O you were the best of all my days

by lilith_morgana

Summary

_They all fall down in the end. The humans and the angel who once brought light to the breathless sky._

Lucifer's love story with humanity, written for the Lucifer Bingo prompt "devil may care".

Notes

Written for the Lucifer bingo wildcard prompt ‘Devil may care’, interpreted in the most liberal of ways. I intended a quick little piece about carelessness vs care and ended up with... something completely different.

See the end of the work for more notes

O you were the best of all my days

"There is no mortal sin, there are only souls, lost in a maze that someone else has made for them."

Lucifer, vol. 9 - Crux
His fall is the grandest in the history of time.

They say he wanted to overthrow the celestial kingdom, take the throne for himself and erase the opposing angels from existence. That the prideful son of the morning desired the power of a god. He doesn’t deny this - the millennia pass around him, Hell dulls his senses and he doesn’t properly remember anymore but he can’t question that he once wanted exactly what they accuse him of wanting.

They say, too, that he was envious of the humans. So envious, in fact, that he brought upon their downfall.

*This*, he cannot remember.

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Her eyes make him do it.

It’s all terribly ironic, given what the world will make of it, how the human race will tell the story of their self-proclaimed *original sin*. Scholars and artists alike will demonize the female body for millennia, consider it the path to fire and brimstone through sweet carnal desires and yet, Lucifer could tell them if they would listen, what mattered were her *eyes*.

The garden is lush and hot, its leaves and branches reaching for him when he moves through it, giving him a sense of importance. Such tasteless *abundance* of everything in this paradise of pleasure and then the woman who is the crown of everything, a living being molded from someone else in order to perfect Creation. And what a woman she is, what a *mirage*. After Lilith, dear old dad had taken all necessary measures with the second attempt at giving Adam a wife and Lucifer can imagine his triumph and satisfaction at the sight of her, *Eve*, walking for the first time through her Heavenly life.

They are free to choose, Father claims. In their cores there is a burning flame, a free will that gasps faintly even here at dawn. Lucifer grapples with the concept, with the buried implications and limitations of it: how freely can one move if one is made from someone else’s bones, how much can an echoic voice sing out of tune? They are free to choose by celestial design but when they do, when their dissonances grow, they are punished for it.

Predictably, he finds it revolting.

Even more predictably, he finds it necessary to *tell* her, the words spilling out of him almost like it’s orchestrated and perhaps it is. The humans will write epic volumes on this, after all, dress it in layer upon layer of morality, sexuality, theology. But here, at the heart of it, Lucifer leans in to ask a
question that has formed itself at the back of his mind ever since he first saw the woman in the
Garden of Eden and spotted the sad tint in her eyes as she had taken in her hollow empire.

“Adam is a fortunate man. I wonder, however, if this is what you truly desire?” he asks.

“Oh.” She shakes her head. “No, I- I do not know -”

Even her language is meant to tell someone else’s story.

Lucifer tilts his head, looks down at her honest face - an uncorrupted face, still utterly above the
profanation that will follow as she, too, dares to disagree with celestial law. He places a hand on her
cheek, touches the gentle shape of her chin, the lush curve of her lower lip. And Eve looks like him
as though he is the light in the sky. As though it’s there within him after all. Something aches at the
notion, her mere presence awakening the half-buried wounds of his own.

“Show me?” he says, hoping that his voice is gentler than he knows it to be.

So she does.

In turn, he shows her what he does best.

She tastes of apples and salt, honey and grapes; her body is a soft road full of rounded flesh and
tender passages and it welcomes him like nothing he could have even imagined before.

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They all fall down in the end. The humans and the angel who once brought light to the breathless
sky.

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“They are barely more than animals. What is it that you possibly could find so intriguing about
them?”

Lucifer turns to the self-righteous frame of his older brother, perched like a guardian angel on his
right side. They must be a sight up here on the mountain where he’s sometimes sitting, observing the
struggles of the men and women down there. If they saw them, that is. And they don’t. They rarely
look up, afraid of the sun and the sky and all the terrors that come from above.

“They discovered fire,” he replies, folding his arms across his chest. “And invented the wheel. I can’t
wait to see where they’re going with that. Probably going to hunt each other to death with burning
wheels, but you never know.”

“Luci-“
“Father cast me out of Heaven, Amenadiel. He never exiled me from Earth.” Many, many feet below them a tribe is taking care of today’s harvest; fish are being grilled, the skin of a bear is being prepared to better uses. It’s a whole little world in itself. Banal matters, far from divine strategies and celestial power games but fascinating, in their own way. “I have, however indirectly it may have been announced, a right to be here.”

Heaven’s brightest angel has so very few rights left that he will fight to the death for this particular one. He doesn’t say that.

“Perhaps.” Amenadiel sighs. “But you are interfering.”

“I’m merely watching. Isn’t that what angels are supposed to do? Stand idly by, full of grace and ego and conceit?”

“So it was not you at Mount Horeb then, brother?”

_They were slaves._

Lucifer can’t conceal his own sneer and raises a hand to rub the bridge of his nose. “I am what I am. Which is not, incidentally, a burning bush, now is it?”

His brother gives a low growl. Animals, indeed.

“How can you, after everything that has happened, still question everything?” Amenadiel’s voice is harsh but there’s a tear in it, a shiver he tries to conceal. _Enough, Samael. Please, dear brother. Enough. I do not wish to see any harm come to you._ They had been holding on to each other then, gripping and clawing for life although everything had already been too late. Very early in his life, everything became too late. The Silver City had been silent that last time he walked through it, a cold kind of emptiness swallowing every sound; he had heard Azrael’s quiet wails but it had been distant, all of it _distant._

Lucifer exhales slowly, evenly. The memory exhausts him.

“How can you not?” he asks but the spot beside him is already empty.

Below the nameless human bodies scurry about, moving in and out of each other’s shadows, in and out of each other’s lives; above he can hear the vague sound of wings.

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He watches them rise from their fall, exploration by exploration, invention by invention. They grow taller, stronger, faster; they build families and villages, form cities and empires. With it comes borders to expand and defend, leaders to elect and dispose of; at long last both Hell and Earth are beginning to become rather interesting places.
The Greeks and the Romans, the Egyptians and the Spartans; oh he bloody loves them.

“The great lady of perfection, excellent in counsel.” Lucifer sips his goblet of wine, reading from the hieroglyphs on the wall. This is his second visit to Alexandria; he has found some time to study even written language. “Now this is an honour, my lady, and it’s all mine for a change.”

She smiles at him across the table. Later, she climbs on top of his naked body without much preamble and in the light from the flames by the bed her features resemble those of a great sphinx. He chuckles into her mouth, into her awe at the sight of him, that small fraction of her mind that seems to acknowledge a divinity she cannot possibly fathom.

A couple of years later he sees Cleopatra again - in ruins this time, though still as magnificent. Empires crumble and burn and Hell is busy welcoming the souls of this particular pyre. He must admit that he had not expected her to end up with him, had not deemed her doomed enough. It jars dangerously in him, the mere idea of what awaits her. Kissing the top of her head, he carries her to her final destination and recoils slightly at the discomfort in the whole arrangement, the stab of regret as she turns in his arms stares at him, mouth open.

“You will be in good company here, my lady,” he says and puts her down as gently as he possibly can.

