. “Why would he think I’d want a house?”

“Did he say anything about it in the letter?”

With a weary sigh, she massaged her head again. “He said… he knew I liked it. I saw it on a case once,” she said by way of explanation. She waved a hand in the air to convey it didn’t really matter. “I mean, it was nice, but… When I said it had a great view and was perfect for getting away from the city sometimes, I didn’t mean I wanted it!” Chloe exclaimed with exasperation. She fiddled with the balled-up handkerchief in her hands, alternately crushing and pulling taut the fabric.

After a moment, Chloe continued, “He said he didn’t want me or Trixie to want for anything. So if something happened, or if Maze left with him and I couldn’t keep the apartment, we had the property or any money it was worth.”

Linda tilted her head to the side, but said nothing for a few minutes. Internally, she struggled with the lines she could cross as a friend or as a doctor. Lucifer wasn’t her patient anymore, but psychoanalyzing his thought patterns to Chloe didn’t seem fair either. She also believed that you had to arrive at some conclusions yourself or they wouldn’t be as meaningful.

“You know…” she finally said quietly, “I had a patient once. He was very upset that his father had bequeathed a very considerable amount to his long-lost daughter in his will. It didn’t actually change much of what he inherited; what bothered him was why his father did it.”

Chloe had been studying the creeping emergence of dawn at the very edges of the horizon. Now she turned her face to Linda and gave her complete attention. “Why did he? Guilt?”

“That was certainly what his son thought. He felt this woman had just come into his father’s life, a daughter out of nowhere, who’d grown up without him or his help and couldn’t possibly love him. Of course, it would be reasonable that, as a father, he would feel guilty and try to make up for it with money.”

“But that wasn’t it?” Chloe asked.

“Many of the choices we make are tied up with more than one motive, Chloe. He may have felt guilty, sure. But eventually his son came to consider another possibility,” Linda waited and looked at her expectantly.

Chloe frowned, but the more she thought over the question, the more logical the simplest answer became. “Love?”

Linda chuckled, “Seems too obvious, doesn’t it? He wanted his daughter to have anything she needed, because he loved her and wasn’t going to be there. If he was alive and gave her something, she would be accepting him as family. If she rejected…”

“…she would also be rejecting him,” Chloe finished.

“Exactly.”
As Chloe pondered that, they returned their views to the horizon, where in the east the sun was beginning its pilgrimage across the sky. Tendrils of color radiated from beneath the sun, as if lifting it from the depths. Hues of orange, peach, and pink elongated and blossomed. There was something so peaceful about watching the beginnings and endings of a day. It was either the optimistic opening to possibilities, or the acceptance of a day’s endeavors, good or bad.

She didn’t want to reject Lucifer. He thought money inconsequential, despite playing with buckets of it. She tried to read the intent of his actions instead of its monetary value. He wanted to ensure they were safe and happy because he wouldn’t be here. Because he loved them.

Chloe was tempted to bring up the other item to Linda as well, the one apparently in a lockbox downtown. Its value concerned her greatly, and she wasn’t sure what she was supposed to do about it, or what it would mean. She allowed her thoughts to linger on the words he had elegantly written.

Dear Detective,

I am not one for words unless through music. Even then, music being the language of emotions, it seems I frequently err when it comes to understanding the emotions of others, or even of myself; so, I ask for your patience for any fumbling on my part.

I first came to Los Angeles for a vacation, never intending to stay for an indefinite period of time. I knew that sooner or later, I would return to that wretched Hellhole, but on my terms, and when I felt I had tortured my siblings sufficiently. Our time together changed that. I wanted very much to spend my days here permanently.

It is important for you to know that. Without you in my life, I doubt that I would ever have contemplated doing so. I certainly never had before.

However, our time together also changed my concept of myself. When I am with you, Chloe, I want to be a better man. I felt like I was a better man, or becoming one at least. As they say, a tiger cannot change its stripes. Recent events opened my eyes to the realization that I cannot change who I am. Any time I had the excuse to embrace my darker impulses, I did so. Those desires demonstrate my true nature as nothing else can.

You said that I am the Devil, but I am also an angel. That is true to an extent. The kind of angel that my brother is, for example, was never me. Beneath the wings and divine glow was a being that was never meant to be an angel, or else I wouldn’t be who I am now.

Please know how much I cherish the time I stole here with you. It was unlike anything I’ve ever known. It may be conceited of me to think that something might harm you when I am no longer here. But truly Detective, you are shot at more often than anyone I know. I have left you and your offspring a small token of my affection. You seemed fond of the property and you may do with it what you wish. I do not know if Maze will choose to stay, and you may prefer living without the cost of rent.

I am also leaving you with an item of great importance to me, something I brought from home. I believe it would be safe with you and I, perhaps foolishly, like to think you will keep it as a piece of me to remember me by. I was told it would bring me good fortune. It must have, for it brought you into my life.

Yours,
Lucifer

P.S. You may tell Dr. Linda this was quite possibly the longest reflection in my life and restrained
from sexual innuendos.

Linda had already gone back inside the penthouse, so Chloe stood up to do the same. She stepped through the glass door to see Ella was awake, looking like she felt as wonderful as Chloe did. Maze looked up immediately at her entrance, and Linda squeezed Maze’s arm as she walked by. Chloe offered her a small smile to convey she didn’t harbor any blame or anger at all, and Maze seemed to relax a fraction.

Sinking back onto the couch, Chloe eyed the glasses they had left scattered on the table. She was sorely tempted after all that had transpired to take a hearty drink. Instead, she was surprised when Ella picked up her discarded glass first. The brunette studied its contents thoughtfully and with a somberness that concerned Chloe. If Ella was feeling that poorly, maybe she should tell her to put the drink down.

Seeing Ella holding her glass again, Maze lifted an eyebrow. “Wanting some hair of the dog that bit you?” she asked. Her own glass was full again, but she picked up the bottle of bourbon and swiftly topped off Linda and Chloe’s with the casual dexterity of an experienced bartender.

Linda started to object, but Chloe shrugged. Why not. She’d been thinking about it anyway. Taking it as a sign, she raised her glass and was about to throw down its contents when Ella spoke up.

“I forgot a really important Never Have I Ever,” she said. Without leaving any space for one of her companions to object, she lifted her glass as if she was about to make a toast.

“Never Have I Ever seen the Devil’s face.”

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The two demons acting as guards to Lilith’s den took one look at their King and wisely stepped out of the way. Without breaking stride, he marched down the cave-like corridor until he came to the main entrance of her dwelling. Another demon was posted here, this one burlier and meaner than his scraggly counterparts.

Lucifer bared his teeth at him in a snarl, “Move!” he ordered, weighting the word with his authority without raising his voice. The demon’s skin was a morass of scars, and he hefted a battle ax in his hands with other gleaming blades at the ready. His stare was bold, refusing to look away from Lucifer or move from the space.

Lucifer gritted his teeth. “MOVE,” he repeated, “Or I will move you myself.”

“Lilith has told me not to leave this spot,” he replied.

“Are you implying that your King is less than your mistress?” Lucifer asked rhetorically. He didn’t wait for an answer, simply grasped the hulking man with one hand about his neck and pushed him backward against the door. Once, twice, Lucifer used him as a battering ram, until the door exploded open, with the surprised demon flying through under a cloud of debris.

All movement in the room came to a halt as Lucifer entered, brushing the crumbled bits of stone from his sleeves. “Lilith, dear, a word?”

The juxtaposition of the presentation of violence and the incongruently polite demeanor didn’t concern Lilith in the least. She remained in her seat for another moment to communicate that she was choosing to condescend to him. Then she gracefully and calmly raised to her feet, bestowing a
saccharine smile. “To what do I owe the honor, my King? I am always gratefully humbled by your presence.”

“Is that so?” Lucifer asked, with the same tone one would employ when asking if jumping from a plane without a parachute was a ripping good time.

“Of course,” she replied, and extended a slim hand toward her son, Mammon. “We are beyond pleased you have come to join us.” The words were warm, as though he didn’t just blow down the door to get in.

“We have some catching up to do, Lilith,” Lucifer replied without even glancing in the boy’s way. He paused to study the tableau that lay before her, a queen playing with her subjects.

At his entrance, the opponents had frozen in their spots, and now awkwardly awaited some signal to continue or disperse. Two demons in the center bore nasty gouges, one demon bleeding profusely from a deep slice across the arm, another’s face nearly covered in blood from the many shallow cuts, probably caused by extensive dragging across the rock floor.

Lilith flicked her gaze to the fighters. “Would you like to see them finish, my King?”

Battles to the death were an oft-passed time. Commonly, the gladiator-style combat was for entertainment. Strength and ferocity were all demons cared about, and the only currency they held above one another. Sometimes, as in Dromos’ case, brutal killings were used to punish or teach the others. Both, really.

Lucifer swept his gaze over the demons collected in the ring. Besides the two combatants in the center, the remainder of the horde were spectators, and as one demon would fall, another would take its place to battle the victor. “Go,” he commanded, snarling.

As they scattered out, suitably reminded of his strength, Lucifer strode to Lilith. He briefly took in her appearance. She was a beautiful woman, but for the bitter vitriol running through her veins, which robbed her of any true loveliness. Her beauty was like a flame that devoured anything that came near. She stood straight, ever-confident and defiant. There was a time he had appreciated that about her, and sympathized enough to offer her refuge.

Now she was nothing but twisted anger and resentment. She remained in Hell because here she was as close to immortal as she could become, impervious to aging or illness. Lilith would not take her chances on Earth and risk dying because she knew where her soul would end up and be tortured for eternity.

“Ah, Lilith… What have you been up to?” he asked, almost thoughtfully.

She upheld the pretense and coyly asked, “Whatever do you mean? Selena came to see me not long ago. She said you seemed very… distracted.”

“Didn’t take her very long to come running to report, did it?” he asked sardonically.

“To report what?” Lilith curved her lips in a study of innocence.

“Cut the charade, Lilith,” Lucifer growled. He allowed more than just his eyes to burn now. His visage morphed into the one he had adopted as his own after his fall, his internalization of the plummet into fire.

Raw tissue and charred lesions distorted his features and Lilith inhaled sharply, tensing so minutely it was difficult to see. She was not so much afraid of his form, she had seen that often enough, but it
was a reminder of the visceral power he owned. She, of all creatures here, was the weakest in comparison. Her power came from her ability to manipulate and influence. She was the mother of all demons, in one way or another, and like any good mother, made sure her children knew who was boss.

Lucifer saw the telltale sign of her apprehension, however, and smiled gruesomely. He advanced on her, ready to seize her if she uttered another false word. “This is your last chance to explain yourself.”

Rising from his seat beside Lilith, Mammon moved to her defense. Lucifer glanced at him for the merest second. “Tell your pup to sit down if you don’t want him hurt as well, Lilith.”

She raised her hands in a mollifying gesture, though she didn’t spare her son a glance. “You have not been acting like yourself. I only thought to help.”

“You dare to presume to tell me how I act?” he growled again.

“There is talk amongst many of the demons that you are different from your time on Earth. I was only trying to help show them you haven’t changed,” she lifted a shoulder in a shrug.

He didn’t buy her counterfeit nonchalance for a minute. “And this demon gossip, being so astute, is saying what precisely?”

“That you are weakened from a human woman,” she answered coolly.

Lucifer paused, feeling a momentary flutter of panic. How would any of the demons who possessed the bodies in the church know about his relationship with the Detective?

The rage that built to a breaking point inside him was not in relation to the assertion that he was somehow weak. The thought that any of these cretins had even the slightest idea of Chloe filled him with a paralyzing fury. His mind raced with the atrocious possibilities that could befall her.

Lilith was watching him with rapt attention. Though he thought his expression had not changed, she must have read something that pleased her. “So it is true!” she marveled. Her smile was predatory as she looked to Mammon.

“Perhaps it is time for a new King,” she dared tauntingly.

Lucifer advanced on her in a second, intent on crushing her into the stone. Mammon intercepted, placing himself between Lucifer and Lilith. “Leave her---” her son began, but was cut off by a large elbow locking around his throat.

Asmodeus pinned Mammon in an unmaneuverable position and looked up at Lucifer. “Some demons who were here earlier said there was trouble. What would you like me to do to them, my King?” he asked.

“More gossip. Wonderful.” Lucifer glowered at the couple and swiftly returned to his normal, more comfortable, form. “Put them…. ” he frowned. “Put them in the tower.”

He stared at Lilith, locking eyes with her with deadly intent, “Consider yourself under house arrest, madam. Be grateful I haven’t decided to throw your well-preserved carcass to the hounds. Yet.”

Disgusted, Lucifer left her there to be dealt with by Asmodeus. He was startled to find his hands subtly trembling. He was more than a little shaken up by the idea that the demons had been talking amongst themselves and were drawing conclusions about the Detective. Now that he wasn’t facing
an adversary, the incendiary rage was replaced with ice-cold dread.

He couldn’t put off looking for more answers any longer. It was time to start rattling some cages. He swiftly traversed the corridors, stride purposeful. If a demon dared approach him, he or she quickly altered course, his look of rigid resolve enough to frighten them away.

Lucifer found Azazel departing from the room of a man who had killed his friend in a drunken bar fight and carried the guilt for forty-six years, never forgiving himself for a senseless argument that grew out of proportion. His fate was to walk into the bar, take the stool next to his buddy, and order a beer. It was only when they were served their drinks that he fully saw his friend, who looked back at him from a face, rotting and disfigured. The horror of realizing he was the cause of the hideous corpse became his never-ending comeuppance.

Impatient, Lucifer grabbed him by the elbow and steered him down another hall. “We’re going for a little walk,” he told Azazel. “There’s someone I’d like you to meet.”

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Chapter End Notes

I am so incredibly blown away by the comments I've received. It is wonderful encouragement! There was a lot of interest in Lucifer's letter, so I made sure you all got a copy! ; D I hope this one has some shock or surprise value! More answers coming soon...
In the Know

Chapter Summary

Ella gets some answers and Lucifer thinks he'll get some answers, but instead just gets more questions.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Never Have I Ever seen the Devil’s face.”

Maze being Maze, and not finding anything surprising about Ella’s statement, shrugged and downed half her bourbon.

Ella watched Chloe and Linda closely, who had both frozen immediately. “Well?” she demanded.

With a nervous laugh, Chloe tucked a bit of hair behind her ear. “I’m not sure what you mean, Ella.” She threw a panicked glance at Linda, whose face was expressionless. What had Ella heard, exactly? And when? Frantically, she reviewed last night’s events, from when she’d received Lucifer’s package to her retreat onto the balcony. Nothing stood out to her. If Ella really knew the truth… Chloe swallowed hard, remembering the first few days after she’d seen Lucifer’s Devil face. It had been life shattering, and she knew Linda had also gone through a period of existential crisis before arriving at a place of acceptance. Chloe inwardly blanched at the thought of losing her friend.

It seemed Linda was also struggling to come up with a suitable response. She chewed on her bottom lip. It was clear she didn’t want to lie, but was in the same position as Chloe, not wanting to irrevocably damage a valued friendship.

Apparently, Ella was tired of waiting for a response. She snorted, looking aggrieved and disappointed with them. “Come on, guys. I’m not stupid. My job is literally about putting clues together to reach a conclusion.” Under the bravado, it was clear she was a little wounded that they had discluded her.

Chloe’s breath left her in a whoosh, and she realized she had been holding it while her overwrought, frenzied brain searched in vain for an explanation. She was coming up empty. She needed that drink now. She looked down at the forgotten tumbler clenched in her hands.

Linda cleared her throat delicately. “Er… what are you saying you know exactly, Ella?”

The question was met with an uncharacteristic unerring stare. It was like Ella was looking straight through her, pinpointing the truth she concealed with laser-like accuracy. “I’m saying I know Lucifer is really the Devil,” she said calmly. When Chloe opened her mouth to voice some kind of denial, Ella shot her a look. “No more bullshitting,” she warned.

“How did you…?” Chloe trailed off, unsure what to say exactly. If she asked her how Ella knew, it was basically an affirmation she was correct. Was that wise? It wasn’t her secret to tell, for one thing. Lucifer had decided when, and to whom, he revealed himself. Except for how she found
out; that had been accidental, at a time he was painfully vulnerable. What if Ella thought of Lucifer as evil, like she had? That wouldn’t be fair. And for another thing, she wanted to spare Ella any pain.

Ella rolled her eyes before saying, “You know… I really believed Lucifer was just acting. Then I wondered if he might have some kind of mental affliction, maybe some sort of P.T.S.D. that built this Devil persona in his head. But the more time went on, the things that happened, I began to think… “ she looked at Maze, and shook her head, “I thought maybe the bizarre comments you made weren’t just playing into his delusion. And you, Chloe? You always treated his ‘I-am-the-Devil’ kicks as ridiculous. Then out of nowhere, you were acting weird around him and asking about him being an angel like it was real.”

“And so… you believe it’s all true? Chloe asked carefully, completely flabbergasted by Ella’s calm.

Ella sighed and looked at all three of them. “Honestly, I’m between you all being simultaneously brainwashed, sharing a really bad trip, or, “ Ella paused and shook her head again, as if she still couldn’t quite believe it, “Or Lucifer really is the Devil.”

At their collective silence, Ella challenged, “Tell me I’m wrong.” Her expression and tone suggesting that if they dared to deny her allegations, she would be out the door without taking another breath.

Slowly, Chloe raised her drink to her mouth and took a satisfying drink, feeling the burn slide down her throat and melt some of the numbness. Linda met her eyes and gave the barest hint of a nod before doing the same. There was no going back now.

Ella looked concurrently stunned and relieved. She brought her own drink to her lips, took several deep swallows, and coughed. “Shit!”

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“What exactly are you looking for?” Azazel asked, perplexed, but willingly trailing after Lucifer.

“Not a ‘what’. More of a ‘who’. Someone I believe may have moved into the neighborhood…” Lucifer responded, though his attention never wavered from his inspection of the doors they passed.

“A damned soul?” Azazel looked around as they walked.

“Of course,” Lucifer said, casting Azazel a look over his shoulder that said he was being particularly dimwitted.

Azazel briefly lifted his eyes to the ceiling. Really, Lucifer would try anyone’s patience. “‘Of course’,” he echoed. “If you want to tell me who, I could--”

Lucifer grinned, though Azazel thought there might be something sharp in it, and asked, “Now, where would the fun in that be?”

As it happened, it didn’t take the Lord of Hell much longer to find his quarry. No one knew his way around like the Devil did. It didn’t hurt that there were subtle indications of newly expanded corridors. Lucifer knew the twists and turns like the back of his hand, so newly carved routes were much more obviously apparent to him. Plus, less ash had accumulated. He supposed he should be grateful that demons were poor housekeepers.
He paused and peered into the portal of one room. Inside, night swallowed up the space, the only light punctuating the darkness from a pair of headlights. The car weaved dangerously, straying from the winding curves and bends with increasing regularity. “No, I don’t think so.”

Lucifer looked at the door across the tight channel, “Ah, more like it,” he said, observing through the window as he had before. “I thought as much. Humans can be so predictable.”

Lucifer pulled open the door and gestured for Azazel to enter, cheerfully intoning, “After you!”

He did so warily, not sure what Lucifer expected to find, or what it had to do with him. Azazel was surprised to find they had stepped into a living room that was completely empty except for a few pieces of bare furniture and a wide mirror spanning the wall. Lucifer stepped in behind him and smiled. “Just in time to enjoy the show!” he exclaimed jovially.

Before their eyes, a middle-aged man came to his knees and brought his hands together in prayer. Azazel directed a look of confusion at Lucifer, wondering what could be so special about this man, but Lucifer ignored him and continued to watch. The man prayed in a quiet murmur that was nearly inaudible. A broken chair materialized nearby. Seemingly without warning or provocation, the man threw himself on a splintered stake, effectively skewering his skull on the wood. His body gave several twitches before slumping.

“What--?” he turned to Lucifer, puzzled.

But Lucifer gave a shake of his head and held up one finger to silence him. “Not yet.” He looked expectantly at the wall with the large mirror, only the mirror wasn’t there, Azazel realized.

The mirror had vanished as if it and the wall behind it had never existed, exposing a smaller chamber adjoined to the one they stood in. Occupying the space were two men, priests by the look of their apparel. The gray-haired, taller man was shaking his head in agonized denial, “No, no, no,” he repeated, frustration and anger mating in his words.

Azazel watched as the black priest, whose bearing and demeanor was imbued with a sense of authority, turned to the other man with a scowl. “This is your doing!” he accused. “You have killed this man as surely as if you had done so with your own hand!”

“No! You don’t understand!” The first priest was frantic and gestured with an outflung hand. His voice shook with the intensity of feeling, and a fanatic gleam lit his eyes. “You will see! You must see!”

“How many more must die because of you?” came the hissed reply. “Murderer! You bring pain and death to innocent souls. You are as evil as the Devil himself!”

His head bowed in shame, the first priest visibly trembled and lifted his hand in the sign of the cross, falling to his knees in supplication.

His superior looked down on him with pure hatred. “You are the Devil!”

He was hauled to his feet and chains wrapped around his arms like vines. “I am not the Devil!” he cried, “I am good! I am a man of God!” He turned to see out the non-existent mirror, perhaps seeking aid, and was met with his reflection. The visage of the Devil stared back unforgivingly. “No! It is not me!” he protested.

“The Devil must be destroyed,” the other man intoned, lifting his hand high, which suddenly grasped a long, sharp blade, a tool of execution. His intent was clear, and his arm descended in a strike that would decimate the man collapsed in desperation before him.
Lucifer stepped into the mirage and waved his arm, “Enough of that!” The semblance of the righteous priest dissipated in the air like wisps of smoke. Head cocked to the side, Lucifer studied Father Kinley with derisive interest. “Well, well. It seems you have a bit of a me-complex, don’t you?”

“Wha-what?” Father Kinley blinked up at him, not understanding the sudden interruption of his annihilation, disrupting the pattern he had come to anticipate.

“My The Devil. Yes,” Lucifer mused, “You do recognize your actions as evil, don’t you? Somewhere deep inside. Otherwise you wouldn’t be here, of course.”

“Here?” Kinley looked about him, confusion marking a frown between his eyes. “I am here to prove the Devil exists. You!” he suddenly recalled, and stared accusingly at Lucifer.

“You are the Devil! They will all see!” he declared with triumphant fervor.

Lucifer shook his head. “No, Father,” he bestowed the honorific maliciously. He wasn’t quite big enough to forgive the priest’s role in the corruption of the Detective and the would-be poisoning of their relationship. He leaned closer, as if confiding a secret. “You have failed, you see. You exist only to serve your own guilt.”

Father Kinley’s eyes burned with pure hatred. “You will not hold my soul! I will be freed by the grace of God!” He took notice of Azazel then, who watched the drama unfold, before returning his attention to his nemesis.

“God will not save you,” Lucifer snarled. “Did God ask you to kill innocent people? Manipulate their lives?”

Between them, serving as an ironic reminder of the priest’s success, was the crumpled corpse of the impaled man. He flicked his gaze to the body pointedly and Kinley flushed.

The priest struggled to his feet and spat at Lucifer, “He called me to His purpose when He entrusted me with the prophecy. Everything that has happened as a result is necessary in the face of my holy mission! My sacrifices may have brought me here, but I will be rewarded. I have sent the Devil back to Hell!”

Lucifer’s face hardened further, if that was at all possible. Whatever nerve the priest’s words had struck, Azazel thought, he wasn’t sure it would be tolerated well. He wasn’t entirely certain if it was possible to eviscerate a soul, but he didn’t want to find out. Azazel shifted his stance, ready to act if Lucifer required it.

“Your holy mission is a load of crap,” he said bluntly and tiredly. “So sure you are worthy? Do you think God would dump you here if you had pleased Him?” Lucifer turned away, the conversation complete on his part.

But it seemed Kinley was determined to have the last word. He called after him, like a fool poking a bear with a stick, “Maybe I am here because my work is not yet finished.”

Having successfully caught Lucifer’s attention, the priest smiled venomously. Lucifer turned
slowly, fixing the priest with a stare that promised retribution so terrifyingly that many who saw it crumbled in terror. “And what does that mean?” he asked silkily.

“You didn’t think I would take any chances, did you?”

“What did you do?” Lucifer demanded, the look in his eyes so fierce, Azazel took a step back himself. Had he ever seen him that dangerously on edge?

Kinley did not flinch as the Devil himself picked him up and held him aloft. Lucifer’s skin rippled and darkened with mottled blood and contusions as his wings unfurled with a resounding crack. “What do you mean?” he roared.

But the priest only laughed, too drunk on his victory to be cowed by the horror of the Devil’s form. Rather than enrage Lucifer further, the reaction drew forth a dark enjoyment. He wanted nothing more than to torture this pathetic villain. He could torture him endlessly and in a million excruciatingly agonizing ways with no worry he would expire.

“But the priest only laughed, too drunk on his victory to be cowed by the horror of the Devil’s form. Rather than enrage Lucifer further, the reaction drew forth a dark enjoyment. He wanted nothing more than to torture this pathetic villain. He could torture him endlessly and in a million excruciatingly agonizing ways with no worry he would expire.

“Don’t… know…” Kinley choked out between wheezing breaths. Lucifer hurled him down to the floor, where he lay in a heap. His body behaved as his soul believed it still would, and the trauma of the blow caused several organs to rupture, pierced by bones that snapped from the reverberation of meeting the concrete floor.

Lucifer reached for him again, hoisting Kinley’s limp body in the air. He drew back an arm, intending to drive his fist through Kinley’s flesh and remove one organ at a time until he received the answers he sought.

The priest laughed again, though it sounded more like the braying of a dying donkey. “Rest of… prophecy… unknown,” he grinned with psychotic satisfaction.

There was more to it? His first love, and evil being released… what else could there be? He was already back in Hell, so what else could Kinley do?

His blood ran cold. What was going to happen to Chloe?

Swiftly, Lucifer shed his appearance and abandoned Kinley’s body dismissively. His self-condemned punishment would restart soon and Lucifer could return to pry more answers then. He looked up then, seemingly startled to realize Azazel’s presence. Silently, Azazel followed him from the priest’s room, completely baffled by his King’s behavior, and trying to piece together what little he had been able to ascertain from their exchange, at least before the bone-crushing violence.

Lucifer seemed deep in thought again, but then suddenly directed his attention to him, studying him pensively.

“Why did you want me to enter that priest’s room with you?” Azazel asked. Especially since Lucifer had never involved him, he realized. He had only seemed to want Azazel there to… witness?

When no response was forthcoming, Azazel frowned. “Was this some kind of test?”

A short, considering pause, and then Lucifer answered, “Yes.”

“Did I pass?”

Lucifer barked out a laugh. “For now.”
“What was all that about?” Azazel asked, following Lucifer again as he descended the corridor.

“It didn’t appear Kinley recognized you,” Lucifer said instead. He sounded as if his mind was miles away.

Azazel scowled, “The test was to see if I had seen that priest before?”

“Yes, of course,” Lucifer answered. “But now I have a bigger problem. What the good Father Kinley said back there… it’s not good.”

They entered Lucifer’s, for lack of a better word, castle. In the Great Room, where he received most of his company, Lucifer stood in front of the blue-flamed fire perpetually blazing in the rock hearth. He stared into the flames, feeling impossibly torn. What could he do? What could keep Chloe safe?

He chewed on Kinley’s words, working them over again and again though each bite tasted more bitter than the last. When he’d implied Chloe was in danger, Lucifer had snapped. He needed to cool his head and think. As much as he wanted to tear the deranged priest into little pieces, he had to be more strategic, especially when any careless mistakes could cost Chloe her life.

“What did the priest mean?”

Azazel didn’t think Lucifer would reply, or even that his question had been heard when he remained silent for long minutes. He shifted his weight, uncomfortable and unsure whether to stay or go. Lucifer was definitely different. More… serious, he decided. No longer preoccupied with his anger for his circumstances, but someone else’s, it seemed.

Lucifer pulled his gaze from the fire and leveled it, measuringly, on him. “What concerns me at the moment is who else Kinley may have told.”

Chapter End Notes

I can't express enough how much I value and adore your feedback! Thank you for the time you take to let me know your thoughts.
Do You Want a Piece of Me?

Chapter Summary

Chloe discovers a gift from Lucifer, and Lucifer considers a way to get some peace of mind.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Tell me what happened while I was gone,” Lucifer commanded quietly.

Dromos, the vile worm, was not what Lucifer would consider a reliable source, being a traitor and all. Still, he remembered when the demon had found him in his club, pathetically ecstatic and convinced he was doing a great service to his King. What had he said? Hell had become worse? Lucifer hadn’t cared enough to question what he meant. Unlike the demons who were spawned there, he didn’t enjoy the place. It was always awful to him, and he had no intention of returning to that meaningless existence.

But now, after finding himself confronted by one suspicious act after another, he wondered what plots had been hatching behind his back. And more importantly, by who. Belphegor was undoubtedly a strong adversary, but the guy had always been a few sandwiches short of a picnic. He wouldn’t put anything past Lilith, the scheming minx. She was incredibly cunning, having had thousands of years to hone her skills, and it seemed she had very high ambitions for her favored little demon.

Lucifer snorted in derision. He couldn’t see why. The pasty weakling didn’t possess a single impressive attribute. Did he really think he was a viable successor for the King of Hell? He couldn’t measure up in any way. He could never match Lucifer for good looks, charm, or charisma. Not to mention prowess, in and out of bed.

The runt was inconsequential. Still, Lilith was plotting something. She was as untrustworthy as a cat in a birdhouse. So while the Devil was away, the kitty came out to play?

He would do away with both of them, but he couldn’t until he knew how their plans might affect the Detective.

He raised an expectant eyebrow at Azazel. So far, he didn’t seem to be involved, or at least had been covering his tracks very well. He would tread lightly here. Question some suspects, compare some stories, he decided. A little zing of bittersweet pride sparked in his chest. Look at him, being a detective.

“Without you here to keep a tight hold on the reins, the demons started looking for the strongest source of power they could find. Fighting for it. Some of the more formidable demons, older and somewhat smarter, built their own factions. Asmodeus and I put them down when anything close to rebellion occurred,” Azazel reported.

Not surprising. The older demons became, the more power-hungry. Conquering and forcing the enemy to submit was built into their DNA. Still, none of this was terribly concerning, and Lucifer
had put out a few of these fires himself over the years. When he did he made a point, and that
generally calmed things down for a few millennia.

Lucifer nodded, and Azazel continued, “There was some noise about Mammon. He is hungry for
power.”

Yes, the boy had always been known for his greed, hadn’t he? Lucifer thought. Even without
Lilith’s manipulations.

“Anyone else?”

At Azazel’s hesitance, Lucifer rolled his eyes. “Out with it.”

“I’m not sure it is relevant. It’s only a feeling,” Azazel replied. He frowned then, a deep line
prominent between his eyebrows. He looked unsettled.

Azazel had been an angel of war. Trusting his instincts had made him victorious many a time.
With of course, the exception of Lucifer’s rebellion against his father. Lucifer had believed Azazel
to be on his side; they had fought together when the dispute escalated. Michael, his brother, had
wasted no time launching an attack. Without a moment’s hesitation, Michael had cut through the
perimeter and nearly landed a strike to Lucifer that he had only just managed to avoid.

In the brief, but bloody, battle that ensued, the small band of angels who had initially sided with
Lucifer was easily dispatched and contained. Even Azazel, interestingly. And when Lucifer was
punished for his revolt, he was the only one to fall, even more interestingly. Other angels, Azazel
included, paid for transgressions much, much later.

Did he still sound a little resentful after a few eons? No one could hold a grudge like the Devil, he
supposed.

Lucifer stared down his one-time friend. “Don’t hold back now. This is just getting interesting.”

Azazel met his eye. “I found it disconcerting that Asmodeus seemed to know about every
insurrection. Especially when it involved Mammon. After a time, it was too convenient to be
easily dismissed.”

“Isn’t dealing with that kind of thing part of his, I don’t know, job?” Lucifer asked pointedly and
with a hint of scorn.

“I did tell you it likely wasn’t of import,” Azazel reminded him lightly. “Are you going to explain
why you nearly eviscerated that man’s soul? He’s not a demon. Or why you cared about him
recognizing me?”

Lucifer smiled sardonically, “Of course not. That would defeat the whole purpose.”

“Something happened between you - while you were on Earth?” he guessed.

But he wasn’t going to receive an answer, it seemed. Lucifer ignored him entirely and looked
toward the east tower, just barely within the perspective of the Great Room’s balcony.

“Sorry, I have some business to attend to. But since I can’t be in two places at one time, and it
seems the priest doesn’t know you, I have a very special job for you. You see, I need some
answers. Make him talk. Anything about a prophecy, any detail at all, I want to hear about it.”

It was a gamble, trusting that sensitive information would come back to him unfiltered. But it was
a calculated risk. Lucifer had to obtain more intel, deduce who was doing what around here, find a way to check on the Detective and soon, all while being the King of Hell. No pressure.

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After Ella’s bombshell that morning, the tribe had awkwardly gone their separate ways; Linda home to check on Charlie, Ella to her apartment to feed her chicken, and Maze and Chloe back to their apartment. Ella was glad to know the truth but was still a bit dazed by its enormity. Her knowledge was still more abstract, not having seen irrefutable proof of the angelic or demonic, and Chloe felt that was probably for the best. Maybe it would make everything easier to digest. There was no denying that seeing, say, the Devil’s face or an angel’s feather, could be paralyzing. Before leaving, Chloe took a break from tidying their mess in the penthouse and asked her how she was doing.

Ella had been standing at the balcony, watching the city come to life below them. She stood barefoot, a bit of a mess from sleeping in her dress, and hair tangled. She offered Chloe a tired smile. “Weirded out. But in a good way, I guess.”

“I get that. Are you… upset?” Chloe had ventured and hugged herself in response to the brisk morning air. She was relieved Ella sounded pretty calm.

Ella shook her head in response and told her, “No. I just feel like there’s so much we never really understand. I’ve lived most of my life seeing religion as a story about faith. Accepting that so much of it has dimensions no one knew? As much as I needed to know the truth… I don’t know if it’s better to be in the know or unaware. It’s heavy stuff.”

“Yeah. I know. I never believed… in any of this before. It was an eye-opener. Made me reevaluate a lot,” Chloe agreed. “I didn’t just mean about knowing about Lucifer, though. Are you upset with us?”

The brunette hesitated for a moment, then shrugged. “Yes and no. The thing is I kind of get it. It’s huge. It’s like really huge. And honestly, if you’d told me, I don’t know if I would have believed you.”

A half-smile tugged at the corner of Chloe’s lips. “Isn’t that it, though? Lucifer did tell us, over and over, and we never took him seriously. It’s huge. It’s like really huge. And honestly, if you’d told me, I don’t know if I would have believed you.”

A half-smile tugged at the corner of Chloe’s lips. “Isn’t that it, though? Lucifer did tell us, over and over, and we never took him seriously. Who would?”

Ella laughed, though it was a bit sad. “Guess it’s something you have to figure out yourself.”

Chloe wanted to ask how Ella felt about Lucifer now that his identity had been confirmed. The last thing she wanted was Ella fearing him. She hesitated on the words, finally pushing them down for a later date. They agreed to talk later once Ella had more time to absorb, and Chloe decided the best she could do was offer to be there as she worked through it. Ella was probably better equipped to handle it than any of them had been, she reflected.

In the meantime, she had something to do.

Chloe showered off the previous night and changed into fresh clothes. She had decided to visit the bank this morning while she still had the nerve. She’d warred with herself for hours and ultimately decided that she needed to at least find out what he’d left her. To leave it there would be an act of rejection like she’d come to realize in her conversation with Linda. She doubted she would ever touch the house or use whatever he’d left her in the bank, but to act like it wasn’t there at all wasn’t fair to him.
It had also occurred to her in the shower that there was the possibility that whatever it was could help her figure out how to bring him home. Only Maze or Amenadiel would know, but it was a first step. In the face of last night/this morning, she was absolute in her determination. Their relationship ending there wasn’t right; she could feel it resonate in her bones.

Maze was typing on her laptop when Chloe came down the stairs. She paused a moment, finding the scene a bit amusing. It seemed so tame, so ordinary, for Maze, that she nearly laughed in shock.

Hearing and sensing movement, the demon glanced up. “Oh, hey,” she said. “Going out? Thought you’d need the day to recupe, lightweight. You were still looking green when we got home.”

Chloe rolled her eyes. “That’s because I had bourbon for breakfast. I don’t have a stomach forged in Hell,” she teased. Maze blinked at her in surprise before a small smile played at the corner of her mouth. “Anyway, yes, I am going out. I decided to go to Lucifer’s bank.”

Maze nodded and looked at her computer screen again. She was scanning documents from Lux. Thankfully, Lucifer had always hired the best to handle different facets of Lux; financials, payroll, management, supplies. She was pretty certain handling the account books herself would be her own personal hell. As it was, she checked over the reports every few weeks, just to make sure all was in order. Someone would have to be masochistic to try to swindle them, but that didn’t mean she was lax enough to let her guard down. Vigilance was key. In Hell, lulling your opponents into a false sense of security was practically taught at birth.

She noticed that Chloe hadn’t left yet, or even moved from her stance by the couch, and looked up at her again with one eyebrow lifted.

“I was wondering if--” Chloe started, a little uncomfortable. She toyed with the edge of her grandmother’s afghan folded over the back of the couch.

Tensing up again, Maze shook her head and cut her off before she finished the question. “I don’t know what he left for you.”

“No, that wasn’t what I--” Chloe blew out a breath, feeling unaccountably nervous. After finding out the truth about Maze, her tough and impervious demeanor made so much sense. She’d hoped that it would improve their relationship and ability to communicate. Yet, trying to talk to Maze about something so personal, she was worried she would push her too far.

Chloe came around the end of the couch and sat down, bending one knee on the cushion and turning to face Maze directly. “That wasn’t what I wanted to know. I’m just really curious about something.”

“Okay,” Maze replied, completely without expression. She set the laptop on the coffee table.

“Lucifer wrote in his letter that you might choose to stay. I’ve been wondering, if he asked you if you wanted to go back with him… why did you stay?” She wanted to understand. There was still so much she didn’t know about their previous lives.

Not that long ago, Chloe recalled Lucifer trying to explain why he and Maze were on the outs and he’d said something to the effect that she was mad he wouldn’t take her home. At the time, she’d thought it was something stupid, like refusing to give her a ride home one night, and written the whole thing off as immature. Now, with working hindsight, she realized Maze had wanted to go back to her real home. She’d finally been given the opportunity, yet she hadn’t taken it.

Maze looked away, and Chloe worried she had truly offended her, but then realized Maze was
searching for the right words. Or maybe the nerve to voice them. Where Chloe was out of her depth with all the devil-and-demon stuff, Maze was with her more human side.

“If he’d asked me a year ago, even a few months ago, I would have jumped at the chance. I felt betrayed. By everyone. I didn’t belong here,” Maze said. She was looking at the table and forced herself to meet Chloe’s eyes, let her in. It was more frightening than taking on ten adversaries without a single blade. If she’d learned anything though, it was that courage came from facing challenges; not the physical ones, those were easy, but the ones that tested you on the inside. “I wanted to leave because I was hurt.”

“I’m sorry,” whispered Chloe, knowing her rejection had also hurt Maze. How hard must it be to finally have people know the real you, and then watch them walk away?

“I’m over it,” Maze said. “The thing is, I figured out I was hurt because I let myself love people, and that gave them the power to hurt me. It really pissed me off. It made me feel weak. Then I came close to losing one of the people I cared about and I realized… that would have really been Hell. Running away made me weak. The place I wanted to go back to was an escape, but even with all the hurt I had here, it was worth it. There’s no love in Hell. No friends.” Maze’s expression turned a little wistful, a little soft, and Chloe wondered who it was Maze was thinking of.

She cleared her throat and said, “Well, I’m glad you stayed.”

The look Maze gave her was only the tiniest bit unguarded, but it told Chloe all she needed to know. Maze was glad too.

After a quick drive downtown, Chloe entered the bank and headed directly to the counter to ask the clerk how to access the security box. Chloe honestly knew nothing about the process, never having had one before. She fumbled for a bit to identify the account number, grimacing when she realized she hadn’t brought any of the information from Lucifer’s file.

When she explained that Lucifer Morningstar had given it to her, however, the clerk’s eyes widened and she departed to get her manager.

That’s just great, Chloe thought. How humiliating would it be if they called the cops? She could hear the precinct ribbing already, and little of it would be amicable. She was still carrying some heat from Palmetto, despite the fact she’d been proven right, and that compounded with her two office relationships… Well, not a lot of compliments were being dished her way.

The manager appeared and apparently had no inclination to call the police. A sandy-haired man, a bit on the short and round side, shook her hand with a smile she could only describe as oily and greeted her with overdone enthusiasm. Evidently, not only was she listed in Lucifer’s account, but he was one of their most prestigious clients.

He did seem to have a never-ending supply of money, so that wasn’t a terrible surprise.

Eventually, the obsequient manager led her to the security box chamber and showed her how to use the key, and after assuring her that they were at her service if she needed anything, anything at all, he left her in blessed privacy.

Chloe reached for the box slowly. Exhaling a deep breath to calm her suddenly racing pulse, she opened it. She slowly reached in and withdrew the object that had been nestled in soft, dark velvet. Lucifer’s signet ring shone in the overhead light.
Oh, Lord. Somehow, this wasn’t what she’d expected. She’d never seen him without the ring, not even once. The ring wasn’t even an accessory so much as it was a part of him. It was hard to even imagine him without it. How many times had she witnessed him twisting it between his fingers when deep in thought or quietly, and he could do that sometimes, listening to her as they talked during a stakeout?

She was tempted to leave it in the security box where it would be safe. It was far too large for her to wear. A week ago the constant reminder of him would have been excruciating. Now, though, maybe it would give her strength and encouragement as she looked for a way to find him. Quickly, she unclasped the necklace he had given her -- she had barely gone without it since -- and added it to the chain. The ring hung suspended, the bullet nestled against it.

Out on the street, Chloe headed for her car. Being downtown already, she was going to stop at the precinct for a few hours and catch up on paperwork. She had a lot of documents to go through while the Hopper case was still ongoing. Getting into her car, she paused by the open door. She felt an odd awareness behind her, and she turned imperceptibly to look for someone watching her out of the corner of her eye, but didn’t see anyone taking an interest in her, just people going about their day. It wasn’t the first time either; the sensation prickling the hair at her nape happened last night at Lux as well. She’d dismissed it then because it was very likely in a place where people took notice of each other, she’d felt the brief focus of someone’s gaze. She told herself to quit being paranoid and ignored the shiver that chased over her skin.

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“As much as I love guessing games darling, especially when they involve a blindfold and cuffs, I promise you this isn’t the time for them,” Lucifer warned. “What are you trying to accomplish? Putting Mammon on the throne?”

Lilith gave him a look of complete boredom. Mammon was a silent and sullen lump leaning on the opposite wall.

He leaned close, smirking. There was one trick she couldn’t get out of. “What is it you truly desire?”

Lilith’s stare snagged, caught in his gaze. She was quiet, unblinking, and then, “To be queen.”

“Sorry, darling. You’re not my type.”

She sneered, although she still couldn’t look away. “I don’t plan on ruling with you.”

“And just how do you think to accomplish that? A celestial must rule. Do you really think there’s enough diluted angel in Mammon’s perverted veins to do the job? He doesn’t have enough celestial glow to light a candle,” he mocked. His insulting glance to Mammon was momentary. “No offense,” he added, not sounding sorry at all.

The trance broke, and Lilith visibly pulled away, leaning back against the stone and studiously fixing her gaze at some point just behind his left ear.

His interrogation of Lilith and Mammon was yielding absolutely nothing, and his “mojo” as the Detective called it, had revealed no more than he already knew. The problem with torturing people who did it for a living was that it made it nearly impossible to actually torture them. Frustrated, Lucifer took at least some comfort from knowing that he had them under lock and key. Chained in a tower in his home, which would normally sound like a tantalizing way to kill a few decades, would throw a wrench in their gears.
Other than that, he was temporarily stymied. He didn’t like feeling impotent. It was completely unnatural.

He’d brought Asmodeus along, just to see how the trio interacted. That was also getting him nowhere. Lilith glared at him. He glared at Lilith. Mammon glared at Lucifer. Really, it was nauseatingly boring.

“You’re not strong enough to overthrow me,’ he said pointedly. “It’s ridiculous.”

“Well, you’re not the same as you were, are you?” Lilith looked him up and down insolently. “You’ve spent too much time living with humans. Soft.”

“Nothing about me is soft!” Lucifer echoed with outrage.

“Look at you, bent out of shape because I mentioned some woman,” her words degraded.


Lucifer turned flaming eyes on him and was pleased by the recoil the boy made, shrinking back against the stone wall. If he wasn’t so furious, he would have been amused at the irony: Mammon disdainful of a human woman when, in fact, Lilith still was one. He moved his gaze to Lilith.

“You will leave her alone,” he growled.

“I? How could I do anything?” she said with false innocence. “I am locked up in a tower, remember?”

Yes, but that didn’t mean she didn’t have schemes. “If I find any demons doing your bidding…”

“You’ll what?” she cocked her head to the side and scoffed, “The old Lucifer would have ripped me apart by now. L.A. made you too complacent.”

“You’re trying to goad me. I’m sorry to disappoint you, but I’m not going to fall into your plans that easily.”

Dealing with Lilith had its own complications. As she was human, she had a human soul. Granted, she was definitely on God’s naughty list, but killing her was still in a nefarious gray area. On the one hand, he had already crossed that line with Cain. On the other, he didn’t want to damn his own soul. At least, not any further. Mammon was several-generation demon. Disposing of him didn’t concern Lucifer in the least, but he might be useful leverage against Lilith. Lilith didn’t care about anyone but herself, but it seemed she reserved something for Mammon.

Lucifer quit the room and gestured for Asmodeus to follow him. Once out of earshot, Lucifer asked what uprisings Mammon had incited. He wanted to hear another angle, maybe notice something peculiar.

“Mainly just stirring up desires for more power,” he answered. “I kept a close eye on him. He let Lilith do most of the dirty work. I can’t decide if he is unable to devise what to do himself, or if he purposefully orchestrates through Lilith.”

“Somehow,” Lucifer said dryly, “I think it’s Lilith.” He sighed inwardly. Questioning suspects without looking like you were questioning suspects was a lot harder than he’d thought. This had been far easier with the Detective. Perhaps that was because he could use his “power” on humans, whereas demons couldn’t divulge what was secret to their souls, as they didn’t have any actual souls.
“My King…” Asmodeus paused.

Wearily, Lucifer looked at him. “What now?”

“This woman Lilith mentioned, is she here?”

Lucifer hesitated, not sure whether to answer. “No,” he said slowly.

“She is on Earth then?” Asmodeus asked. “As you know, I have made certain no demon would dare attempt another possession. If you are concerned, however, I could look for her, report if there are any suspicious activities or signs of deceased humans occupied by demons.”

Not bloody likely.

“It would be far more productive to curb demons from possessions by blocking them here, don’t you think?” Lucifer asked. “Keen to visit the human world again are you?”

Asmodeus spoke very quietly. “I know what it is to care for a woman you are refused.”

“Refused is putting it mildly, considering you were condemned to Hell for it,” Lucifer replied archly. And he doubted very much that Asmodeus’ care for Sarah had been genuine.

The infraction Asmodeus paid for was the murder of not just Sarah’s husband, but seven of her husbands. His sin had been a lust he could not turn away from. Privately, Lucifer wondered if his lust was not for Sarah but for blood, for it seemed once he began to kill, he couldn’t stop.

Lucifer was no stranger to lust, but he certainly didn’t kill over it. Even the unfortunate death of Mr. Cain Pierce. He lusted for the Detective though that was only one-tenth of the complicated mess of feelings he owned where she was concerned, but it wasn’t his lust that had driven him to kill. He had been chasing vengeance in her name. For her.

And that was where the crux of the difference between his and Asmodeus’ experiences lay. What Lucifer did was for Chloe, and Asmodeus had only ever done for himself.

“She is only a human,” Lucifer said carefully. “She isn’t of concern here.”

Asmodeus looked skeptical but left him without another protest. It didn’t escape Lucifer that Asmodeus was trying very desperately to be helpful to his King.

Still, the idea had merit. Would it be possible for him to pop out, check on the Detective, and return to keep the demons suitably restrained and in line? The problem was time, the flow of it being so difficult to measure here. Mere seconds on Earth could count as endless years here to an imprisoned human soul. For the rest of them, however, time still moved swiftly but at a distorted pace. It would be difficult to control, but could he? He would have to manage it closely, down to the briefest of glimpses, just to look around and ensure she was safe. Then he could come back without her plaguing his every thought.

Chapter End Notes

I love reading your thoughts as the story progresses! This is a wonderful experience and I hope to continue to hear from you. I appreciate each and every word. In respect to this chapter, I have to say... Lucifer is seriously tough to write. I have the deepest
respect for the show's writers. He's a special blend between hilarious and perv. I'd like to know your thoughts on cliff-hangers. How am I doing there? Thoughts on how to improve if needed?
“I can’t believe this!” Chloe muttered. Her eyes were strained and her temples throbbed in tune with the beat of her heart. She had been poring over the financials of the only two possible suspects she could determine in Jonathon Hopper’s murder. It seemed instantaneous on t.v. shows, but this kind of work took days and days of meticulous searching. Every statement, every credit card, narrowing on any purchase that could remotely relate to rat poison. And after two days of grueling mind-numbing torture: nothing. Back to square one.

She wondered if this was one of those tortures in Hell.

If it wasn’t, it should be. Lucifer had probably dedicated a whole chapter of new torture techniques based on his time with the LAPD.

Chloe had been at it for hours, so long in fact that she was surprised at the time when she checked her phone. She decided the best thing for her was to get some sleep, recharge, and then maybe with some luck she could figure out square two. She gathered her things, switching off her computer, and started to head to the garage, but then she stopped and turned around. Maybe it was too soon, but she was full of anxiety and as much as she wanted to give Ella space, she just needed to see for herself that she was doing alright. She was a little worried Ella had been avoiding her.

Peeking her head into Ella’s lab, she was disappointed to see it empty. Everything looked neat and orderly, like she’d packed up for the night. Chloe sighed. Maybe she should call--

“What are we looking for?” a voice whispered melodramatically by her ear.

“Gah!” Chloe gasped and startled, whipping around to find Ella smirking mischievously.

Ella snorted in amusement, “I’m sorry, I’ve always wanted to do that! The look on your face!”

“Jeez, Ella, you about gave me a heart attack!”

Rather than look contrite, Ella laughed again and lifted her hands in a gesture of surrender. Chloe’s laugh was born of relief as much as anything. Ella was treating her normally, not as if she wanted to pretend Chloe didn’t exist. “I just wanted to see how things are going,” she said lamely.

Ella sobered and jerked her head in the direction of the exit to the parking garage. They could walk and talk. “To be honest, I could use a little more time to process. I keep thinking about certain
stories from the Bible - I can’t help it. They just pop into my head. I’m cutting open a spleen and bam! Wondering if Jesus actually raised a man from the dead. And I mean I’ve actually met Cain and Eve - actual real live people from the Bible.”

They ascended the stairs and Chloe said, “I should probably find out more about that someday.” What she didn’t know could fill a bucket.

“What, the Bible?”

“Yeah, that.”

Ella looked doubtful, “That’s the problem. There are so many contradictions. Like who is really good and why are some people literally smited while others are forgiven?”

She stopped walking when they hit the parking lot, seeing their cars were parked in opposite directions. “Can I give you some advice?” Chloe offered.

“By all means,” Ella answered seriously.

“I think a lot of it depends on context. When we’re working a case, our job is that way. We examine evidence in light of the context of the murder, or else we wouldn’t know what was relevant or not. And from my experience, at least, it seems the Bible and a lot of that stuff might not know the right context,” said Chloe.

Ella was looking at her thoughtfully. “You know, that’s really… logical. What do you mean, your experience?”

“When I went to Rome. I visited the Vatican and when I was there, I met Father Kinley,” Chloe hesitated. Was it a good idea to share the things that had planted the seeds of doubt for Lucifer? She still wasn’t sure how Ella felt about him in light of her redefined world. “He… he collected all this stuff on Lucifer, circumstantial things that made him look really bad. But he didn’t know the context of any of it.”

She was quiet another moment, mulling over Chloe’s words. “Context. You’re absolutely right.”

Though Ella departed with a smile before they separated, Chloe wondered why she still felt an immutable distance between them. Ella was talking to her, she didn’t seem angry or on the verge of a break down, so why did Chloe still feel something was wrong?

Dinner with Trixie that evening was short as she had a science project to complete and Chloe had been late getting home thanks to rush hour and, grumbling to herself, had finally relented and stopped for fast food. At least she had the whole day with Trixie tomorrow for her birthday. Maybe it was because she had been so consumed with her thoughts and impatience to get home, she didn’t register that eerie sensation common to the last few days of feeling like someone was nearby, watching.

She was too busy caught up in her own head, berating her tendency to put in long hours when she encountered a snag in a case. She went over notes and records and statements until she could recite them by rote to find even the tiniest detail that stood out as different. And that… that took up time she could be giving to Trixie. That fine line between mother and detective, both trying to make a difference in their own ways, was sometimes so blurred she worried she wouldn’t find it again.

She felt like the worst kind of fraud at these moments, when she recalled being so angry with Dan for letting work take priority. Wasn’t she just as bad when she fixated on a case to this extent? As a child, she’d often felt her parents’ jobs had demanded so much time that it made her feel a little
insecure. Her parents had never intentionally made her feel that way, but from a child’s perspective, when you had one parent who was gone for weeks and sometimes months at a time, and another whose job was fundamentally dangerous, all she’d wanted was to get them both in the same place at the same time and just hold on. Chloe never wanted her daughter to feel like that.

So maybe she worried or obsessed a little too much. Was that such a bad thing? At least, Chloe thought, she was aware that nights like these could add up and was trying to keep a pattern from forming. She wasn’t going to let it sneak up on them. Everything recently had reminded her, more than ever, how every moment mattered.

Now Chloe rounded the stairs, making a quick stop in her room to toss her coat on the bed and grab her fluffy bathrobe. What she wanted was a bath. A good, hot soak that would relieve all the coiled up tension in her neck and back from, well, everything. Would a time ever come again when she could take a look around and say, Wow, this is normal?

Chloe finished pulling her hair into a messy bun on the top of her head and turned the doorknob. Then she shut the door in her face. “Oh my God, Maze! I mean -” wasn’t she working on trying to replace all those Gods and Goddamns in her vocabulary? “What are you doing!?”

“I’m doing my hair!” Maze opened the door and Chloe peeked at her from squinted eyes. Maze had thankfully wrapped herself in a towel, holding a curling iron in one hand and mascara in the other.

“Naked?” she exclaimed. Nope, sorry buddy. She lived with a demon for crying out loud. Normal was so far from here it was practically on Mars.

“Chill, Decker. It’s no big.” Maze tossed her hair accessories in the drawer under the vanity, completely comfortable with her body being displayed. “I don’t see why you’re freaked out.”

“Just… lock the door next time so I don’t walk in on you. Or Trixie walks in on you. For G-- ugh. Aren’t you worried about burning yourself?” Chloe unearthed a towel and a few scented candles from the closet. She was really going to need to find some proper swearing phrases. Knowing that God existed, like really existed, made her feel a little freaked out about throwing His name around all the time. She didn’t want to make Lucifer uncomfortable with it either. If she ever got him home.

“That’s half the fun!” Maze answered cheerfully. She smirked and dropped a wink over her shoulder as she headed out. The towel was carelessly tossed on the bathroom tile before the door closed.

Chloe shuddered lightly, not sure which part Maze’s reply had been in response to. Half of what Maze said, she was pretty sure, was just to mess with her these days. Maze’s attempt at a normal sense of humor, she supposed.

The bathtub had never looked more inviting.

She’d added a few handfuls of bath salts to the steaming water, and by the time she slid in, she sighed with pleasure. Her necklace was carefully laid out on the table beside her. This was good, she thought, turning on the music playlist on her phone and setting it at a soothing, low volume. She submerged her shoulders and neck in the water before straightening and finding a comfortable position.

She’d close her eyes for a few minutes, let the hot water do its work on her muscles, and feel
relaxed and refreshed for Trixie’s party tomorrow. There was still some unresolved tension
between her and Dan’s parents since the divorce, and while everyone wanted Trixie to have fun at
her birthday party, it was bound to be a little awkward.

The ache that had settled at the base of her neck and between her shoulder blades was gradually
released with the delightful pressure of an expert touch. Chloe blinked through the sleepy state of
tranquility. In some remote corner of her brain, she was sure there was some reason why it wasn’t
possible for him to be here.

“What are you doing here?” She mumbled.

Lucifer chuckled and infinitesimally increased the pressure right where she needed it, the pleasure-
pain releasing the muscle’s strain. A happy moan escaped her. “Taking care of my Detective, of
of course,” his voice teased low in her ear as he leaned over her, alleviating every ache until she was
nearly limp in transported rapture.

His warm hands mapped the expanse of her back, along the sides of her ribs, and returned to her
shoulders. His touch reached further to gently massage what was accessible of her breasts. Another
tiny moan was elicited as he teased her, the promise of more tantalizingly close.

He encouraged her body to turn over and she waited for his hands to resume their activity, but he
made her wait. Chloe barely managed to refrain from squirming in suspense. Finally, to her relief,
his hands descended once more, but worked their way up her legs instead, stopping to massage her
calves and making excruciatingly slow progress to her thighs, where he administered the same
agonizing treatment.

“All in good time,” he answered, voice playful with mischief. Relenting some, he raised himself
higher, weight on one arm and using the other to trail lightly up her body, returning to her breasts.
Nimble fingers massaged, sliding smoothly with the application of oil while he kissed her, hot and
not at all analogous with the lazy and lambent manner of his touch.

But Chloe was a woman who didn’t mind taking control to get things done. She wanted more and
a whisper of something in her mind told her there wasn’t much time, urging her to hurry. The
thought tickled momentarily in her brain, but elusively slipped away. All that remained was that
sense of urgency one sometimes felt in dreams, a truth known in one’s body but not yet in the
mind. Shoving the thought away before clarity could destroy her pleasure, she shifted, locking her
legs around his waist and using his short pause of surprise to flip them over.

A quick grin at his bemused expression, then she leaned down and initiated another hot kiss. “I
like this naughty side of you Detective,” he murmured wickedly against her lips and—

And then she woke up in a bath of tepid water, having grown cold over who knows how many
hours, her own hand playing at her breast. Chloe huffed in annoyance. At least her subconscious
could let her finish!

Biting her lip, she closed her eyes again. She tried to recall the details of the dream. One hand
drifted down beneath the water and touched her center, where she ached for him, inner muscles
tightly clenching on nothing but her fantasy.

He was fairly certain he had arranged his absence in a way that no one would be the wiser. If
anyone did wonder where he was, Lucifer had laid out a dozen or two possibilities for where and what he might be doing. Impressively crafty, if he did say so himself.

The only person he’d given any hint to was Azazel, and he wasn’t even completely sure why, when he’d taken him aside to ask about progress with Kinley. Nothing on that front either. Torture on both the body and the psyche hadn’t unearthed any new information. Religious zealots could be like that, believing in their crusade so passionately with every fiber of their being, no logic or persuasion could sway them.

What Azazel had managed to ascertain was that no other demon had visited the priest’s loop. That wasn’t helpful to Lucifer in the least as it pointed him right back to square one, which was Dromos, who was dead, and completely useless in any case.

Lucifer rubbed a hand over his face, tired in a way that was emotional far more than physical. His physical form didn’t alter in Hell, so there was no time between when he’d left and now for his body to feel so exhausted. There had been ways of passing time before in Hell that had been enjoyable. Why couldn’t he find them now?

He started up the engine of the ‘66 Camaro - he wished it was the Ferrari, but what could you do when you were trying to be inconspicuous - and began the drive back to the garage he kept near Lux. He’d followed the Detective home from the precinct and waited long enough to make sure she was fine. He had been careful to stay out of sight. He knew if he made the mistake of approaching her, talking to her, he would be tempted to stay and it would just hurt both of them when he left again.

Somehow he’d missed Maze, however, and he wanted to make sure he talked to her about necessary precautions before he left. If she wasn’t at Lux, he’d wait until he could speak to her tomorrow, but he couldn’t risk more than that. The comparison of time wasn’t felt as keenly by demons, but enough would pass while he was gone to raise questions. Not that he had to answer them, of course. He answered to no one. But that didn’t mean he wanted more bloody problems on his hands. One catastrophe at a time was enough, thank you.

The Detective and her offspring had left a few hours ago and it was approaching early evening by the time Maze sauntered in. Lucifer had stayed in the car at first, cautionary of being seen, but finally the stifling heat, not to mention the boredom, had him anxious to quit the cramped space. Stakeouts were bloody boring by yourself.

“Hello Mazikeen,” he greeted slyly, pleased he’d extracted a startled look from his demon when she entered and found him lounging in the armchair.

“Lucifer!” She hissed, “What are you doing here?”

“You’re not happy to see me?” He blinked, tone a little wounded.

She rolled her eyes to the ceiling. “Of course I am — besides the fact that you actually got the jump on me. Normally I’m the one doing the sneaking.”

He shrugged, nonplussed. “So what’s the problem?”

“The problem,” she snarled, “is that Chloe was devastated when you left. It broke her heart. You waltzing back in if you’re not planning to stay is… is… evil,” she finished.

Lucifer felt himself angering. He wasn’t evil. He was trying, still, to do the right thing. Irony, his Father’s grand joke: The Devil, evil itself, trying to do good and still achieving evil. “Not your
place, Mazikeen,” he bit out.

She glared at him for another moment before slumping. “So, why are you here?”

His temper cooled, although it was still on edge. It always was, these days. Lucifer leaned forward, arms resting on his knees, and studied his hands. How to put this?

“It turns out… The Detective might still be in danger. Maybe her spawn as well.”


The party hadn’t been a total awkward-fest after all. It helped that Dan’s parents knew their son had moved on. If he hadn’t, they’d happily be treating her to scathing, biting remarks about fidelity and honor and vows throughout the day.

As it was, she’d only received one or two sour comments on the sad rate of divorces in the country because people married too young and impulsively (read: her and Dan, but mostly her) and an implication that people (read: her) didn’t see an oath made before God as important because religion wasn’t emphasized anymore. That one kind of killed her. She took God very, very seriously now.

The important thing was that Trixie had a great time. Her grandparents had hosted the entire thing, a carnival-themed party that came with an authentic circus clown. Was she the only one a little weirded out by the clown? She snorted. She hung out with demons and loved the Devil himself, and she was freaked out by a clown.

“Tell your parents thank you again for me. They really went all-out for Trixie’s party,” Chloe said as they approached the apartment.

“Will do. You know how overcompensating these things can get,” Dan replied, careful of his wording around Trixie. Chloe understood his meaning clearly; his parents didn’t visit the city often, preferring to stay in the suburbs. It made visits with Trixie difficult. As a result, their efforts ended up a little overblown.

Chloe was familiar with the pattern, having had a mother who expressed her regret for long absences with impractical gifts and gestures. It all came from the right place, although Chloe would have been happy with watching a movie together or baking cookies. Like her mom could bake cookies.

“Mom, can I go in and show Maze the balloon animals?” Trixie asked in excitement.

“Yeah, of course. Dad and I are just finishing talking. You go in. Say goodnight to Dad first!”

Trixie did so and hurried into the house to share her discovery.

“And sorry about anything my mom might have said, y’know,” Dan gestured between them, “She’s still accepting that we…”

“Divorced. Yeah. It’s fine, really,” Chloe assured him. “So, I’ll finish the weekend with Trixie and you could take her to school Monday? She could stay with you for a few days if you want.”

“Sounds great,” he answered. But instead of the conversation coming to an end, he lingered and his hands came to rest on his hips.
“Listen, we’ve both been through a lot lately. Me with Charlotte and you with… Lucifer. It’s made me do a lot of thinking,” he said.

Inside, Trixie came to an abrupt halt, ecstatic to see both Maze and Lucifer standing in the living room. Bouncing with excitement, she squeezed Maze with a hug and turned to do the same to Lucifer. The same look was on their faces. Sort of surprised, sort of scared. Feeling a little nervous, Trixie let him go.

It was a testament to Lucifer’s astonishment that he didn’t utter a word of protest at the child’s attack. He patted her on the head, secretly a little touched at her genuine happiness to see him. Father help him, he’d sort of missed the little creature.

“Um, start getting ready for bed Trix,” Maze said. “I’ll be up in a minute and you can tell me all about your party and if you got to show anyone your new knife.”

“Uh, okay,” Trixie said, and left the room, feeling there was something going on that she didn’t quite understand.

Dan was still talking, his eyes earnest and locked on Chloe’s. “All these bad things that have happened, it made me think how much sense we made together. As a family, with Trixie. Normal. It was good,” he said.

“Oh no. Chloe was at a loss for words. She got where he was coming from, she really did, and completely sympathized with the anguish and despair he’d faced. But they were so past that place. He wanted comfort without risk. She couldn’t be that for him.

Dan moved a little closer, bridging the gap between them. His hand came up to brush a lock of hair away from her face. “Remember? We could be that again.”

The door opened and Lucifer paused in the threshold. His expression was completely devoid of emotion.

Her heart stuttered in her chest. He was here. Was he? All she could do was stare, stunned. She couldn’t manage a single coherent thought.

Lucifer shook his head and gave a humorless chuckle. It didn’t take a spark of electricity for her brain to guess what he was thinking. ‘Of course’ was the message written in his body language. She needed to explain—

“I’m impressed Detective Douche. It appears you own some bollocks after all. Well, don’t let me keep you. Unless of course, you want some pointers?” He shrugged into his coat and lifted an eyebrow.

“No? Then I’ll leave you to it. I’m sure the Detective will take pity on your attempt at seduction soon.”

He didn’t quite shoulder past them. He didn’t have to. Dan stepped back, out of his path, too surprised to say anything. Chloe turned, watching Lucifer walk away without a single backward glance. Inside, Maze also stood frozen and met Chloe’s eyes, shaking her head slightly.

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Chapter End Notes

I know. Don’t hate me.
Must know your thoughts. ; D
Chloe came out of her paralysis feeling disoriented, like time had abruptly snapped back into place like a rubber band when pulled taught. What just happened here?

“I’m sorry, Dan. I’ve got to go,” she said without preamble, stepping inside, and closing the door firmly, but gently, behind her. She turned to Maze, “What the hell?” she asked, dazedly and a little accusingly.

“I’ve got Trixie,” Maze said. “Go!”

“But—“

“Go!” Maze repeated, jerking her head towards the door with emphasis.

Chloe nodded numbly and, stealing a glance to make sure Dan had gone, swiftly made for her car. She hoped Lucifer would be where she thought he was. If he had left completely again…

Maze got Trixie into pajamas and bed and read her a spiced up rendition of Cinderella. She’d been so disgusted the first time Trixie had shown it to her, she’d insisted she be allowed to tell it her way. In her version, Cinderella gave that stepmother a what-for, booted her from her house, tied up the obnoxious stepsisters, siced the mice and birds on them, and took herself to the bar — er, ball. She hooked up with the Prince, but damn if she needed him to save her.

She finished the tale with satisfaction, pleased by Trixie’s giggles and approval. It made her feel wonderfully warm inside, but unlike any of the fires in Hell. She felt lucky. Admired, even. Not for how many demons she could defeat, but just for being her.

“Maze?” Trixie asked on a yawn as Maze stood up and absentmindedly straightened her covers.

“Yeah?”

“Is Lucifer okay?”

Maze paused. “Picked up on that, did you?” Trixie was sick smart. Lucifer, who couldn't recognize his own thoughts and feelings even if they rolled over and pinched him in the ass, pegged by a miniature-human. Hah.

“He looked upset. So did Mommy.” A tiny frown formed on her face above troubled brown eyes, and Maze reached out to smooth the wrinkles on her forehead.

“They’ll figure it out,” she said, although inside she felt that foreign feeling, the one that had speared through her when Eve walked away. Disappointment and hopelessness.
“I hope so. Mommy’s been sad,” Trixie said, her own face sad for her mom. Kids saw so much more than anyone thought; they just didn’t always fit it into words. When Maze reached the door she asked, “Maze, will Lucifer make her not sad anymore?”

“I hope so,” Maze echoed, flipping off the light. She wasn’t sure any of them had any idea what they were doing.

Chloe vacillated between guilt and anger during the drive to Lucifer’s penthouse. Not guilt over Dan. (That was stupid and not her fault, and if she had a nickel for every time one of Lucifer’s exes had spoiled a moment! Can you say “flight attendant”?) Guilt for being angry. And part of her was angry. Maybe not so much angry as frustrated and confused.

He’d been gone. Seriously gone, no indication he would ever return. Then out of the blue, he just walks into her house - when she wasn’t even there! - and acts snide when he sees someone else express interest in her?

That part made her angry, frustrated, and confused. He didn’t have the right when he’d been the one to leave, for one thing. And how was he here, and had it always been that simple for him? That was… Why couldn’t he ever just sit down and talk about a problem like a normal person!?

Guilt was two-fold. He wasn’t a normal person and she knew that. Chloe knew better than to expect him to be rational, or deal with an issue in a remotely reasonable way. On that point, her guilt expanded. How could she be angry when that was who he was, and as she had come to understand, who he was existed on a whole other level.

Equally self-inflicted was her guilt for being angry with his behavior when it was in direct opposition to what she’d been yearning for, desperate for, since he’d left: for him to be here. Lucifer was here, within her reach she hoped, and instead of being overjoyed, she was upset. That annoyed and frustrated her too.

Chloe parked the car outside Lux rather than pulling into the valet just yet. She was only a few minutes behind him. She might have (okay, she did) disregarded a few speed limit signs in her hurry and might have (...she did) turned on her siren once or twice to bypass a red light.

But after driving like a bat out of Hell to get here - and there were far too many Hell expressions - an unsteady laugh broke free. Really, she was chasing Hell, not running away from it. Chloe stared at the building, her anxiety in her throat. She couldn’t sit here and avoid it, distracting herself with ridiculous idioms. She was terrified of going in there.

What if he wasn’t there? What if he was and looked at her like he didn’t care? Greeted her with that detached and distant “Detective”? The last minutes she’d spent with him he had told her he loved her. Kissed her like he loved her and couldn’t bear to let her go. And if she walked in there and he pretended none of that signified, she would well and truly crack. This was an emotional bungee cord.

Under her shirt, his ring on her necklace laid just a few inches above her frantically pounding heart. She felt its presence like an imprint. Hadn’t she believed it was her encouragement and strength to find him? And now she had the opportunity to see him and was too much of a chicken to do it. Chloe pulled it free and rubbed her thumb against it as if it were a magical talisman.

Lucifer said it was to bring good fortune.
So she had to trust that and not squander this chance.

When the elevator doors opened, she was instantly relieved to see him standing by the window. His back was to her and he had discarded his jacket. An arm raised, lifting a glass of dark amber liquid to his mouth. She knew he must have heard her arrival, but he hadn’t turned around.

Chloe opened her mouth to speak, but he turned then and beat her to it. His lips lifted in humor and he lifted a sardonic eyebrow. “Detective Douche finished already? It’s no wonder you left him in the first place if that’s indicative of his stamina.”

It was the same kind of flippant remark anyone would expect from him. That she would have expected and accepted with a roll of her eyes or shake of her head, but that was before she knew better. Chloe listened to his tone carefully, searching through its layers for any sign of what he was really feeling.

Lucifer took another long drink, draining the tumbler. He’d decided, once behind the wheel, that before he departed for Hell once more he was going to have a decent drink. It wasn’t because he was angry - because he wasn’t. What bothered him was that he had no idea what the turmoil he felt was exactly. Maybe Dr. Linda could have told him.

He struggled in his effort to define it, to separate and distinguish and name each part. He could speak every and any language, but it was so difficult to conjugate the right nouns and verbs for this. It was similar to when Chloe had been pursued by Pierce. There was something hot and uncomfortable that had roared in protest to see her accepting, wanting, someone else’s attentions. Jealousy. An ache that wanted her to choose him in order to assuage it. There was some anger too. Not at her, but at the situation, and at his Father. A kind of sadness because he did want her to be happy.

Underneath it all lurked hurt and self-effacing chagrin, a voice that said he was a hundred times a fool. He’d pined for her like an idiot, and here she’d probably meant “I love you” as a dear friend with deep affection and kissed him back as such.

So it was with a roiling mixture of this riot of turbulent emotions that, in true Lucifer fashion, he didn’t caution his words and spoke with his trademark acerbity. “Detective, I’m truly flattered that you’d come to me after being left so unsatisfied. I’m afraid I can’t oblige, however. I’m on my out.”

The low simmer of anger that had been humming under Chloe’s skin since he’d made his dramatic exit rose higher, approaching a boil. She was coming to a good mad. “Stop it!” she snapped sharply.

Lucifer didn’t say another word, although nothing about his demeanor or bearing softened either. For lack of a better word, she would say he was blank. Forcing a facade over whatever he was feeling. Well, she wasn’t letting him use humor and apathy to avoid this.

“You don’t get to do that, Lucifer!” Chloe continued. The simmer boiled over. “You don’t get to leave and then come back and be upset over something I had no control over! And even if I did, you left!” Though she knew that wasn’t fair, the hurt, as irrational as it was, was still there. He’d left her even though she’d begged him to stay.

“I didn’t want to go, Chloe,” he said, low and dangerous. His gaze was intense, and she felt her pulse quicken in trepidation, but not exactly fear.

“I know, but you did,” she said just as quietly. “You said you wouldn’t be back.”
He assumed she meant that it was unfair to expect that she would refuse relationships with others, and she was right. He agreed completely. Except for in the purely selfish and insecure piece of him that he refused to acknowledge, which said he sort of had wanted her to long for him and not replace his presence in her life quite so easily. It was unlike him and didn’t make sense, but few things did when she was around.

Unsettled, he walked past her to the bar and refilled his glass. Might as well enjoy it while he was here. He didn’t offer her any. “I’m not back,” he said. “As I said, I’m on my way out.”

“What are you doing here?” she asked, not leaving her spot, but turning to watch him.

When he didn’t answer, Chloe felt the confusion and frustration warring again to come to the surface. “Is this what you’re doing? Coming in and out but not wanting me to know?” Her voice dropped to a strangled whisper and she closed her eyes. “You wanted to avoid me?”

“No!” The word escaped him, roughly, as if pulled out against his will.

“Then explain it to me, Lucifer, because I don’t understand!” She cried, and pushed her falling hair from her face. “Why are you here if you’re not staying?” She would push him if she had to. He wouldn’t lie, so she’d push the truth out of him. “Why tell me you love me if you didn’t mean it—if you were just going to come here and hide from me?”

Lucifer stiffened, and even from her distance Chloe could see his fingers tightening on the glass tumbler. “I am not hiding!” His tone was indignant.

“Then what?” Chloe challenged, and she knew her next words weren’t just fueled by their recent calamity, but also stores of wounded pride and exasperation, but out they poured anyway. “Things got too real for you? You admit to having serious feelings and have to take any route away?”

She wasn’t sure if she meant his actions now or his decision to return to Hell in the first place. Candy had bubbled up in her mind, and for a moment it was the same story all over again, the past overlaying the present with lethal symmetry. How many times could he run away before she couldn’t take it anymore?

He advanced a few steps toward her before he came to a sudden halt. The lines of his body read temper and she recognized his desire to unleash it from the times she had held him back or talked him down. She caught the merest flash of red in his eyes before it was banked, but his gaze didn’t leave hers.

