“-You promised them Dean. Why am I being given off in his place now? How can they even accept something like this!?”

Too bad Prince Michael doesn't care who he marries as long as his duty to his kingdom is fullfilled.
“No! Just no!” Adam shouts clenching his fists at his sides. John sighs and puts a hand on his son’s shoulder. “Adam you have to understand. This is for the good of.” Adam slaps his father’s hand away and interrupts. “The good of the kingdom? What about the good of me? Your son?” John throws a desperate look over his shoulder at Sam who contented himself by simply watching from where he sat for the last twenty minutes. The older prince lowers his eyes to his lap. His brother is right at his outburst, he knows. And Adam has always been frail. He was sickly as a child and grew up with a delicate temper. The physicians advised them to avoid crossing or upsetting him lest he made himself dangerously ill after a breakdown. Sam really doesn’t want to get involved and make this situation worse. The decision has been made already. A promise between two kingdoms is set in stone. It can’t be changed. He can’t help Adam. “-You promised them Dean. Why am I being given off in his place now? How can they even accept something like this!?”

“Because Dean returned from his border patrol with a husband in his arm, Adam. He secretly married the son of a poor man who has no money or title to speak of! Because Dean brought shame to our family and kingdom! Because Dean chose to live a simple life in a small house in the woods with that Castiel!-” John raises his voice finally running out of patience with his youngest son. He always loved Adam something else, Sam knows. This situation must be harder on their father than he shows. “-Do you think I want to do this to you? You are only nineteen! The Prince is ten years older than you as Dean is. But this marriage between the kingdoms was arranged almost fifteen years ago, Adam. We can’t back down from this! We need the alignment. Our kingdom needs the protection their army can provide. Not to mention commerce. We need the treaties we will sign with them. Do you want our people to starve or be slaughtered in the hands of our enemies?”

Adam throws himself down to sit on the edge of his bed and covers his face with his hands. “Adam-“ John starts with a gentler tone and the young prince snaps his head up to glare at his father. “If mom was here, she would have never let you do this,” He states and John’s face contorts with grief at the mention of his dead wife. “now leave please, sir. You and my Prince must have more important duties to take care of. And I shall rest so I’ll be all good and pretty for my fiancé when he comes to take me away next month.” He turns his head away stubbornly from his father and John clears his throat before taking a step back from his youngest son and Sam stands up to follow him out. “Sam and Jessica will be responsible of the preparations for your wedding. Make sure one of them knows if you have any requests.” John says over his shoulder as he slowly walks out with Sam trailing behind.

The next month passes in the blink of an eye.

One morning, as Adam has breakfast with his father, John tells him that King Charles Shurley will be here in two days with his sons Prince Michael and Prince Gabriel for the wedding. Adam is supposed to spend that time packing to leave with his new family.
Adam drops his fork and merely watches his plate, nausea replacing his already meager appetite as John explains him how the Kingdom of Enochia is different from theirs in both law and tradition once again. He wants his son to be prepared. “Listen son, your fiancé is the Crowned Prince of Enochia. When he ascends to the throne, you will also be King since you are of royal blood. But-” John stops to take a deep breath and a sip of water. “-there is one other thing you must know.” Adam raises his head to lock his eyes with his father’s at the gloomy tone. He notices, for the first time, that John looks exhausted. There are bags under his puffy eyes. He is pale and slouched forward a little. For a few seconds, the father and son watch each other silently. John looks as if he’s trying to swallow a knot in his throat.

“King Charles is still young, son. But he already has many heirs. He has four sons and a grandson. So the throne isn’t in immediate danger. It will never be so for the foreseeable future.” Adam nods in understanding when John looks at him expectantly. Somehow, the young man feels as if his father is trying to steal a few more seconds to compose himself rather than to make sure he follows and understands. Suddenly dread settles in him. To see King John Winchester like this- Just what kind of life awaits him at Enochia?