He comes for some of them in person, finds it a welcome change to be there not for the death itself - that is Azrael’s quest and he turns away each time, steps back into the shadows to avoid an encounter - but for the moments leading up to it. The fear, the shame, the guilt. Nothing teaches him as much about humans or their just punishments as those frantic scenes leading up to their ultimate demise.

He comes for Brutus, as well, follows him into the hills where he runs to live out his last hours. Observing him for a moment where he sits still by the edge of a patch of forest, a little haven where they cannot be spotted. Not yet. There’s still pride in his posture but it’s waning, washed away by the memories of everything that has taken place since this man decided to rebel against the emperor. A hollowness in his gaze where guilt and shame has carved out their share, a raw desperation in his voice that has paid the price. Sic semper tyrannis.

“You thought you were defending the Republic,” Lucifer says, stepping into the other man’s vision. He is greeted by a pair of widening eyes, a soft gasp. Broken, like most beautiful things on this Earth, but still in possession of the stubborn strength that has carried mankind thus far.

“I was. We were. I have only ever wanted the common good. The best for Rome.” There’s no deceit in his words, no aftertaste of warped ambition laced around the statements. Surprising.

“And yet your guilt carries a stench worse than those corpses.” He looks around, nodding towards a pair of dead bodies not yet taken care of. “Because you betrayed a friend, did you not? A man who has acted like your father. He trusted you. More than anyone else.”

Brutus winces, heaving himself up on all fours with unease and it’s not until then Lucifer spots the injuries on his left leg, the deep cut on his right arm.

“We had to act,” he says.
Oh, you didn’t.” Lucifer hears his own voice as a ghost in the hot and dry air between them. Smooth and cold, like a departed soul. “You didn’t truly need to. You chose to.”

He sounds like Father. He sounds like Father and it makes him inhale his own words; they taste bitter at the back of his tongue, sour as they travel inwardly. An echo that should not be.

Brutus suddenly looks him straight in the eyes. So few of them do that.

“Not because I loved Caesar less,” he says, biting back visible pain as he squares his shoulders and adjusts the shield still on his back. “But because I loved Rome more.”

A mere hour later he impales himself on his own sword and Lucifer waits by the forest until the stars are out above them before he leaves, too.

It is said - he blames Dante, the smug bastard - that the inner circle of Hell imprisons the worst sinners in the history of mankind. That this is where Brutus the younger live out his eternal torment, trapped in frenetic agony, surrounded by the high-pitched cries of others in the same kind of pain.

The truth is that Brutus' cell in the winding corridors is a quiet one, eerily so even, and no noise ever emerges from it. He stands there in the middle of his empty chamber with a dagger in his hand while tears run down his cheek. A reasonable man with a political mind; his hell is not the deed but the decision.

Lucifer visits from time to time and every time Mazikeen is disappointed he refuses to add extra torture.

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He watches them rise from their fall, watches them climb over each other to reach the heights they can never restore, never even imagine. But they try, they try so diligently, and he cannot look away.

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Astronomy is one of his favorite entertainments. It is wild and mad, bloody-minded and far-fetched and then occasionally it hits the exact spots.

In the golden age of the Abbasid Caliphate he spends a whole visit soaking himself in the partly delusional, partly brilliant human methods of making sense of the skies above. There’s a chamber in the Buyid court in Isfahan that smells of incense and ink, of mint leaves and heat. There’s a woman in there, too, who is moving inside the palace like a thief and Lucifer has followed her for half a day. Such a waste of his precious time up here, had it not been for the way her hips sway in front of him and that irreverent glint in her eyes as she turns around once the door to this chamber has snapped shut.

“You. State your purpose.”
“Lucifer Morningstar.” He pauses, holds up his hands. “My purpose is simply pleasure.”

The woman leans against the edge of the table, frowning. She wears blood-red and purple, her entire body clad in smooth silk and fine jewelry and he knows without asking that she is a princess. That explains the confidence and, he supposes, also the need for secrecy. Women of the court are mere statues, wordless and motionless. Daughters of Eve, indeed.

“Pleasure? That is an odd purpose.”

“Is it?” He smiles, waiting for her to smile back or make a move towards him. She remains where she is but her body inches closer, almost unnoticeable. “I think it’s a fairly reasonable one.”

“Perhaps. I suppose it depends on the person pursuing it.”

“And you, what do you think? What do you want?” He catches her gaze over the parchments on the table, holds it as her fingers begin to tremble against the spilled ink, the patched research. A great, complex mind, he thinks. He will never have enough of those, not for all of eternity; he eats them like sugar-coated figs, like gorgeous women, like starved men eat bread. It’s not wholly about the power even, it’s about the unfolding, the deconstructing. Her entire face falls open like a book as he enters, subtly and carefully, touching only the faintest edges of her desire. She draws a shaky breath and the sound lands with a hot jolt in his body.

“I want to finish this. This technique. I am not even supposed to be able to write, they have no idea what I’m capable of.” She looks down at the unfinished drawing in the middle of all the notes and quills, looks up again and meets Lucifer’s eyes once more. “I just want to solve it.”

“What’s stopping you?”

“Everything.” The princess sighs, before squaring her shoulders again; he is continually amazed at how resilient human women are, how much they endure and accept without losing their ground, without leading pointless rebellions against powers that are beyond their comprehension. “Everyone.”

“They are not here now,” he says softly. He picks up a quill and weighs it in his palm for a moment. “Let me guard the door for as long as you need.”

“But-”

“Just get to work, will you.” He holds up his hands once more, this time as a more firm gesture. “Solve your mystery. One-time offer.”

She doesn’t waver for long; next time he looks at her she is bent over the parchments, leaning so close that her dark hair is caught in a rivulet of ink. Lucifer admires the outlines of her body, stretched out like a feline animal all across her work and he thinks of the limitations they have put upon themselves. The tiny imaginations of the struggling human brains, so barren of innovative thoughts that they cannot even fathom that physical strength and intellectual prowess are entirely unrelated. Some of the more vehement oppressors he gets to punish, at least, but the majority of them end up with his brothers and sisters and he mourns this fact, some days more than others.

They remain in the secluded chamber until the sun has set and the shadows wrap the floor in enticing patterns. Not until then, the princess puts her quill down and straightens her back. She runs her palms
along her sides and hands him a scribbled note that seems to say the same thing as what she just wrote on the parchment. He looks at it, then back at her.

“Why are you doing this?”

“Because,” he says, wondering why he so rarely is asked this very question. “It is within my powers.”

“And what do you want in return?”

_Temptation._

“Whatever you would like to give me.”

They part at midnight with a kiss that leave traces of acacia and minerals on his skin, a scent of wine in her mouth; he will remember the way her breasts had risen on the pillows below her, the arch of her back and the flesh of her thighs under his tongue. A mind like an angel and the body of a demon, he thinks, strangely reluctant to part with the sensation of her pressed up against his chest.

“Resist their petty restrictions,” he tells her, breathes it into her like a distorted god. “Be free. Rebel. If not with your body, then at least with your soul. Take whatever you can get, whenever you want it.”

“You are a very strange creature.” Her brown eyes are firm, her lips are parted, smiling.

“You could never even imagine the extent of it.” He smiles back. “Or perhaps you of all humans could.”