There had been a time after seeing his Devil face that the thought of being on the receiving end of that anger and rage had terrified her. But that time was gone. She knew he would never turn the force of it on her. Back straight, she held his gaze and stared him down. To her embarrassment, though she didn’t let it alter her stance, she felt a tear escape.

Lucifer’s stiffness disappeared and his eyes squeezed shut before opening again. He looked tired, weary, like he had traversed the earth and back.

“I was worried,” he said. “I needed to see for myself that you were alright.”

Chloe swallowed hard and swiped at her cheeks. “Oh,” she mumbled lamely. What response was there to that? Her own anger deflated some. Lord, the man was a piece of work.

“I can’t stay. I wasn’t lying about that,” Lucifer said softly.

Chloe nodded; she knew he wouldn’t lie. Maybe to himself, but not to her.
A short, humorless laugh. “I thought… if you didn’t know I was here or I didn’t talk to you, this would be easier.”

Meaning he was making the decision that was easiest for him again. Not finding out, or taking into account, what she really wanted. Taking the most painless route again, which always seemed to lead away from her.

Well. She straightened her shoulders. That was enough. He wanted to keep from feeling pain, or spare her, too bad. This hurt already, and it was going to hurt a hell of a lot more. He was not making this choice for her again.

Her hand came up to her necklace and she rubbed the ring again like she had outside, wishing and maybe even praying a little for luck. She pulled the band from her hair, releasing what hadn’t already fallen free of the ponytail. Her hands moved to her buttons.

Lucifer looked a touch confused, adorably so, in fact. She kept eye contact with him, fingers descending steadily from one button to the next. His eyes widened.

“Not— not a good idea, Chloe,” he rasped, and took a deep swallow of his whiskey, though his eyes never left her.

“I know.” She pulled the last button free and toed off her flats. She walked towards him, slowly. He didn’t move a muscle, the arrested look on his face saying he wanted to tell her to stop but couldn’t.

Her jeans unfastened and she shimmied free, leaving them on the floor. She advanced another step. With every inch she bridged, her resolve strengthened. She had now with him. Maybe it was borrowed time. Regardless, she wasn’t going to let it slip through her fingers. She wasn’t going to wake up tomorrow from another heartbreaking dream and regret that she hadn’t taken advantage of the time she was given.

“I’ll still have to leave,” Lucifer said. There was a warning in his voice now. He couldn’t look away. He really was a monster. He had to tell her to stop, though he really, really didn’t want to.

“I know,” Chloe said, and smiled. The unbuttoned shirt was disrobed last and dropped at his feet.

The Devil himself held his breath.

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Chapter End Notes

I think Chloe’s been due to get a lot of this off her chest, yeah? And while they both vent these emotions (him just wanting to be loved, her just wanting to understand it all) to other people - usually Linda - when does any of it get aired between them?

Also, I’m not seriously bashing on Disney movies. I just think Maze would have a way different take and want Trixie to see it too.

ALSO - My oldest daughter roped me into watching season 4 again (such a hardship) and his final scene on the throne shows him wearing his ring. Damn disappointed. I liked my spin on it.
Chapter Summary

Chloe uses the Devil’s trick against him. So much feels. Smut, pillow talk, smut.

Chapter Notes

Extreme-Extreme graphic content below! Profuse sexy-times. It’s really all smut down there guys. If you don’t want to read it, the very very very bottom might be safe.

Also, I don’t normally share songs, but it was so intrinsically him and perfect, I couldn’t not do it. If you don’t know the song, look it up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He stood still as a stone statue and hard as one as well. Thought had stuttered to a halt when it became apparent what Chloe intended, somehow her stripping more erotic than any contrived display Selena or any other woman or demon could achieve. Division pulled him in two directions, one saying he was a bloody monster for not stopping her, and if he had just left, she wouldn’t be standing here almost naked and tempting him beyond reason and without mercy; the dark, selfish voice that he used to listen to without question warning him he would never receive another chance like this, and unlike other times when his abandoned conscience had kicked him and said ‘This isn’t what’s best for her’, he didn’t want to face eternity never having had this.

Did he really want to spend eternity in regret? It was bleak to imagine.

Chloe, clad in nothing but her skin and simple cotton that was sweetly feminine and made his mouth run dry as effectively as any enticing lingerie could have, raised up on her toes to bring her face closer to his and her hands crept up his chest to rest behind his neck. Gentle exertion urged his head lower so she could press her lips softly against his. He was frozen, wanting desperately to lose himself in her mouth and warring with the upheaval inside of him.

She pulled back, though not far, and he realized his arms had come around her. Holding her, but not locking her to him like his body screamed for him to do. Lucifer drew her closer, not daring to do more than lightly embrace her, and exhaled a sigh into her hair. He couldn’t walk away. Damn, but he should.

“Lucifer,” Chloe said, tugging his hair to bring his face up to hers again. “Do you really need me to tell you my greatest desire? I literally stripped naked and took my clothes off. What more of an invitation do you need?”

A half-laugh escaped him and Lucifer gave in. The great seducer, seduced. He wasn’t a saint, after all. “Just giving you time to come to your senses, Detective,” the appellation now warm on his lips.

She stretched up again to meet his height. “I’m not changing my mind,” Chloe whispered against
his lips. If his destination wasn’t already certain, he would have undoubtedly been sent to Hell for this. There was so much he should probably tell her—

This kiss was met with everything he had held tight, and he let go with overpowering relief, passion and desire and lust crashing to the surface like waves cresting the beach. Lucifer grasped her tightly; she’d had her chance to recant and now she was his, and he was wasting no more time in indecision.

Her body firmly pressed to his, not so much as an inch between them, and still he couldn’t get enough, he thought feverishly. Lucifer lifted her, filling his hands with her delectable bottom, and encouraging her to wrap her legs around his waist. Better, but still not enough. Where was his patience? He loved sex, spent his days consuming it, playing with arousal, anticipation, and gratification like well-tuned instruments; a symphony he controlled with eons-old expertise. None of it was in reach now. All he wanted was closer, tighter, harder.

Lucifer was oblivious to the obvious conclusion; his perspective always obscured and clouded by his own self-doubt and abandonment. But as their kisses grew more wild, unleashing years of suppressed want, his subconscious knew what he did not. If he had been at his piano, his feelings could not have painted a clearer picture than an anvil to the head.

Never know how much I love you
Never know how much I care
When you put your arms around me
I get a fever that’s so hard to bear
You give me fever when you kiss me
Fever when you hold me tight
Fever in the mornin’
Fever all through the night

Sun lights up the day time
Moon lights up the night
I light up when you call my name
’Cause I know you’re gonna treat me right
You give me fever when you kiss me
Fever when you hold me tight
Fever in the mornin’
Fever all through the night

And like the Lightbringer he had once been, he felt that light burn inside him. Dad above, how he felt it.
“Why, Detective,” he rumbled, “It appears you weren’t very thorough. I’m terribly disappointed in you.”

Her beautiful eyes were unfocused as she stared at him uncomprehendingly. “What?”

“You still have clothes on,” he explained simply, a wicked smile gracing his face while his hand glided along her back and the clasp of her bra surrendered, falling sway like everything else to his persuasive charm.

It evoked a breathless laugh from her lips and he could have sworn her eyes sparkled. Her already lush lips, now swollen from their kisses, curved in a smile. The smooth slide of her skin, especially the light pressure of her full, soft breasts, was positively sinful against his nearly full-dressed body, and he greedily caressed every inch he could reach.

Lucifer wanted to sink into her, wanted to surround himself with the warmth of her skin. He explored the graceful arch of her neck, giving into the desire to lick his way back to her jaw and return, like a magnet pulled to its mate, to her mouth. He drank in her shiver, electrified by it. Treating her to hot open-mouthed kisses, he slowly lowered her to the couch, loathe to break contact. He followed her descent but moved to kneel before her and was temporarily arrested by his ring on her necklace. He wanted to say something, felt compelled by it, but had no idea what.

The ability to think was gone. It was all feeling now; instinct and the desire to please her a heady aphrodisiac beyond anything he’d ever tried.

Everybody’s got the fever

That is somethin’ you all know

Fever isn’t such a new thing

Fever started long time ago

He was lured by the scent of her, not just the natural perfume of her skin, but the compounded musk of arousal. Drawing her panties slowly down her legs, he settled between her thighs and clasped her hips to bring her closer to the edge. The honeyed warmth of her on his tongue was delicious, as was her moan of pleasure. Spurred on, hungry to hear every sound she could make, he dipped his tongue into her hot center.

Lucifer heard her gasp his name and he continued to play, wanting to drive her own fever as hot and as bright as his. He licked slowly, lapping at her like a cat with cream. He listened intently to each hitched breath, every whimper and whisper, learning.

Baby, turn on your love light

Let it shine on me

Well, baby, turn on your love light

And let it shine on me

Well, just a little bit higher

And just a little bit brighter, baby
You give me fever

“You give me fever” Chloe gasped, arching helplessly into his mouth.

You give me fever

He liked that. More of that, please. His Detective, his Chloe, begging for him.

You give me fever

So he did it all again, and again, eliciting everything but her loss of control. That was what he needed desperately. It was a compulsive need, craving, hooking its claws into him. Lucifer moved to her clit, which he had been studiously withholding his attention from, and sucked lightly. He felt her body tense and watched as she cried out, watched as her orgasm took her apart in rapt fascination.

You give me fever

His arousal, already hard and throbbing, pulsed against his trousers at the sight of her, limp and breathless, and wet. So wet, he ached. The fever intensified if that was at all possible. He had to be in her. Lucifer was almost startled to realize he was still clothed, and quickly stripped, not caring a whit if buttons popped or tore.

Chloe seemed to come back to herself, though she didn’t move from her boneless sprawl, her eyes seeming to eat him up while he shed his shirt. They dropped to his belt when he began to pull it free, and she licked her lips, drawing a tortured groan from him.

“Um,” Chloe said, and Lucifer paused though he was pretty certain it was doing him an injury to do so. “You’ve been with a lot of people. I mean, a lot,” she said.

“Yes, and?” His brain struggled to catch up.

“It would be irresponsible of me if I didn’t ask,” she said, and he could gather from the flush in her cheeks - well, what hadn’t been caused by him - that she was embarrassed. “You are… safe, right?”

He frowned, temporarily baffled. What was she getting at?

Oh. Right. “Oh, right, you mean… all the promiscuous sex and countless partners over thousands and thousands of years,” he said, understanding dawning. She was worried about possible undesirable side effects.

“Yes. That. ‘Promiscuous’ was enough to cover it,” she snapped, sounding like her usual self when she was reprimanding or berating him for some joke or other. He’d missed it so much, he smiled.

It was also a lot sexier when she was naked and flushed, but he refrained from telling her that. Maybe he would later.

Lucifer hurried to reassure her, turning a very serious, if rare, look on her, his brown eyes completely guileless, “You have nothing to be concerned about. I promise. Devil-scout oath and all that.” He held up three fingers in a parody of a Boy Scout’s honor.

Chloe sat up, “And what happened to Amenadiel? The baby?” Hesitation was clear in her voice, but as always, his Detective bravely sought the facts.
“Can’t happen either,” he answered, feeling a little strange at the thought of his brother and his child. “He was mortal for a time. I’m not.”

Her hands loosened the buckle of his belt and tugged at his pants, helping when he briefly stood up to shuck them. For a moment, as he sank to his knees, he wondered why he was struggling to fill his lungs with air.

Lucifer pulled her to the edge of the couch once more, raising to meet her. Chloe, anticipating his intention, accommodated him by tilting her hips. Even so, he entered her agonizingly slowly, inch by inch. He was actually larger and thicker than most - which he knew to actually be true given how many men he’d also taken as lovers. The slide into her was tantalizingly slow, the lubrication made by her cum easing the way. She was hot and tight and lovely.

Romeo loved Juliet
Juliet she felt the same
When he put his arms around her

He said, “Julie baby you're my flame”

Thou givest fever when we kisseth
Fever with thy flaming youth
Fever, I'm on fire
Fever, yea, I burn forsooth

Engaging her mouth with another kiss, they both took a moment to adjust. Then Lucifer swept her up without once leaving her hot sheath, lifting her in his arms like she weighed nothing, and for him, she really didn’t. He suddenly realized how very badly he wanted to be able to spread her out on his bed, view every delectable inch of her. Navigating the stairs with ease, Lucifer gently laid her on the bed and followed her down, still held tight within her.

As if he couldn’t bear to withdraw from her completely, he found himself thrusting in deep nudes, unerringly hitting a spot that made her moan helplessly, watching her intently to find a rhythm that made her eyes widen and her breath come in little pants. He was going to change their position, finding the idea irresistible to see her on top, riding him, but somehow he became too caught up in her.

Captain Smith and Pocahontas
Had a very mad affair
When her daddy tried to kill him

She said, "Daddy oh don't you dare"
"He gives me fever with his kisses"
"Fever when he holds me tight"
"Fever, I'm his missus"
"Daddy won't you treat him right?"
Her moans mingled with his and she clasped him firmly, from her legs locked around his hips to her arms tracing the lines of his back. It was probably only mere minutes, which he would have thought humiliatingly unacceptable if he’d been able to think at all. Instead, the damn unquenchable fire burned hotter and as her orgasm hit, womb clenching him deeply, tightly, she cried out with a look of almost surprise. Then he was coming, following after her without thought, surprised too.

Now you’ve listened to my story

Here’s the point that I have made

Chicks were born to give you fever

Be it Fahrenheit or centigrade

We give you fever when we kiss you

Fever if you live and learn

Fever till you sizzle

What a lovely way to burn

What a lovely way to burn

What a lovely way to burn

What a lovely way to burn

——

Chloe’s heart hammered in her chest and she dragged in a breath, feeling completely knocked over, partly from her orgasm and partly from the solid weight of Lucifer atop her. She should tell him to move so she could breathe but she didn’t want to, so instead she continued to caress his back, slick with sweat and, she marveled, trembling.

It abruptly hit her that those women were right; it really was the best, most unbelievable, incredible, earth-shattering night of her life. Chloe tried to stifle a laugh. As if she’d ever tell him though. His ego would never get over it.

Lucifer felt more than heard her laugh and pushed himself up, looking down at her with a mixture of astonishment and indignation. It was so endearing, his befuddlement, that she laughed again. “Happy,” she said in an attempt to explain her mirth.

His expression was wry, and he moved to collapse on a pillow, reaching over to pull her over too. She complied easily, resting her head on the pillow beside his and rolling on her side to face him. They lay there in silence for a moment, watching one another and catching their breath.

“I made you happy?” he asked quietly. Chloe would have expected such a different reaction from him — something obnoxiously arrogant would be fitting — but instead she was charmed by his humble question, his tone that said that this man, who had probably bedded more than half of L.A., wanted reassurance. He seemed stunned and almost… spooked.

She squelched another laugh, amused that the Devil could be afraid. “Very. Very happy,” she said.
“You have no idea how many times I tried not to scream ‘Oh my God!’ But I didn’t want to bring up your dad,” she said, tongue in cheek and eyes dancing.

He laughed, a sound of pure amusement, and she wondered if she’d ever heard him so uninhibited before.

“What, you don’t want to scream ‘Oh my Satan!’?” he asked teasingly.

“Mm. Not quite yet.”

His hand came over to pick up the ring, still hanging from her necklace. He held it in his fingers for a minute but didn’t say anything. Neither of them spoke, maybe wanting to put off the conversation she dreaded, the proverbial elephant which sat suffocatingly heavy in the air. The one where he got up and told her goodbye again and left.

You knew this would be painful, Chloe, she thought. You did it anyway, because the alternative was worse. She would soak up every minute and be thankful. Once he was gone again, she would put on her big girl pants and deal with it.

Somehow though, the exertion caught up with her, and she drifted asleep. Chloe snapped awake in alarm, uncertain how long she had been out and sure he was already gone, and was swamped with relief when she found him watching her, still laying beside her with one arm behind his head in a classically masculine pose, that perturbed look shadowing his face.

“Come here,” he said, before she could ask him about it. His arm came around her, securing her against his solid warmth, and she relaxed, panic retreating for the time being. Chloe rested her head on his chest and gave in to the impulse to stretch her arm across him, fearing he’d find it too possessive and pull away.

He surprised her though when his other hand came up to hers, his thumb rubbing back and forth against the inside of her palm. He was quiet, which was unnerving, and she sensed he was a million miles away so she spoke, desperate to bring him back to her, to the present, for as long as she could. This quiet, somber, pensive Lucifer made her sad.

“What is it like there? Hell?” Chloe asked, and then immediately regretted bringing up the reminder, and in response to the subtle tensing of his body beneath her.

After a long pause, Lucifer said, “I don’t like who I have to be there. I don’t think I ever hated it like I do now.”

She wanted, terribly, to ask him what he meant; to understand, and as futile as it may have been, to try to ease his pain. There was a ring of pain in those words, and other things she couldn’t decipher.

She didn’t want to contribute to it, but she couldn’t help the burgeoning curiosity or questions that had weighed on her for months now. Tonight was the most serious she had ever seen him, and she wondered if maybe he had let her in past the walls of humor and cynicism.

“Why did you fall, Lucifer? You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to,” she rushed to add.

“Why does any father eject a recalcitrant son? Disobedience mostly, questioned his rules. Words were said,” he paused infinitesimally, perhaps caught on the edge of a memory, and damn did she want to know what it was. Then he dismissed it, and his jaded smile returned. “Might have instigated one pesky little war. You know me, my mouth is always getting me into trouble,” he joked, trying to inject humor. “I come by my temper honestly, I’m afraid. Old Testament’s chock
Then he did his best to distract her, and she let him. Lucifer gently pushed her back, returning her to her side, rolling to face her as well. His fingers came to play at the peak of a breast, lightly squeezing and rolling the tightened tip, teasing and determining what she liked.

“I didn’t pay these proper attention before, did I? Can’t lea- let the lovelies feel neglected,” he said. “Especially since it’s been at least 10 years since I’ve seen them.”

Chloe’s lips twitched in a smile at his allusion to her one-and-only film, in which she’d gone topless. His dark head bent, taking a nipple into his mouth and suckling in a gentle rhythm that had her breathless and body humming in anticipation, heat gathering and aching for him to assuage it. “Well,” she managed, “You do always try to… make up for your mistakes,” she agreed, arching.

When he’d finished paying homage to one, he moved his attentions to the other, deftly hitching her leg around his hip. An exploration of his fingers found her already wet and ready, and with one slow and sure stroke, he slid inside her. The sensation of being suddenly and completely filled shocked her, a delirious wave of pleasure crashing over her, then building in intensity when he expertly stroked her clit with varying degrees of pressure, changing the angle and method as soon as he felt her nearing completion and seriously testing her sanity to the limit.

Chloe caressed him in return, eager to reciprocate everything he stirred in her. She discovered where a light sweep of her fingers made him shiver, how the pace of his breathing increased when she grew close to coming, or how it seemed to urge him faster, harder if her fingers tightened around his shoulder or lower, a firm pressure on his testicles or ass. If she provoked him to moan her name, the sibilant and seductive sound caused a new wave of heat and yearning to collect in her.

This time was more tender, even if Lucifer didn’t realize it. But she felt it in his touch, urging her further, working her through the aftershocks and tremors of one orgasm into another. It was in his eyes when he watched her, so focused and driven, it was unnerving. It was also addictive and impossibly arousing, the knowledge that she was the center of his concentration. How had she never seen this side of him before?

She fell asleep again, unable to help it, sated and sleepy in his arms. She didn’t know how long he stayed, simply watching her sleep, or that his thoughts were a wreck of conflicting emotions and convictions.

She woke up alone to the sound of her cell phone buzzing on the nightstand, surprised and disoriented to see it there. Chloe yawned and answered, where she was and last night coming to her as she lay on her back and contemplated the ceiling. “Mm, hello?”

“Chloe?” came Ella’s familiar voice. There was a note of concern in it.

“Yeah, what’s going on?” she pushed past the burn in her throat. Chloe looked around her again, knowing she wouldn’t see him, but vainly hoping anyway.

She saw something white on the pillowcase and picked it up, turning it carefully in her fingers.

“We caught another case. It looks like the same as the Bell.”

—
Wow, that was a lot of sex. I feel a disturbing blend of proud, embarrassed, and voyeur. Please be kind.
The Best Intentions

Chapter Summary

Chloe is thrown into a new case that seems to be mysteriously connected to the previous, unsolved homicide. Meanwhile, Lucifer is freaking out. Feels.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I’m so sorry I called you on your day off,” Ella said when Chloe entered the crime scene. Her usually cheerful demeanor was sober as she led Chloe to the victim, camera freshly strapped around her neck and at the ready.

Chloe replied reassuringly, “It was the right thing to do. If the case is related…”

“I’d say it is,” Ella’s tone unnaturally grim, undeniably sharing the same thought as Chloe. A second homicide following the same pattern indicated the makings of a possible serial killer; three being the unlucky number everyone wanted to avoid. Then she gave Chloe a once-over, really looking at her for the first time since her arrival, looking thoughtful.

“There’s something different about you,” she said shrewdly, measuring the subtle changes in her friend. Beyond the tiny differences, or maybe a combination of them, Chloe appeared more alive than she had in weeks; fair skin healthy instead of sickly pale, eyes clear instead of shadowed, even the way she stood a little straighter.

Awkwardly, Chloe cleared her throat and tried to steer the conversation back to the very important matter at hand. Murder, death, crime scene. “Completely normal,” she denied, pulling on gloves to avoid Ella’s probing, and far too perceptive, regard.

Even she knew it for the lie it was; everything about her since she’d woken up felt different. It was incredibly hackneyed and cliched, but she felt she was glowing inside; something ignited since Lucifer touched her and it hadn’t dimmed yet. She felt warm, relaxed; the tension and grief soothed. Without the calm, without the pleasurable ache of muscles that had gone unused for awhile, she might have convinced herself it had only been another of her dreams.

But there had been other evidence as well: his sandalwood and smoke scent on the pillow, the careful folding of her clothes on the chair, her phone thoughtfully placed on the bedside table - the man really could be considerate, couldn’t he? - not to mention the slightly sticky reminder between her thighs, but most of all, the feather.

She was puzzled as to why he’d left it. Another momento to remember him by? A fallen angel’s interpretation of a rose? It was no more than six inches in length, the vane velvet and silky to the touch, and softly radiant. Truly, one of the most beautiful things she’d ever seen. Fearing it becoming damaged, she’d located another of Lucifer’s handkerchiefs crisply and meticulously folded in a drawer in his closet and protectively wrapped the feather inside its folds, carefully tucking the make-shift parcel into a pocket of her purse.

Chloe hadn’t been home yet, but had given Maze a call to apprise her of the delay and offer an
approximate time of when she’d be back. She hoped Maze could enlighten her about what to do with the feather and where to store it, for one thing. The exasperating conversation had gone something like this:

Maze: Did the two of you finally have sex?
Chloe: Yes, and no, I’m not talking about it.
Maze: Oh, come on! Did he do that thing—
Chloe: I’m still not talking about it.
Maze: Well, you guys take alllll the time you need. We’re good here.
Chloe: I’ll be home after I stop and look at a crime scene.
Maze: You’re giving up totally hot sex to look at a dead body? I mean, I’m not judging… I always figured it was some kind of foreplay...
Chloe: He’s not here.
Maze was uncharacteristically quiet for a long moment, then Chloe heard something indecipherable muttered another her breath.
Chloe: I’ll be home soon.
Maze: Sure, sure.
And then she’d disconnected without another word.

Ella was snapping photos of the victim at varying perspectives for later reference, and Chloe took note of the body, assessing and mentally cataloguing her observations. He was also male, though older than the first victim, she’d guess somewhere in the vicinity of early-thirties. There were other discrepancies as well, so many, in fact, that Chloe was bothered by the extremity.

This man was obviously more prosperous, his fashionable apartment decorated to prominently display his affluence. Leather furniture, modernistic art and furnishings, glass sculptures and vases that had never held a flower. As direct a contrast to the young, struggling drug-dealer as possible. Two very seemingly different victims.

“Meet Xavier Alors,” Ella said, and gave Chloe the basic assembled facts. He was indeed in his thirties, his driver’s license naming him 36 years of age, was a minor player in the film industry, and had been discovered by his ex-wife’s sister, who he was also apparently sleeping with.

Signs of his recent illness were obvious, which Chloe recognized from Ella’s previous description of the poison’s effects on the body, such as the remnant vomit on his bathrobe and sheets. There were no signs of a struggle in the room aside from a spilled glass of water on the nightstand. A look of pain still vaguely twisted the sallow skin of his face, and in his hands rested a book, closed so that the gold engraved title was clearly displayed.

A King James edition Bible.

“Any idea if he was particularly religious?” Chloe asked, wondering if he had prayed when he was ill or became so ill he thought he might die, or the more likely alternative, arranged in his hands by his killer. Why a bell with the first victim and a Bible with the second, and both still clutched by
the deceased?

Distress clear on her face, Ella shook her head no. It was nearly imperceptible, but Chloe knew cases with religious undertones bothered her. “But I can tell you about the poisoning. The arsenic was dumped into the bottle of red wine on the counter and there are signs of the cork being resealed. But this was no slow accumulation of arsenic, Chloe. He was sick quickly and violently from the indication in the bathroom.”

She stood up and gestured in the direction of the bathroom with a jerk of her head. “His wine was heavily drugged so that he would get sick fast and in as much pain as possible. Someone wanted him to suffer.”

Chloe returned to canvass the apartment, giving the pretentious decor a cursory once-over but taking note that it painted an effectual picture of the man’s personality. Image seemed to be a priority, everything calculatingly placed to exude success. Personal effects were few, testimonial of either an extreme sense of privacy or a lack of meaningful connections. In the kitchen, she observed two glasses sitting beside the vintage, which was again selected to impress.

A gift from a guest? Or taken from the victim’s own collection and slyly returned?

Only one glass had evidence of being used, the other pristine, not containing so much as a drop, and by the volume in the bottle, she judged he had drank around two full glasses. Chloe beckoned a uni over and bagged both glasses. Chances were the barren glass would come back with no results, but it was better to be thorough and possibly recover a print or other form of DNA. The remainder of the bottle was also resealed and bagged, its surface conceivably yielding prints as well.

Finding that preliminary questions had already been asked of the woman who had discovered his body this morning, and that she had been given permission to leave, irked her. Chloe was not at all mollified that a time had already been arranged for the woman to come to the precinct for an official statement. As the lead investigator for the preceding case mysteriously connected to this one, she needed to be acknowledged as the primary detective, without her witnesses being prematurely dismissed before she had a chance to talk to them herself.

Still stewing, Chloe returned home, already missing the tranquility she’d felt this morning. Now she felt uneasy, unsettled, beyond the case or procedural politics. Something else that she couldn’t quite put her finger on. In the living room, she found Maze and her daughter watching Rambo and supposed she should be glad it wasn’t Hellraiser or something equally disturbing.

Maze saw her come in and followed her to the kitchen, leaning on the breakfast bar, assessing her with a long up-and-down perusal. Her features darkened in a scowl. “Sex is supposed to make you feel good, Decker. You look pissed off.”

For a moment, she was tempted to tell Maze about the case, curious what insight the demon might have into murders with an odd religious connection, but what could she really tell her? The guy had been holding a bible? It wasn’t especially forthcoming, and knowing Maze, she’d go in a completely alternate direction and likely start kidnapping nuns or something.

She reached for her purse instead and said, “Never mind about that. It’s not important.”

“Sex is alwa—“ Maze began to retort, but abruptly stopped when Chloe pulled the handkerchief from her purse. Brow furrowed, she asked, “What is that?”

She slowly, delicately, unwrapped the feather, leery of bending any part of its structure. Lightning
quick, Maze grabbed her wrist with such intensity that she jerked in surprise, the demon’s grip painful.

“Don’t!” Maze hissed, having immediately recognized the object.

“First,” Chloe said as calmly as she could manage, “OW, so let go. Secondly, what is the big deal about me uncovering it?”

The demon relented immediately, gaze following Chloe’s to where she still grasped her wrist like a vise, and released her hold. She didn’t apologize, of course, but took a deep breath and darted a look at Trixie, who was oblivious, absorbed in watching the movie.

“Chloe, objects of divinity can’t just be in the open,” Maze gestured to the air around them, as if that explained everything. “They can cause a kind of.. a kind of madness. Mortals who see proof of divinity sometimes can’t take it, like,” she hunted for a metaphor, “a computer on overload. Their brains are fried.”

“Oh, lovely,” muttered Chloe. But rather than dismiss Maze’s bizarre warning, it triggered something, a long-forgotten memory of Jimmy Barnes. He’d completely lost his grip on sanity. And she’d seen other people too, she remembered, who were similarly crazed from terror. After seeing Lucifer’s devil face, she’d assumed that was the cause, because it was pretty frightening…it shook something in one’s soul until you got used to it.

But maybe that wasn’t all. She recalled the man Lucifer had accused of stealing his wings and the madness on his face, like he had been rendered dumb, unable to speak or form coherent thought. Perhaps it wasn’t terror that did it, but the confrontation of the divine shaking you, knocking you, from your foundations.

Not wanting to take any chances with Trixie nearby, Chloe quickly wrapped the feather in its protective cocoon. Maze watched her with what Chloe could only describe as a calculating expression.

“Not your brain, though,” Maze said.

Chloe shook her head, “You don’t remember me freaking out for a month then coming back and nearly roofie-ing Lucifer?”

“Hmm. I don’t know,” Maze admitted thoughtfully.

“And what about Linda? She handled it,” Chloe continued.

“Yeah,” was her noncommittal answer, but to Chloe, it sounded like Maze was still thinking about it. “Keep it somewhere safe,” Maze said.

“Why would he give it to me?” Chloe asked. “Did he?”

There was an aggrieved look on Maze’s face before it was smoothly wiped clean.

“Probably,” she shrugged like it didn’t matter, and Chloe sensed that was all she was going to get from the taciturn demon. For now.

“Maze, is there anything it could do to, I don’t know, bring him back?” Chloe asked in a low voice, feeling both incredibly foolish and hopeful.

The demon shook her head in reply. “No, Chloe, I’m sorry. If I knew a way, I would tell you. I
think this whole thing is bullshit. I did think once that I could use one to get back in.”

Back into Hell, Chloe realized. “It could do that? Let you in?”

Maze shrugged, “I don’t know. I never tested it. But I wouldn’t recommend it, Chloe.”

She pretended she hadn’t been considering the idea of trying to go in after him, maybe, what, save him? Right.(Apparently, he could leave whenever he wanted, he was choosing NOT to. And though she hadn’t let it deter her last night, she couldn’t deny it was weighing on her. Giving into her curiosity, Chloe finally asked, “Why not?”

“I don’t think you’d survive it,” Maze answered seriously, made all the more intense by the softness of her voice. “It’s not a place living souls can enter freely. There’s only one human who ever has.”

—-

He probably shouldn’t have stayed as long as he did. It had been ridiculously foolish, as well as dicey. He’d been lucky his time away had largely gone unnoticed. The last thing Lucifer wanted was to stir up any more talk about humans he cared about.

He’d showered and shaved before leaving, perhaps putting it off, or maybe hoping Chloe would wake up and join him and then he could stay with her a little longer. But instead, she continued to sleep peacefully and he’d made himself go before he could do anything else that was stupid.

Because staying had been very, very stupid. It had done the exact opposite of what he’d hoped. Finally being with her hadn’t assuaged any of the hurt at all. First, there was that trouble breathing. Maybe she’d drugged him.

He’d most likely had more sex than anyone else on the planet and was well-acquainted with the elemental masculine pride that occurred when a sexual partner was pleased, but this had been a completely foreign experience. Even now, there was this strange pain that wasn’t really a pain in his chest that had come over him when he’d watched her. Robbing him of breath and control.

She must have drugged him, successfully this time, and he’d died. Again. And this was his loop, to endlessly remember and want.

Because he did still want. Perversely, he wanted more and more of that feeling. Even this panic that accompanied it.

Then his second act of lunacy, leaving her one of his feathers. He wasn’t completely sure why he’d done it. All his worry over her safety had been temporarily displaced, but then as he watched her sleep, it all came rushing back. What if she was hurt, if not because of him, but by her job?

Reasonably, he knew that everyone died eventually. He had been through this cycle time and time again, learning to keep friendships light, because there would always come a day in the future when he would return to the human realm and find that the people he’d known, laughed with, drank with, played with, were long dead. It was the way of it, for humans to die. But he’d never been able to accept hers. Not even the first time he’d worked with her and watched, in fury, as Jimmy Barnes fired and she went down, or later, when he’d watched her beginning to waste away from a poison.

So he’d left the damn feather because he just couldn’t imagine it or accept it.

Lucifer was supremely grateful for Azazel’s entrance, which pulled him from the direction of his
thoughts. He was eager to know what other information Azazel may have uncovered, and he needed his thoughts to be anywhere else right now.

“Anything new?” he asked as the fallen angel joined him.

“More of the same,” Azazel replied. “He carries guilt for many, many deaths and betrayals. In any scenario I used, he revealed only that this prophecy you spoke of is incomplete, but he has no knowledge of what it is. He could not translate it himself.”

Lucifer straightened, “He was working with someone then?” Yes, that did make sense. Kinley had said his work was not finished. Was there someone, now, carrying it on? He must have entrusted it to someone.

“Apparently, but all he kept saying was ‘The Communicator’ or something to that effect. Didn’t make any sense.”

Azazel was right; that made no sense at all. Lots of people communicated, or did he mean an instrument of communication? Or was it something like the prophecy communicated to him?

Maybe he meant communion. That was something priests did, right? One of the more bizarre rituals, he’d always believed, with clearly cannibalistic undertones. Eating Jesus and drinking his blood. Really, and the Church called him evil?

It was becoming clear there were two separate problems: There was more to this prophecy malarkey, and someone Kinley knew and worked with could possibly be doing something about it, and he was left with no idea of what or who.

Secondly, Kinley had spoken enough of this prophecy to Dromos that the demon had jumped into Kinley’s body to find him. No one else had spoken to Kinley, and only Dromos would have known there was a woman he cared for involved. He had seen her. For Dromos to have engineered an idea of replacing him, he’d needed someone cunning. And who else but the woman who had been dropping sly remarks?

“Lucifer!”

Asmodeus was approaching them quickly. “Your jaunt to the human realm — did you take a group of demons with you?”

Lucifer narrowed his eyes, “Of course not! Why?”

“Gone. I visited the gates - there are signs of demons passing through. If you didn’t take them…” he trailed off.

“That’s impossible! They can’t just open the gates and go for a walk!” Instantly, his confusion burned away on a churning tidal wave of anger and foreboding. She had demons to do her bidding, but how could she have orchestrated it?

Unless...

“Demons can’t break free in their corporeal forms unless they are brought through the gates,” Asmodeus was saying.

But Lucifer had already thought it.

With no time to waste on words, Lucifer abandoned Asmodeus and Azazel and made for the tower
where he’d left Mammon and Lilith, not caring if they followed or not. She had plotted the whole thing, he realized with clarity, diabolically inciting Dromos to revolt, planting the seeds of his brilliant plan to replace him. And when Dromos had returned to recruit more demons to possessions, he could have told her everything — this prophecy drivel, the humans he was with, his brother, his nephew… Chloe.

He barreled past the strewn bodies of the demons he had ordered to stand guard and threw open the door, unsurprised to find it completely barren, yet feeling the sinking in his stomach anyway.

“What could they be after?” Azazel asked from behind him.

Not what. Who.

Another ominous weight settled on him, and a horrible thought rang through his mind.

He had no idea when Lilith and Mammon had escaped. Had he led them right to her?

Chapter End Notes

Feeling a little trepidation over the previous sexy-times chapter. Too much?

Please help me steer in the right direction. Your comments mean the world to me.
Inductions and Deductions

Chapter Summary

Chloe puzzles over the feather and understanding Celestials, while Lucifer puzzles over motives and plots. Meanwhile, Maze is getting fed-up.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Keeping the feather secure in her jewelry box seemed too obvious, as did hiding it in her underwear drawer, though she was sure Lucifer would have been ecstatic. Chloe also considered using the safety deposit box at the bank but rejected the idea, afraid it would make retrieving the feather too inaccessible on short notice. She’d asked Maze to take it back to Lucifer’s penthouse, his safe there seeming to her to be both highly guarded and reachable, but Maze shook her head.

“I don’t know,” she’d said. “Lucifer may have wanted you to have it nearby if you needed it.”

“Needed it for what?” Chloe insisted.

Looking dangerously annoyed, Maze threw out, “It can heal you,” then said she had work to do and left.

The drama in this family. Drama that was so beyond uncomfortable dinner conversation on Thanksgiving or Maury-style man-stealing. How was she to understand it, let alone keep up? She was only human; only Chloe Decker, single mom and homicide detective. Not an intimidating angel in disguise, a lethal ninja demon, or an all-powerful, somewhat-sociopathic goddess.

It would be too easy to give in to the self-doubt, get swallowed up by the hurricane and be swept away. Chloe Decker might not be a lot of things, but what she could be was unafraid.

She would examine the whole magic-holy-angel-feather-healing part of it later and how it made her feel. Touched? Aggravated?

In the end, she chose a place where the feather would be safe from damage or, hopefully, accidental discovery, and still be within reach. Like the house he’d left her, she couldn’t imagine ever using it. But she could hardly hand it back to him and say, “Thanks for thinking of me.” His heart was in the right place. Everything with him was grand gestures when some words would suffice, but at least it was a language she understood.

From the row of framed photos on the hallway table, she picked up one taken at the bar down the street from the precinct. For last year’s Halloween party, she, Ella, and Dan had insisted Lucifer and Maze go as well. Smiles and grins looked back at her from goofy poses and laughing faces. Ella as a character from Star Trek, she recognized the costume but couldn’t recall the name, Dan as a cowboy from the Old West, Maze as Catwoman (yes, the complete costume), and herself as a witch, who was more laid-back than sexy, then Lucifer in a suit who’d cheekily replied, “I’m going as ME of course!” when asked. His only concession to a costume was a red tie he’d added to his ensemble.
She couldn’t remember who had taken the photo now, but she’d liked the idea of having something in the apartment that made Maze more included.

As far as she knew, it was the only picture around of Maze or Lucifer, for that matter (not including the stalker-scrapbook of Kinley’s). Had she ever seen photos in his penthouse? She supposed not, given that he didn’t need to use them as mementos of friends or family. His family was immortal.

For a moment, that thought stilled her - that in a way, he held himself so apart from the world. Lucifer socialized and partied and played, lived life with savoir-faire, but to a man that had lived forever, and would live forever, were his relationships just transient? None of them needed to be captured by a camera’s lens to be immortalized and remembered.

And that distance he reserved reminded her of another apartment, one just as void of pictures and mementos. No crayon drawings or honor roll report cards tacked to the fridge, no snapshots of vacations at the beach, holidays, or weddings. No life fully lived with people they loved. Only a cold, bare apartment of glass and sleek lines, of someone who maybe wasn’t what who he appeared to be either.

Uncomfortable, Chloe removed the back from the frame and gingerly inserted the feather. The backing had to be secured carefully, but no one would know if it was a little loose.

That afternoon they were going to visit Linda and Charlie. Trixie hadn’t seen the baby yet and had been begging to be allowed to hold him. That was up to his mother, Chloe told her firmly. There would be fewer opportunities to bring Trixie on a visit once Linda returned to work, so today was a good day to do it.

Plus, Chloe had an ulterior motive.

She was in the dark about a lot of the rules that apparently Celestials lived by. Between her reflections of past events and some questions that Linda or Maze had illuminated for her, she had gained much in the way of perspective. But there was still so much she didn’t know or understand.

So... Amenadiel was going to tell her.

Luckily, Linda was in full support of the idea and agreed to help manage things so that she had sufficient time to sit Amenadiel down and get some real answers. Or at least as real and full as she could get; according to Linda, some of it was too much to conceive on a daily basis. Trees, not the forest, she said with irony.

Baby Charlie nestled in Trixie’s arms, Linda caught Chloe’s eye and jerked her chin toward the kitchen, where she found Amenadiel washing baby bottles.

Too cute. And a little boggling, once you started to think about it: an angel painstakingly sterilizing baby bottles as if this menial task was his sacred duty.

See the trees up close, not the overwhelming forest.

Dedicated father, not angel of God. Compartmentalizing the way she did at work, Chloe focused on separating the two. For now, Amenadiel was a friend, dedicated father, and expert authority.

“Hey,” she said, clearing her throat a little nervously.

Amenadiel turned, and upon seeing her, dried his hands on a towel. Offering her a kind smile, he folded himself into a chair at the modest kitchen table. “Hi Chloe. How are you?”
“Good, thanks. How’s fatherhood?” Chloe asked, joining him.

The smile that spread across his face was in no way similar to the small, polite one of moments ago. Awe and pride and devotion beamed back at her, transforming him in a way that compartmentalizing never could. Here was a man who loved his family and it was easy to see him as such, painting him in a far more welcoming light. Anxiety began to recede and as they spoke, she relaxed enough to bring herself to the questions she burned, and dreaded, to ask.

When the conversation came to a natural lull, she used the pause to steel herself.

“Amenadiel, why…” why can’t he come back, Chloe wanted to ask. Instead she settled for Lucifer’s own words the night he’d left. “Why did Lucifer say they, the demons, had to have a King? I mean, why did he have to be their King instead of someone else, like one of them?”

The large man was silent for a moment before leaning forward and bracing his forearms on his legs. He knew this was her main purpose for coming, to seek answers. Amenadiel wanted to help her but fought an internal battle determining how exactly to explain. Some questions would only lead to more questions. And whereas in the past, he would have scoffed scornfully at explaining any of Celestial business to a human, he believed she deserved to know. Lucifer cared for her a great deal and it was obvious she cared for him as well; he had seen it himself on many, many occasions. That alone made her special.

So, he finally concluded, he would be as forthcoming as he could. For every question but one; the one that made her special in another way, and one that he had no answers for.

“I gather you mean why did Lucifer have to return to his throne, as opposed to why he had to be King in the first place?” he asked.

Chloe hesitated. Why he had been sent there to begin with? His fall? How badly she wanted to know. Lucifer’s evasive answer, no matter how honest the words were, had not shown her any of the truth. His side of the truth.

And that, she decided, was what she wanted. His story from his own lips. Not from a line in the Bible, not an angel bystander, not even God Himself.

“Why did he, specifically, have to return?” she asked.

“Because he’s the only one who could. Only an angel can open or close the gates from the outside. The inside, however… on occasion a spirit might get through, but it was Lucifer who kept the demons inside.”

“You mean, they could come out all the time, like when they went after Charlie?”

“No. It would be far, far worse. What you saw was possession. Child’s play next to the savage force of a full demon.”

Chloe swallowed, unnerved by the idea that those things had been the very weakest of attacks. “But Maze?”

Amenadiel leaned back and agreed, “Maze… is an exception. Her time here has made her different, more than she even knows. Even so, you have seen what she’s capable of, Chloe. Unrestrained, unchecked, demons would destroy everything in their path.”

When she said nothing, her mind painting a vivid picture of what she imagined the carnage would be, he continued, “He keeps order in a place of chaos. If he left them to their own devices, Chloe,
the effects could be heinous. No one but an angel can rule them.”

And he’s the only angel who’s been forced to, she thought sadly.

Chloe fished the ring from beneath her shirt, feeling she already knew what his answer would be, but unwilling to give up anyway. The words still came out sounding shamefully desperate. “And this? Can it be used to go inside - through the gates or whatever, like a feather? Or could it bring him out?”

The angel stilled, his penetrating stare stuck on the signet ring on her necklace. Very slowly, he brought his eyes back to hers. “How did you come by Lucifer’s ring?”

His tone, already serious, managed to become more so. Amenadiel looked like a strong wind could blow him over. A very strong wind. “Did he leave his ring with you?”

Despite his obvious shock, the timbre of his voice carried an almost threatening note. Chloe swallowed again, suddenly reminded he was not a regular man in a regular kitchen. She had no idea of the scope of his power but could imagine the ease with which he could wield it.

“Yes,” she answered, and before intimidation could cow her she realized the severity of his response meant that the ring was important. “Can it?” she demanded.

“No, I don’t think so,” Amenadiel answered.

“Well, what does it do? He said he brought it from where he came from. It must mean something!”

“Chloe, I don’t know,” he said again. “It’s the only thing he took with him from the Silver City. Heaven. I have no idea why.”

Heaven? She stared at the ring in shock, as if seeing it for the first time, and maybe she was - she had never imagined he meant heaven. An actual object from heaven, and she held it in her hands. Why?

“He said he thought it was for good luck. Is that true?” she asked numbly.

“You know as much about it as I do,” he answered.

As much as Amenadiel had answered her questions, when she and Trixie left, she felt more confused than ever.

—-

“I’ll go after them immediately,” Asmodeus said.

Lucifer was pacing before the fire in the Great Room again, and briefly looked up in response to the demon’s offer. “No.”

Asmodeus frowned, and Lucifer knew what he was thinking. The demon couldn’t care less about the havoc loose demons, not to mention Lilith and Mammon, could wreak on Earth, or the humans who would suffer. Authority, however, and power… those had been jeopardized. If Lucifer did nothing, well, it was as Machiavelli said, yes? It was better to be feared, and to forgive the offense of one was to encourage the trespass of many… Something to that effect.

Perhaps he was mixing his Pinterest quotes. He would have to remember to pay him a call
sometime. In any event, Asmodeus knew as well as he did what the repercussions would be.

Anarchy.

“I’ll have to go,” he said, considering the mechanics of it.

They needed to be contained. He had been gone too long, his authority eroded with the passage of time, and now his command was openly disregarded. With Lilith and Mammon’s show, how many more demons would follow, find a way to escape? It would be Hell on earth. Just as that damn prophecy said.

That prophecy was a bloody nuisance.

The first part had been about Chloe, which was true enough, but coming back here hadn’t changed anything yet, apparently. A pack of demons had just been let loose. He wondered what the rest of the prophecy said. Could it be even worse?

A dark, resentful part of him - the Devil on his shoulder, perhaps - suggested he do nothing. After all, he had nothing to do with the demons’ creation in the first place. They shouldn't be his responsibility. Sitting back and watching the melee that his Father’s machinations had caused sounded temptingly appetizing, in fact.

The old Lucifer might have done that. Enjoyed the show, thinking it was what the Old Man deserved for meddling and controlling his life. But he balked at that idea now, thinking of the work he had done - loved doing - in L.A. Not just punishing those responsible, but bringing justice to the ones who needed it, even protecting, he supposed, others from the same harm.

If he let the demons run loose, he would be the one causing unjust harm. It would be he deserving punishment, blood on his hands. No one else would be capable of claiming justice for the innocents - people like Ms. Lopez or Dr. Linda or, Dad help him, Detective Douche - who would be harmed, no one who could stop them.

He could. He could keep any of that from occurring, so long as he reclaimed his power and authority here and made sure the demons feared him again.

To do that, he had to go after the ones who had broken out.

Worrying Lucifer was why they broke out in the first place. Lilith was a living human; she could walk out of here herself if she chose, yet she took Mammon and others through the gate. To stage a revolt, why leave? The only reason he could come up with was the same horrible conclusion - the Detective. Lilith had provoked him more than once with taunts about her.

The longer he thought about it, the more convinced he became that the prophecy and Lilith’s plots were linked. Clearly, she was the Hell on earth. Actually, that made a lot of sense. To say she hated humankind was putting it mildly. Add in her “I want to be queen” diva complex and plot to overthrow him, and clearly, the Detective was on her radar.

Ergo: After witnessing his reaction, it was likely she thought targeting the Detective would hurt him. Weaken him.

After all, two plus two make four...

It was preposterous, really. He wouldn’t be easier to subdue. Just the thought of Lilith causing harm to Chloe… Well, human or no human, Lilith or her companions wouldn’t stand a chance. Something Pierce-Cain… Hmm. Pain?... had learned all too well.
Dispatching Lilith and the others would be simple. He’d return to Los Angeles, follow the signs of drunk and disorderly demonic disturbances, and bring them back here to be made examples of. Easy-peasy, demon-squeezy.

Asmodeus and Azazel would just have to keep an eye on things here until he returned. Lock the doors firmly, nice and tight, and guard them if necessary. He just hoped they would do a better job this time around. He’d hate to have to kill more people when he got back. When did his life become so bloody complicated?

—-

Lucifer was pleasantly surprised to find that only a few days had passed. Less opportunity for Lilith’s schemes to come to fruition. He had it all figured out, too.

Once he popped by to see if the Detective was fine, he’d meet up with Maze. They would strategize, and between the two of them, they would soon pick up on Lilith’s trail, do some punishing, and everything would be peaches.

And he could see the Detective.

He entered the penthouse feeling pretty optimistic. It was early yet, or very late, depending on how you looked at it. He often did, from both directions. Lux had emptied of the last stragglers and dawn was only a few hours out. In the morning, he’d—

Mazey!” he exclaimed upon seeing her, “I’m home!” Well, that would save him the time of tracking her down. How convenient.

Seated at the bar, Maze had been enjoying a drink while she went over the most recent financials. More accounting, lucky her. The ding of the elevator had caught her attention when Lucifer walked in, and she narrowed her eyes at him. Perhaps her less-than-warm reception was due to the paperwork that made her want to pull her eyes out. Or, more likely, it was the combination with the disgust for the distasteful situation he’d put her in.

She was sick to death of secrets and being expected to keep them for other people. If it were up to her, everyone would deal with their own messes and not drag her into it.

“That’s great,” she said, while baring her teeth in a smile that was the opposite of friendly. “Because I’m going to kick your ass.”

—-

Chapter End Notes

Omg, you guys are so awesome. Thank you for your reassurances because honestly it got so intense there that I had to save some for later and wanted to make sure it would be well-received!

On another note, I absolutely adore how you’re picking up on things I drop in on purpose. And some of you are already on the Bell and the Book... but hopefully I can still surprise you.

Lastly, totally bummed I couldn’t post this last night (I fell asleep revising it because
I’m OCD like that) but maybe I can get the next chapter out on time.

Post script script: If you recognize the quote Lucifer mentions, please let me know. I know the second part isn’t Machiavelli. I can’t remember where I read it and Google is being especially unhelpful.
Sacrifices Are Self-Serving

Chapter Summary

Lucifer has some explaining to do...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It would have been disastrous for the Devil’s image to show even the barest hint of fear, but Lucifer had to admit the look on Maze’s face gave him pause. She really could be terrifying sometimes, he thought with a touch of pride. His was a practiced hand at rolling with the punches, so to speak, so he quirked an eyebrow questioningly and tugged on his left cuff to neatly align the material, the picture of cool indifference.

“Care to tell me why before you commence with the said kicking?” he asked with nonchalance.

She slammed the laptop closed with so much force he wondered if the screen would crack. “You,” she said accusingly, “Didn’t tell Chloe anything.”

“Well, no,” Lucifer admitted, baffled. “I don’t want her concerned about it. Hence, my telling you to be concerned about it. And speaking of—”

But he didn’t get to finish the sentence to inform her about Lilith. Maze continued, pointing a finger at him. “I can’t watch her every minute, Lucifer! I have responsibilities! Lux, for one thing, not to mention my job!”

This felt oddly familiar. Was it him or was he on the receiving end of every woman’s wrath lately? Exasperated, Lucifer replied, “For Dad’s sake, you don’t have to do either one! Problem solved! We actually have a greater problem right now,” he tried again.

Maze took a deep breath and the look she leveled on him said he was a hopeless idiot. “Those things are important to me, Lucifer. Did you have to work with Chloe practically every day?”

Knowing her point would hit him eventually, she let it drop there before the conversation got mushy. The last thing she needed was for him to know that Lux had become so important because it was what she had left of him after he’d gone. The decision to stay had been an easy choice except for being separated from Lucifer. Completely separated for the first time in… well, ever.

“And if Chloe is also important to you, then you need to be the one doing something about it. Tell her, instead of leaving feathers and vanishing into the night.”

Lucifer scowled. “I didn’t vanish into the night, thank you. I waited until morning.”

Wanting some fresh clothes, he dug into the closet and tried not to let his gaze fall overlong on the bed, which looked pristine and bare, unlike the last time he’d seen it, when it had been very not-pristine and very not-bare.

“Ohhh, much better!” Maze said sarcastically, following him. “Either way, you blew through here without telling her anything. If she or Trixie really could be in possible danger, she needs more
“She’s here?” The question came out so quietly Maze wasn't sure who said it. It sounded like it had to be someone else’s voice.

“Yes, she’s here,” Lucifer continued, “With who knows how many demons. I think it might be more of that prophecy. The part about Hell on earth.”

A frown settled on Maze’s features. “That does sound pretty accurate,” she agreed. “So what’s your plan? I assume you’re here to boot their asses back to Hell?”

“Yes, and I believe we should be able to handle it in no time. You can put those bounty-hunting skills to good use while I keep an eye on the Detective and look for any cases demon-related,” he said, obviously pleased with his efficient plan.

“And what are you going to tell Chloe while you’re ‘keeping an eye’ or other body parts on her?” she asked while he tossed trousers and a couple shirts on the bed to consider.

Seeing his hesitation, Maze shook her head. “You don’t think she’s going to wonder why you’re here again or be upset when you leave?”

“Of all people, she will understand why I have to. She’d be the first to agree we can’t have rabid demons running wild on the populace,” he said. All true words, but a voice in his mind protested the lie to himself.

“And are you going to tell her why? That they might be here because hurting her could get to you?”

Lucifer glared at her, “Absolutely not! Every reason she is in danger is because of me, because I insinuated myself into her life and couldn’t - didn’t - stay away! The safest thing for her, what’s best for her, is that I remove these Celestial complications from her life, most of all me.”

Anger had swelled in response to Maze’s question, but rather than an explosion, the words seemed to suck the energy out of him, and by the end of his sentence his voice dropped to a barely-audible tone.

She wanted to argue how asinine that was and opened her mouth to do so, but stopped. Someone else could get through to him. No matter what logic she used right now, he wasn’t going to listen. Maze sighed. What a drama queen he was. How could he be so intelligent sometimes and be such a pigheaded idiot?

—-

Just in case Lilith also thought to use his nephew in her schemes, Lucifer knew he had to alert Amenadiel to the situation, though he really, really wasn’t looking forward to it.

Somehow it would all end up being his fault.

So it was with some reluctance that Lucifer rang the bell of the front door, having eschewed calling first in the hopes it would get this over sooner.
To say that Amenadiel had been surprised to see his brother on the doorstep was an understatement, but he took it in stride. News about Lilith he did not take as well, but Lucifer hadn’t expected him to. Even he was having some trouble convincing himself she was an inconsequential threat, to be defeated as easily as he’d told Maze.

It had also been uncomfortable when Linda had joined them in the sitting room with the baby. He’d tried unsuccessfully, because Linda could be quite bossy when she wanted to be, to avoid holding it. Completely ignoring his protestations, Linda practically dumped his nephew into his arms.

Lucifer fumbled to support the baby and shot her a look of surprised horror, “Shouldn’t you try not to drop him? Aren’t these things breakable?”

“Oh, you mean besides diaper rash and regurgitated fluids?”

With the patience of a martyr, Amenadiel ignored the interjection. Lucifer would hear him whether he liked it or not. “And one thing I’ve come to realize is a father’s love for his child. I can’t imagine this is what Father really intends for you. Maybe everything that’s happening is a part of something greater—“

“A greater plan, is that it? If it is, it’s still the same. To punish me.” Lucifer’s breath became harsher and he worked to moderate his voice.
“You talk about none of this being my fault, but you’re wrong. It’s more punishment, because I didn’t do as I was told! I didn’t go where He wanted me to go! And for it, I have to watch the people I care about be in danger. Your son. The Detective. Who knows who could be hurt next?”

His words were met with silence, until finally Linda cleared her throat. “Lucifer, you’re not to blame for everyone else’s actions.”

But that gentle sentence touched something else, held deep, deep inside where he couldn’t look at it. “This is not therapy!” he snapped. “You are not my therapist anymore, remember?”

Linda rocked the Charlie, unruffled. His patterns were always the same, either humor or anger, and she knew he was lashing out in the only way he knew how. To avoid, to separate himself, remove himself before he could be hurt.

“No,” she agreed. “I’m not. But I am still your friend. You have been my most fascinating patient and one of my most fascinating friends. That won’t change, no matter how… scared you get, she thought. “No matter how difficult things become.”

“It shouldn’t be difficult, and it will be a lot less so once this is over. Your lives have had enough Celestial complications, don’t you agree? I can at least do my part to end it.” Lucifer’s tone held something ominous that worried Linda.

“I see.” She was quiet a moment, mulling over her choice of words. Guilt and so much more was eating at him, and he had convinced himself that he would be doing everyone a favor by distancing himself and severing the relationships that meant so much to him. She didn’t bother to point out that there was no cutting Celestial complications from her life, her son and his father both being angels. This wasn’t about her, however, so she bypassed the detour and mercilessly aimed for the heart of the matter.

“And what about Chloe? Isn’t she a… how did you put it? A Celestial complication?”

When Lucifer didn’t respond, Linda pressed further. “I mean, she is a miracle, right? Created specifically by God? Doesn’t that mean that she’s involved in all this whether you are around or not?”

Frustrated that he had no immediate answer and that Linda’s question made his heart twist with something that felt like hope, Lucifer stood up to leave. “I’ll be in touch when I have leads on the demons,” he said.

“Before you go, Luci…” Amenadiel wasn’t sure if the question would do more harm or good to Lucifer’s state of mind, but his curiosity since seeing Chloe was too great. “The ring you gave Chloe. It was the only thing you took when you left the Silver City. Why?”

Lucifer paused in the doorway, not wanting to answer but unable to lie. Before the door closed, he gave a sardonic laugh and said, “It was the last gift Father gave me.”

—-

It was mid-morning by the time he reached the precinct, his visit to his brother having taken far longer than he’d expected. He had been looking forward to surprising the Detective with a coffee, or maybe simply sitting at her desk when she arrived. He wondered what her expression might have been upon seeing him.

Lucifer was disappointed to find her chair empty and hoped she wasn’t out on a case. He stopped by the desk sergeant, gifting the woman there with a charming you-know-you-want-to-help-me
“Hello Carlotta,” he purred.

“Mr. Morningstar!” Carlotta smiled flirtatiously. Though she was in her fifties, she was as easily affected by his charms as the next woman, and it never failed to surprise her when she found herself giggling in response to whatever outrageous thing he said.

“How are you, darling? I noticed the Detective isn’t around. Do you happen to know where I could find her?”

He didn’t bother explaining which detective. He didn’t have to. Carlotta smiled. There was never any doubt to whom he meant.

“She should be here somewhere. Probably grabbing a coffee or conferring on a case,” she said, and watched without surprise as his face lit up with excited realization and eagerly took off in another direction, hastily tossing a “Of course! Thank you, darling!” behind him. She shook her head.

Lucifer popped around the doorway of Ms. Lopez’s lab, gratified to see the Detective inside, speaking with the animated brunette, back to the door.

Over her shoulder, he saw the moment Ms. Lopez noticed his presence, recognition hitting her eyes. Stopping mid-word, her eyes widened, and he watched with brows knit in confusion as, instead of welcome on her face, her features froze. A few abandoned attempts by her lips to form words, and then the Detective realized they weren’t alone.

She fully turned then and he lost any notice of Ms. Lopez. The smile on the Detective’s face was unlike any she had bestowed on him before. Beyond friendly or exasperated or reluctantly amused. Or even the confident, sexy one she had given him a few nights ago, the one that still made his heart race. This smile was sunshine; open, bright, completely... happy.

That bizarre pain-not-pain lit in his chest again, stealing his breath.

——

Chloe paused mid-sentence at the look on Ella’s face, whose eyes were locked on something behind her. Concerned by her abrupt panic, Chloe turned around and surprise shot through her. Immediate flooding joy. She couldn’t contain it, or keep a smile from leaping to her face. He was here, relief sang through her body.

Then she saw his eyes. Lucifer’s lips were twisted into something like a smile, but nothing like what she’d expect. Nothing like the ardent, passionate lover of a few nights past who had looked at her like she was the center of the universe. And his eyes told her what the counterfeit playfulness could not. He was hurting, and more, something that made her feel cold.

Her smile faded. He hadn’t come to her, reached for her, not even said anything salacious or... anything at all really. It was like that night had never happened.

“Hello Detective, Ms. Lopez,” he said pleasantly. Coolly.

Behind her, Ella gaped, and Chloe realized she should probably get him out of the room until Ella had adjusted. Knowing was one thing. Facing it was another.

Chloe took a few steps towards him and he politely backed out of the doorway. She frowned and led him to an empty conference room. “What... what are you doing here?” she asked, so terribly confused by his presence and the chill that was spreading.
“Oh, only checking on things. There haven’t been, say, any violent dismemberments lately? Gruesome murders?” Lucifer asked casually.

Evasively.

She crossed her arms over her chest. “No. Why?”

“Simply wondering,” he smiled.

“So you’re here, again, just because you were suddenly wondering if there have been violent or gruesome deaths?” She studied him carefully, tapping the file she held against her fingers. “Right.”

Lucifer blew out a breath. “Alright, no. Some of my… we could call them ‘workers’ may be here.” Workers. He meant demons. Chloe stared at him for a moment, recalling Amenadiel’s description. Violent and gruesome sounded legitimate. So he was here to stop them.

“And you’re here because it would help you track them down?” she asked. He nodded.

Her voice carefully level, she asked, “So the other night… you were here because of them?” She held her breath. Please, she thought. You won’t lie.

She wasn’t sure if he froze, it was so fleeting, as was the flicker of emotion in his eyes, there and gone so fast she couldn’t make heads or tails of it. But when he answered, it crushed her all the same.

“Of course,” Lucifer said.

She realized what that cold feeling was. He had done it again. Pulled away from her. And after she’d believed in that warmth between them, where for once they were honest and vulnerable, its absence now left her feeling more alone than ever. Was it really already over?

“Fine. I’ll flag anything that comes in that sounds like what you said. I’ll reach out to nearby precincts too,” she said quietly.

He cleared his throat. “Thank you. Well, you appear to have your hands full there,” he gestured to the folder in her hands, “so I’ll get out of your way.”

Before she could open her mouth to stop him, he was out of the room. Not a word about her, or them, or any work they could do together; just demon attacks and oh, look at the time.

“Unbelievable,” she muttered. Except… it really wasn’t.

Chapter End Notes

You are all so wonderful! I love your thoughts and comments; please don’t stop! = )

This is a slightly shorter chapter because I’m on an out of town trip again. Long day driving and don’t get me started on how many hours it took to get a hotel, stupid
airport cities. But I promise the next one is in progress and should be finished soon.
For two more days, that was the routine. Lucifer came in, checked to see if there was any demon-like activity, and promptly departed. Chloe couldn’t say he was rude. In fact, he was scrupulously polite to her. He’d flash a charming roguish grin around the department, seeming like his usual self, and then he’d be gone.

Ella kept to the lab, covertly darting out to the coffee bar for refills, then retreating back behind the safety of glass. Chloe also saw that Lucifer had taken notice, glancing in the direction of the lab with confusion when Ella emerged and scurried back.

Other than a perfunctory greeting and request for information, there was no other conversation between them either. Each morning, Chloe became increasingly annoyed. Years of this back and forth dance, even when they proclaimed they were no more than friends, the awareness had hummed in the background like a favorite song on repeat. You knew the words and melody so well that at times you forgot it was there. He was pretending it wasn’t there at all.

Or maybe had decided once together was enough. It wasn’t like he did monogamy or relationships as a general rule. To him, it was just another night.

It was easy for her trampled feelings to believe that was the case. Especially when he came in looking like that. As if he’d spent the whole night out drinking and hooking up, clothes looking the worse for wear and hair mussed. Not to mention the shadows beginning to deepen beneath his eyes, betraying a lack of sufficient sleep. He looked rough.

Under any other circumstances, she might have felt sorry for him, concerned that something was horribly wrong. She had only ever seen him like this once before. The death of his brother had been like this, sending him down a path of self-destruction. As much as she wanted to ask him or help him, the evidence of his behavior was too insulting, too hurtful. If they hadn’t taken that step, if she hadn’t pushed… but she had, and now it wasn’t just irritation or mild jealousy at his escapades. It was pain.

Flipping through another page of names and numbers from the phone records she was cross-referencing - there had to be a connection between the victims somewhere despite hours of fruitless searching and interviews -, she watched him from under her eyelashes. He was looking in the direction of Ella’s lab again and frowning.

Chloe opened her mouth to tell him, though she’d been dreading it and hoping she wouldn’t have to, when he surprised her by doing it for her.

“Ms. Lopez knows, doesn’t she?” he asked.
It would have been impossible to ignore Ella’s reaction, she supposed. More so when he was sensitive to the likely adverse responses.

“Yes,” Chloe answered, “She figured it out. None of us told her,” she added, leaning forward to assure her words privacy.

Lucifer gave her a droll look. “I told her? Only about a hundred times?”

He had a point.

Chloe returned her attention to the phone records. She wished she could ask him about the case or for him to offer to help, but neither was happening and she couldn’t bring herself to do it. Wounded pride rose up and cut off the words, maintaining a safe distance between them.

She resolutely forced her eyes to remain on the pages while she made notes on the legal pad, even when she heard him move away.

—-

Not wishing to startle her, Lucifer very softly closed the door to the lab behind him. Ms. Lopez looked up from her computer monitor the moment he entered, and though her face was wary and her eyes wide, she didn’t tell him to leave.

“Ah… I’m not entirely sure what to say to you, Ms. Lopez,” Lucifer said, tone uncharacteristically gentle. “Perhaps that I’m sorry.” That it all turned out this way, he thought.

“I don’t… “ Ella shook her head. “I don’t see why you should be sorry. You are who you are, you know?”

Still, there was no softening of her eyes or mouth, nothing that said they were anywhere near on the terms they had been before.

“Yes, well. We all know who that is, don’t we?” he flashed her a smile, turning to go. Why he’d come in to talk to her was a mystery to him; he’d known what he would find when he stepped inside. Still, it sliced him a little inside to see someone he considered a friend look at him with fear.

Ella jumped up, surprising him when she said, “Wait!”

Lucifer faced her again and waited patiently while she thought over her words. Brushing the sides of his coat back, he slipped his hands into his trouser pockets.

“Listen,” she said. “I thought I’d handle this a lot better. I’ve been going over and over it—“ she broke off and motioned her hands by her head, as if spinning the information around.

Raising his palm in the air, Lucifer gestured for her to stop. “It’s fine, Ms. Lopez. Truly. It is not the first time. I’m grateful you haven’t run screaming.”

“Lucifer. It’s… It’s not you,” Ella said.

“Are you really about to tell me ‘It’s not you; it’s me’?” he asked incredulously, and darkly amused. “I have to congratulate you. I don’t believe I’ve ever been on the receiving end of a break-up line before.”

She couldn’t help the laugh that popped out of her, and the mad thought of how ridiculous it all
was. It was hard, but she gave him a genuine smile. “It really isn’t you, you know? It has nothing to do with you being the You-Know.”

With a quizzical look, Lucifer tilted his head to the side and regarded her curiously. “Oh? Then what is it?”

“It’s that all this is real. It’s what you represent,” she whispered, fingers closing on the gold crucifix at her neck.

He made a sound of derision. “Yes. Evil incarnate.” That’s where it always was.

“No! Not you! ALL of it. Heaven, Hell,” she exploded, arms waving in the air to encompass the vastness of the subject.

“You believed in those before. I fail to see the difference.”

“The difference is that lately I’ve made choices that I’m not so proud of. I had a falling out with the Big Guy and…” she shook her head.

Lucifer interjected, “Something I understand completely, trust me.”

Ella shot him a look that was an odd mix of exasperation and desperation. “I don’t know if I’m living my life the right way anymore. If.. if I’m…”

He didn’t let her finish the sentence, or what he feared might have become a question. He didn’t know who was good or bad, didn’t carry around a Naughty or Nice list like bloody Santa Clause. “Ms. Lopez,” he began, and waited until he had her attention.

“You are a singularly wonderful person. No matter what you believe you have done to tarnish your soul, I give you my most sincere promise that you have nothing to fear,” said Lucifer.

Ella sniffed and blinked hard, “But I’ve done some really bad things.”

Lucifer smiled, very much in doubt. “You’re an awful tease, Ms. Lopez.”

She didn’t think she could laugh, but she did. “I mean it.”

“Let’s hear it then,” he invited. “I had better hear something truly scandalous. Stole a Porsche for a joyride? Helped yourself to some hallucinogens from Evidence? Binged another season of The Real Housewives?”

“No, but there was some drugs. And sex,” she admitted, and bit her lip as her conscience needled her again.

“My favorite things!” Lucifer congratulated.

Ella groaned. “See? That’s what I mean!”

Lucifer’s laugh was kind, for all that hers implied censure, but he took no offense. “Ms. Lopez, indulging in those things, as sinfully fun as they are, don’t actually send you to Hell.”

“No?” She sounded hopeful for his reassurance even though inside, it was like she already knew it, the truth of what he said stabilizing something that had been falling into pieces.

“No. The souls who go to Hell,” Lucifer paused, not sure why he was telling her. Hoping that she would understand and whatever plagued her would desist. “They fall from the weight of their
guilt,” he said. For a moment, his own words rang in his ears, and the reflection disturbed him.

“So if I feel guilty, I’ll go to Hell?” she asked, aghast. “For, like, anything?”

He rolled his eyes. “If that were the case, I’d have corridors assigned for poor sods who cut someone off on the freeway or cheat the parking meter.”

She laughed again, a little freer, and felt a subtle shift in the air, a returning of normalcy. The space between them far more comfortable than before.

“Lucifer,” she called again as he turned for the door.

“Yes, Ms. Lopez?”

She took a breath and then leveled him with a familiar sass, her tone telling him she meant business. “I don’t care if you are Mr. I-am-the-Devil, but if you toy with Chloe’s feelings… if you break her heart, you are going to answer to me, pal.”

His laugh was cynical and completely at his own expense as he left the lab. “I have no doubt, Ms. Lopez. It is the last thing I want.”

He got home just as the clock hit four. The daily routine of stopping to check for leads at the precinct, surreptitiously scanning the APB’s for anything suspicious, then coordinating with Maze was, disappointingly, not leading to anything.

Lucifer fell into bed face-down. If he was lucky, he might manage four hours of sleep before his nightly routine began. Briefly, he considered dispensing with the nap altogether. Yesterday he had woken from a nightmare. He rarely suffered those human afflictions, but this wasn’t the first time his subconscious had twisted his secret fears into horrifying torment.

He flinched from even the vague memory of the dream, the sight of Chloe at Lilith’s mercy, her eyes screaming at him for help as Mammon ripped her apart, and then gone… her beautiful eyes accusing, condemning him for not stopping it, not there in time.

Maybe he could have stayed awake if he tried hard enough. There were drugs and stimulants that would keep him up for days; but he held off, worried that his reflexes would be affected, his mind too strained to see things properly. That could really kill her, and it wasn’t a risk he could take.

Resigning himself to the spare hours of rest and hoping they would be worth it, he set an alarm for nightfall.

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Chloe finished loading the dishwasher, surrounded by a silent house. Trixie at Dan’s for this week, Maze off on bounty-hunting. She wished she could enjoy the solitude, but as always, the quiet was an opportunity for her thoughts to break free of their traces. All her focus at work to unravel the cases quieted the cacophony until she got home; then there was no containing them, no distractions. If she tried to think about work, her numb brain cells protested.

She was so conflicted. Lucifer from last weekend and Lucifer this week rivaled in her thoughts. However she tried to reconcile the two, she came up failing. It was impossible to accept the callous reserve he had shown her at the precinct, and she wanted more than anything to believe in the other Lucifer, who had held her and loved her. Which one was real, which one was fake? Or was it neither, and he was a conglomerate of both, rash and indecisive and only taking what he wanted when he wanted it?
No, she couldn’t believe that. Just the thought brought a rise of nausea, roiling in her stomach.

With no more answers than she had before, she went upstairs to prepare for bed, pausing to peek out the window. Shaking her head, she collected a loose T-shirt and pajama shorts, stepping into the bathroom to wash her hair and brush her teeth. Back in her room, she checked the street once more, rapidly plaiting her hair into a loose braid down her back.

Turning out the light, she carefully sat on the bed and pulled on old, comfortable running shoes. Stalking from the room, Chloe kept to the shadows and avoided where light could silhouette her movement.

It took ten minutes longer to exit the apartment without use of the door and circle back up the block without being seen. But it was worth it when, finally, she came up behind the car.

She prayed she moved swiftly enough before he saw her.

The handle of the door clicked as she opened it and slid onto the leather seat. Chloe regarded him expectantly.

“What are you doing, Lucifer?”

Chapter End Notes

I hope the chapter wasn’t too brief or boring. I wanted to leave you in a good place for what comes next!

As always, I absolutely adore your comments and feedback. Please don’t stop! It totally brings a smile to my face!
In Dawn’s Early Light

Chapter Summary

Chloe confronts Lucifer and expects some answers. Not all his answers are verbal.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

His startled jump would have been comical had she not been so frustrated.

“Er, good evening Detective,” he said pleasantly. Straightening from his slouch as he tucked his flask away, Lucifer smiled innocently as if she hadn’t just caught him, in what amounted to be, stalking her house.

Arms crossed over her chest in disapproval, she leaned partly against the window and seat back to face him, and waited him out. When he continued to say nothing, didn’t offer her a single excuse or reasonable explanation, she let her eyes travel over him again, taking in his bedraggled appearance; creases in his usually immaculate suit, hair disheveled and unkempt, and dark eyes shadowed with deep fatigue.

“Is this what you’ve been doing every night?” she asked softly, bewildered. “Are you… guarding my house?”

He sighed then as if he was too tired to prevaricate, to do anything but tell the truth. “Yes. I’ve been here.”

“You haven’t been—” she cut herself off from asking if any of his nighttime activities were with other women. Her traitorous little heart squeezed. The answer was obvious, sitting right in front of her, and she sorely needed to remain on the topic at hand and not let her feelings run away with her again.

His words came to her from the precinct, his concern about demons his reason for being there. When she’d come home with Trixie from her birthday party and stood shocked on the doorstep to see him here, at her house, he must have been talking to Maze about the demons as well. But why her home, why not simply ask Maze to meet him at the penthouse?

Because he had been worried the demons would come here. To her home.

He had been here for her, the big fraud.

“Lucifer, why didn’t you just tell me you thought they might come here?” she sighed. “Instead of sitting out here? I can take care of myself. I don’t need you to stay up all night to protect me.”

He left off fiddling with the car keys and the look he gave her was serious, and all the more heart wrenching for it. “Isn’t that what partners do, Detective?” he asked softly.

The answer melted her heart some while also infuriating her. Again, he had told her half-truths to achieve his purpose; again, he had kept information to himself and left her stumbling in the dark. Even after all this time, despite being ‘partners’, he didn’t trust her with the complete truth. The
eternal question was why. Was it for her or for himself? She wondered who it was he was really protecting.

Before, she hadn’t believed who he truly was. His evasiveness made a certain kind of sense under those circumstances. But now? He couldn’t keep doing this to her.

“You should go home,” she told him gently, turning away to open the door and let herself out.

His voice arrested her, “I can’t.”

He didn’t want her to be alone and unprotected; she got it. Chloe tried not to be short when she asked, “What do you want then? Do you want to come inside?”

For heaven’s sake, she thought. After they’d already slept together, he could have just come home with her. Unless, like she’d thought earlier, once had been enough for him and he was trying to avoid an awkward position? Trying to figure him out was giving her a headache and emotional whiplash.

Lucifer’s hesitation to answer irritated her further, but her pride wouldn’t let her voice her fear. She wasn’t going to touch that with a ten-foot pole.