“But once your fiancé becomes King, Prince Lucifer will be the first in line to the throne followed by his son Prince Jack and his brothers Prince Raphael and Prince Gabriel.” John speaks slowly. Anticipation claws at Adam’s mind. “So? What is the problem here?” He asks and his father lowers his eyes. “Father?” Adam reaches out a hand to place it over his father’s on the table. “Adam you need to understand this. Prince Michael may not want to leave the throne to his brother. It’s known that the two Princes are on bad terms.” Adam furrows his brows. He doesn’t see what his father is getting at. And it is apparently just what the King feared when he first started on his small lecture about Enochia, Adam feels. “By Enochia’s law, Prince Michael will have to choose a woman of noble birth but at a standing lower than you or else the woman would have a position higher than you at the royal court as the mother of the heirs. This is also why you being a Prince instead of just the son of a Lord is important. A Princess who is equal to you can not become a King’s consort. You will still be King, Adam. You will be higher than her. You won’t have to put up with her. Just the children-”

Adam doesn’t hear the rest.

Not only will he be forced to marry a man he doesn’t know let alone love, but this man will cheat on him by bedding someone else and conceiving children. Not child, children. This will happen multiple times. Adam will be nothing more than a ragdoll to be used and showed off. He will be a pretty face to sit next to his husband on the throne for the people to see while said husband has a wife and children, a real family. And Adam won’t be able to do anything about it. He will spend the rest of his life alone in his rooms every day and night and only brought out when he is necessary to be placed in the King’s arm and admired from afar. How is this even legal? Adam was told Enochians were traditional people but this?
He never had any hope to fall in love with a man ten years older and told to be no more than a ruthless warrior with a hellish temper. He never thought he would someday be loved. But Adam thought he would at least be respected and treated as a human being with thoughts and emotions of his own rather than a piece of ordinary furniture, a decorative sculpture. Yet this is his fate. Why? He now understands why Dean ran off and found himself Castiel. The other man may not be a King but he will at least be faithful to Dean. He will love and respect Dean. He will be there for Dean as a real spouse should.

Dean saved himself. Adam wishes he too could. Yet he is impotent now. He always will be. He will sit back and watch his husband’s children growing up around him. There will be a woman, no doubt beautiful and perfect. She will be better than him. She will be cherished by his- no, her husband. She will be treated with absolute respect. Someday, her child will claim the throne after Michael dies. If Adam lives to see that day- He will live at their mercy. He will be a beggar in his own home. The woman will have a grudge against him for sure. She will have to be a Consort rather than a Queen until her child gives her the righteous position in the Court because he exists. Then once she has what she wants, once the King dies, there will be no more need for Adam.

Adam feels something shattering in him.

His chest tightens and Adam realizes he isn’t breathing.

“-dam!” Adam gasps for a breath. He feels hands tightly grasping at his arms and shaking him. He can’t see who. His eyes are shut closed. It’s dark. Too dark. “Adam! Son, breathe! Adam! Guards!” He hears a man shouting. He tries to breathe.

Adam opens his eyes slowly.

He is lying on his bed with pillows tucked behind his back. Ellen, the Court Physician is leaning over him with a damp cloth in one hand and a stick covered in some foul smelling paste in the other as she holds it just under his nose. He sees his father, Sam and Jessica standing behind the woman. John looks half dead. Jessica has tear streaks on her face. Sam has an arm around his wife’s shoulders but he too watches Adam with worry.

“Thank God, he is awake.” Immediately, John comes forward to kneel at his bedside and take his hand. Adam lets his eyes travel on his father’s face. “How are you son? Do you feel pain anywhere?” He asks gently. Adam shakes his head. He feels numb. He will be like that for a few hours. He is familiar with this although it hasn’t happened for a long time. He will be fine in no time. John nods at him tiredly. Ellen takes him to the corner of the room to explain something to
him in whispers. John looks back at Adam a few times. Then everyone walks out of the room with brief goodbyes and forced smiles. Kevin, his manservant fixes his pillows and the duvet after they leave. Adam closes his eyes to rest until Kevin brings him some soup and a draught Ellen made for him.

It is his last day in his home.

Despite what happened, the wedding wasn’t postponed. King Charles and his two sons arrived two days ago. They took a day for the party to rest and Adam to recover completely. And yesterday was spent with the two Kings negotiating and gifts being presented to Adam by Prince Gabriel in his brother’s place. As the Crowned Princes, Michael and Sam attend the meetings while Adam and Jessica receive the expensive jewelry, rare cloths and everything else Adam doesn’t really care about. He looks at the things in the corner of his eye and nods his approval at the servants displaying them without really seeing anything. After that slow procedure, Jessica lays out Adam’s dowry then everything gets packed under her and Prince Gabriel’s supervision.