Next time he visits Earth he reads in the _Book of Fixed Stars_ about the nebulous spot in the Andromeda constellation, about the technique that generates linear motion from the sum of two circular motions and he thinks about ink-stained hands in a room that had smelled of mint.

Court astronomer Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi claims the discovery for himself, of course, but Lucifer knows better. Sometimes that little poke at his dear old dad’s hopeless creation, that slight _shove_ into the order of things, is truly all that matters.

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He watches them rise, oblivious to their own sins or determined to succeed because of them. They profit on each other, on the disadvantages and weakness; they expand and advance, enslave and eradicate. They fear too little and caveat too much; they speak of laws and limits and break them with their eyes wide-open.

These are busy centuries for them all.
There’s a thunderstorm approaching and he is deliberately soaked in rain, not wanting to display more angelic features than necessary in the small city where he landed.

In what looks to be an abandoned cottage, he finds a temporary shelter. Later, he almost wishes he hadn’t.

But here he is, filling up a narrow door frame in a house that is not, as it turns out, a derelict shell. He is about to enter someone’s home. Someone in this case being a woman of a reasonably young age, short and blond and plump and dressed in simple clothes. A peasant, perhaps. Or a farmer.

“Good evening,” he ventures.

She scrutinizes him in silence. The warmth from the room behind her reaches his skin and he shivers in the draft. One of the many delights of his human form is the fact that he gets to experience a lot of the bodily sensations and merely a select few of the disadvantages. Where the mortals freeze he feels a pleasant chill, where the mortals sweat he basks in the sun like a cat.

Here he keeps himself still, nonthreatening, as the effect he has on humans begins to work its way around the uninhabitable temperatures outside. Its result is usually a sign that is hard to miss: a smile, a relieved chuckle, a relenting posture, more and more often - as the forced chastity slowly erodes - a direct invitation. With her it’s a light in her gaze.

“You are not a dangerous man,” she says and moves to the side.

“Not to you.”

“Then step inside. You look a fright and the weather is terrible.” She nods towards the fire and a chair near it. Then she serves him broth and bread with thick slices of cheese as though he’s just another traveler passing by in the late evening. He is and he isn’t; there have been rumblings of disaster in Europe for a while, large dispatches of men of the cloth arriving in Hell looking more shocked than most to end up there and Lucifer is curious enough to visit one of the sources of the turmoil.

She sits down opposite him as she lets her story slip out, lets it land between the flickering shadows cast by the fire. Her name is Catherine Boyraionne - he will learn it later, will see it in written accounts of the so-called trials and always with that bitter sting of regret, of guilt - and they say she is a witch.

The witches, the priests claim, are selling their souls to Satan. Conspiring against the holy order, spreading the devil’s gospel of destruction on God’s earth, entering pacts with the dark lord through offerings Lucifer cannot even begin to understand why he would even desire. In reality, of course, the witches are often women in positions of slight advantages - widows, knowledgeable midwives, temptresses. Or, more rarely, men who have misbehaved or stuttered while reciting the Bible. They are mere humans with no powers whatsoever except for those given to them by other people’s fear.

He tells her this and waits for a gasp of horror, a terrified look.

“Perhaps,” she says instead and observes him, her eyes intent and demanding. It makes his lips curl into a smile that she catches, indicating that this night could take a rather pleasant turn despite
everything. Or because of everything - the people society damn often turn out to be delightful company, he has learned that over the last millennia.

“You are not afraid of the church then?” he has to ask, finishing his cheese. Her door had been marked with the sign for witch, her secluded little place singled out in this deranged quest and every time he thinks about the vast pattern of holy men and unholy sins that is at work here, he has to clench his hands.

“Fear serves no purpose.” The woman lowers her head slightly, then looks up again. “They will break me. I have no hope of proving my innocence against their methods.”

“So why not run away?”

“This is my home,” she says simply. He appreciates the candor, sympathizes with the statement. “I refuse to be afraid in my own home. And I know, in my heart, that I am innocent.”

"How do you know? Make no mistake, I do not doubt your innocence either but how can a mere human make such bold claims?"

She is silent for a long time, dipping her bread in the bowl of broth to savor every last drop and eyeing him with a serious expression.

"I serve God with my medical knowledge," she replies then, jutting her round jaw so that her expression morphs into a stubborn one. "I treat the villagers, I aid those in need, I have committed no sins."

It reaches something far beyond the surface, hearing her words. Humans and their warped sense of importance, their grandiose claims of both sainthood and villainy. Has he ever been as certain of anything as this woman in front of him is about the direction her soul will take after death? Has he ever held on to a truth quite as fervently?

"You are fearless," he says and the admiration he feels colors his voice. It lands with a warm blow in the sparse room, in the air between them.

Later, as the thunder ravages the scenery outside she’s breathless, boneless in his arms but there’s no fear in her voice even then, even as he stares into her eyes, baring her deepest desires in order to fulfill them. “What are you?”

“What do you want me to be?”

She laughs gently, moving his hand between her legs. “Oblivion.”

“As you wish,” he murmurs, lowering his voice a little just as another wave of thunder cracks over their heads and the sound of heavy rain increase once more. Before she falls asleep her hand taps absentmindedly along his upper arm, dragging his gaze down to meet hers.

“My trial takes place the day after tomorrow. I don’t suppose you can stay?”

Lucifer opens his mouth, then closes it again.

It is, he realizes with a peculiar jolt in his chest, the first time someone has asked him to.

It is, he realizes as well, impossible.
When he does return to the village - as soon as he can and only a brief while later - the cottage is empty and Catherine thrown into a prison cell, guarded by soldiers and priests. Ignorant, small-minded cretins filling up the empty spaces of this petty little world and he feels his fury like a beat in his entire body as he scares everyone out of the way. At least the simplicity of barbarism goes both ways.

She’s still breathing but everything is too late. Everything and they have barely left an inch of her unharmed.

“It’s you,” she lifts her head from the floor as he enters, bending to her immediately. Her body feels smaller, lighter than the one he had rendered exhausted before, the one that had shivered with pleasure and lit up in a low, wicked laughter. Her body feels distorted, used, her skin carrying too many traces of torture for him to see anything but the uneven patches of burnt skin, of torn muscle, of crushed bones.

Lucifer swallows, gradually losing his self-control. “Who did this to you?”

“It - it doesn’t matter.”

“It matters to me.”

“T-thank you. For coming.” Her voice is clotted with pain. Her eyes are dark and dull, the way they look right before death, just as the soul is readying itself for departure. The knowledge twists in him, fuels the pull deep inside that he struggles against. And knows, as he meets her eyes, that he is losing. His form slips out of reach, taunting him in a near distance but he cannot rein in the stream of emotions that break out of him, flooding the entire room. “Y-you’re an... angel.”

“I-” He is about to tell her that he has not been for a very long time, but the joy that mingles with the destruction in her face cuts him off. Sheer, absolute relief at the sight of him, the promise of him. “I am.”

And he is one, for her.

As her breathing quickens and her hands reach out, grappling for something to hold on to he takes them in his own and allows his angelic form to appear in full force. Her bruised and bloodied face stills as the divinity sinks in, as the gold-tinted light of it shrouds her. At peace. For a fraction of a moment as he lets his wings sepulcher the dying woman, there is peace in him, too. A deep-set, overwhelming sort of peace that he has not felt since Heaven. It has the edges of a sharp blade but the heart of a boundless love.