“I didn’t come in because of how your child might react to my presence. Or anyone else,” he added, and she wondered if he meant Dan. Good grief - see, she was working on her blasphemy - did he really think there was something going on between them?

“She’s at Dan’s this week,” Chloe said. She would try one more time. “What do you want, Lucifer?”

“I would prefer you to stay at the penthouse,” he said, not looking at her. “I have remarkably superior security there; you would be far safer. Besides,” he said, rubbing his eyes, “I could finally get some sleep.”

She was quiet a moment, studying him and then looking out the windshield at her apartment. “Okay. I’ll pack a bag. Wait here.”

In the house, she tossed enough for a few days in a duffel bag. She, Chloe decided, was out of her mind. But good Lord, how was she supposed to react to that? Modern woman she might be, but that didn’t keep her from being affected. Lucifer had been sitting out there every night? Lucifer?

A soothing breeze had kicked up, pushing back the balmy air, when she stepped outside again. She hadn’t bothered to change out of her pajamas and the slight chill danced across her skin, but she was grateful for it. Her thoughts and feelings were a mess; mad, hurt, touched, aggravated, cherished, vexed.

Lucifer was leaning on the driver’s side door of the car, finishing the last of a cigarette. When she approached, he took her bag and walked her around to the passenger side.

“I’m dying to know,” he said, “What gave me away?”

Chloe pointedly looked at the Camaro. “You’re not exactly incognito.” Of course, he probably thought he was.

“Shouldn’t I drive my own car?”

“Absolutely not, Detective. Your personal guardian Devil will be driving you. It’s far more
convenient for me to know where you are at all times. Imagine how much I’ll save on gas.”

She started to protest, then closed her mouth. While that sounded a little claustrophobic, and frankly, sort of possessive, it also meant that he would be spending the day with her at work. After all, he was her partner, and his help on cases was invaluable. Unorthodox and crazy, but invaluable.

Chloe wasn’t sure what she had expected when they arrived at the penthouse. The drive had been short and silent, which she assumed was because he was exhausted. Somehow, a quiet Lucifer felt unnatural. He was nearly always animated, talking and doing and getting into trouble.

Now she was laying in his bed. Alone. Also unnatural.

He’d brought her things in, made himself scarce while she got situated and hung a few items for work that she didn’t want wrinkled in the closet - and wasn’t that oddly domestic - and then changed for bed himself. Then, clad in silk pajama bottoms, he escaped to the sitting room.

Her eyes on the bare pillow next to her, she pictured the feather he’d left for her as she had found it. Lucifer was contradictions, words and actions constantly at odds. As absolutely drained as he’d looked, she felt the same inside. For a man who didn’t lie, he so rarely said what he meant. His actions, though, she thought she could understand. For all the barriers between them, including the ones he erected and the ones she hid behind, those actions told her enough, everything that his indifference denied.

Was he worth it? Worth chasing again and again, until he believed in her, trusted in them, despite how it crushed her? And knowing that in the end, she may lose him all over again?

Chloe reached out and touched the coverlet where he had laid beside her. She closed her eyes, calling to memory in detail the sound of his laugh, free and happy and unburdened, sharing a moment they both finally could understand, no secrets or hidden layers in the words they said.

Yes. He was worth it.

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Funny how he had been enervated to the point of being catatonic, but now that she was here and he could finally sleep with some peace of mind, he found it impossible.

Standing on the balcony to smoke hadn’t helped, nor had Scotch, which should have been exceedingly more potent with her presence, not even tinkering with melodies on the piano, which was his failsafe when his head was churning with a cyclone of thoughts so muddled he couldn’t hear one above the others in the din.

He was trying, unsuccessfully, to relax. As couches went, his was abundant in comfort, expertly crafted with the finest supple leather and perfect give, so why was he tense? The Detective was nearby which should have been reassuring, yet he was restless.

Of course, it was entirely possible that was the problem. She was here; thus, he was restless.

A stirring of movement caught his attention, and he saw her come down the steps. Those shorts did absolutely nothing to conceal long, luscious legs that just a few nights ago his hands had traveled, nor did the unassuming gray shirt shield her body from his memory. Did she have to wear that?

Propping himself up on one elbow, he frowned and asked, “Did my playing wake you? I thought
“No, I couldn’t sleep. I listened for awhile, though.” Chloe pushed his leg gently, and he sat up, moving to give her room to join him. “What was it? I thought I recognized parts.”

“This and that. Chopin’s Polonaise. Marianelli. You’ve no doubt heard ‘Dawn’ before.”

She nodded. “I suppose I should have known you play anything.”

“One of the benefits of having eternity to learn,” he joked, and even he heard it fall flat, but she wasn’t listening in any case. While he appreciated most music, there was something about giving his hands free reign to release a melody that allowed his mind to drift. It calmed the maelstrom, his thoughts able to center and solidify into shape as the comfort of the music itself reminded him he wasn’t truly alone.

Chloe’s attention was across the room and he followed her line of sight to the bookshelves lining the wall. She got up and crossed to them, tilting her head to read the titles, though some spines were bare and the oldest behind a wall of glass.

She glanced back at him. “Some of these are incredibly old. I never really noticed before.”

“I’ve acquired quite a bit over the years.”

“This is going to sound really dumb,” she said while perusing, fingers trailing along one bookshelf. “I was thinking the other day how you don’t have pictures of anyone. I mean, you’ve lived… met so many people. I thought maybe… “ she hesitated, “maybe you didn’t want to remember them.”

“Those are all from my visits here,” he said, coming up beside her.

“I see that,” Chloe said with a small sheepish smile.

It perturbed him to think that she was under that impression. Even if they were all sentimental keepsakes, he still treasured them. They preserved what time could not.

Lucifer pointed at one, a leather-bound folio. “Will’s. Hand-written copies of his more appreciated works, and a few that never saw the light of day.”

“Shakespeare?” she asked, stunned.

“I may have been the, er, inspiration of a few of his more controversial sonnets,” Lucifer said, grinning wickedly. “Here, Marlowe. Although, to be honest, I still resent the deal-with-the-devil trope. I have never once asked for a soul in exchange for a favor.”

It wasn’t through any fault of his their souls usually came to him regardless. Not liking how that particular thought felt, he stepped closer and reached an arm around her waist to point out another. Not even a full step back and she would be leaning her weight on him, he thought, and hated himself more for wanting her to.

“Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. The picture of her mother. Percy treated her abominably, pathetically influenced by others, mostly Byron.”

He showed her gifts across the room from those whose names she would be the most familiar; the globe from Napoleon, a statue from Thomas Jefferson. “There are many I store elsewhere.”
Chloe turned, though her movement did not extend the distance between them, and looked up at him. “Like the Russian nesting dolls?”

“Mm. From Czar Nikolai II. Few pictures or portraits however,” Lucifer answered.

Her eyes were still on him, clear and thoughtful. “Why is that?”

“I told you, Detective. I never forget a face.”

“Oh,” she replied, the word nearly a whisper.

Understanding dawned on him and, before he’d even thought about it, he reached out to stroke her cheek, mesmerized by the softness and delicacy of her skin beneath his fingers. “How could you ever believe I would forget yours?”

Her hand came to rest on his, keeping his touch. Finally, Lucifer drew her hand away and held it in his, resting his forehead lightly against hers. They stood in silence for long minutes while he simply breathed her in.

She woke to find herself warmly nestled against him, her back to his front and his arm around her middle, hand on the skin of her stomach just barely beneath her T-shirt.

Never would she have pictured him as a cuddler. It seemed too close, too intimate, for him. Selfishly, Chloe admitted to herself she wanted to believe she was the only one he held like this.

You have it so bad, she thought, but nevertheless relaxed into his embrace a little further. Okay, she snuggled. For so long, she had held back these secret desires, buried them as far as they could go, and now that she didn’t have to, she let herself soak up every inch of it.

Lucifer slept on, oblivious, which she also found a touch humorous. She might have even been concerned if not for the fact that he had fallen asleep nearly the moment his head touched the pillow and that she could quite clearly feel evidence of his interest, even in sleep.

Last night, she had led him back to his bed with her. Apparently, his late nights had caught up with him and his tired body had crashed in relief. Repose softened him, his shields down and lately frighteningly serious disposition temporarily banished; a wayward lock of hair on his forehead contrary to the polished and urbane image he presented the world.

She liked that she could see him like this. Vulnerable. Beyond physical vulnerability, there was something mystifying that tied them together, making it impossible to deny the desire to trust one another. It frightened him, that link, which she could accept because it frightened her too. But she needed him to be brave and stop running from it.

Chloe may only be a human, but what she could be was unafraid too.

Noticing the time, she reluctantly and cautiously disentangled herself from the safety of his arms, deciding it was better to let him sleep a little longer while she got ready for work. She was eager to share the case with him, for him to share his perspective and unique brand of focus. For all that he made every case about him, it also unfailingly drew her attention to reconsider seemingly innocuous and inconsequential details.

This case was disturbing her and she couldn’t shake the foreboding sense that something else was beneath the surface, and once it was unearthed, the result would be intractable.
Absorbing the heat and steam of the shower chased away some of the cold that thinking about the case had settled on her. Unsurprisingly, his shower was opulent and luxurious, sparing no detail for comfort, not that she had expected anything less. She relaxed into the mist and pulsing water released by the many jets. Washing her hair again wasn’t necessary; she’d only wanted the heat to melt some of the stress and worry away.

It was a good thing he purposefully made noise when he entered the bathroom and slid open the door, otherwise she would have jumped out of her skin when he came up behind her.

Arms wrapped around her and drew her back against him, and Lucifer nuzzled the curve of her neck. “Well, hello. What have I got here?” he teased. “There seems to be a Detective in my shower.”

His actions were saying a lot again, and for a minute she let herself sink into it, drinking in his touch. Oh, how badly she wanted to just turn around and kiss him and hold him to her. But she couldn’t let it progress again like this, knowing what the inevitable repercussions would be.

Chloe turned around to face him and his eyes followed from her lips down her neck, roaming across her shoulders to her chest and down. Just his admiring regard was enough to heat her blood. She didn’t protest when his fingers traced over the pink path the near-scalding water had written across her skin.

“Like it hot, do you?” he murmured, and she smiled at the double-entendre.

When he began to pull her nearer, however, she resisted, though she did slide her arms up to link behind his neck.

“Does this mean you’re done pushing me away for my own good?” she countered.

“I doubt I even have a choice. Wet Detective. That’s like kryptonite, except for the Devil,” said Lucifer.

“Uh-huh. So you’re telling me when you do that, I should just get wet and naked?”

“Oh, would that work?” His grin was mischievous.

She tugged lightly on his hair in playful retaliation.

“Ow! Forceful! I had no idea of this side of you, Detective,” he purred lasciviously. “I like it.”

When he pulled her to him this time, she welcomed him gladly, lost in heady kisses. Beneath the spray of the shower, pressed between the contrasting heat of his body and the cold tile at her back, water running in glistening rivulets down their skin, she was immersed in a sliver of paradise. Until she felt a flutter of panic disrupt her sensual haze when Lucifer swept her up, pinning her to the tile.

The feel of him inside her was so delicious that Chloe was momentarily distracted, but Lucifer, lips and teeth grazing the sensitive skin of her neck and ear, noticed the change and halted, pulling back to meet her eyes. “What’s wrong, Chloe?”

“Oh, I see,” she said, a little embarrassed. “I’m kind of… afraid of falling. Like you’ll drop me.”

Showers were slippery by nature; she couldn’t help it.

“Chloe, I will
never, ever let you fall.”

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Chapter End Notes

Extremely fluffy and mushy, I know. I’m telling you, this story is going to have a little of everything. By the way, lots of Easter eggs in there, so if something seemed familiar to you, it was most likely on purpose!
Cold water rained down on them and Chloe couldn’t hold back a shiver. It was actually impressive how long the hot water had lasted. They had been in there for quite awhile. And, as he’d promised, he definitely hadn’t let her fall.

Another shiver chased across her skin as the water trickled down her back. Lucifer held her steady while she found her legs, boneless as they were. Through the mist and streams of water, she glanced up at the ceiling of the shower and gave a short, breathless laugh.

In front of her, Lucifer sighed and raked back his wet hair. “Detective, I am going to develop a complex if you continue to laugh after we…” he trailed off, though he continued to look at her quizzically.

“It’s not that!” She rushed to assure him. “I had a funny thought. For a moment, I was thinking this must be what it feels like to stand under a waterfall,” she explained.

“Is that so?” Lucifer leaned into her again, hands braced on the tile on either side of her, bracketing her in. He kissed her collarbone, then made his way up to her lips. “I could arrange that, actually,” he said.

“What?” She was becoming distracted again, and she needed to pull herself back to the present, no matter how exquisite his kisses were.

“A waterfall. We could go, explore, and be back in time for dinner,” said Lucifer.

His voice was low and alluring and for a minute she was so tempted. “How would you accomplish that?”

He responded with a wicked smile.

Chloe gaped, “You don’t mean—” her hands glided over and behind his shoulders, remembering the scars she had once seen there, two crescents marking where his wings had once been. Those wings that she’d stared at in wonder before he had left.

His shoulders rolled beneath her hands in a careless shrug. “Bothersome things might as well be good for something.”

He would… fly… them? To a waterfall, just because she said it made her think of one?

“You are too much,” she said in disbelief, though she had to admit she was more than a little flattered. This wasn’t his crazy excess to impress her, like when he’d tried to win her from Pierce. This felt different.
Still smiling incorrigibly, he cast a fleeting glance down, “Well, thank you. It was about time you noticed.”

Another amazed laugh escaped her lips and she put a hand on his chest to keep him from moving closer again. “Stop. We can’t. We have to go to work.”

“Detective, what’s one day…” Lucifer coaxed.

She didn’t want this interlude to end. She really didn’t. But as much as she wanted to steal every moment with him she could, her heart wasn’t made to take at the expense of others, and she knew his, for all his playfulness, wasn’t either. She had a job to do. There had already been two murders, and she feared there would be more before it was finished.

Chloe kissed him, trying to convey in it how wonderful, how special, he made her feel. “Maybe when all this is… Maybe when the case is over,” she amended quietly.

He sighed and turned off the water before retrieving towels, wrapping one around his waist and bundling her in another; though she suspected that was so he could continue to run his hands over her, ‘helpfully’ covering her breasts, then down her back where he playfully squeezed her bottom before she swatted him away.

“I told you we’d be late,” she grumbled as they pulled into the precinct garage. It had been both amusing and exasperating, seeing him get ready for work. He took longer than she did, which she found completely unnecessary. He was already shamefully handsome. It wasn’t like he needed to work at it. But his vanity was almost cute.

“There is absolutely nothing to be concerned about Detective. I am sure no one will have even noticed,” he said, his touch on her hand lingering after helping her from the car.

She gave him a stern look to remind him of their talk during the drive to the precinct. It was important their professional partnership be completely unaffected by their, she still struggled to accurately define it, amorous relationship. Even if they were sleeping together, she admonished him, it needed to remain one hundred percent separate from work. Not only was it a risk to her job, it could distract her from being focused. He was very, very good at distracting her.

He’d promised to behave, although she knew better than to trust his idea of behaving. Hopefully she’d be able to avert any real catastrophes.

Undeterred, Lucifer grinned and tucked a loose lock of hair behind her ear. She’d left it down in soft waves today since there hadn’t been time to worry about fixing it up.

“You have my word. No one will have any idea how incredibly lucky you are right now,” he answered solemnly.

“Lucifer!”

“Of course, I’m incredibly lucky too.”

She didn’t chastise him; it was too good to see him like this. Happier, lighter than the last few days. Chloe darted a look around the garage to see if they were alone before stepping closer and reaching up to give him a swift kiss.

“Now. Work,” she ordered.

Almost as soon as they’d entered the precinct, however, the acting lieutenant must have spotted
them because he stepped outside his office and barked, “Mr. Morningstar! A minute of your time, if you please?” It wasn’t a question.

Lucifer winked at her before turning away.

Oh, boy. She could only hope nothing too outrageous was said. Acting Lieutenant Davis wasn’t familiar with Lucifer’s personality. And since Lucifer didn’t lie per se, she wasn’t sure what he might say in response to some questions. Like where he’d been. She could just imagine that conversation.

Unfortunately, the disruptive turn to their morning didn’t end there. Immediately, she saw Dan approaching.

“Good morning,” she told him, striving for casual.

“So, Lucifer’s back on cases, huh?” He asked, not looking thrilled.

She hummed an acknowledgement. Please let that be it, she thought.

Dan’s eyes flicked up the stairs then back to her. “Came in together this morning?”

So much for nobody noticing. Cops were as bad at gossiping as teenage girls.

She was taking a deep breath for fortification before she answered when Lucifer returned, strolling up to them.

“Good morning, Detective… Daniel,” he said smoothly, if a little mockingly, in response to the narrowed-eye warning Chloe sent him.

“Yeah. Right. So you disappear for almost two months and then just waltz in like it’s nothing?” Dan asked, tone hard.

It was clear he thought he was protecting her, but she wasn’t sure how to diffuse the situation before it became any more uncomfortable. In fact, body posture was beginning to look worrisome. Dan’s stance was challenging, arms crossed at his chest, body angled slightly in front of her.

She needed to intervene now, she thought. Lucifer was looking Dan up and down, very clearly telegraphing that he didn’t see Dan as threatening. He opened his mouth—

“Dan! Could I talk to you for a moment, please?” Chloe hissed, quickly stepping between them and pulling on Dan’s arm.

Grateful that he acquiesced, Chloe led him in the direction of his desk, which was in a quiet area of the precinct below the main stairs. “Dan, that is completely inappropriate.”

“What?” He asked. “That’s bullshit, Chloe. What he did to you was bullshit. Do you think I don’t remember what you went through when he left?” Dan kept his voice low, but even so, it was laced with anger.

“Dan. I appreciate that you think you’re looking out for me. Really, I do. But I thought you had worked past this thing you have against him,” Chloe replied.

“That has nothing to do with this,” Dan said. “I get he didn’t have anything to do with happened to Charlotte, okay? This is an entirely different issue. He’s— he’s toxic. You forget I saw what you were like after he left, Chloe. What’s going to happen when he does it to you again?”
She really didn’t want to think about that, and having Dan say it blindsighted her. She wanted to keep that future event as far away as possible and not imagine the fallout. She would deal with it when they came to that particular juncture.

Chloe took another moment to steady her nerves and composure, and then spoke very carefully and quietly. “He had to leave, Dan. And you’re right. He will probably have to leave again. But that’s for me to deal with, okay? I know you’re trying to help. But please… don’t… He’s my partner, Dan. And I need him.”

If he’d had anything to say in response, she didn’t wait to hear it. Back at her desk, she found Lucifer coming back from looking at the recent bulletins and APB’s. “Anything new?”

“No,” he said with a shake of his head. “At least, nothing that screams demonic pandemonium anyway.”

“So you’re free to help me on this case?” She asked. During their commute she had only been able to share the barest of facts. “What did Davis say to you, anyway?”

Lucifer leaned against her desk, making himself comfortable. “He was cross that I haven’t been more available lately, so of course I explained my… work called me away.”

“That was clever of you. I’m surprised you didn’t tell him where you really were.”

“Well, I did say my work was Hell. However, I’m fairly certain he took it as hyperbole.”

Chloe opened the files and showed him photographs of the victims as they were found at the crime scenes, explaining the use of arsenic to poison them and the objects found in their hands, as well as her frustration that she hadn’t found a single connection between them; no friends, relatives, exes, employers, anything.

“Does that mean anything to you? A bell and a book?” She asked.

Lucifer flipped through the rest of the photos. “Wasn’t that a movie? Bell, Book and Candle?”

“It was. But if it has any relevance here, I don’t see it. The movie was about witches, right? Not even harmful ones, really. Neither of these victims has any connection to witchcraft or paganism. The only religious angle here at all is the Bible.”

“He was holding a Bible?” Lucifer asked, frowning slightly.

Noticing his reaction, Chloe leaned closer and pointed out the photo displaying it. “Does that mean anything to you?”

He gave her a funny look and she rolled her eyes. “Right. I mean besides your… family?”

“No,” he answered thoughtfully. “But I’m hardly surprised.”

Baffled, she asked, “What do you mean?”

“People have used the Bible as an excuse to kill people for thousands of years, Detective,” he answered with a touch of exasperation, flipping through the Bell file.

That statement nudged something in her mind, but she couldn’t quite grasp it. Reasons for killing others? In her job, she found people generally committed murder for greed, power, or sex, and it was often a combination. She supposed hate crimes purportedly for religious views were about
power and control.

Her thoughts were interrupted by Lucifer asking, “I don’t suppose either had syphilis?”

She blinked. “Uh… no. Why?”

“Arsenic was once used to treat syphilis. It was called the ‘magic bullet’, though believe me, the toy is far—“

“Got it. Thank you.” Yeah, she was going to shut that line of thought down before he started voicing ideas. “And no, neither had contracted syphilis.”

Discouraged, Chloe tapped her pen on her notepad, chin propped up by one hand.

“There goes my theory the murderer was either a vengeful femme fatale or overly-enthusiastic chemist,” he said.

“Why would you say a femme fatale?” Chloe asked.

“Well, because of the arsenic. She might have been exacting revenge for his choice of parting gift, the gift that keeps on giving. Historically, if a woman wanted to clear the way, arsenic was the tool to do it. Catherine de Medici, for one, was particularly maniacal. And religion was conveniently a motive,” he explained.

There was a tone in his voice that Chloe had never noticed before. “That bothers you, doesn’t it? When religion is brought into it?”

Lucifer was quiet a moment. “If you ever see someone suppressing free will, Detective, it is undoubtedly because of religion.”

“Well,” she said, sensing his discomfort, changed the topic. “It’s interesting you said it could be a woman. The second victim was having an affair with his ex-wife’s sister and it looked like he either had or might have been expecting female company the night he died.”

“An affair with his ex-wife’s sister? That sounds poisonous.” He waited a beat, then sighed in dramatic defeat when she didn’t react. “Come on! Poisonous! Because of the arsenic—“

She rolled her eyes and picked up her jacket. “Yes, Lucifer, I got it. Let’s go, I want to talk to the ex-wife’s sister again.”

—

The ex-wife’s sister’s name was Adrienne Maybrick, an attractive redhead in her early thirties who gave Lucifer a predatory smile when she opened the door.

He caught the smallest of frowns on Chloe’s face as they entered. Lucifer glanced down at himself. There were really times an off-switch would come in handy.

Then again, he thought, with another glance at Chloe, he didn’t exactly mind her appearing a mite jealous. It was actually quite a nice feeling.

“Ms. Maybrick, we appreciate you taking the time to see us,” Chloe said as they followed her to the woman’s sitting room. He took in the woman’s decorating style, including the curio cabinet of porcelain dolls, and shuddered. Their eyes always seemed to be looking at you. Living dolls were a common torture in Hell, and even he found them a bit disturbing.
Chloe was still speaking to the woman, so he pulled his attention away. Looking at her wasn’t a good idea either because every time he did he pictured her as he’d seen her that morning, wet and pink and… He needed to remember what she’d said this morning about boundaries at work. Detective here. Where he couldn’t put his hands all over her, much to his disappointment.

“Certainly, anything I can do,” Ms. Maybrick cooed. Noticing his attention on the cabinet, she tossed her head and zeroed in on him. “You’ve noticed my collection, I see. Isn’t it impressive? It’s the… largest,” she looked him up and down, “…around.”

He snorted, “I generally find people with an unnatural fixation for creepy dolls suffer from some type of mental imbalance. Do you—“

“Our purpose here,” the Detective interrupted irritably, “Is to ask you some questions about your relationship with Xavier.”

“I believe I told you everything already when I came to the police station,” she said.

“Yes, but we have to be thorough, Ms. Maybrick. I need to verify a few details,” She said and jerked her head at him to join her.

Right. His turn was coming up.

The Detective cleared her throat, “The night Mr. Alors was killed he seemed to be expecting company. You told us it wasn’t you?”

Ms. Maybrick straightened, dropping her smile. “No. It wasn’t me.”

“The two of you were involved, correct?” She prodded. “The setup seemed rather romantic in nature.”

In response, Ms. Maybrick stiffened further, much like a brick actually. “If it was, it wasn’t for me.”

Lucifer felt a subtle poke from Chloe and took that as his cue. “That sounds rather unpleasant, Adrienne,” he said solicitously. “After all, if you and your deceased were in a relationship and thought him unfaithful, perhaps you wanted to teach him a lesson?”

He thought he felt the Detective’s eyes on him, but he kept his focus on the woman they were questioning, offering her a smile that said she could confide in him. “Hell hath no fury and all that. Believe me, I should know.”

Ms. Maybrick couldn’t look away, her eyes locked on his, trapped in his gaze. Lucifer could almost feel the slow, inexorable gravitation of her thoughts toward him, her mind becoming soft, sluggish. “Tell me, Adrienne darling, what is it you truly desire?”

“I want…” she leaned forward nearly imperceptibly. “I want the diamond necklace he promised me.”

Lucifer broke the contact with her and sat back, briefly meeting the Detective’s eyes. He didn’t know if that was particularly helpful, but it was all his “mojo” was going to reveal.

“Did he give this necklace to someone else?” She asked.

As if shaking off the hypnosis, Ms. Maybrick jerked and looked at the Detective. Her attractive features twisted into an expression of annoyance and she sniffed imperiously. “I have no idea.
Xavier wasn’t exactly intellectually stimulating. But he made up for it with extravagant gifts.”

“He did that often?”

“Often enough,” she answered. “But he hadn’t in awhile. I was starting to think he wasn’t worth my time anymore, but then he said he was finishing a very lucrative project at work and he’d treat me to something special.”

Chloe offered her a bland, polite smile. “Thank you, Ms. Maybrick, I think we have everything we need for now.”

She stood up to go and Lucifer followed her, grateful. He felt those dolls looking at him again.

Chloe was quiet on the way to the car. “She must have done it. The dolls are a dead giveaway.”

With open exasperation, she got in the car. “No, Lucifer. I don’t think she did it. Mercenary, yes. Murderous, no.”

“Maybe he was giving diamond necklaces to another woman and she killed him,” he said.

“No, Lucifer, I don’t think so,” Chloe said with a brief smile.

“How do you know?”

“Because people like that don’t commit a passionate murder. She used him for the things he gave her. It was a transaction to her. His death was painful, by someone who felt very strongly and wanted him to suffer as much as possible.”

Chloe looked at him, eyes suddenly serious. “It’s not about who can give you expensive things, Lucifer.”

Lucifer searched her face for some sign of what she meant. “Is this… about the house I gave you?” He remembered her reaction when he’d tried to give her other things. It still confused him; couldn’t she see he believed she was important and deserved the best? Those things were the best he could give her.

She hesitated before answering, “I understand why you did it. But I don’t need things like that from you to be happy. I’m happy just to be with you. For whatever time we have,” she said softly.

He started the car, trying not to acknowledge that perplexing stab of pain and not pain in his chest.

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Chapter End Notes

SO, bummed I missed posting this chapter yesterday; life happened, as it is wont to do. My deadline is coming up soon also, since I want to complete the story before I need to devote more time to work prep, so I’m going to be writing frantically. Expect a total of 30 chapters, give or take.

That being said, you get a double feature today! Next chapter will be up within a few hours of this one. Aaaand, since there have been a few requests for increased adult
sexytimes content, you will definitely get an eyeful in the next chap. Hope it comes up to muster!

And lastly, if you like those dolls.. I apologize for any offense. I’m sure you’re a perfectly lovely human being. My sis-in-law collects them and she’s pretty stable.

Please, please, always let me know your thoughts!
Chapter Summary

Chloe and Lucifer finally get to spend some time together.

Chapter Notes

EXTREME adult content below, and I hope satisfies some recent requests!

If he’d harbored any concern that the Detective’s interest had at all abated, she disabused him of that notion as soon as they were alone in the elevator at Lux. They had taken the service entrance around the back to avoid any crowds, and as soon as the doors closed, she cornered him against the wall.

Taken completely by surprise, Lucifer returned her kiss, his body’s response alarmingly immediate. All she had to do was touch him, and, he reflected wryly, often not even that. He greedily absorbed the feel and warmth of her whole body pressed against his. Trapped between her and the elevator wall, he was far from voicing any complaint. Her arms wrapped around his waist to hold him closer and she continued to kiss him, playfully licking his lips until he opened for her.

Boldly, her tongue stroked along his, enticing him to play and then teasingly retreating until he chased her. He was rapidly becoming lost, senses drowning in the feel of her, smell, taste, sounds of her; and buried his hand in her hair, her loose, beautiful hair, that she didn’t wear down often enough. The ding of the elevator dimly registered, but Chloe didn’t seem to notice it at all. He walked her back from the elevator, not able, or willing, to stop touching her.

“You were driving me crazy today,” she said breathlessly between kisses, pulling away only the barest number of inches to strip off her jacket and drop it carelessly on the floor.

He followed her, closing the gap between them as soon as was possible and grasping her shirt, pulling it over her head and letting it fall to the floor like its companion. “I thought I usually did?”

She went to work on the buttons of his shirt while he pulled free of his coat, tossing it in the general direction of the couch. He wasn’t sure if it made it and frankly didn’t care.

“Yes,” Chloe agreed. She pushed him in the direction of his bedroom. “But you were looking at me like…” she trailed off when he knelt to remove her pants, drawing them down her hips. He felt her clutch his shoulder for stability.

“Like I wanted to eat you up?” Pants discarded, he planted dragging kisses as he moved up; a kiss on the front of her thigh, then slightly higher on the more sensitive inner curve, the hollow of her hip, then finally the soft skin of her abdomen above the cut of her panties.

She made a soft sound of acknowledgment, watching his every move, her eyes still on him when he rose to finish undressing. “You said I couldn’t touch you at work. You never said I couldn’t
think about it,” his grin positively wolfish.

“And, um, what were you thinking?” Chloe asked, scooting back on the bed.

Pursuing her slowly, much like a wolf after his prey - and, he thought, he was feeling particular wolfish - he followed her down and kissed her with a lightness that belied the demand pounding in his veins. Why, he thought, couldn’t he find control when he was with her?

The need to be joined with her was so great it overwhelmed him, burning away any constraint, no matter how tightly he held onto it. The only desire stronger being to see her pleasure, the look in her eyes, cheeks slightly flushed, when she climaxed. He didn’t think he’d ever tire of seeing it; somehow the sight of her ecstasy erasing any memory of those before her.

Divesting her of her bra and panties, he urged her to lay down. He liked the idea of her spread like an offering before him, his to feast on and devour. His gaze raked over her and he recalled she had asked him a question.

“ Mostly what you sound like,” he said, and lowered his head to draw the tip of one breast into his mouth. He teased and suckled her while he massaged and filled his hand with her breasts, gently exerting pressure as he played with the other puckered peak.

When he’d elicited a sweet, light moan from her lips, he released the tightened bud in favor of the other, drawing more strongly in a coaxing rhythm. Her breathing quickened and she arched slightly in a subconscious plea for more. He didn’t relent until her breath came in moans and short pants, her legs pressed together in desperation.

“And what you taste like,” he said, craving the taste of her and gently pulling her legs apart to open her to his gaze. The first touch of his tongue induced a tortured cry from her. He held her still with a palm against her abdomen while he raised up to kiss her, unable to resist. Desire and something like fondness, but he wasn’t sure he had the correct word for it, lived in her eyes. He felt that confusion he’d experienced that morning trying to describe what it was when they were together.

Chloe twisted beneath him, trying to close her legs around him and draw him closer, but he backed away. Holding her hips down more firmly, he brought his mouth to her again, flicking his tongue against her clitoris. Licking the engorged bud slowly, he teased her with strong strokes and alternated with slow circles. Light pressure, the barest sweep, and he drank in her pleas for more. Firmer pressure, slow, then brief, and he savored her moans of satisfaction and excitement.

When Chloe was begging, moaning his name and reaching for him, Lucifer brought one hand down, dipping his fingers in her heat to feel readiness. She was slick, desperately on edge, the inner muscles of her core tensing eagerly. He felt an answering pulse in his cock, the acute need to drive home throbbing within him. As badly as he wanted to sink inside her, he held back.

“Lucifer!” Chloe cried, sounding tormented, and he loved it. Hearing her desperation for him, impatient for him to assuage her need, made every moment of suspended, agonizing desire he endured worth it.

He dipped his tongue insider her again, teasing those muscles with the hint of fulfillment, and stole a deeper taste of her juices. He couldn’t help a satisfied smile when she whimpered and did it again.

Lucifer knelt between her legs, helping her to sit up and pulling her onto his lap astride him. He kissed her throat while he entered her, groaning when he was finally sheathed within her, and swept her hair away from the side of her neck so he could whisper in her ear. “And mostly what
you look like, Chloe. Seeing you come is one of the most beautiful things I’ve ever seen.”

She met his eyes, and whatever she saw there she must have liked because she kissed him deeply, fingers sweeping down his jaw and her other arm reaching around his neck to grip his back. She began to rock against him and he moaned into her mouth.

Their position did not allow for much range of movement, but he held her steady with one arm around her waist, using the other for support. Lucifer thrust, sliding his cock into her snug channel with slow, strong strokes, and swallowing her cries. The pace tortured them both, stoking their need to a fever pitch with increasing urgency, closer and closer, but holding completion just out of reach.

When the tension had built to the point of breaking, he brought her hand between them, drawing it lower until she could touch herself. Eyes locked with his, Chloe stroked herself and almost immediately found relief, thrown into her orgasm and milking him in long rapturous pulses. He watched her, riveted, until he shuddered and found his own release, burying his face in her neck as he thrust as deeply as was possible.

—-

“You aren’t going to laugh again, are you?” He mumbled into the pillow.

That really did make her want to laugh, but Chloe contained it with extreme restraint. A smile was still in her voice though when she answered, “No, I promise.”

“Good. Because it’s enough for any man, even me, to start to doubt himself,” he said, but though his words were serious, his tone was not.

He would have had to be blind, deaf, and dumb not to pick up on her absolute bliss, she thought. She laid beside him, waiting to feel all of her body parts again - she was pretty certain there were some that hadn’t yet recovered. Half of her was damn near tingling.

“Are you fishing for compliments?” She asked.

His face still buried in a pillow, he gave a muffled, “Maybe.”

“Lucifer, you… satisfied me beyond any expectations or wildest dreams. In every way but one,” she said.

He sat up and pinned here with an assessing stare, mildly affronted. “Oh, have I? Do tell.”

Chloe inched closer to him. “I…”

“Come on now, you can tell me,” he said.

“I want…” she came closer, leaning down enough to kiss him. She bit her lip as if embarrassed to say it aloud.

“What is it Chloe?” Lucifer cocked his head to the side and regarded her seriously.

She should have felt bad for teasing him, really she should. But he needed it, she thought, fighting to contain a smirk.

“I want food,” she whispered.

Before she knew it, she was on her back, pinned beneath him and laughing. Lucifer laughed, looking charmingly boyish, and dropped a kiss on her lips. “I don’t know if making you food is a
good idea, actually.”

“Why’s that?” She asked, smiling up at him. She brushed back his tousled hair, gently scraping his scalp with her nails.

He purred a little, like a cat, and stared down at her like she was the most puzzling thing he’d ever seen. “You might laugh at it.”

She giggled. Straight-out giggled. “Promise I won’t.”

In the end, he did make her dinner, and they ate at the counter in pajamas and him in his robe. She was amazed by the kitchen, streamlined stainless steel and granite countertops; she hadn’t known he had this much interest in cooking. With it being on the opposite side of the in-house bar and bedroom, she had never been in it before.

“Satisfied now?” Lucifer asked good-naturedly, eyes twinkling.

“Completely. Absolutely. Though I would like to take a bath or hot shower before bed,” Chloe said.

“Oh, really?” The gleam in his eyes was all predator again, and Chloe felt a shiver dance down her spine.

“Aching muscles,” she told him.

He was insatiable. She’d honestly never been that consumed by sexual desire before. Even with Dan, she had liked it, enjoyed it, but hadn’t necessarily wanted to have sex every time he did.

This was entirely different. Just that look was enough to bring heat to her belly and muscles contract in anticipation. For a moment, she felt another flutter of panic. Good grief, was this what happened to every woman with him? Was she becoming addicted, as he’d joked about being as habit-forming as heroin?

“Actually, I have a much better idea,” Lucifer was saying, and took her hand. “Come here, love.”

He led her back to the bedroom and gently bade her to sit.

“Um, I don’t think this is—” she stopped when he came back with massage oil. “Oh.”

“Does that mean yes?” He asked.

A fragment of a forgotten dream came to her as she drew off the oversized T-shirt she’d donned for bed. He helped her to stretch out and she closed her eyes in contentment at the warm pressure of his hands descending on her poor, strung-out muscles.

“Detective!” Lucifer suddenly exclaimed, absolutely delighted. “What is this?”

“Mmm, what is what?” She asked, and felt his finger draw slowly along her back, skipping across her spine and over. “Oh, that.”

“How did I never know about this?” He said, astounded and enchanted in equal measure.

He resumed massaging away the stiffness and, in other places, soreness. She sighed in absolute ecstasy.

“Artemis, goddess of the hunt,” she said.
The tattoo was a simple one, consisting of a handful of small star-shaped markings, aligned to represent the constellation.

“My dad, he used to take me to the desert sometimes to look at the stars,” she said, lulled by the soothing ministrations, and feeling… peaceful. Cherished, even.

Lucifer surprised her by keeping the massage fairly innocent, for him anyway. Amused, she said, “You know, I had a dream about this once…”

“What, a dream about this?” He asked with a touch of confusion.

She rolled onto her back so she could see him. “Yes. More of a fantasy, I guess.”

Lucifer grinned, “Naughty, Detective. Tell me more.”

Chloe came up to her knees and gestured for him to lie down, assisting by untying his robe and helping him out of it.

He acquiesced easily but gave her a look of mild surprise when she urged him onto his stomach. Lucifer had no reservations, but he hadn’t expected her to have inclinations in this direction. Still, he gave a one-shoulder shrug and laid down as she directed.

Then he moaned in pleasure.

She smiled and exerted a little more pressure, earning another encouraging moan. “Like that?”

She continued to massage his back, marveling at the change to his back, where only the faintest of scars marred his skin to show where he had once severed his wings. “This looks different,” she said.

“Scars less now that they’re back,” he said, and turned some to look at her. “Your fantasy? he asked inquiringly.

Chloe smiled before answering, “To make you happy too.”
Darkest Hours

Chapter Summary

The reason behind the murder of the man with the Bible is discovered.

Chapter Notes

Content in this chapter could be upsetting, so... caution.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Lucifer?”

Thinking he was about to receive a lecture for going a tad over the speed limit, he slowed some and affected innocence, “Yes, Detective?”

“I was thinking we should start at the second victim’s apartment,” said Chloe.

Lucifer looked at her sidelong, and he could see her mind was already reviewing files and facts, miles and miles away from him. He sighed. Stealing another moment with her, even a kiss, was apparently not going to happen. As far as the Detective was concerned, she was already on the clock, actively planning her next steps.

Then again, he mused, there was something to be said for having to exercise self-restraint during the day. By the time they went home, he was near demented with desire for her. As if all the touches, kisses, words he wanted to share bottled up and simmered right beneath the surface. Banked during the day, it blazed to life, hotter and brighter than he could almost withstand by the time it could be released.

“Something about his apartment really bothered me,” she said as they crossed the crime scene tape. “I’ve kept the scene preserved for now. We swept it pretty thoroughly, but honestly there wasn’t much to find.”

He had to agree. Furniture, a wine cabinet, centerpieces that took up room but served no actual purpose, and — “Oh, no!” He cried. “What is.. this is absolutely horrendous!”

“What?” Chloe asked from the kitchen, poking through cabinets. She stepped back into the room.

“This travesty masquerading as art! Where did he get it? A hotel? Not to mention the dreadful state of his wine cabinet. Not one decent vintage in the lot,” he said seriously. “Actually…” he bent and withdrew a bottle, studying the label. “This one isn’t a complete loss.”

Lucifer watched her shake her head and walk away, her voice floating back to him.

“I’ve already been through those. Since when do you care about wine, anyway?”

“Detective, there isn’t an alcohol I don’t know about. I simply don’t prefer it.”
She closed the cabinets and returned to the open living space, looking disappointed.

“I don’t understand, Detective. If you’ve already been here, what are you hoping to find now?” He asked.

“It was something you said the other night. It got me thinking that I wanted to take a closer look,” she said.

He smiled slyly. “Oh? I recall saying quite a few things the other—“

She cut him off, expression and tone chastising, “*Not* that. You were showing me the things you’ve collected over the years. What do you notice in this apartment?”

He looked around the space again and still didn’t see much either than the awful furniture. “Nothing.”

“Exactly. Nothing. You said, ‘I’ve acquired a lot over the years’. What has he acquired?” She asked, her gaze sweeping the room again.

“What, you think this wasn’t where he truly lived?” Lucifer asked.

“I don’t know. There isn’t any indication of another residence. But it’s strange don’t you think? Not a single book or photo… nothing personal. He has nice tech though,” she pointed out, indicating the flat screen and stereo. “He must have spent enough time here. And there’s photo and filming equipment in one of the closets. Plenty of clothes too. Items in the bathroom and medicine cabinet.”

She moved down the hallway again and flipped on the light in what appeared to be the master bedroom, where the victim had been found.

Lucifer followed, casually looking around, but also not seeing anything of interest. “So, you are thinking what exactly then? He lived here but didn’t live here? Leading a double life?”

“I think,” she said, poking around the closet, sweeping clothes on their hangers aside and rummaging through drawers, “that he lived here. But the absence of personal objects makes me feel like there has to be something else here. It’s too… Clean. Impersonal.” She looked at him in the way she did when she was annoyed with him. “You could help, you know.”

He gave a beleaguered sigh and approached the closet, half-heartedly repeating what she had already searched. “Apparently not only was he inept in art and wine, he also couldn’t recognize a decent suit.”

Lucifer heard her resigned sigh.

“Well, it’s true,” he said, frowning. “Not that it would have made a difference, but he was destroying the lines keeping all this in his pockets.”

Chloe blinked at him. “What?” She turned to see what he held in his palm. “Where did you find those?”

“I just told you, Detective. The suit pockets.”

She looked at the jackets again and felt around in the pockets, though she didn’t find anymore. “Well, damn. Who would have thought to look here? How many are there?”
“Three it looks like,” he said, studying the flash drives. “Brought them home from work and forgot about them, do you think?”

“Or,” Chloe said, “He was keeping them very secret, on purpose.” She took one from his hand and slid her thumb along the groove on the side to reveal the usb connection.

In his breast pocket, his cell rang, and she took the drives while he fished it out. Looking at the caller ID, he said, “It’s Maze,” before picking up.

She waited while he finished the call, and he told her a condensed summary of the conversation as they left. “She thinks she may have found a sign of our fugitive demons.”

—-

In the end, it didn’t matter how stubbornly or determinedly she argued, he refused to bring her along. Chloe had finally relented when he said the only thing that could convince her. Her presence could make him too vulnerable.

He didn’t have to say the rest, that he would be too vulnerable and get hurt, possibly fatally. The last thing she wanted was to be the cause. Under any other circumstances, she would have refused to let him go alone; they were partners, they protected each other and had the other’s back, and would never allow the other to walk right into danger alone.

But what could she do when his chances of being safer were without her? Chloe recognized what he wasn’t saying, as well. If the roles were reversed, she wouldn’t let him anywhere near adversaries so much stronger than he was. She wouldn’t risk his safety or his life in something that wasn’t close to being a fair fight.

That didn’t mean it still didn’t hurt. Every minute that passed was steeped in worry and frustration. She didn’t know if he was alright, nor could she do anything to help. Except stay here.

He had promised to call. Although, she really wasn’t sure if he had meant once he was there and assessed the situation or after he had “handled” it.

So she waited for tech to decrypt the thumb drives, trying unsuccessfully to not pick up her phone every two minutes to see if he’d called or texted, even. Underneath that worry lurked a darker anxiety that she also didn’t want to face.

Touching his ring on her necklace, she closed her eyes. Never had he asked for it back, nor had she offered. For him to take it would mean she would lose that piece of him when he was gone, and for every minute it remained hers was a reminder that his leaving was imminent. Catch-22. If he and Maze tracked down the demons today and that crisis was averted, what was his excuse to stay?

“Chloe, are you alright?”

She opened her eyes and saw Ella, who had stopped at her desk, still carrying files from or to wherever she was going.

“Yeah, of course,” Chloe replied.

Ella’s expression said, ‘Yeah, right.’ Giving up the pretense, Chloe sighed and followed her friend to the lab, where Ella closed the door for privacy.

“Talk to me,” she said.
“I’m… not sure I can. Or should. Or…” Chloe struggled to explain.

Ella leaned forward on her elbows and stared at her. Her gaze was steady and compassionate. “I figured it had to do with Lucifer,” she said dryly. “It’s okay. I can handle it.”

She hadn’t explained any of it to Ella. When Lucifer had left, it was impossible to tell her the truth, and since she’d become a “celestial insider” as Linda would put it, there hadn’t been an opportunity. Or, Chloe reflected honestly, she hadn’t wanted to lose Ella by overwhelming her with too much of her new reality.

Now she wrestled for a way to simplify the mess. Chloe finally circumvented the stipulations and preconditions, isolating what it all really came down to. He was going to leave her again, and she had no idea what to do about it.

“He can’t stay,” she said quietly.

Seeming to understand that those simple words carried far more than they purported to be, Ella nodded. “He has to go back to… Oh my goodness, he has to go back to Hell. Actual Hell!”

Wincing, Chloe nodded. Freaking Ella out was exactly what she had been afraid of.

But that doesn’t stop a true friend from being there. Ella shook her head, as if to completely dismiss the Hell factor.

“You both have been different,” she observed. “Since Lucifer’s been back. Something changed between you.”

Chloe couldn’t help squirming a little under Ella’s astute gaze. How would Ella handle knowing about… that?

“You guys used the ‘L’ word, huh?” Ella asked, smirking.

“Uh… y-yeah. Sort of. Once,” she stammered, and gratefully took a sip from her bottled water. Truthfully, that had been before he left, and it hadn’t been voiced again from either of them.

Her friend rolled her eyes. “And had sex.”

She nearly choked on her water. Chloe’s eyes burned as she coughed. “Excuse me?”

“Chloe. I can handle the fact you had sex with the Devil. I’m not going to look at you like you’ve gone to the dark side or something. Don’t take this the wrong way, but Lucifer has had sex with, like, half of L.A. I think there would have been signs of an apocalypse by now,” Ella snorted.

Chloe coughed again and took another sip of water to quell the residual burn. “Right.”

Then Ella’s eyes grew a bit wider and she came around the table to enfold Chloe in a hug. “Oh, chica! No wonder you’re so upset! Here you guys finally… and he has to leave again?”

After returning the embrace, Chloe shrugged and shook her head with a chagrined smile. She tried very hard to keep emotion from her voice, allow only aloof acceptance to show. Even she doubted she succeeded. “It’s, it’s fine. I knew, y’know, he’d have to… go.”

Ella wasn’t buying it. She opened her mouth to probably ask another question when there was a knock at the door.

Sharon from the tech department poked her head in. “I’m sorry to interrupt, but I was looking for
Detective Decker. We have the files decrypted from the USB drives you brought it.”

Nodding, Chloe took a deep breath and firmly directed her brain back into work mode before bidding Ella a quick thanks and bye.

Fifteen minutes later, they were halfway through the files of the first drive. Many were still photos, probably taken in his apartment. The rest were videos. And they were very, very bad.

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When Lucifer called to tell her what happened, she tried to sound normal. She worked hard not to let her feelings show on cases, to stay cool and collected and professional. But God, cases like this one…

“So, what happened on your end?” Chloe asked with a quick glance around her, checking that no one was listening. Although, it wasn’t like she was going to drop the word “demon” for anyone to hear either.

Lucifer sounded very put-out. “Well, turned out not to be demons at all.”

“How about…?”

“Maze heard there was a gang of violent criminals holed up in an old warehouse in the industrial district. As it happens, it really was a gang of violent criminals. Who knew it would be a challenge to find demons in L.A.? It’s like looking for an evil needle in a haystack full of evil needles,” he said.

He wasn’t wrong. How were you supposed to locate one specific evil in a city, in a world, full of it?

“Detective?”

“How about…?”

“Um, what? I’m sorry,” Chloe said. “What did you say?”

“I said your name. A few times. What’s the matter, Chloe?” He answered, slowly.

Chloe swallowed. She didn’t want to tell him now, on the phone. If she was this upset, she had a feeling he might react a hundred times worse.

“Lucifer,” she whispered. “I need to go home tonight.”

She looked over at Dan, who sat at his desk, finalizing paperwork while on the phone. He would understand once she told him.

Before he could ask her what she meant, Chloe said, “I need to be home with Trixie tonight. I’m sorry. I’ll… explain it when you get here, okay?” and disconnected.

By the time he arrived, and that didn’t take him long, which shouldn’t have surprised her really, she had regained her composure and donned her professional mask.

Lucifer didn’t sit by her desk; he came right up to her chair and looked down at her. It was like he saw past the shield of careful detachment she’d erected. For a moment, she was caught between immense relief that he could see beyond it, see her, and fear, because the idea of someone being able to completely bypass it made her feel incredibly vulnerable.

Worried that he would touch her, or she’d somehow give away her feelings, she cleared her throat
and jerked her head to the chair he usually sat in. “We got into the files on the flash drives,” she said.

He sat and watched as she turned the computer monitor toward him. She wouldn’t show him the worst. Even the mildest was terrible enough.

Watching it again was harrowing. They were only children. Brutally forced into positions and actions, and somehow even worse, the ones who complied without struggle, as if they had long ago given up on fighting back. There were no words for the devastation she felt.

When Chloe finally looked at him, unable to look at the screen any longer, she was not surprised in the least by the subtle hint of red in his eyes. She regretted showing it to him, not because she feared that sign of his anger, but because she was relieved and comforted by it.

Lucifer said nothing, and when the red had faded, he met her gaze. Suddenly she didn’t care who saw or what they would think because of it, and she reached out to take his hand in hers. His features were expressionless, though he returned the light pressure.

Once they’d left, Lucifer spoke freely. “He was killed for creating that violation?”

She nodded, “Yes, I think so. I think the killer found out and…” she didn’t want to say the word ‘punish’. “I’m seeing a pattern. The first victim was selling drugs, some apparently to teenagers. This victim—“

“Victim?”

For all the tightly-coiled anger she could read in his body, he drove with graceful dexterity. Chloe wasn’t really afraid he would lose control of the car, but she felt maybe it wouldn’t have been a bad idea to drive instead.

“He is not the victim. He is the depraved monster that victimized, Detective,” Lucifer growled.

Before she could respond, he continued, “His actions were atrocious. He was killed for it? I, for one, do not have a problem with that.”

He parked outside the apartment, but made no move to leave the car. Chloe turned to him; she could see Maze and Trixie in the doorway, waiting for them.

“Someone has taken it upon themselves to punish that vile lowlife? I say let them.”

She took a deep breath before answering. Lucifer was so angry that she could practically feel it coming off him in waves. “It doesn’t work that way.”

“Perhaps not for you, Detective.”

“I can hate what he did,” Chloe said. “I can find it abhorrent and sick and… and I can’t even bear to be away from my child right now because of it. But tomorrow I will still have to walk back into the precinct and do my job, Lucifer.”

He didn’t respond, so she continued, “I took an oath. Like a doctor. I don’t pick and choose who is worth saving or avenging.”

“He isn’t worth it,” he seethed.

“He probably isn’t,” she agreed. “But that’s not my place. I am not judge, jury, and executioner.
Whatever crimes he’s done… whatever sins… there’s someone out there who is playing judge, taking lives he doesn’t have the right to take. Today, it was a man who did horrible, terrible, disgusting things. The boy before? Did he? Will the next?”

When Lucifer didn’t answer her again, she continued, “You told me once that you take no part in who goes to Hell.”

He looked at her sharply.

“You said you didn’t weigh their souls and decide who goes or doesn’t go.” Chloe waited for a sign of acknowledgement, studying him intently. “I can’t either.”

She looked at the door again, which Maze had shut when it appeared they would be taking longer before going inside. She badly, badly wanted him to come in, wanted his presence and comfort and reassurance. She wanted to tell him she needed him. And that scared her, lodging a lump in her throat that prevented her from asking. Someday soon he would be gone, and she could live with the pain that would come from loving him in this time they had. But she wasn’t sure she how she’d survive the wreckage if she let herself need him, rely on him.

She just couldn’t bring herself to ask. He didn’t stop her when she closed the car door, or after she’d closed the apartment door. Maze was here tonight. It was possible he thought they were safe enough and wouldn’t stay. Or maybe he would think, as before, that because Trixie was here, he shouldn’t be. Chloe wished she had found the courage to ask him to stay with her.

Savoring the time with her daughter temporarily banished the burn of anger and fear. Trixie was here and whole and safe, and she would not let any monsters, human or otherwise, near. Lingering over a movie, even reading Trixie a bedtime story, which her daughter was beginning to believe she was getting too old for, all helped Chloe breathe a little easier.

Preparing for bed, she refused to let herself look out the window. If his car was there, would she go out and plead with him to come in? If his car wasn’t, how would she feel then? It had become Schrödinger’s cat. As long as she didn’t look, she wouldn’t have to find out, but as long as she didn’t look, she wouldn’t know. This was what she elementally feared in their relationship; the not knowing.

She may have tossed and turned for twenty minutes or two hours, she wasn’t certain. But Chloe heard when he came in, and she lay very still while he shed his coat and shirt, draping them on the chair. The clink of his belt buckle came before the dip of the bed and rustle of the comforter when he joined her.

As soon as he had stretched out, she turned to him and buried her face in his neck, relief finally allowing her agitated body to relax. Lucifer’s arms came around her, and that was where she found herself when she woke.

Chapter End Notes

I know. Not much fun here. Chloe has some suppressed fears and while this case is pretty dark, it’s necessary for Lucifer to learn some things now and later. I promise it will lighten up in the next chapter.

I absolutely adore hearing from you. Please leave me your thoughts, on this chapter or
any other. You are all helping me become a much better writer!
The shirt was hopeless, absolutely hopeless. To be perfectly honest, his coat was too. He couldn’t go to the precinct in this. The wrinkles!

“It can’t be avoided, Detective. We’ll have to stop by Lux,” Lucifer said.

Chloe turned in her seat at the vanity, regarding him. “Um… I think that’s a great idea,” she said.

“You do?” he asked. Something about her tone sounded off.

“Oh-huh. I think you should definitely stop by Lux to get new clothes,” she said, finishing tying her hair back in a braid.

“You said me,” Lucifer repeated. “What, you’re not going with me? I promise I won’t take that long, Detective.”

She smiled and came over to him. He still hadn’t completely gotten used to the open affection she showed him. Touches that bespoke intimate familiarity, not in the sexual capacity he was accustomed to, but somewhere past friendship. Like the way she leaned in to him or slid her palms up his chest or tugged his head down for a kiss.

He’d been touched far more intimately than that, kissed far more everything than that. Yet when she did it… everything felt different.

“You,” she said, “are going to go back to Lux and pick up some clothes and after you are going to see Linda. I am going to go to work and I will see you after.”

“You.. what? Absolutely not! Guardian Devil, remember?” She was not leaving his sight. How could she expect him to just leave her?

Chloe kissed him again, sweetly. “Yes, I remember. My own personal guardian Devil. But, Lucifer, I am going to work. And,” she took a deep breath, “I need you to go home and pack. And after you’ve talked to Linda, you can come meet up with me at work.”

“But… Wait a moment, Detective, are you saying I need therapy?”

“Only in the best possible way,” she said before walking away to put on her boots.

He frowned. That bothered him. Not the therapy part, but, “Did you say ‘pack’?”

“Mm. I did,” she said without looking up.

“Why…”
She brought up the zipper on the ankle boot and finally looked at him. “You are going to stay with me, aren’t you?”

It was odd how, sometimes, the merest, most innocuous of words from her completely bowled him over. “I... thought you were coming back home with me.”

“Lucifer, I can’t leave Trixie.”

He sighed and gave up trying to smooth the wrinkles from his coat. It really was worthless. “Fine, fine. She can come too. As long as she stays off the couch. And my piano. I’m sure I can find a cardboard box or something.”

“She’s not a lost puppy, Lucifer. She’s my daughter.” Her voice was wry.

“Fine! There is a guest bedroom, you know.” At her pointed look, Lucifer scoffed. “Of course, I wasn’t going to let you sleep in it! How would that have helped me?”

“I’m not buying it,” she said. Thankfully, she didn’t say it. But he saw it in her eyes, and the truth in them made him look away, uncomfortable. She smiled at him again and went downstairs.

He finally followed her down. Really, what else could he do? It wasn’t like he was going to fly home.

Chloe was talking to Beatrix whilst mixing something in a bowl. Well, this was bound to be awkward. But the Devil didn’t run from 10 year olds, so he joined them in the kitchen and stood, awkwardly of course, near Chloe. Until he saw what was in the bowl.

“For Dad’s sake, what are you doing?” He asked, reaching for the bowl.

The child looked at him, excited. “Are you going to make the pancakes, Lucifer?”

“Er, yes. I suppose I may as well.” Well, really. How did that happen?

See, this was why children were evil. Completely swindled.

Chloe smiled at him and moved to the refrigerator to retrieve juice, so he turned to the stove with resignation. “I hope I do actually get to eat some of these.”

She laughed. “Yes, Lucifer, I’m sure there is more than enough. Linda is expecting you at her house at nine-thirty, by the way. She hasn’t gone back to her office yet, with.. y’know. She and Amenadiel think she should keep close to home for now.”

He tossed a look over his shoulder. “Are you managing me, Detective?”

“Absolutely,” she said, still with a smile. She smiled at him a lot these days, actually. There was that peculiar pain-not-pain again. He rubbed at his chest distractedly.

“And you insist on this plan for me to…” he gestured futilely at the entire house.

She turned to face him, back maneuvered to the child, he assumed to keep her from overhearing. “Trixie’s whole life is here, Lucifer. That is important, and if it’s important to you to ‘protect’ us, then you need to be here with us.”

Beatrix looked at him with renewed interest and he was certain there was a gleam in her eye. Apparently the devious little creature had heard anyway because she asked, “Lucifer, are you going to live here?”
Whilst he sputtered to form a coherent answer, he heard Chloe tell her, “While these pancakes are, uh, cooking… why don’t you get your shoes on and make sure your backpack’s all set?”

The child groaned but got up. “I’m only saying,” she said, “I think we’ll need a bigger house.”

Chloe snickered, which he studiously ignored as he slid pancakes onto the plates she’d laid out. She sobered up quickly though, and tore off a bit of a pancake, which she popped into her mouth.

“I suppose she has a point,” he said. “You’ll need a much bigger bed. It will be necessary for me to see a chiropractor if I must continue to sleep in it.”

She rolled her eyes, “I didn’t give you grief about sleeping in yours. Despite who knows how many women have been it.”

He shut his mouth when she held up a hand. “No. Don’t tell me. Please.”

Lucifer couldn’t help it. He nuzzled her neck and sneaked a kiss behind her ear, loving her delicate shiver. Snaking an arm around her middle, he pulled her a little closer so that she was right in front of him. He leaned forward and whispered, “Okay. New bed.”

She snorted. “Right.” But she leaned back into him anyway, tilting her neck just enough for him to do it again. “As if it’s only the bed I should be worried about.”

“Alright, new house,” he murmured, his only fleeting thought as he kissed the smooth column of her throat that she wouldn’t be bothered by thinking about his previous guests anymore, and was surprised when she stiffened.

Chloe stepped out of his arms and turned to face him. “Lucifer, you can’t say…”

But then the child returned and attacked her breakfast, and he lost his chance to understand what she’d been about to say. “Right, well,” he cleared his throat. “Nine-thirty was it? I’ll have to clean up first.” And he left as swiftly as he could.

He didn’t want to talk about it, any of it, but oddly, he did. Chloe insisting he talk to Linda didn’t really perturb him. It was normal behavior, and that was what they were doing for his time here, wasn’t it? Affecting normalcy? So if she wanted him to follow familiar patterns for peace of mind, he could do that.

“Good morning, Lucifer,” said Linda, motioning toward the couch.

Lucifer offered her a sardonic smile. “Good morning, doctor. Love the new office. Homey decor to set patients as ease, is it?”

She laughed and sat in the chair across the coffee table, “Something like that. Although, only very select patients. Only my most important.”

She sobered then and gave him her serious doctor face. “I know you said before that you didn’t need to see me anymore. Have you changed your mind?”

He shrugged, making himself comfortable, and noticing that she had set out a pitcher of water as usual. “I’m not sure. Chlo— the Detective, thought I might come talk to you.”

Her words came slowly, as if she was choosing each carefully, “Yes, Chloe was very upset by the
“Yes, she was,” he agreed, seeing again the look on her face that had nearly slayed him. Her cheeks had gone pale, her voice strangled, and when he had held her, she had trembled for what seemed like hours. All night he had battled the desire to punish who had done those things, but the culprit was dead; what could he do? The idea of hunting his soul down and ensuring the most brutal, most savage of tortures was administered to the animal had merit, but he was loath to leave the Detective. Especially when she had looked like that.

“She thought it might have upset you too,” the doctor said.

Lucifer’s jaw tightened, “Yes. Of course it did.” Only the thought of it and he could feel the fire that lived just beneath the surface of his skin spreading, fighting to break free. He could feel it in his eyes and averted his gaze, not wishing to frighten her.

He must not have been successful because she was quiet for long minutes. Lucifer dared to meet her eyes again once he felt the heat receding. But Linda didn’t appear to be frightened, nor had she turned her face from him apparently, and instead had been steadily assessing him.

“You have found some crimes especially abhorrent before, but this seems to be affecting you more. Or more obviously, at least,” she said. “Is it because the victims were children? Or because the man responsible is out of your reach?”

“No one,” he answered in a hard voice, “is out of my reach, doctor.”

She looked like she wanted to pursue that statement further, but she closed her mouth and waited.

“It could have been Beatrix. It could have been Charlie in a few years,” he said finally.

He watched as Linda took a deep breath before she spoke again. And though it was a statement, he heard the question in it. “You have always been particularly reserved regarding children.”

“Well, they hardly come to Lux for a drink. And my lovers before certainly didn’t bring any children around,” he said with exasperation, waving a hand in the air. “Nothing I do for fun is suitable for children, and nothing they do could possibly be fun for me. Besides, they are selfish, manipulating little creatures.”

Linda tilted her head, “You’ve had fun with Chloe and Trixie, haven’t you?”

He frowned, “That’s different.” Beatrix was indeed manipulative and devious, but he actually enjoyed it sometimes and felt oddly proud. He abandoned his casual recline and sat forward, arms on his legs and hands folded in front of him.

“Is it? It sounds to me almost like xenophobia. You fear the unknown. Why are children so alien to you?” she asked.

“I told you.”

“Are there no… children in Hell?” she asked.

“Of course there are children in Hell,” he scoffed. “Didn’t I say they were manipulative, evil little deviants? They are also very popular and effective torture.”

Lucifer took a drink of water. “There are few, however,” he admitted. “Children are innocents. No matter how cruel or selfish, they are forgiven.” He moved to twist his ring, a familiar habit he
wasn’t aware of doing, and belatedly remembered he was no longer wearing it.

“Yes, parents always forgive their children,” Linda said, and her voice was carefully emptied of inflection. “Your father forgives them too, doesn’t He? They don’t go to Hell because they go to Heaven.”

He stared at her, going deadly still. “That isn’t of import here.”

“I disagree,” she said, unfazed. “Perhaps, on some level, you resent them a little.” She looked at his hands. “Last time you were here, you mentioned your ring was a gift from your father. You’ve kept it all this time.”

Why was she always saying things that sounded like questions, but weren’t? He almost always found himself drawn to answering it. This one, however, he refused to answer.

Linda continued, however. “Are you waiting for His forgiveness?”

“No,” he stood up and straightened his coat.

She looked up at him from her chair. “In our last sessions, you said you felt like you hated yourself, that you felt evil. What do you feel you did to deserve that?”

He wouldn’t, couldn’t, unearth that. It was buried and locked away, which was just how he preferred it. No matter how he tried to stop it, the feeling punched him in the gut anyway. He felt responsible. Horrible, despicable things, like that animal had perpetrated. They weren’t his actions; he would never have condoned or suggested such a thing. He didn’t make any humans do anything. So what was this sense of guilt inflicted on him, that made him want to rage, and made him want to run?

“Apologies, doctor. I have to be meeting with the Detective at the precinct,” he said, heading for the door.

“Goodbye, Lucifer—-” but he was already gone.

——

Chloe looked up when she heard him approach, feeling relieved by his usual, cheerful smile. Pushing him to talk to Linda had seemed a good idea at the time, but she had worried that he would be annoyed with her for meddling. She decided asking how it had gone would be testing her luck, though, and opted for telling him new developments in the case instead.

“So, the content on the drives helped us obtain a subpoena for all of the victim’s work materials. His employer hadn’t relinquished them before. If there’s any sign of… if it’s on any of his files there, it could be motive.”

“And also reveal if anyone he worked with was involved in his activities?” Lucifer asked.

“Yes. Although, I’m not sure how far any evidence of that might go. It’s possible it wouldn’t be admissible in court if charges are pressed on any accomplices.” She hated telling him that, but it was an unsavory truth.

She eyed him carefully, trying to determine how receptive he would be if she talked about the killer’s M.O. Last night, he hadn’t exactly been keen on catching and reprimanding the killer.

“It definitely explains,” she said, “why his death seemed far more violent than the first. The
magnitude of the suffering he wanted to inflict proportionate to the victim’s crime.”

Lucifer looked at her, “Not nearly proportionate, Detective.”

“I know,” she whispered. And sadly, this wasn’t the first time her sense of morality had been caught in the crossfire. Criminals double-crossed each other all the time, gang wars enacted in the streets, victims fought back in self-defense. But her job was to see it through.

She continued, “So the question remains, how did the killer know about both the victims’ crimes? No arrest records, so no public records. I can’t find any common friends, family members, or places they worked. It seems they didn’t know each other at all.”

“Someone may have been seeking revenge on the behalf of the children,” he said.

“Which would make complete sense,” she agreed, thinking out loud. “But why the first victim, then? He was selling pot and Xanax to teenagers.”

She stopped the gentle swivel of her chair. “Unless, and it’s a long shot, but could one of the teenagers and the children be related somehow? Maybe one of the teenagers had been abused before, or was a sibling of one?”

The problem was she had absolutely no names to go on. As disgusted by it as she was, she was going to have to study the pictures and videos again and try to find matches to any of the children there in abuse charges and missing children and adolescents. It would take a long, long time. She decided the pictures would be easier for Lucifer than the rest.

By the time she was home that evening, she was feeling a little hopeless. Maze had cleared out to apparently continue the demon search, and Lucifer had brought a bag while he stayed over. Well, a bag was understating the several fastidious suits and toiletries. He didn’t really do casual attire, but she thought maybe he’d bring jeans or sweatpants or something.

Lucifer even made them dinner that night, which had been wonderful. She wouldn’t have minded doing it herself just to keep her hands and thoughts busy, but in the end she was grateful to have the time free with Trixie, just doing ordinary things like homework and laundry. For the same reason, he may have preferred to stay occupied in the kitchen, she reflected. It was rare he spent long periods of time with her daughter, and he had to be dealing - or not dealing, as was his way - with suddenly being in close quarters for what may be extended time.

She let him adjust and she was certain that by the end of dinner, he visibly looked more relaxed. Chloe insisted on cleaning up since he’d cooked, having to explain that was generally the way these things worked. Adorably confused, he stepped outside to smoke.

With her daughter preparing for bed, she took the opportunity to slip out the back door to join him. True as she’d predicted, he’d been chain smoking. She never knew if it was a nervous habit or just something he did because it barely affected him. She still didn’t quite understand that part; that she somehow made him vulnerable, more susceptible. Like everything else in their relationship, she dearly, dearly wanted to know, but avoided asking, certain that the answer would somehow change everything.

“Hi,” she said, sitting beside him on the deck steps.

Lucifer looked away from the sky to regard her. “Fancy a smoke, Detective?” he joked, knowing very well that she never did.

“Ah, no thank you. Tried it once. Didn’t care for it,” she answered. She raised her eyes to the sky
as he had been doing, looking for the few stars that were visible here by the city, even with dusk falling.

“Child in bed, then?” Lucifer asked.

She hummed, “Mm. Soon.” She studied the expanse of sky, reminded how much she had loved those stolen trips with her dad, missed those small moments only between them. “Maybe someday I should take Trixie out to the desert too. Show her what it’s really like.”

“In more remote places, it’s even more so. The night sky fills with so many that it looks like millions and millions of diamonds, so bright you wonder how it isn’t daytime,” he said, sounding far away. It was a strange tone from him, but one she realized she heard more and more often now over the past year. Since… well, since she’d found out the truth.

“I never knew you paid much attention to them,” she said.

Lucifer returned his eyes to her. “Oh, believe me, I do.”

“Is that…” she asked slowly, turning it over in her mind, “Is that why your last name is Morningstar?”

At his searching expression, she added, “I’m sorry if it’s a ridiculous question. I never read the Bible or stuff growing up.”

“Even when you were collecting evidence that I am the embodiment of all evil? Didn’t find some juicy details there?” He asked.

It wasn’t anger in his voice. Chloe knew now that beneath the sarcasm he was hiding hurt from her betrayal. She wanted to say something, to finally have this conversation, bring it out to the open and really deal with it, put it behind them. But she was at a loss for words, not knowing where or how to even begin, and he did what he always did; changed the subject as if it hadn’t happened.

“I’m not in it much, to tell you the truth. ‘Satan’ is a loose term that encompasses many. The serpent, the red dragon, the beast…” he answered, looking away from her again, lighting another cigarette.

“So what does Morningstar mean then?” She asked.

“The morning star,” he pointed to the horizon, where it was visible. “The brightest of all the stars.”

She remembered then, from stargazing with her father. “Oh. Right.”

“My mother would say I burned the brightest,” he said.

In his voice, she could hear the struggle it was for him to tell her. Everything he kept so private, and he was trying to show her pieces of it. It occurred to her, then, the reason for his surprise when she had rubbed his back the other night. He took pleasure wherever he could, reveled in it, offered it… but had he ever asked for it, for a gentle touch, for himself?

Had he never believed that someone would want to give to him without asking for anything in return?

She edged a bit closer. If he could face this fear, couldn’t she? Chloe reached for his hand and entwined her fingers with his before meeting his gaze. “I’m sorry.”
“I know, love.”

But he still didn’t want to talk about it. He put out the cigarette and lifted their joined hands, pointing to a loose faint dusting of stars. “There’s your huntress.”

“Mmhmm.”

“Giving the stars their light… that was a long, long time ago. Whatever light I had; well, it’s gone now. I tried to find it once,” said Lucifer, sounding as if he was talking to a memory. “There wasn’t anything left though.”

She stood and tugged on his hand. “Come to bed, Lucifer.”

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Chapter End Notes

I didn’t expect those conversations to be like that either. Sheesh. But, all’s for a reason.
Other Relationships, Apparently

Chapter Summary

A little more fluff and some feels that puzzle Lucifer before things get serious again.
Uh, some sexual content down there too.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Her hand was somewhere very interesting when she woke up. Chloe didn’t remove it, however, and instead curled her fingers around him as much as she could without waking him, slowly increasing her pressure as her grip moved down to the base of his cock, then less as she reached the tip.

She heard Lucifer moan and repeated the movement, stealing a look at him. He was either still asleep or very good at pretending. With every firm stroke, he urged himself into her grasp a little deeper. Chloe bit back a smile, thinking that she wouldn’t mind finding out what it would take to wake him. In fact, her body reacted instinctively to the sounds he made; each moan and labored breath sending a wave of warmth through her, tightening in her nipples and tingling below, where she could feel herself already growing wet.

It was like her body had become attuned to his, she thought. He looked at her that way, like he was undressing her slowly in his mind, or more, and she ached with the need to be touched; he kissed her and she yearned for the feel of warm skin against skin; he caressed her and she hungered for the completion only he brought her.

She really would worry she had acquired some kind of addiction, except she could tell him no when he suggested, only half-kidding, of more at inappropriate times. Chloe had realized that although he was still incredibly trying to her patience, could still upset her, she was also still totally immune to his charms. Not that she didn’t sometimes find him charming, but she didn’t fall for his pretenses. In general, however, much of what had pissed her off about him before had abated. Maybe it had burned away from resolved sexual tension and denial, and maybe, she admitted to herself wryly, some had been suppressed jealousy.

It had also surprised her to learn how much she’d missed the small things. Everything with Pierce had advanced in a whirlwind and skipped right over the daily, and nightly, intimacies. No stolen kisses or light, casual touches making dinner. No shared looks from across a room, the sounds of someone else getting ready in the morning, or even the comforting, loving embrace at night, listening to a steady heartbeat.

She slipped from said embrace so she could move down and take him in her mouth. Licking the head of his penis, she tasted the precum already glistening at the tip, and couldn’t help a small, satisfied smile at Lucifer’s exultant moan, his hips canting towards her.

Again she stroked him, this time with the addition of her mouth drawing in as much of him as she could take. There was absolutely no way he was still asleep, but if he wanted to pretend, she was game…
It didn’t take many minutes before he was close, the sounds of his soft groans urging for more, subtly pushing into her mouth. Chloe covered his length, enveloping him in her mouth and using her hand at his base where she couldn’t reach. She drew up, stopping occasionally to flick her tongue against his crown. A little deeper, until she felt him at the back of her throat. Lucifer inhaled sharply on a hiss.

She backed off, enjoying his sound of disappointment. When she took him in her mouth again, she gently sucked. Lucifer groaned, “Chloe!” and his hand sank into her hair.

This wasn’t something she normally enjoyed doing, but seeing and hearing his very visceral reactions were definitely doing something for her too. His sounds fed her desire, especially knowing that they were because of her. She looked up again, pleased to see his eyes open and staring at her with a mixture of surprise and heat. Lots and lots of heat.

“Mm, Chloe…”

“ Took you awhile,” she said, repeating the movement and sucking more firmly. “You must have been having a really… good… dream.”

“I was,” he said, voice thick. “Convinced I had to be dreaming.”

He squeezed her shoulder, trying to draw her up. “Come here… I promise I will come if you—”

That was the point, wasn’t it? She hummed around him, thrilled by his complete loss of control. Chloe savored the feel of him as he came, tasting his release on her tongue, and teasing him with licks through the aftershocks. He stared at the ceiling and breathed deeply.

“I may have lost the ability to speak,” he said.

Chloe didn’t bother to point out that he was, in fact, speaking. “You rendered speechless?” she asked. “You never stop talking.”

“Well, should you feel the need to silence me,” he said, “Do that.”

Lucifer rolled her beneath him and kissed her deeply, rocking his still semi-hard length into her heat, making her gasp. “Give me about two minutes, love, and I can return the favor,” he murmured in her ear.

She returned his kiss, wondering if he even knew the endearment he kept using. Tossing out warm endearments was second nature to him; practically everyone he met was a dear or darling. In fact, you were more likely to be a “dear” or “darling” if he didn’t know you at all. But she’d never once heard him use that particular word. She could far-too-easily believe it was intended only for her and wasn’t sure how she felt about how that made her feel. Perhaps purposefully, perhaps not, but the words “I love you” had not been voiced by either of them since he’d returned.

“I know,” she said, “But Trixie could wake up any minute.”