Without comprehending how, Adam is left alone in his room surrounded by chests and bundles and with a small envelope with the royal seal of Enochia in his hand.

Adam sits in front of his window next to a wooden mannequin with his outfit for the wedding and watches the setting sun color the city in fall colors with the letter in his hand until Kevin finishes lighting all the candles then leaves. Once the double doors close after his servant who he dismisses early, Adam slowly tears the envelope open. A single page folded in four falls out into his hand.

To my most cherished,

I want to start by thanking you for granting me the honor of having your hand. You and I will be together from now on until love do us part. Because even in death, I promise you we will love each other. We are yet to meet and I am not aware what you were told about me. I hope they didn’t make me sound like some mindless war machine or an emotionless man who does not care for anything other than duty. I myself, have been told about the young Prince who has a mind to rival the the world and a heart so loving and compassionate that he will be talked of for decades after his death by his people. I am in awe of you just by the light in your brother’s eyes as he tells me of you.

Tomorrow we shall be wed. Sleep will desert me tonight, I am afraid. I shall stay up and watch the sun bring hue to the dark night sky. This beautiful kingdom has a sunrise so fascinating that it leaves one in a land of most pleasant dreams once witnessed. Tomorrow, the sun will truly rise for me only when I hold your hand in mine. And you my beloved, will turn my life into a beautiful
dream. I can only hope and promise on my honor to work everyday to make you as happy as you make me just with the mention of your name now. Tomorrow, we will be one. We shall live the sweetest dreams together until our sun goes down in the end of our days and takes us into our shared Heaven.

I hope you liked my gifts though no delicacy or finery of this world can deserve to be in your presence. I can not wait to see you wearing my ring and the silks I chose for you. You have a beauty in you no one else possesses I have heard and fully believe. I shall wish tonight if I happen to see a comet that you will also find me admirable and come to think of me with such merriment as I feel now one day. I must save my vows to our wedding. Yet I can’t help but to recite one in this piece of paper I wish you will want to keep: I vow to love you and live for your love only. I vow to bow my head to my demise if I fail your love. The rest, you will hear tomorrow. I hope these words help convey at least a bit of what can not be expressed with words and you see the whole of it in my eyes as we hold hands to take the first step to our life together.

Always yours,

Michael.

Adam reads the thing dryly already knowing the pretty words didn’t come from Prince Michael’s pen. He puts the paper back into the envelope and tosses it to the small table in front of him to dispose of later. He wonders who wrote that letter. Maybe Prince Gabriel, he thinks. The other man is one year older than Adam and full of excitement. He literally glows with happiness and love. Adam found a smile he couldn’t keep back no matter how much he tried earlier today in the other Prince’s presence. If only his fiancé was anything like his youngest brother. Adam already knows he isn’t.

He stands in front of Prince Michael in his white robes with golden embroidery and pearls. The other man is wearing midnight blue with silver ornaments and a large crown on his head signifying his status as the future King. He is tall and broad in the shoulders. Just the sturdy type Adam imagined. As the Head Priest rambles on in the background, Adam looks into the cold green eyes inspecting him with well hidden distaste. He wonders if the crown placed over the shiny dark strands makes the Prince’s head ache like his own golden circlet does. Is that why he looks so tense? Or does he frown always?

Adam remembers the letter from last night and wants to laugh. Maybe he should lean into his husband’s ear and ask him if he saw a comet in his sleepless night once they are seated at their table side by side. He can imagine the hateful look he would get. Maybe he should tell his husband to smile for him. He is already ten years older. He is sure to get old quickly if he is this intense all the time. Maybe the scandalous words will make the Prince flip.
Adam grins to himself and makes it look like he is smiling sweetly at his husband. They have already said their vows. Indeed the Prince’s vows were as pretty as Michael’s letter. Adam discreetly glanced at his side and saw Gabriel almost floating next to his brother. He is now sure that the younger Prince is the passionate poet behind those words. As far as Adam sees, his husband wants to get this thing over with as soon as possible and get away from him. It is impossible for him to craft such sentences for him. Maybe he will do so for his wife after he becomes King.