He remains with her on the ground until he feels the soul let go; only then he does, too.

The wrath that follows wrecks the entire building and the only reason he never reads about it in historical records afterwards is because the priests that he encounters are too terrified to ever form words again.

The wrath that follows wrecks his momentum, his pattern of these visits. In his head, as a distant echo warped around memories he no longer wishes to have, he can hear father, can hear Amenadiel - it is not your place, Samael, it is not your battle - but he pushes it away, pushes to his feet and rages forth. He breaks the cycle; he is doomed to repeat the cycle over and over again.
“How dare you invoke my name!” The hellfire blazes through the room, he can feel it like a flame in front of his own face, can hear a collective gasp of fear. His entire being soars with wrath, his mind is wonderfully clouded and heavy, his movements perfectly in tune with his emotions. It has been some time since he unleashed the depths of his fury up on Earth; too long, evidently, these beasts forget so quickly. “How dare you use me for this extermination, these mindless murders!”

One of the soldiers cries, another falls to his knees. Behind them a shaking figure stands up, holding up a Bible. A vicar, by the looks of it. Likely the one responsible for Catherine’s death. That notion is a flash of lightning in Lucifer’s mind, a whip of molten wrath. He wants the man in a thousand pieces, wants every bone in his worthless little body to shatter like ashes, wants to hear him cry for the false god he has dedicated his life to, see the lifeless stare of his gaze when all sense and purpose flee, when he is nothing but an empty husk.

“The power of Chr-”

“How dare you use my name!” He grabs the vicar by the throat and throws him across the room. In his mind the broken body of Catherine has wedged itself in between other terrors that stand out among the many depraved sins of humanity, in his throat he still feels the angry protests as he had found her - too late, too broken - on the bloodied stones. “Do you think this is what God wants, you wretched filth?”

He has never, he thinks later, felt closer to his father than in this moment, never felt so certain of His intent; he has never before spoken of him with the name the humans have created for him, never given him that power. In a twisted sense, it brings him consolation.

“Burn them,” he orders Mazikeen as they arrive in Hell, one by one, trickling down like dirty water. A few of them have broken their own principles and committed suicide; the thought burns in him, half pleasure half guilt. “Boil them, crucify them, drown them. Taunt them with their own faith.”

“They used this book,” he adds and hands her the Malleus Maleficarum. “You should be able to find inspiration there.”

A delighted glint in her eyes as she bows her head. “Yes, my lord.”

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And then all of a sudden or long overdue depending on your perspective, it’s the age of revolutions and every major city in the world boil with change, with desire, with authorities being dethroned, tyrants being replaced. People find their voices after all these years of slumber and Lucifer watches with delight how they fight each other on the streets and inside the buildings of law and justice. Watches how the men in charge change the system, alter the odds, wage wars to keep the population from turning against their leaders by turning them against each other. Trick as old as time but these humans fall for it, over and over.

Until some of them suddenly refuse to. It’s exhilarating, makes him tolerate even Amenadiel’s dry, bitter company whenever he is graced with his brother’s presence. London, Moscow, Berlin, Stockholm; the location matters very little for the temperance of angels. Or at least for the temperance of one of the two angels present. The sour-looking one.

“Amenadiel.” Lucifer looks up from the newspaper he’s snagged from outside the pub that’s
overlooking Newgate and Old Bailey. “Have a drink while there is still time, I’m fairly certain there
will be riots again soon. They stormed the prison last week, did you know? Freed the inmates by the
authority of his Majesty, King Mob.”

The whole city had reeked of rebellion even today - summer warmth and chaos in the streets, a
lovely mixture of things he could get used to if he ever was to find a way to worm his way up to the
surface permanently.

“Were you there?” Amenadiel asks, sharper than usual.

“Oh, brother.” He chuckles, folds the newspaper and empties what’s left of his pint. “You know I
wasn’t. Furthermore, I assume you already know the exact time and date for all my earthly journeys,
no need to pretend otherwise. Had I been here, however, I would not have turned down a decent
riot. And ‘King Mob’, now that I like. Lovely name for an unruly and fearsome proletariat. They are
improving.”

“Luci, these are complex times.” His brother sighs and leans back in his seat. Time around them is
still unmoving; Lucifer wonders idly if there is a limit to the duration of that power or if it’s simply as
unrelenting and stubborn as the angel wielding it. “Now more than ever it is of utmost importance to
be mere observers. There are wars brewing, revolutions to come.”

Lucifer whistles, reluctantly impressed with the astute assertion of current affairs. “I’m surprised you
have picked up on that, brother. You who see everything through Heaven.”

His brother doesn’t take the bait, dismisses the opportunity for a good angelic quarrel. Then again,
Amenadiel’s life probably isn’t lacking in that particular aspect, isn’t restricted to demonic company
and the unending pain of the pits of Hell. The pathetic truth is that Lucifer is keen on debate
whenever their paths cross, eager like the rebellious little brother he has always been behind his
disdain and dislike.

“That is precisely why I know about what goes on here on Earth. Celestials needn’t meddle in the
insignificant struggles.”

“If they are so insignificant, why not just let me be?” He cuts Amenadiel off. “What harm can it do,
interacting with these supposedly wild animals?”

“Humans are not meant to be exposed to the divine, Luci. You know this.”

“I don’t expose anything divine. Well, unless you count my divine ability for erotic escapades but I
don’t suppose you would anything about that.” Reaching over the bar, Lucifer refills his drink and
leaves a pile of coin near the barkeeper’s hand. More than enough, the way he usually pays for his
vices up here. Never let it be said that the Lord of Hell is parsimonious. “At the moment the humans
are too busy to look for it, at any rate. They are finally acting out their desire for freedom, brother.
The age of revolution! If I can flip just one coin in the face of fate I’m a lucky Devil”

“Fate?” A shade of disgust crosses Amenadiel’s face. “You truly refuse to learn anything then? After
all this time it’s still only ever about sowing seeds of destruction and watching it unfold? Is that all
you have learned? Is that all you are?”

He scoffs into the barley wine. “Apparently so, brother. If you say it, it must be true.”
He watches human history unfold from pubs and gentlemen's clubs, from galas and factory yards and university chambers. There are speeches and rallies, steam engines and Common Sense, iron and blood and so many twists and turns that Lucifer marvels at every visit.

He gives out favors when he can, have them returned if possible - much less often than people who stoop to making deals with the Devil would think - and enjoys the busy decades of change. His life is change, or so he claims, and humanity finally seems to agree.

On Haiti, he has exquisite coffee from the plantation he quietly showers in money while waiting for the uprising that will undoubtedly change the course for a lot of humans. It hadn’t even been a favor, that splurge of cash that found its way into Toussaint Louverture’s hands; it had been offered freely in a moment of pleasure in a very dark corner of a very questionable establishment and accepted in an equally half-delirious rush. The outcome is bloody and results in several new residents in Hell but Lucifer never regrets the funding.

Napoleon Bonaparte, on the other hand, is the sort of man who sells his soul and cheap at that. Lucifer gets a flamboyantly ugly statue of a horse in return, but he certainly feels no remorse when he leaves the tiny French emperor to his own misfortune. At the very least the Duke of Wellington has better taste - as well as a beautiful, slightly underappreciated wife. Now that deal is beneficial to both parties.