“I can be very quiet,” he assured her, “Are you worried you won’t be able to?” He flashed her a smile of deviltry. “We could make it a wager.”

Chloe kissed him again, planning on telling him it wasn’t a good idea. Then that thought escaped her entirely when he moved against her, kissing her neck and the curve of her shoulder. A kiss to her chest right above the gentle swell of her cleavage. He rocked against her again, already recovered, and apparently intent on quid quo pro.
Bracing on his forearms, Lucifer hovered over her and slid his cock inside her folds, pressing against her where she needed him too briefly, and making her want to rub herself against his hardness. Honestly, it wouldn’t take much for her right now. She brought her legs up around him, tilting her hips to receive him. He might have wanted to torment her first, but she wasn’t having it, and reached down to guide him inside.

For all his teasing, she loved how the moment he entered her, he became deadly serious. Or, maybe not so much serious as genuine. The look in his eyes then was so intent, lost in hers, no matter how they made love. No, she decided, it wasn’t serious…it was just real. It wasn’t sex between strangers or friends; it was pleasure given expressly for the enjoyment of the other, pleasure taken from the gratification of your lover. She felt so much more with him because of it. Plus, it didn’t hurt that he had moves. And some damn nimble hands.

It felt so good to be completely filled with him, that alone was almost enough to bring her to orgasm. Lucifer’s thrusts began as long, slow, torturous withdrawals, followed by forceful returns, driving deep, the impact angled to excite a hidden place inside her that overloaded her senses. She chased that sensation, raising to meet him, until it built so high, so intense, she was desperate to reach it, imploring him to give her more.

“Yes, Chloe,” he said just as breathlessly when she grasped his shoulders, feeling like she was about to fall apart. He kissed her, slowly and sweetly, contradictory to the increasing timing of his thrusts. Each stroke brought her closer, dangling at the precipice.

When he finally reached between them and bore down on the bundle of nerves above where they joined, she couldn’t hold back a cry of relief at the sudden waves of pure euphoria. Lucifer kissed her through the end, drinking in every of her cries and whimpers, especially when he pumped his release as well, holding still within her. The walls of her channel contracted around him gratefully when he touched her again, throwing her into another orgasm, short but just as rapturous.

Lucifer sank into her for a minute, but she wrapped her arms around him when he began to rise. She was loathe for him to leave her yet, but could already hear the sounds of her daughter on the stairs. Chloe ran a hand down his damp back, selfishly taking one more second for herself. These last few weeks with him had been beyond wonderful, and she worked hard to silence the voice inside that warned her the end was coming. Each day that passed, she worried would be their last.

He sat up, pulling her up as well, and brushed her hair back behind her ear. “Are you coming home with me today?” he asked.

“Yes, after Dan picks up Trixie, we can go whenever you want,” she told him, reluctantly leaving the bed to dress.

Dan was due to pick her up for his week with her in the early afternoon. Until then, Chloe had things around the house she could take care of, bills and laundry mostly. Lucifer, she thought, could find ways to entertain himself. She was surprised he did actually spend time on his phone for things other than playing games and cruising social media; he frequently made and received calls about properties and investments, including establishments he was a silent partner for. Other times, he even engaged Trixie in conversations, listening with patience to her stories about school and friends. He didn’t say much in those conversations, but gave her his complete attention.

She realized how often she had overlooked that he did that. Gave his entire focus to one person, making them feel they were important, that the little things they said were important to him. Their talks in the evenings had become more of a habit also, each night him revealing a little more, but she knew there was still so much he held back.
Chloe made Trixie breakfast and started on laundry so that it wouldn’t be sitting around while she was gone, leaving Lucifer to his own devices. She wasn’t sure how long she would be staying with him this time, if it would become an entire week or… or less, if it became time for him to go.

She stayed busy until she heard sounds downstairs, and thinking it was Dan arriving early to get Trixie, started down the stairs. She halted immediately though when she heard Lucifer talking to her daughter, and completely fascinated, sat on the stairs out of sight to watch.

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“What is that?” Lucifer asked, horrified at the sounds the child was making.

“It’s a guitar!” Trixie told him with excitement.

He looked the instrument, and more specifically the child holding it, up and down doubtfully. “I see that, child. I was referring to the horrendous sound you are producing.”

She sighed and bit her lip. “I guess it does sound awful, huh?” she asked glumly. Thankfully, she continued before he answered with his usual blunt honesty. “Papa, my grandpa, has been teaching me to play, but I don’t see him much so Dad helps me practice.”

He snorted. “Well, obviously that was your first problem.”

She shook her head sadly. “I know, I’m still not very good.”

“Well, you are learning yet,” he allowed graciously.

Trixie, sitting on the couch, folded her arms over the guitar and gave him her best pleading look. “Do you play?”

Lucifer felt sure this was likely a trap, but answered truthfully, “Indeed. I play everything.”

Her eyes grew wide in disbelief. “Nuh-uh! Every instrument?”

“Yes. Every instrument,” he confirmed. Well, when you had forever, he thought. Her look of admiration did make him a little proud.

“Could you teach me?” Trixie asked, hope shining on her face.

Lucifer scoffed and shook his head. That sounded like torture if he’d ever heard it. “Absolutely not.”

“Pleeeeeeaaase?” She cajoled.

“Unequivocally no. I draw the line at masquerading as a music tutor. My reputation would never recover.” To emphasize his point, he turned away from her to return to the kitchen. To get what, he had no idea, but anything to avoid the attempts of being roped into — he cringed and halted.

She tried the same few chords and he could practically feel the disaccordance of notes.

“No, stop, stop! What in Dad’s name are you doing? It’s like musical genocide!” Lucifer asked, compelled to put an end to the racket. He stalked back over to her.

“Papa wrote the chords down for me, see?” Trixie held the book out to him, open to the song she wanted, with pencil-written chords labeled above them. “I can’t read all the sheet music, yet,” she said.
“Right,” he answered, and made a face once he’d perused it, “Apparently spectacularly terrible taste in music is genetic.”

She tried to fit her fingers into the proper chords again and strummed, sighing dejectedly.

“Oh, all right, fine! Give here,” he said, sitting on the table across from her. It wasn’t even tuned properly. He tilted his head to better hear as he listened and compared the notes. He nodded at the music book and illustrated the series of chords. The song, and he very loosely allowed it that word, consisted of only a few simple ones.

“I can’t understand why you would voluntarily choose to listen to this drivel,” he said, shaking his head.

Trixie grinned at him, and he felt a perturbed and dark suspicion she had lured him into her plan. Devious, evil child. Well, he thought, he respected her ability to fleece him.

“Got it?” He gave her back the instrument, but it was only a moment before he had to adjust her hold on the frets. “You have to be firmer, child.”

“It hurts my fingers,” she complained.

“It’s going to. Either you wish to play or you don’t,” he said.

“I want to,” she said doggedly, and tried again. She looked at the sheet music, playing a few measures, then cast him a furtive, worried look.

With a resigned sigh, he adjusted her hold again. When she tried once more, he nodded. There was no point in getting up; he would just have to come back over again.

The third time she did much better, though the chords were halting. Gradually, her fingers became more fluid, and she grew confident enough to sing along.

He couldn’t help rolling his eyes at the inanity, but listened. Truthfully, the child had the voice of an angel. Figures, he thought. She’d buried the lead. Astonished, he didn’t pay much attention to the actual words, until a line caught him by surprise.

“With the monsters in your head… When hopes and dreams are far away and you feel you can’t face the day… Let me be the one you call, if you jump I’ll break your fall, lift you up and fly away with you into the night… If you need to fall apart, I can mend a broken heart, if you need to crash then crash and burn, you’re not alone…”

Well, unless you’re the Devil, he thought. Then when you crash and burn, you are alone. It was something he had come to find fascinating about humans, however. This belief that they could save each other. And here this miniature-human wanted to save someone, even if it was impossible, and that all would be right. That was innocence for you. He sincerely hoped she would never have to find out what it was to fall.

He finally registered that she had stopped playing, didn’t know she had caught the expression on his face.

“Thank you for showing me, Lucifer,” and smiled with so much brilliance it reminded him of her mother. His chest ached in that bizarrely pleasant way, and he frowned, rubbing at his sternum though it did absolutely nothing.

She continued, shyly regarding the guitar, “I’m glad you came back. Mom was really sad when
you were gone.”

That perked him up some. “Oh, she was, was she?”

Trixie nodded, all earnest seriousness. “She’s very happy now. I am too.”

“Gosh, what is this?” He muttered. “Is this what humans call indigestion? Heartburn? Perhaps she’s given me a stroke.”

The child laughed gaily. “No, Lucifer, don’t be silly. You love my mom, don’t you?”

He looked at her, dumbfounded and flabbergasted.

“You’re happy because you made us happy. It’s a feeling you get when you’re happy you did something to make someone you love happy.”

Lucifer was filled with gratitude when there was a knock at the door, even when he admitted Daniel of all people. He recalled he was there to retrieve Beatrix. “Come to collect your offspring?”

Dan shouldered his way inside. “I hear you’re living here now?”

“I haven’t established permanent residence, if that’s what you mean,” Lucifer answered. At Daniel’s look of relief, he added, “No room for the piano, for one.”

“You—!” Daniel broke off and pinched the bridge of his nose. “You know what? Forget it, man. Just try not to cause too much damage before you walk out on everyone again.”

“I beg your pardon?” Lucifer asked, offended. It wasn’t like he had wanted to leave in the first place, and his entire reason for doing so was to avoid damage being caused.

“Well, it’s what you do isn’t it? It was one thing to never take the job seriously, but—“

Chloe swooped in. “Dan. We actually have plans, so I’m sorry to hurry you out, but it would be best if you got going. And, you know, Trixie has a social studies project to finish and would really love your help on it.”

Yes, that class Beatrix had told him about. He hadn’t even begun to explain some of those inaccuracies.

But in no time at all, they too had departed. He couldn't help but ask though, “Why does Detective Douche seem even more douchey than usual?”

Chloe answered slowly. “He’s just being protective. Your leaving affected everyone, y’know, not just me. I think… as warped as your relationship was, I actually think Dan was a little upset you left too. He sort of saw you as a friend.”

That really puzzled him. “Me?”

She nodded. “He might not know it himself. But if there’s one thing I’ve learned from you, Lucifer, is that men express themselves in really, really weird ways. I think maybe you thought of him as a friend, too.”

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Chapter End Notes

I know, fluff again. Please don’t hold back on those comments, you know I absolutely adore reading them! And yes, I did the classic bonding-time-with-Trixie-thing, but that’s rather important in a relationship. In fact, was anyone else a little bothered that Chloe got engaged to Pierce when he like barely knew her daughter and/or how her daughter felt about it?
There might have been some preternatural second sense in the air. For whatever reason, it was as if neither of them wanted to lose a single minute of time together that weekend. At one point, Chloe actually forced him to go downstairs Saturday night. He had barely spent any time at Lux since he’d returned, either working the case with her or, well, living with her.

She’d never thought an arrangement like that would work between them. They were such different people, and where Lucifer craved company and people, action and excitement, she usually wanted the opposite, wanted quiet, downtime to relax and enjoy before she raced to one crime scene or another.

She’d wondered a few times over the years if he even slept, he did so much. How he could spend most of the night playing in his club, and other strenuous nighttime activities, and then work with her on most cases confounded her. She finally learned he did in fact sleep few hours at night, sometimes caught naps here and there during the day, and occasionally slept like the dead, possibly recharging an overextended body.

Chloe sometimes caught herself wondering how they would make it work, if they did have a future. Would he spend every night at the club? Would he continue to work cases with her? How would they live with a crazy schedule like that? And on the nights he would spend long hours at Lux, would she ever worry about his fidelity?

She felt guilty for even thinking it. His honesty, and as he said particularly for her, was a point of pride to him. Chloe would think that truthfulness would extend to faithfulness, or the desire to not stray, or even the concept of remaining true to someone. Once a promise made, a promise kept, and she had never seen him go back on his word. Skew it perhaps, but never break it.

What it really came down to was some self-confidence issues. But who could blame her when he had a history of sleeping with drop-dead gorgeous women and wild, unconventional sex? She was nowhere near that adventurous or experienced or sophisticated or stunning, and she couldn’t possibly compete.

But none of that was the real problem, and she knew it. If they loved each other, they would make it work. But it was all moot unless by some miracle, he found a way to stay.
In any event, she knew how important music was to him now. During one of their evening talks, she’d succeeded in getting him to divulge a little more about Hell. It had dominated so much of his life, was one facet of his identity, and yet it was entirely foreign to her. She knew she was mostly to blame for it. Why would he want to confide in her after she had reacted so badly?

Despite his reticence, Lucifer had finally told her why he loved music. He had none of it in Hell. There was no harmony, no instrument that could be tuned, no melody that could please. Hell robbed everything of its full value, even music. It could be played, but it never satisfied; because it brought joy to him, something was always wrong.

Here, he could soak up any kind of music, hear it in its perfect state. He consumed it like sunlight. And perhaps it was, after being trapped in darkness. Lucifer explained that he didn’t play so much for others, though he liked the company of people who weren’t either the tortured or the torturers. He played for himself, for the feeling that banished loneliness. For the length of a song, he identified with another, and finally felt understood.

Chloe was surprised then when she heard the ding of the elevator and looked up from the book she’d been reading, snuggled in a blanket in front of the fire, to see him coming in. Frowning, she checked her watch. Two hours. Really?

He caught her frown as he was pouring himself a drink. “Tired of me already? And here I thought you would be glad to see me.” He brought her a tumbler too.

“Of course I am,” she said, taking a sip. “I’m just surprised. I thought you’d want to stay awhile longer. You’ve been here three weeks and I think you’ve spent maybe one or two evenings there.”

Lucifer downed about half of his whiskey before answering, and she realized that the answer had required him some time to voice. Bringing what he really felt to the surface was difficult for him.

“It felt good to play awhile. But I kept thinking that whilst I’m down there, you’re up here. Possibly naked. I’d rather be where you are right now,” he said.

“Because I could potentially be naked?”

“Exactly!” He looked at how she was wrapped up in a blanket. “But since you’re not, we can remedy that.”

He was leaning forward to kiss her when a cell phone rang.

Now it was his turn to frown. “It’s Maze.”

“Oh. Okay,” she said, and looked down at her book again, not really wanting him to see it affect her.

Moving to the balcony, he answered and stepped outside.

If he’d wanted her not to hear, it didn’t work very well. Granted, she could only make out bits and pieces of his side of the call, but she picked up on enough, and the agitation laced in his tone. Lucifer was not happy with the direction of the conversation.

At first, she’d thought Maze was calling with news of another possible site of demon activity. That was apparently not the case, or if it had started that way, it quickly escalated into something else.

“Lovely! What do you mean it isn’t good news? You said it wasn’t demonic murder and mayhem,” he said.
Then a long pause before he answered her again, voice harder than she’d ever heard, “That’s none of your business and not your place.”

“I am not deluding myself and they will not think they have won… That’s ridiculous. They wouldn’t dare.”

Finally, before he ended the call, Lucifer said, “There wasn’t an alternative. I couldn’t allow them to set that precedent. To return empty-handed… Well, if there was a permanent solution, don’t you think I would take it?”

He didn’t come back in right away, electing to light up a cigarette and finish his whiskey. She saw his long exhale after the cigarette took, the smoke dwindling away into the night breeze, but from his posture, she could tell his back was still stiff with tension. Waiting for him to come back in, she wondered if she should ask him about the conversation or honor the privacy he had wanted and pretend she hadn’t heard.

Chloe had gathered enough to understand Maze was concerned what the possible ramifications could be with his absence from down there. What might be happening without him there to prevent it. He was using the demons as an excuse to be here, when he easily could have claimed to have dispatched them to his constituents.

“So, what was that about?” she asked after he came in and went to pour himself another drink.

“False alarm, apparently,” he answered.

Lucifer picked her up, blankets at all, and sat down with her on his lap. Burying his face in her neck, he inhaled the sweet scent of her skin, catching even the faint perfume of jasmine in her hair. He pulled it free from its ponytail so he could run his fingers through it, loving its silkiness and the way it brushed against his skin when she was above him.

He didn’t want to think about the disconcerting discussion with Maze, in which she had chewed him out for his denial. He’d wanted to remind her that it wasn’t simply about a few demons escaping and running around Earth. It was the threat they represented to Chloe, whether or not they actually came after her, which seemed less and less a possibility every day. Whether or not there truly was more to this prophecy business, he didn’t want to take chances. And if he returned to Hell without demons to be made examples of, it wouldn’t take long for others to find a way to do the same.

There was only so much he wanted to say with Chloe nearby, however. All he wanted was to use every minute he could.

So it might have been with a touch of desperation that he drew her in for a kiss, but she didn’t resist, moving to straddle him and twine her arms behind his neck. On her lips he could taste the faint bite of the whiskey mixed with her intoxicating sweetness. She nipped playfully at his bottom lip and he pulled her a little closer so he could feel her curves against him.

Before he could do it himself, she pulled her shirt over her head. He really loved how often she took the initiative, how it communicated she wanted him as badly as he did her. It still awed him some, that she did. Each time she pursued him for a kiss, touched him or encouraged his, called his name, she was choosing him.

Chloe pulled away, ending their kiss, and he felt the loss keenly.
“Lucifer?”

“What, love?” There was a small smile hidden in the corner of her mouth, and he wanted to chase it and steal it for himself.

She looked like she was going to say or ask him something, but she shook her head. Then she said, “I thought you came up here to make sure I was naked. So far, I’m the only one doing anything about it.”

“Detective, are you implying I’m laying down on the job?” His fingers skated up the curve of her spine, stopping at the clasp of her bra. Maybe he was delusional, but he thought maybe she had been wearing more lacy undergarments of late. He loved her in anything, or especially nothing at all, but it was lovely to think it might be for him. Like a sexy Detective present for him alone to unwrap.

“I am implying you aren’t laying down on the job, and that’s a problem,” she replied as he bared her shoulders.

There were so many places around the apartment he would love to ravish her, strip her down and bury himself in her. But night had fallen, and with the crackling fire in front of them, it occurred to him that it was a particularly romantic setting.

With the warm glow dancing across her skin, burnished by the gilded kiss of firelight, he gathered her up in his arms and laid her down on the rug, hoping she would be comfortable, and admiring the spill of her hair beneath her, glinting like spun gold. She pulled him down and he lost every thought except the desire to please her. It fed his own in a way he had never known before, and he privately wondered if the child hadn’t been on to something.

Lucifer entered her from behind as they laid on their sides, bodies stretched out before the fire, and facing its warmth. He pulled her back, supporting her hips with his to assume more of her weight and reveal more of her to his touch.

From here, their position allowed him free reign of her and he loved that Chloe relinquished herself to him without reservation. Adjusting the position of her leg to rest on his, he opened her even further. Lucifer brushed kisses along her neck, feeling her shiver in response to the light abrasion from the stubble on his jaw. He fondled her breasts, rolling and gently pinching her taut nipples between his fingers and thrusting slowly, never completely leaving her tight embrace.

She reached behind her and covered the nape of his neck with her hand, urging his renewed attention to kiss the curve of where her neck met shoulder. Lucifer felt her inner muscles contract with the gentle bite, and he drew on her skin, wishing to mark her, a visible reminder to her in the future that she was his, although she would most likely chastise him for it later.

He was completely absorbed in listening to her, savoring each sound of enjoyment, sometimes refraining from thrusting entirely to indulge in the feel of her rocking back against him in frustration. Then he would start up again, and when she reached for his hand, dragging his palm down the plane of her stomach, he gave up his control and stroked her. He would have teased her more, but her inner muscles clenched around him so deliciously that he couldn’t delay any longer.

She came on a moan, chanting yes in a breathy voice drowned in exhilaration. Lucifer continued to stimulate her through his own release, coming hard throughout the vise-like grip of her contractions. A shaky exhalation escaped him and he rested his forehead on the back of her shoulder. He wasn’t sure he had ever felt a culmination like that before her. It was different, this way of soft, slow…
Chloe had rolled to face him and propped herself up on an elbow, head resting in her hand. She was eyeing him with an expression, sated, but something else, almost secretive. She sighed and reached out to run her fingers through his hair.

“I must be getting better at this,” he said to divert the discomfort of his confusion. “You hardly laugh anymore.”

She smiled, amused as he had hoped, and kissed him. He felt the need to say something, but couldn’t find the words. She rested on her stomach, stretching, and he, drawn to the scattering of stars, traced the constellation on her back.

“There’s so much you don’t tell me,” she sighed.

He felt a small stirring of guilt growing in his chest. Yes, there were so many things, but he had his reasons. He couldn’t risk it, hazard watching her turn away from him again.

Chloe continued, “I heard you tell Trixie you could play everything, not just the piano.”

Relieved that was what she meant, he replied, “Yes. Languages are sort of my thing, and I suppose music is another form of language.”

“Languages?” she asked. “You can speak more languages?”

“Any language,” he said, still tracing signs on her back. “Although I admit I am sorely out of practice on my Arabic.”

She blinked. “You’re kidding?”

Lucifer frowned at her, “No, really. My Arabic was never particularly impressive.”

“I don’t mean Arabic,” she said, “I mean about all the languages. Every one? Prove it.”

“Seriously?”

“Yes! Tell me something… in… French,” she decided.

He looked at her doubtfully. “That’s hardly a challenge. Half of Canada speaks French.”

“Okay, Spanish.”

“Half of California speaks Spanish! Wouldn’t you prefer something more exotic? Swahili? Hindi? I could do Appalachian, but please don’t make me.”

She laughed, “No. How about Italian? I like Italian.”

“Only if you tell me your insistence is because it’s a turn-on?” Lucifer asked hopefully. That could be useful in the future.

“Sure, but I think you’re stalling.”

He scoffed, but gave in and told her, for lack of anything else to say, in Italian how much he adored the sight of her, naked as the day she was born, limned by the firelight. Then he told her he’d missed her when he’d gone downstairs to Lux. From there, it was too simple to admit how much he had missed her before that, how life in Hell had never felt so directionless or lonely.

She watched him without interruption and he felt the rest pouring out, the immense relief to tell
her, although he couldn’t bring himself to in words she could understand. She was a miracle. All the ways she had brought miraculous changes to his life, and that he worried why. That sometimes his secret desire, hidden dark and deep, was that he wished he could simplify his life. Rid it of all the celestial complications, be normal, so there were no more obstacles between them.

Had he known then, perhaps he would have told her more. He would have fought for the courage to tell her in simple English, before it was too late.

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“Are you going to tell me what you said?” Chloe asked when he had finished.

He smiled charmingly. “Only how special you are, Detective.”

“Really? Seemed there were more words than that,” she said, skeptical.

“Well, there were examples. Adjectives.”

She let it go there, because she really hadn’t meant to do it. It hadn’t occurred to her when she had asked for Italian that she would recognize some of the words. She knew just enough Spanish to get in trouble, could hear it better than she could speak it, but hadn’t considered how similar many words were, or how many cognates there were between English and Italian. The word “miracle”, for example, “miracolo”; “desire” she heard as “desiderio”; “angelo” for “angel” and others.

Even being able to pick out some of the words, the context and depth of what Lucifer said was lost on her. Her curiosity grew, piqued by the hint of those words, but she let them be. The reminder of the word “angel”, though, only resurfaced older questions that she wanted to understand.

“I found the feather you left for me,” she said.

Lucifer didn’t respond, so with an internal sigh, she prodded, “I asked Maze about it. She said.. It could heal someone?”

“Theoretically,” he answered. “It worked for my misfortunate brother.”

Chloe regarded him seriously. “Lucifer, you can’t protect me from ever being hurt. My job carries that risk. And that’s just… life.”

“Which puzzles me as to why you do it,” he said.

“You know me better than that. I do it because that’s who I am,” she told him.

Lucifer looked annoyed by that, his expression conveying a sarcastic “Oh, really?” of affront. “Well, if we are what we do, Detective, you can see why I do not find that statement particularly comforting.”

Belatedly, she realized how he had internalized that statement and wished she had explained how it defined both of them. “Lucifer, that’s not what I meant. There is a difference between the job you choose and the job you are forced into. You choose to right wrongs beside me every day.”

As she’d known he would, he redirected the conversation. “The difference is, Detective, that your job doesn’t risk my life. It risks yours.”

She could ask him about that now, how his statement wasn’t completely accurate because somehow she did affect him, somehow she made him vulnerable. He took a risk every day with her
and she still didn’t understand why. But he cut her off before she could marshall the words, effectively slamming the door on the opportunity.

“My life goes on. For the time I can tell myself you’re here, I want it to be true. Someday… Well, someday, you will go someplace I can’t follow,” He smiled without humor. “Persona non grata, remember?”

Chloe wasn’t even sure how to respond to that, so she didn’t. It was an opening for her to ask again why it was he wasn’t welcome there, what he had done to fall… but she doubted he would be any more forthcoming than he already had. Instead, she touched his shoulder, running her fingers over the smooth curve.

“Why did you never show me your wings before?”

He didn’t answer at first.

“Did you want to see them again?” he asked.

“Um, yeah, I guess so,” Chloe said. Then, “Where are you going?” when he left the room.

Lucifer returned in silk bottoms and wrapped her up in a black robe. It was far too large, but she did her best to tie it securely. He led her out to the balcony.

“I’m liable to hit something in there,” he said.

She raised an eyebrow. “I’m surprised you bothered with pants, if you aren’t concerned with someone seeing your wings from down there.”

He snorted. “I’m not. It’s cold out here, Detective,” he said pointedly.

“Lucifer,” she said, “I promise you, I know better than to think your… ego… is at all affected by the cold.”

He grinned in that rogue-ish way that never failed to charm someone out of something, usually their clothes, and she gasped when, in the next moment, his wings unfurled.

She took a step forward, then stopped. “Can I… touch you?”

“Detective, you may always touch me in any place you desire.”

She wasn’t sure why she was so afraid to touch them, but she approached slowly, and very carefully brushed her fingertips along the feathers above his shoulder. The same as the one he’d left her, they were soft like velvet. Her feather had been white, but seeing them in entirety, she realized his wings were nearly iridescent, so pure and bright were they.

“Are all angels’ wings like that?” She asked. “So… bright?”

He smiled. “No. The morning star is the brightest,” he said. “The bringer of light to the night sky.”

“Oh,” she whispered, withdrawing her hand. “But you never showed them to me either. All that time you told me who you were… you could have.”

The soft, nearly pearly glow disappeared as his wings folded in on themselves, finally completely vanishing somewhere, mysteriously, into him.
“That’s not who I am, Detective.”

She wrapped her arms around him, pulling him down to meet her kiss. Lucifer, she thought, don’t you know you’re both?

Chapter End Notes

Well, my dears. Wrapping up by the 1st has died (I hate adulting) but don’t worry, the story will go on... In the meantime, please feed me with commentary!
The call came in the morning, while Chloe was still comparing still-frames of children and adolescents to the database of missing persons. The last week of fruitless searching had yielded no connections, but she was tenaciously refusing to give up the one lead she currently had.

An officer who had been dispatched to follow-up on a 911 call in which the wife reported someone had poisoned her husband recognized the similarities to the bulletins she had put out, and called her as soon as the hospital confirmed there had been a poisoning. Intentional poisonings weren’t actually all that common, and arsenic less so. People generally went for drug-related overdoses, as they were easy to obtain, more likely to be believable, faster to take effect, and less violent.

“Arsenic, are you sure?” Chloe asked, and stood up, looking for where Lucifer had run off to. “Yes, I definitely want to speak with them. Great. Yes, thank you,” she answered to his inquiry if she could meet the family at the hospital soon.

She wasn’t surprised in the least to find Lucifer jawing away with Ella in the lab. He had choice favorite hiding places when he was trying to avoid any work he considered dull, like paperwork. It worked for both of them; she was able to actually get things done in peace without his special brand of helpfulness, and he was free to socialize and be the center of someone else’s attention for a little while. Actually, she thought, she probably got the most benefit from the arrangement.

Chloe hated that she would have to interrupt them. Lucifer and Ella had been talking more regularly over the last week; it was like things were getting back to normal for them, and she didn’t want to spoil it. She knocked softly on the frame of the door and they both looked up at her, stopping mid-conversation.

“Hey,” she greeted them with an apologetic smile, “Sorry, but something’s come up related to the arsenic murders.”

“Really?” Ella hopped off her stool. “There was another one already?”

“Sort of,” she said. “The intended victim made it to the hospital and is being treated now. So far, so good. I’m going to head down there now and see if we can get some new information, at least find some kind of clue as to how everyone’s related in this thing.”

Lucifer adjusted his coat as he stood, telling her he would meet her at the car, and Chloe nodded. “That’s fine, I actually need to talk to Ella for a minute.”

“How?” Ella moved some files out of the way so they could have more room at the table. “What’s up?”

“I was hoping you’d come with us. Maybe something about the arsenic can tell you something?”
she asked.

“I doubt it,” she answered, “Unless the amount of the dosage shows how badly the guy wanted this person dead. I think I can be more help at the crime scene, though, maybe see how the victim ingested the poison or any possible markers for DNA samples. Was there an object this time?”

Chloe shook her head to tell her she didn’t know. “I’m planning to ask when we get to the hospital.”

She waited for Ella to gather supplies. “So… you two are, like, living together, huh?”

“Um, sort of, I guess,” she fumbled to answer.

“Which means you’re sleeping together. Like, every night.”

Frowning slightly, Chloe regarded her with concern, “Ella, I thought you were okay with…” she waved a hand in the air to convey everything.

“Oh, I am!” she laughed. “I just want details!”

Startled into laughter, Chloe exclaimed, “No! No way.”

“Come on!” Ella whined. “It’s what girlfriends do. Maze’s sex life is scary and I don’t think Linda is close to resuming that one. You’re it, lady. Not to mention Lucifer’s reputation. I’m dying to know!”

“Absolutely not,” she said firmly as they left the lab. She looked around to see if anyone, more specifically Lucifer, was around to hear. “I will tell you this much. He knows what he’s doing.”

Lucifer had two general modes, Chloe thought. Serious, which admittedly was more rare, and wicked. Sometimes seriously wicked, she amended, and quickly redirected her thoughts away from some of the things he’d done the night before.

Delighted, Ella half-laughed and half-squealed. “Girl!” And, thankfully, didn’t push for more.

They were nearly to the car, though, when she stopped Chloe with a hand on her arm, and Chloe turned to see a rather serious expression on her face. “What?”

“Listen, Lucifer’s helped me think about a few things, and… Could we, uh, talk later sometime?” Ella asked, not meeting Chloe’s eyes.

Concerned, Chloe tried to reassure her. “Of course, Ella.”

The normally chipper brunette gave her a lukewarm smile, and changed the subject when they all got in the car. Chloe hoped whatever it was Ella wanted to get off her chest would finally clear the last vestiges of awkward between them. It had seemed to her that since her revelation and Lucifer’s subsequent return, Ella had been coping well and gradually returning to their usual camaraderie. The vibe was greatly improved, but there was still some last vestiges of distance in the air over the last few weeks.

Why was it lately, when she thought of the last few weeks, there was an unintelligible whisper in the corner of her mind, like there was something she was overlooking?

—-

When they arrived, a uni directed them to a small hospital room holding a male patient, his wife,
and their teenage son. Chloe filed that away for later, noting that he was around seventeen or eighteen. She would explore the child pornography angle here as well. That would have to be a very delicate conversation. For now though, her focus was on the patient and any information he might uncover.

The married couple looked to be in their forties, probably on the younger side. Patricia, as she introduced herself, sat by her husband’s bedside, holding his hand, and immediately stood when they entered.

“I can’t understand why anyone would do this to Barry,” she said. It was clear she had been crying on and off, and her eyes welled up again. She impatiently brushed her brown hair from her face and her husband squeezed her hand comfortingly.

Chloe quickly reached for the standard box of tissues in the room and offered her one. “I’m sure this has been very upsetting. It’s fortunate you were able to make it to the hospital in time,” she said, giving her best reassuring smile and introducing herself and Lucifer.

“I’m sorry, I’m confused. You’re homicide detectives?” Patricia asked, looking back and forth between them.

Chloe didn’t want to divulge the series of murders and upset them, and picked her words carefully. “There have been other deaths related to arsenic poisonings. Anything you can tell us about what happened will help.”

“Okay. Okay. Well, I was out for my morning jog, and Lincoln,” Patricia looked to her son, “had already left for school. He leaves around the time I go out because he picks up his friends on the way to school. He’s the only one with a car.” She smiled briefly. “He’s been so responsible, we just helped him buy his first car a few months ago.”

“Sorry,” she said. “That probably wasn’t important.”

“Anything could be important. Please continue, everything you remember,” Chloe encouraged her. “So your husband was the only one home? Did you have any guests or expecting any company?”

“No,” Barry answered. “I actually just got home from work. I’m third shift at the cardboard packing plant in Swift Park. I get home in time to see them in the morning then usually hit the hay until early evening and have dinner.”

Chloe nodded. “Did you notice anyone suspicious near your house or in the neighborhood? Anyone acting strangely or loitering?”

“No, no one,” Barry said, and looked questioningly at his wife.

Patricia shook her head, “I jog through the neighborhood and didn’t see anyone either. I might not have even noticed, really. I meet up with Melanie from down the street and we’re always talking.”

I would appreciate Melanie’s number and address from you later please. I’ll check with her too,” said Chloe. “Barry, did you eat or drink anything? How did you know to report a poison when you called 911?”

“Yeah, I drank my glucerna shake,” Barry said. In response to Chloe’s questioning look, he added, “It’s for people with diabetes. I have one sometimes when I get home.”

So the poison was definitely intended for him, Chloe thought. She had only been theorizing to this
point that the poison had been meant for Barry. The victims, so far, had been males. Smart, she thought. Someone poisoned the shake, something only he drank, waited for everyone to leave the house, and while the wife was away at work, Barry would become violently ill, and the killer could come back.

The question was why Barry? The other victims had skeletons in their closets, ones related to adolescents. What was his?

Chloe turned to face Lucifer and gestured that it would be a really good time for his hypnosis-mojo thing, and then she swiftly faced Patricia. “Patricia, while my partner finishes up with your husband, would you mind telling my other associate, Ms. Lopez, about finding Barry when you got home? Any details about the shake, his symptoms, why you believed it was poisoned, that would all be very helpful.”

On cue, Ella smiled sympathetically at the wife and held out her hand. While she collected more information to help analyze the crime scene and set Patricia at ease, Lucifer approached Barry. His smile for the patient was not friendly and Chloe edged closer. Given what they’d learned about the last victim, she could guess Lucifer believed this man to be guilty of similar transgressions. Or worse.

“Hello there, Barry,” he said, introducing himself. “Interesting to find yourself at the center of a foiled murder attempt, isn’t it?”

“Uh, no,” he answered, a little nervously, “I mean, y-yes. I don’t know why someone would want to murder me. I thought maybe it was just a rancid shake, or y’know a mean prank or something.”

“Right… Well, perhaps it is your proclivities someone takes exception to. Been a bad boy Barry?”

She poked him in the ribs and Lucifer shot her a look of aggravation. “Fine, fine,” he sighed and faced Barry again. He caught the man’s gaze and asked, “Tell me, Barry, what is it you truly desire?”

She watched as Barry’s eyes widened slightly and brows knit in confusion. Snared by Lucifer’s intense focus, unable to break the connection, he said, “I want… to be a good husband and father.”

Lucifer sighed gustily, clearly unappeased. “That’s it?”

“Yeah,” Barry blinked and gave his head a tiny shake. “I just want to do right by them, you know? Deserve them.”

Looking bothered on his father’s behalf, Lincoln stepped toward them and laid a protective hand on his father’s shoulder. “You do, Dad. We know you do,” he said, and cast a disgruntled look Lucifer’s way.

Ella cleared her throat, “I have all the information I need here, and Patricia has given us permission to check out their house.”

“Great. Thank you,” Chloe told the both of them. She handed out her card. “That will help considerably. Please, take this. Call anytime if you think of anything.” She smiled at Patricia again. “Anything can be important.”

“You should have let me talk to the son too,” Lucifer grumbled in the car.

Chloe sighed, checking the rear-view mirror. “You heard the husband, Lucifer. I don’t think we were going to get more from the conversation. At least right now.”
“Detective, you know he has to be guilty of something,” he argued.

Ella looked confused. “Why’s that?”

“The two victims before might have been killed for illegal activities,” Chloe explained, and then answered Lucifer, “Which is why having permission to search in their home is excellent. Should we find anything…”

“Oh!” He said, “Like in the suit pockets, you mean. Evidence of his wrong-doings.”

She smiled, “Exactly.”

They didn’t have all day to poke around the Cabbins’ house though. The search would have to be more or less superficial, but on the bright side, there were three of them. With any luck, they would find, as Lucifer hoped, an indication of why the man had been targeted, or even better, how these people were related.

Because despite each having sins, there was someone who knew about all of them.

Sweeping the obvious places wasn’t revealing anything, however. Drawers contained no hidden secrets. Closets held nothing but clothes and shoes, the pockets and boxes in them empty of anything irregular. All was as it should be.

It was interesting to find in this day and age of smartphones and mini-computers, Patricia kept an old-fashioned appointment book. Chloe flipped through, looking for anything eye-catching, but only saw things like “Dinner with the Talbots” and “Movie night with Cheryl.” There were hardly any notes pertaining to her work, which wasn’t surprising given that she worked customer service for a cable company, so her work was usually confined to the hours she clocked in and out. It appeared she was active in the community though, like charity work and attending support groups for women with trauma.

Chloe checked in with Ella, who had also been joined by Lucifer. “Leave that alone!” Ella scolded, smacking his hand when he reached for a pudding in the refrigerator.

“What, it’s not a protein shake,” he said.

“We’re helping ourselves to evidence, not their food,” Chloe said. “Go… check some more drawers or something. What did you find, Ella?”

“Lots, actually. Between her testimony and what I see here, I have a pretty clear picture,” she stood up and pointed to the remaining protein shakes as Lucifer left the room, ostensibly to continue searching, but more likely to play with things that weren’t his.

“Barry drinks one almost every morning, right? So he comes in, opens one, takes a few drinks,” she stopped and pointed at the sink, where a half-empty bottle had been dumped. “He feels sick, and thinking it was off, tosses it and grabs another.

“He drinks this one. Maybe he checked the expiration date or just decided it was a stomach bug or the greasy burger he had last night - whatever. He drinks it. They must have been pretty toxic, though I’d say nowhere near as much as our last guy’s. He makes it to the bathroom, where he gets ill.” She made a retching face.

Ella moved to the door off the kitchen. “Enter wife, back from her jog. Hears husband getting sick. He tells her it started after he had his shakes. She sees the shake in the sink and the one on the counter, thinks, ‘Hey, that’s strange’, and picks them up to drain them. Turns them over—”
here she shows them the bottoms of the drinks. “See that? Injection holes, just like the beer. It was easier with this material since it’s more malleable, but that also means it poked a larger hole.”

“And that’s why Patricia suspected poisoning?” Chloe asked.

“Yup. Damn dumb luck she spotted it,” Ella replied, carefully sealing the drinks in plastic evidence baggies. “But that wasn’t all.”

“It wasn’t?”

“Nope. Found something weird on the counter, too, meaning the killer was here for at least a few minutes. Must have ran when he saw the wife coming. Wild guess,” she said.

“A candle?” Chloe asked.

Ella smiled. “You got it. I’ll check it for any DNA when we get back to the lab.”

—

No prints were found on the candle, which didn’t surprise anyone. Lucifer was still sulking that he couldn’t go back and question Barry some more. His usual methods of intimidation would likely have yielded some results. Far more than the waste of time spent snooping around their house.

Unfortunately, there was no way he’d be able to corner Barry at the hospital without the Detective finding out. She generally didn’t like when he closeted himself away with a suspect in interrogation, so he doubted it would go any better there. Also, too many witnesses.

The Detective had added the protein shake and candle details to the board and leaned back in her chair to study it. She liked to swivel while she thought, which he’d always found rather adorable.

She sighed, resting her head on the back of her chair. “I don’t get it. Somewhere there is some connection between these three, and I just don’t see it. Or what the Bell, Book, and Candle motif has to do with anything.

“There was nothing special about the bell, nothing marked in the Bible, and this is just an ordinary taper…” she trailed off, peering more closely at the candle.

“What? Do you see something?” Lucifer asked, straightening.

“Maybe, I don’t know,” she frowned, and opened the bag to withdraw the candle. “I think there’s something on the bottom,” she said, turning it over.

The Detective was right. There was something; the number 10 written in what appeared to be black marker. That… seemed oddly familiar. Where did he remember numbered candles from?


He sat up and stared at the murder board again, looking for the picture of the Bible. Standing abruptly, he walked over to it, not sure what he hoped to find, but… He was vaguely aware she was still speaking, but his thoughts were coming together with startling and appalling clarity. Oh, no… not ten at all, he realized in dismay.

Lucifer cleared his throat before he said, “We need to find eleven and twelve.”

She stopped whatever she had been saying. “What?”
“It’s… not ten candles, Detective. It’s twelve,” he answered, briefly closing his eyes against the rising tide of dread.

“Why twelve? What does that mean, Lucifer?” Chloe stared at him, confusion and expectancy in her eyes.

He should have put it together when she told him about the Bible. But he’d been too busy thinking about her and trying not to think about her… And damn, was he in trouble now. And how could he have been so dim-witted? Communicated, indeed!

It’s fine, he told himself. Just tell her what Kinley had said about more of the prophecy, what he’d disregarded as lunacy. Tell her he hadn’t disclosed it was a possibility she could be involved in more because she was the woman he loved and… He looked in her soft, green eyes, the shade of the surf of the sea, and swallowed, searching for the words that were right out of reach.

Tell her that it was nothing to put stock in, except it had brought him here in the first place, and those demons would never have broken free if he hadn’t left. Tell her it was because of that prophecy that he feared she was a target now, a deranged and desperate woman’s ploy for leverage, and who knew what else that could be waiting in the wings. Dear God.

Because it hadn’t been the raving of a tormented soul; it hadn’t been a bluff to taunt the Devil. Excommunicated. Kinley had been saying “excommunicated.” Kinley had been working with another, likely someone else who had been excommunicated from the Church. What was he’d said? His work wasn’t finished, and the rest hadn’t been translated before his demise? It was too great a coincidence.

Lucifer came up to her, unable to break free from the worry collecting in her eyes. “A bell, a Bible, and twelve candles, Detective. It hasn’t been practiced in hundreds of years.”

“What hasn’t, Lucifer?” she asked, confused.

“The formal ritual of excommunication with twelve priests bearing candles,” he said, and his damn perfect memory recalled words he hadn’t heard spoken in so many ages…

“...We declare him excommunicated and anathematized and we judge him condemned to eternal fire with Satan and his angels and all the reprobate, so long as he will not burst the fetters of the demon, do penance and satisfy the Church; we deliver him to Satan to mortify his body, that his soul may be saved on the day of judgment.”

Chloe’s brows knit and she began to ask, “So someone is condemning these men for their sins and… sending them to you to be…?”

Tell her the rest, he thought. The connection to Kinley.

Neither of them saw Maze coming until she had blasted through the room and pushed him so hard he nearly fell into his chair.

“Maze, what the—“ he started.

“You damn idiot,” she hissed. “When will you learn to see people other than yourself? You told me Chloe could be hurt. You said the prophecy was about her because you love her.”

Chloe approached quickly, trying to defuse whatever was happening - and he wasn’t even sure what that was. “Maze,” she said.
Mazikeen whipped her attention to Chloe, her tone biting, not from anger but from pain. “He never sees beyond you, Chloe. It never occurs to him that anyone else could be important.”

“Maze, what is going on? What’s happened?” she asked.

Yes, he’d like to know that himself. With Mazikeen behaving like a spitting cobra, he wanted to get her far, far away from Chloe, at least until he knew she wasn’t going to be a threat.

Maze crumpled a little, closing her eyes briefly before meeting Chloe’s gaze and pinning him with an accusatory glare. “You knew the prophecy was about Chloe, Lucifer. The demons didn’t. They saw you with Eve, remember? And now I can’t find her.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope that the connection between Kinley and the prophecy and ex-communication and the murders finally made sense. It reads kinda wonky because it’s supposed to all be coming together really horrifyingly in Lucifer’s brain.

Anyways, please continue leaving me your feedback and thoughts. You have no idea how much it means to me when I see something from you!
Chapter Summary

A rescue operation for Guardian Lucifer, who might be more angel than he likes. And the secrets have only begun to be spilt.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Lucifer raised a palm mollifying, “Now, Maze. Calm down. Eve is… somewhere, I’m sure, happy as a clam at high water, or just, high, rather.”

“No, Lucifer, you are not listening!” Maze growled, advancing on him.

Suddenly Chloe was inserting herself between them and his heart skipped in panic. “Detective!”

She ignored him completely, addressing Maze, voice calm and soothing. “Maze, Maze, I am listening. Okay? Tell me. What’s happened?”

Maze breathed hard, still looking like she was about to break something - or somebody - and Lucifer nearly pulled Chloe out of the way. He was both surprised and relieved when his demon took a step back and crossed her arms. He didn’t even mind that she treated him to another disgusted glare.

“I can’t find Eve. Tuesday we were supposed to… When she didn’t show, I just figured something came up, left her a message the next day.”

Raising an eyebrow, Lucifer asked, “Ah, Maze… I don’t wish to bring up a painful reminder, but perhaps Eve wasn’t interested?”

Chloe gave Lucifer one of those looks over her shoulder; the kind that said he was doing the opposite of helping. “Fine, fine,” he muttered and backed away. A sardonic wave of his hand invited Maze to continue.

“What do you mean?” Chloe asked, looking between them. She pointed at Maze and asked, “Were you and Eve —?”

“Yes. No. Sort of!” Maze huffed. “We were taking it slow. Okay? We were still friends.”

Disregarding him completely, Maze spoke to Chloe. “Something is wrong. She wouldn’t do that. And when I went to her apartment, she wasn’t there. There was some broken furniture, stuff thrown around.”

“I see. So you think she’s been abducted. By the demons that have been on the loose,” Chloe said. “And they think grabbing Eve is important because of the prophecy. I thought we were done with that.”

If Maze could have shown Hellfire in her eyes when she turned them on Lucifer, she would have without a moment’s deliberation. “You still didn’t tell her! I can’t believe this.”
Chloe’s gaze shot to him also, and damn it hurt to see her expression wary. “What is she talking about, Lucifer? Tell me what?”

After a beat, Maze continued, “I’m done with secrets. Eve could possibly be dead right now. Lucifer found out there was more to the prophecy, and thought the demons who escaped might come after you. Eve wanted me to keep our relationship quiet while she figured things out. And if everyone had been on the same page, this wouldn’t have happened!”

“Mazikeen—” Lucifer began, furious. It wasn’t her place to tell Chloe any of that.

“Stop,” Chloe ordered and turned away from him, attention back on Maze. “There is no time for any of that right now. Maze, do you have any idea where she could be?”

She took a deep breath, “Yes. That’s why I’m here. From what I could tell, her phone wasn’t there. It might have been on her. The demons have been here long enough to figure out phones, but I doubt they know anything about GPS tracking.”

“And you think it might give us her location,” Chloe said.

“Yes. I know it’s a long shot, but I’m out of ideas. You can trace it faster than I can, which is why I’m here. I think she had a phone-locator app if it went missing.”

Chloe moved to her desk to grab a notepad and hand it to her. “Write the number, Eve’s address, anything helpful. I’ll take it to tech and see what we can find, starting in this area.”

He couldn’t very well have a knock-down, drag-out fight with Mazikeen in the middle of a police station, as much as he wanted to. “You had no right, Maze,” he seethed.

She gave him a stony-faced look. “Maybe I didn’t. But you know what? You didn’t either. Stop making other people’s choices for them,” she snarled.

That only threw gasoline on what was already a dangerous burn. “I do not,” he gritted. “I don’t pull other people’s strings, Maze. That’s my dad’s jam, not mine.”

But on the heels of that thought chased a vague memory of the doctor telling him something similar. When he was losing Chloe and couldn’t bear it, and deluded himself by telling himself he couldn’t ask her to choose him over Pierce, because her feelings for him couldn’t be genuine. Because it was all engineered by his father; her existence by a miracle, placed purposefully in his path.

He’d hid behind that because it was more convenient than the truth; that he’d feared she wouldn’t want him in any case. It was easier to blame circumstances he didn’t fully understand than take the risk. Because he’d always known she would turn from him if she saw the real truth, who he really was, and how he had come to be in her life.

One more rejection and abandonment by someone he loved and trusted.

She’d asked the other night why he’d never shown her his wings to offer proof of who he was. Perhaps it hadn’t just been his refusal to accept his identity beyond being the Devil. He’d tried to ignore his wings because he’d believed them to be his father’s machinations, hadn’t wanted to recognize them. But if he was being honest with himself, that wasn’t all there was to it. Fearing her rejection, he’d circumvented the possibility by taking away the opportunity, her choice.

Chloe came back in, breathless. “I got something. The phone signal came back from, ironically, Angels Landing.”
Angels Landing consisted of two high-rise buildings, still in its early stages, and slated for commercial and residential properties, including low-income housing and an elementary school. It was already becoming a predominant fixture in the downtown Los Angeles metropolis.

Lucifer finally registered that she was pulling on her coat. “Absolutely not. Under no circumstances are you coming with us.”

She didn’t even treat him to a glare or raise her voice. “You are not telling me what to do, Lucifer.”

When he opened his mouth to object, Maze interrupted with unleashed impatience. “We don’t have time for this! You can argue later.”

Lucifer tried to reason with her the entire drive, but she wasn’t having it. Resigned, he voiced the was one very valid point that she would have to listen to. “Detective, you can’t be in there. It will affect me, remember? It’s better for everyone for you to stay here. Or, preferably, far away from here. And if you’ll recall, your proximity last time led to you being nearly mauled as well.”

She was quiet for a long moment, and he felt a breath of relief building that he’d finally convinced her to see reason.

“I’ll go in, find Eve, and get her out. You two will be free to… do whatever it is you have to do,” she said.

“No!” He exclaimed, completely horrified. “Were you not just listening to what I said?”

Maze cleared her throat and said, “She has a point, Lucifer. We don’t know what to expect going in. Eve would only be a hostage, or worse, collateral damage. It makes sense for Chloe to go in and get them both out as soon as possible.”

“So it’s completely acceptable for the Detective to become collateral damage in the process? Absolutely not. We’ll call for Amenadiel and he can remove Eve to safety,” he argued.

“Amenadiel, save the woman who was responsible for his son’s abduction and near relocation to Hell? Not likely. And there is no time to argue with him or get him to leave Linda and Charlie,” Maze said.

Lucifer scowled and looked at the high-risers. “It isn’t as though we’re about to break down the doors, in any case. Do you know how long it will take to search each floor?”

“I don’t think that’s going to be necessary,” Chloe said, shielding her eyes and staring up at the buildings.

“Why’s that?” Maze asked, following her line of sight.

“See that scaffolding?” Chloe asked, indicating one of the higher floors of the left tower, approximately around the 60th or 62nd floor. He was just estimating.

Chloe continued, “These buildings are still in early stages of development, so all the construction is going top-down. If I were hiding out somewhere off the grid, I would hole up on one of the few finished floors, where few people are going to enter. And I doubt they’re very concerned about taking care of anyone who does wander in.”

Shrugging, Maze said, “It’s a good start.”
“Detective,” Lucifer stopped her with a hand on her arm as they entered the building, letting Maze go ahead. “Chloe.”

She raised her eyebrows, silent.

“As soon as you can get out, go. If it’s not possible to get to Eve, go. In case I’m not being painfully clear: Go.”

She took a deep breath, looking away, and then met his eyes. “That’s not who I am, Lucifer.”

Frustrated, knowing changing her mind on this front was futile, he finally warned, “There are things you are not going to like seeing.”

She didn’t elect to answer and turned around, picking her way around construction debris and supplies, and followed Maze down the hall.

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Chloe was relieved her hunch paid off. She wanted to make sure Eve was safe and for all this to be over so that she could sit down and have a nice, long talk with Lucifer. It wasn’t that she was completely angry, more a little annoyed, and maybe a tiny bit hurt. Why hadn’t he explained the full story to her in the first place, and why had he thought he needed to hide more about the prophecy from her?

Well, she was going to find out. But first, Eve was her priority, and those demons or whatever were his and Maze’s. She definitely didn’t want them running loose in her city. For the same reason she hadn’t tried to bring backup, they could be capable of anything and she wasn’t going to have innocent lives lost in the process.

Maze peered around an open doorway and crept back to report her reconnaissance. “Five demons and guess who? Mammon.”

“No Lilith?” asked Lucifer in surprise.

“Didn’t see her,” she shook her head. “Could be in another room. I couldn’t see the whole space, there’s a couple erected walls. She might be with Eve in another part.

“So,” she continued, “I’m thinking Lucifer and I go in hard, Chloe can get to Eve and sneak her out.”

“With Lilith over there?” Lucifer objected.

Retrieving her gun, Chloe checked the clip and turned off the safety. “She’s human, right? I have a gun.”

When he opened his mouth, she continued and directed her question to Maze, “We can either go around, find another way in, or create a distraction and I—” she broke off.

Lucifer had already sauntered in and she could hear his flamboyant, boisterous greeting, “Hello demons!”

“Or we can do that,” she said, looking at Maze.

She waited in the corridor until she heard a lot of crashing, figuring that was her cue to go, while everyone else was apparently very, very busy. Keeping to the wall was the quickest route to the
opening Maze had described, so she inched her way in, relieved no one took notice of her.

Two threateningly muscular men were bearing down on Maze, and she hesitated, unsure whether or not to try to help. In the next moment, however, a short dagger appeared in one man’s throat before he dropped to the floor. Maze briefly met her eyes and turned her attention to his partner.

Assured Maze was handling her end just fine, Chloe continued along the wall and peeked around the corner, methodically sweeping her gaze across the room. There was Eve, not far from the windows, gagged, and secured to a rolling office chair. As their eyes met, Eve’s widened in surprise.

“I’m coming to get you,” Chloe hoped her whisper would carry to her without notifying anyone else. “Are you alone?”

Eve nodded frantically, and Chloe breathed a sigh of relief. She reholstered her gun, leaving the safety off just in case she would need to draw it out, and fished a pocket knife from her boot. Kneeling by Eve, Chloe swept another assessing look around the room, and satisfied no one was in the vicinity, pulled the strip of material from Eve’s mouth.

“Thank God they didn’t know about duct tape!” she breathed, swallowing convulsively. Chloe could only imagine her discomfort if she’d been gagged most of the time.

“I was trying to get to the windows,” Eve whispered. “I hoped I could drop something or scream, I don’t know. I’ve been here almost two days.”

Chloe nodded, “I know. Maze was worried when you went missing.”

A glimmer of a smile hovered on Eve’s lips, even as her eyes filled. “There’s six of them,” she said. “We have to help her.”

“Don’t worry about that right now,” Chloe said. “We are getting out of here first. Lucifer is here too.”

“He is?” Eve whispered. “I think the one… the boss-demon, I think he’s after Lucifer.”

Indecision gnawed at her. She’d promised him she would only worry about rescuing Eve, but she was torn with the desire to backup her partner. He had been very adamant about her not trying to do that.

Chloe ushered Eve along the wall, following the route she’d taken. A sharp, pained gasp escaped Eve and Chloe stopped and looked back at her. “Are you okay?”

“Yes. I’ll be fine,” Eve said, but her words were short and she seemed to be breathing hard. She looked unnaturally pale, but Chloe had attributed that to abduction and probable lack of food. Concerned, Chloe looked her over again.

“It’s nothing,” she insisted. “I’ll be fine. Just a few bruises.”

Another crash and the room itself shook, as if a wall had fallen down. Among a spray of plaster and drywall, another demon sprawled in front of them, and Chloe realized that a wall really had fallen down. She looked up and saw Maze engaged in combat, her opponent managing to sneak past her defenses, though Maze retaliated immediately. Both of their knives flashed through the air in wild arcs almost too quickly to register. Maze seemed to be increasingly anticipating his attacks, but the fight was steadily progressing to the far side of the room.
Two more demons dispatched on the floor. She rapidly searched the room for him, mentally tallying.

Lucifer was across the room, though he had apparently been the cause of the wall’s collapse in front of them. He had another man, five, she counted, as she watched Lucifer corner him. She drew Eve along slowly, hoping not to draw any attention. Out of the corner of her eye, Chloe saw Lucifer pick the man or demon or whatever straight up with one hand around his neck. A forcible slam, and the man’s body broke through the wall. Dusting off his hands, Lucifer followed him through the antechamber.

This was as good a time as any, Chloe thought. They could dash across the window and leave by the opposite door, putting as much distance between them and Lucifer as possible, which she hoped would give him the advantage.

Eve gave a startled cry when she was yanked from behind, and Chloe whirled, gun raised, to see the sixth behind them. He was different from the other men, paler, and not as robust. Eve twisted in his hold to no avail, and as Chloe searched for a line of sight that wouldn’t risk Eve being shot, he withdrew a long dagger. Light without a source reflected in the foreign symbols along the blade, something about it making Chloe suppress a shudder.

She kept the gun trained on him, steady and patient for an opening, although the adrenaline was literally buzzing through her veins. Eve managed to drive her elbow into him, surprising more than injuring him, and his hold loosened. She wriggled, pulling free, and Chloe fired. He grinned without a single flinch of pain and Chloe fired again and again, until he finally went down. She emptied the remaining rounds just in case and reached for Eve, only to find her gasping for breath by the window. Chloe went to lift her by the arm and pull her to her feet, but suddenly found herself slammed against the glass. As if in slow motion, she heard the tinkle of each pane as they shattered, and she grabbed blindly for anything.

“Chloe!” Eve lowered herself to the edge of the window and stretched an arm out. Above her, Chloe saw Maze attack with a stranglehold. How had bullets not done anything to stop him?

“Hello brother,” Maze growled and landed a vicious kick to the man’s abdomen. She reached desperately for Eve, beyond even feeling the glass biting into her palms. The blood made it hard to maintain a firm grip and one hand slipped.

Eve frantically looked over her shoulder for help, but Maze was nowhere near close enough — “Lucifer!” Eve screamed.

Then Chloe felt as the strain of supporting her weight became too much, her left hand losing its purchase. She couldn’t see Eve anymore, but heard Eve scream her name, and then she was falling.

——

She’d closed her eyes instinctively, she supposed because she didn’t really want to see everything rush by; somehow it made the knowing worse. All she could hear was the wind screaming in her ears and feel that bottomless drop in her stomach. That feeling was only fun on roller coasters, was the only coherent thought in her mind. Until suddenly, she hit something solid.

Or something solid hit her. Gratefully, she leaned against it, holding on as tightly as she could, and slowly coming to the realization that her fall had abruptly ended, and without being smashed into
the sidewalk.

Chloe opened her eyes. She was standing on solid ground, more or less. Lucifer was in front of her, and it was apparently more of a “less” because she fell into him and realized she hadn’t actually been standing independently at all. He held her tighter, one hand cupping the back of her head, urging her to rest her head against him. His other arm clapsed her waist, binding her fast against him, and in any other circumstances, she’d be worried about having the breath squeezed out of her.

As it was, she could barely take a breath. She worked hard at it, shutting off everything except directing each inhale, dragging air in and holding it, and exhaling without panicking. The feel of his suit jacket beneath her cheek was steadying, as was his warmth and the sound of his heartbeat, stabilizing her. His breaths were labored also and she was shocked to realize that it wasn’t just her trembling; he was shaking.

She looked up at him. “I’m okay,” she whispered, because the look on his face was raw. It was beyond frighten or angry, or shocked; there was no accurate word. Chloe managed to fully support herself, though her legs felt wobbly, and tried to take a step back.

His arms were a barricade keeping her locked in place. “I’m okay,” she repeated just as softly, realizing he wasn’t ready to let her go. Chloe reached around him, holding him tight as well. Another deep breath, she turned her cheek and saw his wings, radiant even in the daylight.

“You should probably put those away,” she mumbled against him, closing her eyes. “I don’t think anyone actually expects to see an angel in Los Angeles.”

“Lucifer!” Maze’s shout came from the building’s entrance, and Chloe looked up again to see her, supporting Eve with an arm around her waist. She wasn’t looking too good.

Of course, Chloe had just fallen off a building, so she supposed she didn’t look great either. Slowly, Lucifer rolled his shoulders, and she watched in amazement as each wing furled, smoothly folding in on themselves and disappearing as if they’d never been there at all.

Maze and Eve approached them and finally Lucifer turned to face them, barely loosening his hold on her. “What?”

A frisson of fear danced down her spine at his tone. For a moment, it wasn’t human at all. His voice had been soft but chilling.

“Mammon and another of his flunkies got away. I had to get Eve out,” Maze said. She ignored whatever warning was in his voice.

For a moment, Lucifer looked like he was going to tell her it didn’t matter, but Chloe couldn’t let that happen. There was absolutely no way she was allowing that monster, that thing that could survive an entire clip of bullets unloaded into it. If only Maze or Lucifer could do something to stop it, then so be it.

“I’ll take Eve. You two need to go after them.” Chloe pulled away from him, ignoring his look of dismay.

“We’re going,” she said, “Come on Eve.”

Eve came to her, giving Maze’s hand a squeeze. “I’m coming.”

“Lucifer, let’s go,” Maze urged, and grabbed him by the arm. He hadn’t looked away from her.
Chloe offered him a small, but what she hoped was reassuring smile. “Please. You need to stop them. I’ll take Eve back to my house,” she said, and pulled Eve along with her gently. She was still looking a bit frail and favoring one side.

She carefully urged Eve with her, heading for Lucifer’s car, and took a deep, relieved breath when she heard Maze’s motorcycle behind them.

Chapter End Notes

Eh, don’t hate on Eve too much. See, she tried to save Chloe. Forgive my exaggeration for the cell phone tracking to work here. Side note: Angels Landing is a real deal, though it is probably nowhere near constructed yet, not even to be completed for like 10 years. But, you know, artistic license.
“You saved my life,” murmured Eve, slumping into the passenger seat. Chloe tried not to wince in pain as she helped Eve in; her hands were bleeding like crazy. Thankfully, most of the cuts were shallow, only one or two bleeding profusely, but it was still a mess, leaving smears on the leather seat.

This only prompted more concern from Chloe. Eve didn’t slump anywhere. Then again, Chloe thought, finally fully taking in Eve’s appearance assessingly, she looked a little different. Was she wearing jeans?

“I think we’re even on that score,” Chloe replied, and tightened her hands on the wheel, though it hurt to do so. She welcomed the throbbing sting; the pain at least kept her aware. The tremors were becoming more pronounced and she needed to get them home before shock fully set in. She was lucky she could drive at all. But Eve’s pallor was worrying her, and the sooner they got there, the sooner she could help or get her medical treatment.

That reminded her of the bruises she had mentioned, and Chloe asked, “Eve, are you hurt?”

“Just a few bruises on my back, I think,” Eve said, between breaths. “I tried to fight back when they came for me. Things got a little… rough.”

Frowning, Chloe checked the time. They were halfway home, with any luck they would arrive in less than ten minutes. She was barely cognizant of their surroundings and driving mostly on autopilot, when it occurred to her Eve had fallen silent, and hadn’t spoken for some minutes.

“Eve?” Chloe darted a look at her. The brunette’s eyes were closed, head listing on the seat. Had she fallen asleep? She reached with one hand and shook Eve’s arm. “Eve!” she tried louder.

Receiving no response and worried about taking her eyes off the road, Chloe spared another quick glance, looking for a sign of her breathing. There was no visible movement of her chest.

How she managed to pull the car over without being rear-ended, she didn’t know, but she came to a sudden stop on the shoulder and leaned over Eve again, feeling for a pulse or any sign she was still breathing. She pressed harder on her wrist, worried she wouldn’t be able to make out Eve’s heartbeat over her own pounding one, but then she felt it. Weak. Thready.

Eve needed a hospital now. Ten minutes ago. Probably two days ago! Chloe took stock of where they were, parked off of Calhoun. The nearest hospital was at least ten minutes away. More with traffic. Would they be able to save her in time? Her house was half of that. Could she risk it, with Eve no longer breathing?

One more look at the woman beside her in the passenger seat, and Chloe knew she couldn’t waste...
another moment in indecision. She threw the car into gear and floored it, accelerating without pause as she shifted. She’d have to trust that Lucifer’s ridiculously extravagant taste in cars could get them there in less.

Eve must not have completely stopped breathing, only lost consciousness, because when Chloe tried to pull her from the car, she stirred some. Whatever she tried to say was lost in a mumble. “Eve,” Chloe said firmly, hands under her arms to lift her up. “You have to get up. You have to. If I have to carry you—“ and at this point, she wasn’t sure she could, “we won’t make it. Understand?”

There was no answer, but Chloe hadn’t really expected one. She’d just hoped the pointed words and brisk, no-nonsense tone got through and kept Eve as aware as possible. Chloe was extremely thankful that Eve managed to stay upright and not drop to the ground; her dead body weight would have taken Chloe too long to move, but even so, it was an agonizing twenty yards to the door.

They collapsed just inside the doorway and Chloe lurched for the picture frame. Her fingers shook trying to pry off the back cover, and she muttered a quick, grateful prayer that the feather was still there and unharmed. She wasn’t sure how to do this at all, but if anything could help Eve at this point…

It made the most sense to her that the feather would do the most healing wherever the worst of the damage was. As she rolled Eve to her side, Chloe felt for her pulse again. It was irregular and skipping over a beat. Arrhythmia, she realized.

She was considering if the feather would help if she laid it over her heart, but then remembered the bruises. She yanked up her shirt in the back, and hissed in a breath in sympathy. Not just bruises. These contusions, dark and purple, swathed over her back, indicated at least internal bleeding. Over her left kidney, the bruising was even worse. Eve could be going into kidney failure from blunt force trauma. Chloe knew enough from working with Ella and other forensics over the years how easily and deadly organ damage could be.

Chloe held the feather against Eve’s skin, terrified nothing would happen. Squeezing her eyes shut, she waited, resolutely holding the feather in place, until suddenly, her fingers were warm. Heat grew, just short of burning, and Chloe looked down at the light, reminiscent of a shaft of sunlight, radiating into Eve. The light expanded, nearly blinding her, and she had to cover her eyes, though she kept a hold on Eve throughout.

The warmth gradually receded and Chloe squinted, finding the intense burst of light had dimmed to a glow. Beneath her hands, Eve’s skin was cool and unblemished; the feather looked threadbare and tattered now.

With relief, Chloe sank back against the wall. Whatever second dose of adrenaline had fueled her through the ordeal had run out, and she felt drained and light-headed. Between the two of them, they managed to more or less crawl to the sofa. Chloe tried to get Eve to lie down, not sure how injured she might still be, and when she turned to retrieve water and a first-aid-kit from the kitchen, a wave of dizziness assaulted her. She gave up and sat where she’d stood, leaning her head against the couch.

She lost sense of time for awhile, until Eve squeezed her shoulder and said, “Chloe? Let me see your hands, Chloe.”

A bit woozy, she focused on Eve, who had retrieved the first-aid-kit herself and held Chloe’s palm in her own, carefully blotting the dried blood with a dampened cotton ball.
“Does this hurt?” she asked.

Chloe shook her head, “C-can’t feel it.  Sh-shock.” After a few minutes of body-racking shudders, they subsided completely, and Chloe breathed a little easier. Maybe going from one adrenaline rush to another to another had coasted her body through the effects of falling. Having worked cases with jumpers before, she knew what happened internally long before physical impact. Her body was finding equilibrium again.

Eve applied ointment and a loose bandage before she said, “You really are a miracle you know. Not many people would have done what you did. Especially with our… history.”

“None of that matters,” Chloe said, a little wearily. “You needed it. That’s my job.”

“This wasn’t your job,” Eve replied softly.

Chloe looked for words that could explain it, but all she could come up with was, “It was what I felt was right.” They were silent while Eve completed doctoring her other hand, and then Chloe asked, “Why did you call me a miracle?”

“Oh. I don’t know. It was something Lucifer said about you once,” Eve shrugged, packing up the little kit and collecting the wrappers and waste.

Did he, now? Chloe thought. Miracolo. If she didn’t know better, she would have taken it as hyperbole, as Eve clearly had. The problem was, though, that Lucifer was very good at hiding the truth behind the truth. Say you’re the Devil, for example, which is true, but no one would believe it. Say your work is Hell, because it literally is the truth, but no one would take it seriously.

Call someone a miracle… and it’s not just pretty, romantic words, is it?

“My mother used to call me that,” Chloe said. “A miracle.”

She took off her necklace before continuing, and watched the bullet and ring twist on the chain. “They couldn’t have a baby, you see… and then, finally, they got pregnant. I was their miracle. It’s even my middle name, y’know. Jane. It means ‘gift from God’.”

Eve was watching her with unveiled interest, and might have opened her mouth to ask her a question, but the door opened. Lucifer and Maze came in. The bullet was starting to make a lot more sense. It seemed there was more than just the prophecy to talk about.

—-

Finding Mammon and the last demon had not taken long; they hadn’t gone far with their injuries. Disposing of them, however, Lucifer had taken his time with. He would have taken longer if he hadn’t been worried about what condition Chloe was in. That was the only thought that penetrated the bloodlust and haze, otherwise he would still have been ripping Mammon apart.

And he meant literally. The King of Hell did not like torturing, generally preferred to not take part in it, but that didn’t mean he couldn’t or that he wouldn’t when it was necessary. This had been very necessary. Mammon had nearly killed Chloe.

He had barely caught her in time. Just the thought of it had his heart pounding madly and swimming with not just anger, but fear. An emotion he knew rarely, and never for himself. Fear for her, because someday soon there would be no last minute saves, and then he would never see her again.
Lucifer was glad she had taken Eve with her and hadn’t been there to see the rest. The Detective was accepting the sight of his monstrous side, his Devil face, but that was one thing and seeing him tear apart demons was another.

Excruciating agony was what they had deserved and Lucifer was only sorry that their deaths would terminate their suffering. They had no souls that would be trapped in endless torment, reliving just punishment for eternity. For them, death was a gift.

He tried to compensate for that by ensuring Mammon received the most brutal and merciless death possible under the circumstances. It was what the sadistic traitor deserved. Lucifer had also hoped to induce some information from the endeavor, but not much had been forthcoming. Either Mammon did not know the truth, or he had met his demise still protecting Lilith. Unfailingly loyal to his last scream, Mammon claimed she was not with them.

Now he discarded his suit jacket, covered with remnants of demon, and rolled up his sleeves as well. He wanted to see for himself Chloe was alright, and then he would go home and change. How, he thought, had this morning escalated from waking up with her pressed against him, contemplating all the delightful ways he could wake her up and imagining the merits of actually purchasing a new bed, because he could definitely see the benefits of one with posts, his lovely Detective tied up to one perhaps… to this?

When he came in and found her sitting on the floor, looking pale and struck, he felt a wave of trepidation, and wished Mammon were still alive so he could make him scream again. Lucifer helped her to her feet, astonished when he felt her skin. It was ice-cold.

“You’re like ice!” He said, and reached for the blanket draped on the couch, pulling it tightly around her.

She held the blanket closed but didn’t say a word, eyes searching his.

“We found them,” he said to reassure her. “It’s over.”

“Why didn’t you tell me there was more to the prophecy, Lucifer? How did you know?”

He sighed, defeated. He’d known this was going to come back to bite him. Mammon had just been a fortuitous distraction.

“I saw Kinley in Hell,” he said. “He didn’t know what the rest of it said, only alluded to there being more. Then the demons escaped, and I thought it too great to be a coincidence.”

“I see,” she said. There was no change to her expression or stance. She was like a statue, he thought eerily. Except for her eyes, fixed on him.

“How am I a miracle?” she asked, in that same toneless way, suckerpunching him.

It was distance, he realized. She was keeping space between them.

“Is that how I can hurt you?” Her voice had risen a note.

“Yes!” He finally let go, frustrated and desperate for her to cease sounding like that, like they were strangers. “I think my dear Dad had you put here to cross my path, yes. And you are the only one who can make me vulnerable. He orchestrated it that way.”

Lucifer exhaled harshly. Now she knew. And she’d know that all the things she thought she’d felt for him were artificial. As much as he wanted to, he couldn’t look away from her, waiting for her
expression to change, to show her disgust.

She shook her head and asked, “It doesn’t matter, does it? Friend, partner, lover… You still hide the truth from me.”

“I don’t lie to you!” He exclaimed.

“No, you’re very careful not to do that,” she agreed. “But you still don’t trust me. You tell me a truth. The part you can bear showing me. You’re still hiding the rest.”

When he said nothing, she continued, “Didn’t we learn from last time? Not to keep secrets?”

“This was different,” he said.

“How so? Last time we kept secrets, mine almost destroyed you. What are yours doing?”

“Fine!” He shouted, “I didn’t tell you because I thought once you knew, you’d realize everything between us wasn’t real.”

She looked down and he caught the flicker of pain on her face, which only made him angrier, and there was a heavy compression in his chest, squeezing his heart. This was all falling out of control.

“What else are you hiding from me?” she asked quietly, nearly on a whisper.

“Nothing!” He answered, but the look on her face didn’t alter. He had wounded her, disappointed her. But if she knew all his secrets, it would be so much worse than that. Even now, he could feel it, that dark and ugly guilt twisting to the surface.

Then he couldn’t keep it at bay anymore. He’d told her he was a monster, but she never believed him, until he’d shown her. He’d show her again even if it killed him.

“You really want to know my secrets, Chloe?” She looked up at him then, and he felt his heart crack.

“How about that I really am to blame for every dark, evil deed that is done? Every villainous act?”

“Lucifer, you are not respon—“

But he cut her off, despite how much he wanted her words to be true. She needed to hear the truth. And now that the words were here, there was no stopping it.

“Oh, but I am. You wanted to know why I fell, Detective?”

She was silent, but he could see the question still in her eyes.

“I fell because I wanted free will. I didn’t do what He wanted and I argued and fought for it, for the right to make my own choices. I may have fallen, but it was too late. Humans had free will, the choice to make any decision they wanted, even if it was horrible, despicable. Even if it was cruel or destroyed the innocent.”

“You’re not to blame for that,” she started.

He laughed, bitterly. “Would you like to know the best part? What do you think Hell is, Detective? It’s where I get to see the result of my arrogance, every day.”
Rapists, murderers, sociopaths… all his handiwork to admire for eternity. And people like the man who had been killed, who did unspeakable things to children for his own profit, his choices were on Lucifer’s head too.

“Arrogance?” She repeated.

“My pride,” he affirmed. “Because I wouldn’t bow down to that prick. I refused to kneel before him and pledge my service. I was an angel, superior to him in every way!”

“To be fair,” Eve interrupted, “Adam could be an asshole.”

“See!” Lucifer threw a hand out, gesturing to Eve. At both Lucifer and the Detective’s looks, however, Eve turned to Maze and said, “Um. Maybe we should go?”

“Right,” Maze answered as they got up and left, heading for her room. “As much as I enjoy torture, this is a little much for even me.”

Lucifer turned back to the Detective to find her regarding him.

“I don’t really understand, Lucifer,” she said.

“My father created the angels first, Detective. We were His children. Then His beloved project, humanity, came to life. And we were expected to serve it, pledge ourselves to an inferior being.”

Her hand came to rest on her stomach, a protective gesture she didn’t even seem aware of doing.

“Inferior,” she repeated, and he realized how she might read the implications of that word.

“That’s not how I see humans anymore, Detective,” he said. “That was a long time ago.”

“Was it?” she asked, sounding a little dazed. Her hand tightened into a fist. “But it’s what you do, isn’t it? Throughout time. You’ve come here and — and played with us, like we were toys. Doing favors, all of it. Just to see what happens.”