Adam bites the inside of his cheek to keep himself from chuckling bitterly. The Priest finishes his monologue. Prince Michael leans down to kiss him on the forehead then lips as is customary. Adam stands perfectly still and lets him do it. Just as he will in their bedroom tonight. He isn’t even sad anymore. The blissful resignation and the impossibility of a life other than as a mute accessory for the future King Of Enochia gives him strength to bear this foreigner’s touch. He won’t object to anything.

Just, this morning after the servants dressed him in his wedding robes and lead him in front of the mirror, Adam closed his eyes. It was all he could manage to rebel to all of this. He refused to look at his reflection and view the pretty young man who now belongs to the Crowned Prince Of Enochia.

Adam sits on the foot of the large bed in the chamber that was prepared for him and his husband for their first night before they set out for Enochia at noon tomorrow. Samandriel, an Enochian servant who will replace Kevin in his new home, dressed him in a pure white nightshirt and pants made from the softest silk Adam has ever felt on his skin. The boy then covered his head with a white tulle that represents purity in their traditions and left him alone in the dim candle light and among white rose petals on the sheets. Outside, he can hear the ongoing celebrations. The fireworks must look pretty to the people in the gardens.

The door creaks open how long later, Adam doesn’t know. He takes a deep breath and stands up. Prince Michael walks closer to him then lets his gaze travel on him from head to toe. “My Prince.” He greets quietly and his husband repeats it after Adam. They look at each other for a few seconds more before the Prince sighs and raises his hands to gingerly lift the tulle off his face and take it completely away. He will need to keep it as another creepy tradition of theirs demands. Something about his spouse’s purity belonging to him. He will probably be asked about tonight by the Enochian Priest too. Adam isn’t sure though, he didn’t really listen as Samandriel explained these things.

“I don’t want to do this any more than you do. But we have a duty. You are young. Do you understand this?” Adam lets out a breath of a chuckle. At least his husband is taking time to talk
rather than immediately getting to the business and hurrying to leave. “Yes my Prince.” He lets his
eyes stray from his husband. “That is only for when we are in public or greetings. In private and
when we are with family, you are to call me by my name.”

After that, Adam’s mind shuts off.

The Prin- Michael helps him to undress before removing his own clothes. Adam closes his eyes
tightly as he lays on his back. Michael does what needs to be done. To Adam’s surprise, he takes
time to work on him then prepare him. Adam mostly manages to keep quiet other than the
occasional whimpers and gasps escaping his lips. He expected it to be brutal and to hurt unbearably
as this man who has full ownership over him used him then left him alone and bleeding to cry
silently. He quickly learns that it is what he would have preferred. Michael goes slow then even
makes sure to help him clean up and cover him with the duvet before covering himself too and
closing his eyes. He tells Adam that he brought a carriage for him as he could be too tired for a
horse tomorrow. They have three days’ worth of travel ahead of them. They could go slower and
make it four days if Adam needs frequent breaks or wants to see the sights. As if he cares. Indeed
the painful way would have been so much better.

It takes time for it to sink in that Adam has just given himself to this man sleeping soundlessly next
to him. From now on, he is Adam Shurley, husband of the Crowned Prince Of Enochia and a
Prince Of Enochia himself. He will never be himself again. He will be used, cheated on and thrown
away once he has no more use to the Court Of Enochia. He will never be happy there. He will
never have a family there. Michael should stop pretending to care as soon as they are out of his
father’s kingdom. Then the real pain will begin. He will be on his own from now on. He will have
to be strong. He tells himself to be strong.

He turns on his side away from Michael then cries anyway.

Goodbyes are hard. Adam has always hated them. Ever since he had to say goodbye to his mom at
the age of fifteen, he despised them even more.