“I do love the smell of gunpowder,” the Red Virgin of Montmartre confesses, smirking at him over a bottle of cheap wine. The entire room smells of sweat and skin rubbing against too-heavy clothing and the rush of emotion. Paris is splendid these days, perpetually tethering on the edge of another uproar, another protest in the streets. Lucifer has watched her agitate tonight, has seen her standing on a rickety table in the middle of a crowded room, has heard her call for weapons, for unified struggle against the oppressors. People are dying from hunger and they do not even have the right to say that they are dying from hunger! She’s brilliant and bold, appears to be made up of well-contained fury and a sharp, vitriolic mind. He is quite taken with her and makes no attempt at hiding it; her cheeks flush the faintest shade of pink when he compliments her but she follows him to a table, sits as close as she possibly can without drawing too much attention to them. “I suppose it’s the danger of it all.”

“Do you now?” Lucifer sits still, hands on the table, observing the way her features dance before him. She has the sort of charisma that triumphs all beauty, overshadows every flaw. “Is it war you desire then?”

“Revolution,” comes the answer, without hesitation. Her hair is tousled and unkempt, stray rivulets getting in her eyes and she brushes them back with her free hand. The other one holds a bottle of liquor that she passes him. “I want fire. In my dreams I see Paris in flames. Those flames are a new dawn.”

He shifts in his seat, drawing nearer after taking a large mouthful of bourbon. “Delightful.”

She scoffs. “It’s not a matter of delight, monsieur. Revolution is always a question of necessity. It is also my duty as a woman to see to it since power has not yet corrupted us.”
When he passes the bottle back, her hand comes to rest over his for a lingering moment and he cannot help but smile, fascinated by the depths of her passion, her influence on him.

An influence that hours later leave them both panting against the sheets in the room he has rented for the night. Her breasts are pressed against his naked skin and his hand is playing in her hairdo that is now definitely ruined. When asked about her desires she had surprised him with her imagination, brought a low chuckle out of him as he had proceeded to satisfy her and she had, in turn, rewarded him with more pleasure than he has felt in a long, long time.

“Have I sold my soul now?” she murmurs, letting her tongue travel up over his neck.

“Never.” He catches her lips in an indulgent kiss. “Though you might need to find a new sobriquet, Mademoiselle Michel.”

Her laughter is a vivid memory, a beacon of light. When he learns that she’s been taken prisoner a couple of years after their encounter, he visits a few of Paris’s most influential men to ensure that her punishment is deportation instead of death and it feels like a Pyrrhic victory, but a victory nonetheless. He counts the years, waits in Hell and hopes he will never see her again, hopes that the cosmic balance will deem her light far greater than her darkness.

When he learns that she’s dead he leaves a bottle of bourbon and a red flag by her grave, wondering what her Heaven looks like.

*

He watches them rise, through education and learning. How far they have come from when he first saw them draw on the walls of their caves, trying to establish foundations for the culture they now have. How far they have come, how much the same they still are.

Lucifer gathers books and paintings during his visits, collects beautiful items as much as he ever collects beautiful people and spends his hellish money on concerts, plays, rare editions of human scholars’ publications on philosophy, religion, history. When he returns to Hell the demons give him peculiar looks but they never ask about his collections, never complains when he hands out absinthe and opium as gifts of reconciliation even though they are undeserving of them.

*

The first time he meets Oscar Wilde, they attend a rather spectacular social event together. Lucifer in pursuit of illegally purchased books that are said to contain matters of great importance - it’s a task handed down to him through Amenadiel, he has only pretended to listen to have an excuse for earthly visits - and Oscar in pursuit of, well, the Devil only knows.

It’s a warm spring evening in Oxford; the human race is at its best behavior and the liquor is both inexpensive and strong.
“She has a striking quality, that one,” Lucifer says, meaning one of the more prominent guests in the room. A young woman dressed in something that stands out, which he figures is either because it’s the height of fashion or because she is an eccentric. Probably the former, though he is personally more fond of the latter category, especially in bed.

The man beside him glances up from his notebook. “Ah, Miss Hewson, yes. She behaves as if she was beautiful. Most American women do. It is the secret to their charm.”

Lucifer smiles over the rim of his glass. “But you are not so easily swayed?”

“No. Unfortunately, some would argue.” A sadness flickers across the other man’s face for a brief moment, followed by a completely different expression, one that almost resembles pride. He is quite striking, too, albeit in a slightly more brooding manner. Not that a brooding demeanor has ever been a disadvantage - ask all the ladies flocking to Lord Byron, or well, ask the Devil who still nurses fond memories of twisting his fingers into those dark curls.

He has a sense of the same kind of soul in this man, the same kind of mind that you can literally taste by looking at him.

Lucifer leans closer, almost instinctively. Almost humanly , following the way of longing mortal bodies. The setting in here gets to him, he thinks. All this spirited talk of poetry and art and politics make him more high-spirited than the wine has the capacity for; there is no intellectual debate in Hell, there are no tortured souls still capable of carrying out the endless human capacity for wit, sarcasm and analysis, for that wondrous turns of phrase that humans like this one can muster up.

“Why is that?”

“Why am I insensitive to the allure of women?” he asks bluntly and Lucifer smiles. “I’m a married man, Mr Morningstar.”

“No, I mean why is it unfortunate that you are?”

He receives no answer to that except for a raised eyebrow and a long, lingering glance.

Time passes quickly; glasses empty at a quick pace and the dynamic of the room transforms as the shadows grow longer and darker around them. Oscar - Mr Wilde sounds simply preposterous, darling, I'll call you Oscar - is red-cheeked drunk; Lucifer is delightfully blurry, all the hard edges of his thoughts have softened. His hand at the table rests intimately close to the other man's and when their eyes meet over the finished drinks, they both smile.

Conservative moral and religion - and the vehemently disgusting version that is conservatively religious moral, Hell is crowded with those zealots - are still hard at work trying to outlaw desire, Lucifer knows. He is, in fact, regularly shocked at the iron grip it has over humans though he of all creatures should not be.

It creeps into the most astute mind, a ghost in their dreams, a silent scream into their deepest secrets. He tastes it in their minds, a bitter aftertaste that reminds him of grief, of betrayal. That is, after all, what they're doing. Betraying themselves. Betraying creation itself, the free will they were given.

Oscar shakes his head, mournfully, when Lucifer talks like that.

"I wish it was that simple for me to brush off doctrines and convention."
"But do you believe them?"

"That is a far more substantial question than I have the stomach for, tonight, I’m afraid," Oscar says and looks into his empty glass. "Perhaps next time."

Next time, as it turns out, is quite a few months later under a slightly different sky but with the same flow of alcohol and high spirits.

"Now that we have met twice," Oscar says; there’s a hopeful tug after his words. "Will you tell me your true name?"

Lucifer stretches out in his seat - a comfortable armchair in a well-lit corner of an establishment that, at least below the surface, seems to be preoccupied with sinful activities.

"Oh, I did last time. I’m Lucifer Morningstar, the Devil."

"Very well."

A little disappointed tilt of the other man’s head tells him there won’t be further discussions of the origins of Lucifer at present. It’s a pity. He does enjoy it when humans believe him, delights in the leap of faith their minds take, the creativity and strength it requires. As religion loses some of its hold the number of humans that take his words for truths decreases steadily - he wonders what it will be like a hundred years from now or a thousand. Simultaneously, as the idea of cardinal sins is washed out of the reality, he gathers that his true form might not mean as much as it once did.