“No,” he denied. But could he really say that hadn’t been his outlook for many years? That it was fun to come and play when he was bored? It hadn’t been for anyone else’s benefit.

She stepped back and dropped the blanket on the couch. “I… need to walk, or drive, or something.”

“Detective, don’t—” Was she really running away from him? He’d thought he would be prepared for it, but seeing her trying to escape him was worse.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I just need some space. I don’t know what I’m thinking or- or feeling right now.” She picked up her keys and closed the door.

Where was a drink when he needed one? Stunned and disheartened, he was slow to move, but finally bent forward to pick up the blanket that had slipped to the ground. As he dropped it on the couch, the necklace caught his eye.

He picked it up, the bullet and ring dangling off the chain. Lucifer removed his ring and laid the rest on the table, carefully. He could give her space, he thought.

It was almost strange, the familiar weight of the ring on his finger again, after so much time apart.
With it came a bittersweet addition, that he’d left it with her and she had kept it close to her heart. Having it back now didn’t feel the same.

He cleaned up, donned fresh clothes. He didn’t welcome the thought of sitting in Hell with demon intestines stained on his sleeves for eternity, thank you very much. Returning to the gates, he stared at them without interest.

He didn’t want to be here, now more than ever. He felt hollow. As if all the secrets and recriminations he’d buried inside had poured out, and now without those, and without the Detective, he was empty. But he had done what he had come here to do. The demons were dead, threat averted… even if Lilith was out there, she was only one human. Without her deadly entourage, she didn’t pose any more damage than any other human did. The Detective was safe, and he no longer had an excuse to be there.

Lucifer put his hand on the gate and pushed when he was met with resistance. He’d given Azazel and Asmodeus orders to keep it locked, but he should have been able to open it easily.

He tried again. He was the King of Hell. No matter what angel locked these, he was its ruler; it listened to him.

Except it wasn’t. Fed up, Lucifer placed his palm on the lock itself. But his ring didn’t warm, and there was no change to the locking mechanism. The door still didn’t open.

“Well. That’s interesting.”

Chapter End Notes

Well, the upside to being sick is I get lots of opportunity to write. The downside is I don’t actually feel well enough to write and it’s a struggle to make things come out the way I would like. Bear with me, please! And please leave me your thoughts. = )
Defying Expectations

Chapter Summary

Lots of soul searching, some relationship advice, and some perspective from the case helps Chloe and Lucifer figure out where to go from here.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She called in sick the next day.

She felt horrible doing it. She always toughed it out. No matter what she was going through personally, she kept it separate from the responsibility of doing her job well. Even when she and Pierce had broken up, she braved it. This was a first. Her mind was racing in so many directions, she couldn’t pin down a single one, and even the homicide cases and Excommunication killer couldn’t cut through the chaos.

Chloe finally turned off her phone and went down to the beach, disappearing from the world to sort out her feelings. This time of year, few people frequented the shore; the brisk winds rolling in off the waves deterred visitors. Grateful for the solitude, she found a small outcrop of rocks, one low and wide enough to sit against, and dug her toes into the sand. Watching the tide, the swells crashing, the breeze sweeping through her hair, she tried to make sense of her world.

She was a detective. Her stock and trade was evidence. So she would consider the evidence until she came to a conclusion.

First, she was a miracle. Well, having been told that most of her life by her family, the word itself didn’t faze her. The implications, however, those were monumental. What did that mean, exactly? God wanted her to be here, right now, in this exact time and place? And for what purpose? To hurt Lucifer? She was apparently the only person who could. Somehow that didn’t feel right either. She couldn’t hurt him; she’d never wanted to, even when she had been convinced she had to send him back to Hell. That hadn’t been to hurt him, but to protect everyone, including him.

To love him? Lucifer said their paths were meant to cross, but that didn’t necessarily mean that they were destined to feel any particular way about each other. To be honest, she hadn’t even liked him at first. She couldn’t help but believe that part was up to them; her feelings were her own. Even if circumstances are laid out for us, aren’t our reactions our own choices? Their choice, their… free will.

And if that were the case, the product of what that meant was also overwhelming to examine, so she set it aside for the time being.

Second, she thought, was Lucifer’s other revelations. She couldn’t care less that he thought he was to blame for demanding free will. In fact, she was proud of him for it. His guilt finally made sense to her and she wished she could help him to see it differently. But the cause… inferior being. Those words hurt. If that was truly his perspective, and it was too easy to imagine it was, where did that leave her? Human was all she was, miracle or not. She’d thought they would have enough problems making a relationship work when it was only the difference of their lifestyles; now it was
so much more. How could she be with someone who saw her as inferior? And again, that possibility, how would he view…

Chloe hugged her legs to her chest, resting her chin on her knees. None of this even took into account the impossibilities of their relationship as it stood. Could he stay with her, or would he have to return to Hell? Had he already; was he done here, done with her? She hadn’t missed that he had taken back his ring. Even if they could have a relationship, they had not established a good foundation for trust. That only underscored her feeling that he didn’t see them as equals. She was darkly amused by the irony that she had, for so long, seen herself as superior to him - his immoral, hedonistic, egotistical life philosophy counter to her own simple, solid one. Only for now to feel inconsequential compared to the scope of his being.

Underlying each of these questions was the possibility that she had been avoiding. It was time to confront it. Chloe laid her palm against her stomach again, though there was no change, no difference, she knew. Somehow she’d already known. Confirming it was her next step, and she was going to swallow her pride and see Linda, because really - who else would understand how she felt right now?

It had hit her, after their fight, a wave of nausea that she had initially attributed to the events of the entire day. Until she had realized how his words had slammed against something uncomfortable, a truth hidden in simple math. It had been almost four weeks since their first night together. She was over a week late.

She was pregnant.

I’m sorry, come again?” Linda shook her head a tiny bit to knock loose the cobwebs because she wasn’t sure she had heard him correctly.

“Plan to, darling.” Grinning exuberantly, Lucifer practically threw himself onto the couch.

“I am locked out! Do you know what this means, doctor? I am officially no longer the King of Hell! Isn’t that great?” He looked at her expectantly, eyes bright.

“Uh…” Linda searched for words carefully. She didn’t want to rain on his parade, but this was quite the turn-around. “And we know this because?”

“I’m locked out,” he repeated, as if she was being dense. “I went back to the gates and they wouldn’t open. I couldn’t get in!”

Her nod was completely clueless and turned into a head shake. “Yeah, I don’t get it. There are literal gates?”

“Yes, try to keep up,” he said, exasperated. “The point is, I’m here. Not there. I couldn’t get in, ergo I am no longer King and I am free to do whatever I want,” he finished triumphantly, pouring himself a glass of water.

She watched him, gnawing on her lip. “I’m not entirely certain that’s how it works,” she said carefully. “But I admit this isn’t really my area of expertise… Aren’t you a little, I don’t know, concerned about that?”

“Not in the least. Obviously, it’s not my problem anymore. That’s not what I’m here to talk to you about anyway,” said Lucifer, taking a drink and setting his glass on the table.
“Alright. What would you like to talk about?” Linda asked, taking her usual seat. Denial was going to be a problem for another day.

Lucifer cleared his throat. “Well, as you may know, things in my relationship with the Detective, were… uh, progressing. And then we had a…”

“An argument?” Linda asked.

“Right. I’m afraid she may have left with the wrong impression,” he said.

“About?” Why, she thought, was it always like pulling teeth to get to actual answers.

He looked uncomfortable as he answered, “I didn’t always possess the most, we’ll say, respect for humans,” he said. “And that I wasn’t entirely forthcoming about who she was. Her being a miracle.”

“That’s quite a bit, Lucifer. I take it she was upset.” And that was putting it mildly, Linda thought, reflecting on her conversation with Chloe the day before.

“Quite. She’s avoiding me. I’m here now. I don’t have to go back. We could go back to how things were,” he said.

Linda sighed, “It’s not that simple. Relationships don’t move backward, Lucifer, remember? I think, if you want to continue to move forward, you need to be honest with yourself and Chloe about what you want.”

“I was,” he said, clearly confused. “I want her.”

“Yes, but, in your own words, there was much you withheld. That lack of trust is anathema to an intimate relationship. And you’ve redefined her in two ways. One, as a human, that you consider yourself different from. Secondly, as a miracle, with engendered feelings that you’ve implied are beyond her control. In both cases, she’s been told how incompatible you are.”

“Before that, we were very compatible. In all manner of places, actually,” he said, eyes twinkling with wickedness.

“Maybe,” Linda suggested, “You should start with that. Show her how you are compatible. Not with sex. In the areas of her life that are important to her.”

“Spending time with Beatrix is important to her, no matter how boring the activity. The Detective is very fond of her daughter.”

Linda winced, thinking of all the ways that could potentially backfire. That would do more harm than good at this point. “Let’s hold off on anything involving her children - her child, for now,” she amended hastily.

“Solving cases is important to her,” he said slowly, “What you’re saying is I should just go to work and show her what a great team we make. Pretend everything is as it should be?”

“I know that you’re going to take that idea and run with it. Listen… and this may be more the advice of a friend than a therapist… But the best thing you can do right now is show her how you see her and show her you value her trust.”

She watched him go, hoping for the best. He didn’t know it yet, but Chloe was struggling with a lot more than his trust issues.
“Lucifer?” Chloe didn’t look thrilled to see him. Truthfully, he had expected as much, and had held off cornering her at the precinct as a last resort. How was he supposed to show her anything when she refused to see him?

She was sitting at her desk filling out paperwork, a small frown gathered above her eyes. Before he could say another word, she stood up hugging a stack of folders in her arms like a shield, “I think you should go.”

“Detective, you haven’t been answering your phone,” he pressed; he couldn’t help if he sounded a little hurt.

“Yes, I know.” She passed him, and he followed at her heels determinedly.

“I can’t believe this is me saying this, but I think we need to talk,” he said.

She took a deep breath and turned around to face him, finally looking at him. “Lucifer, I think we’ve already said plenty. Right now, having you here just… hurts.”

He didn’t like that at all.

“Detective, what about the case?” He asked.

“I can handle it,” she said.

“But we’re a team,” Lucifer insisted. “We’re always better together.” He was baffled when his words had the opposite effect. Instead of convincing her, she looked even more disappointed.

Alright, compatibility. What was important to both of them.

“The case is important to you. It’s important to me too,” he said softly.

She didn’t answer immediately, which he took as a good sign. At least she hadn’t walked away again.

After a long moment of deliberation, she finally said, “Okay. Stopping this killer is very important, and I will admit there are things about this case you know that I don’t,” here she gave him a pointed look, “and I might need you—“

Lucifer smiled, “See, you need me.”

“I might need your help. On the case. Friday evening there is a meeting at the community center that I expect the last victim’s wife to be at. I think talking to her there is going to be more revealing,” Chloe said. “You can meet me there. Until then, I just need… some time. Okay?”

Shoving his hands in his trouser pockets, he agreed, “Alright. Friday then.” He wasn’t happy about it, but it would give him time to figure out his next steps reminding her how great things had been going. The doctor said they couldn’t go backwards, but it was still a good place to start, wasn’t it? If those few weeks had anywhere near the same effect on her as they had on him, they had to mean something.

It had been a novel experience, to be sure. Somehow, completely different from living with Eve. While they had got on well enough together, being with Chloe was something else entirely. Eve had craved excitement, the next party, the next high. He’d once loved those things too, but his life
had come to be about more. A purpose. Not drifting through one day to the next on whatever (or whoever) cloud of pleasure he could find.

With Chloe, there had been fun too, either together or at times when he went to the club and socialized, absorbing the energy and vivacity people brought to it. Quieter moments, reading a book in front of the fire, or talking late at night looking up at the night sky. Even more different had been the effect of the little things, like being handed a mug of coffee in the morning, or her stealing bits of food while he was cooking, her laughing when he dallied over choosing clothes in the morning, even watching her fix her hair. All those little intimacies that, collected together, were the opposite of loneliness.

That specter, loneliness, that he had battled without success for an eternity. Walking through the human world, not truly one of them, only skimming the surface with superficial encounters, or down below in a realm of despair, with few he could trust, and where affection could be a liability. Not belonging anywhere, until here, until now.

“And Lucifer,” she said, as an afterthought, “You can stop checking on me. I’m fine.”

Puzzled, he was about to ask her what she meant, but she was already halfway down the hall. Whilst he was here, he ought to do some research, he decided.

“Daniel, you know what the Detective detests,” Lucifer said, sliding into a chair beside his desk.

He received a look of annoyance. “What?”

“Well, you were married to her until she left you. Obviously you know what she finds abhorrent.”

Dan sighed. “What’s your point, man?”

“I’m trying to make amends. And I know from experience she doesn’t like when I buy her things, which is a completely unfathomable concept to me, but I need to not do the same thing. See? An old devil can learn new tricks,” he said.

Dan tossed his pencil on the desk and leaned back in his chair. “I understood about half of that.”

“What will she not like? I thought about jewelry, but she hardly wears any.”

“She’s not about that kind of stuff, man. Chloe appreciates genuine feelings, not flashy statements.”

“But they are genuine feelings,” he said, confused.

“Then show her in a genuine way. Although God knows why I’m helping you,” Dan said, and left.

Well, if his dad knew, He certainly wasn’t helping. Frustrated, Lucifer asked aloud, “What does that mean?”

He tried Ella next, surprising her in the lab. “Ms. Lopez, you’re a woman.”

“Uh, yeah,” she said slowly, paused holding the slides she’d been examining.

He leaned on the table. “I need your expertise.”

“As a woman?” Ella asked with cautious curiosity. “Okay, I’ll bite… what’s going on?”

“What can I do to show the Detective how I feel about her?” He asked.
Ella blinked and set the slides down. “Whoa. I mean, I guess that depends on what the feelings are exactly. And why.” She cocked her head to the side, studying him consideringly. “Ohhh, you’re in the dog house, aren’t you?”

Snorting in amusement, she seemed to take pity on him. “Okay. What did you do?”

Lucifer sighed with aggravation. “Does it really matter?”

“Kinda, but I won’t torture you. Listen, Chloe is like any other woman. She wants to know how you feel, not have to guess about it. Just tell her. It will mean more to her than any dazzling, engineered stage you could try impressing her with.”

“That’s it?” He asked. “Just - tell her?” Lucifer frowned. “Ms. Lopez, that is completely unhelpful!”

She shrugged.

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By Friday evening, she couldn’t say her feelings were any clearer. After many hours and sleepless nights of reflection, Chloe had come away with some certainties. For one, she loved him. Terribly. So there was that. Second, she had seen him evolve over the years, and Lucifer wasn’t the same careless philandering playboy he’d first presented himself as. He owned ideals and he cared about people, whether he considered himself a human or not.

As for their relationship, yes, it hurt that he kept things from her. That was an obstacle that needed to be addressed or things would never change. But the thing was no relationship was perfect. Theirs had problems unlike any others, to be sure, but when you stripped away their unique circumstances and examined the basis - trust, insecurity, willingness to adapt - wasn’t it all the same?

And then there was the baby. She was still coming to terms with that herself, and couldn’t even begin to imagine how he would react or how to tell him, for that matter. She dreaded it, actually. Because she feared she knew how he would react, and that thing she had tried so desperately to avoid - needing him - had happened anyway, and it was going to break her heart.

Eight o’clock, there he was waiting for her outside the doors to the community center. Chloe found a polite smile and greeted him, “Hey.”

“Hello, Detective,” he returned. “So what is the meeting our lucky survivor’s wife is here for?”

“It’s a support group for women who have lived in domestic abuse,” she answered. “Patricia had it written in her day calendar. Call it a hunch, but I think she had first hand experience. They should be letting out any minute.”

Lucifer looked at her. “Domestic abuse?” He repeated. “You think Barry—?”

“Yes. Think about it. All the victims so far have committed acts that hurt others. This fits the pattern,” she said.

She spied Patricia exchanging last words with a lingering attendee, and waited to approach her. When recognition lit Patricia’s face, her smile faltered and she came to an abrupt stop.

“Detectives. What are you doing here?” Then a flash of alarm swept her features. “Has something happened to Barry?”
“No, no,” Chloe assured her quickly, cutting off Lucifer and whatever inappropriate commentary he’d been ready to share.

“But we would like to talk to you about Barry, if we could have a few minutes of your time,” she said, and nodded to the benches outside the building.

“Here?” Patricia asked doubtfully, but took a seat willingly.

Lucifer didn’t join them on the bench, but stood silently a few feet to the side, hands in his pockets. Chloe could tell he was unsettled by the new intel on Barry; he’d already believed the man guilty of something.

“Patricia,” she began carefully, “I understand you help with a support group here, for women who have survived domestic abuse.”

The woman didn’t meet her eyes. “Yes, I do. Why is that important?”

Wanting to guide Patricia into the conversation without defensiveness obscuring her answers, Chloe went for the most direct appeal. “We know by now that Barry’s poisoning was definitely not an accident. He was targeted specifically by someone who has been selecting victims on one kind of criteria.”

Patricia looked petrified, eyes wide in horror. “Victims?”

“Yes. There have been at least two deaths that we know of.”

“Oh my God,” she said. “Why… why would someone do that? Why Barry; what possible reason could this person have against him?”

“All of the victims have been guilty of acts that hurt or brutalized others.” Chloe’s eyes searched hers compassionately. “Barry has hurt you, hasn’t he? It’s why you come to these meetings, with other victims of domestic violence.”

Patricia’s eyes filled and she rummaged in her purse for a tissue. “It’s not what you think,” she said.

“Enlighten us then, my dear. Because it does seem as though Barry is guilty of something he deserves punishment for,” Lucifer said, tone devoid of sympathy.

Chloe shot him a look, but Patricia’s words regained her attention.

“No, no! Nothing like that! I mean, yes, he did before… It was ten years ago,” Patricia said.

“I’m sorry? Ten years ago?” Chloe asked.

“He had a terrible temper,” Patricia twisted the tissue in her hands, looking down at them. “We were so young and stressed, no idea what we were doing, really. I know this sounds like excuses. And believe me, he always had excuses. Long day at work or we were short on the bills… He was always so sorry after it happened,” she said softly.

Patrica continued, “The first time our son was old enough to understand what was happening, he tried to intervene… Lincoln got thrown clear across the room.” She stopped and looked Chloe in the eyes. “I left him that night. Packed up Lincoln and didn’t look back.

“I never thought I’d be able to trust him again. But four years ago, he calls and asks if we can
talk. Barry went through counseling and therapy, and... he changed. For us. Never once have I regretted giving him another chance. He’s shown us every day how much he loves us.”

Chloe was quiet a moment before she reached out to take Patricia’s hand briefly in her own. “I sincerely hope that remains the case. It was that easy to just... forgive him, after he treated you that way?”

“No,” Patricia shook her head, “It wasn’t easy at all. It was terrifying, to be honest. And some might call me a fool for it. But I couldn’t stop loving him, and believed in the man he wanted to be.”

Chloe was surprised to hear Lucifer ask, quietly and seriously, “How did you know he meant it? How did he show you?”

Patricia looked at him and shrugged helplessly. “Just by being there. Needing us as much as we needed him.”

A moment of quiet descended upon them, until Chloe finally cleared her throat and said, “Thank you, Patricia. We’re still working on possible suspects. We’ve looked at traffic cam and security camera footage in your area extensively, and don’t see anyone coming or going around the time Barry was poisoned. Are you certain there wasn’t anyone who knew your routines, who might have been in the house with Barry before you arrived?” She hated asking, knowing the question would make Patricia fear for her safety in her own home. But it was better to alert her to the possibility than not.

“No. I don’t think anyone was there. Barry doesn’t recall seeing or hearing anyone.”

“We thought otherwise. There was a candle left on the counter. A message from whoever this is. Do you know anything about that?”

Frowning, Patricia answered, “Actually, yes. Barry did tell me about that. But he found it in the mailbox when he came in that morning.”

“Really? That’s very interesting,” Chloe murmured, considering possibilities. If that was a deviance from the pattern, it might carry more significance.

Before she and Lucifer left, Patricia called out, “Detectives? I hope you find whoever is responsible soon. This person... whoever he or she is... they don’t know Barry. They don’t know what he’s gone through to change.”

“I know,” Chloe said.

She and Lucifer walked toward their cars and Lucifer stopped her with a gentle hand on her arm. “Detective?”

She took a deep, steadying breath, “Yes?”

“Will you come back to the penthouse with me and we can talk?” He asked, looking apprehensive.

Oh, how she wanted to. But she wasn’t sure she was ready. She bit her lip, divided, and finally said, “No, not tonight. What if I came over tomorrow? We could have dinner and talk?”

“Perfect,” he said, though his smile didn’t quite reach his eyes.

She got in the car, mulling over Patricia’s words. Yes, trust was terrifying, especially when you’ve
been let down before. But did she love him enough to believe in who he could be, or was that
naïve and foolish? People like Barry, who could fundamentally change, were one in a million, at
least. But the thing was… Lucifer was one in billions.

Chapter End Notes

My muse was not having it. I had to scrap this a few times to get it out right. It was
also a tough decision whether to go the pregnancy route or not. I know some readers
were really for it, but it wasn’t in my original story arc. After a lot of consideration
though, I began to see how it would add an interesting layer to some of my other ideas,
and realized I even planted the idea pretty far back without even knowing it. So here it
is!

And thank you so very, very much for the get-well wishes and all the wonderful
comments and feedback you leave me!

By the way, if any of you haven’t seen some truly spectacular art, you need to. Look
up my girl thepoisonofgod. She’s made some beautiful renderings to go with the story.
<3
Fear

Chapter Summary

Chloe and Lucifer each have their own fears to work through.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

He was actually nervous. Him! There were few things that could make the Devil anxious; he’d experienced nearly everything there was. Except for this, telling a woman his feelings, baring secrets he himself didn’t even fully understand, and risking rejection. He couldn’t blame her if she did; his crimes painted him as he truly was, and she’d finally recognized it.

Some sliver of hope remained. Clinging to that, Lucifer straightened the tablecloth, minutely adjusting the tapers before lighting them, and checked that the wine was chilled and box securely in his breast pocket. He had taken a step back to assess the tableau with a critical eye when the sound of the elevator caught his attention.

Chloe came in tentatively and he couldn’t help his admiring gaze as he looked her up and down. She preferred comfort over style as a general rule, but had expended effort for their dinner tonight. A modest midnight-blue dress graced her form, its simplicity underscoring the curves of her breasts, the neat nip of her waist and flare of her hips, down to her long, lithe legs. The deep hue served to accentuate the golden highlights of her hair and the mesmerizing blue-green of her eyes. Was he completely an infatuated sap that his breath caught at the sight of her?

Snapping out of his stupor, he led her to her seat at the table. “You look absolutely divine, Detective.”

She gave him a small smile, the first he’d seen on her lips in too many days. “Thank you. This looks… great,” she said, indicating the table.

“It occurred to me,” he said as he picked up the wine, “we never actually had our date. Not all the way through, at least.”

Lucifer filled his glass and moved to pour hers, but she put a hand over it. “Better not,” she said. “Could I trouble you for some water instead?”

“Certainly,” he said, obligingly taking her glass to the bar before bringing the plates to the table. “Chicken Parmesan,” he said with a flourish.

She gave him another one of those small smiles. “One of my favorites. Thank you.”

“I know,” he answered. But when she was slow to eat more than a few bites, pushing the vegetables around on her plate, he frowned and asked, “Is something wrong?”

She looked at him, “Nothing, really, it’s great. My appetite has just been… kind of off lately.”

“Just as well,” Lucifer said, taking a moment to orient himself. “I asked you here so we could talk about everything that happened. Us. What you learned about me. I need to know if it’s made you
see me differently. Again.”

Her answer came hesitantly, choosing her words carefully. “In some ways, yes.”

“Well, you’re not running away again. That’s good, I think. Unless we’ve moved on to the poisoning part. Did you bring arsenic this time?”

She looked at him sharply. “That’s not funny.”

“I’m sorry. Macabre humor,” he said, and took a deep drink of his wine.

Chloe shook her head slowly. “No, Lucifer. It’s not macabre humor. It’s the truth, and I think we need to talk about it.”

He fidgeted, camouflaging his discomfort with a misleading, casual pose of disaffection, leaning back in his chair. “There’s no need, Detective, I assure you. I’m over it.”

“Well, I’m not,” Chloe said. “You can claim to have made peace with it, fine. Maybe you believe that. But your actions speak differently, Lucifer. Don’t you see that we’re in the same pattern as before? Hiding truths, withholding information?”

Lucifer stared at her, not wanting to have this conversation. Why did they have to dissect something in the past that they had moved on from? Didn’t Dr. Linda say they couldn’t move backwards?

She continued, adamant. “I’m sorry that I disappointed you. I disappointed myself. I should have looked at the evidence, all the good you’ve done, the way you make me feel, not the testimony of someone who’d never met you.”

He couldn’t look at her, so he stared into the fire past her instead. He knew; he didn’t need her to say it. He was above needing her to admit culpability. Yet, it soothed something inside, something he only now could identify as fear, and he hated that he recognized it in himself.

Nervously, Chloe licked her lips. “You—“

“I’m not good, Detective;” he interrupted.

“Yes, you are,” she insisted. “You’re rash and ridiculous and-and completely oblivious—“

Lucifer looked at her then, flummoxed and mildly piqued. “Oh, do go on. Any other ways you find me lacking?”

“And good. You are not evil, you are not a monster. No matter what you blame yourself for. I don’t blame you, Lucifer,” she said. “I think… maybe part of the reason I reacted so badly was I felt you had been hiding the truth. Maybe if I’d found out from you first…”

That aggravated him. “I never lied to you.”

“I know. But you could have shown me, Lucifer,” she said, softly.

“You reacted the way I supposed you would, Detective. That’s why.” He finished his wine, wishing it was something stronger. In fact, that was a fine idea. Not one part of this conversation was going how he’d wanted it to. He got up to pour himself a whiskey before her words arrested him mid-step. “What? I couldn’t have possibly heard you correctly.”

Chloe was looking at him, eyes clear and steady. “I want you to show me again.”
When he didn’t move, affixed to the floor, she said, “It was a lack of trust on both our parts. It’s still keeping you from sharing with me, obviously. Look at everything we just dealt with after getting Eve.”

He scoffed. “You must be joking.”

But she didn’t retract her request. He was silent a long moment. He truly didn’t want to do this. Lucifer knew the precise moment she saw the change, could time it to the nano-second by the widening of her eyes. He was frozen in place. He knew he shouldn’t have.

She stood up, eyes never wavering, though she looked less surprised. Her hand extended toward him, then stopped inches away. “Does it hurt?”

“No. Not physically,” he said. She wanted to know more, she’d said. “It’s how I appeared after my fall,” he said quietly. “Frightened?”

Her hand brushed his cheek before looking into his eyes. “No. Sad. I hate that you see yourself this way. I don’t.” She pressed a chaste, sweet kiss to his lips and squeezed his hand in hers.

Lucifer smoothed away his Devil-face, replacing the hated visage with the one he was most comfortable with, the way he’d once been. “I don’t always. I don’t when I’m with you. I started to believe maybe that wasn’t me.”

Her eyes softened and she kissed him again. “That doesn’t define you, or all that you are. I love you, Lucifer.”

He sucked in a breath. She hadn’t said those words since he’d first left. They were an offering, an appeal for his trust, and a conviction of her feelings. He’d told her he had worried her feelings were manufactured because of the circumstances of her birth, and she didn’t care.

“I love you too,” he murmured, cupping her face in his hands, and kissing her just as gently. He wanted to believe in that, that it was strong enough. She’d made herself vulnerable to him, a sign of faith that he could reciprocate. He recalled Patricia’s words, that her husband had needed them, as they did him.

“I always found excuses to not show you,” he said. “I didn’t want to lose you. This life here.” Where he felt like he belonged, where he was valued.

“You won’t lose me,” she whispered. “I’m the one that keeps losing you.”

He encouraged her to sit and pulled his chair over to sit beside her. “I’m not going back. I don’t think, anyway.”

“What?” She asked, confused.

“I’ll explain the semantics of it later, but suffice it to say, I don’t think I can go back.” Lucifer reached in his jacket and withdrew the flat, rectangular box. “This is for you… sort of.”

She took the box, looking as apprehensive as he felt.

“Dr. Linda says we can’t move backwards,” he said. “But I liked where we were. And I want to continue moving forward. Go ahead, open it.”

She did, slowly, and he relaxed at her laugh of amazement. “Speaking of moving…” he added as she picked up the key from its velvet abode.
“Lucifer… what…” She looked at him, completely at a loss for words, but Chloe didn’t look as if she was going to hand it back to him.

“I didn’t buy anything yet. You don’t seem to like when I do,” he said. “But there are new lofts about to be on the market, recently renovated, on this side of town. Lots of room, even for Beatrix. We could go look at it if you like.”

“About to be on the market?”

“Called in a—“

“Favor,” she said in tandem, dryly. She looked at him as if gauging his seriousness. “Okay. Yes.”

She shouldn’t have agreed. There was so much still to tell him. But the way he looked at her, especially when he told her he loved her, and this… he wanted to live together, officially? Oh, how she wished they could. As soon as she told him, would it be over? Would it be so awful to take right now for herself?

She’d worried he saw her as inferior and realized now how completely false that was. Yes, he saw himself as different. But not condescending; not anymore, at least. She’d fallen into the same pattern as he. How could she have forgotten, again, the good things he had done, the justice he helped her right every day? Those weren’t the actions of someone who believed himself superior. He cared, and he cared about her. He loved her.

And it had finally clicked, when he hid behind humor, why he had hidden secrets from her again. How could she blame him, when he had reason to expect her rejection? She wanted to be able to trust him; relying on him had always been a leap of faith with the way he saw the world… but maybe to trust him, she needed to make sure he could trust her. It went both ways.

Chloe didn’t want to think about the complications - who she was, who he was, if he’d have to go back, what this baby meant - she wanted to lose herself, for one night, in possibilities. Very likely deluding herself, but she didn’t care. She could have this fantasy tonight before she told him, because she feared he was not going to take the news well.

The kiss took him by surprise, but he caught up quickly enough, and Chloe tried to pour everything she felt into the meeting of lips and playful dance of her tongue with his. Every bit of passion and love and wishes. A small sound of startled surprise escaped her when he pulled her onto his lap, the skirt of her dress riding up when she straddled him.

Loathe to break the kiss, her fingers traced down his jaw, over the stubble of the hint of beard, skating over his chest until finally locating the buttons of his shirt. Deftly loosing each from their holes, she greedily spread her palms across his bare chest, hungry for the warmth of his skin. It had been less than a week, a matter of days, since their fight but she was starving for him; his kiss, his touch… She’d missed him so much. Not just this, but everything they had begun to share.

Lucifer’s hands coasted up her legs to her bottom, filling his hands with her and pulling her in tightly. Brought firmly against his hard length, she gave in to her desire, grinding against him. His reaction was instantaneous, rising to his feet with her in his arms. Gasping, she quickly hooked her legs around his waist, her hands behind his neck.

Maybe he was as impatient as she was, for all of the surfaces nearby, not even counting the couch or the bed in the next room, she found herself between the wall and a very tall, aroused, and intent
Devil.

It amazed her some that Lucifer’s inhuman strength had frightened her not long ago. But some softer, feminine part of her was secretly excited by it, that he could so easily, so effortlessly, lift her, and so steadily, so securely, that she didn’t doubt his ability to hold her for a second.

He ground against her, mimicking the same teasing she had done to him, and she moaned helplessly. This angle was much, much better, and his arousal drew against her so exquisitely that she pushed back against him as best she could, eager for him to repeat the motion. With each pass, Chloe’s desperate hunger for more only grew. She felt empty without him inside her, and she ached to feel his hardness fill her completely.

“Lucifer, please,” she whimpered. “I need you.” The thought crossed her mind, though she was barely cognizant of her own breathless voice begging him, that theirs was an interesting reversal of roles. In their work, she was generally the one keeping him in line, to which he amiably deferred. But here, when they came together, she had no qualms letting him lead and control.

“Here?” He asked, sounding a little breathless himself.

“Yes. Here,” she answered between kisses. “I know you won’t let me fall.”

The press of his hips and an arm wrapped around her locked her in place while his other hand disappeared under her skirt once more. She felt him hook one finger under the band of her underwear, embarrassingly already damp with her desire.

“Are you particularly attached to these, Detective?” He asked with a smile in his voice.

“Um.. no,” she managed to reply while he kissed the spot right below her ear that always made her shiver. In the next moment, she felt a rough tug and her panties dropped to the floor. “Did you just…?”

“Yes, I did,” he answered, and that was apparently enough exchange about the matter, because he was kissing her again, tongue boldly sweeping into her mouth and electrifying hers.

Between them, she felt his hand move again, and then he was pushing into her, hard and thick and so wonderfully filling that she nearly came right then. Then his hips moved, withdrawing and driving inside her again so powerfully that she wouldn’t be surprised to find bruises on her back in the morning.

But she would gladly take those bruises any day; with each of his thrusts, he came up against her clit in tantalizing, teasing brushes, which she tried without success to rock into, but he held her too soundly for her to do much more than arch into him. She needed him to move, to give her more; every stroke elicited a spark of pleasure, but held fulfillment just out of reach.

Their breaths came in harsh pants, and his hand under her bottom squeezed tightly. The fingers of his other hand laced tightly with hers and pinned her hand to the wall. Chloe nipped his neck and pleaded, “Please, more, I’m so close…”

His low growl fed her excitement, and then he was finally moving faster, the contact made more extreme, and then she was lost to everything but the sound of her name on his lips as he came and the warm glow of her orgasm racing along her nerves in dizzying waves.

Once she’d caught her breath, she realized with a start that they were both mostly clothed. She pushed gently on Lucifer’s shoulder and he obligingly let her down, though she couldn’t help a brief wince. Yes, she was going to feel some of that tomorrow.
Concerned, he looked down at her, “Did I hurt you?”

“No,” she reassured him, “No. The wall did, a little.”

“Well, that won’t do for my Detective,” Lucifer said, with mock reproof. He swung her up into his arms and deposited her on the bed.

When he backed away from her though, she frowned. “Where are you going?”

“Just a minute, love. I’ll be only a moment,” he said, dropping a swift kiss on her lips.

Chloe sank back into the pillows and closed her eyes, waiting for him to return. If he took much longer, she thought, she might even fall asleep. But even as she thought it, an annoying little voice inside her head reminded her of the news she had to tell him. Later, she told it. I promise… later.

Her eyes flew open when she felt his hands on her, pulling down the zipper at the back of her dress, and drawing it up over her head. She started to tell him she could undress herself, but belatedly realized he’d already disrobed her. Lucifer lifted her up again.

Confused, she wrapped her arms about his neck and asked, “What are you doing now?”

He gave her his charming, playful grin. “See for yourself,” he said.

She looked down to see the jacuzzi tub, filled with steaming hot water and bubbles, as he lowered her down. A sigh of absolute pleasure escaped her as she sank into the warm, inviting water. There was a faint splash as he entered and sat behind her, gently pulling her back to lay against him.

“Mm, thank you,” she murmured, feeling her body already relaxing in the soothing heat.

“Of course,” he said, drawing symbols on her skin with the water.

“Have you always been this sweet?” She asked teasingly.

He laughed lightly, “Of course. You were just too blinded by lust to see it.”

“Right,” she agreed with a snort of amusement.

Before the water cooled completely, she sat up and turned to face him. His gaze was soft and open, with the kind of rare vulnerability she was coming to recognize he sometimes had when looking at her.

Chloe came closer, slipping astride his lap, and leaned forward to kiss him. He made a sound of appreciative interest, hands coming up to caress her backside.

Spying a drop of water on his chest, she licked it away. At his collarbone was another bead of water, and from there she followed it to the next, until she found her way to his mouth again.

His fingers slipped between her legs, expertly teasing before two long fingers entered her in a gentle rhythm. Soon she was impatient for more and drew his hand away. He filled her in slow degrees as she lowered herself onto him, his hands exploring her every curve.

She tormented him with the same soft pace until he grasped her hips and, drawing her nipples into his mouth by turns, suckled her until her breath hitched and her inner muscles clamped down on him. Before the last tremor ended, she felt his finger delve between the starting swells of her cheeks, the barest pressure above her anus, and squirmed in helpless response as her peak intensified, tightening around his shaft even more, provoking his own release.
Chloe rested her head on his shoulder, feeling boneless. When eventually the water grew cold, they dried off and she crawled into bed. She fell asleep quickly, nestled against him, feeling satisfied not only in body, but in spirit, in a way she hadn’t for several days.

Morning came all too soon, however, and she woke at dawn. As badly as she wanted to stay wrapped up in the blankets with Lucifer, content and asleep, she couldn’t. Her agitated conscience wouldn’t let her. Still, she didn’t want to wake him.

Slipping away gently, she quietly dressed in a pair of jeans and a comfortable button down she’d left there. She perched on the side of the bed and, building up the strength to wake him, watched through the window as the sun topped the horizon and spilled gold into the sky.

“Mmm,” she heard, and turned her head to see Lucifer blinking at her sleepily, “Come back to bed, Chloe.”

“I can’t,” she said apologetically with a sad half-smile. “Things I have to do today.”

“Are we not going to see the loft later?” He yawned, sitting up on one arm.

Oh, she’d have loved that. But she doubted that was going to be the case.

She cleared her throat. “Maybe we could go later this week, after work?”

“Alright,” he said slowly, giving her a look of growing confusion.

“Listen,” Chloe began, “I need to tell you something, and… I have no idea how it happened. Somehow I’m not really even surprised though, because what about us has ever made sense? But…”

Lucifer peered at her, brows furrowed. “Detective, I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“I know.” She took a deep breath, steadying her nerves. She could do this. “The way I see it, you’re going to react in probably one of three ways. One, you’ll do something completely asinine, like run off to Las Vegas, or sleep with a ton of women, or do an appalling amount of drugs in order to show me, in some backwards and convoluted way, how unsuitable you are—-“

“Detective——“

She shook her head and continued before he could argue. “Two, you’ll disappear on me. Or three, you’ll do something completely weird.”

“You are not making any sense,” he told her, though he was beginning to look concerned.

Chloe met his eyes. “I’m pregnant.”

Then, in his stunned silence, she kissed his temple, said, “I’ll see you at work later?” and left.

Chapter End Notes

Preemptive strike?
Chapter Summary

Chloe wonders how Lucifer is reacting to the news. Meanwhile, there appears to be a new homicide.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was Monday afternoon before she heard from him again. The rest of Sunday had passed in tense silence while Chloe internally debated whether she had done the right thing telling him that way or if she should stop by the penthouse to see if he was okay. She finally decided that if she did go over only to find him gone again, she might lose it. Of course, that left option one as a possibility, and she really didn’t want to consider that. That would truly break her heart, and be a hundred times more painful than when she’d yearned for him to come back from Hell.

She knew he needed time to process. For any man, impending fatherhood would be a shock, especially for any man who considered himself a confirmed life-long bachelor; as Maze had once said, “He’s not the marrying kind.” That alone would be a bombshell. Lucifer being the epitome of a life-long bachelor - he was what, thousands, hundreds of thousands of years old, if not more? And wasn’t that a kick in the face to think about - not to mention supposedly unable to father children, and this was more comparable to a nuclear explosion.

It was freaking her out too. This had been unexpected for both of them. For crying out loud, she was even on birth control! Strangely, it was that fact that provided a measure of comfort. Just consider the odds of this baby, she thought. Not only was it phenomenal for this child to be conceived given who the father was, it had also circumvented any normal prevention methods. And it was that conclusion that steadied her - this baby was meant to be, and if she was some sort of miracle planned by God himself, then she believed it could only be for good reasons.

Now all that was left to do was wait for the father to process and come to terms with it.

By the time lunch rolled around and she hadn’t heard from him, she was beginning to feel anxious. Was he even going to call when he came out of his shock, or was she eventually going to have to track him down?

Coming back from refilling her coffee mug, Chloe was curious to find a black box sitting open on her desk. Her pulse picked up. Was that…?

Sure enough, there was the key he had given her, still in its velvet lining, and underneath a card. A simple square of card stock that read in his neat hand, “You forgot something.”

The wave of relief she felt was nearly overpowering. He hadn’t left. He wasn’t running away.

She looked up to see him leaning a shoulder against the wall, hands in his pockets. “Hey,” she said softly.

“Hello Detective,” his answering smile was faint, but it was still there.
Chloe regarded him carefully. For all Lucifer’s pose seemed casual and relaxed, she saw signs of fatigue around his eyes. He seemed to lack his overwhelming store of energy. She opened her mouth to ask him if he was okay when he suddenly frowned, staring at her desk.

“What?” She asked, looking for what seemed to perturb him.

“Is that coffee?” Lucifer asked, nodding at her mug.

“Yes…” she answered slowly and then exclaimed, “Hey!” when he snatched it up.

“What are you doing?”

He took it to the kitchenette and poured it down the drain. “You shouldn’t have caffeine.”

Bewildered, she looked at him with annoyance. “You just wasted my coffee.”

“Don’t worry. I came prepared,” he announced, opening the refrigerator. In front of her he placed a pint of milk. “Calcium.” Then he reached in the fridge again, retrieving her sandwich and chucking it in the trash can.

“What the — what is the matter with you?”

“Detective, that is a turkey sandwich from the deli.”

“I know what it is, Lucifer. That was my lunch,” she said with growing impatience.

He placed a chicken Caesar salad in front of her.

She looked at it, then him, and back again before she figured it out. “Oh, good. You went with weird. Honestly, it was the option I preferred, but seriously Lucifer… why are you being so neurotic about my food?”

“Nine of the books I read name an entire list of dietary restrictions and necessary nutrients,” he said, perfectly serious.

“Nine of the… what did you read?”

“Pregnancy-related books,” Lucifer said.

Chloe blinked. Well. Maybe he was handling this better than she’d thought.

“Okay. Lucifer, I’m really touched that you’re obviously, uh…” she stopped and looked at the bottle of milk, “you’re interested in the baby’s health, but they’re smaller than a peanut right now.”

“It’s not for the baby,” he said, perfectly serious. “It’s for you, Detective.”

“Alright, I’m confused,” she said, shaking her head.

“The baby is the equivalent of an embryonic vampire. Sucking all the life out of you. And it’s not even born yet.” Lucifer looked at her.

Embryonic vampire? No, he definitely was not in the place of acceptance that she’d been hoping for.

Flummoxed, she tried to come up with an appropriate response. “Um, okay. Lucifer, I have a lot of phone records and interviews to run through, so… why don’t you go home and get some sleep?
You look exhausted.”

Taken aback, he asked, “Detective, you want me to leave?”

“You’re tired. And I’ll call you if anything comes up,” she promised.

He still looked slightly wounded but, after a moment, said, “Fine. Fine. I’ll go.”

Chloe gave him a calm, unaffected smile. “I’ll see you later.”

As she watched him go, she shook her head. Was she doing the wrong thing, hoping he would become comfortable with this… maybe even glad? Lucifer was definitely not thinking about the baby first, or even positively, for that matter.

Then again, she thought, he did read at least nine books. With a sigh, she picked up the milk and salad and went back to her desk.

—-

If he hadn’t already been laying down, those two words “I’m pregnant” would have knocked him over. He spent the next six hours trying to get drunk. After several attempts and a bottle and a half of his finest scotch failed to do absolutely anything, he picked up his phone. He’d had a fuzzy inclination to maybe call someone, but he didn’t know what to say to the Detective yet, and he couldn’t imagine calling his brother or Linda. The last thing he could handle right now was Amenadiel’s smug concept of advice.

Instead of tossing his phone down, Lucifer found himself Googling. And then Googling. And then reading through one ebook after another, until before he’d known it, night had passed. He wasn’t sure what it was exactly he was looking for - it wasn’t like there were any chapters devoted to the spawn of Satan.

He had learned dozens of other facts though, some including things he’d absolutely no desire to know about at all, and would have gladly remained in blissfully ignorant of. And he’d thought he knew everything there was about women’s bodies.

At the very least, he wanted to make sure the Detective remained healthy and safe. Who knew what could happen to her? Until he figured out what there was to be done, her well-being was his utmost concern.

He was going out of his mind. Naturally, he needed to talk to someone who specialized in that sort of thing. So, after visiting the Detective at the precinct, he went to see the only professional who could offer some perspective.

Lucifer didn’t bother knocking, sweeping into Dr. Linda’s office, and startling both her and the patient sitting on the couch.

“Lucifer!” Linda exclaimed, “What are you doing? You can’t just burst in here when I’m with a patient!”

“Believe me, doctor, my problems are far greater,” he said, pulling a wad of cash from a pocket. He turned to the astonished woman and peeled a few hundred dollar bills from the bundle, “You can reschedule, can’t you darling?”

The woman stammered in confusion, looking at him and then Linda in bewilderment. Huffing with impatience, Lucifer added another couple bills to the pile collecting on her lap. “Yes?” he
“Um. Y-yeah. Sure,” the woman agreed, scooping up the money and grabbing her purse. She directed a flustered, apologetic smile at Linda before slipping out the door.

Sighing heavily, Linda watched her go. She waved a resigned hand in the direction of the couch. “Well, you’re here. You may as well sit down. But do not think you can make a habit out of this, Lucifer. I have other patients.”

“Yes, well,” he said, sitting, “None of your other patients have an unholy progeny on the way.”

“Ah,” Linda said, sitting down, “I gather Chloe told you.”

“What, you knew!” Lucifer looked at her in confounded shock.

“Yes, she told me.”

Incredulous, he asked, “And you didn’t tell me?”

“It wasn’t really my place, Lucifer. That was something only Chloe could share with you,” she said calmly.

He sat back with a sigh, rubbing his forehead. “I don’t understand how this happened. I don’t know how to protect her from this.”

She tilted her head to the side, regarding him. “Protect her from what?”

“From the—“ he lifted a hand in the air, “the evil parasitic seed, of course.”

“What makes you so certain the baby is evil?” Linda asked.

Lucifer treated her to one of his patented isn’t-it-obvious stares. “I’m the Devil, doctor.”

“Yes, but you’re also an angel. And Chloe is a good person. A miracle, even. Neither of those adds up to evil,” she reasoned.

“Possible sociopathic nature aside, that’s not even the biggest problem,” he said, standing up with nervous energy and pacing.

Linda watched him, quiet.

“How did this even happen!” he asked, though he clearly wasn’t expecting an answer. The doctor decided to take it as a serious question anyway and propose her theory.

“Well, we know that angels self-actualize. Maybe…” she trailed off.

He paused immediately and turned to stare at her. “You think I did this? That’s absurd! Preposterous, even!”

“Is it? Do you have another theory?”

“Maybe the fact that she’s a bloody miracle?” He frowned. “Which would imply this is the result of my dad’s machinations.”

“Mm, which would mean the baby is probably not evil,” Linda pointed out. “But I do find it interesting that, while proximity to Chloe does make you vulnerable, you haven’t ever become
completely mortal around her either. You always had your Devil face or wings, or strength.”

“So you really are saying that I did this?” Lucifer asked. “Why would I do that? You know how I… feel about the little burdens. Why would I want one?”

At her silence, he pointed a finger in the air. “Aha! See? You can’t answer that.”

“The desire to engender offspring is a biological response,” she said. “Maybe it was something you weren’t even conscious of wanting. You say you don’t desire children, but can you honestly tell me you’ve never thought, or had feelings about, having a family of your own? A part of you, maybe reminiscent of a time when you yourself were innocent?”

“Absolutely not,” he replied. But even as he said it, he was struck by that odd feeling. That pleasure-pain in his chest. And that momentary, fleeting sense of strange emotion when Chloe had asked him if there was any possibility of a baby. He’d thought of Amenadiel and his son and… there had been a twinge of something. Not envy exactly, nor sadness. But maybe something in between.

“What does Chloe seem to think about all this?”

He brought his attention back to the doctor. “We haven’t really talked about it. She dropped it on me yesterday and left. She didn’t seem upset though.”

“So, it sounds like Chloe might be optimistic about this. Maybe you should talk to her. Find out how she feels and… be supportive. And, please, whatever you do… don’t call the baby a parasite.”

Another regular part of their routine was to decompartmentalize their work from their personal relationship dilemmas. So when Chloe received a call in the dead of night, or more accurately, around 2 o’clock, she texted Lucifer on the chance he would want to be there. He was likely still awake, either entertaining in the club or… well. She still wasn’t sure about those other options yet and was trying very hard not to let her thoughts spiral in that direction. He hadn’t exactly been crystal clear about his feelings. Either way, maybe they could both use a taste of normal.

She met up with Ella at the crime scene, the home of a successful doctor in an affluent neighborhood. “Any indication this is related to the arsenic murders?”

Chloe was hoping their stratagem for impeding the Excommunication killer paid off. They had decided that to inform the public of too many specific details, like the candlesticks - which Lucifer believed there would be more of - would invite too many false leads and waste valuable time and resources to sort the wheat from the chaff. Many crazies came out of the woodwork in situations like these, obscuring any real potentially helpful clues.

In the end, all they related to the news channels was that there had been several deaths related to arsenic poisoning and cautioned everyone to carefully inspect food or drinks before consumption for any signs of tampering. There hadn’t been much else they could say other than to request for any known information to be reported to the police. It would hardly have been helpful to warn the public that anyone who had a sin or skeleton in their closet was a potential target. At the very least, Chloe hoped, the warning would postpone any other plans for future victims, and buy her more time to investigate whomever it was behind it all.

Ella looked up from her crouch beside the woman sprawled on the floor. She had been carefully
turned on her side to expose the cranial wound that had killed her. “Nope. Good old-fashioned murder. Time of death is less than an hour.” She nodded at a woman talking to two police officers, perched on the couch with her arms hugging herself. “The doctor’s wife, Mrs. White, called it in.”

“So this isn’t the wife? Do we know who she is?” Chloe asked.

She heard Lucifer behind her as he entered. “I’ve got it,” he announced. “It was Mrs. White in the study with the candlestick.”

“Uh, close,” Ella said, and pointed at the bloody fireplace poker a few feet from the body. “She came up behind the woman and got in a good whack. She must have turned, maybe hearing movement behind her, and the blow caught her across the temple, above her ear, and across to the parietal bone. It was just enough to be deadly.

“Wife is still pretty shaken. Said she heard an intruder and just reacted,” Ella told them.

“Alright. Let’s go talk to her,” Chloe said, glancing up at Lucifer. “Hey.”

“Hello,” he answered, and Chloe was relieved to see a more genuine smile this time. He looked more well-rested too.

As they crossed the room, he leaned toward her, asking, “Detective, do you think we should…”

“Yes?” She asked when his words trailed off. He sounded nervous.

“Do you think we should stop by the loft later today? Or tomorrow?”

“Oh. Right. Yeah, maybe. Let’s see what we find out about this case first,” she said.

“Detective, if you don’t want to do this—-” he began.

Oh, shoot. No, she didn’t want him to have that idea. She was thrilled and excited, even a little scared by it, but in a wonderful way. “No, I do!” Chloe reassured him.

“You do?” He asked.

He had that touch of vulnerability in his eyes again, and she’d be lying if she said it didn’t squeeze her heart some. She gave him a smile. “I only meant that it’s late and I don’t know how long we’ll be here, or what I’ll need to handle at the precinct before leaving. I’d like to sleep at some point.”

Lucifer met her eyes searchingly, then apparently having found what he was looking for, he relaxed. “Alright. I’ll set it up for tomorrow, after work?”

“Sounds great,” she said.

Mrs. White was a lovely woman who looked at least ten years younger than her age, held herself with immaculate poise, and a gracious, if tremulous, smile. She had clearly been dressed for bed, and was now clutching the sleeves of her robe. Even her hair was flawless, as was her makeup; all as elegant as the room in which she sat. A woman who took her role as doctor’s wife and hostess very seriously, Chloe thought.

She introduced herself and Lucifer, explaining that she would need her to go over her statement again, and possibly go over a few details.

“I thought I already explained all this to the police,” she said.
“Yes, but this is standard procedure. We want to draw as clear a picture as possible of the circumstances,” Chloe answered. “Now, Mrs. White…”

“Amber,” she said, smiling almost shyly at Lucifer. “Please call me Amber.”

Why did every woman in a hundred-yard radius have to look at him like that? Chloe barely refrained from rolling her eyes.

“Amber,” she said, a bit firmly, “Could you tell us what you heard and what happened when you came downstairs?”

“Well, I was already in bed. I think I’d fallen asleep maybe around eleven or so, and then I heard a noise like something had fallen over. At first, I thought maybe the cat jumped on a side table again and upended a lamp. I came down and saw—saw the shape of a person. The room was dark, I had no idea who it was, but my first thought was that a robber had broken in and I just panicked. I was here alone. I grabbed the fireplace poker and swung it. I didn’t mean to kill her. I was just scared,” Amber sniffed between shaky breaths.

“I see. Do you have home security? They should have been alerted by a break-in. You also didn’t call for help,” Chloe added.

“Like I said, I just panicked. We do have security. I don’t know why the alarm didn’t go off. Maybe I forgot to set it before bed. Usually Greg does it,” she answered.

“Greg is your husband?”

“Yes. Every now and then he has a night shift at the hospital. That’s where he was tonight. If only I hadn’t been alone,” said Amber.

Lucifer shook his head. “It’s a crime for Greg to leave a lovely lady like yourself alone so often,” he said charmingly.

Amber sniffed again. “Yes, it is. I feel so unappreciated sometimes. I bet you wouldn’t let a woman feel unappreciated, would you?”

“Ah, no,” he answered slowly, taking a discreet step back.

“Amber,” Chloe said, feeling a bit more charitable towards the woman, “Are you sure you had never seen her before? Never saw her at, say, a social event, or around the neighborhood?”

“No, never,” she said, then hesitated. “Well, actually… there has been a car driving by our house, a few times this week. I think the driver was a woman. I never got a good look. Why?”

Chloe offered her a kind smile, “Just going over facts. Burglars generally get the layout of a home before breaking in. Do you have many valuables in the house? Jewelry or money for instance?”

“Um, a few pieces of jewelry, but those are upstairs. Some of the art down here on the main floor is worth a few thousand, I guess,” Amber said. “Am I going to be in any trouble, Detective? I didn’t mean to…”

“In cases of self-defense, no, you are generally not found to be at fault,” Chloe said. “For now, this is still an investigation. I’ll be in touch if we need more information from you.”

“Alright,” she replied, a little dazed.
After stopping to speak to Ella about the forensic evidence and requesting for a few more areas to be dusted for fingerprints, Chloe met up with Lucifer, who was leaning against his car with a cigarette.

She wrinkled her nose a little. For the last week, she had become more sensitive to certain odors, and while she hadn’t exactly liked the smell of cigarettes, it hadn’t been enough to bother her. Now it made her vaguely nauseous. She moved to the side, where the wind would blow the smoke away from her.

It seemed he had read about harmful substances too, because Lucifer dropped it to the pavement and stepped on it to put it out.

“Thank you,” she said softly, leaning against the car as well, surveying the house in front of them consideringly.

“You know, Detective, the penthouse is closer than your house,” he said.

She looked at him, “Is it?”

“Yes, it is. A short drive and you can be back in bed,” he grinned wickedly.

“I think I might actually end up with less sleep that way,” Chloe teased, glancing back at the house.

Lucifer followed her gaze. “What are you thinking, Detective?”

“I’m thinking poor, lonely, and unappreciated Mrs. Amber White is lying.”

—-

Chapter End Notes

Poor Lucifer, hmm?

And you know how much I appreciate hearing your thoughts, so please take the time to share them with me if you can! When my writing starts to go adrift, reading your comments helps me get back on the right path, so thank you!
Chloe and Lucifer work on their newest case while Chloe checks in with Ella and Lucifer has a mild attack of nerves.

“Detective, are you certain you wouldn’t rather a few more hours of sleep?” Lucifer asked, adjusting his cufflinks.

Chloe came out of the bathroom, twisting her hair into a ponytail. “Of course I’d like more sleep, Lucifer. But I’m already up and there’s work to do.”

“I’m ‘up’ as well, which is why I’d like to go back to bed.”

She couldn’t hold back a small yawn. She really was exhausted. They had caught maybe four hours of sleep before her alarm rang.

Lucifer’s response was a look of feigned injury. “First you laugh, now you’re bored. Is my performance so mediocre then?”

The look she gave him was wry as she headed out of the room, never knowing that her casually-uttered words stopped him in his tracks. “Believe me, making love with you is never boring.”

Pulling on her coat she called, “I really need a coffee on the way.”

She caught the look on his face when he joined her and misinterpreted it as impending protest. “Don’t you dare make a fuss,” she warned. “One cup of coffee is perfectly fine. You don’t need to freak out.”

This time his offense was genuine, “I do not ‘freak out’ or ‘make a fuss’.”

“Lucifer, you threw my food in the trash,” she reminded him while they exited the elevator.

“Perfectly reasonable,” he argued.

But despite his attempt to defend his position, Lucifer relented and stopped for the caramel cappuccino she wanted. Feeling a little guilty for teasing him — after all, at least he was caring — she stopped him from leaving the car when they parked. His strangeness wasn’t unexpected, and it was more that she was used to more independence, not having someone scrutinize and question the way she did things.

Sliding a little closer, Chloe reached for him, fingers sifting through his hair at the nape of his neck. When he turned to look at her, she pressed a sweet kiss to his lips. They would be okay, she thought. She could have faith; they had come this far, despite demons and Devil wings and monsters of the human variety.
She’d meant the kiss to be brief and light, but his hand came to caress her cheek, and the kiss became something else; hotter and increasingly fervent, with a taste of longing that she hated to suppress. She was completely blind to their surroundings, including the passing stupefied observer.

Chloe drew in a shaky breath and smiled ruefully. “I didn’t mean for that to happen. I just wanted you to know this is okay. I’m okay.” But she didn’t want to push him too hard right now, so she turned and exited the car. As impatient as she was for him to accept the pregnancy, she respected that he needed to come to it on his own. Forcing anything in a relationship was poisonous. And in the meantime, they had a job to do.

Opening the folder assigned for last night’s homicide, Chloe reviewed the crime scene shots while pulling her arms from her coat. It was assisted by another smooth tug and she peeked over her shoulder to see Lucifer draping her coat over the back of her chair.

“What?” Lucifer’s benign smile was a little too innocent.

“You’re being charming again,” she said.

His overly-polite demeanor didn’t waver and he didn’t bother to modulate his volume. “I’m always charming. Are you saying I should stop being charming because people might suspect—“

“Shh!” Chloe said with exasperation. “Yes, you’re incredibly charming. Sometimes. I just don’t want you to be overly charming. In a way that says that you… you and I…” she sighed and closed her eyes. Even to her own ears she sounded flustered and absurd. It wasn’t that she was ashamed of their relationship; she was afraid of their rapidly changing personal relationship spilling over into their work one. They were a good team, and she wasn’t prepared for something to change that. Who knew how the pregnancy would, once people found out?

She opened her eyes again, wanting to try to explain her worry to him, but found him negligently sitting on the corner of her desk, flipping through the same photos she had begun sifting through.

“So why do you believe our poor, unappreciated Mrs. White is lying?” He asked.

Taking his lead, she transitioned to the case as well. “Two reasons. For one thing, women don’t generally go to bed looking like that when they’re alone. Her makeup was perfect, her hair was perfect. As for the second thing… what is missing from these photos?”

“Missing?” Lucifer frowned, regarding them from a different angle. “So you think Mrs. White wasn’t alone; she was entertaining some male company while her husband was away? Ooh, what if the burglar was the company?”

“And a lover’s quarrel is why she got beaten to death with a fireplace poker?”

“Granted, not the best way to rekindle the flames.”

Ella passed by them, a fresh mug of coffee in her hands. “Hey guys,” she greeted.

“Hey Ella,” Chloe said, “Oh, hey, did you happen to have the results of the fingerprinting and forensics from last night?”

“I was just finishing them up now,” she answered, gesturing for them to follow her.
Grabbing a few sheets of paper from the printer, she laid them out on the table for each of them to see. “Fingerprints of the vic show she’s not in the system.”

“Were her fingerprints found in any of the places I asked you about? The doorknob, the frames of the paintings?” Chloe asked.

“Nope, nowhere. But that’s kind of expected. Most thieves know better than to leave their fingerprints everywhere,” answered Ella.

“Right… No fingerprints, but the scene is also missing gloves or lock picking tools. I don’t think she was a thief,” Chloe said thoughtfully.

“Nicely done, Mrs. White,” said Lucifer admiringly, then caught the looks on their faces. “Except for the murder part, of course.”

Chloe sighed. “Come on, Lucifer. We’re going to check with the hospital to see if Dr. White was on duty last night. There’s another explanation other than Mrs. White having a secret affair, and that’s that Dr. White was having a secret affair.”

At the hospital, Lucifer’s “mojo” was more effective for circumventing the chain of command and official requests than it would take for Chloe to get a confirmation. The desk nurse was only too happy to accommodate him, and perhaps it was because Chloe had encouraged him to do it, but the nurse’s clear captivation didn’t chafe her the way Amber White’s had. The entire endeavor took mere minutes, but told her enough: Dr. White didn’t take night shifts.

“Question Mrs. White again?” Lucifer asked, joining her in the car.

Chloe shook her head no. “It wouldn’t do any good right now. All we have is evidence that Dr. White wasn’t where his wife said he’d be and a few minor details that don’t add up. Unfortunately, a lack of evidence isn’t really evidence of anything else.”

“So where to then?” He asked.

“Still no ID on the purported burglar,” she answered. “We need to find out who she is. Mrs. White told us a car had been driving past their house frequently. Whether or not that’s the truth, it’s the best lead we’ve got. We can circle the neighborhood and look for any vehicles matching that description.”

The drive back to the neighborhood was short, but exploring the surrounding streets added on the minutes, and Chloe bit her lip, the silence reaching for the words she had been pushing aside since that morning.

“You know, Lucifer… this morning, I didn’t mean—” she tried to find the right words to explain her worry.

He gave her his attention, expression questioning, “Didn’t mean what?”

“I didn’t mean that I’m hiding you or us,” she said, wondering how exactly she was even going to phrase it. Relationship?

“Ah,” he said. “I know. It does seem to preoccupy you though.”

She glanced away from the road to briefly meet his eyes. “I think I’m just worried that too much will change. I don’t want to lose you as my partner either.”
He was quiet a minute before answering. “You don’t have to worry about that, Detective. You will never lose me. Not unless you wished it.”

She wasn’t sure how to respond to that, so she gave him a small smile. Neither of them were any good at talking about their feelings, being vulnerable. The changing dynamics of their relationship made it easier. But it was still terrifying, even if being with him now felt like the most natural thing in the world.

“Hey, I think this car might be it. Older model, dark blue,” she said, pulling over behind it. They were parked at the end of the White’s street.

They peeked through the windows and she spied a cell phone on the driver’s seat. Most people didn’t leave those behind, even in a locked car. She pulled out her phone and dialed Ella. “Hey Ella, can you run a plate for me? See if the registration matches our vic. EQD998. Great, thanks,” she hung up after waiting for Ella to pull up the car’s registration and match the name to the driver’s license on file, and slid her phone into her back pocket.

She looked at Lucifer and nodded, “It’s hers.”

It didn’t take much digging after that to uncover that the victim, Megan Donnelly, was a nurse at a clinic in the next township, a good forty-five minutes away. She lived in an apartment with her husband, Mark, and six-year-old daughter Lauren.

Which begged the question, why was she killed so far from home, and in an alleged stranger’s home?

Probably the part she hated the most about her job was breaking the news to a victim’s family. She’d been on the receiving end when her father died. There were no words that made any difference. Once your heart knew that devastation, you were forever broken. Hearts could heal, but never forget.

The immediate horror on Mark’s face squeezed her heart in sympathy. Having to extend a family’s pain with questioning was also difficult, but at least brought the possibility for hope, for justice to be met.

Mark led them in the apartment to a pair of couches, shaking his head. “I thought maybe you were here to tell me she’d been found. But not this.”

“Found?” asked Chloe.

“She didn’t come home last night. I tried to report her missing but the police said it hadn’t been twenty-four hours yet. I tried to tell them she wouldn’t do that, that I’d tried calling her dozens of times,” Mark sat down, sightlessly staring at the floor.

“I’m sorry,” Chloe told him sincerely. “But whatever information you can give will help us. Your wife was found in the home of a Dr. White. It’s believed that she broke in.”

“What? Megan would never do that!” Mark protested. “We don’t even know a Dr. White. And she would never steal from someone.”

Lucifer chimed in, asking, “What about a clandestine affair with the doctor’s wife?”

At Mark’s answering expression of outrage and tightly spoken, “She would never do that,” Chloe quickly moved on to another line of questioning.
“Had she been acting odd lately? Any strange behavior or changes in routine?” she asked.

Mark shook his head again. “Everything’s been strange lately, for all of us.” At Chloe’s inquiring look, he continued, “Our daughter Lauren was diagnosed with leukemia last month. Everything has been doctors appointments and tests, insurance and bills, the cost of treatment… It’s been taking a toll.”

Chloe nodded slowly. There might be a connection there to look into. Mark claimed not to know a Dr. White, but the illness of their daughter may have brought them into contact somehow.

A small sound outside the room caused her to look up in time to see a head peeking around the corner. Mark waved her in and the little girl warily passed them, Lucifer leaning back in his seat as she did, to bury her face, shyly, in her father’s arm. He reached around her, embracing her tightly, and it was obvious how hard he was trying to keep it together in his daughter’s presence.

She didn’t want to say that if they had been struggling with this kind of emotional and financial burden, it indicated a motive for Megan to have been breaking into the Whites’ home for valuable items that could fetch a decent price after all.

The little girl turned enough to survey them with a single eye. She had already begun chemotherapy; her hair shaved close, arms and legs rail thin. She looked smaller than six years old. For an innocent child to bear so much suffering… and now without her mother, Chloe thought sadly.

“Thank you for your time, Mark. I will call you when more information comes up,” she said.

“Detective Decker, my wife wouldn’t…” he trailed off.

Chloe paused in the doorway behind Lucifer and met Mark’s eyes, and said gently, “I sincerely hope you’re right. I promise you that I’ll find out what happened.”

When they returned to the precinct, Chloe knocked on the door to Ella’s lab and called her name. The door opened immediately and Ella smiled welcomingly. “What’s up Chloe?”

“Actually,” said Chloe, shutting the door behind her for privacy, “that’s what I was going to ask you.”

“Huh?”

“You asked if we could talk, and then I got sidetracked with some really—” Chloe’s eyes widened when she thought of the bizarre events of the last week or so - rescuing Eve from murderous demons, falling from the 60th story of a sky rise only to be caught in the last second by an angel, realizing she was pregnant. Yeah, explaining any of that, even with Ella in the know, would just be too much to even attempt. “—Really weird stuff. But I want to know what’s bothering you and see if I can help. You’re one of my best friends.”

Ella winced, studying the floor guiltily. “That’s what makes this worse.”

“What?” Chloe squeezed Ella’s shoulder. “It can’t be that bad. What is it, Ella?”

Looking miserable, Ella met her eyes, her own looking a little wet. “I slept with Dan. A few times, actually.”

Stunned, Chloe blinked. That was what she’d been worried about? “Wow.”
“‘Wow’? That’s it?” Ella sniffed.

“Yeah. Ella… we haven’t been married for awhile now. And we’ve both had relationships since, y’know?”

“I know, but Charlotte didn’t work with us every day, y’know? We all work together and it just made me feel guilty, like I betrayed our friendship. I mean, you guys have a child together,” she said helplessly.

With a kind smile, Chloe shook her head. “It doesn’t matter that we all work together. I mean, Lucifer’s my partner and we’re,” she frowned for a moment, trying to find the right word for it, “partners,” she said finally. “But I don’t think that’s all that’s bothering you, Ella. You know Dan and I both moved on.”

Ella sighed. “No, that’s not all.” She twisted her fingers together nervously. “I thought at first it was just that we were both hurting and lonely, and we both decided to just leave it in the past. But the thing is… I miss him,” she confessed. “We still joke and have fun and work together fine, but I keep wondering if we could have had more.”

That was a sentiment Chloe understood. How long had she decided to leave her feelings for Lucifer in the past, to just keep working and move on, and not let herself wonder if there was more? She touched her stomach with a fleeting smile.

“Ella, if you want to go for more, then do it. You’re both my friends; I want you to be happy. Maybe it will work out or maybe you’ll only be friends. But don’t let fear hold you back from something wonderful,” she said.

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“Lucifer, calm down. We’ll be there on time,” she said, slipping the stack of records in the case file.

The remainder of yesterday and today had been spent going through phone records, background checks, and employment histories. Well, for the Detective at least. He’d helped until he’d been bored to distraction, and Chloe snatched the marker from his hand, ordering him to go find something else to do.

He’d come back from business at Lux to remind her about seeing the loft and another fifteen minutes had already passed. He admitted to himself that his impatience wasn’t really about the schedule; he was eager to see what she thought of it.

Chloe laughed when she joined him, “Lucifer, the loft isn’t going to change its address before we get there.”

Passing them on the way to the exit, Daniel paused. “Chloe, can I—“

“Not now, Daniel!” Lucifer said in irritation. “The Detective and I have an appointment.”

“Lucifer!” Her tone and the look Chloe shot him said she thought he was being rude. He sighed. Turning to Daniel, she said, “Actually, Lucifer is right. If it’s not important, can we talk later?”

“Yeah. Sure,” he said, clearly unhappy. Lucifer wasn’t above feeling a little pleased by that.
Well, at least the Detective’s response had been in his favor, not Daniel’s, he thought. He allowed that he might be feeling not only eager, but a tiny bit anxious as well. So it was with a show of confidence that he didn’t quite feel that he opened her door outside the massive brick warehouse turned residential.

Lucifer offered her his arm, “Shall we, Detective?”

Unlocking the entrance of the first unit with a flourish, he hung back by the door to watch for her reaction. Chloe had walked into the center of the main floor and turned in a slow circle, not saying a word. It wasn’t until she faced him again that he saw her pleased astonishment and relaxed some.

“What do you think?” He asked.

“This place is enormous!” Chloe exclaimed. “I think my whole apartment could fit here. Twice.”

Relieved, he said, “This is just the ground floor. The bedrooms are upstairs.”

She looked up to see the glass railing that ran along the perimeter of the open second floor. Lucifer grinned as he led her upstairs and showed her each of the three rooms. “And the best is your favorite room.”

“What’s that?” she asked.

“The master bath,” he said, showing her the connected bath.

She laughed, “You caught me. I’m just using you for your glorious shower and jacuzzi tub.”

“I thought as much. Which is why this place is even better,” Lucifer indicated the decadent fixtures in the bathroom that easily rivaled the size of some bedrooms.

Chloe bit her lip as she surveyed the room, from the double sink to the corner tub raised above two steps, lined by a tiled deck where it met the wall, that he could imagine her spacing lit candles along and resting a glass of wine while she indulged in a bath. Or them, because there was definitely room enough.

The shower was just as grand, spacious and built with polished blue tile with glass doors and jets not only on the ceiling, but the sides as well.

Lucifer caught the look on her face. “You’re feeling guilty for liking it? That’s ridiculous.”

“I never knew I was so superficial,” she confessed, hands in her back pockets.

“You’re not. You’re the least superficial person I know. It might even be good for you to be spoiled once in awhile,” he said.

“It’s just so much more than what I need,” Chloe said, though she looked over the room again admiringly.

He knew she wouldn’t believe him if he told her that she deserved all that and more. He had the money for it, there was no reason for her not to enjoy it. Lucifer liked quality. Why have less when you could have more? Giving her the same, and her actually accepting it, was a whole other feeling entirely.

Instead he told her, “Come back downstairs with me.”

Back on the main floor, he urged her to explore the kitchen, which he himself found pretty
impressive. Sleek and well-organized with a professional range and enough counter space and island for decent prep work. Glass-fronted cabinets above the countertops sparkled.

He leaned back against the island and said, “That wall would do very nicely for a bar. A setup similar to the one in the penthouse, and room enough for the piano.”

She followed his gaze. “You could even have an entertaining area there if you wanted. Or your library.”

“What else do you see?” Lucifer wished for a cigarette. Something to occupy him whilst he encouraged her to envision it as a real… home. It was interesting, and a little uncomfortable, to realize that even though he’d considered the penthouse as home, this was different, and he wasn’t quite sure how or why.

“There could be a dining area adjoining the kitchen,” she said hesitantly. “And maybe a family room off here.”

He stilled momentarily at the phrase “family room”. That was the second time in as many days she had said something that blindsighted him for no reason. First with that casual description the previous morning; “making love”, she’d said. Lucifer had always considered that something humans said to romanticize and rationalize giving into their desires. Sex and fucking and bedplay were all just words for the same act. But the words had echoed in his mind because he’d had the odd sense more than once that sex with her was somehow different.

He’d liked all his partners well enough. But that was the thing, wasn’t it? He’d liked them, but not loved them. He loved her, and even that word didn’t seem to accurately reflect what he felt. Since the day he had met her, she had frustrated and fascinated him, surprised him with parts of life he had never known or cared about before. And when her life was threatened, he never hesitated to do what was necessary to save her. Not once, no matter how extreme or painful.

Chloe walked over to him and he realized he’d been lost in his own thoughts.

“I like it,” she said. “If you want it, I do too. We’ll have to find some compromise between our styles though. I’m more about comfort than expense,” she teased.

He shrugged, not terribly concerned. There were plenty of options, and he’d become accustomed to changing fashions over the millennia. There was plenty of room for what he liked and what she liked.

“Look,” she said hesitantly, “I haven’t wanted to push you. I know you’re not exactly thrilled about the baby.”

Lucifer didn’t want to disappoint her, but couldn’t lie either. “I don’t know what I think about it.”

“Well,” Chloe continued, “I have an appointment next week. And I want you to be there. It’s just to see if everything is going as it should and get an idea of the due date.”

He didn’t answer right away, not sure if he wanted to go, but loathe to make her go without him. “You really aren’t concerned about this?”

“Is that what’s upsetting you? All that ‘embryonic vampire’ nonsense? You think the baby is going to be evil or something?”

“ Aren’t you?” He looked away from her, but she turned his face back to hers.
“No,” she said simply. “I’m not. Because you’re not evil, not to me. You’re like anyone else; you have your good virtues and your bad flaws, and that’s it. And I believe this baby wouldn’t have even happened if it wasn’t meant to.”

Which was more of his dad’s interference then, if that was the case.

His voice was doubtful. “You’ve been impregnated by the Devil, Chloe.”

Raising her eyebrows, she answered dryly, “Yeah. I was kinda there.”

“I’m the reason why evil things are done every day,” Lucifer argued. And would she still think this baby was a good omen if she knew he might have subconsciously made this happen?

“You are going to have to work through this, Lucifer. You’re responsible for the choices you make, not the choices of others. Your rebellion with your father had nothing to do with wanting people to hurt each other.”

“You know what they say, Detective. The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.”

She sighed.

Lucifer shook his head again. “How are you so calm about this?”

“Lucifer,” she looked down, speaking softly. “After you left, I thought about a lot. I tried to see more through your perspective, so I get that this is a lot for you to process. I can give you time to adjust to this, even if it’s hard. Somehow, as bizarre as it all is, it makes sense to me. I missed so much time, so many opportunities… I got you back and I don’t want to waste anymore.”

Pulling her close, he wrapped his arms around her and rested his head on hers. He understood what she meant. He thought he’d never see her again, and this second chance wasn’t going to pass by. Now that he had her, the idea of letting her go was incomprehensible.

Because that was the problem with time, he thought. Someday he would have to let her go. Until then, he didn’t want precious time to go by wasted either. For him, her life was too brief. All too soon, she would be gone where he couldn’t follow, and he would have to go on without her.