John hugs him tightly. As if he will never hold his son again. Were they in private, Adam would
see a few tears, he knows. And he is thankful that isn’t the case. Or Adam would never be able to
turn away and go. Next is Sam. The older Prince looks at him with grief and whispers questions in
his ear if he is alright and if he was hurt the night before. Adam nods against his brother’s shoulder
the shakes his head just before he draws back and gives him and Jessica a smile. The last thing
they need is to worry for him when he will be far away, out of their reach. Jessica discreetly slides
something in his pocket as they hug. She smiles at Adam and tells him she will write often. She is
barely holding herself back from breaking into sobs.
“I plead you to treat my son with care. He is very young and he has never been separated from his family before. His health could deteriorate as we informed your physician if he is upset.” John tells Michael after he pulls the younger man into a brief hug. “You have no need to worry, old friend. Adam is the son of Clan Shurley now. He will be in good hands. My son will treat him well as will the rest of the royal family.” King Charles promises and Michael nods at his father’s words.

All too quickly, Adam finds himself in the carriage sitting opposite of Michael. The King and Prince Gabriel ride another one in front of them. It is silent for over two hours before Adam snaps out of the daze and dips his hand in his pocket. He finds a wooden angel carved from oak. John made that for him and Kate polished and painted it when he was a baby. Jessica must have taken it from his room. She was the one to pack everything when he was ill after all.

Michael watches him turn the little thing in his hands but chooses to stay silent. Adam leans back on his seat and forces himself to bear the rocky road for one more hour. His muscles are sore after last night and the shaking carriage doesn’t help at all. “Are you hurting anywhere? We can take a break.” Michael’s voice wakes him up from his meditation to keep his discomfort away from his mind. “I am fine my P- Michael.” He answers curtly and closes his eyes again. Another ten or fifteen minutes pass, Adam guesses. Michael clears his throat and knocks four times on the wall. “I need a break.” He states even though he looks nothing close to tired yet.

They stop a few minutes later at a clearing with a small river close by. Michael climbs out first and Adam lets him take his hand to help when he notices Prince Gabriel and the King watching them.

He silently accepts a bottle of water filled from the river from Samandriel. The boy goes to their carriage after that. Adam sees Michael talking to him and the coachman. Samandriel carries something in his arms but Adam doesn’t see what he does with the bundle.

Once their small break is over and they get settled again, Adam sees that their carriage has been redecorated with cushions and throw pillows on the seats. He doesn’t say anything as he sits and finds it more comfortable than before. They also go slower. The carriage doesn’t shake as much as before. Adam turns his head away from Michael to watch the scenery and stubbornly stays quiet all through the day.

When they set camp for the night, Adam strolls away from the tents and throws the wooden toy in his pocket away into the dark forest. Maybe a kid from the surrounding villages will find it, he hopes. He won’t drag his little guardian angel into hell with himself. He takes a deep breath then slowly walks back to his and his husband’s tent. The mattress is narrow. They have no choice but to stick closer than the night before. Also it’s harder than a normal bed. He isn’t used to this. Though Michael has no issue falling asleep next to him. He must stay in tents a lot. Adam was told he spends most of the year on patrols or border battles if there are any. Good, he will at least have
They arrive at Enochia in exactly four days.

In the parlour, there is a blond man with a woman and baby waiting for them.

Prince Lucifer and his wife Kelly receive Adam pretty sweetly. They have a beautiful son. Adam politely makes small conversation with the woman and little Jack giggles at him when he smiles down at the baby. Prince Lucifer seems a little overzealous as he congratulates him and his brother. Adam learns that a beautiful mare is waiting for him in the stables courtesy of his oldest brother-in-law. Michael doesn’t even look at his brother instead choosing to greet Prince Raphael who arrives to also welcome them.

After the brief introductions to everyone in the family, King Charles tells Michael to show Adam to his chambers. Adam feels relief wash over him at that. He wants nothing more than to bathe and sleep sprawled on an actual bed rather than in a crumpled tent on a hard mattress.

Michael takes him to a place with four rooms at least, a huge bathroom and a terrace. There is a study, a drawing room and an extra room with a fireplace and ordinary living space. It should be comfortable enough, Adam decides. He can put things from his dowry around, make it feel a little like his own home where he grew up.

He is taken to the bedroom the last. His eyes go wide. “This is your room? Why did you bring me here?” He asks and Michael looks at him weirdly. “So you can settle.” He talks as if it is the simplest thing in the world. Indeed his chests and bags are placed in a corner of the large bedroom. “Don’t I get my own chambers?” Adam asks patiently. “If you don’t like it here, we can move somewhere else. I am always away from the palace, I didn’t use these chambers much anyway. It makes no difference to me.” And it dawns on Adam. This is another Enochian tradition. He is expected to share the chambers with his husband here unlike from his own kingdom where his parents had separate chambers. Until he is kicked out when the consort arrives anyway. Or will she have her own chambers to stay in with her children?