Here and now, however, they do not have the luxury of the future but must make do regardless.

"Tell me what you’re writing?" Lucifer asks and takes a sip from his drink.

The look in Oscar’s eyes tells him it is a good topic.

Much later and much closer, Lucifer breathes in the other man’s scent as he lights his cigarette and offers a firm smile. Tobacco has become one of the things he most fervently misses down in Hell, its rich scent and slightly intoxicating smoke rolling down his throat followed by the temporary calmness that comes after.

"We could, naturally, speak of the sacred-profane dichotomy for the rest of the evening."

"Oh, that sounds positively dreadful."

"Doesn’t it just." Lucifer places a hand on Oscar’s knee under the table, warm tweed against his palm and a low gasp emerging, delivered like a sweet reward. He raises the hand a little further, increases the pressure. “My other suggestion is a little bolder. But I am certain it’s something you desire.”

“This is quickly becoming unmanly, Lucifer.” His voice is tight, his eyes full of awe and desperation and Lucifer almost feels pity for the man’s visible internal struggle. You are not a sinner, beautiful creature.

“I will stop the second you tell me to. Do you want me to stop?"

A quick head-shake.
Alone in another, more secluded room, Lucifer allows Oscar to approach him. He stands by the curtains that cover the window, leaning against the narrow windowsill and waits.

He doesn’t have to, at least not for very long. The other man carries a scent of tobacco and wine that travels through the humid air between them; the heat from his body is a heady kind of drug and when Lucifer allows his thumb to brush over the pattern of Oscar's cuff links when he stands close enough.

“No regrets then?” he asks, one last time.

“I never said *that.*” Oscar lets out a laugh that sounds both breathless and impressively *intriguing.*

“Oh, but you are a complex character.”

“Indeed.”

Lucifer chuckles. “So let us melt, and make no noise.”

“A cultivated man, too.” A glitter in Oscar’s eyes, a crooked smile as they inch even closer.

“Not quite a man and not quite cultivated.”

“It will suffice.”

And it does. It suffices for a whole night and into the dawn when Lucifer leaves, stepping out through the half-open window to spread his wings.

The last time he sees Oscar Wilde the man is trapped in hell on Earth, his back bent against the prison cell that surrounds the squalor he has made of his life since they last saw each other. They have taken his name. They have punished him for human needs through their inhuman, grotesque laws that they pretend will hold up in the grand scheme of things. Lucifer curls his hands to fists by his sides, bends down to to man who remains seated on the floor, his head only slightly tilted upwards as though he cannot properly bear to look at his visitor.

“It’s you,” he says, tonelessly. “Have you come to punish me then?”

Around him, scattered in the room are religious words and prayers, ink horns and crumbled papers; Lucifer spots the broken remains of prayers near Oscar’s feet. *Out of the depths I have cried to thee, Lord.*

“You know who I am?”

The prisoner - *C33,* an inhuman name given by inhuman circumstances - nods and there’s a recent crack in his lower lip that leaks blood. Lucifer leans in somewhat and Oscar jerks back, eyes wide and blank.


“This is not my doing. Or yours.”

Oscar shakes his head again, burying his face in his hands. “I should have known your true face, Devil. I should have resisted. I saw… I saw you *fly* out of that hotel room.”
Humans should not be exposed to the divine, he wonders how many times Amenadiel has recited this sentence to him, how often they have had conversations that had ended in this very truth. One of Father’s fundamental rules; Lucifer has always considered it dismissive and redundant but here in the Reading Gaol its impact strikes him, rendering him momentarily speechless.

"You're not going to Hell, Oscar," he says, softly, when he finds words again. The futility of such a sentence leaves a tear in the room, the powerlessness of their positions suddenly so overwhelming. Even the prisoner seems to understand how hollow his statement is.

He gives a bitter laugh, a scarce sound that bounces off the walls. "Is that a promise then?"

I would never let you in through the gates.

"I'm afraid not. It's still up to you."

“So the truth about Heaven and Hell is that I am more powerful than the devil himself? Oh, Lord Almighty.”

“Acknowledge your own power!” Lucifer hears his voice grow thicker, booming; he keeps himself on the verge of a transformation, careful not to cross the line, “You are accountable for your own actions. Humans have made these laws that make you suffer but that is not what you are, Oscar. You are not a sinner because a court of cretins claims it. Desire is not a sin. Love is not a crime. You know this, you must know this.”

The voice that comes from the floor is no more than a whisper. “Must I?”

And Lucifer bends down once more, one last time, to touch Oscar’s face and lift it up so that their eyes can meet.

“Yes,” he says. “Yes.”

For several human years, Lucifer avoids the knowledge of new tenants of Hell. He leaves it to Mazikeen, to Dromos, brushes off news with a snarl and his now famous disinterest in demonic matters, takes only the routes down there that he knows leads to the older population, all the ancient souls still trapped in their suffering.

He visits Abel and Brutus, visits Cleopatra and Caligula. He takes a walk past the cells where the men of church and the women of bloody revolutions spend their eternity; he lingers for a while in the loudest hellfire where they keep the humans who do not sufficiently torment themselves. That’s Maze’s favorite spot and it used to be his, it used to be where he saw the faces of those in Heaven that cast him out. Delusions used to be enough to sustain him.

He never meets Oscar Wilde again and the relief is a heavy beat inside his bones.

* 

He watches them rise after their fall though sometimes he believes they are still falling, that they are cast out into an endless exile that has no beginning and no end as time is nothing but a loop.

That he for all of his desolate, desperate walking is still falling.
Angels are not meant to walk the Earth. The Lord of Hell is not meant to mourn for those he punishes.

*But I know no other way to endure this, Father.*

*  

He knows no other way to endure.

Hell has made him a torturer and a punisher and he can be one if he must, he can live with that if he has to. He looks into the hellfires fueled by his wrath and thinks of balance and justice, of fitting ends.

Hell has made him a liar, a bloody charlatan handing out punishments for mortal sins that are make-believe, created and upheld by angelical egos. Hell has twisted all of his beliefs in desire and free will, warped his principles of accountability around the lie of its very existence. This, he *cannot* forgive.

Perhaps his escape had always been part of a grand scheme. Perhaps dear old dad just wanted to see how long he could manage.

*  

When his vacation is prolonged into an indefinite stay he willingly throws himself into the human life he’s never had, with a force that is anything *but* human but most of them never seem to notice. It is very easy to hide in plain sight up here, to cover oneself in entertainment and glittery surfaces, toss money around like it means nothing - it doesn’t, not to him - and seek solace in drugs, music, willing bodies spread out on expensive sheets.

“And yet you seem *bored*?” Maze looks at him from across the bar, pouring tequila shots with her usual expression of vague disinterest and suspicion. Earth still doesn’t sit right with her, she sees enemies in every shadow, conspiracies in every corner. He’s taught her well.

Lucifer down two shots before he answers.

“There’s no desire here, not anymore.” The party has just started at Lux, people are crowding the dance floor and the tables, moving around each other and nearly inside each other and yet he knows that he’s right. Right here, in the posh parts of this wasteful, vulgar city there is barely any desire left. “Desire is the need for what we can’t have. The need for what’s readily available is called greed. That is *so* much less interesting. I’d even call it more of a sin, but don’t ever tell my dad I said so.”