Chapter End Notes

This one’s a little longer than usual since I went two days without updating. Admittedly, not much going on this chapter but fluff and the case. I hesitated posting it yesterday because it felt a little bare. But things will move along, I promise. As always, please share your thoughts with me. I adore your comments.
Chapter Summary

Chloe and Dan have an uncomfortable conversation, and opens up about her concerns to Lucifer.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Dr. White, thank you for coming in today,” Chloe said, dropping the files on the interrogation room table before sitting opposite.

He was a handsome man, tall and lean despite the silver hair at his temples revealing his age, and exuding confidence. No doubt he and his wife turned a lot of heads at their society affairs and charitable dinners. Chloe got the same sense from him that she had from his wife, that image was highly valued.

She’d held off on questioning the doctor until she had done more research. One possibility she had considered was that the victim, Megan, and Dr. White were acquainted through her daughter’s cancer diagnosis and treatment. As it turned out, Dr. White’s field of medicine was completely unrelated. As a cardiac surgeon at Dignity Health hospital, there was little to no likelihood they had crossed paths, especially since Megan’s daughter, Lauren, would have been receiving care through Children’s Hospital.

“I’m happy to be of any help, but I don’t know how I really can. I wasn’t home when the unfortunate incident took place,” Greg White replied coolly, folding his hands.

Yes, that was the story, at least the way Mrs. White had told it. But she had been under the impression that her husband was at work. With the hospital’s records telling a different story, that led Chloe to hypothesize a second possibility. Given that Amber, despite the late hour and vow that she had already been in bed, had looked like she had been entertaining company, it was entirely possible her own husband had been that company. Was Amber covering for her husband, shielding him because he had been involved?

Chloe offered a brief, polite smile. “Dr. White, could you tell us if you were familiar with the woman who entered your home?” She laid Megan’s driver’s license photograph in front of him.

“No, I already told you I had no idea who the woman was.”

“Sometimes names aren’t as easy to recognize as faces. Are you sure?” Chloe tapped the photo again, and he obligingly cast a glance at it before shaking his head again.

Assessing his reactions, Chloe said, “That’s interesting. Because up until seven years ago, you both worked at Good Samaritan hospital. Then you changed employment, and coincidentally, Megan did the same a few months later, moving to the East End Clinic.”

Apparently Greg had quite the poker face. He didn’t so much as blink. Instead, he lifted a shoulder in a careless shrug. “Hospitals have hundreds of employees, Detective Decker. It’s not unusual that
we never met.”

She nodded. “Right. Lauren, Megan Donnely’s daughter, was diagnosed with leukemia a few weeks ago.”

“That’s unfortunate. What does that have to do with me? Or my wife, for that matter?” He asked.

“I thought it might be reasonable that a mother in that predicament might call on any acquaintances or connections she had in the medical field, maybe looking for a referral or help engaging a specialist,” Chloe said.

From the corner of her eye, Chloe could see Lucifer, where he leaned casually against the wall near the door. He shifted slightly, drawing Dr. White’s attention.

Dr. White glanced between the two of them before coming back to Chloe. “I wouldn’t have been able to help in any case, even if I had known her. I don’t work with anyone in that field. And breaking into my home would hardly induce me to give her assistance.”

Approaching the table slowly, Lucifer remarked, “It’s funny you should say that, Greg. It doesn’t appear that Megan broke into your home at all.”

“What are you saying?”

Lucifer shrugged. “Perhaps you invited her in yourself.. as it appears you weren’t at the hospital. So, how about it, Dr. White? Were you leaving Mrs. White lonely and unappreciated, or were you home after all?”

Dr. White stood, buttoning his suit jacket. “That is neither here nor there. If you have further questions, you can contact my attorney.”

After concluding the interview with Dr. White, Chloe sank into her chair and gingerly massaged her right temple. This sudden cutback on caffeine was killing her. Taking a drink of her bottled water, she opened her top desk drawer in search of something for her headache. All she could find was ibuprofen, and she looked at the bottle consideringly. It had been awhile since she was pregnant with Trixie, and she honestly couldn’t remember which medications were safe and which weren’t. Was it Tylenol that was okay?

She turned the bottle sideways to inspect the label. Just about everything had warnings now, especially for women who were pregnant or nursing. She was still searching for any information when Lucifer plucked the bottle from her hands.

“No ibuprofen,” he said.

Leaning back in her chair, she crossed her arms. Honestly, she couldn’t decide if she found his obsessive paranoia adorable or infuriating. Both, she suspected.

“I have a headache,” she told him.

Lucifer shook his head. “Sorry, love.” He placed a fresh bottle of water from the vending machine in front of her.

Make that infuriating. For a man who wasn’t sure how he felt about an impending child, he was pretty damn invested.

Before she could come up with a response, Dan passed by and paused. “Hey Chloe.” He glanced
at Lucifer and said, “Lucifer,” by way of greeting.

“Hey Dan,” she replied, and took a drink of the water. What the hell. She was thirsty.

After a final flick of his eyes at Lucifer, Dan zeroed his attention on her. “Can we talk?”

Right, she remembered. He had wanted to talk the other day and she’d asked him to wait until later, wanting to keep Lucifer from having to wait any longer.

“Sure,” she said.

Lucifer cleared his throat. “I think I’ll head back to Lux,” he said.

She nodded in response. They had driven separately today since she had needed to stop at her apartment for clothes. One thing she wouldn’t mind once they moved into the loft would be no more switching back and forth, one week at her place, one at his, depending on when she had Trixie. All of her clothes in one place!

He hesitated, asking, “Are you certain you wouldn’t rather go as well? Lie down for your headache?”

Okay. Maybe it was also adorable.

“I’ll see you later, Lucifer. I forgot a few things at home anyway,” she assured him with a smile.

He lingered another moment, their eyes locked. It was getting more and more difficult to not say or do anything that communicated their relationship to the whole precinct. She’d never had a problem before, keeping her professionalism separate from the personal, and it wasn’t that exactly. She couldn’t imagine saying, “I love you,” before one of them left, or kissing him goodbye. She wasn’t sure what it was really. It was just… this feeling of disappointment, that everything was a secret, and that was on her. It would have been nice to at least say, “I’ll see you at home,” but she was the one who kept insisting everything remain private.

And why was that?

Dan watched him go in silence before turning back to her. “Saw you the other day, in the garage.”

“What?” Chloe asked, confused.

He crossed his arms. “Making out like a pair of teenagers.”

Annoyed, Chloe looked around to see if anyone was in hearing range. “First of all, quiet down. And secondly, absolutely none of your business!”

“Yeah, you’re right. It’s not my business who you sleep with. I didn’t say anything before, when I thought it was just a fling or something. To tell you the truth, I prefer that ass to Pierce.”

Standing up, Chloe shut her case files. “Thank you so much. It’s still none of your business.”

“Chloe, you know what kind of guy he is. You wanted to fool around with him — fine. Disturbing, but fine. But weeks later, you guys are still coming in together and half the time he’s at your apartment.”

She grabbed him by the elbow and practically dragged him into an empty conference room. Back to the door, she crossed her arms. “What is this about, Dan?”
“Yesterday, you were on your way out, and I heard you say something about a loft,” he said, placing his hands on his hips.

Chloe really hadn’t wanted to discuss this yet. After all, they had only looked at the property yesterday. But it really seemed Dan wasn’t going to let this go. “Yeah,” she answered. “We found a place.”

“You ‘found a place’?” Dan asked incredulously. “You mean the two of you? Living together?”

“Why is this such a big deal to you?” Chloe asked. Now that she knew what had transpired between him and Ella, she was beginning to form an idea.

He shook his head, as if to say it wasn’t worth explaining. “I just think it’s a risky move. Life is a game to him. Nothing is important; he doesn’t take anything serious.”

“Well, obviously he does!” Chloe took a deep breath. Just because Dan was butting into her love life didn’t mean she should do the same to him, but she had the sense this wasn’t really about her. The last time he’d talked like this had been when he suggested they get back together, and it had been clear he was searching for safety.

“Dan,” she continued with as much patience as she could muster, “I know you’ve been hurt. Losing Charlotte… I can’t imagine how awful that was for you. But Lucifer and I have this chance, and we’re taking it. No matter what happens. And if it were you getting another chance with Charlotte you’d take it.”

He had gone silent, and his expression said he was somewhere between fuming and destroyed. Chloe felt a spark of guilt burn in her chest. Adding to his pain was the last thing she wanted.

“You’re right. It’s risky. I have no idea what’s going to happen with Lucifer and that terrifies me. But if I didn’t take a chance at all, that would be worse.” Should she say that was what was happening with Ella? It was obvious to her that he was avoiding any risk of being hurt again. Maybe that was better left alone, understood but unspoken. She knew her own feelings about his barging in to her love life; out of respect she wouldn’t do the same to either him or Ella.

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“You know, it has been a long day, actually. I think I’m going to take Lucifer’s advice and lie down,” she said. Dan wouldn’t meet her eyes. “I’m sorry,” she said quietly.

She had just walked in to the penthouse to find Lucifer at the piano, glass of bourbon resting on top, and paused at the melody. It was vaguely familiar, but she couldn’t place it. He turned at the sound of her entrance and flashed her a smile.

“Well, hello Detective,” he purred playfully. “You’re here earlier than I expected.”

“I decided you had a good point,” she answered, returning his kiss and running her fingers through his hair. She secretly loved mussing him up a little.

He pulled her down to sit on his lap. “Feeling better?”

“Some,” she said softly. “I had a talk with Dan before I left. It didn’t go so well.” If he asked what about, Chloe wasn’t sure she wanted to tell him. Besides, she had some thinking to do about things they had both said.

“I think I might lie down for awhile after all,” she said. “By the way, Mark Donnelly is coming in Monday for follow-up.” His daughter’s medical appointments had interfered with any chance of interviewing today. At the start of the week she hoped to get answers that would shed more light.
Lucifer hooked an arm around her waist and kissed below her ear. “I’m planning on playing in the club. Do you want to come down later?”

“Maybe,” Chloe said, and gave him another kiss.

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For a few minutes, the world ceased to exist. There was only the lights, the keys under his fingers, the melody ringing in his ears. Every note brought memories, until his hands wroght the music without conscious thought. From some stroke of luck, Lucifer looked up in time to see a shimmer of blonde. He glanced down; he knew those curves, intimately. A smile teased his mouth and he tossed down the rest of his tumbler.

He smoothly transitioned from one song to the next, the one he had been running through only a few hours ago. She turned, a smile directed his way over her shoulder, and continued to the bar. He relaxed, shifting into the lyrics. “I’ve been so many places in my life and time. I’ve sung a lot of songs, I’ve made some bad rhymes. I’ve acted out my life in stages with ten thousand people watching, but we’re alone now, and I’m singing this song for you…”

He’d thought the song was too sentimental, lyrics more maudlin than he preferred, but how could he resist when it seemed the song spoke to her? There were others, far more honest, ones that he couldn’t bring himself to voice. The notes slid smoothly, a glissade from one to the next. “Oh, but now it’s so much better, so if my words don’t quite come together, listen to the melody ‘cause my love is in there hiding. I love you in a place where there’s no space or time, I love you for my life ‘cause you’re a friend of mine. And when my life is over, remember when we were together…”

Well, if he’d known syrupy music such as this garnered so much female attention, he might have included it in his repertoire sooner. By the time he managed a few feet’s distance from his stage, he’d smoothly extricated himself from no fewer than six lovely young women in imaginative attire that was the very opposite of modest.

Lucifer finally caught up with her, talking amicably with a trio around her age, perhaps a little older, and not the usual patrons like the attractive ladies he had met along the way here. Two were obviously a couple, but the third was a bespectacled man perhaps a few years their senior, standing intimately close to Chloe. Privately, he was delighted to see her, and relieved that she looked far more comfortable and refreshed than she had when she’d come in. She’d most likely found the Tylenol and water he’d set out by the bed.

He ran a hand down her back and drank in her look of welcome as she looked up at him. Then he was surprised when she placed a hand on his shoulder in return and engaged him in a lingering kiss. He was accustomed to her usual reservation showing their relationship in public. Doing so wasn’t a problem for him, but he’d respected her wish to keep it private. He brought her a little closer, not ending the kiss until he had to.

There was a faint blush on her cheeks when she returned her attention to the people she’d been conversing with, and introduced them. Apparently, they were parents at Trixie’s school, the couple had a daughter who was a classmate of hers, as did the single fellow, Ramone.

Chloe set her club soda down on the nearby table, asking him, “Are you staying much later?”

“Why, would you stay here if I did?” He asked.

She smiled and answered, “Maybe.”
He glanced at the small group, taking note of the man Ramone, who had glanced between them uncomfortably before studying his drink. For some reason, he disliked the idea of leaving her with them and shook his head. “No, I’ve finished for tonight.”

They bid them a pleasant night and he led her to the elevator, having to stop a few times to return a greeting or politely refuse an invitation to join someone for a drink or other activities. On the ride up to the penthouse, he played with the hem of her top, skating beneath the fabric and brushing his fingers across the silky skin of her back. Chloe bit her lip, looking away from him. “I suppose I should be used to all the attention you get.”

“Attention?” He wasn’t completely paying attention himself, more focused on calculating how many seconds it would take to reach the bedroom.

She shook her head. “Never mind.”

Lucifer studied her consideringly, reviewing who had stopped to speak to him on their way out. He could barely remember. A man or two and a few single ladies he recalled seeing more of on other occasions. Oh, option one. Hadn’t his not doing that indicated it wasn’t going to occur?

“I wouldn’t, you know,” he said. “Unless it was something you wanted.”

She didn’t pretend to misunderstand his meaning, though she still didn’t look at him. “We haven’t really talked about it. I know we haven’t exactly put a label on… whatever this is.”

Well, he really didn’t want to talk about it either, but he didn’t like that she hadn’t looked his way since leaving the club. “What’s bothering you, Chloe?”

Lifting a shoulder in a shrug, she sat near the foot of the bed. “You’re used to a lot more than I’m comfortable with, I guess. I don’t know how to be like the women you’ve been with, and more than that, I’m not sure I want to be.”

He sat next to her, laughing shortly without real humor. “Chloe, I’ve been around a long time.”

Holding his gaze, she waited for him to continue. Talking about sex wasn’t in the least uncomfortable for him, but it was strange trying to put it into words. In his experience, no one stopped to talk about these things.

“How the years, sex has become less about what I do, and more deriving pleasure from what others desire. Yes, I’ve liked adventure, but it’s more about fulfilling someone else’s wants, and that gives me more.” Her eyes still expressed anxiety and he stroked her back again. “I wouldn’t ever ask you to do something you were uncomfortable with. What would be the fun in that?”

Lucifer relaxed back into the mattress and pulled her down alongside him. Turning on her side to face him, she fished her phone from her pocket. “I forgot I had something to show you.”

Hopes high that they could return to where they’d left off before the impromptu conversation and intrigued, he smiled with anticipation and pulled her closer by the waist of her jeans. He was disappointed when she rolled her eyes and said, “It’s not related to sex, Lucifer.”

“Detective, everything is related to sex.”

Handing him the phone, she asked, “What do you think? For the loft?”

He raised his eyebrows. The dining table wasn’t really his taste, but when was the last time he’d had people over for the kind of dinner that required sitting at a table for a fully-clothed meal?
“I have an idea, Detective.” He reached for his phone. “How about this. Every time we agree on something, we lose an item of clothing. We’ll call it… strip shopping.”

“Strip shopping,” she repeated doubtfully.

“See? Everything can be related to sex.” He laughed when she looked at him with exasperation. He probably agreed to more of her suggestions than she did his, but he was highly motivated to compromise. If she agreed to an item he proposed, his reward was selecting any item of clothing for her to relinquish. In return, he was obligated - and really, what a hardship - to do the same.

His pants were lost to her choice of settee, her shirt to side tables they didn’t actually need. She asked for a rug though he vetoed it for another, graciously insisting her suggestion cost him the point and added black silk boxers to the pile. A Tiffany’s lamp earned him her panties as well, though she protested that wasn’t fair because she had to remove her jeans to take them off anyway. Just to spite him, she left the room and returned still wearing them. With a saucy smile, she dropped the requested item of clothing in front of him, and they resumed the game.

Finally she laughed. “Well, now what? I’m out of clothes and we’ve hardly finished.”

“Oh, not to worry, love. There’s always deals to be made. I can agree to do something for you, you can do something for me…” Lucifer showed her a California-King with a massive oak four-post frame. He already had a few plans for that bedframe, and he was betting she definitely wouldn’t be uncomfortable with them.

“Hmm. I don’t know. What will you give me for it?” She asked, a teasing light gleaming in her eyes.

She had no idea how enchanting she was when she played, he thought. “You tell me. What would the Detective desire?”

“You have to…” she said. “Turn me on.”

“What? You aren’t already?” Well, she always could resist him, couldn’t she? Still, too easy. One of the things he loved was how sensitive she was, and he’d catalogued each and every way to elicit her responses.

Chloe was motionless when he kissed her ankle and gently turned her over on her stomach. He licked the back of her knee, amused when she tensed. Straddling her legs, Lucifer found her constellation tattoo and traced the path of stars with his tongue. He heard her sharp intake of breath though she valiantly held still. Originating at the base of her spine, he slowly swept kisses up each vertebrae until reaching her neck and, covering her body with his, brushed aside the curtain of her hair. Her neck exposed, he continued and smiled in victory when the kiss he left just behind her ear provoked a delicate shiver.

“You win,” she relented breathlessly.

He couldn’t resist a last kiss on her shoulder before moving away. She stayed where she was though she leaned on her forearms and picked up her phone, discarded when he’d touched her.

“Curtains,” she said, offering the phone. “Only for downstairs.” At the look on his face, she rolled her eyes. “Nothing floral or lacy. That’s not my style either.”

“Nothing that dark,” he said. “Choose another color.” But he didn’t hand back her phone, hiding a smile when she had to crawl closer.
He agreed to her selection before she asked, “So what are these worth?”

Lucifer eyed her consideringly. “Surprise me.”

And when she sank to her knees on the floor in front of him, she definitely surprised him. He waited with anticipation for her to take him into her mouth, but she didn’t. Apparently he was being repaid for every time he’d tortured her for her greater good.

His hand fisted to keep from reaching for her, especially when she looked up at him, beautiful eyes drawing him in like a siren’s call. When she finally took him deeper, breathing became more difficult, and when she sucked lightly, he couldn’t help a groan. The need to thrust was unbearable and he held very still, as though if he moved he would find he had only been entertaining a fantasy.

But Chloe wasn’t satisfied with his restraint and reached around him to pull him closer. Her hands stayed on him, as if to keep him from escaping. And that indication of her desire made it impossible to hold back. He buried his hand in her hair and gave in, enthralled by the vision of her mouth on him, the hint of her tongue when she teased him, and the feel of her sleek, warm mouth when she took him as far as she could.

When he came, she tightened her hold on his hips to keep him still, swallowing without hesitation. She didn’t leave him even when the last of his seed had released, and gently drawing on him again until he groaned her name, the sensation to his oversensitized flesh almost enough to excite a second orgasm. Finally, she pulled away with a last lick across the head of his cock that left him nearly trembling, especially when she licked her lips.

Once she’d stood, he dragged her to him, cradling her face in his hands to receive his kiss, and tasted himself on her tongue. He brought her back onto the bed with him, never breaking contact or leaving her lush mouth.

She settled astride him, accommodatingly draping herself along his chest when his hands urged her down and roamed her back and lower. With some regret, he relinquished his hold so she could sit up. Continuing from there was tempting, but he did love to play, as he loved the spectrum of her reactions. He never knew what to expect, but enjoyed each outcome; what humor would take her off guard, what might bring that softness to her eyes, or even scolding to her voice.

He handed her his phone. “New bed calls for new accompaniments,” he indicated the wardrobe and dresser.

“We’re really still playing?” She asked, adorably surprised. He could feel the evidence of her arousal from her position, the slick heat of her against his hardening cock and teasingly slid against her.

“Of course.”

She was quiet for a minute, studying the image on the screen. Then she turned her eyes to him and he had the odd sense she hadn’t been contemplating the furniture so much as him.

“Well, what should these cost me?” Lucifer asked.

Instead of answering playfully, she looked a little too serious. “You know… I find it interesting that you accept yourself as the Devil. Too easily, I might add. But you always find a way to deny the other part of you.”

“The other part of me?” He asked quizzically.
“Being an angel.”

Not sure how this related to their game, he regarded her with expectation. He could read there was some worry and indecision in her expression, and he didn’t want her to feel there was anything she couldn’t say. “What is it you’re asking for, Chloe?”

She bit her lip, but finally answered, “I accept both parts of you, Lucifer. I know who you want to be and I believe in you. But you don’t, not really, and you should.”

He felt some apprehension at her words, wanted to change the subject and return to the simplicity they had been enjoying just moments earlier. But he was a man, so to speak, of his word, and he wouldn’t break his deal with her. All the same, it cost him to keep from tensing.

“I would never make you do anything you didn’t want to,” she echoed his previous promise with a brief smile. She continued, “What I want is for you to make love to me, wings and all.”

Chloe leaned down and kissed him again, silencing any immediate objection. The request whirled in his head, pulling him in so many directions he wished he could shut it off. So he did, refusing to think, preferring to retreat back into passion and sensation. And steeling himself against any whispers of doubt that might interrupt, Lucifer seized her waist in his hands and flipped them over, wings easily and effortlessly releasing.

She gasped in amazement, but tampered any distraction, instead welcoming him in her embrace. And a hand careful on his shoulder, as if afraid she would hurt him, her fingers lost in his hair, tugged him closer for another kiss. Perhaps she was distracting him, he thought.

Her legs cradled him, inviting him to drive home. And as he worked to fit himself inside her, her tongue sought his and stroked against it, a reversal of his penetration. Fully seated, he held still, simply enjoying the feel and taste of her mouth under his, a provocative dance leading to the main course.

“Yes, Lucifer,” Chloe encouraged, twisting impatiently beneath him. He slid a hand beneath her, squeezing the soft, yielding fullness of her ass and lifting her to better receive him.

Her cries were the best elixir, nourishing his need to feel her climax, and his hand worked between them to exert the pressure she needed. Sitting back enough to draw her spread legs over his thighs and open her fully to his ministrations, he drove with increasing urgency and expertly worked her bud of nerves in tight circles. She tensed while the euphoric waves crashed over her, milking the start of his own release. He relented for torturous seconds before rousing her again.

“No, I can’t…” she protested and gripped his hand until, surprised to feel the rushing build of another, she was nearly immediately propelling her into a second orgasm. “Lucifer, oh my… yes!”

His own intensified, heightened by the extended contractions, wringing a few last pulses from him. He breathed her name against her skin, slow and reluctant to leave her. For brief seconds, he allowed his wings to come around them, the softest and warmest of blankets, before he pushed them away with his will and they disappeared.

Feeling more exhausted and relaxed than he had in a long time, he settled on his back and brought her close, where she sleepily rested her head on his chest after brushing a light kiss on his lips. He held her closer beneath the down coverlet, and wasn’t aware of drifting into sleep until the phone woke him with a call that banished any thoughts of peaceful rest for the next twenty-four hours.
Well, more meetings and seminars are taking over my life, making it a little more difficult to update as regularly as I would like. I’m eager to get in as many chapters as possible by the start of next week. In the meantime, please leave me your thoughts and comments and feedback... You know how much I value each and every one.
Beyond a Doubt

Chapter Summary

A long wait for Chloe and Lucifer, followed by Lucifer trying to understand this father thing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Reaching across Lucifer to the bed table, Chloe yawned and picked up her phone. She really hoped it wasn’t a homicide. Selfish it might be, but she wanted to stay where she was, warm and relaxed. She checked the time - 1:02 am.

Frowning, she listened to Lieutenant Davis and sat up. Behind her, Lucifer was watching her curiously and leaned against the pillows. “Yes, of course, Lieutenant. I will,” she agreed, sliding out of bed to find clothes. “Was there any information at the crime scene? No, sir, my objectivity will not be clouded.” She hung up, finishing zipping her jeans and throwing on the first sweater she found. It was hard to meet Lucifer’s gaze, and swallowed a lump in her throat. It took her a second to find her voice again.

“There’s been a… an accident,” she said. “We need to go to the hospital.”

There wasn’t much she could tell him while he dressed and drove them to Good Samaritan’s. The lieutenant had not conveyed many details to her either, and little was known besides the barest facts.

Hit and run. A dark sedan had been seen fleeing the scene by two witnesses, who had immediately called for an ambulance and police. The victim had been unresponsive and admitted to the ER for emergency surgery. Her brother had been contacted and was at the hospital as well.

As of yet, there was no word on Ella’s status.

Chloe and Lucifer entered the waiting room and while Lucifer checked for any news at the front desk, she found Dan and enveloped him in a comforting hug. She’d called him on the way, not sure if he would be able to meet them or not. Whatever was going on with him and Ella romantically, at the very least they were all friends. And if this had happened to either of them, Ella would have been there for them as well.

“Hey,” she said softly. “I’m glad you could make it. Where’s Trixie?” She gave him a squeeze before stepping back, and found Lucifer walking to her side.

Dan rubbed at his eyes, looking a kind of tired that was far beyond being woken in the middle of the night. “Donna was able to come over and watch her,” he said, referring to a neighbor in his apartment building who sometimes babysat Trixie after school.

“Daniel,” Lucifer greeted, and Chloe could tell he was searching for what to say. Either he wasn’t certain what to say, or it was one of those male things that didn’t need excessive verbal conversation to express sentiment.
“Was there any news?” She asked Lucifer.

He shook his head. “Nothing yet. She’s still in surgery. Her brother is here somewhere.”

Dan looked around the waiting room. “If it’s the brother I think it is, I’ve met him once.”

He approached a young man, tall and slender, approximately Ella’s age, and identified himself. Chloe and Lucifer watched as the man nodded and joined them.

“Hey,” he said, hands stuffed in his leather coat’s pockets. He nodded at them as a group. “I’m Ricardo, Ella’s brother.”

Lucifer tilted his head to the side, studying him. “Ah… weren’t you the brother with the illegal car shop who returned to Detroit?”

Ricardo looked between Dan and Chloe with panic on his face. “Uh… no?”

Chloe said, “Listen. Unless that becomes relevant to what happened to Ella tonight, we don’t care about that, okay?”

Though he didn’t look particularly relieved, he took a seat with them in the uncomfortable wooden chairs, whose cushions felt harder than the wood frame. “I don’t know what happened,” he said, leaning forward and talking to his hands. “One minute I’m having a beer with some old friends, the next I’m getting a call from the hospital that Ella’s been in an accident.”

To Chloe, Dan didn’t look up to questioning Ricardo further, so she turned to the young man herself, taking a seat across from him. “So you moved back from Detroit again?”

“No,” he answered, sighing and leaning back in his chair. “I only came out to visit. I had some more stuff to pick up after selling the shop, and abuela wanted me to check on Ella while I was here. I didn’t,” he said, visibly upset. “I hadn’t even called her yet. I went out for beer with the guys instead.”

“Don’t blame yourself,” Chloe said. “You weren’t behind the wheel.” But she found it concerning that her words, rather than offer him comfort, seemed to agitate him further.

The wait was excruciating, filled with an indeterminable number of trips to the coffee and snack vending machines and restrooms. Chloe shifted, struggling to find a comfortable position. It had already been six hours with no word. She was fighting to stay awake and a little resentful that Lucifer was being so tyrannical about her coffee consumption. Finally, she brought her legs up on the seat beside her and leaned against him.

Lucifer brought his arm around her so she could rest against him more fully, his fingers trailing up and down her arm. It struck her, somewhere in her tired and foggy brain, how quietly and patiently he waited. He didn’t fidget or get up to stretch, and hadn’t gone to the vending machines for more than a single trip for coffee and some snacks for her, which he’d insisted she eat.

Was it the late hour or the setting and circumstances that kept him so contained? Conversely, Dan and Ricardo could hardly sit still for longer than thirty minutes at a time, pacing or retrieving coffee or water.

She looked at Lucifer consideringly, and though his hand still caressed her arm, he seemed unaware of her study. Wherever his gaze was, it wasn’t here. Who knew where his thoughts were? She’d have loved to know.
But the more she contemplated it, she realized she didn’t want to know. Hospitals were for the sick or dying, things that Lucifer never were. For him to be here meant someone he knew was hurting, like now. How many friends had he seen perish over the years? Or, she thought about his aloof nature early in their partnership, had he even formed real friendships in order to avoid the heartache of losing them?

And those thoughts brought to mind the words he’d said on a few occasions, that someday she would be gone and there would be no way to see each other again. He would outlive her a million times over. How many times had she come close to death already in her job, and when would it be the last, the one that would take her with finality? It was a risk of her job, and she knew that, knew it every day she strapped on her gun and badge, but that didn’t stop her and she wouldn’t let it.

There had been a few close calls over the last three years. And when she slowed enough to think about them, she realized that every time she had woken in the hospital, he had been there. Either sitting vigil in a chair beside the bed, or sleeping in his wait for her to wake up. How many hours had he stayed, when no one had asked or expected him to? Even when they’d barely known each other, he’d been there.

Dan came into her line of vision, interrupting her from her thoughts, and offered her a cup of coffee, still steaming from the machine. Chloe sat up straighter to take it, her shifting position apparently recalling Lucifer’s attention. He took the coffee himself, setting it down by the chair where it wouldn’t be kicked over.

Dan looked annoyed, though he hadn’t appeared anything but during their wait. Obviously, their reason for being here was serious, but he’d seemed further irritated by her closeness with Lucifer while they waited. He wasn’t accustomed to seeing the visible evidence of their relationship.

“That was for Chloe,” he said flatly.

Lucifer on the cusp of a ready retort, and Chloe intervened swiftly. The last thing she needed was for Lucifer to tell anyone, especially Dan, about the pregnancy. Lucifer didn’t know, and she hadn’t been ready to explain it to him yet, partly not wanting to add to his already over-protective behavior. “It’s okay, Dan. I’m just letting it cool off some.”

“Right,” answered Dan in a tone that said he wasn’t buying it.

Thankfully, she was spared any need to further explain by the approach of a doctor. Lucifer straightened from his tired slouch in the chair, and Ricardo stood.

“Which of you is the family of Ella Lopez?” asked the doctor, looking amongst them.

Ricardo took another step forward. “I’m her brother.” He glanced back at the group over his shoulder. “They can hear anything too.”

With a nod, the doctor introduced himself and gave them a factual report of her injuries. “My name is Dr. Stevenson. Ms. Lopez came in with a severe concussion and broken bones. The impact from the car appears to have hit her from the side, most likely as she was crossing the street. As a result, most of the damage was to her right side, breaking her leg and two ribs. Unfortunately, one of the fractured ribs punctured a lung. We managed to repair it, but we need to keep a close eye on the concussion. We’ll be monitoring for a few days at the very least. Any swelling of the brain could be life-threatening. You can go in and see her now, and if things look good, we may move her from ICU. I wouldn’t advise a long visit. She could use some rest.”

“Thank God,” breathed Ricardo. After a moment, he headed to the desk to ask for Ella’s room.
Dan took a deep breath, looking at the floor, and rubbed the back of his neck, where he collected stress. “Thank God is right. God, Ella…”

In her mind, Chloe echoed the sentiment, but said nothing. She turned into Lucifer’s shoulder for a brief moment until she had managed to successfully blink away any of the relieved tears. She could easily read Lucifer’s relief as well.

“You need to get rest too,” he said privately before she stepped out of his arms.

She wiped at her eyes, feeling a lingering burn, and not wanting to cry. It was vital to her, to stay strong in the face of pain and suffering and the adversity of the world. She wouldn’t be able to do her job if she didn’t. More than that, it was a learned trait from childhood, when she’d had few opportunities to lean on someone else for emotional support. Now it was ingrained, and she didn’t know how to lean on, to emotionally rely on, him, as much as she wanted to.

“After we visit her,” she said. “I need to see she’s okay.”

Lucifer nodded, and they followed Ricardo to the elevator to Ella’s floor and room number. By tacit agreement, they allowed Ricardo privacy to see Ella first, and respectfully waited in the hall outside her room. Dan went next, only for a few minutes, and returned looking harrowed. Ricardo looked about ready to collapse from a combination of exhaustion, relief, and misery.

Chloe and Lucifer went in together, and she hung back while Lucifer approached the bed and lightly squeezed Ella’s hand in his. She didn’t stir. He whispered something in her ear that Chloe couldn’t make out. The only word she thought she heard was something like “Ray ray.”

Next was Chloe’s turn and now that she saw Ella laying there, the reality of the severity of her injuries was a thousand times more real. Beneath the blanket, her leg had been cast and a bandage wrapped lightly around her forehead. Chloe swallowed hard and though she was unconscious, she also squeezed Ella’s hand gently and said, “I’m going to find out what happened, Ella. I promise. You’re going to be okay, okay? You’re not allowed to do anything else.” Though she’d kept her voice from wavering, she had to fight back tears again. Damn emotional hormones.

They rejoined the rest of their group in the hall. Dan was assuring Ricardo they would do everything they could to find out who had hit Ella and that they would be in contact soon. After they had done the same, and she had never seen or heard Lucifer that sober and empathetic before, Lucifer urged her to leave so she could get some sleep.

“Can I talk to you for a minute, Chloe?” Dan asked, as Lucifer walked ahead to bring the car around.

She slowed her pace and looked at Dan. “Sure, Dan. What is it?”

Dan’s eyes followed Lucifer before returning to her. Concern was etched in his voice when he said, “Chloe, is Lucifer treating you right?”

Startled, a short laugh of amazement escaped her. “What?”

“He’s striking me as… I don’t know. Overbearing. Controlling. Tonight’s not the first time I’ve seen it.”

She felt the need to hold back somewhat hysterical laughter. Oh, if he only knew the reason why. “Dan, that’s ridiculous.”

“Is it?” His tense expression didn’t change.
“I’m fine. I promise. Lucifer’s just worried. Besides, when have you ever seen me take anyone’s crap?” Chloe asked.

“Yeah,” he agreed, not looking totally convinced.

For the next twelve hours, she couldn’t sleep out of worry that Ella would take a turn for the worse, despite Lucifer’s repeated urging for her to lie down. When she’d last called the hospital and been told there had been no change, she forced herself to occupy her brain with something useful.

Chloe obtained traffic cam footage from several blocks around the accident, tracing where the car had originated from. She and Lucifer studied the recordings, but there was never a clear shot of any identifying marks or glimpses of the driver. The license plates had been removed as well. By the time they had watched the videos for the final time, one thing was very clear. The accident was no accident at all. Hitting Ella had been very, very deliberate.

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By Monday, there had been news that Ella was improving and the head trauma was minor, to both his and Chloe’s relief. Though the doctors wanted to keep her for a few more days for observation, she had been moved from the intensive care unit to a regular room, giving everyone at the precinct a measure of relief. Chloe had impressed upon him the need to keep the information from the traffic cam recordings to themselves and Dan, but Ella was so loved around the precinct that everyone was outraged over the accident.

It was early afternoon before Mark Donnelly joined them in a conference room for a follow-up interview. Before Donnelly’s arrival, Chloe had walked away from Lucifer, shaking her head, when he’d said this was a perfect opportunity to understand why humans became so attached to their offspring, even the sick ones, that they could be driven to robbery.

Mark sat across from them at the table, looking haggard. The last week, he’d said, had been especially hard. Lauren needed all the inner strength she could muster, and the news of her mother’s death was devastating.

Chloe expressed her sympathy before asking about the victim in that way she had that was both kind and business-like. “Mark, we came across an interesting coincidence in Megan and Dr. White’s previous employment. Do you know why she left her last position at Good Samaritan hospital?”

“Good Samaritan hospital? That was like six or seven years ago,” Mark said, looking confused. “We moved around then, and her new job was closer.”

“It seems Dr. White worked there too. Megan might have known him from work. Did she ever mention him, or any doctors she worked with there?”

Mark started to shake his head, then paused. “Did you say he used to work there too? Like, he left?”

Chloe nodded and Lucifer studied the sudden change on Mark’s face.

“Shit… It didn’t even occur to me before,” he said, mostly to himself. Then he looked at them. “Look. I’m not Lauren’s biological father.”

That was surprising, Lucifer thought.
“We met when she was pregnant. She’d told me the baby was from someone she worked with, but never told me who. I always thought that was the real reason she wanted to find a new job. I thought she was still working with the father and didn’t want to see him there anymore.” Mark leaned forward. “Do you think the father could have been Dr. White?”

She didn’t say so outright, but Lucifer knew what she was thinking. The chances were very high that was the case.

“Mark, I would appreciate if you could write down any information you remember Megan telling you. Especially in the months she was pregnant, and anything about her coworkers. Who she was close to, things like that,” Chloe said.

She gave Mark a pen and got up to retrieve another notebook. Lucifer saw through the window as another officer stopped her in the hall to ask her a question. Perfect opportunity, he thought. Unfortunately, he had no idea that Chloe had disengaged from the conversation so quickly and was already about to re-enter the room.

Lucifer leaned forward. “I’d like to ask you a question,” he said to Mark.

The man paused in his writing and gave him a quizzical look. “Yeah?”

“What exactly interests you in having a child? Especially when the child wasn’t even your responsibility?”

“First of all,” Mark said, his tone offended, “Lauren is my responsibility. I’ve been her father since she was born. I’m more her father than that prick.”

Nodding, Lucifer said, “Right, right. But what made you want to be her father?”

Donnelly sat back, regarding him coolly and with a touch of distaste. “It wasn’t her fault she was born. I held her when she was only a few minutes old, and I just knew… I was going to be her dad.”

“I still don’t understand. What about them makes them so appealing to humans? They’re noisy and needy and take up every minute.” Lucifer sighed. He wasn’t getting any answers.

He felt Donnelly’s scrutiny. “Oh,” he said, far more sympathetically. “You’ve got one on the way.”

Disgruntled, Lucifer asked, “How do you know that?”

“I remember feeling the same way. I didn’t have any idea how to be a father. I just wanted to be with Megan.”

“How did you get past that, then?” Lucifer asked, becoming impatient. The man could have gotten to this part of the conversation sooner.

He shrugged. “I just did. I didn’t really have a choice.”

He wanted to argue that point. Everyone always had a choice. Why had this man chosen to be a father voluntarily, when he didn’t have to? But he held it back, hoping Mark would be more forthcoming.

“You want to know why people want children?” Mark asked. “We do because they’re the best part of us. Innocent, capable of growing into people even better than we are. Their love is
unconditional, like a parent’s is for their child.”

Looking doubtful, Lucifer said, “Not apparently for Dr. White.” Nor his own.

With real anger, Mark said, “That man was no father. He didn’t love Lauren, he didn’t love Megan. He chose not to be there and give up any chance of having his daughter’s love.”

After a moment of silence, Mark returned to Lucifer’s question. “Kids make their parents awed, and proud, and even annoyed and furious. But the point is, they’re the part of us that lives on, hopefully the best part. We watch them grow and do great things, or screw up, but we’re there to help them do better. Because we belong to them, and they belong to us. Isn’t that what we all want? To belong? And that’s what a family is.”

He looked past Lucifer and nodded at Chloe, standing up. “Think on that,” he told Lucifer, and headed for the doorway, passing the notepad to her on the way out. Lucifer felt Chloe’s regard but before he had the chance to say anything, she turned around and left.

He took the opportunity to get out of her way, since the Detective didn’t seem to want his help at the moment. He headed to Lux, calling Maze from the car, pleased to hear she was already there.

When he arrived, he met her at the bar, where she was doing an inventory. “You know we have people to do that, right?”

She gave him a withering stare. “What was so important you wanted to talk to me right now?”

“Well, I wanted to offer you the penthouse,” he said, amused by her surprise.

“What?” Maze asked, shaking her head as if she thought she hadn’t heard him clearly.

“The Detective and I are moving into the loft soon. It should be ready next week, actually.”

“Wait. You bought a house? For you and Chloe?” Her stare made him the slightest bit uncomfortable.

He reached for a bottle of bourbon behind the bar and poured them each a drink. “Just signed the papers today. And it won’t be just me and Chloe, obviously. There’s Beatrix some of the time, and the baby.”

Maze downed the entire drink at once, and not appearing any more relaxed, she poured herself a second. “The what? A baby?”

“Yes, isn’t that wonderful? I’m going to be a father, Dad help us. Cheers,” he clinked his glass against hers and downed a generous portion.

“You can’t be a father,” Maze said slowly. “You’re the Devil. You can’t knock anyone up.”

Lucifer looked at her with exasperated annoyance. “Yes, I know who I am, Maze.”

“Do you?” She asked. “Because unless you’re being completely ironic, I don’t get how you think Chloe’s pregnant from you.”

Anger roiled beneath his skin, and his tone was deadly. “What is it you’re implying Maze?”

She wouldn’t meet his eyes, and busily wiped at the bar counter with a cloth. “Just that it’s possible Chloe was… with someone else. Before you came back. You didn’t think about that?”
“No,” he said flatly. “It didn’t cross my mind for a second.”

“Really? You trust her, just like that?” Now Maze did look at him. “Do I really need to remind you what happened earlier this year? She conspired with that priest to send you back to Hell?”

Lucifer lifted his drink, studying the amber depths of the liquor as the light hit it through the sides of glass. “Well, she didn’t, did she?”

“So you’re over it? And you’re ready to play house with a kid and wife, with a woman who betrayed you?” Her voice was both skeptical and condescending.

He reigned in his temper while he contemplated her words, reflecting on his time without Chloe, and how he’d felt with her since returning. “You know,” he said, thoughtfully, “I don’t think love means you never fight, or see things differently.” He finished the bourbon and looked Maze in the eye. “I think it means you never stop fighting for each other. And she did, for me, then and since.”

He stood up, straightening his suit jacket. “I’ve never entertained a single doubt that I’m the father. Who knows? Maybe it’s because she’s a miracle, or this is something dear old Dad is behind, or,” he paused at the possibility, “or something I did. Either way, it doesn’t change a thing.”

For the last nearly three years, he’d wanted her, convinced it wasn’t possible. There was always an obstacle, always something or somebody in the way. Finally, Lucifer had her, and his desire for her hadn’t been a passing interest that waned once the novelty wore off. It was absolute. It was that sense of belonging Donnelly had talked about. Whether or not he was prepared to be a father, or if he could come to terms with it, Chloe was his family. He didn’t just belong in L.A. where he had work that fulfilled him or friends he cared about. He belonged with her.

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Chapter End Notes

Couldn’t sleep at 4am, so I finished the chapter I started on the road yesterday. Yes, traveling again. Last mini-vacay with the kids. With any luck, I’ll get some time to write again tomorrow! Let me know your thoughts on the chapter!
Chapter Summary

Chloe’s fears make a reappearance with the heralding of an important appointment. Lucifer looks around for honesty.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She wasn’t trying to be cold or detached. Chloe had made up her mind to be understanding and respectful that all of this - their relationship, the pregnancy - was alien to Lucifer. But damn it was getting difficult. Maybe most of it was her own fault. He hadn’t really done anything to deserve her distance. He’d been, if not exactly happy, at least kind.

But the night at the hospital, then at the precinct, her thoughts had led her down a dark road. One that was shadowed by both uncertainties and certainties, neither of which were comforting. Suddenly, their future looked bleak, and she couldn’t escape the reality that even though he was here, they were still deluding themselves on borrowed time.

How long could she expect him to stay with her, while she continued to age and he never changed, not by the merest wrinkle or gray hair? She’d realized, as she sat beside him in the cold hospital waiting room, how long he had lived through the passing of others, constantly the flux of people who came and went. She’d known it, but in an abstract way, not this weight like lead in her heart that made it a struggle to breathe. Lucifer’s absolute stillness had reminded her how very different they were.

And it wasn’t just her he would outlive. He would see their child grow up and someday die as well. That was the way of it. But not for him, and she saw now how blind she had been. Could she really expect Lucifer to love a child that he would see come and go like all others in his life?

The conversation she’d overheard Lucifer have with Mark yesterday had hit her just as forcibly. These emotions were foreign to him, and how could he understand? He was still the inhuman being that couldn’t see beyond his own concerns, insensitive to anyone else’s pain or needs. He would intrude on that poor man’s suffering just as always, only focused on his own personal dilemmas. It only reinforced her fear that he would never put their child before himself. Would the baby always be a “noisy and needy” inconvenience? She wouldn’t put any child of hers through that.

So she’d made up an excuse to stay in her home and bed last night, saying she had things like laundry for herself and Trixie to do. When he’d called late after a few hours at Lux, she’d told him not to worry about coming over, that it was late and she was already half-asleep. Chloe felt some shame for the lie, but she’d needed, desperately, room to think, time to separate these volatile emotions.

More immediate than her frustration and fear was her anxiety over the impending OB appointment. Her stomach wasn’t only full of butterflies - inside were flutters of hope interspersed with vortexes of terror.
Behind the shield of her desk, Chloe covertly smoothed her palm over her abdomen. Lost in her thoughts, she wasn’t aware of Lucifer’s approach until he was standing before her desk. Her head jerked up and she quickly occupied her hands with a pen.

“Good morning, Detective,” he greeted her pleasantly.

She did her best to essay a smile. “Same.”

“Sleep well?” He asked, nonchalantly perching on the corner of her desk.

No, she thought. Not really. “Mm-hmm.” Uncomfortable and determined to move on from the topic, she opened the case folder. “We’re going to talk to Dr. White again, now that we know he might possibly be Lauren’s father. It definitely casts him in a more suspicious light. Unfortunately, he said he would only come in with his attorney present. We’ll have to work with it. And you won’t be able to do your mojo thing.”

Lucifer frowned. “Why not?”

“Because I doubt we’ll get Dr. White alone without his lawyer, and he’s already squirreling his way out. You trying that in front of his lawyer will only make it more difficult if we need to question him again,” she said.

“It might be worth it if the opportunity comes up,” he pointed out.

She couldn’t really argue with that. The case took precedent.

Once she was notified that Dr. White and his counsel were seated in one of the interrogation rooms, they had agreed that if it was possible for Lucifer to engage Dr. White privately without the company of his lawyer, he should take advantage of it.

They took a seat across from Dr. White, and if he had appeared cold and unaccommodating during their last meeting, he was now fully disobliging, clearly only present because a refusal would be impossible, if not ill-advised.

“I appreciate you making time for us again, Dr. White,” Chloe said politely.

His response was not as courteous. “I didn’t have much of a choice, though this is bordering on intolerable. We were the injured party, Detective. I don’t see why you feel the need to pester us with unwelcome questions.”

“If you consider yourselves the injured party, I’m curious how you would describe the fatal injury to the woman in your home.” Lucifer said with mild sarcasm.

Dr. White’s glare was a carefully-controlled hostility. “Anyone in my wife’s position might have done the same when surprised by a trespasser in the middle of the night. Her actions were a completely reasonable self-defense. Why are we still having to defend ourselves? That woman was the intruder. She brought her death upon herself.”

“This is a cut and dry case, Detective. My client and his wife are clear of any wrong-doing; self-defense is protected by law. Continuing to subject the Whites to questioning will be brought up as harassment,” his attorney said. The man was obviously used to serving his clients with efficiency and compensated well for his approach of going on the offense from the get-go. She’d seen his type often enough.

Chloe wasn’t sure of what Lucifer’s response would entail, and intervened before he spoke.
Knowing the possible cause of Megan’s presence in their home colored the situation disparately, where Megan might have been innocent of wrong-doing. “New information has come to light,” she said. “So unfortunately, Dr. White will have to be subjected to our very rational questions.”

Not looking impressed, the attorney asked, “And what is this supposed new information, Miss Decker?”

Chloe leveled him with a serene smile, uncowed by his patronizing tone. It was an unfortunate truth in many professions, and law-enforcement a significant example, that women were often thought to be easily intimidated in a “man’s world.” But she had been raised by a cop, her formative years filled with strangers, roles, audiences, and judges. Schooling her emotions, protected and private behind barriers of steel, was how she lived. Neither of these men in front of her frightened her.

Perhaps, she thought, it was her own fault of pride, to keep those vulnerable spots safe from the reaches of others, who would exploit them for their own advantage. To break her, beat her down. And it was that inability to open up, she realized, that was why she was afraid to talk to Lucifer.

She felt like the ground beneath her was as ice, an unknown territory whose strength she wasn’t yet certain of. Ice could be fragile, shattered and splintered, giving way beneath you so suddenly that, like a person struggling to reach safety in a frozen lake, you found yourself trapped in its merciless paralyzing grip. But ice could also be as massive and unyielding as a glacier whose unseen power lay beneath the water’s surface, only a fraction of its awesome strength visible, with the might to carve mountains and valleys in its path.

And it frightened her that she didn’t know which they would be once this crossroads was left behind. It frightened her the way his identity had. Not him. She realized she’d never feared him, but what he was capable of. The magnitude of his power.

“It seems Dr. White wasn’t truthful during his last visit. He told us he had never met Megan Donnelly,” she said. “Is that true?”

Dr. White looked at his lawyer for guidance. At the man’s nod, Dr. White agreed, “It is.”

“Then I’m afraid we have a problem.” She folded her hands on the table, unflinchingly, challengingly meeting his eyes. “Because that wasn’t the truth.”

The lawyer interjected, “Based on what?”

“Based on the testimony of Megan’s husband and several coworkers, Dr. White and Megan had an affair seven years ago. Coincidentally right around the time of her daughter’s conception.” She was bluffing a bit about the coworkers, but it wasn’t her endgame. She raised her eyebrows as she stressed ‘coincidentally.’

“That is what we call hearsay, Detective,” his attorney dismissed with a scoff. “Unless you have incontrovertible evidence, there’s no way to prove such a connection between my client and the trespasser.”

She pursed her lips in a parody of deep thought. “You’re right. I suppose the whole matter could easily be solved with a simple paternity test.”

Dr. White fixed the lawyer with an impassive stare, but Chloe bet that beneath that deceiving calm, a lot more was stirring.

He met Chloe’s eyes without a trace of remorse. “Her child is not my problem.”
“My client will not agree to share his DNA without a court order, and no judge will grant it to you on flimsy gossip and a distraught father,” his attorney finished, moving to stand, apparently finding the subject dispensed with.

Check. Chloe didn’t bother looking his way, maintaining focus on Dr. White. “Have a seat Mr. Whitford. We’re not through. There is one other matter we need to address.”

“And what’s that?” White’s lawyer asked.

“Dr. White’s alibi. He wasn’t at work the night of the murder. Now that he is a person of interest in this investigation, he is required to divulge his whereabouts. If he refuses to do so…” Without as much as a flick of her eyes to the lawyer, she added, “I believe we call that ‘obstruction of justice’.”

Another tense moment passed before Mr. Whitford approached his client and advised him in a low voice by his ear to comply. Checkmate.

The doctor cleared his throat. “I was not at work, as my wife believed. I was with the company of Ms. Hensel.” At the nod of his lawyer, he continued, “She is the wife of a prior client. We had dinner at the Marriott.”

“Late dinner,” observed Lucifer. “I can guess what he had for dessert.”

“Will that be all, Detective?” Mr. Whitford asked sarcastically as they stood up.

She allowed them to leave first, gathering her materials. Lucifer halted her with a hand on her arm. “Shouldn’t I try to get a moment alone with the doctor?”

Chloe shook her head. “No need. I got what I wanted.” Besides, she didn’t need Lucifer’s hypnosis superpower to know what White’s greatest desire was. It was pretty clear that all he wanted was the thrill of the chase.

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The Detective was unnaturally quiet today, Lucifer thought, perplexed.

There had been a note of something in her voice last night, and something missing in her smile today. He knew the signs of her anger, the sight of her fear, but whatever he was hearing now, he didn’t know it or understand its origins.

After another question about the case received the same distracted and subdued reply, he sighed and decided if she didn’t need him here, his time could be better spent on another problem occupying his mind lately. He could take advantage of Daniel’s presence here rather than the hospital to conduct some interrogating of his own.

He tapped her desk to get her attention, and she looked up at him with a neutral expression that gave him absolutely no indication of her thoughts.

“I thought I’d see Ms. Lopez,” he said, relieved when she gave him a small smile, eyes losing some of their guarded quality. “That, er… appointment is this afternoon, yes?”

Her lips twisted into a sardonic smile. “Yes, Lucifer, that appointment is today.”

Chloe returned her attention to her computer screen and said, “It’s at 4:30.”

“Would you like me to come back and drive you? We can go back to the penthouse after,” he
said. It had been odd without her last night. He’d become accustomed to sharing every night with her that its absence was startling.

She went completely still for a fraction of a second. “No, that’s okay.”

With a frown he asked, “Are you sure?”

“Mmhmm,” she hummed noncommittally. “I’ll see you later.”

Lucifer exited slowly, pausing to look back at her with uncertainty. Her responses were worrying him some. He knew she was upset about Ms. Lopez, but this wasn’t the concern and anger of a few days ago. Perhaps she’d learned something new in Ms. Lopez’s accident, but it didn’t make sense that she wouldn’t simply tell him. Asking her outright never got him anything but deflection, and it had taken him some time to learn it was her poker face.

So what was it she wouldn’t tell him, and why? When he saw her next for her appointment with the doctor, he would subtly ask her about it. Maybe his own investigation would prove useful as well.

His interest in visiting Ms. Lopez today had more than one purpose. Besides wanting to see her improvement, he was also expecting to have a very revealing conversation.

He found Ricardo sitting by her as she slept, paging uninterestedly through a magazine, boots kicked up on the hospital bed. Lucifer tilted his head to read the magazine title, Country Living, and said conversationally, “The southwestern fiesta chicken is actually quite tasty, if a little dry. I recommend a nice marinade first.”

Ms. Lopez’s brother’s alarmed jump of surprise was nearly comical. “Oh my God, man!” he exclaimed.

Lucifer’s smile was the very opposite of friendly. “Sorry, no. My views on retribution are radically different, I’m afraid.”

“R-retribution?” Ricardo stammered.

“You humans,” Lucifer said, shaking his head, and standing by Ella’s bed. He gripped the plastic at its end as he looked over her still-sleeping form. “No matter the betrayal or transgression, you’ve only to promise you’re sorry for however long it takes you to go off and do it again. You tell yourselves God has forgiven you and you go merrily about your way.”

He strolled over to casually look at the computer monitors. “I’m not as forgiving. Everyone pays a price. Especially those whose heedlessness causes my friends pain.” He looked at Ricardo again, pleased to see the man had paled some.

Ms. Lopez’s brother shook his head. “You’re crazy, man. You’re that guy who goes around saying he’s the Devil.”

“Oh, I am the Devil,” Lucifer replied cordially.

“Whatsoever, man.”

Giving Ella’s uninjured leg a short, gentle pat, he returned to Ricardo and seized him by the elbow, hauling him from his chair. “Let’s catch up in the hall, Mr. Lopez.”

Outside, he continued until he found a door marked “Stairway access” and opened it, tossing
Ricardo through. The two of them alone on the landing, he sighed and slipped his hands into his pockets.

The look on Mr. Lopez’s face was rapidly descending into terror.

“Here’s the way I see it. Not too long ago, you supplied Ms. Lopez with a rare substance that saved the life of someone that — well, someone I love. I suppose in a way, that means I owe you a debt. So here’s my offer: In exchange for your service, I won’t kill you for the stupidity that nearly took Ms. Lopez’s life.”

When Ricardo’s mouth opened to argue, Lucifer held up a hand. “And I’ll even offer you another deal. I won’t tell her whatever it is you did… if you go to the police and are completely truthful about what happened.”

He waited patiently while Ella’s brother perpetuated his puffed-up pose of confusion and righteous outrage. Then with an exhale, he deflated, shoulders slumping. “How did you know it was because of me?”

“Criminal activities. Fleeing back to Detroit. Mysterious, convenient timing. It wasn’t that difficult,” he added dryly. “So what happened, Ricky?”

“I wouldn’t take a job. I was getting heat from the law, and when this guy - real high-roller, y’know? - approached me for a job, I was real tempted but told him I couldn’t. But he kept up the pressure until I cleaned a couple of his cars through the shop.”

Lucifer rolled his eyes. “What is it with you Lopezes?”

“I wasn’t going to take it!” Ricardo protested. “I told him I wouldn’t do any more. He paid me and I packed up.”

“So, you told him no. Then took the money and said no,” Lucifer summarized succinctly.

“No! I only asked for the money for the cars I handled. I guess he thought if he showed me the money for the rest, I’d do the whole job.”

With a shake of his head, Lucifer said, “That’s not how deals work, Mr. Lopez. You walked away with more than what balanced the scales.”

“I know,” Ricardo said quietly. “I know. He said he wanted the money back, after I went back to Detroit. But… I didn’t have it anymore. I asked for some time, but it wasn’t enough.”

“And,” Lucifer finished for him with disgust, “Ms. Lopez became his leverage. Make her a target to induce you to pay up, because going after you, he’d never get his money.”

Shame made it impossible for Ricardo to look at Lucifer directly. “I tried,” he contended without any real conviction.

“No.” In the blink of an eye, Lucifer pinned him against the wall. The younger man struggled, but no amount was enough to dislodge him. “You can’t play halfway, Mr. Lopez.”

“Ease up, man!” Ricardo pushed at Lucifer’s arm, attempting to seize his wrist and remove it. He could have used his Devil face. He wanted to. The anger, the rage at what Ms. Lopez’s own brother had done to bring danger to her burned inside him. The most innocent and giving of people he’d ever known. But he didn’t want to rely on that part of himself to bring justice. In a way, this was a test of himself, to embrace another of his faces.
His ineffectual attempts to free himself were ignored, and Lucifer continued, “You vacillated between what you selfishly wanted and what you knew was going to hurt someone in the end. Instead of choosing a place to stand and defending it, now someone else is paying the price.”

The fight left him and Lucifer let him go, watching as he sat one of the steps. “What do I do?”

Lucifer waited with Ricardo in Ella’s room until Daniel arrived to collect him. No one wanted to make a scene in her room, where she might potentially wake up and see or hear, and they moved to the hall. Daniel didn’t cuff him since Ricardo had agreed to go in willingly and testify his involvement leading to the hit and run that had targeted his sister. Before leaving with Daniel, Ricardo said, “I don’t know what’s going to happen to me now.”

“Fear for your own future pales in comparison to the pain your botched indecision brought her,” Lucifer jerked his head toward Ella’s room. And so does mine, he thought.

It had hit him, while he’d waited with Ms. Lopez’s brother, how his own misgivings might be affecting the Detective. He was so preoccupied with his own, he’d admit, terror at the idea of being a father, he’d assumed she was fine. Like Ricardo, who’d thought his actions would have no consequences for his sister, was he also guilty of leaving her to contend with it all by herself? She was adept at concealing her fears and doubts, he knew. He’d let her do it this entire time, easily accepting her smiles and reassurances at face value, and never offering her any of his own.

“Come on,” Daniel said, leading Ricardo out with him, and directing a departing nod at Lucifer.

He contemplated it whist he drove to her appointment. His world was still completely turned upside down, and he felt no more comfortable about the idea of being responsible for a child than he had before, but he refused to cause Chloe, or the child, pain because of his own doubt.

When he entered, he found her already sitting, and staring down at her phone. She looked up and, seeing him, slid her cell phone into her coat pocket.

Offering her a smile, he said, “Hello again, Detective.” Lifting her hand to his lips, he brushed a soft kiss against it before sitting beside her, keeping her hand in his. Her answering smile seemed a little more free, he thought.

But despite her welcome, Chloe didn’t relax. She sat stiffly, staring at her dress, and he realized she’d changed sometime before arriving.

“So, what should I expect at these things?” He asked, looking around. There were few places that hosted such a large number of women gathered in one place. Not that he would have gone looking here.

“This part’s all standard stuff I guess,” she said. “They take my measurements and test again to make sure I’m pregnant, and…” But she didn’t finish explaining because a nurse came to the door and called her name.

Chloe bit her lip and looked back at him. “If you don’t want to go back with me, that’s okay. It’s enough that you came.”

He’d be lying if he said he wasn’t tempted, but the conversation with Ricardo rang in his ears, and he refused to let her feel alone in this.

The nurse deposited him in an examination room and took Chloe with her, though she returned a few minutes later. He spent the time inspecting the posters on the wall and found a 3D model of a womb and fetus. Lucifer was both horrified and morbidly curious, and was startled when the door
opened again, dropping several of the pieces on the counter.

Handing Chloe a blanket, the nurse grinned and threw him a wink before shutting the door. She gave him a long-suffering sigh. “I leave you alone for two minutes.”

With an unconcerned and unabashed grin, Lucifer straightened the figure, and watched with curiosity as Chloe sat on the table and covered her lap with the blanket. She tossed something at him and he caught it reflexively. “Hold on to those, will you?”

Surprised, he saw he was holding her panties. The smile she gave him was adorably mischievous and he couldn’t help a short laugh.

“Detective,” he began, but was interrupted by a knock on the door.

A kind-faced man in a doctor’s coat came in, followed by a nurse. The warm smile expressed by his features was the type given to a long-standing acquaintance, and Lucifer deduced he had been Chloe’s doctor for some time. There was a calming quality about him, boosted perhaps by the evidence of a man competent at his job.

“Dr. Martino,” he said, offering Lucifer his hand. “You must be the lucky father. Congratulations.” He patted Chloe’s hand as well. “The test came back positive.”

“Lucifer Morningstar,” he returned as they shook hands.

The doctor’s mouth quirked in amusement. “Like the Devil?”

“Just so,” he replied. “I hope you have no reservations about the Devil’s spawn coming to life. She certainly doesn’t,” he said, indicating Chloe.

Chloe shook her head in embarrassment. “Ignore him,” she said quickly.

“Oh, he doesn’t bother me any,” Dr. Martino answered with a chuckle. “He’s hardly the first nervous father I’ve seen in this room.”

Lucifer awkwardly stood by while Chloe lay down, answering routine questions. He felt the young nurse’s stare and returned a polite smile, he hoped, edging closer to Chloe. She glanced up at him.

“Well, let’s see what we have here. Any idea of the conception date, or date of your last cycle?” He asked, pulling the stool over and logging into the computer beside them.

“May 27th,” she said. “I was supposed to start on June 2nd or 3rd, and didn’t.”

“That’s very specific,” Dr. Martino noted. “Must have been a special day.”

A very slight blush swept her cheeks, and her hand came up to her necklace, nervously twisting the bullet on its chain. May 27th was the Saturday he’d come back to check on her safety and she’d followed him back to the penthouse to yell at him, and then surprise the hell out of him, to borrow a phrase. He gently extricated her fingers from her necklace and held her hand in his.

“You keep good track of your cycles?” The doctor asked, focus on inputting the information rather than them.

“Yes,” she said. “That was the reason for the birth control.”

Lucifer looked at her with interest, but Chloe continued speaking to the doctor. “I stopped taking it
when I got the positive test back.”

“Good, good,” he said. “Let’s see what we have here. Any pain?” he continued, a cylindrical device in one hand and a bottle of gel in the other.

That looked familiar, he thought, then looked at Chloe. Really?

She must have guessed his thoughts because she snorted in amusement and held still for the doctor, looking up at him. “Seriously, Lucifer, how did you think they would see it? X-ray glasses?” Then she answered the doctor. “No, no pain at all.”

The doctor, assuming he was apprehensive, gave him a reassuring smile. “It will only be a few minutes, Mr. Morningstar. We just want to get a first look.” He gestured to the monitor.

He wasn’t sure what they were looking at exactly. The image was mainly black and gray, but he realized Chloe was watching it intently and her hand was tense in his.

“And… there’s the sac. Looks just fine,” Dr. Martino said, patting Chloe’s shoulder.

She sighed in relief and squeezed Lucifer’s hand. He peered at the monitor, where the outline of a wonky gray circle could be seen. The doctor continued to enter information, clicking on different spots of the screen and taking digital measurements.

“I’d say your calculations are spot on,” he said. “I’d put you at just over seven weeks. We’ll be looking at a due date around the end of January.” He looked at Chloe. “The implantation is good,” he said, and tapped the screen with his finger. “You were lucky you had minimal scarring here.”

“Yeah. Real lucky,” she said quietly.

“Let’s take a listen, shall we?”

Lucifer watched as Dr. Martino moved the ultrasound equipment away, and asked Chloe to bare her stomach. He moved the doppler around carefully until the whoosh-whoosh sound was replaced by something else, like the galloping of horses. Chloe’s smile was of true, happy excitement, and she squeezed his hand again.

“That’s the baby?” Lucifer asked her.

The heartbeat was so strong already, he thought. It was hard to believe that the shadowy image on the computer screen was capable of producing such vitality. He half-laughed at the realization. Chloe was already carrying a whole life inside her, made from the both of them. Maybe, like Donnelly had said, the best parts, the innocent parts of them.

And he knew, as he listened to that heartbeat, that he had made this happen. He’d wanted the kind of innocent, trusting love and belonging that he’d once possessed, and saw again with his brother and his child. Without even knowing it, he’d envied it so badly he’d wanted the possibility for himself, a living proof that he was meant to be with her, and not destined to lose her forever.

He intertwined his fingers with hers and brought her hand to his lips again until Dr. Martino had left. The nurse made an embarrassed sound of surprise and the door closed, but he was too busy kissing Chloe to care.

Somewhere in the hall was a burst of giggles and someone squealing, “Can you believe that hot—“ but Chloe didn’t pull away, and he drank in the taste of her kiss like champagne on his tongue. Light and crisp, sweet and heady kisses that swept him away with an intoxication no liquor had.
Lucifer lifted her in his arms, the warmth of her body against his a relief after days starved of her touch.

She traced her fingers along his jaw, and he reluctantly caught his breath. He rested his forehead against hers.

“Lucifer, I’d like my panties back now.”

He laughed. “Deal with the Devil, Detective. You can have them back…”

“When?”

“After you come home with me tonight, of course,” he said.

——

Chapter End Notes

So, first... I am so sorry I hit a sensitive topic for some of you with the content in the last chapter. In fact, I agonized over whether or not to include something in this one because I didn’t want to hit on any other sensitive places. I hope, in the name of fiction and storytelling, I don’t upset anyone.

Second, I hope tonight’s update earns some more feedback. You know I love it and need it.
Facets of Being

Chapter Summary

Chloe doesn’t get the reaction she hoped for, and Lucifer works on his method acting skills.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

By a technicality, Chloe didn’t actually get her underwear back. Apparently, the Devil meant she would receive them after she stayed the entire night, and by the time it was morning again, she would change her clothes anyway.

Once in the penthouse, Lucifer had stripped her of her dress and kept her occupied in bed until late in the evening. She stirred a little past midnight, finding the space beside her bare, and decided he must have gone down to the club. He did sometimes when he was restless or, as she was coming to suspect, when he needed distraction from his thoughts.

She wondered if the visit to the doctor’s was the cause. It was difficult to tell for sure, but it seemed likely. Lucifer had apparently been intent on making up for their separation the night before. Conversation hadn’t been high on his priorities, and she was too wary of his response to bring it up. All she could do for the time being was remember his backwards pattern of expressing feelings: while his words never told the whole story, his actions spoke volumes. Relying on that mode of reasoning, his positive reaction hearing the baby for the first time and his insistence she stay with him were good signs, right?

When she woke at five, the bed was still empty, and she sat for a few minutes, sipping slowly on water before rising. Morning (or all-day, rather) sickness had been occasional with Trixie, and so far she was doing well now too. Other than a touch of nausea when she first got up, she felt fine. She actually loved being pregnant, and knew she was one of the rare lucky few who felt terrific. The only part that drove her crazy was the enforced desk-duty in the last trimester.

Lucifer wasn’t anywhere in the penthouse, she found, becoming a little concerned; had he stayed up the entire night, and not come back?

Her phone rang at half past just as she was finishing dressing. Feeling ridiculous for worrying it was Lucifer and he was hurt or something, which wasn’t even possible, she checked the screen. Finding it was Dan, she answered, “Hey Dan, what’s up?”

“I have a bit of a favor to ask,” he said. His voice held a whisper of hesitation, and a measure of discomfiture.

“Sure. What do you need?” She asked, sitting on the edge of the bed to slip on her shoes.

“I know it’s still my week with Trixie, but do you think you could pick her up today? Ella’s being discharged, and I offered to help her get home and give her a hand. It’s kind of hard for her to do everything,” he explained.
Chloe smiled and couldn’t help teasing, “Oh, give her a hand, hmm?”

With some chagrin, he replied defensively, “I’m just helping her out like any good friend would, okay? Two broken ribs and a broken leg isn’t great for moving around and cooking and taking care of pets.”

“And dressing, and showering?” Good grief, she was as bad as Lucifer. Not wanting to embarrass him further, she asked, “Does she still have a chicken?”

“No,” he said. “It’s a ferret now. Named Rocky.”

“Cute,” answered Chloe. “I won’t ask what happened to the chicken. Yes, I can take Trixie. Just let me know when you’ll, um, be done staying with Ella?”

Dan expected to be out the rest of the day getting Ella settled and also updated her about Ricardo, who had apparently turned himself in yesterday and revealed that he was involved in Ella’s injury. She remembered the traffic cam footage that showed the driver hitting Ella deliberately, and though she was angry on Ella’s behalf for her brother’s role in it, she also couldn’t help being relieved that he had stepped forward. Without his testimony, it might have been impossible to determine who was responsible. They talked for a few minutes, speculating whether or not Ricardo’s statement would lead to more evidence. Their conversation wrapped up quickly after that, with Chloe promising she’d have Trixie FaceTime him in the evening.

Despite telling herself it was foolish to be worried about Lucifer or what he was doing, or who he was with (that, she acknowledged, was her own insecurity. They still hadn’t really discussed what their relationship was or level of commitment), she was relieved to find him at the piano when she stepped off the elevator. He seemed completely lost in his own world; a half-touched glass of some liquor rested on the piano, and his hands would play over the keys for a few measures before slowing to a stop, then resume with a completely different melody.

Chloe tentatively walked toward him, not wanting to startle him by suddenly speaking or sitting down next to him. But she shouldn’t have bothered, as his next words were directed at her.

“Is it morning already?”

She stopped at the piano, one hand on its glossy surface and looked him over. He had certainly looked worse. Other than faint signs of fatigue and his hair somewhat mussed, Lucifer seemed fine. Unkempt, but as handsome as ever.

“Yeah. So, you’ve been down here all night?”

Shaking his head, Lucifer said, “I slept for awhile. But I woke and needed to clear my head.”

“How’s that going for you?” She asked, tilting her head as she regarded him.

With a crooked smile, he laughed shortly, “I’ll let you know when it clears.”

Indecision pulled on her. Encourage him to talk to her or let him be? The problem was that she wanted to be a coward and leave it alone. And that, she realized, was exactly the reason why she needed to. Hiding and avoiding wasn’t how she liked to deal with things. At some point, she needed to confront the rest of her concerns with him too, rather than allow them to spread insidiously in her weaker moments.

“Are you okay?” She asked. Knowing his response would likely be a general claim of well-being, she tried to be more specific. “What’s bothering you, Lucifer?”
When he didn’t answer, she sat next to him on the bench. “You said you’d never lie to me,” she said softly. “Silence is the same thing.”

“I’m not answering because I don’t want to be honest. I just can’t put it into words,” he said, and finished the drink he had forgotten about.

“Okay.” Chloe licked her lips. She wasn’t sure if his answer was good or bad. She thought about the night they’d had dinner and he had asked her to move in with him, and she had told him she was pregnant. They’d both had to sacrifice some and step past the fear to be honest. Maybe if she could do it again, he could too.

They were both so bad at this, she thought. How is it I can trust him with my life, but I’m terrified to tell him about what scares me?

Chloe gathered her nerve and kept her gaze locked on the keys in front of her, which somehow made it a little easier. “The last… how did you put it… ‘embryonic vampire’ didn’t make it.”

She felt him looking at her. “It was one of those flukes of nature, no one’s fault. But for whatever reason, it was easier to pretend that we were just waiting for a good time to try again than to admit we were terrified to. Then so much time had passed.

“I wouldn’t have minded having another child. But the odds would keep increasing that I’d lose it, and then it just seemed it wasn’t meant to happen.”

Risking a glance at him, she found him watching her intently.

“You think you’ll lose the baby?” He asked, the string of words coming haltingly, sounding foreign in the way that he’d never used them in that combination before.

“No,” she said, and he looked at her with consternation. “I’m happy about it and I feel like it’s all… the way it should be,” she answered, hoping her meaning made sense. “What I’m scared of is that you will never see it that way.”

He stood up, turning away from her. Chloe winced, feeling she was doing more harm than good. “I know it’s completely unfair to pressure you like this. I said I wouldn’t. I’m sorry.”

Lucifer didn’t answer right away, but then shook his head. “A part of me is amazed by it. Excited, even. But I’m not going to be a good father, Chloe. Changing diapers, screaming infants and temper tantrums, bedtime stories; that’s not me. I like my life free.”

Well. She felt a burn begin in her throat, heralding the welling of tears swimming in her eyes. She’d wanted him to tell her how he felt. She’d hoped he would say he was nervous or even glad, maybe. Now she saw how foolish that had been. He was right; he wasn’t about those things. She couldn’t even imagine him in the daily routine of the mundane. Life would stop being never-ending parties and play, of doing whatever he wanted when he wanted. He would never do that.

So where did that leave her? Could she even be with him in those circumstances?

Keeping her eyes tightly shut, Chloe swallowed a few times until the pressure behind her eyelids eased and she trusted herself to speak unaffected. Stupid hormones, sneaking past her guard, leaving her feeling vulnerable and exposed. She wouldn’t allow it.

“Okay. Well, um, it’s time for work. Are you wanting to come with me or do you have other things you need to do? Maybe catch up on sleep?” Honestly, she wasn’t sure she wanted his company today. This was also the problem with working closely with someone you were involved
with romantically. Separating work from the rest.

“I’ll meet you there,” he said. “I need to change first.”

True to his word, he did arrive shortly after her, even presenting her with coffee and a muffin. She accepted the peace offering with a thanks. Any more talk on the subject of the baby or their relationship would have to wait. The priority at hand was arresting Megan Donnelly’s murderer.

Chloe rang the doorbell and waited for Mrs. White to come to the door. When she recognized them, she looked back and forth between them with a slight frown and asked, “Detectives, can I help you? I thought my husband told me everything was finished.”

“I’m afraid not,” Chloe answered as they followed her into the living room. “We need to ask you a few questions.”

“Again?” Amber sat, graciously inviting them to join her. “I’m not sure what else I can tell you.”

Chloe kept Amber’s gaze intently. “Why did you lie to us about your husband’s whereabouts that night? You knew he wasn’t at work.”

Amber looked away, her words coming stiffly. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Megan didn’t break in, did she? You invited her when you saw her outside your house again,” said Chloe.

“That’s ridiculous. I didn’t even know her.” But Mrs. White couldn’t quite meet Chloe’s eyes again and stood up, agitated.

“You didn’t have to know her,” Chloe said softly. “You knew as soon as you saw her that she had been one of your husband’s affairs.” When Amber didn’t answer, she continued. “Is that why you struck her? You were angry about his infidelity? I can understand how upset you felt, how you felt betrayed.”

Amber was shaking her head. “No,” she insisted, but the presence of tears was unmistakable.

“You were jealous?” Chloe asked. When Amber didn’t answer again, still shaking her head, Chloe nodded at Lucifer.

He approached Amber and gave her a winsome smile. “Here now, Amber. Why don’t you tell me? What was it you desired so much that you killed Megan for it?”