Michael is still frowning at him so Adam makes sure to tell him to excuse his distraction from the long journey. The older man accepts it and tells him he will send Samandriel shortly and that he might be needed at the throne room. It sounds like an excuse to get out of the chambers but Adam is thankful for it nonetheless. He needs to be alone right now.
He goes and sits himself on a loveseat. He doesn’t want to get close to that bed even though he was looking forward to sleeping. He will be expected to share it with Michael too since he didn’t see another bedroom in the chambers. He dreads it. Everything happened so fast. Adam didn’t have it in him to think about anything other than his misery as he laid awake on that first night, sore and feeling disgusted with himself or as he traveled to come to hell and stayed in tents let alone realizing that Michael wasn’t going away from his bed. He stayed each of the four nights that they have been married. Adam couldn’t even get his head together enough to hate it. But now, here in his husband’s room, everything became real.

He is finally here, in hell.

He wonders what his family is doing. Is his father sitting in Adam’s empty rooms and remembering his mother? Is Sam with him, drinking together as they like to do on restless nights before battles? Is Jessica crying for the little brother she couldn’t save? Is Dean happy? He should be. Adam took his place and he went to heaven instead. He knows his oldest brother didn’t do this to him on purpose. He saved himself. How could he have known that the Prince Of Enochia would accept to take Adam instead? How could he have known that his little brother who was a kid a couple of years ago would be handed to these demons in his place?

Is his mother happy?

Does she know what happened to him? Did she see how he was sold off and defiled? Did she weep for him with the angels? Will she watch over him? Will she keep their family safe as well? Her and John were in love. She loved Sam and Dean as her own children. She was the best mother ever to all three of them.

Adam remembers her smile. He remembers her eyes. He remembers her voice as she told him tales. He was never a strong child. He got ill easily and suffered for long periods just like her. Yet Kate taught him to be strong in other ways. She taught him to have a kind heart who beat for others as much as it did for him. She taught him to be clever, to ask, to understand and to teach. She taught him to have courage, to never back down. Not without a fight. She taught him to not let himself be pushed around and controlled, to have a voice of his own, to speak his mind.

Adam did the opposite of that in the last month.

The desperation on his father’s face shut him up for good. The stress Sam was under when he suddenly became the Crowned Prince in Dean’s place told him that they all had it hard. Even Dean. Yes he escaped but now he won’t be able to ever return home. He wasn’t even present at Adam’s wedding. Jessica watched him with pity in her eyes. Adam knew no one could help him. So he didn’t try to oppose any of this. He didn’t rebel. He only closed his eyes in front of that mirror and took whatever life threw at him.
As he sits alone in the torture chamber that will take his best years from him, Adam comes to a decision.

He will do what his mother taught him. He will fight. He will never be the obedient doll the Court wants. He will never accept his husband remarrying. If he can’t prevent it, he will wreck this whole palace down. He won’t be a toy in their hands and suffer quietly. He is in hell, there’s no escaping from here unless he employs a small knife and destroys himself. He won’t do that. Kate taught him better. He won’t let them win. He won’t let them cause his downfall.

He will undergo torture yes, but he will face it all with courage.

He will fight back with all his might.

He will make Michael’s life hell.
Chapter 2

“I don’t understand, father. I received my promise ring back just a few weeks ago. My engagement to Prince Dean was broken by their side. Isn’t this an insult to our kingdom? Why are we still trying to keep the peace?” Michael stands before the throne as his father listens to his questions with exasperation written over his face. He probably went over the same things more times than he bothered to count with his advisors and the higher positioned members of the Court. Still the man takes a deep breath and starts to explain the new condition he will be placed in. “Look Michael, King John is an old friend of mine. You know I owe him a lot for introducing me to your late mother and his first wife Queen Mary for helping out with you once your mother passed away, right? The engagement between you and their son was to bring our families together and help both kingdoms to benefit. You grew up hearing this. It was bad that Prince Dean went and married a commoner right after secretly sending the ring back to you but son, you have to accept something. You two are twenty nine. You have been betrothed since both of you were fifteen. Prince Dean was raised to be your king. You should have married right after you completed your higher education, eight years before now. Then you went and joined the military training and threw yourself in battle after battle. Prince Dean waited half his life to be your husband. You kept postponing the wedding. You still didn’t have any intention to go through with it anytime soon when the letter arrived with the ring. You two haven’t seen each other’s faces in almost six years. It is only natural, even if we legally can’t express this, that you have drifted apart and Prince Dean sought happiness elsewhere. Am I wrong, son?”