Maze shrugs. “You wanted a vacation.”

He did. He does.

It’s just that up here his purpose is ever so much dimmer and he finds, at long last, that he *wants* one
that he is allowed to define for himself.

“Well, there’s your hopeless desire for you, then,” Maze deadpans when he lets it slip, pushing two new shots before him. “Now drink up, we’ve got an orgy in ten minutes.”

* 

He buys a house in the suburbs, another one in the most luxurious location he can imagine. He buys Lux and the penthouse. A cabin in the Alps despite Maze’s eye-roll - when are you ever in the Alps and why would you be there? After a few months he finds another three properties that he pays for in cash, then a couple of vintage cars and a handful of other necessities, most of them technological. He craves music and people, surrounds himself with an abundance of everything just in case he will need it, even on those nights when he ends up playing the piano by himself he keeps the party downstairs going, claims it’s for security, for show, for the world to see. It’s for him.

The humans think he’s extravagant, even for this part of the world, even for L.A. A playboy, a douche, a man with a severe Peter Pan complex.

Perhaps that is what Hell ultimately has made him.

Hell is deprivation, dispossession and the utter inability for change.

He falls and they take his name, break his pride, they chain him and destroy his sword in front of him up in the Silver City. He asks why, asks how, the way he always has but God is silence - silence for all these years, silence, silence. They cast him out with their heads turned away, the mouths shut, no words to accompany him on his long journey down, no sound to drown out the wrath and grief in his head.

He falls and the only memory is his own screams.

Millions of years he spends knowing that nothing is his, nothing is named by him or created by his hands; everything in Hell - the cells, the towers, the burning pits with their exquisite forges - belongs to his father and any ownership Lucifer could pretend to feel is only ever a part of his own hell loop.

Everything that is yours shall be taken from you.

It is, all things considered and all fire and brimstone aside, a very human punishment.

* 

Once upon a time or rather before time, Eve and Adam fall. Graciously they fall from Heaven to Earth, they who were created in His image. In his image, too, for that matter.

A thousand lifetimes afterwards, long after their exile and his own descent, Lucifer hears a newly ordained minister say, almost in passing, that every human being is a fallen angel. That is our shared
experience, our struggle with God. She says it prosaically, with a smile - some hours later she repeats it again when he asks her to, trailing a path of kisses from her belly to her neck. It’s almost sickeningly self-indulgent on his part but then again, when is it not? Her hands are hot and eager against him, her mouth full of filthy suggestions but the only thing he’ll remember is the way it had pronounced the stray line about humans being fallen angels.

The words bring with them a distant, broken understanding at long last, a familiarity that shatters him and makes him whole.

*

And then there is Chloe Jane Decker.

*

It is such a small thing.

Such a banal routine and his life changes. He thinks, years later in the depths of his misery, that this is the first terrifying moment when he was truly human.

Humans with their phobias and frigidity, their vulnerabilities and insecurities written on their bodies. All the lovers in his memory trying to cover up stretch marks, birthmarks, blemishes and unwanted softness. Scars. He has learned that some want him to bring them to light, shower them in attention while others prefer if he never even acknowledges the existence of any flaws in their figure, any signs of age or hardship. It’s uncomplicated, he’s adaptable and creative; he has never understood it before. Humans have eaten food from his back and his scars have been carefully examined by eager hands and mouths, some of them with questions, most of them without.

“What’s that on your back… my god.”

Now here he stands, keeping a tight leash on himself to prevent from shaking when he feels Chloe’s breath ghosting over his skin. His head soars, his mind runs wild, there’s a fire of memories, fragments, whispers inside him and clenching his teeth doesn’t help:

You have failed me, Samael. Down on your knees, ask for forgiveness.

Never.

He hits the ground, burning, his wings broken and his face a mask of scarred skin.

The terror in their eyes the first few time he slips, shows himself to a human. They claw out their eyes, jump from cliffs, slit their throats.

No. Enough.

And Chloe stands here, looking at him like she would look at a human man, a playboy who has just
tried to seduce her. His voice is lighthearted; he can hear it quip through the maze of his own confusion.

“No, seriously… what is that?”

He wants to say that it’s nothing. That it’s merely flesh, angelic flesh created in the high heavens to be an imposing sight to all humans, to serve as a vessel to the celestial weapon that he is forged to be. A flaming bloody sword of whatever wretched justice, whatever perverted cause -

No.

His fingers snap around her hand; for a fraction of a second he thinks he’s used too much force, that he’s broken her bones. He relents; he doesn’t let go.

“Don’t, please.”

He who has seen too much, said too much; he who has lived until he has run out of both new visions and original words and yet everything catches here, in the way her wrist rests in his palm. In the way her fingers touches not only his skin, but his soul and he pulls away in fear of the darkness she will uncover, pulls away in shame.

Chloe’s eyes are full of astonishment and her voice unsteady when she nods.

“Okay,” she says, nodding again.

It’s such a small thing until it isn’t.

*

His fall is the grandest in the history of time.

It follows that his leap, when it finally comes, must be magnificent as well.

“Enough!” he roars, his voice feeding off his own frustration and anger, all the accumulated guilt and shame that has kept him going for a billion years, that is still his beating heart. For all the vengeance and righteous punishment in his blood, for every hellfire, each deserving bastard standing in his way, there is nothing in this universe that he hates as passionately as he hates himself. That hate soars through the air as Dromos and Squee fall down like the subservient creatures they are, drums in his ears as he flies from down where Chloe is surrounded by demons up to where he can be witnessed in all his disgusting, monstrous power. “You’ll bow down to your king! You do not belong here. Go home!”

Chloe, he thinks before he unleashes his fury from the depths of his own being, lets her be the catalyst of all his determination, all his remaining pride. There’s a light in her that he holds on to, a promise of a goodness that both stuns and sustains him.

Afterwards, he catches her gaze.
A long time ago in a different life, he had asked her if he scared her. She had denied it then but he had never believed it, never even wanted an honest answer to the carelessly blurted question either, truth be told. He had been perfectly content with the satisfaction she brought into his life, the new challenges, the opportunities, the double-edged joy of her presence.

Now, for the first time, he does believe her.

He doesn’t scare her.

He doesn’t scare *her*.

The notion cracks down the last barriers around his much too-old angelic soul, hits him right in the chest with a force that brings tears to his eyes.

He has wanted words, wanted signs. For as long as he can remember he has wanted Father to tell him - in no uncertain bloody egotistical way - what it is he demands from his son, what it is that Lucifer will have to *do*.

*Are you still trying to win him over?* Mother’s way of posing the question, his own way of raging against it. It jumbles in his memory. *That’s who your father wanted you to be.* When Mother walked the Earth, he had wanted guidance, had sought everywhere for clarity and purpose but found only his own reflection in the mirror every morning, his own hand around that flaming sword.

*Why do you care about these creatures?*

Because *they* do. They care, they shelter, they nurse each other far beyond anything he's experienced before. Even when they are doomed and so many of they are, they are still living, working, loving. For better and for worse they sacrifice their own happiness, their own future for others. They don't deserve to be caught in a battle they did not bring about, in a power game not of their own design.