She lifted her chin, drawn into his gaze, and Chloe could see red rimming her eyes from the inescapable impulse to cry. “I wanted children.” As soon as the words were free, she began crying in earnest and broke their eye contact. “I wanted children of my own, and Greg always said no. He thought I didn’t know about his affairs, like I was too stupid to figure it out. And then she starts showing up…”

Amber took her seat again, burying her face in her hands. “Every night, she sat in her car, and I knew she must be one of his women. I brought her inside and she told me about her daughter. I just… snapped. It was too unfair, too cruel. I didn’t even know what I was doing. I was just so angry - so furious. How badly I wanted a child, how I begged, and he’d made one with her.”

Chloe retrieved handcuffs from her back pocket. “He didn’t care about Megan’s daughter, you know,” said Chloe, not unkindly. She recognized a sadness for both Megan and this woman, both neglected by his capriciousness, and left to pay the terrible price. How they all had been torn apart
by one man’s selfishness.

“I know. It didn’t matter. I didn’t need him to care if we’d had a child either. I just wanted my own son or daughter to love,” Amber whispered miserably.

Standing up, Chloe gently helped Amber to her feet and the cuffs clicked around her wrists. “Amber White, you are under arrest for the murder of Megan Donnelly…”

——

He left the precinct after they’d brought Amber in. She’d immediately called for her lawyer, but the Detective was already working on obtaining her written confession. Lucifer thought it highly probable that Amber would admit to the murder, though the attorney would likely be able to reduce her sentence with a plea bargain. Amber wasn’t a bad woman in heart; only one who had fallen prey to madness by degrees of pain and humiliation.

In the meantime, he wasn’t going to be any other help to the Detective right now, and he had an appointment with Dr. Linda to keep. The need to unburden himself had never been as crucial, his thoughts a disorderly melee of panic and clashing dissonance.

“You may have been right, doctor,” said Lucifer once they had sat down.

“Oh? About what?” Linda asked.

“That I may have… played a role in the Detective’s pregnancy.”

She nodded slowly. “I suppose you mean more than the obvious way?”

Lucifer paused pouring himself a drink and looked at her with mild censure. “Yes, of course. I am referring to your theory that I may have unintentionally influenced making it happen.”

“Oh, I see,” she said. “And how are you feeling about that?”

“Rather divided, actually,” he said, momentarily falling into silence, recalling the awe of the day before, when the baby had ceased being an abstract concept and become overwhelmingly real. “We heard the baby’s heartbeat yesterday.”

“That must have been exciting,” she said, smiling.

“Yes.” He hesitated again, reaching deeply into the chaos of his thoughts in an effort to mold them into words. “It was truly amazing. But look at me, doctor. I am not father material. My life is the opposite of boredom and tedium, and that is the way I prefer it.” He was not destined to be a shoe.

“Hmm,” she answered. “It sounds like you fear your life changing and losing all the parts of you that you enjoy.”

“Well, wouldn’t I?” He wasn’t going to acknowledge the accusation of fear. He wasn’t afraid.

Linda shook her head contemplatively. “Life is about change, Lucifer. Even yours. Can you say you are the same as you were seven years ago? Even two years ago?”

He thought about that. He supposed she did have a point. There were many more interests and people he valued now as opposed to when he’d first settled here. And he did not want to be in any way similar to Dr. Greg White. Leaving his wife miserable, ignoring his own child, pretending to genuinely care about those women until he had used them. That kind of callousness was
despicable, and he took no little satisfaction from knowing that someday the man’s guilt would
serve him just punishment.

“Lucifer, you’ve spent the last few years trying to find the lifestyle you want for yourself.
Detective, club owner… Every time you’ve added new dimensions to your life, you’ve never lost
your identity. No one said it’s one or the other. You still are who you choose to be. Who’s to say
you wouldn’t like this one?”

He scoffed. “Me. What would I possibly like about it? The very thought sounds horrid.”

“Well, maybe you’re only looking at one side of it, and not taking any of the wondrous parts into
consideration,” she answered.

“What is so wondrous about whining children?” Lucifer asked with real disbelief.

“That’s not something I can answer for you. That may be something you have to discover for
yourself,” she offered.

He leaned forward with sudden zeal as an interesting possibility formed. “So your advice is I try
out being a dad and see if I like it?”

Linda’s expression was a mixture between approval and concern. “Uh… yes?”

“Marvelous. I know just the child to help me test this little endeavor,” he said eagerly, readying to
leave.

“Oh, Lucifer! - I didn’t mean -“ but whatever the doctor was saying wasn’t necessary, and he
closed the door behind him. He had to stop for some things and a phone call to make.

On that thought, he pulled out his cell phone and dialed as he strode down the hall. “Hello Lewis.
About the loft…”

He waited for the school bell to ring and sent Beatrix a short wave. She grinned in return when she
spotted him and turned to say something to her teacher. The woman frowned behind her glasses
and followed her to his car.

“You’re not one of Trixie’s parents. We don’t really allow anyone else for pick-up unless we have
your name on file,” she said hesitantly, looking down at Trixie with concern.

“Oh, don’t be worried Mrs. Hopkins! This is Lucifer, he’s my mom’s boyfriend,” she assured her
teacher.

Still doubtful, the teacher shook her head and looked at him. Then she paused mid-shake and her
eyes widened. “Well, um…”

Lucifer smiled charmingly. “I promise I’m not up to anything naughty. Not right now anyway.”

She giggled and tucked a piece of her hair behind her ear. “Well, Trixie does seem to know
you…”

Trixie nodded enthusiastically, and Lucifer retrieved his phone. “I texted her mother that I would
pick her up today. Would you like to check?”

The teacher glanced down at his phone’s screen briefly. “Okay. I suppose it’s alright…” Looking
a bit dazed, she waved to Trixie while they got in the car.
“Why are you picking me up today?” She asked.

“As it happens, your father is helping Ms. Lopez get home from the hospital,” he explained. “So you’ll be home with your mom for a few days.”

Trixie’s face froze in alarm. “Is she okay?”

“Who - oh, Ms. Lopez? Yes, she’s perfectly fine. She had an accident is all. But she broke a few bones and needs help for a little while.”

Biting her lip in worry, she replied, “I hope she’s better soon. Ella’s super nice.”

“Yes, she is,” Lucifer agreed. If anyone deserved to be in good health and spirits, it was definitely Ms. Lopez.

Then Trixie relaxed and studied him with confusion, her eyes narrowing. “Lucifer… you look different. Are you wearing jeans? I didn’t know you owned jeans. What’s with the Clark Kent makeover?”

“I own jeans,” he protested, rolling his eyes. “They’re just not my style.” Then, seeing she had pulled a chocolate bar from her bag, he exclaimed, “Absolutely not! No sweets before dinner!”

She frowned at him. “Seriously?” When it became obvious he was serious, she sighed resignedly and said, “Okay…” with clear suspicion. He couldn’t say she wasn’t a perceptive child.

He was just pulling dinner from the oven when Chloe came in the door, hanging up her coat. She was staring at him with blatant confusion and peered around the room, as if wary of what she would find hiding behind the couch.

“Trixie, what’s up, honey?” She joined her at the coffee table, where she sat doing her homework.

Giving her mother a sour look, she answered, “Lucifer hasn’t let me eat anything because he said it would spoil my appetite. And then gave me a lecture about the ‘healthy, beneficial properties’ of milk. I think he’s been abducted by aliens.”

“Uh-huh…” said Chloe.

“I only said to wait until after dinner,” Lucifer called. “Which, by the way, is ready.”

Chloe moved to the kitchen, still watching him with scrutiny, and retrieved plates from the cabinet. “Here, Trixie, set the table please.”

“What?” He asked defensively. “It’s not the first time I made dinner.”

“No,” she answered slowly. “It’s not… So what is for dinner then?”

Lucifer set the serving dishes in the center of the table, proudly announcing, “Meatloaf and brussel sprouts!”

Trixie wrinkled her nose in disgust, complaining, “Brussel sprouts? Ew.”

They sat down to eat although it was uncomfortably quiet, but for the life of him, Lucifer wasn’t certain what to say to improve the mood. At least the meal seemed to meet with approval. He frowned at Beatrix, who hadn’t touched anything but the meatloaf yet. And only then with copious amounts of ketchup, which he found appalling.
“They have a rich butter sauce,” he said, indicating the brussel sprouts. “Try them; I promise you’ll like it.”

She made a face at her plate that clearly communicated her total lack of interest and eyed the food like it was made of worms. Chloe put down her glass and said, “Eat your vegetables, Trixie.”

“Mom,” she whined. “They’re gross.”

There was a word for that, what parents said when children disobeyed, wasn’t there? “You’re grounded,” he told her with as stern a tone as he could muster, and earning a response of horrified outrage from the child.

Completely disregarding him, Chloe shook her head and addressed her daughter. “How would you know?” Chloe asked calmly. “You haven’t tried one yet. You know the rule. You have to eat at least one before you say you hate it.”

The child begrudgingly stabbed one with her fork and brought it to her mouth like a martyr approaching the lion’s den. She chewed in silence, the sullen attitude slowly dissipating, and used her knife to slice another one in half before eating it.

Lucifer smiled in satisfaction, but before he could respond, Chloe leaned over and whispered, “Don’t say anything or she’ll swear she doesn’t like it.”

“That’s completely convoluted,” he said, receiving only a shrug in response. Were all children so nonsensical and insistent on behaving without logic or reason? He really didn’t see how the Detective could call him childish in comparison.

When they’d finished, Chloe stacked the plates, taking them back to the kitchen, and Lucifer regarded Trixie with consideration. “Don’t you have a bedtime soon?”

“No,” she replied slowly, confused. “I have homework.”

“Hmm. More of that history book?”

“I don’t think you should help me with that anymore,” she said. “I told my teacher what you said about Harriet Tubman and she said it was made-up.”

“That’s ridiculous!” Lucifer protested incredulously. “Harrie really did—-“

Chloe interrupted, delicately clearing her throat. “Maybe, monkey, you just shouldn’t repeat what Lucifer tells you. I’m sure a lot of it is true, but others might not believe it.”

Trixie shrugged. “Whatever. It was more interesting than school.”

“Monkey, how about you get started on it in your room, please? And if you do need help, you can come ask. I’d like to talk to Lucifer for a minute.” Trixie complied, rolling her eyes, and Chloe fixed her gaze on him. “Counter. Now.”

Scraping the remainder of food on the dishes into the waste, she set the pile in the sink and wiped her hands on a towel. Then she took a deep breath and examined him thoughtfully. “Why are you being weird, Lucifer?”

He indicated himself and the room at large with a wave of his hand. “This is what dads do, isn’t it?”
“Oh, I see now,” she said, gaze sweeping him again. “Picking Trixie up from school, the casual clothes, dinner, parental attitude… This is some bizarre attempt to emulate being a father.”

Lucifer huffed, “Well, how else am I supposed to know what to do?”

“There isn’t a rule book or checklist of criteria, Lucifer,” she said.

“Obviously. Dear Dad, I could use a drink.”

She turned away from him and dug in the cabinet behind canned tomato soup and corn, withdrawing a bottle of whiskey. Placing it in front of him, Chloe retrieved a glass as well. “I know it’s not as fancy as your usual stuff,” she said, pouring him a generous serving. “Let me see if I understand this. You’re trying to try out being a father because, like you said this morning, you don’t think you can be a good one.”

He was silent, throwing back the liquor, and appreciating the burn and the general warmth spreading through him that he usually didn’t experience with so little. Perks of her miraculous nature, he thought.

“I don’t know anything about it,” he said finally. “I didn’t exactly have a great relationship with my own, if you recall. Rebellion, war, grand exile.”

Chloe leaned across the counter and briefly touched her lips to his gently. “I get it, Lucifer. I even think it’s a sweet gesture, despite it’s over-the-top lunacy. But you don’t have to do all this. I had no idea how to be a parent either. There’s no real way to prepare for it. I just knew what my own parents were like and tried to do the same good things and be better than the bad. And all parents mess up. Even God, apparently.”

Her words prompted a startled laugh from him. “Right.” Lucifer stared into the glass. “I never expected this. Not in a million years. Literally.”

“I know,” she said softly.

“I don’t know the first thing about it,” he confessed.

She smiled, the aspect communicating both wry humor and patience. “You know, I thought about that today, especially after I got a call from Mark Donnelly, who was beside himself with gratitude that someone anonymously donated money for his daughter’s treatment.” Lucifer didn’t look up from the drink in his hand, idly swirling the liquid around and pretending to be absorbed with the reflection of light.

Chloe continued, “Dr. White didn’t do the smallest thing for his daughter, let alone help her when she needed it. You’ve done nothing but the exact opposite since day one.”

That made him look up with curiosity, completely lost.

“Worrying about what I’m eating and drinking, or if you’re smoking around me, or if I’m getting enough rest… Lucifer, that’s not for me. Those things aren’t going to affect me any differently than before. It’s the baby you’re concerned about being hurt. You’ve been protecting him or her already.” Chloe covered his hand with hers and kissed him while he sat, stunned.

Then there was a gasp and a high-pitched squeal, and they both turned to find Trixie staring back at them, open-mouthed and wide-eyed. “Oh my God! Are you having a baby!”
Chapter End Notes

Some spoken and inspired by true events, as much writing is.

Hope you enjoy... I’d love to hear your thoughts! Btw, I realized I’m going to have to go back and change the conception date, otherwise it won’t line up with Trixie being in school! Lol Ah, well.
Invited and Uninvited Guests

Chapter Summary

A few days of living together, a party, and a lot of introspection for Lucifer.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

With a gasp, Chloe reflexively arched her back, instinctively seeking the solid warmth behind her. A firm, gentle touch skimmed along her skin, and she felt the tickle of his breath behind her ear.

“It’s no use pretending to be asleep,” he chided. “I heard you. But in case I’m wrong, maybe I should make sure you’re awake.”

Fighting a smile and eyes still closed, she murmured, “Definitely asleep.”

“My apologies, Detective. You must be exhausted from all the unpacking yesterday. You need your rest,” Lucifer’s hand halted in its descent and, rerouted, chastely caressed the curve of her hip.

“Don’t you dare,” she warned, ruining the effect by the breathless quality of her voice. She caught his hand and drew it back, guiding it over the slight swell beneath her stomach that became more apparent each day.

Lucifer nuzzled her neck. “You are always giving me orders. ‘Lucifer, don’t play with that’, ‘Lucifer, don’t drive so fast’, ‘Lucifer, if you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.’ It’s lucky for you that I like your orders. In fact, you should give me one right now.”

Lower, between her thighs, she continued to guide his path until his questing fingers were gliding delicately through her moisture, already growing wet in anticipation, seeking the entrance to her sex. Reflectively, she considered how amusing it was that she would be resentful of anyone else interrupting her sleep. “Okay. Here’s an order: Don’t. Stop.”

Then extraneous thoughts were banished. There was a nudge as his knee insinuated between her legs, easing the way for two of his fingers to slip inside her. Chloe rewarded him with an encouraging moan and sought the hard length of his erection behind her. He obligingly pushed against her and kissed the curve of her shoulder.

“Detective, I would never want to disappoint you.” But she felt the disappointing loss of his touch keenly, until he spread her lubrication around the bundle of nerves hidden at her apex, stroking tight circles with perfect pressure. Her orgasm came without warning, cascading in a sweet rush over her.

Before she’d even recovered from the last drop of pleasure, Lucifer had brought her over him, and guided her gradual acceptance of his cock inside her with a gentle but firm hold on her hips. She sighed in satisfaction, his complete fulfillment almost too strong. The swift orgasm of minutes ago had primed her for more, expediting her need for more friction. Chloe rocked against him, frissons of teasing excitement sparking through her, and urged further by Lucifer’s assistance.

“Yes, Chloe,” Lucifer coaxed with her movements. “Let me see you. Come for me, love.”
It was addictive, his focus, completely enthralled watching her. She would have thought being the recipient of such intense study would be uncomfortable, but it was impossible to feel that way when every move he made was dedicated to her pleasure.

Lucifer drove her higher, his thrusts timed with the relief of pressure against her clit brought with every roll of her hips. She felt it building with each meeting of her sex against him, every driving thrust that filled her, hostage to the maddening, enticing lure of what waited just beyond. He elicited a cry from her when her crisis hit, and she tensed through the shattering crest, temporarily blinded to everything but the radiating burst of sheer bliss.

“Lucifer!” She worked to catch her breath and he brought her down for a kiss, mouth catching hers in light and innocent kisses that contrasted the passionate strokes below while his pace increased in furtive strokes. Then his hand was tangled in her hair, tugging it away from her neck to growl his release against her skin.

Chloe was slow to move, relishing the feel of his arms around her while her heart slowed to its normal pace and she sighed with happiness, then shivered when he laved open-mouthed kisses along the slope of her neck.

“Mm, you have to stop that. I have more unpacking to do,” she said regretfully.

He didn’t try to conceal his dejected tone. “Can’t all that wait? We aren’t even close to being finished.”

Bringing her mouth to his, she treated him to a lingering kiss, “Maybe if I finish early, I can take a break with you before everyone arrives.”

“Is ‘break’ a euphemism for sex?” He asked hopefully.

“Yes, Lucifer.” With a last kiss, she sat beside him and combed her hair back over her shoulder.

Sitting up, he surprised her with a light kiss, one hand ghosting down her cheek and trailing down her chest to rest on her stomach. Chloe stood to leave to dress, but before he allowed her to walk away, he kissed her abdomen, where the nearly indiscernible curve had become more obvious over the last week.

Over the last week, she’d found him tentatively growing more familiar with the signs of her pregnancy. He’d already been cognizant of it from the beginning with his exasperating and sweet overtures, but this was different; brief touches, resting his hand on her stomach, or secretly scrolling through baby-related websites on his phone. She’d caught him more than once although he didn’t know it.

It gave her hope that he was adjusting, welcoming the idea of fatherhood. It was antithetical to his entire way of life, she knew that, but she also knew that when Lucifer loved, he did so absolutely, deeply, unfailingly (if in somewhat baffling ways). He’d stayed by her side every day, despite risking his immortality, and even when their partnership had fractured, he hadn’t walked away. If he came to love his child, she knew he would do the same. He didn’t envision himself in the day-to-day role of a caregiver, and really - what man did his first run?, but that didn’t mean there was no future at all.

The downstairs was already arranged for company, but Chloe was determined to be done with all the unpacking today so she could finally feel truly settled in. Trixie had been immediately awed by the airy rooms, especially the spacious bedroom that was easily twice the size of her old one. Immediately animated, she had planned out every inch of the room, where she wanted bookshelves...
and posters and toys.

Before they had taken Trixie to see the loft, she and Lucifer had bought her silence about the baby. She was over the moon at the idea of being a big sister and had been crushed when Chloe had told her it was too soon to share the news with anyone. Caving in less than a minute, Lucifer bribed her with a tantalizing offer: If she promised not to tell anyone, she could make the big reveal announcement tonight. Ostensibly, it was a housewarming party, but since their friends and family would all be present, it made for a wonderful opportunity. Chloe had been uneasy about it at first; it was still early on. It was generally advisable to wait until the first trimester had passed, and that was another three weeks, at least.

What had finally swayed her was Lucifer’s unexpected interest in the idea. And the circumstances of this pregnancy were so different - miraculous even, that she felt inclined to believe in the best. Every soft look he sent her, every tender touch, eased the fear in her heart.

Reaching for the final box of her daughter’s books, she heard Lucifer ask from the doorway, “Should you be lifting that?”

“I’m perfectly fine. I can lift a box,” Chloe answered calmly. He was worse than Dan had been.

He came up behind her, gently pulling her back against him. “I have something to show you.”

Chloe relaxed into his hold for a moment, then straightened, distancing herself from any amorous attentions before she fell into his spell. “And I told you later. I want to finish this.”

“Yes, I heard you the first time, much to my disappointment. This is something else. Come with me,” he said, leading her to the third bedroom, which had remained closed since they'd started moving in.

“Oh, I finally get to enter the mystery room?” She raised her eyebrows. “Your excuses of wet paint weren’t really fooling me.”

He affected a look of offended pride, though his tone told her he wasn’t taking her teasing to heart. “Detective, I would never lie to you. There really was wet paint. Not good for you, or,” his gaze swept down her stomach, “the baby.”

She gave him a soft smile and stepped into the room when he opened the door for her. She gasped in amazement, covering her mouth with her hands, “Oh my… Lucifer, this is…. You did this?”

The mural stretched across the three walls lining the rest of the bedroom. It was like a fairy tale come to life. Castles with spires waving banners rose majestically over knights on horses, a beautiful dragon with gleaming scales of pearl and scarlet curled protectively around sparkling jewels, and deep in a wooded forest she could make out the lone tower from which a fair, dreamy-eyed princess surveyed the world outside, her golden tresses spilling down the facade of stones. There was more, so much she doubted her ability to absorb it all in one viewing. She thought she spied a red-cloaked figure with a basket among a cluster of trees. Spread across the last wall was a depiction of the sea in the distance, so realistic she could see the spray of water from the surf. Carefully, she touched the hint of a mermaid’s tail as she dove beneath the sea, pirate ships lurking beyond a cliff.

“I wanted it to suit either a boy or girl,” Lucifer said, still hovering in the doorway. “If you don’t like it, you’re free to change it. You would know what’s more appropriate.”

Shaking her head, she swept her gaze across the magical world again. “I don’t want to change a
She thought she heard an exhale of relief, then he was standing by her, hands in his pockets. “I can’t tell you whether or not I can be a good father,” he said, expression serious. “But I can tell you I don’t want to be a poor one.”

Slipping her hands around his neck, she reached up to give him her kiss. “I think you’re doing really great,” she whispered. “Thank you.” They rarely said it, because it seemed it lived in everything else, but she spoke the words. “I love you, Lucifer.”

He surveyed the caterers setting out trays and preparing the flutes for champagne and sparkling water (for the Detective, of course) and he supposed for Beatrice if someone noticed him slipping her the more exciting beverage.

Even if Lucifer didn’t see it as a harmless tidbit, how often did a child get to announce the impending arrival of a little brother or sister, especially when it was the Devil’s own spawn?

Neatly pilfering one of the glasses, he went ahead and treated himself to an early toast. Something to quell the nervous hum of energy in his veins. He poured himself a second, amused by the soothing tingle of the liquor. Imagine how much he’d save on the cost of alcohol simply by living with her.

The doctor was right. Life really was change. His own had been stagnant for so long, unending eons of the same bitter resentment and darkness. Estranged from anything light or soft. Visits to Earth to cull the boredom were even the same at their core. Different times, different dress or cultures, but still the same, seeking out any distraction that could thrill and as much fun as he could find.

Well, sex was still the best fun he could find; that wasn’t bound to change.

But it had dawned on him in recent days, as Chloe and her daughter began to move belongings to the loft and his own were transported in, how the last few years deviated so sharply from before. Since he had met her, life itself had changed, evolving into mysteries and puzzles and purpose. Meaningful ties.

The visceral sight of their worlds coming together here had painted it plainly. He hadn’t begun to change until he’d met her. Everything about her had entranced him, and whether that was by his father’s grand design or not, he had become addicted. Chloe was the reason his life had become more exciting. Without her as catalyst, he would still be living the same not-living cycle as before.

Domestic life would bore him, he’d thought, before he had fallen into the pattern of coming home to her each day, either her apartment or his. But that was the problem; it wasn’t boring at all. It was a strange amalgamation borne of oddly tranquil moments and others of firsts. Experiences he’d never had before, which made them interesting and exciting.

And once in a lifetime, for him. How could he let it pass by?

And just as Chloe had fascinated him, so too did this child they had created. It wasn’t only once in a lifetime - it was once in eternity. It was as if since she had pointed out the ways he had already been fixating on the baby’s wellbeing, the realization had naturally come that he was holding on so tightly because this was something that would never occur again.

Lucifer was still thrown by the idea of fatherhood, drool and all those other icky fluids, but if he
put any stock in the doctor’s logic, he never would have expected to become involved in police work before either. Perhaps this was another role that he would find a startling compatibility in.

A voice beckoned him from his thoughts and he left them behind gratefully. He turned to see Chloe descending the staircase, her loose black dress flowing around her knees with each step. A shy and captivating smile played on her lips and she brushed her curls back.

“Stunning,” he told her, meeting her at the stairs. He stopped her two steps from the bottom where she met his height perfectly for a kiss. When she kept the contact light and would have pulled away, he slid an arm around her waist. Chloe might care about what caterers and servers thought, but he sure as Hell didn’t. Deepening the kiss with a lick across her lips until she opened for him, he held her in his arms, lifting her from the stairs. He drank in her muffled sound of surprise and her hands fisted in his coat at the sudden loss of balance.

Behind them came an unwelcome interruption as someone asked uncomfortably, “Is this where the party is?”

Setting Chloe down gently, he turned to Dan with no attempt to mask his annoyance. “Spectacularly poor timing as usual.”

Blushing, Chloe said quickly, “Yes, Dan, please come in!”

Daniel looked down, hopefully in dire embarrassment, and Lucifer sighed. “At ease, Detective Douche. It’s not like you walked in on us—–”

“Lucifer!” Chloe hissed and walked past him. “Dan, did you bring Ella too?”

With one more disgusted look directed his way from Dan, they turned to bring Ella’s wheelchair around. After being cooped up in her apartment, she was practically dancing at the opportunity to be out with other people, and with a broken leg, that was saying something. Not that he was surprised, with Daniel for company.

Lucifer stopped by Ella a few times throughout the evening, ensuring she was never without a glass of champagne. A few times he regaled the company with performances at the piano, entertaining himself with conversations on a range of topics and people, guests from the precinct and business associates, and even some shadier folk with whom he had done favors and was owed favors. It was quite a gathering, really.

Glimpses of Chloe through the crowds were almost a kind of foreplay. She was beautiful and slightly uncomfortable making small talk with so many people, but carrying on because, as he knew all too well, her tenacity and bravery had no limit.

He brought a martini dry to Ella, who laughingly protested. “I’ve had plenty don’t you think?”

Surveying the room at large, he spied Dan talking animatedly with Amenadiel, Linda with Maze not far away. “Your bodyguard is distracted. Quick, time is of the essence.”

Rolling her eyes, Ella took the glass. “He’s helping a friend. And he needs a break from sitting here, talking to me all night. I can’t exactly be a social butterfly,” she said, indicating her current condition. Even chair-bound as she was, she was vitality itself and dressed to catch anyone’s eye.

Scoffing, he stole the olive from the drink for himself. “My dear Ms. Lopez, that is a man who is guarding his prize with all the finesse of a pimply president of the chess club in a closet with the head cheerleader.”
“Uh-huh. Following that very absurd observation of male behavior, why haven’t you been near Chloe in the last couple of hours?”

“Simple,” Lucifer said, gaze sweeping across the room again until he located her. “I’m not concerned that anyone else will steal her.”

“Besides the fact that talking about her as an inanimate object is sexist, that’s pretty ballsy, dude.”

Maybe. The fact was she was stuck with him. He was out of his element to be sure. But he would not lose her to someone else, not when he finally had her. There was only one thing he would inevitably lose her to, and until then, he planned to take every minute. All he had in front of him was more time.

Lucifer had already known Chloe was special, and he thought he’d known why. He had been so wrong. She was special because she showed him life as he’d never seen before, because when she’d told him she loved him she’d never looked back, because ever since she’d never asked him to change. He had chosen to ask her this step and she’d never pushed for more, and he’d had control to balance his days and nights the way he wanted.

And that trust and acceptance had to be met with equal measures if he loved her the same way. She believed he would never let her fall, and he wouldn’t.

Ms. Lopez was watching him closely and he smiled with arrogance, and said glibly, “Comparing my bollocks to Daniel’s is no contest, Ms. Lopez.” Without a moment’s pause for her reply, he checked the time. “Ah, stay put.”

“Where am I gonna go?” Ella said dryly behind him.

Approaching Chloe, he handed her a champagne flute, prepared for her. “Where is Beatrice?”

She smiled, accepting the glass, and pointed to her daughter. Servers began winding through the crowds with trays of glasses, swiftly dispersing them to curious guests. He’d had a few pieces of equipment brought over from the club. Now he handed a microphone to Beatrice. “Certain you still want to let the cat out of the bag?”

She grinned back at him. “One hundred and ten percent.”

“Remind me to browse your mathematics book as well. It must be full of inaccuracies,” he said, then gave her a reassuring nod.

Taking a deep breath, she raised the microphone and said clearly, “Excuse me, everyone.”

The room hushed and she continued, “I’m Beatrice. And I’m sharing a big announcement with you tonight. My mom and Lucifer are making me a BIG SISTER!”

A round of celebratory applause met her announcement and enthusiastic acquaintances flocked over to them to immediately offer congratulations. It wasn’t until the fervor had died down and guests began to leave for the evening when their friends finally got their turn.

It wasn’t much of a surprise for Linda, of course, or Maze for that matter, but they had kept mum on the topic. Amenadiel was stoic-faced as usual, but Daniel and Ms. Lopez were seemingly shell-shocked. His brother gripped him in a brief approximation of a hug and said lowly, “We need to talk later, Luci.”

Funny, he had actually been avoiding that. Smug older-brother advice on the joyous toils of
parenting ad nauseum.

Daniel didn’t look thrilled with the news, unsurprisingly. “Aren’t you the Devil, like you’re always telling us? Aren’t you worried of fathering the Antichrist or something?”

Lucifer stiffened. “You shouldn’t believe everything you read, Daniel.” More ways he’d been vilified and scapegoated by the world. Not only did his hubris open the gates for crimes beyond imagination, named the enforcer of evil, he was also apparently the bearer of doom and destruction upon humanity. He didn’t want to look at Chloe and see her reaction.

“Dan, of course… I would never have considered,” she said, as if the revelation had struck her like lightning. He kept his sight trained on the glass in his hand, feeling the stirring of anger beneath his skin and knowing what might appear in his eyes any moment.

Except it didn’t. Her words drowned any rage, soosing it like water on a flame.

“Terrific name. Christine for a girl!” Chloe exclaimed, mirth dancing in her eyes.

He couldn’t help but stare at her in complete, paralyzing shock, except for the startled laugh that escaped him. “What, you want Christopher for a boy? Oh, the irony.”

He would have loved to answer Daniel’s sour look with a biting rejoinder, but there was a call at the door. Consideringly, Lucifer decided there were benefits to a physical door as compared to an elevator that far too many people had access to on a regular basis, constantly waltzing in with untimely interruptions. However, someone may have left something behind, so he turned for the door. Besides, Maze looked ready to flay Dan in his place. Metaphorically, that is.

Crossing the room and still marveling at Chloe’s cavalier reply to something that would have easily flooded her with terror… He opened the door, and his buoyant mood deflated like a punctured balloon. Dread settled in his chest, rapidly supplanted by new anger.

“What are you doing here?” He hissed. A glance over his shoulder told him no one had taken notice of the visitor.

“I’m glad to see you too… My King,” replied Azazel.

Chapter End Notes

My excuse for a suddenly-introspective Lucifer is 1) finally experiencing ‘in love’ with Chloe. 2) a second chance to be with her after thinking there was no chance. And 3) impending fatherhood, a completely life-altering experience (at least for decent men, and I’ll leave it there).
“What do you think you’re doing here?” Lucifer growled darkly. There were no circumstances in which seeing Azazel outside of the ash clouds and fire pits of Tartarus were a good thing. The faster he could find out the cause and get him about his business, the better.

“I came to find you, obviously,” Azazel answered. “You have been gone too long, and——“

This monologue sounded irritatingly familiar. “You do not give me orders, Azazel.”

The fallen angel’s expression remained inscrutable. “You are needed in Hell, Boss.”

“You know,” Lucifer said, sardonically pleasant, “This is nearly identical to a conversation I had a few months ago. What was the next line? Oh, I remember… I’m not going back.”

There was a soft touch on his arm and he turned to see Chloe, looking concerned and curious. He tensed before he regulated the motion, not comfortable with Azazel taking notice of Chloe.

“Lucifer, did someone forget something?” She smiled politely at Azazel. “There was a coat left behind, I think.”

“It’s not his,” Lucifer replied shortly.

Chloe looked between him and Azazel suspiciously. “Okay.” Her brow furrowed.

He had hoped to get Azazel out of here before she’d come over, now all he could do was facilitate a hasty exit. But before Lucifer could prompt an excuse, or even something as efficient as a closed door in his face, Azazel pasted on a kind, unassuming smile and extended his hand.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you. I’m Azazel Drak.”

Drak. Cute, thought Lucifer. Always the big, bad, fire-breathing dragon, wasn’t he?

“Chloe Decker,” she replied, returning the handshake, but Azazel didn’t release her hand, instead lifting it to his lips with a gentlemanly bow.

“Oh, please,” Lucifer said, annoyed with the display. He wouldn’t stoop so low as to physically remove him. Slipping his hands into his pockets, he waited with as much patience as he could collect.

Tilting her head to a slight degree, Chloe regarded Azazel more carefully. He should have known she would instantly form suspicions and want to know what was happening. Lucifer wondered if he could design a plausible excuse for her to return inside.
“That’s a very interesting name,” she observed. “Are you another of Lucifer’s brothers?”

Azazel’s eyes flickered to Lucifer’s, expectant questions of his own plainly visible. “No. I’m more of a… distant relative, but we were once very close. The best of friends.”

Gritting his teeth, Lucifer bit out, “A very, very long time ago.”

Clearly reading the hostility in Lucifer’s stance, she squeezed his arm in a gesture he took as solidarity. “I’ll leave you to… catch up,” she murmured. “It was nice to meet you, Azazel.” With a last, searching look in his eyes, she left, and he heard her say something to one of their friends, though the words were unintelligible from where he stood.

“I can see why you’ve been eager to stay,” spoke Azazel, gaze following Chloe’s retreat.

Ordering Azazel to stay away from her, as much as he wanted to, would only increase his interest. If hearing his reason for being here would make his exit more imminent, fine. Time to turn his attention away from Chloe.

“What’s so dire that you felt the need to come find me?” Lucifer asked.

But Azazel countered him with a question of his own. “Is this the human woman Lilith was baiting you with?”

Forcibly shutting the door behind him, Lucifer advanced down the front steps, making Azazel retreat a step back. “I don’t answer to you.”

“And your memory is hardly infallible, since you seem to have forgotten I still am your King.”

“Unless you are no longer my King,” he replied with a careless shrug. “Then we are equal in stature. And unless my memory fails me, the Lightbringer, the Venom of God, was never a match for the Red Dragon.”

“Referring to yourself in the third person doesn’t increase your chances of intimidating me,” snorted Lucifer. “And your memory is hardly infallible, since you seem to have forgotten I still am your King.”

When Azazel remained impassive, Lucifer said, “I suppose it’s true then.” That would explain why the gates had failed to open for him. He had briefly considered the possibility before, but hadn’t cared to explore it further. The gift of being able to stay with Chloe had been all he’d needed to know. Well, being dethroned was no problem for him. Abdicating was one thing, but if he truly was free from those responsibilities, who was he to argue?

“Fantastic. I’m no longer Hell’s warden. Then what are you doing here?” Lucifer huffed. The math seemed pretty simple to him. Not King, not needed.

“Because Lilith never left. She has been rallying the demons,” he said.

“Apparently not my problem.” He turned away.

Azazel arrested him with a firm hand on his shoulder, speaking before Lucifer shook, or threw, him off. “Her children will follow her. King or no King, she is determined to take over.” It was his last sentence that gave him real pause. “You know how she feels about humans, Lucifer. You thought a few rogue demons let loose were bad; what about legions?”

Lucifer searched in his pockets for his flask, but only came up with his cigarette case. With a sigh, he leaned against the brick wall beside the door and lit one. “You’re so adamant that God will welcome you back with open arms, then you can do something about it. Make Him proud. You
have Asmodeus and at least two dozen other angels for assistance.”

“Asmodeus hasn’t been seen in weeks,” answered Azazel.

Demons had managed to overpower Asmodeus? He felt a discomforting dart of unease at the news, but ignored it.

With a mocking smile, Lucifer tapped his cigarette, the build-up of ash lost on the wind. “I know the jewels could use a polish, but the crown is all yours. Redecorate the place as you’ve always wanted; hang new curtains. I’ve been absolved of responsibility. Before you go back, have a night on the town, on me. Just to show there’s no hard feelings. I can arrange some party supplies, maybe a few licentious liaisons; knock yourself out.”

Azazel, in his normally infuriating way, didn’t alter either his stance or tone, and like most people who dealt with him on a regular basis, completely ignored the majority of his reply. “Are you willing to bet your human woman’s life on it?”

The resounding cracking of the pavement made a satisfying sound upon Azazel’s impact, and Lucifer watched Azazel roll to his feet, a satisfying, sizable dent left behind. Somewhere nearby a car alarm was set off. “We could find out who’d win in a fight if you’d really like,” he offered.

“The threat isn’t from me,” he said, shaking out his arms. “You know my meaning. Punishing me isn’t the solution.” Azazel rolled his shoulders. His damn reasonable tone grated.

“You should be, but it couldn’t hurt.” Lucifer smiled. “Me, anyway.”

Azazel’s gaze returned to the building behind him. “She must really be something, Lucifer.”

You have no idea. And you never will, he promised himself. It wasn’t only the instinctive desire to keep him away from Chloe. He trusted Azazel less than he could throw him. What would he be willing to take away from him to get his way? Would Azazel use her as leverage?

“I’ll be around,” he heard Azazel say behind him, hand already on the doorknob. “In case you change your mind.”

From across the room, Chloe met his eyes, and he could tell she was worried from the crease in her forehead and the way her gaze swept over him. The last thing she needed was to know about Azazel’s concern, which he had no doubt could be easily resolved if Azazel would just get his arse back down there.

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Another arsenic-suspected poisoning had been found at the apartment of two female roommates. The off-campus housing was technically outside of their precinct’s jurisdiction, but the likelihood of its connection to the arsenic murders gave them purview. Chloe and Lucifer arrived at the apartment off the UCLA campus a quarter past nine, finding one of the roommates, Tyra, waiting in the living room with a box of tissues in her lap and her cell phone in one hand. She hoped the woman wasn’t sending out texts or social media posts about the murder.

When they approached Tyra, she put her phone down and dramatically blinked her eyes, as if battling back tears. It didn’t escape Chloe’s notice that there wasn’t a single used tissue or sign her makeup had been smudged. Either that was the most high-performance mascara she had ever seen, or she wasn’t as distraught over her roommate’s death as it would seem.

Meeting up with Connie in the apartment’s kitchen, Chloe assessed the body of the victim. She
looked similar in age to Tyra, and from a distance might even have been mistaken for her, though her skin was the darker of the two’s. “Is it confirmed arsenic?”

“No, not yet. I’ll put a priority rush on the labs, but I can tell you what I see fits. She was sick quickly and violently and there is evidence in the sink that she tried to vomit what she’d ingested,” Connie collected the evidence bag for Chloe. “Sweet tea,” she identified the half-empty bottle. One of those plastic Lipton bottles you could pick up a pack of at the grocery store or from a vending machine. Chloe turned the bag over, examining the plastic. She couldn’t see any holes or evidence of the drink being tampered, but that didn’t mean forensics wouldn’t find it.

“Alright, thanks,” Chloe said, beginning to organize notes and survey the room. She was good with clues, with jigsaw pieces, but Ella was gifted at seeing how a crime scene came together, reconstructing the last moments from what remained. The kitchen seemed neat, but bare, as expected of two college students who most likely spent the majority of their time out, either in classes or work or friends.

“Was a candle found?”

Connie handed her a second bag, and Chloe recognized the same long-tapered candle as before. Flipping it over, she found a black nine written on the bottom. The arsenic murderer was done waiting, and was picking up right where he left off with number ten. Eleven and twelve still hadn’t been found, but that could be due to any number of reasons. Maybe the victims hadn’t ingested whatever substance had been poisoned, or maybe their deaths hadn’t been attributed to toxins. The increased volume of arsenic was showing with each new victim, and while that could be a correlation to the crimes, it was also likely the murderer was losing self-control.

What would come next when he had?

When Lucifer joined her, she told him the facts she’d compiled. “Her name was Shawna Porter. Nineteen. Accounting student at the college.”

“Someone actually chooses to do that?” He asked. When Chloe looked at him with censure, he smiled innocently. “I suppose it’s like people who choose to be taxidermists and greens keepers. It takes all kinds, as they say.”

She sighed. “Boring or not, her chance to do it is gone. Let’s go talk to the roommate.”

Tyra was on her phone again when they approached her. When she noticed them, she flashed a smile and said apologetically, “My classmate. I had to explain why I wasn’t in class.”

“Okay,” Chloe said. “Tyra Michaels, I’m Detective Decker and this is Lucifer Morningstar, my consultant. We would appreciate if you limit any information you share with others while we’re investigating.”

She dropped her smile and tossed her phone onto the couch cushion next to her. “Fine.”

“Could you walk us through what happened today? Everything from the beginning of the day to when you found Shawna,” she asked.

Tyra shrugged but began describing. “Tuesdays I have an early morning class at six-thirty. Shawna’s doesn’t start until noon because she bartends at night, so I really don’t see her until I come back between classes. I have a break until about ten, when I go back. I like to go for a run in between, so I came home, changed, left, and when I returned to shower, there she was.”

“What are you a student of? Accounting, like your friend?” Lucifer asked curiously.
She made a face of distaste. “Ew. No. I’m in fashion design.”

“Ah, much more glamorous!” approved Lucifer.

“I see… Anything strange the last few days? Any odd behavior or visitors, anyone hanging around?” Chloe asked, ignoring him.

The young woman shook her head. “Not that I noticed.”

“And what about when you left for your run today? Shawna was acting normally?” Looking over Tyra’s clothes, she registered the exercise tank and yoga pants, as pristine as the woman’s makeup had been. Tear-proof makeup and sweat-proof work-out clothes.

“Yeah. I saw her for a minute. I grabbed a water from the fridge and she got out tea.”

Nodding, Chloe asked, “Is she the only one who drinks those?”

“No, we both do. I was actually kind of annoyed. It was the last of it and one of us was going to have to go to the store.” Tyra’s eyes shot to the kitchen. “I guess if I had taken it, I’d be dead now instead.”

“Seems that way,” replied Chloe. “And you can’t think of anyone who would have a problem with either of you? Maybe someone who believes one of you is guilty of something?”

Puzzled, Tyra’s eyebrows drew together. “Guilty? What would we be guilty of?”

Lucifer regarded her consideringly. “No cheating on an exam or stealing the rent money for a disgraceful gambling habit? Exhorting little children to sew sequined cushions for your fashion parade?”

“That’s ridiculous,” Tyra objected, looking at him as if was a raving lunatic. “And I would know if Shawna did anything. We’re like best friends.”

His sarcasm bypassed Tyra’s comprehension completely. “Obviously. Friends are always trustworthy.”

—-

Paperwork might be too boring for Lucifer, but there were times Chloe honestly enjoyed it. When a case was completed, it gave her a sense of closure, that she had done her best to serve the victim and his family. And at other times, it helped her keep perspective, each testimony, witness, and piece of evidence categorized and labeled. Like puzzle pieces waiting to be assembled, and she could take them from the box and try to put them together to form a picture.

She was reviewing the files she had organized pertaining to the arsenic murders, noting her questions and thoughts as she compared the prior cases to today’s newest event, when she felt a presence nearby and raised her head to see a stranger at her desk.

No, not a stranger, Chloe remembered. She had met him just two days ago, briefly. The man-angel related to Lucifer, looking like any other normal human in faded jeans and a casual T-shirt. Like Lucifer and Amenadiel, he was also impressively built and handsome. She supposed it was the result of divine genetics. Unlike them, however, his features were Asian. Idly, she wondered if all angels were representative of all types of people; it certainly seemed so based on the small sample she’d met.
Lucifer had been very close-mouthed about Azazel after his abrupt visit. When she’d asked, Lucifer had told her a repetition of what she had heard at the door. Distantly related, and friends a long time ago. He had admitted though that Azazel was a fallen angel, which meant he was also from Hell. That worried her. Lucifer assured her he wouldn’t be around long, and that Azazel had only been here to ask if he would be returning since it was apparent that Lilith had not left Hell after all.

Chloe couldn’t help wondering though if that was the whole story.

“Detective Decker,” he greeted her politely. “Perhaps you remember me?”

She nodded. “I do. Azazel, isn’t it? Lucifer isn’t around right now.”

“Oh, I know,” he answered pleasantly. “It’s you I wanted to see.”

“Me?” Chloe felt a trickle of unease. What could he want with her? Face impassive, she gestured to an open chair. Lucifer had just left a few minutes ago. Either Azazel had impeccable timing, or he had been waiting for a moment he could catch her alone.

The angel sat, relaxing into the chair. “Has Lucifer told you why I came to see him?”

Closing the file folder on her desk, Chloe sat back and crossed her arms over her chest. “Why don’t you tell me?”

He hesitated, seemingly gathering the right words, and rested his hands on his knees. Both his tone and his expression was calm, nearly friendly. “When we met, you asked if I was another of Lucifer’s brothers. Do you know much about his family?”

“If you’re asking if I know who you really are, then yes, I do,” she replied carefully. She doubted revealing her knowledge of the celestial world to Azazel was going to put her in danger. In fact, she was hoping it meant he would be candid. And if there was one thing being a detective had taught her, it was how to use information to your advantage to procure the right kinds of reactions.

“Interesting,” he murmured, and it was clear he was talking about her, not to her. After a long, assessing pause, he said, “I came to bring Lucifer back to… well, you know.”

She’d thought as much. It hadn’t seemed likely that someone would come all the way here as an emissary just to tell Lucifer about Lilith. “Why do you think he needs to go back?”

His smile was genuinely amused, if somewhat nonplussed. “You don’t want him to go, do you? You truly care about him. The Devil himself.”

It didn’t seem there was any way she could respond to that without revealing too much, either about her own feelings or Lucifer’s. With it being apparent that Lucifer hadn’t been pleased to see Azazel on their doorstep, she was leery of doing or saying anything that could complicate the situation.

Azazel continued, leaning forward to communicate how serious he was. “Believe it or not, I care about him too. My presence here isn’t to hurt him.” He locked eyes with her as he recounted the facts. “He is the King. He needs to rule, and he is the only one who can.”

“And if he doesn’t want to?” How long would he be forced to do something he hated, that he didn’t deserve to be responsible for?

He sighed. “Then I don’t know what may happen, Detective. Lilith is inciting a lot of anger, a lot
of desire to leave Hell and take what they want here for themselves.”

Chloe looked away briefly, guilt rising uncomfortably. In the face of the possible carnage that could unfold, how could she stand by and let it happen?

“You want me to tell Lucifer he should go,” she said quietly.

“It would be for the best,” he said, just as quietly and solemnly. There was no triumph in his voice. Azazel almost sounded sympathetic. “There is no one else who can control them. Even the angels resent their captivity.”

She knew she was grasping at straws, fruitlessly reaching for a miracle. “He said he couldn’t get through when he tried. Maybe that means he isn’t supposed to.”

Azazel gave a light shrug in response. “Maybe. But if so, no one else has taken his place.” He stood to leave, offering her a polite, departing smile. “You will do what you believe is right. That is all I can ask.”

She sat at her desk for some time, weighing each side, trying to discover, as he’d said, what she believed was right. No answer came easily, and no solution seemed conceivable. In the end, Chloe left work with a heavy heart, and went to the restaurant they’d agreed on for dinner, mind and stomach churning.

A hostess led her to the table where he was already waiting, and his bright smile at seeing her hurt all the more. Lucifer hurried to hold her chair for her with gentlemanly decorum, sneaking an incorrigible kiss while he had the chance, but as soon as he’d reclaimed his seat, his happy mood began to fade and concern took its place.

“Are you feeling alright?” He asked, and she struggled to answer him with a smile. Anytime she had so much as a headache or felt tired, he worried. Sometimes his hovering drove her crazy, but right now she was reminded painfully of how sweet it was.

Putting off what she needed to say would only make it worse. She doubted she could make it through the whole meal with the conversation she’d had with Azazel hanging over her in dread, gnawing at her. “Lucifer… “ he looked up at her immediately, caught by the misery in her tone, even though she’d tried to hide it.

“Azazel came to see me after you left.”

Chapter End Notes

Unfortunately, work has become insane, as I knew it would. I’m sorry that it will be much longer between updates now, but I’m committing to at least twice a week. I plan to get some writing in over the holiday weekend. My husband says I have to do laundry first lol - we’re practically living out of baskets. Anyway, the end is in sight... You guys have made some wonderful suggestions, and you have no idea how badly I would love to explore some of those ideas. I’m considering the idea of a series, though. That way I can finish this one the way I intend to, and if anyone is interested in reading more, I can extend the story.
As I figuratively toss that idea around, please drop me a comment letting me know what you think about it and the latest chapter. I feel I had to rush it some, which sucks, since I’ve only been able to work on it a few minutes at a time here and there this week. I love to reply to each of you, and I hope to finish those later today, and I’m eagerly looking forward to reading more of your feedback! It seriously keeps me going when I need it.
Chapter Summary

Some romantic realizations and some advancements in the case.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“Oh, did he now?” Taking a deep drink of wine, Lucifer watched her steadily, irritated. Azazel was too crafty; he’d got to her because she was not only mind-bogglingly noble and selfless, but also willing to sacrifice him too. He studied her, looking for and expecting her mistrust and judgement. She met his gaze head-on, honest and clear.

“Yes, he did,” she said.

“And, let me guess, he has enlisted you on the crusade to return the King to his deserving subjects,” he suggested, tone piercing.

Her solemn eyes never left his, and he knew the sense of disappointment was trumping irritation.

“I want you to explain to me,” she said, “how the gates work.” If she had recognized his caustic tone, she chose to ignore it.

“The gates?” Lucifer asked with a frown. That was what she wanted to talk about? The gates to Hell?

“Are they, like, real metal gates?” Chloe asked, and smiled gratefully to the waiter as he placed her salad on the table.

He nodded a thank you as well whilst his glass was refilled. “Yes and no,” he admitted. “Metaphysically, yes. Physically, no.”

She laughed wryly. “I don’t understand. You mean, they don’t really exist, but people think they do?”

“Precisely.”

“So, how does that work? Like, you see it, but it’s not there? Is it a, what do you call it, like an optical illusion? You can’t touch them?” Chloe asked, sounding fascinated.

“No, they’re completely there. But while they exist, they don’t at the same time. It’s a matter of where they exist.” Attempting to explain the metaphysical and spiritual world was a mix of tiring and cumbersome, but also strangely liberating. He didn’t care about the wheres or wherefores of the universe or his father’s architecture genius. Yet, watching her — and he could almost literally see the wheels turning in her mind — work to understand something that other people couldn’t conceive, it made him feel something. He wasn’t sure what.

His siblings understood how all the realms and planes came together and could be separated like colors through a prism, how matter was malleable, how time could move in flux, but one thing
they’d never understood was him. His friends here, Chloe, came the closest to understanding him, maybe sometimes even more than he understood himself. But this might be the first time someone tried to understand both. The intimacy of that was alluring, but terrifying. What would she ask about next? How he spent his days in Hell? His childhood?

“The Buddhists believe in 31 planes of existence. Some pagans believe in as few as seven,” he said. “Neither is correct, nor is their concept complete, but it’s an accurate enough description. What can’t be sensed here can be perceived elsewhere, if one can get to it. Humans cannot yet. Souls can.”

She nodded slowly. “Which is why once someone dies, their soul can enter Heaven or Hell?”

“Exactly.”

Chloe appeared to be mulling it over, and he wondered what questions were taking form behind her eyes, fixed on the tablecloth while she ate distractedly. A thought occurred to him, and he sat up, his blood running cold. She would never think about trying to—

“So if the gates aren’t really there, how can you not get in?” She asked, interrupting him.

“I suppose that’s the million dollar question,” he murmured absently, distracted with his thoughts. “Like real gates, they can be locked.”

“You’re telling me you’re locked out?” She was fighting a smile and finally gave in, snorting softly in amusement. “The Devil locked out of Hell.”

Lucifer laughed shortly as well and took a drink. He found it amusing too. “I’ve never been locked out of anywhere before. Well, except for Heaven.”

“I knew it! I knew you were getting into places somehow!” She exclaimed triumphantly. He said nothing but smiled unrepentantly. “So how come you can’t unlock them now?”

He shrugged. “I told you before I couldn’t get in. I suppose I’m not supposed to be there anymore. The lock shouldn’t keep me out, not if I’m King. Locked on the outside, locked on the inside, it doesn’t matter. Any angel can access them, but I… The King,” he corrected, “has complete control over its reality.”

“I see,” she said softly. She was unnervingly quiet for a long minute and then met his eyes. “I want you to promise me something. It’s selfish and awful but I don’t care.”

This couldn’t be good, he thought. Now that they had finished the philosophical discussion, they had returned to the original cause. Azazel and his poorly timed interference. It pained him, like the slice of a knife, to ask, but he couldn’t deny her. “What is it?”

“That you won’t leave me,” she said, nearly at a whisper.

Dumbfounded, he stared back at her. Her conviction didn’t waver, gaze steadfast and pleading. “You aren’t telling me I should go?”

She shook her head, swallowing, and he thought he saw a brightness glistening in her eyes that made him tense. Vulnerability like that was rare from her, and signs of her on the verge of tears were unnerving. Every time he was simultaneously bombarded between the compulsive need to hold her and run like Hell.

“You wouldn’t lie to me. You think you aren’t supposed to go back and I don’t either. I
understand the world by measuring evidence, Lucifer. Everything between us and your being locked out... I don't think you're meant to go back. But I'm scared you will."

Reaching for her across the table, he caught her hand in his and kissed her. Quietly, he promised, "I will never leave you. But if you're thinking this is some grand cosmic balance, that I'm fated not to go back there, that isn't how it works, Detective. I wasn't set free for good behavior because I served my time."

"How do you know?" she asked. "How do you know that's not it - that your father isn't letting you go?"

Lucifer shook his head, looking away from her. She just didn't understand. His father didn't make those kinds of statements, not to him anyway. Whatever was happening here, he was sure his father was far from involved.

—-

Amenadiel answered the door with his son tucked in one arm, and upon seeing Lucifer at the door, pushed Charlie into his arms and said in relief, "Finally, I can go to the bathroom!"

"You're really selling me on this whole fatherhood thing," called Lucifer after the retreating figure of his brother down the hallway. He looked down at the face of his nephew, whose eyes were screwed up tightly despite the misleading appearance of tranquil sleep. In the next moment, the baby’s mouth opened in an ear-piercing scream, a wail that abraded every nerve.

"Stop that, stop, shh," he said desperately before shouting after Amenadiel, "Is it normal for him to sound like a dying cat?"

"Jiggle him a little," Amenadiel called back.

"Are you going for a world record?" he asked him, annoyed. But he gently bounced the infant in his arms, walking a few steps in either direction. The screaming didn’t stop, but quieted some, the baby finally taking breaths in between howls. Finally, those reduced to whimpers and Charlie resumed the opossum-like guise of sleep.

Amenadiel returned and gently transferred Charlie into his arms. "Thanks. He’s had colic the last few days. Won’t sleep unless he’s held. I haven’t been able to put him down."

"Charming," Lucifer muttered.

"Hey, you better get used to it," his brother rejoined. Seeing the look of dread on his brother’s face, he smiled and said kindly, "It’s not that bad, Luci. The benefits outweigh the cons."

Doubtfully, Lucifer replied, "Right..." Straightening his suit jacket, he took a seat on the couch and crossed his legs. "What did you want to talk to me about anyway? Or was it just a misguided notion to extol the virtues of fatherhood and share profound tidbits of your time in the trenches?"

His brother didn’t answer, patting his son’s back as he lay against his shoulder. "I’m concerned what will happen when the child is born, Luci. Its nature."

"You think because I’m the devil, my offspring will be evil?" Lucifer asked with some shock. Although he had voiced similar thoughts himself upon the news, now it upset him, and he could barely believe this was coming from his own brother. He, who had only weeks ago, been convinced their father wanted more for him? The slight filled him with righteous anger. No one would vilify his son or daughter.
Amenadiel shook his head. “No, not evil, Luci. But nephilim? Possibly. With your temperament as a child’s influence, who knows what he or she may become capable of.”

Scoffing, Lucifer stilled, stiff in his chair. “Unbelievable. One moment you’re suffocating me in platitudes and waxing poetic about your progeny, but Father-forbid I be allowed the same without it meaning a plague descending on humankind.”

“That’s not what I’m saying,” he protested.

“Forgive me if I fail to see it otherwise.” He’d thought they were past this; that in the last year, he and Amenadiel had finally become brothers, that his brother had begun to see who he really was beyond his feud with their father.

“Luci, that’s not what I’m saying,” he repeated. “Father punished the nephilim and the angels who sired them, and making it - I thought - impossible for an angel to do the same again. The fact that you committed another act He’s forbidden—”

“No, it isn’t,” Lucifer finally replied quietly. “I don’t think that’s how it happened.”

Eyebrows raised in skepticism, Amenadiel said, “Well, you weren’t mortal like I was.”

Not completely, no. Amenadiel had gone so far as to lose his wings, and Lucifer hadn’t. But in accordance with Amenadiel’s theory, it depended on self-actualization, how the angel saw himself. His brother had seen himself as undeserving and fallen, and so he had; the subsequent humanity had been self-inflicted.

That first time with Chloe, Lucifer had believed it was his only chance to experience a night with her, and all he’d desired was for it to somehow last long enough for both of them, in defiance of the likelihood they wouldn’t have another one. He’d known it couldn’t make a difference and that he would be forced to leave soon after, and even tried to talk her out of it because it was futile. In that desperation, he could see now how he had wanted to cut away the complications and impossibilities, maybe even so far as to wish them away and want to be human; simple, free. It hadn’t been any more conscious than Amenadiel’s guilt for his perceived failures and sins.

Another thought whispered across his mind, a shadow that rippled like water, too translucent to yet make out beyond a few shifting blades of light. Faced with the unavoidable truth that he had to leave her, the threat of Mammon and Lilith vanquished, he’d stood before the gates, feeling like his heart had been broken and hollowed out. When they had failed to open, was it because he hadn’t wanted them to, because he’d wanted to be free?

If there was any substance in the possibility, then it meant Hell was without a King because of him.

—

Lucifer seemed preoccupied, Chloe thought. She’d spoken to him at least twice and he hadn’t appeared to notice.

“Lucifer, the college girl?”

He shook his head as if to dispel the distracting fog, and looked at her. “I’m sorry. What about college girls? Were you asking if they really do go wild? ”

“No,” she said with a sigh. “I was referring to our last arsenic victim. The college girl who died?”
“Oh, yes,” he agreed. “The one you said has no family or close friends nearby, and an estranged father somewhere in Pittsburgh.”

“Chicago,” she corrected.

“Close enough.”

Rolling her eyes, she said, “Yes, no leads in people close to her. It’s like she had no relationships, so what terrible secret did she have and who would kill her over it?”

“She couldn’t have been a hermit. College is a time for keg parties, hook-ups in the library stacks, latent experimental girl-on-girl—“

“Sexual curiosity notwithstanding, I can’t find any evidence of anyone who really knew her aside from the roommate,” Chloe frowned over her notes.

Lucifer didn’t look up from playing Angry Birds on his phone. “Young, attractive women don’t go to college to be hermits. You stay at home to be a hermit.”

Making a sound of agreement, Chloe said, “You’re right.”

The velocity of the red bird swung pathetically low, falling short of the target. He tucked his phone back into his pocket. “Of course I am. And she wouldn’t be a successful bartender without an ability to talk to people, be personable.”

“Yeah,” she said dryly, “Maze is so personable. People can’t help telling her their troubles.”

“Maze’s absolute disregard for human interest drew its own perverse crowd, believe me. The more the challenge and mystery. But regardless, if the victim was tending bar, it must have been somewhere shady. Even I adhere to liquor laws.”

Chloe nodded. “That’s true. By law, she couldn’t serve bar until she was 21. I haven’t found any paystubs or records in her checking account showing where she was employed. She has a whopping 29 dollars and 83 cents. So she either didn’t work in a bar like her roommate claimed, or she was paid under the table somewhere. Any ideas?”

Looking thoughtful, Lucifer said, “I can ask around. There are a few places that believe they’re far enough below or above the law to worry.”

“Like mob families?” That would cast the murder in an entirely different light. Shawna’s murder could have been the result of betrayal, retribution, or a deal gone wrong, and crafted to resemble the recent string of murders to cover-up the real crime. “We need to find more connections to people in her life. The only angle we have access to is the college. She must have talked to people in her classes, had friends on campus. Her roommate seemed pretty self-absorbed. Just because she didn’t know of any friends doesn’t mean Shawna didn’t have any.”

“Oh,” Lucifer said with intrigued interest, “undercover?”

“That’s what I’m thinking. But,” she said before he could run away with any ideas, “not us.”

Nearly pouting, he asked, “Why not? I’ve seen you let your hair down, Detective. And there’s always the library stacks…” his tone turned low and seductive.

In her mind’s eye, the image he described flared to life; alone with Lucifer, pinned solidly against the shelves, unable to make a sound… Clearing her throat, Chloe imperceptibly pressed her legs
“Shawna’s roommate would recognize us. Who else could pass for a college student and seamlessly infiltrate the masses?” She tapped her pencil on the pad until, a few seconds later, Lucifer laughed.

“Detective, I know just the person.”

“Well, that’s... Wow. That’s actually really great,” Chloe said, surprised and honestly happy for Eve and the look of proud confidence shining from her smile. “What are you majoring in, or are you undecided?”

The day of Eve’s rescue, Chloe had briefly wondered if there was a change to Eve, and she saw now she was right. A beautiful woman, Eve could effortlessly pull off nearly any style, probably even rags. But her simple jeans and white peasant blouse added rather than detracted. She looked comfortable, confident, natural. Truly happy. And her apartment around her reflected that as well, filled with eclectic furnishings, colorful paintings and sculptures, scattered with stacks of textbooks and novels.

A shyly, Eve swept a lock of hair behind her ear. “I’ve been going to UCLA for about two months. I joined the semester late, but begged them to let me in; I promised I could make up the lost time, so they did. At first I really had no idea what I wanted to study, I just wanted to try everything.”

“Sounds like the Eve I know,” Lucifer said with the hint of a smirk, but his suggestive words were kind.

Undoubtedly understanding his joke, Eve laughed in agreement. “How else can I know what I want? So I started taking classes and fell completely in love with my official major as of a few weeks ago - Women’s Studies! You wouldn’t believe some of the opportunities there are!”

“That’s wonderful, Eve,” Chloe smiled. “And you’re sure you wouldn’t mind helping us?”

“I would love to help,” she answered seriously. “Everyone in my classes has been talking about it. The girl who was her roommate says she can’t stand to talk about it, but that doesn’t stop the news from recirculating.”

“My money’s on the roommate,” Lucifer said. “‘Best friend’ doesn’t equate trust and loyalty.”

Projecting again, Chloe thought, but let his comment slide. She knew he was upset by Azazel’s presence, and whatever history between them was worming its way to the surface.

Sitting on the couch, Eve put her hands on her knees and sat up, spine straight. “What do I do?”

“Try to get into the classes she went to. Talk to the students, find out if anyone was close to her or suspected her of any suspicious activity. And,” Chloe added, “see if anyone knows where she
worked. We think a bar, but someplace she could get away with serving underage. If I were a college student, I’d want to be fast friends with the girl who could get me liquor.”


Pausing, Chloe said, “Most importantly, you do not go anywhere with anyone; do not risk yourself, okay? You stay smart and safe and tell us what you know.”

Her lips lifted in a wry approximation of humor. “I promise. The last kidnapping was plenty. I just want to help. Make a difference.”

“You will.” Chloe assured her.

Before they left, she saw Lucifer lean over Eve, leaving a kiss on her cheek. “Good for you, Eve. You’re finding what you want.”

“Maze told me the news,” she replied. “Sounds like you are too.”

“I think so,” he murmured.

—-

She urged him upstairs, but definitely not for sleep; her hormones had staged a revolt, and were demanding satisfaction. And if Lucifer’s immediate enthusiastic response was any indication, he was fine with that.

Bringing her mouth back to his, Chloe nipped his lower lip, and he opened his mouth for her, beckoning her to follow. She did, tongue sweeping seductively against his, and for a few minutes they played, enjoying the give and take, the chase and retreat. His hands wandered, grasping her curves and bringing her flush to him, where he could press against her.

Her fingers found him, deftly loosening his belt and drawing down the zipper to slip inside and slide her touch along him again, warm and enticing. Tantalizing by its promise of pressure, but still leaving him longing for it.

“Do you trust me, Detective?” His voice was a low vibration against her skin that descended as he moved to his knees, and looked up at her, waiting to see her reply.

“Yes,” she whispered without pause. And though she did, completely, in all the ways that mattered, she felt a flutter of trepidation. She jerked in surprise when he hooked his fingers beneath her waistband and tugged sharply, the sound of protesting fabric tearing, and her gasp was half-pleased and half-annoyed. “You are destroying my clothes,” she scolded, though to be truthful, she was soon going to need to buy others anyway.

He brought her slacks down her legs, his hands traveling back up the smooth expanse of thigh and waist, absorbing the silk of her skin. Lucifer pulled her down atop him. Chloe raised her eyebrows questioningly, glancing at the perfectly good bed behind them. But he’d asked her to trust him, so she let herself relax.

“That’s not a fair argument. Do you have any idea how many suits, masterpieces of fine tailoring, have been lost detecting?”

She began to laugh, but the sound promptly transformed into a moan of delight. He had a hold on her hips and kept her from fully lowering, inching himself down until he could lick along the seam of her sex, a slow sweep from bottom to top.
Apparently intent on eliciting the same sweet sound, he continued, long, warm, wet strokes that encouraged her arousal to grow. Chloe didn’t tug, but her hand sifted through his hair, a soft touch wordlessly communicating her need for him to continue. Acquiescing for a few minutes, he flicked his tongue against her, pausing when she strained to come closer; he held her shy of release, and then stopped.

Without warning, he had caught her wrists behind her back, and she felt a material wrap snugly, but not tightly, binding them together, not only restraining her, but also her ability to touch him. He’d distracted her so thoroughly she’d had no idea of his intentions.

His teasing continued, but now when she tried to adjust her position, prolong the touch of his tongue where she needed it, he pulled on her wrists. The movement was gentle but effective, forcing her to straighten away from him in the instinctive need for balance.

Finally, he brought her to her climax, but not until the combination of being controlled and suspended release had made her overheated and desperate. Her cry was wrung from her in equal parts relief and heightened senses.

Lucifer moved, sitting before her and engaging her in another kiss. “Next time,” he said, “I’ll use a blindfold too.”

“I-I don’t know about that,” Chloe said, hearing the shaky quality in her voice, and not knowing if it was anxiety or excitement.

“You’ll like it,” he promised, engaging her in a long kiss before tracing the scalloped lace edge of her bra with his tongue. “When one sense is subdued, the rest feel more keenly, every part intensified. You won’t know when I’ll touch you, or how, or where. Having to accept my control and concede yours.”

He swept the straps down her arms, exposing more of her curves, touch so gossamer light it teased her nerves, and she realized that the way her skin tingled, craving more, was what he meant. Her body would reach blindly, searching for the merest kiss, the barest hint of contact.

She didn’t protest when he moved her to the bed, instead observing the way he studied her, admiring the new firmness and fullness of her breasts. She’d have to purchase new bras soon too, nearly spilling from the cups of the ones she had. Lucifer kissed above the swells of her breasts, tongue dipping into her cleavage, and untied her wrists. She was also far more sensitive, biting back a cry when he had removed her bra and drawn her nipple into his mouth. Gentling his touch, he suckled lightly, and she felt the answering tug in her womb. He licked at its mate, moving from delicate to deep pulls in the heat of his mouth until she arched toward him.

Lucifer stood by the bed but didn’t join her, instead shifting her closer to the edge. Her wrists were bound again by the length of satiny ribbon, though in front of her, and with a slow, inexorable push on her shoulder, she laid on her back as he wanted, knees bent over the side of the mattress. He slid home and moaned in pleasure, and she adjusted accordingly, closing her legs around him and tilting her hips. Lost in the bliss of his hardness filling her, pounding relentlessly, firmly pressing against that spot inside her that he seemed to always find, the one that made her ache for the next thrust, she savored each withdrawal and fierce return, greedy for every contact that came faster and harder.

Her breathing was ragged and she writhed, suspended at the peak and unable to fall. She still hadn’t been allowed to touch him, having to absorb his with every advance of his cock filling her, the stilling hold of his hands on her waist, and the way his gaze roved her hungrily. The restraint that kept her from touching him didn’t extend to her own body, and she teased her clit, loving his
obvious enjoyment. Then her need was too high and she brought herself to orgasm, muscles gratefully tensing around his thick, hard length and she felt like she had fallen from a high cliff, a dizzying head-long flight that chased over her in waves of pure ecstasy.

He followed soon after with a brief shudder, her name on his lips when he came, and she edged back to give him room to join her. Lucifer kissed her lazily, hand entwined in her mess of hair while they laid there, and her pounding heart eventually found its normal rhythm.

She didn’t remember falling asleep, though she woke feeling wonderful, even considering indulging the idea he’d voiced the previous night as she drove to her old apartment. Chloe was only there to make a final sweep of the house and make sure she hadn’t left anything behind, drop off the keys at the landlord’s office, and check the mailbox. Although she’d changed her address officially over a week ago, sometimes mail didn’t get the memo.

She hadn’t really expected to find anything however, which was why her reaction, the plummet of her stomach, was twice as intense. From the mailbox, she drew out the one item left behind, though it hadn’t been delivered by the postal service. Turning the candle over, she found the black number 1 indelibly printed on the bottom. Her sins would be the final act of vengeance.

Chapter End Notes

Well, this has been a harrowing few weeks. If you’re still here, thanks for sticking with me. I had really hoped to get more writing in, and I have another full week ahead of me. Maybe I can luck out tomorrow, but I don’t know yet.

Back to the story... look, I know Lucifer is a lot more in touch with his emotions here. Even bordering on sappy; maybe “pathetic.” But I see a man who wants to hold onto a second chance and is experiencing all the euphoria of being in love. Maybe it’s not a perfect fit, but it could be, especially from a psychological standpoint. The whole show is about redemption and forgiveness and love. I also haven’t written anything that hasn’t been hinted at or shown in his character on the show. I’m not trying to be passive-aggressive here, or rude or insulting, but I felt I should give fair warning. If you really dislike my Lucifer, you should probably get off the ride here, because you’ll really hate the ending.
The sea of dancers ebbed with the flow of music, some falling into shadow as others sparkled beneath the colorful lights. Lucifer watched idly from the bar, where he casually leaned while waiting for his drink. He’d played a few sets and was now content simply observing the masses, a decent turn-out even for a weeknight. He enjoyed seeing Lux’s success, and knowing he’d had a hand in it. Likely many more parts of his anatomy, but still.

Maze slid him another bourbon and set a beer down beside it. Before he asked why, because he’d only ordered one drink for himself and no one else, he saw Daniel beside him. Lucifer was mildly intrigued to see him, as Daniel rarely frequented Lux, unless he was with someone else, on a date with Amenadiel, or wanting to drink himself blind, which didn’t happen often.

It seemed that tonight that was exactly Daniel’s intention, and judging by the heavy way he took his seat on the bar stool, he was well into his cups. Lucifer took a drink himself, gaze returning to the crowd.

Other than his proximity, the other man seemed set on ignoring him. Playing along for the time being, Lucifer steadily sipped at his drink. He was thinking of going home to Chloe soon. It had been an enjoyable evening, socializing, and even receiving more attention than usual since he wasn’t here every night. It made the nights he did spend here garner far more interest, which was fun.

Returning to their end of the bar, Maze refilled his glass and said with heat, “When are you going to get rid of him?”

Raising a brow in question, Lucifer asked, “Who, Daniel?”

“No,” she replied testily. “Him,” she stressed, indicating Azazel with a jerk of his head. Lucifer found him standing a few yards away at one of the round bar tables at the edge of the dance floor. One elbow leaned on the table while he surveyed the crowd. Even with only Azazel’s profile turned to him, his implacable, stoic expression was easily visible.

Someone needed to loosen some screws, Lucifer thought. Azazel always acted more like a statue than an actual living being. Surrounded by music, gaiety, women, he was still unaffected.

“I didn’t know he was still here,” he answered. He supposed it had been foolish to believe Azazel would give up that easily and leave him in peace.

“Yeah, well, I’m sick of it,” Maze said. “He stays upstairs almost all the time, then down here almost all night. Much more and I’m going to kill somebody,” she growled.

Maze and Azazel had something of a hate-hate relationship. He would describe it as love-hate, but
there was absolutely no affection between them, only disdain. When they did have sex, it looked more like a fight to the death.

Amused, he said, “I would have thought you’d make something of a reunion.”

“We said hello. We fucked. We’re done. Get him out of here,” she said sullenly.

He smiled into his glass at her petulant tone. He didn’t disagree though; he wanted Azazel gone, where he could occupy himself keeping an eye on Hell, not here, complicating his life and approaching Chloe with calculated appeals to make him return. Yesterday’s little stunt was still annoying him.

There was a light squeeze on his arm and a sultry voice to his left said, “Well, if it isn’t the elusive Lucifer Morningstar.”

Bethany, a tall, leggy blonde, smiled coyly. She came to Lux once a month or so, when she was in town for business. He hadn’t seen her in the time he’d been back, the last times perhaps once or twice when he’d been with Eve. They’d had a few parties that he didn’t remember many details of.

Returning her playful smile with a casual one, Lucifer replied, “Lovely to see you as always, darling.”

She sidled a little closer, making a pretense of sliding her martini glass to Maze for a replacement. “You’ve been a difficult man to find,” she said.

“Have I?” he asked.

“Do you remember Joy?” Bethany asked, smiling over her shoulder at her friend, a more petite version of herself, and he recalled those impressive pairs of legs were both swimsuit models. She returned her attention to him, tilting her head and biting her lip. “She says you’ve practically been a ghost the last few months. Everyone thinks you ran off to Las Vegas again and brought back a mysterious new wife.”

Scoffing, he ignored her attempts to lure his interest, and answered, “As you can see, I’ve hardly disappeared.”

“Yes. And I’m so glad to see you while I’m here.” Sipping from her fresh martini, she said, “I’m hoping you’ll satisfy my curiosity though. Is it really a new wife or something, or have you just been in need of the right company?” Her lips curved.

“Or something,” he replied, eyeing Azazel again. Then he turned to face her with a charming smile. “Speaking of the right company… I have a friend right over there,” he pointed, “who would be incredibly grateful for yours, and your friend’s of course.”

Bethany glanced the way he pointed doubtfully. “Really?” She looked Azazel up and down consideringly. Eyes on Lucifer again, her voice dropped huskily, “Are you sure we couldn’t… catch up? I’m only in town a few days.”

“Sorry,” he answered. “My nights are spoken for.” He softened his words with a kind smile. “Go have fun, Bethany.”

With a toss of her head and a one-shoulder shrug, she left to rejoin her friend, and Lucifer was greatly amused watching them approach Azazel, who was startled to find himself their sudden prey.
Daniel was shaking his head and muttered disapprovingly, “Unbelievable.”

“What?” He asked him, sighing dramatically.

“Here you are, playing charming ladies’ man, while Chloe waits at home for you. What are you going to do when the baby comes, huh? Leave her to deal with it all by herself?” Daniel said with scorn, only slightly slurring.

“In case you haven’t noticed Daniel,” he returned shortly, “I still own the place. It’s a night club. Hence, I’m here at night.”

“Whatever. Still selfish, leaving her at home while you go do whatever you want. I wonder what she’d think of you flirting with other women,” he argued, draining his beer.

With real irritation, Lucifer said, “First of all, I wasn’t flirting. If I had, I wouldn’t be standing here talking to you. Secondly, not that I have to explain myself to you, Chloe knows I’m not here to pick up lovers. Why would I need to?”