Michael bows his head. "No, father. I only wanted to work hard to become a good king to my people. Our throne already had many heirs. I didn't think it was really vital that I marry before ascending to the throne since I was already engaged to a man anyway." King Charles watches his son with soft eyes now. "I know, Michael. I understand the both of you. God saw it fit that your paths separate. We can only move forward. Now that Prince Dean is out of the picture, you will be wedded to his brother as soon as possible before the news of your broken engagement spreads and we have to accuse King John of causing a scandal." Confusion crosses over Michael’s face for a second. "Isn't Prince Sam already married?" He asks and his father affirms him. "Your fiancé is Prince Adam, their youngest brother."

At that Michael can't keep his surprise hidden. "Isn't he even younger than Gabriel, father?" Michael very vaguely remembers a little boy of maybe twelve or thirteen from his last visit to Dean. It has been years since then. “Only by a few months. He is already nineteen, almost twenty. In another world, I would also choose to wait a few more years but son, you are aware of the situation at hand. Also in a few years as I said, you will be well into your thirties so even if we could afford to have you two betrothed for a proper period of time, it still wouldn’t sit too well. You will be wedded some time in the next four or five weeks. Be prepared.”

A month. Michael inhales slowly and bows before his father. He can’t go against a direct order from his King. He has already failed his duty to his kingdom once, his father implied that just now. He can’t afford to do that again. His King is already being kind overlooking his mistake. Ten years of age gap is too much. He will surely have difficulty with the young Prince. And why would Prince Adam even accept this marriage? Being married off in his brother’s place, to cover his
family’s shame?

“Son, King John has already talked to his youngest son and sent word that they are fine with this arrangement. Have no doubt, you shall be happy together. I knew the late Queen Kate too. She raised her son well. You just need to be gentle with your fiancé, you will take care of him and help him through everything. As you know, Prince Dean was educated in our customs and everything else a King Of Enochia should need to know. Prince Adam will have to receive tutelage here after your wedding. You can’t expect a perfect husband who will know and fully understand all of his duties to you and to the Court in a foreign kingdom, not anymore. That was Prince Dean. If you have any thoughts like this, snap out of it soon. Prince Adam will be very different from what you believed you would be getting all these years. You will be patient and kind with him. You are older and a warrior. He will be averse to you at first. It is in your hands to make him love you and this kingdom so he can be a good king and a good spouse someday. Should you fail, he too will be compelled to find what he wants in another. We can’t have another scandal. Am I clear, Michael?”

If he was anyone else, he would be on his knees shaking by now. The King is angry with him. He is angry with Dean too but he can get his hands on only one of them right now. Michael is pretty sure that half of this new engagement is a punishment to him. He knew Dean. They were raised to be each other’s. He could have been happy with Dean. Now though, he is ending up with a stranger. Who knows what kind of person Prince Adam even is? Should he expect a little boy scared of everything who needs to be taken under someone’s wings until he grows up and becomes ready to be a real spouse? Or is he a pampered, spoiled young man who will push all his buttons in every way possible?

Either way, Michael will suffer.

Suddenly he remembers Prince Sam. He became the Crowned Prince in Dean’s place. King John is young and strong still, his second son is too. Michael knows he has a beautiful wife. Prince Adam is the second in line to the throne in his own kingdom now but who’s to say that he won’t be thrown further back behind half a dozen nieces and nephews? And maybe this is it. Maybe he too desperately wants the throne like Lucifer. The more Michael thinks, the more it makes sense. With Dean, he could have at least hoped for a loving relationship. he could have had a home, a safe haven to return to after a battle. Yet Dean is gone. Michael can’t control his own fate anymore. He will be trapped with a stranger who will only use him as a ladder and see nothing more in him. It doesn’t matter anymore. He is engaged to Prince Adam now. He better starts working to accept that fact. He is already on thin ice.