They deserve better.

*Chloe,* he thinks again later on his balcony, keeping his eyes on her until she’s a small figure in the distance. *I will see you soon, I swear it.*

And then he leaps.

*

The dead spread out in infinite numbers, caught deep inside their own darkness.

Hell is as it ever was and yet nothing like he remembers it. It seems to crumble, transform; the red-hot fields of lava dry into deserts, the vast mountains sink into the ground until they are no more than rubble.

He had thought, vainly, that his stay could be only a short duration. Crush a rebellion, demonstrate his might and then walk off again. It is a hope that has long since left him. And yet he isn’t even
certain any time has passed since his arrival - Hell blurs and twists inside him and now increasingly often also around him. These past few years have taught him to work with others, even depend on them and it dawns on him now that he’s back on his loathed throne in the kingdom of the dead just how much he has enjoyed it. Being a part of something, working side by side.

We make a good team, Chloe says somewhere in his memory and he hears something else because that’s what it means in the language they have for each other; it holds an abyss of missed chances and wasted opportunity but the outlines of their sentences, the shape of their words are full of love, heavy with mercy. In all his existence he will never find a soul as forgiving as her.

“Oh, Chloe,” he whispers to the barren fields around his throne. “I’m so sorry I left you. Again.”

Her name down here bounces against the very fabric of Hell. At first the symbol of it, the blow to his gut when he hears her name in a place where she will never go, a place she must never be allowed to see; he’d break apart Hell if she by some great misfortune ended up here, God be damned. Then the echo tears itself away from him, casting down a rock from one of the towers in the distance, as though it has landed there.

He says it again. And again.

The effects are different but visible.

Self-actualization, Amenadiel drones in his memory. A long monologue, as Lucifer recalls, but he had listened to it regardless of what his brother may have thought at the time. He usually does. Can it be applied to places? Can Hell be a reflection of its crowned angel?

He takes a deep, unsteady breath.

And begins his journey, this hypothesis he suddenly finds himself in possession of.

Nothing is familiar as everything moves.

In the narrow and dissolving pathways of the oldest parts of Hell he is lost for so long he begins to despair; then finally to his left are the resting places of the tenants from the ancient civilizations. It seems a fitting place to begin.

He finds Cleopatra, undeserving of her fate but still carrying corpses to their graves. Nameless, faceless people lost to civil war and assassinations, buried far beneath her regal composure to torment her for all eternity. Lucifer stands in front of her but she doesn’t see him, doesn’t even notice the obstacle in her way. It’s not until he puts his arms around her that her loop comes to a halt; it’s not until he tilts her head back and makes her look at him that the dead bodies dissolve around her along with the right corner of her chamber, letting in a flood of light.

“You can put the bodies down,” he says, quietly. “You have carried them for so long.”

She vanishes, wordlessly.

As he places a hand on Brutus's shoulder, the ground shakes. When he wrangles the dagger from his grip, the whole cell begins to rock, one of the walls dissolving into dust. The other man gasps as he, too, flickers out like a candle and the only thing that lingers briefly in the air is the light from his soul.

He continues to another cell, then another one. Hell takes on a new shape after every one, transforms with every broken invisible chain, each door left opened for good. He continues until he’s exhausted.
every bit of his angelic stamina and his chest feels as hollow as this wretched kingdom. He continues until he has proven his point, gathered his evidence. Oh, Chloe would be so proud.

Eventually he sits down again on his throne, leaning forward against the weight of himself as he looks up into the ever-grey sky. This leap, he fears, might be the hardest one yet. It wounds his pride more than anything he has done and pride, they say, is what made him fall.

“Father,” he says and clears his throat. The air down here alters it in unpleasant ways, makes it deeper, darker. A voice suited for a king, not a singer or a lover. “Father, it’s me again. I’d like a word, please. Oh, it’s not like you’d ever actually answer but I already know that. Still. I - I want to tell you something. You were wrong, Father. So very wrong. And cruel. But you know what? So was I. And I bloody hate myself for it. Right. Here goes: I’m - I’m sorry. Not for the rebellion, mind you, but for the suffering I caused. Those I hurt. For my arrogance and pride. For Uriel, I’m so very sorry about that. I’m even sorry about Cain; I would have preferred another ending there. Well, at least I think so. Anyway, dad, that’s what I wanted to say.”

He keeps his gaze fastened on the skies, not daring to look if anything in the surroundings has transformed during his little speech.

“Please,” he adds. “Forgive me.”

When he finally looks back at Hell, everything is darkness.

*

His fall is the grandest in the history of time.

They say he wanted to overthrow the celestial kingdom, take the throne for himself and erase the opposing angels from existence. That the prideful son of the morning desired the power of a god.

It’s just a story. Angels tell them; humans tell them. Gods, too, on a good day.

All stories are lies. But good stories are lies made from light and fire. And those are the stories he was born to tell, he knows this now. That is his purpose.

Hell shakes and shifts, turns over and rises back up again and he’s there, in the middle of it, trying to find the light in the endless dark, trying to tie his entire being to that promise, that distant beacon. His wings ache from the blind flight but he presses on and finally, finally, he can see a tear in the compact veil, a wide crack where the light appears.

And from the light comes a voice, one that he almost would not remember if it wasn’t for the memory of it etched into his very bones.

Samael. It’s been so long.
Sorry/not sorry for all these references.

Title snagged from Frank O’Hara’s fantastic poem Animals.

Very early in his life everything became too late is a reference to/adaption of a quote by Marguerite Duras, used in The Lover. Brilliant book and one of those descriptions of time/one’s idea of life that have stayed with me.

Mount Horeb is where the burning bush appeared, which, as we have learned from Lucifer was actually Lucifer pranking god/freeing god’s people. Throwaway line some of you might say but I say it fits his character perfectly.

The lines Brutus says are quotes from Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar because hey, it’s a great play. I also cannot get over my headcanon that Lucifer influenced Shakespeare’s portrayal of Brutus and Cassius, so there’s that. Also because clearly Lucifer/Shakespeare happened at some point.

Catherine Boyraionne is a name from actual European witch-trial records. She was found dead in prison after extensive torture, carried out by a priest who poured hot fat all over and freaking inside her genitals. Of all the gruesome things that were done to “witches”, this stood out to me as particularly horrid.

The history references are mostly accurate. Book of Fixed Stars existed. Newgate prison was indeed stormed during the Gordon Riots in 1780. Louise Michel, the grande dame of socialistic anarchy, was called the Red Virgin of Montmartre back in the days of the Paris Commune and Lucifer would definitely have liked her. She was sent to New Caledonia instead of being executed after the Bloody Week in Paris, continued to be awesome until her old age and had a huge hero’s funeral. A lot of the lines she says are adapted from her letters and autobiography.

“So let us melt, and make no noise.” John Donne, poet who were very much into the body/soul distinction. Wilde found ways to go about redemption and religion in prison, so I’d very much like to think that he escaped hell in the Lucifer-verse.

Lucifer’s lines about desire vs greed are borrowed from the comics. As are “All stories are lies. But good stories are lies made from light and fire.”

You can put the bodies down is a reference to Cole, the spirit of compassion in Dragon Age Inquisition who tells Blackwall this as a follow up to his realization that Blackwall “carries the bodies to remember” his own guilt and terrible mistakes. Gets me every time.

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