Daniel snorted derisively into his beer, words bordering on belligerent. “Right. You’re definitely on board with monogamy, because you’ve had so many relationships. Even with Eve, you screwed around. Sooner or later, you’re going to be bored going home to the same woman every night.”

His relationship with Eve had been completely different, and based on the kinds of experiences she had wanted to have. Lucifer’s lifestyle with Chloe was nowhere near the same, and he couldn’t imagine ever becoming bored. She was too interesting; their life was too interesting. And all the meaningless seductions of other women and men paled in comparison to the rush and excitement he found each time her breath quickened in anticipation, or she came to him with that look in her eyes that said she needed, wanted, him.

“I think I’m done indulging this conversation. Maybe instead of miserably sitting here, castigating me because you feel sorry for yourself, you should grow a spine and knock on Ms. Lopez’s door,” he said. Daniel could think what he wanted. Pushing away from the bar, he tossed back an order to Maze. “That’s his last drink.”

Azazel had managed to extricate himself from the two women and Lucifer sat on a nearby couch. “If you’re not going to have a good time, don’t you think you should leave?” he asked.

With his barely-touched drink in hand, Azazel coolly sat across from him. “You invited me to look around.”

“If you’re not going to have a good time, don’t you think you should leave?” he asked.

With his barely-touched drink in hand, Azazel coolly sat across from him. “You invited me to look around.”

“I invited you to have some fun. Not to follow Chloe around and try to get her on your side,” he snapped back, eyes flashing red.

Characteristically unfazed, Azazel sat back, relaxing. “I didn’t have to follow her. Just you. But you do seem to spend a lot of time with her, don’t you?”

Lucifer affected a look of horror. “Are you stalking me? I told you, I just don’t see you in that way.”

Continuing his side of the conversation, Azazel said, “I told you before I’m not a threat.”

“Either way, you’ve had your shot to convince her, and it failed. Time’s up. You can leave voluntarily or I can do it for you.”

“It’s rather interesting, isn’t it?” Azazel mused. “She protects people, saves them, seeks justice.
And she protects you.” He regarded him closely, taking a drink. “And here you are, protecting her.”

Lucifer lounged back on the cushions, arm stretched along its back, the picture of nonchalance.

“The Devil has become human enough to love,” Azazel surmised softly.

His words rubbed uncomfortably against Lucifer’s recent thoughts, the reasons he’d been able to sire a child, the cause of his inability to open Hell’s gates. He shook them off.

“I am staying here, Azazel. And you’re not. You will go back, immediately, even if I have to rip your beating heart out myself to do it. A celestial must rule, and you’re a celestial, fallen or not.”

Azazel was quiet a minute, not arguing, but Lucifer knew better than to assume it was because his threat had cowed him. “And if I can’t? If it’s not your father’s will, it won’t matter.”

A chilling smile spread across Lucifer’s face. Chloe had his promise and whether or not his dad liked it, the events of the last few months had made it impossible for him to leave her again. “Then Hell can be His problem.”

The next morning he’d woken for the second day in a row to find Chloe had already risen and left for work. Depending on the hours he kept, they didn’t always get up at the same time, but he’d usually join her at work later, like he planned to today, when there was an active case.

It wouldn’t be until after his appointment with the Doctor, however. After the rituals of grooming and dressing, he whistled on his way down the stairs to the kitchen, intent on a quick meal before leaving. Lucifer opened the refrigerator to find it shockingly bare. With consternation, he opened the pantry to find it just as empty. Where had all the food gone?

He pulled his phone from his pocket to text Chloe, but caught sight of the time, and decided to ask her when he saw her instead. If he left now, he’d have time to buy something on the way to Dr. Linda’s.

The mystery of the missing food was relocated to a distant corner of his mind when he took his usual seat on the Doctor’s couch. It was odd, but not important, and he wanted his time to be useful. Before his leaving, he’d had something of a breakthrough, and now that he was committed to staying, he wanted to make sure he was past another regression into Devil-form.

“Hello, Lucifer,” Dr. Linda greeted him. “How are you?”

“Spectacular as ever,” he said glibly. “In fact, I think if you agreed I’m past my denial and self-hate, I’d be perfect.”

With an understanding but firm smile she said, “I’m sorry. I can’t do that. There’s still a lot you need to work through, especially now that there are so many changes to your life.”

“You said changes are good,” he pointed out.

“And they are,” Linda agreed. “But no one is equipped to handle them without some adjustment. For example, fatherhood is going to continue to be a change. What are you thinking about that development?”

Lucifer shrugged. “The Detective is with child and then the baby will be born. Not much to do about it.”
“But what about preparing? Getting ready to have this new person in your life?”

“We have a room for it and she’s buying furniture and things. At her doctor appointments, they say all is in working order. No horns or devil tail,” he quipped.

“Right,” she answered. “But preparing emotionally and mentally. Thinking about what it means to be a father, not just a provider.”

He templed his hands, replying, “Well, I’ve decided a hands-off approach is best.” Not everything out of Daniel’s mouth last night had been asinine. There might have been a nugget of intelligence when he’d said Chloe could handle a baby by herself. Not completely of course, but enough to make the child grow up more like her, practical and moral, untainted by him. Problem solved.

Dr. Linda’s forehead creased. “‘Hands-off’?” she echoed.

“The child is more likely to grow up normal if the majority of the rearing doesn’t involve me directly,” he explained. “The Detective, for example, is a shining example of goodness, and she grew up mostly without a father. Beatrice is a good-enough child and Daniel is only around her intermittently.”

She remained quietly regarding him, then shook her head. “What I’m hearing is that you’re somehow equating the absence of a father with the description of a ‘good’ character. The two aren’t a mutually-exclusive correlation.”

“Because they haven’t been influenced by the opposite,” he said. “In their formative years. Isn’t that what you say when you bring up my mum and dad? All the things about the past continuing to impact in the future?”

“Yes,” she answered slowly, “But while relationships are complex and can result in good or bad results - and I hesitate to define them in such black and white terms, because it’s never that simple - having no relationship at all can be even more damaging.”

“How can I cause damage if I’m not there?” Lucifer asked.

“Lucifer… When you came to be in Hell after fighting with your father, how did you feel?”

He stilled his leg’s swinging motion. “Hot.”

She waited for his reply to be authentic, and when none was forthcoming, she continued. “Did you feel like your family had left you? It would be normal for anyone in that kind of circumstance to feel abandoned, guilty, scared…. Are those feelings how you want your own child to feel because you’re not there?”

“Doctor, my dad was there before I fell, and I wouldn’t say the experience was beneficial. Everyone on the planet might think He’s the answer to their prayers, quite literally, but believe me when I say He wasn’t deserving of any ‘Father of the Year’ awards. And people who buy those trite gimmicks only do so to delude themselves into pretending their relationships are enviable by others.”

“Just because it wasn’t perfect doesn’t mean it wasn’t beneficial in any way,” she countered. “And many people who had complex relationships with their own parents see it as an opportunity to have better relationships with their children. You can be the father you wish your own had been.”

He was still mulling this over when he entered the precinct. In his heart, he knew he wouldn’t really be able to stay with Chloe and not be an active participant in their child’s life. She would
hate him. Lucifer couldn’t stand disappointing her, or losing her, because he worried that he would err too severely as a father.

Seeing she was already in the lab, he picked up his step, eager to see her and also looking forward to welcoming Ms. Lopez back to work.

Vaguely, Chloe wondered why she was drinking apple juice. She despised it. But she had no sooner put the cup down on the counter when a burning slash of pain seared across her stomach and abdomen. It grew, the slash cutting deeper and deeper until she doubled over in agony.

She tried to gather the breath to scream, either in pain or for help, she wasn’t sure, but it was impossible to pull enough air into her lungs. She fell to her knees, gasping, desperately searching for anyone, or even her phone. She could call 911, she thought, or text - someone would come. Lucifer would be here. He would be here, she knew, but she hadn’t told him. Why hadn’t she just told him?

Then her stomach was heaving, forcibly rejecting the juice and the poison with it. How much arsenic had been in the bottle? How great did the killer measure her sins?

Coughing and gagging, she fought to rid her body of it. The burning never ceased, and the panicked thought - what would it do to the baby? - stole over her, chilling her blood. No, she realized, the chill was shock to her system. She was shaking.

She was on fire inside, yet wracked with shivers. Where was help, she wondered. Hadn’t she called? Chloe reached for her phone, but now it was gone. Helplessly, she got sick again, though she had already vomited everything she had, and sweat dripped from her face. Knife-like stabs of pain continued to spear her abdomen, and she futilely curled up in a ball on the kitchen floor, trying to protect the baby.

Her eyes flew open, and Chloe sat up in bed, heart hammering wildly in fear and nausea. She barely made it to the bathroom in time before she got sick, only now it wasn’t a nightmare.

After rinsing her mouth, she got back in bed, trembling. The clock read a little after two, and the spot beside her was still empty. Lucifer hadn’t come home yet.

Chloe rested her head on her knees while the nightmare faded. When she’d found the candle this morning, she’d almost texted him. Then she’d stopped, not sure what to say. What would it matter? They were no closer to catching the killer than before, and until they did, all there was to do was keep trying to solve the case, keep hunting for evidence.

Since there had been no new cases since Shawna, the college student, Chloe was spending her time reviewing notes, researching, and filing case paperwork and requests. That sort of boring work drove Lucifer to distraction, usually the trouble-making kind, so he wasn’t going to join her at the precinct until they touched-base with Eve and whatever intel she had gathered to report.

So, Chloe had thought, she would tell him about it when they saw each other that night, once she was home. In the meantime, she had thrown out every can, container, and scrap of food in the house. She doubted the killer had been able to get in to doctor any of it, but she didn’t believe in taking foolish chances, either. She knew to be careful, but what if her daughter drank a poisoned glass of milk?

Lucifer had decided to go in to Lux after, and she’d resolved she would tell him later, rather than
bother him. She was fully capable of taking care of herself, and he wasn’t in any danger away from her. It wasn’t unusual for them to go a day without crossing paths; they didn’t live in each other’s pockets, and she was fine.

But after that nightmare, she realized how stupid she was being. She had been alone, unable to get help, without anyone knowing the possibility of her being poisoned, and was dying. Chloe had slept fitfully for the rest of the night, the vestiges of the nightmare making her stomach turn. She’d realized she’d been lying to herself, afraid to tell him that she was scared.

All her pretenses that she could take care of herself had been to soothe her own feelings. The truth was she had begged him to stay with her, made him promise not to leave her again, and she was embarrassed by her fear of losing him. So much so that she had refrained from telling him about the candle. She hated being vulnerable and was scared of him seeing her as needy; scared that it would repel him.

And she was also scared of what the candle’s meaning would do to him, if he’d see it as a reason to pull away from her again. Becoming a target of the Excommunication Killer meant that, in his mind, she was a sinner deserving of death, of punishment. And if, as she suspected, it was because of her relationship with the Devil, it was likely to affect him very badly. Lucifer was already upset over Azazel’s presence. How would he react to this?

Now she stood with Ella in the lab, and though she was exhausted from lack of sleep, Chloe was genuinely ecstatic to have her back. Ella’s ribs had healed enough that she could move around with little discomfort, and her leg was still in a cast, but she was eager to get back to work. This morning she had reviewed the forensic evidence from the college apartment crime scene, and Chloe handed her the evidence bag with her candle inside.

“Shit,” Ella breathed. “Are you serious?”

“Yeah.” She watched Ella put on a pair of gloves before removing the candle and begin analyzing it. “Found it yesterday.”

“Do you think it’s…” Ella hesitated, biting her lip. “Because of the baby? The whole… Antichrist thing?”

“It’s possible,” Chloe replied. But it was also just as likely the killer didn’t know she was pregnant, and her relationship with Lucifer alone was enough to condemn her. Because as she’d stood on her old porch, temporarily frozen with the surprise of the candle, she’d felt that sensation again. The prickling awareness that she was being watched that had come and gone the last few months.

This whole time she’d attributed it to Lucifer because it had begun after he left, and she’d thought, after his nights spent in his car watching over her house, that perhaps he had done the same from time to time - checking on her safety when he couldn’t be near. She hadn’t bothered to examine it more closely.

But now… this development pointed to a more sinister cause. The killer may have been watching her, noting her habits, for a long time. Probably the same way he had done with his previous victims, studying them closely for signs of what they ate or drank, times they were alone, opportunities to ingratiate himself.

Ella scraped samples from the candle as she had with the others to compare under the microscope. They both knew it would be fruitless, only confirming what they already knew - that the candle matched its mates - and wouldn’t reveal more, but it was a procedure that had to be followed.
Patience and meticulous attention to detail was what solved cases.

“What does Lucifer think?” she asked.

With a wince, Chloe admitted, “I haven’t told him.”

“Well,” Ella said, looking at something behind her. “You might want to, because he’s about to walk in.”

Chloe turned to see him in the doorway, closing the door behind him and greeting her with a smile. She returned it weakly. “Hey.”

He joined them at the table and leaned forward to check through the windows if anyone was around to see them. The coast clear, Lucifer stole a very long kiss. Apparently he didn’t get, or maybe care, that these sorts of things were ‘stolen’ because they were brief.

Hearing Ella snicker, she reluctantly put some distance between them. She opened her mouth to admonish him for breaking their not-at-work-rule, but he smiled and said, “Sorry. Haven’t seen you for awhile.” Then he turned, greeting Ella enthusiastically.

It was sweet enough to defuse her annoyance, and she sighed. But in the next moment, his attention had been caught by the candle Ella was handling.

“Another one?” Lucifer asked, then cast her a puzzled, hurt look. “Why didn’t you call me?”

Funny. That was what she’d been yelling at herself for, she thought.

“Who was the victim, a UCLA cheerleader who’s been secretly slipping the football team steroids?”

Ella met her eyes briefly and then said, “Uh, I could use a coffee—“

Chloe interrupted, wanting to get it over with. “It was me.”

Confused, his brows drew together. “What?”

She cleared her throat. “It was in the mailbox. At my old apartment.”

The room was so silent, she would have heard a pin drop. Lucifer’s gaze was fixed on the candle, and he said nothing, engrossed in his thoughts. “Well, that explains the cupboards,” he muttered.

“I didn’t want to take any chances, so I threw it all out,” she said.

Lucifer didn’t reply or react, still staring at the candle.

“Lucifer, it’s fine… It’s good. It gives more information for me to look at. There might be traffic cam footage or a witness who saw—“

“Then someone else can look for it,” he said.

She blinked in surprise. “What?”

“Detective. Chloe. Some madman has made you a target. Not just you, but the baby as well.” He finally looked at her, and his expression was more serious than she’d ever seen it. There wasn’t even a trace of humor left. Especially in his eyes.
Shaking her head, she argued, “Lucifer, it’s my job to stop him, and I will.”

“Oh, I’ll make certain he’s stopped,” he said, voice deadly in its intent.

She caught the glare of red in his eyes. This was the man demons saw and cowered before. The man who punished; and she believed, without a doubt, he would.

“Going out of the country might not be a bad idea,” he said. “You could take Trixie on vacation again.”

“No,” she said flatly. “I am not running.”

“You’re not going to endanger yourself when there are plenty of other people who can find him!” Lucifer argued reasonably.

Shaking her head, Chloe said, “I couldn’t even if I wanted to, Lucifer. I used up my vacation taking Trixie through Europe last summer, remember? What excuse would I give for just up and leaving with a murderer running around Los Angeles?”

“A honeymoon’s a good reason,” he said. “Some people go for weeks. We could go to Paris until this thing is over, or some other place.”

She heard Ella gasp and was suddenly reminded she was still in the room, apparently having been caught while they argued. But she couldn’t look away from Lucifer, who still looked just as serious as before, and triumphant his idea was a perfect solution.

Arsenic would be nothing compared to the mix of anger and disappointment she felt at that moment. He was so infuriatingly blind to the effect of his words, the things he did. He lived as though nothing he did had no ripple effect - or, she recalled, he just didn’t care what was ravaged. If her eyes could have burned with Hell’s fire, he definitely would have been feeling it.

“You do not bring up marriage to me as a way to deal with a deranged killer,” she said tightly, the fury barely masked by her low tone. “Our relationship is not a game. If you ever figure out the right reasons, then we can talk. Until then, don’t you dare say that again. I’m not going anywhere until this case is solved.”

The sound of the door opening behind them saved her from any further argument, and Eve asked from the doorway, “Chloe? Is this a bad time? I have some news.”

“No,” she answered, and walked away from Lucifer. “It’s a perfect time. I’m glad you could come in.” She gave him a last look of displeasure before she gently closed the door behind her.

Ella’s voice penetrated the silence as she looked at him sympathetically. “Sorry, dude.”

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Chapter End Notes

Thank you, everyone, for your kindness and support. I’d like to amend that no one has been hating on the story. Even people who haven’t liked parts have been super nice... In fact, I haven’t met anyone on this site who hasn’t been kind. My passive-aggressive note last chapter was born more from my wish not to disappoint any readers. And I
know I sound like a hypocrite, begging for feedback and then complaining about it. It’s just that in this instance, the suggestions/requests I was receiving completely change the theme and eventual denouement of the story, thus negating my whole story...

Anyway, not much excitement in this chapter, but Chloe and Lucifer are a step closer to answers, the finale around the corner.
The next twenty-four hours were like a hurricane, whipping through their lives and leaving nothing but destruction and devastation in its wake.

Chloe and Eve sat on either side of her desk, going over what Eve had managed to find out on campus, when Lucifer joined them, dragging over a second chair. He said nothing about their argument from minutes before, following her lead and putting it aside for the time being. Murders needed solving, and he had to think on what had just happened in the lab and where he had apparently gone wrong.

As far as he was concerned, marriage was logical on more than one count, the most pressing of which was safety.

“Eve was just telling me what she’s heard about Shawna,” she said quietly. “Or rather, not heard. Apparently she was quiet, kept to herself. If she did work at a bar, no one knew about it.”

“Another dead end?” Lucifer asked.

Eve was shaking her head, glossy curls gently bouncing around her shoulders. Another new look she was playing with on her quest to discover herself. “Actually, I heard quite a bit about Tyra, Shawna’s roommate.”

With a short, exasperated sigh, he turned to her. “Wrong roommate, Eve. We’re trying to solve the dead one’s murder.”

“Lucifer,” Chloe chastised, tone still carefully muted, “You know as well as I do how valuable any information can turn out to be.”

Pulling on his jacket to straighten it, he readjusted in the uncomfortable chair. He wanted his chair, but Eve was in it. Sullen, and not because his completely-rational-and-perfect solution to Chloe’s safety had been summarily rejected and stomped on like a cockroach, he waited for her to continue.

“Anyway,” Eve blew out a breath, “I don’t know how useful this will be, but there’s a lot of talk about Tyra being a total party girl. Like, it’s all she does. She’s a hook-up and a hook-up if you get me.”

Lucifer snorted. “So she’s having a good time, so what? That doesn’t make her a killer.”

“So,” she continued, “she’s on academic probation and about a centimeter away from expulsion. Her average grade is a solid D-. Yet, she’s practically acing Social Theory and Practice.”

Connecting the dots far before he did, Chloe nodded. “Bribing or extorting her professor. And
given her propensity for sex and drugs, it’s likely one of the two.” Finally, she looked at him. “What if we were wrong about Shawna being the victim?”

Eve, trying to follow Chloe’s line of thought, looked confused. “Wasn’t she the one who was poisoned and died though?”

Sitting up straighter with renewed interest, Lucifer said, “You think Tyra was the intended victim and Shawna accidentally got in the way, drank the tea Tyra was supposed to drink.”

Leaning toward him, she continued, “It fits! Drugs, alcohol, sex, bribery; the killer would undoubtedly see her as a sinner, especially for any ways her actions negatively impacted others. Her professor for sure, maybe other students, maybe even Shawna.”

Focused on her as she played the evidence over in her mind, eyes locked with hers, Lucifer added, “And Tyra said they both drank the tea that was poisoned. Shawna takes out the last bottle, innocently takes a drink, dies in place of her promiscuous roommate.”

“Wow, you two are really good,” Eve said, looking back and forth between the narrow gap between them, gradually closed as they’d postulated aloud. Lucifer glanced at her interjection, realizing she was there, and his brain fired off another connection as he looked at her.

“Detective, I know what the connection between them is.” Excited, he patted his breast pockets for his flask and retrieved it from his coat. “Every nubile college student I’ve met has had one thing in common—“

With a groan, Chloe collapsed back into her chair. “Lucifer, now is not the time to talk about your conquests.”

“Listen!” He insisted. “They’ve all gone to UCLA. Like Eve.”

“Seriously?” She looked at him like he was deranged. “That’s because it’s the most sought-after college around… They all attended UCLA at some point,” she realized, and Lucifer smiled before indulging in a nip of whiskey, pleased with himself.

“I didn’t see it.” she muttered, reaching for several files and standing to spread them across her desk. In her haste, she knocked over her water bottle and a file fell, papers scattering on the floor, one sliding under the corner of her desk. He picked up the bottle and gathered up the sheets.

She froze when he offered the stack to her, and he registered that he had dropped to one knee as he’d collected the mess. “Thank you,” she said softly. The force of the position didn’t escape him either, not after their conversation in the lab. He held her gaze steadily for another beat, but they weren’t alone, and he stood by her to look down at the papers as well.

He felt her eyes leave him and return to her desk. “Their ages varied so widely, and it’s still a working theory at best. We have Shawna and Tyra, students. Barry graduated in ‘04. Xavier Alors in 2010. And, college dropout, Jonathon Hopper, attended the fall semester of 2014.”

“So what at the college is killing these people, years later?”

A throat cleared nearby, and they both looked up to see Eve standing and shouldering her bag. “Uh, if you don’t need me…”

“Eve,” Chloe began questioningly, “who would be at the college long enough to form relationships over a span of ten years?”
She shrugged. “Professors, admin, advisors, counselors… Pretty much anyone who works there, I guess.” She waved and departed.

“They had all different majors,” she murmured. “We can start with the professor Tyra was bribing. He has motive for her, at least.”

At the car, she stopped and put a hand on his chest to halt him too. Coming closer, she pressed her lips to his with a lingering kiss, which he took as indication she wasn’t mad anymore. He didn’t let her pull away, even after the kiss ended.

“That’s for figuring it out,” she whispered.

She opened her car door and he did the same. “And getting married?”

Chloe shook her head, turning the key in the ignition. “You haven’t figured that out yet.”

Unfortunately, cornering the guilty professor - and Lucifer was working on a clever allusion to the “Nutty Professor”, he was sure there was one in there somewhere - was a bust. He was giving a lecture and wouldn’t be back for some time.

Impatiently, Chloe obtained a copy of Professor Skin’s - and that was even better, Lucifer thought - classes, rifling through it. “Giving another lecture to Psych 101 students during time of death.” She tossed the packet down. “Not that it proves anything. Tea could have been spiked at any time.”

Then she picked the papers up again, flipping through them. “But… his morning class ends right around the time Tyra goes for a run.” She snorted. “I knew her clothes were too perfect to have been sweating.”

“Oh, you don’t know that,” Lucifer drawled. “I’m sure she was getting a good workout.” He smiled when she rolled her eyes.

“Can I help you?” asked an older gentleman, carrying a briefcase to the office next door. He was likely in his early sixties, judging by the silver head of hair and life-lines creasing his forehead. He squinted at them until he huffed and withdrew a pair of small, square-shaped glasses from his coat. “Waiting for someone?”

“Yes. Professor Skin,” Chloe answered, introducing herself and Lucifer.

He nodded sagely. “You must be here about that poor girl who died. Poisoned or some other? No one can believe such a terrible thing happened here.”

“Did you know her?” Chloe asked, following him when he invited them into his office with a beckoning gesture.

He set down his briefcase and shed his jacket, hanging it on the coat rack. “No, no. Didn’t teach her, myself.”

Lucifer paused by one of the chairs before his desk, about to take a seat, when he noticed a large stain. Odd, in an otherwise pristine room. Papers neatly stacked, books in orderly rows on the shelves, not a single pen or paperclip cluttering the desk. Deciding not to sit, he slipped his hands into his pockets and surveyed the tiny room.

“Oh, yes, sorry about the chair. A student the other day. She knocked over her juice or some such,” he replied offhandedly, and observed Lucifer’s casual perusal of the volumes on his bookshelf.
“An extensive collection you have here, Professor…?” he trailed off expectantly.

“Anthony Lexington,” he supplied, “Professor of Religious Studies and European History.”


The Professor smiled back. “Very good. Quite an ear you have, Mr. Morningstar.”

“I’ve acquired it over the years. You could say I’ve travelled the world,” he quipped. Chloe, knowing he spoke nothing but the truth, though the depth of it was lost on the Professor, steered the conversation back to Shawna.

Despite Lexington’s willingness to answer more questions, nothing else in the fifteen-minute conversation yielded anything more helpful, as he knew nothing of the girls and obviously wasn’t the type of man who partied with the students. He looked more like someone’s boring grandfather whose idea of partying hard was drinking peach Schnapps and staying up until ten.

A little discouraged by the new roadblock, they left the office, stopping to see if Professor Skin had returned. The student aide who worked as an office assistant on this floor greeted them with a smile when they passed her desk, and asked if they needed help.

“Actually,” said Chloe, “We were waiting for Professor Skin. Will he be returning soon?”

“Oh,” the assistant frowned apologetically, “I’m sorry. I think he’s already left for a seminar for the rest of the day.”

Chloe sighed in defeat. Draping an arm on the counter, Lucifer leaned toward the young lady, smiling ingratiatingly. “Would you be able to help us find him? It would be more helpful than you could imagine.”

She began to shake her head slowly, though her eyes never left his. “I really couldn’t. I’m sorry.”

“That’s a shame. Professor Lexington told us you could help us locate him. It’s a matter of life or death.”

“Really?” Her eyes grew wide, and she glanced back down the hall from which they’d come. “Well, if Professor Lexington said… I suppose I should.”

It was an odd thing to say, and Lucifer exchanged a look with Chloe. She nodded to him to question her again, and Lucifer turned back to the young lady. “You work for Professor Lexington directly?”

“Oh, no,” she said, logging into her computer to access the professors’ schedules. “I work for all the professors on this floor. The building is so old, the departments are scattered all over the place and often need an assistant to help out. But Professor Lexington is respected by everybody. He’s the most caring man you’ve ever met. Helps everyone, no matter what it is.”

“He sounds like a saint,” Lucifer remarked sardonically.

“Well, I don’t know about that,” the assistant chuckled, “but he devotes his own time to volunteer as a counselor on campus. Students keep in touch with him for years, even after graduating.” She shook her head at the screen. “I’m sorry. Professor Skin didn’t leave any information about where the symposium was.”

“That’s alright,” assured Chloe. “We can come back another time.” She flashed her a smile of
Thanks and motioned to Lucifer that it was time to go.

Confused, Lucifer turned to her once they were in the car again. “Why did we leave?”

“I want to test a theory,” she said, heading back to the precinct.

—-

Chloe pulled up the national database as soon as she sat down, running for any information related to “Anthony Lexington.” Not much came up, as the man had only entered the country twenty years ago. But beneath aliases was listed one “Anthony Carbone.” He had changed his name upon moving to the United States.

She glanced up at Lucifer. “Do you still believe the Excommunication Killer and the prophecy Kinley talked about are linked?”

Lucifer nodded. “Undoubtedly. If there really is more to the prophecy, there are too many coincidences for this maniac to not be involved somehow. Kinley said he needed a translator and specifically named this co-conspirator as someone who had been excommunicated from the Catholic Church.”

Taking a deep breath, she answered. “Then you,” she said, “need to call the Vatican.”

Incredulous, Lucifer scoffed and regarded her as if she had gone crazy. “Have you lost your mind?”

“Lucifer,” she said in complete seriousness, “If I call, I’ll get shuffled around, transferred from one person to the next, until someone kindly offers to ‘take a message’. You, though… What do you want to bet they’ll take a call from the Devil?”

He pulled out his phone, shaking his head. “Careful,” he muttered. “I have ideas.” But he obligingly opened an internet app and searched for a number related to the Vatican. “I’m sure I’m a celebrity over there. And what am I chatting with the Pope about?”

Rolling her eyes, she said, “Maybe not the Pope. But someone who can confirm Anthony Carbone was a member of the church.”

“The professor?” Lucifer asked, pausing. “Well, I suppose it could be fun; especially imagining the looks on their faces.”

Without replying, she picked up her phone and dialed another number, waiting impatiently for the man on the other end to pick up.

“Barry?” she asked as soon as she heard the drowsy man’s mumble when he answered. “I’m sorry to wake you, but…”

While Chloe waited for Lucifer to return from his lengthy, international phone call, she used the time to type up a request for a warrant to access the victims’ email accounts. After Barry woke up enough to answer her questions, he had happily forwarded his emails to her, but she wouldn’t have access to the deceased victims’ without a court order, and email accounts and text messages were always the most difficult to procure.

Cross-referencing Tyra and Shawna’s class schedules revealed that though Shawna had truly not been a student of Lexington’s, Tyra was. But without more evidence of Professor Lexington’s connections to the victims, she couldn’t move forward. She prayed Lucifer’s end was more fruitful
and gave them a reason to pursue him further.

Scanning the emails, Chloe felt more and more confident her hunch was right. They had known the college must have been the connection between the victims, easily overlooked because the first had dropped out his freshman year. But the real piece to the puzzle that brought the picture into focus had been the office assistant’s profuse admiration for Professor Lexington, a man in a position to meet not only all of the victims, but hear about all their problems.

Barry had admitted he stayed in touch with Lexington, a man he said was “an understanding man who could relate to anyone and give advice that bolstered the soul.” It wasn’t necessary to actually have been a student of his, not if the man made himself available as a counselor. If even a fraction of the university students shared their deep, dark, shameful intimacies with him and kept in touch, the possibility that he took advantage of those confidences to find victims was entirely conceivable.

The real question was, though, if he had been a consoling ear for so many years, what made him snap? The spree of poisonings had only begun in the last few months.

She looked up as Lucifer walked over, returning his phone to his breast pocket. “Were you able to find out?”

“Yes. Although, let me tell you, the first time the clerk offered me mental health services,” he said.

Anxious for him to get to the part where he shared what he’d learned, she asked, “And the next time?”

“I had to… make a deal,” he smirked. “I won’t go into details, but yes, I obtained the information. You were correct. Anthony Carbone was a priest there two decades ago, before he was excommunicated for nearly killing a woman during a supposed ‘exorcism,’” he explained, using air quotes to denote the absurdity. But his amusement ended there. “And when he left, his fledgling understudy moved up the ranks to assume his place. One Father Kinley.”

“Seems he learned quite a bit from his mentor;” Chloe said, thinking on Kinley’s methods of persuasion and ruthless manners of manipulation. Not only had he twisted her mind around, preyed on her anxiety and confusion, but he’d cost innocents their lives as well. One didn’t have to pull the trigger to be a murderer.

“Unfortunately for them, their blind allegiance was not appreciated,” he agreed. “So you think he’s also the Excommunication Killer?”

Chloe slowly swiveled her chair, staring at nothing in particular as she catalogued her thoughts into reasons of importance. “Your knowledge of the prophecy notwithstanding, because I’m not sure how we could explain that to others, he meets the necessary criteria. Most critically, his past as a priest presents an excellent explanation for why his victims confide in him and why his victims are chosen. Who better to confess your sins to than to a priest? He is the only viable link between all of the victims and had regular opportunities to gain their confidences. If they stayed in touch like his assistant said, he would know recent events in their lives as well, which they would share because he was already trusted, and might have even invited him into their homes.”

“It makes a certain kind of sense,” answered Lucifer. “Can we go after him now before he poisons you? I’m warning you, if you tell me you don’t have enough evidence, it’s not going to matter to me.”

She dropped him a brief smile. “We have to do it the right way, Lucifer. Don’t worry,” she told
him softly. “I’m not touching anything I haven’t bought myself. He couldn’t have accessed the vending machine or deli. But he sent it as a warning that he’s coming… I wasn’t next. He’s baiting me. Whoever else he has in mind is in danger right now.” When he nodded, she continued, feeling somewhat ashamed. “I’m sorry for not telling you when I found the candle.”

He didn’t look angry; in fact, he looked carefully neutral, poker face in place. “Why didn’t you?”

Shrugging uncomfortably, she reached up to play with her necklace, an unconscious movement she often did when she thought of him. “I think I was scared. I’ve always taken care of myself, you know?” Lucifer didn’t answer, though he waited for her to continue.

“It’s hard for me to admit I need you,” she confessed. “Especially when all this is going on… It’s so much like what happened with Kinley. I didn’t want you to feel like you did before. That you were somehow to blame because of who you are,” she explained, hating each word, and hoping desperately that he would see and hear how much she didn’t believe that was who he was. Maybe in a stupid way, she had been trying to protect both of them.

“You thought that, like before, it might trigger something in me,” he summarized, then sighed when she nodded helplessly. It was so difficult to explain in the right terms. She wasn’t afraid of him, she was afraid for him, for him to go through the same crisis and guilt as before. He was happy now, or at least she liked to think so, and she didn’t want that to be violated.

There was still no word back on the warrant request. She couldn’t search for more evidence without it, and though their line of reasoning added up, she knew in the eyes of the law, everything they had was circumstantial. But there was nothing keeping them from questioning the man again. Until they got answers, she and Lucifer would be feeling the effects of this uncertainty and worry deeply.

“Let’s see if we can take advantage of the professor’s hospitality,” she suggested. “We’ll try him at his home address. We have the upper hand right now; maybe we can get him to reveal something incriminating.”

Thirty minutes later, the professor amicably welcomed them into his home, offering to make them tea. He had looked surprised finding them on his doorstep after speaking mere hours before, but didn’t offer a protest. If Chloe didn’t know better, she would have taken him at face value as his demeanor and attitude suggested: a kind, intelligent, grandfatherly man who concerned himself with others’ well-being and was happy to maintain traditions of a bygone era; tea in the evenings, bridge on Saturday afternoons.

“Thank you for forgiving our intrusion on your evening,” Chloe said, as they followed him into his modest study. It was a similar room to his university office, but far more comfortable and elegant, with a lit fireplace. If his collection of books had been impressive before, he had a veritable library here, some looking very old, though none were close to comparing to Lucifer’s. He settled behind his polished desk, closing the volume he had been reading.

“Not at all,” he said pleasantly. “But I’m curious as to what I can do for you.”

Chloe could practically feel Lucifer vibrating with tension. Please, hold it together, she thought. We don’t have anything yet. She couldn’t really blame him, though; she felt the same protective anger facing the man who had done so much harm, was threatening both of them.

“Actually, we’ve come across some new information,” she said, “and would really appreciate your opinion.”
He nodded invitingly. “Of course.”

“It’s come to our attention that Shawna may have been having an affair with one of her professors,” she lied, hoping he wouldn’t question why they would come to his home to have a conversation easily done by phone. She had to be here to observe his reactions, otherwise she wouldn’t know what buttons to push.

“That’s quite an allegation,” he remarked, sitting back and folding his hands over his stomach.

“There is enough evidence to support it,” she confided, and glanced at Lucifer, who was ready for his cue.

Anthony shook his head. “I just can’t imagine any of our faculty doing such a thing. And I’ve heard nothing uncomplimentary about the poor girl. Everyone thought her kind and respectful.”

“Those are always the ones who have the most to hide,” commented Lucifer. “The others, well, they don’t mind flaunting themselves. I’m sure she had plenty of sins.”

“Perhaps so,” was the professor’s short response.

“Her roommate, for example… You have her in your class, correct? She has no shame for her sinful activities. Who knows who the corrupting influence was? Perhaps Shawna was only better at hiding it.”

The professor was looking a lot less friendly and harmless now. “Everyone hides something. That man sharing the bus seat next to you might be a drug dealer, or a murderer. The woman in front of you in line for coffee, an adulterer.”

“It’s terrible, isn’t it?” asked Lucifer rhetorically. “And no one does anything about it. I bet you wish you could, don’t you?” he asked, slowly advancing toward the older man. He seemed to be caught in Lucifer’s gaze, fallen under the compulsion to reveal his true desire.

Then his mouth twisted in a snarl and he hissed, “You won’t work your evil on me, Satan.”

Chloe watched in surprise as the mask dropped away, and the professor eschewed all pretense. He met Lucifer’s eyes directly and without fear, as if throwing a gauntlet. In response, Lucifer relaxed and laughed, though it had that quality again that she had heard once before, after she had fallen from Angel’s Landing. A dark, sharp, inhuman edge.

“Lucifer,” she called to him, reaching for his arm. She wasn’t sure what was going to happen but could feel the weight of something inevitable.

“Evil, is it? Was the young woman you murdered evil?” Lucifer asked coldly.

The professor didn’t look away. “An unfortunate casualty. The poison wasn’t meant for her. I added it to Tyra’s tea in my office, when I confronted her. She admitted she had prostituted herself, blackmailed Spencer. She was proud of it.”

Then Tyra gone home, put the bottle in the fridge, then gone for her “run,” thought Chloe. And poor unsuspecting Shawna, just wanting a drink and probably not even knowing if the open bottle had been hers or her roommate’s, paid the price.

Lexington rose from his chair, carrying the tome from his desk to the bookshelf behind him as if they were still engaged in a casual conversation, not even seeming to care that he had admitted to murder. He removed a small, lacquered box from the shelf.
“Why?” she asked. “Why would you start punishing them now?”

“This,” he said, withdrawing a sheet of paper from the box.

“The prophecy?” Lucifer asked.

Holding the paper aloft, he turned his eyes to Chloe. “I always knew this day would come - when the Devil would walk the Earth. No one would listen; no one but Kinley. He told me when he found you… and I knew it was time to start eradicating the evil Satan had let loose. ‘When the Devil walks the Earth and finds his first love, evil shall be released’,” he quoted.

Of course. Chloe looked at Lucifer’s unmoving profile. The Devil caused everyone to sin, didn’t he? It was ridiculous.

“Your logic is faulty,” she said, her voice surprisingly hoarse. “These stupid prophecies only exist because people like you make them true. You choose to blame him for every poor choice you make, as if he did it, when it’s yourselves who should take responsibility! The people you’ve murdered - their blood is on your hands, not his.”

“Your soul is contaminated,” he growled at her, his eyes wild with a kind of fervor that sent a chill down her spine.

“And if it is, it’s because of my own actions,” she replied, incrementally reaching behind her back for her gun. “You’ve chosen to see evil everywhere you look, you’ve chosen to punish people who are just as human as the next. You’ve become a murderer by your own choices.”

Shaking his head, Lexington protested, “You will not confuse me with your lies! The only way to save the innocent is for you to die before your sin spreads like a plague!”

The words had no sooner left his mouth than a flurry of motion descended. The paper he had brandished was thrust into the fireplace a split second before he fell to the ground beneath Lucifer. Gun finally in hand, she shouted, “Lucifer! Don’t!”

But Lucifer was already standing and turned to look at her, slowly shaking his head. “I didn’t. He was dead when he hit the floor.”

Swallowing, she knelt down beside Anthony Lexington and felt for a pulse, finding none. “What happened?” She watched Lucifer hold up the lacquered box as he peered inside, then tilted it to show her the inside as well. Inside was a plastic container with a few rounded pills.

“It would appear arsenic wasn’t his only poison of choice. I’m thinking cyanide,” he said. Then his attention was caught by the fire and the paper smoldering inside. “Shit!”

Chloe quickly called for an ambulance, reporting there was an officer on scene, and joined Lucifer, intent on stopping him from burning himself. Though he hissed in pain and jerked his hand back, he resolutely reached into the flames and withdrew the blackened paper.

“Lucifer! Why would you — I don’t care what it says!” she snapped at him, trying to see his hand.

He held it away from her, using his opposite sleeve to smother the charred edges. There was enough intact that some of the writing was legible. “I’m fine. I can handle a little fire, don’t you think?”

“No, I don’t think,” she argued hotly. “In case you didn’t notice, you can be hurt when you’re with
me."

“I can heal later,” he said, and laid the paper on the desk before it could disintegrate further, leaning closer to read what he could.

In the distance, she could already hear the approaching sirens, when she saw him straighten. Lucifer was expressionless and stiff.

Emergency service personnel rushed in, interrupting her chance to ask him what was wrong. Reading the paper wasn’t possible; he’d purposefully crushed it before walking out. That sense of inevitability was closing in again, a foreboding wave of dread.

Lucifer was waiting by the car when she found him, smoking, one hand resting awkwardly, and she could see the burns even in the dark. He didn’t look up, though he must have heard her. She was worried he wouldn’t acknowledge her presence at all, when he finally spoke. “It was the rest of the damn prophecy.”

“I don’t care,” she whispered.

“‘When the Devil walks the Earth and finds his first love, evil will be released… until he brings her death and restores the balance.’” Lucifer tossed the cigarette to the ground.

She was more numb than surprised. It was like seeing an accident about to happen, unfolding in slow motion. She knew what he was going to do and didn’t know how to stop him. “It doesn’t matter,” she tried. “It’s what I was saying to him - people like him make these things happen. It’s not real.”

He laughed bitterly. “It’s not real until it happens, Chloe. Somehow I’ll make it happen. ‘Bring her death,’ it said.”

Desperately, she pleaded, “Please don’t.” When he wouldn’t look at her again, she said, “You promised me you wouldn’t leave.”

Lucifer made a strangled sound. “I know. God, I know. But I would rather break my word a hundred times over than risk your life.”

“I don’t want you to go. I love you.”

His hand was mottled with blisters and streaks of red, but other than a wince, he didn’t react when he pulled his ring off.

No, she thought.

“This wasn’t the kind of ring I wanted to give you,” he said. Easily, he overcame her attempts to stop him and unfolded her curled fist, putting his ring inside and closing her fingers around it. “Keep it. Please. And maybe someday you can give it to… Christopher or Christine,” he said, and paused before adding, “Maybe you could tell them that I wanted to be a good dad, and I’m sorry I won’t get the chance.”

Angrily, she whispered, “You’re being stupid.” In her mind, she scrambled to find the right words to penetrate this insanity.

“I don’t doubt it,” Lucifer answered. “I love you, Chloe. I can’t watch you die because of me, whether by me or some deluded fanatic who thinks he’s saving the world.” He lightly touched his mouth to hers in the barest form of kiss. “I love you,” he said again. And walked away.
Chapter End Notes

You got a double-feature here. It really should have been two chapters, but I hated splitting it off. As it is, I think the next one will be the finale.

Tell me your thoughts. You guys and gals help me see so many other angles than I consider the first time around. It adds so much depth to this colossus!
The crime scene was cordoned off, Lexington’s body readied for transport, and evidence carefully collected. Ella was bagging the pills Lexington had retrieved from the box, and a search of his home revealed a stock of arsenic and rat poison, as well as a bundle of letters in the desk that showed months of communication with Kinley, even from prison. The two had exchanged dozens of missives that grew increasingly frantic, and if Chloe had to guess, she would lay her money on Kinley’s death as the catalyst for Lexington, or Carbone’s, transformation. The letters revealed Kinley’s plans in detail, his theories about her and Lucifer, and his failure to stop the prophecy from unfolding - or so Anthony had thought - had fueled a manic desperation to continue his old protege’s mission.

None of it assuaged any of the misery in her heart. All she wanted was Lucifer to come back. She was broken-hearted and ravaged and angry. And so, so tired. He had left her, after he’d promised, damn him.

Lost in her haze, Chloe was slow to notice Ella beside her, a warm touch of her hand on her arm. “Chloe, I think you should go home. You look exhausted.”

Well, it had been a pretty messed up couple of days, she thought. Since finding the candle, her sleep had been uneasy, followed by an emotional roller coaster with Lucifer and the case. But she shook her head, not willing to renege on her responsibilities. “No, we’re not done yet.”

Ella glanced behind her shoulder, checking on the officers’ progress. “I think they’re close enough. Let’s get you home, okay?” Her concern was easily apparent.

Knowing she should protest - there was paperwork to do, people to contact - Chloe opened her mouth, but stopped. She felt weary, and she did want to leave. Before she came out of this fog and broke down in front of everyone. There wasn’t much left of her strength. “Okay,” she agreed, and followed Ella to her car compliantly, sliding into the passenger seat without argument. Now that she had decided to go home, she felt even more drained.

The drive was silent, which Chloe was thankful for. Once Ella had asked her where Lucifer was and she’d had no response, she had fallen quiet. They parked before the loft, and Chloe stared at it mutely, not sure she wanted to go in.

“I’ve only seen you like this one time before,” Ella said softly. “When he left the first time. Did he leave again?”

When Chloe didn’t, couldn’t, answer, Ella continued. “Is he coming back?”

She finally turned to Ella and met her eyes. “I don’t think so.” Her voice sounded rough, like
sandpaper or the rugged bark of a tree, to her own ears.

Ella got out of the car with her and followed her inside, sitting down beside her on the couch. Chloe had turned on a single lamp in the sitting area by Lucifer’s piano and was staring sightlessly at their home. His piano, where he frequently played while lost in thought, his bookshelves, filled with wonders and memories she couldn’t begin to fathom, the kitchen where they laughed and he cooked for her and Trixie.

Would she even be able to go upstairs, see the beautiful mural he’d dreamed up for the baby’s room? Sleep in their bedroom, surrounded by his scent of sandalwood and smoke? Every part of their home contained a part of him.

How could he do this again? To her? To them? Her palm rested on her stomach.

“What happened, Chloe?” Ella asked hesitantly, respectful of Chloe’s privacy but also wanting to offer her any possible consolation.

She didn’t want to be alone yet. She was going to tell Ella everything, all the way back from the start of Kinley to the story of tonight and the professor, but oddly, the words that came out were something else.

“Everyone blames him,” she said. “And so he blames him. None of what people do are his fault.” Chloe knew that was the root of his guilt, the self-loathing he struggled to reconcile. But to see and hear someone lay their deeds at his feet had been devastating, and she’d understood, finally, the degree to which it pained him. She hadn’t been able to hold back, to refrain from coming to his defense. She wished she could erase everything the professor had said.

Reaching out a comforting hand, Ella took hers and squeezed lightly. “I know. Anyone who knows him can see that.”

“He thinks he’s doing the right thing, leaving. But how can it be the right thing when he doesn’t deserve it? Nothing he did is worth this,” she said. Hadn’t he paid enough? On the verge of being a family, and he believed they were safer without him.

“I know.” Ella sighed, looking at the bookshelves. “I never understood it, myself, but there it is…the serpent who offered Eve an apple. And that’s supposed to show why he’s evil?”

Chloe shook her head. “He’s not evil. And people just say things… even Dan; he didn’t know any better, but you heard his Antichrist thing.”

“Like I said, he gets a bad rep by a lot of people who don’t know him at all. Look at all the name calling in the Bible. They call him a serpent and a dragon and a beast. Practically any monster they can think of.”

That hit a chord of recognition… a memory of something? Where had she heard those before?

Facing Ella, Chloe unconsciously straightened, reanimated, her voice a little stronger than it had been. “What did you say?”

Blinking and forehead wrinkling in confusion, Ella asked, “What? The names in the Bible?”

“Yeah. Those. A serpent and what?”

“Uh… a red dragon, I think, and a beast… Like with horns and stuff, and some woman in red who rides him. I mean, it’s all sexual metaphors, y’know?”
Mostly talking to herself now, Chloe said, “Unless it’s not all metaphor. Lucifer told me once… we were looking at the stars and he showed me the morning star, and, what was it he said?”

“You were… looking at the stars?” Ella cocked her head to the side, regarding her. “That’s really romantic actually.”

A smile flit across Chloe’s lips before subsiding. That wasn’t the part she was trying to call into focus. “He said the Bible confuses a lot of people together. That all those names attributed to him aren’t actually all him.”

“You mean, like, someone else is a serpent and a dragon?” asked Ella.

Had she met the dragon? “Azazel Drak,” she whispered. ‘Drak’ translated to ‘dragon’, didn’t it? Which meant that if Azazel was actually the red dragon, it was possible someone else was the beast too. And connected to a woman in red?

You’re making too much of this, she thought. But still, it could be. And Lilith had never been found. What if she was the woman in red and working with the beast, trying to take over? Was it possible Azazel had come here to lure Lucifer back into a trap so that they could seize control without worry that he could return at any time and stop them? If she wasn’t crazy, then Lucifer was in danger.

“Ella, I need to talk to Amenadiel. Like right now,” she said, already up and heading for the door.

Though Ella was still perplexed, trying to follow Chloe’s convoluted explanation, she stuck by her on the drive to Linda’s house and while they waited for someone to answer her agitated knocks on the door.

It was Linda who answered, immediately looking concerned to find unexpected guests on her doorsteps this late. “Chloe? Ella? What’s happened?”

“Is Amenadiel here?” Chloe asked without preamble.

“He’s—” she started to reply, but Amenadiel himself entered the room, having apparently heard them come in.

“I’m right here. What’s the matter, Chloe?” Perhaps sensing something in the air, or reading her tense body language, Amenadiel seemed to understand there was some type of emergency.

“Lucifer’s gone,” she said. Those two words were enough to encapsulate everything.

Guilt darkened Amenadiel’s features before he said remorsefully, “Oh God… This could be my fault.”

“What?” Linda, retying her robe, came over. “What are you talking about?”

He looked ashamed. “I didn’t mean for him to take it like that. I just wanted him to think about how impressionable his child would be. To some of Lucifer’s more selfish qualities.”

Linda, with a look of dawning realization, stared at him in censure, mouth hanging open.

“Amenadiel! Please tell me you did not tell him he would be a bad father!”

No answer was forthcoming, but the look on his face said enough. Seeming to be gearing up to say more, Linda crossed her arms. There wasn’t time for this, Chloe thought, and faced him. “I will be mad at you later. But right now, I’m more concerned about what might happen to him.” With her
heart in her throat, Chloe managed to explain an abbreviated recap of the evening’s events and what she thought might be happening with Lucifer. “Do you think it’s possible?” she asked finally.

He shook his head with sympathy. “I’m sorry, Chloe. I couldn’t say. There’s not much of a calendar for these things, telling you when it might happen.”

Nodding, Chloe considered her options. “Can you go to him? Warn him if you can?”

Looking like he was on the edge of refusing, he sighed. “I can try. I might not be able to get through, Chloe.”

All she could do was pray he could, Chloe thought. But she could try to increase the odds. Grasping her phone, she called Maze.

——

Azazel wrapped a hand around a bar of the metal gate and shook it. Sighing, he looked back at Lucifer, who had suddenly shown up at the penthouse without warning, looking like living wrath, and gruffly collected him with a command that it was time to go.

Heat and fire were gone. In their place, Lucifer felt a sharp coldness like the burning of dry ice beneath his skin, as if he was frozen from the inside out. The last time he had stood before these gates, he had felt hollow and despair. Now he knew who he had to be, that there was no alternative, and his anger had been replaced with the opposite of passionate fury. This was cold, unfeeling, and absolute.

He nodded at Azazel to step aside and gripped the metal of the frame himself. The gate gave way easily beneath his touch, the lock audibly releasing before the portal opened. “Locked from the inside after you left,” he directed at Azazel.

“Belphegor, you think?” He asked with consternation.

Lucifer shrugged. It really didn’t matter, did it? It had to have been one of the fallen angels, following his orders for precautions before he had left.

They advanced through to the abyss, a land of dark mist to confuse any wayward spirit who tried to leave. In silence, he and Azazel walked on. The flames of Tartarus and the Lake of Fire would not scorch them, only give the sense of suffocation as they descended the depths, and below, they would reach the entrance to the pit, looking down on its eternal roads of obsidian through clouds of ash.

He peered down on his kingdom without interest, until something gave him pause, and he studied the craggy valleys below, perturbed.

It was nearly desolate. A few figures could be seen from the high vantage as they meandered between the cells. Where was everyone? He should see demons patrolling, others monitoring inmates, or entering rooms to administer punishment.

A snake of unease dispelled the numb coursing through his veins. Something was wrong. More than just Asmodeus gone missing.

Beneath his throne was the entrance to the towers and his private rooms. In the main chamber, where another of his thrones was built into the stone facade, he found no one and nothing but the echoes of his footfalls. Azazel followed and stopped a few feet behind him. “What has happened here?” Lucifer asked.
Azazel surveyed the space as well. “I don’t know. It’s too quiet. It was possible for Lilith or someone to find a way to overtake Asmodeus, but why attack the demon population?”

Lucifer shook his head in response. How was he to know, when he hadn’t been here for months? Regardless, he needed to find out was happening. “Go on a search. Check the towers and nearby tunnels. Anyone you find, question them, and send them here to me,” he ordered.

He walked to the center of the great room and waited, hands in his pockets, evaluating the various details he’d observed the last few months. It wasn’t long before he heard the scrape of claws on stone.

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“This is asinine,” Maze said. “What do you expect me to do, fly down there and pick him up? In case you somehow forgot — hello! Demon!” She exclaimed, rolling her eyes.

Chloe looked at her earnestly. “Please Maze,” she pleaded. “If he’s in danger, he needs to know. You said my theory might be right.”

“That’s not the problem,” came her reply, and Maze stared her down. “First, Lilith plotting to take him down or not, he can squash her like a bug. Secondly, I can’t get down there without some assistance or wings. Last but not least, if you’re hoping this will somehow mean he’ll come back, it won’t matter.”

“Why not?” asked Ella. In a show of solidarity, she had stayed with the tribe as they conferred, and now argued, on their plan of action.

Maze glanced her way, then returned her regard to Chloe with a snort. “Because the only thing Lucifer cares about is making sure Chloe is safe.”

“Well, you can convince him this is more important! It’s not worth him staying there if he could be killed,” said Chloe.

“She’s right,” Amenadiel said to her, not unkindly. “He won’t leave. You have no idea the lengths of insanity he’s gone to before.”

Perplexed, she wanted to ask him what he meant, but then shook her head. It didn’t matter. He’d gone to Hell for her… then she could do the same for him. “Take me with you, then. Let me talk to him.”

He shook his head adamantly. “You would probably die down there. Your sacrifice would do nothing, and even if you could reach him, I doubt anything you say will make a difference. His mind is made up.”

Yes, she had an idea how stubborn Lucifer was, but she wasn’t going to let that deter her. What if he wasn’t able to stop Lilith and her partner before they did something to him, or what if others kept trying to do the same? He needed to leave there; it wasn’t where he belonged.

In the end, it took the combined efforts of herself, Linda, and Ella to bring Amenadiel around. He very, very reluctantly agreed to at least take her and Maze to the gates, though he reminded them again that the likelihood of getting inside was slim. If they were locked from the inside, there was nothing he could do to negate it.

She closed her eyes once they left the ground, Amenadiel hefting Maze and Chloe in each arm, feeling slightly sick in response to the overwhelming height steadily rising under her feet. There
was a strange change in pressure, as if the air she breathed had thickened and then become something else.

Her eyes opened to a world of black and gray. Never-ending black as far as she could see in any direction, swirls of gray mist curling and beckoning like ghostly fingers. There were no sounds - not a bird or rustle of an animal in the brush, no wind. Just emptiness.

Before her were the mysterious gates that were there but not really there. Almost expecting them to vanish, or her fingers to pass through, she was surprised when her hand touched metal. It was hot. Though it seared against her skin, she found no sign of burns when she inspected her hand.

Amenadiel joined her and put his hand on the gate, jerking it powerfully. The gate stood firm, other than the answering rattle of metal. “I’m sorry, Chloe,” he said.

His and Maze’s voices, rising and falling in the initial stages of an argument, faded into the background. Her attention was caught by the warm tingle against her skin - not burning, as the gate had been, but soft, soothing warmth. Looking down, she tugged her necklace from beneath her shirt, holding Lucifer’s ring in her hand. She had returned it to the chain she wore, and now recognized that it was the source of warmth.

Her eyes were drawn to the gates again, and she looked for the locking mechanism. It had to mean something, she thought, hoping she wasn’t grasping at straws. Chloe dropped to her knees before it and, slipping the ring on one finger, rested her hand on the lock.

There was an audible click, and it penetrated Maze and Amenadie’s bickering; they both turned, mute in astonishment. Over her shoulder, Maze adapted quickly and pursed her lips. “Well. One problem solved. The other might be trickier though.”

“What’s that?” Chloe asked, standing up and straightening her necklace.

“You not dying on the way down.”

Amenadiel joined her at the gate, pushing it open. “‘Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.’ I hope you’re ready for this, Chloe.”

The demon hadn’t been making light of it, either. Once more, Chloe had to hold on tightly to Amenadiel. Between him and Maze, they managed to shield her through the strange wall of blue flames. Logically, her brain told her the fire was eating her alive, ripping her skin apart, viciously chewing through her. But when she emerged on the other side, and she shoved the sleeves of her sweater up, her skin was cool and unmarred.

It was a test of faith, she realized.

If she believed she could reach him, she would.

In front of them sprawled a never ending sea, black as night. Only the reflection of the flames behind them illuminated its eerily still surface. No waves rocked or crested on the shore. “How do we cross it?” she asked Maze.

“We don’t,” she answered, walking into the water.

Taking another step of faith, Chloe waded in after her, and gasped. She’d assumed it was water, but now that she was standing inside it, her legs burned. She was standing in something thicker than water, maybe like magma. She took another step forward, deeper, and found her feet were not touching the bottom. No sand or rock; she was walking on nothing. But as she followed Maze
further, the boiling liquid rose. When they had reached chest level, Maze turned to her. “Hold your
breath,” she advised. “And be ready for Amenadiel.”

“What?” Chloe started to ask, but Maze had snatched her wrist and was yanking her down beneath
the surface. She sucked in a breath, and feeling like Alice falling down the rabbit hole, dropped
through the depths.

The bottom of the lake gave way and she fell through… clouds?

Someone grabbed her, the force knocking the air from her lungs, and she hoped it was Amenadiel.
Maze was next to her, yelling at him to change directions; then she was coughing too. It was hard
to open her eyes, but she blinked through the debris, finding the world around them was gray once
more. Ash was swirling around them blindly.

They landed in a narrow tunnel in the subterranean floor, piled high with ash drifts. Chloe rolled
away from them coughing out the ash she’d swallowed, hearing Maze smack Amenadiel and yell,
“Dammit, you were supposed to go down! How difficult is that, you idiot?”

“Where are we?” She crawled to her feet, brushing the flakes away. Casting her eyes up, she
studied where they had fallen through the sky. “It’s like being in the bottom of a volcano.”

“Kinda,” commented Maze, sweeping herself off. “This loser with wings just dropped us a few
blocks away from Lucifer’s throne room.”

‘Throne room’ was so weird it was almost funny.

“That doesn’t sound too bad,” she answered.

The demon huffed. “Yeah, well, ‘blocks’ implies order.” She pointed to the twisting labyrinth
ahead. “It’s a maze. Hundreds and thousands of halls and pathways extending in any number of
directions. Lucky for us,” she said, pulling two daggers from her boot and vest. “Lucifer created
me from these fires to be his bodyguard. I can sense him. Unfortunately, it’s not necessarily linear.
It’s going to be rough, and I don’t know who we’ll find along the way. Hopefully Amenadiel can
do better this time.”

In response, he gave her a sour, pointed look, but thankfully didn’t rise to the bait. Chloe accepted
the dagger Maze extended toward her. It reminded her of the one the demon at Angel’s Landing
had carried. Long and sharp, the metal looked old and shadowed. Yet, its surface was lit by those
symbols like the other one, that glowed without any light to feed it.

“It’s forged from Hellfire too,” Maze said. “It’s the only thing that can kill an angel or a demon.
Be careful with that.”

“Thank you,” Chloe said, sliding it into her boot.

The trek was strenuous, short bursts of flying through the ash, then landing for Maze to check their
direction. At times, they had to climb the ravines to reach areas where Amenadiel could safely
spread his wings again. When it seemed they were getting closer, Maze pointed to a high tower that
rose above the horizon. “That’s it. I’ll run from here. It’ll be faster. Mark me from above if you
can’t see ahead.”

It was easier for Amenadiel with only her weight to support, and his heavy wings beat through the
deluge, easily keeping pace with the blurred form of Maze below as she crossed fissures and scaled
protuberances in the rock.
They met up again at the base of the tower, and Maze cautioned, “There’s something wrong. There’s almost no one around.”

“You think everyone is inside?” Amenadiel asked.

“I don’t know. I’m just telling you to be on your guard,” she snapped back.

They were careful entering the Great Room, but Maze’s warning hadn’t been incorrect. Around the corner of the vestibule there was a crowd of demons, ringed around someone in the center. There was a horrendous, violent howl, like the sound a dying animal makes, and then Maze turned to her. “Do not let anyone see you, Chloe. Find cover. Anywhere. Demons are unlike any cruel human you ever met, do you understand?”

Chloe had barely nodded when the melee broke out.

___

Lucifer stood patiently and withdrew a lighter from his pocket. The seconds ticked away while he waited, flicking the flame to life and snapping the lid closed to extinguish it. Finally, the scraping of the creature’s claws on the stone drew closer and he lifted his head to meet it.

“Very clever,” he congratulated mockingly. “Staging an entire abduction.”

There was no verbal answer, but then, he didn’t need one. The visual was enough. As was the accompanying rush of footsteps coming down the halls. Soon, the room would be flooded.

“And Lilith’s disappearance. That was a nice touch. Led me on a merry chase, didn’t you?” He played with the flame for a moment more, then slid the lighter into his coat pocket. “She was very cunning, and I fell for her ploy, offering Mammon up like a sacrificial lamb to throw me off the scent.”

The creature came closer, halting mere feet away, and Lucifer saw, in the shadows, demons pouring into the room from either side. “You erred, however. Too many neat coincidences, tied up with a lovely bow. Leaving Mammon’s blade by the gate, the tower break-out, the sudden demon spree - all without an angel’s help? Not that easily.”

Three sharp horns threatened to pierce him where he stood as the creature growled. Snarling back, Lucifer’s body shook, and his skin thickened like leather, stretching red and scaly as he transformed. The seams of his coat rent, and he stood eye-to-eye with the beast.

“Impressive,” Asmodeus boomed. His voice was distorted in this form.

“And Lilith?” he asked coolly.

She stepped out from behind the beast, smiling. “Here.”

Lucifer raised his head, seeing that now the chamber was filled. “And your army, it seems.”

“I promise it will only hurt if you make it difficult,” she purred, one hand on her hip over the red satin of her dress.

“Well, I’ve never been afraid of a little pain,” he answered, and grabbed a hold of one of the horns at Asmodeus’ crown. Lucifer pulled until a baying scream issued from the creature, then wrenched it free with a sharp snap of his wrist.
Asmodeus reared back, howling, then dropped to all fours, lowering his head as if to charge Lucifer like a bull. Lucifer leaned into his advance and used the momentum to throw him into the wall. Sheets of rock slid down into a pile of rubble. Striding over before he regained consciousness, Lucifer broke through the hide with his fist, and with a twist, tore free the beast’s heart.

A horde of demons raced toward him and he backhanded them into the same direction, picking up a straggler from his right side with a hand and squeezing until he heard bones break.

There was a commotion somewhere on his left, two demons falling, and another three drew weapons and clambered over the bodies of their brethren. The clanging of metal striking metal resounded, and another roar rose over the mayhem with a surge of flame, but Lucifer redirected his attention to his own problems, which currently was being outnumbered a few hundred to one.

Another form broke through the invading ranks as Lucifer crushed a demon’s skull and threw the hapless corpse into the crowd with enough force to knock down an advancing team. He wasn’t sure but it looked a lot like Maze.

He heard a bone snap and the demon flew through the air like a batarang into his companions. Yeah, that was Maze. And… was that Amenadiel, who had swooped down and taken out a line of attackers with a sweep of his wing?

Lucifer had no sense of the passing of time or recognition; there was no time to search through the blur of bodies and weapons to count allies or adversaries. Only the incessant beat of his heart telling him he was still alive, still breathing, and could keep fighting.

Then through the din he heard the resounding rapport of a gun being discharged. Fear was a shot of adrenaline, not a word that took shape in his mind, but the sense was the same - NO. She couldn’t be here.

Following the line of fire, he found her targeting a demon who had been approaching him from behind with a long dagger, the kind that could easily destroy him. The bullets wouldn’t stop him, but they would slow him down. She must have known that, as every of her shots were aimed to the head. The demon couldn’t take a step forward without the impact of a bullet jerking him back.

He ripped the dagger from the attacker, throwing him aside, and plunged the blade into the next, looking for the simplest road toward her. Surging bodies fell backward, others rushing forward, but he would cut a path through them without a problem. As he watched, Chloe fished a dagger from her boot.

One moment she was fighting, and in the next, she stiffened with a violent jolt. Her expression froze in surprise, and she fell.

Lucifer shoved his way to her; demons who didn’t move were trampled. When he dropped down beside her, he dimly heard the raucous fray, only his harsh breaths in his ears. Pulling her into his arms, he found a shuriken had struck her from behind, lodged against the brain stem. She hadn’t felt it. There was no pain on her face. There was nothing at all. Her eyes were open, but not aware. The visage of the Devil disappeared, replaced by his human form, and he spread his wings desperately. She wasn’t breathing, but if her soul hadn’t left — if he could get a feather, maybe it would be enough, maybe there would be enough time… This wasn’t what was supposed to happen. She was supposed to be safe.

He was unaware that the battle behind him had greatly diminished. He couldn’t feel anything. Except that cold, sharp ice in his veins since he had walked back in. The chill pooled, expanding,
and then it was burning, brighter and brighter…

In the distance, Amenadiel shouted, and Azazel threw himself across the room to tackle Maze and cover her with the shield of his wings.

Light, pure and hot and as divine as the stars, collected beneath his wings, spreading outward in steady rays from the plume of each feather. It was blinding, painting the cavernous black room in white with the intensity of a nuclear reaction. All who were around him that weren’t born from the direct hand of God were hit with the blast and incinerated in the spot in which they stood, their screams from the sudden scalding light abruptly cut off.

The Lightbringer had destroyed every being without a soul.

Lucifer held Chloe close through the white fire, not knowing or caring what happened around him. All he could think was that the warmth of her skin had faded…

With the infinite care of a devoted lover, he gently laid her body on the stone. She wasn’t with them any longer. Before the light had faded enough for the survivors to make out their surroundings, Lucifer had extended his wings. By the time they had blinked the world around them into focus, he was already gone.

He didn’t accept her death. He never had.

So he would get her back.

—

This realm was also gray. But whereas his was suffocating and sinister, this was the gray glow of clouds and mist, surrounded by sun and warmth.

Lucifer strode up to the gates of the Silver City, ready to rip it from its hinges if need be. Hand on the metal, he paused when he heard the voice of someone he hadn’t heard in millennia.

“Son.”

With a growl, Lucifer turned around. His father had met him outside the gates, rather than from the inside. It was like a taunt, he thought, emphasizing how greatly he was refused entrance.

God paused and offered His son a smile. “Samael. It is good to see you.”

“You’ll pardon me if I don’t believe you,” he spat. “Not after your games, not to mention your silence, your absolute denial I even existed, except to let your humans use me as a scapegoat!” He didn’t know why these words were pouring out - they weren’t why he was here. Lucifer could care less what his father thought. He only wanted to retrieve Chloe, but somehow, every suppressed word that had been denied an outlet was shrieking to be let loose.

“I understand,” his father said placatingly. “Though I had hoped that when we saw each other again, your temper would have cooled some.”

“My temper?” Lucifer asked incredulously, then reviewed what he’d just heard. “When we saw each other again? Did you plan this?” he asked with horror.

God brought his hands together, folded at his waist, and continued to observe His son calmly. “I wouldn’t say I planned it, so much as I saw the possibility. I had hoped… that perhaps Chloe would bring you home.”
“Home?” he choked out. “My home is on Earth. This hasn’t been my home since you threw me out.”

“You mean, since you staged a war on our family?” countered his father without reproof.

His mild manner was only provoking Lucifer’s further. “It was only a war because you refused to loosen your control. Everyone obeyed you, exalted you. All I asked for was my own free will.”

“And in so doing, corrupted my humans.”

“So, Chloe really was a devious plan to punish me? Is that why? Our child?” He added, pained. He couldn’t bear to know, but neither could he contain the hurt and outrage that her existence had been manipulated from the beginning, her future already written.

“No, son. Not to punish you. To bring you home,” God repeated.

“This…” Stupefied, Lucifer trailed off. “This was all about making me come back? You couldn’t just come down and talk to me? Ring me on the phone?”

His father laughed in what sounded suspiciously like a snicker. “As if you would have listened. Your pride would never have allowed it.”

Lucifer shook his head, as if to push away the incompatibility of what he was hearing. “It doesn’t matter. I’m not here for you. I just want her back.”

In silence, God regarded him thoughtfully. “How does the expression go? Ah, yes… I’d like to make a deal with the Devil.”

“You can’t be serious,” Lucifer scoffed, then sobered as he studied his father’s mien. “You’ll make a deal with me in return for Chloe and the baby?”

“Of course. You may talk to her, and if her choice is to go with you, I will honor it. In exchange, you agree to live a mortal lifespan, and when it is over, you will come home.”

He hesitated, then asked, “I won’t return to Hell?”

“If you don’t wish it. Azazel can manage things for a turn. He’s done well, don’t you think?”

Not that he wanted to admit it out loud, but he agreed. Azazel may have lost his trust once, but he had kept his word since, even fighting a losing battle by his side tonight. If Azazel could accept the charge, he would gladly yield it.

“And… that’s it? That’s all you want?” He asked again, feeling there must be a hidden catch somewhere. Some clause concealed in the fine print.

“That’s it,” his father confirmed, spreading His hands wide as if to show He was holding nothing back. “I think our time apart has taught us both, Samael.”

God walked to the gates, laying a hand on its smooth, pearly surface. “I was angry with you for your defiance. When you wouldn’t serve my creations, it offended me. I felt as though you were challenging me.” He turned to look at His son again. “But I’ve come to appreciate what you’ve created, son.”

“What I’ve created?” Lucifer’s brows drew together. “Sin?”

“No. Choice,” He corrected. “Choice is beautiful, son. Without it, love isn’t self-sacrificing,
loyalty isn’t true, pain isn’t sorrow, heartbreak isn’t shattering. Nothing would have meaning. What I did was create life,” He put a hand on His son’s shoulder, “what you did was create living.”

His father walked through the portal into the soft, ephemeral glow. Moments later, a figure took shape in the distance, characteristics sharpening as it neared. He recognized her curves in an instant, the golden curtain of her hair curling across her shoulders, and the unconscious grace of her walk.

Chloe stopped before him in surprise. “You’re here!” she breathed, wrapping her arms around him.

Lucifer absorbed the feel of her in his arms, whole and happy, as if he hadn’t only minutes ago held her lifeless body. She was soft and warm and strong. “I’m so sorry,” he said against her hair.

“For what?” she asked, pulling away a few inches.

“For leaving you. You were right. I couldn’t take the idea of losing you, but there wasn’t any way to stop it. And now you’ve left me.”

She shook her head, smiling. “No I haven’t. I’m right here.”

His chuckle was ironic, but he continued on. Heaven was perfect peace, and he felt like a perverse casting of Orpheus as he sought his wife, Eurydice, from the Underworld. How could he lead her back to Earth with him, when she would be enthralled with the sublimity of Heaven? “Chloe, you have to come back with me. Please.”

“Back?” Chloe’s eyes clouded with uncertainty and her smile turning quizzical. “Why?”

“Because… your friends are down there. Your family,” he said.

“Oh,” she shrugged, still smiling, and the light-hearted sparkle in her eyes returned. “It’s okay. They’ll be here someday. My father’s here. Charlotte’s here. Christine is here. We’ll all be together again.” From behind her mother, a sweetly rounded face of a bright blonde-haired child in pigtails looked up at him.

Christine. He had a daughter.

An ache rose in his throat, and he knelt before them, holding a hand out to the little girl. She was around six or seven, rather than an infant. But in the Silver City, time and age didn’t exist. She had chosen for herself a mortal time of innocence and joy.

“Hello Christine,” Lucifer said softly, and earned a shy smile in return. “As beautiful as your mother.” With, perhaps, a hint of deviltry in her eyes. How he would have loved to see what trouble she would get into. He held out his hand, hoping she would come closer, and she surprised him by walking into his arms and hugging him, tiny arms circling his neck.

Her little body was soft, and as he held her, he was overcome with the desire to protect her, watch over her, and see her happy. Was that being a father, he wondered, awed and humbled. It was that simple, to accept love without fear? And he knew, irrefutably, that love was now permanent. As swiftly and inexorably as he had fallen in love with Chloe, he was ensnared again, this time by the amazing creature in front of him; an entire soul made from them. Lucifer reluctantly released her, and looked up at Chloe.

“Chloe, please come home with me,” he asked again.

“Or you could stay here. It’s incredible, Lucifer; no pain, or sadness, or fear. The only thing it’s
missing is you, or it would be perfect,” she said wistfully, and Christine hugged her leg. Chloé’s hand stroked her hair and back lovingly.

Past her, he could make out the shining walls of the city, where millions of souls lived in perfection. Never had he felt a part of it; somehow always different, confined, curious and itching to question and test the limits and rules. Never really understood by another.

Before him, Chloé waited patiently for him to answer. “Chloé,” he said, “I was unhappy here. Alone in an entire world that I was supposed to believe was perfect. But in L.A., on Earth, I didn’t feel alone anymore. Even if sometimes I doubted I could live up to anyone’s expectations, to the way you saw me. Living there with you, our friends, is the only time in my entire existence I’ve felt that I belonged. If you ask me to stay, I will.” He held her gaze. “I think it would feel like Heaven - to be here with you. But…”

He took a deep breath. Embarking on the very long path his life had taken had begun with his refusal to kneel before Adam; his pride and vanity hadn’t allowed it. Now for it to change, he would have to embrace that humility. It cost him nothing to kneel before her, but to beg her meant searching for his most secret desires and exposing their soft underbellies.

“I’m asking you not to deny me the parts of life I haven’t had the chance to experience yet. To see our daughter be born, hold her for the first time, show her the stars like when you were a child. I’m asking you to let me spend each day finding out if you’ll laugh or sigh in exasperation, and making love to you every chance I get, and counting the minute changes of time whilst we grow older. Seeing the parts of you that you keep hidden away from everyone else behind your walls: your compassion and love, your vulnerability and strength. I want to work by your side to stop terrible acts, and give you things that you would never admit to wanting.” The words came easier with every syllable, yet were just as terrifying. “I want a life with you. Where you help me want to be a little bit better, and I help you be a little more naughty.”

Lucifer watched her, tensely holding his breath after his monologue.

She exhaled shakily, then her lips curved in a slow smile, looking down at Christine, then back at him. “Now *that* was a beautiful proposal.”

—-

Cradling her in his lap, he pored over the familiar planes of her face, her nose, her cheeks, lips, waiting with bated breath for some sign. His heart thudded painfully.

Her eyes opened.

—-

Chapter End Notes

Well. There it is. The final chapter. What I saw in my mind’s eye before the story even took form.
I don’t even know what to say... mostly thank you to all of you for helping me on this adventure. Every time I received a comment, it made my day.
I would like to commit to a series, or at least a sequel, but I can’t promise it will be immediate. Life/work get overwhelming at times - but I’ve started kicking around
ideas, and once I can get enough planned out and time to write, we’ll see what dreams may come, eh?

Please leave me some of your thoughts. I do still love reading them. And in case you have any interest in reading it again, I will be making revisions in the coming days, cleaning things up, etc, and posting my little ‘soundtrack’.

Thank you. - Effie
Chapter 41

No Force on Earth

(part two)

Launches: February 14, 2020

End Notes

If you like the story, I beg you to let me know! I thrive on encouragement, compliments, and constructive criticism.

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Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!