“I understand, Father. I will see to my duty and make no mistakes anymore.”

In the next weeks, Michael slowly gets used to the idea of his marriage. His father makes sure all
the preparations go flawlessly. Gifts are bought and brought to the palace in floods for Michael to choose from for his fiancé and to pack the rest for the other members of the family. Lucifer panicked at first when Dean left him. The idea that Michael could marry a woman and have his own heirs instead nearly made him lose it, Michael knows even though the King isn’t aware. After his engagement to Prince Adam was announced to the Court, Lucifer congratulated him with mirth and rolled his sleeves up to personally help with the preparations for the wedding in his glee. Gabriel helps out the most, writing his vows and all. He will also travel with him and his father to bring his husband here. His youngest brother is the happiest among them at the idea of a new friend his own age at the palace. He also thinks his oldest brother will be tied down to the palace and not leave so often once he is married. He is probably right.

His father sends the Head Priest to Michael with another jab at his previous mistake maybe as a warning or reminder when he says it has been too long since Michael learned the rules and ways of marriage thus he shall be educated on the subject until his wedding. He sits through hours of boring lectures and discussions on the intercourse between the spouses and his religious responsibilities in the first night and afterwards that make him want to just dig a hole and bury himself where he sits. Listening to a man of eighty describing with great detail how the consummation of his marriage should go is no less embarrassing than he remembers from last time. In the end, Michael swears putting his hand on the Holy Book in God’s presence that he will be careful and do his duty perfectly to make the man stop with the unnecessary explanations.

When he isn’t choosing gifts or dying inside in front of the Head Priest, Michael tries to fight off the tailors. His ceremonial robes for the wedding should be perfect, worthy of a Crowned Prince. The old seamstress directing the whole ordeal has sewed up his baby blanket too. Now the woman winks at Michael and makes the corset part tighter to show off his firm torso for his husband, as she says and chooses a color to contrast with his pale skin but go well with his dark hair to make him look a little younger. Just in case his husband doesn’t yet look his age and so they look good together. Michael stands quietly and bears the occasional stings of needles here and there. They complete the outfit in a total of three weeks and place it in Michael’s bedroom on display for his family. It is packed carefully for the journey the last day.

Michael wakes one morning to find Gabriel on his door trying to get him to move hours before their departure. Lucifer babbles at Jack how Uncle Michael is going today to bring him a big brother at the breakfast table. No one catches the smirk he throws at Michael hiding his face behind his baby in his arms. Michael stands from the table leaving his plate half full and doesn’t talk to anyone until he is on his horse and Lucifer is helping Jack wave at him as the baby giggles.

Like that they set off. Michael will be a married man soon.

He is just a tad afraid.
The first thing they hear once they arrive is that Prince Adam isn’t feeling well. He apparently fainted two days ago and is still shaken up a little. Though it is nothing to worry about. He will be perfectly fine for the wedding. Michael wonders if it is an excuse to keep him out of his fiancé’s room. He is grateful, really.

Michael spends the first day as the party rests wandering the palace and the gardens. He has been here multiple times before. He played in these halls and ran around under these trees with Dean. They were children then. They thought being promised to each other then getting betrothed meant being best friends and playmates no one could separate. He wonders what his current fiancé thinks of the word at the age of nineteen.

The next day is spent in endless hours of meetings. The two kings negotiate on each and every bullet point of the sixty pages long treaty before finally signing it and shaking hands. All through the meetings, Prince Sam glares at him across the table where he sits. Michael can understand just how he feels. He tilts his gaze down on the papers in front of him.

In the morning, the servants bathe him thoroughly with scented soaps and essential oils. He is perfumed, shaved and manicured before they put his outfit on layer by layer and do his hair. Gabriel sits with him and chats away at him until he is ready. Michael doesn’t hear most of what he says. He can’t concentrate on anything today. He only catches a part about a letter given to Prince Adam and how beautiful his fiancé is.

In the end, his father comes with a velvet cushioned box containing a silver crown then makes a whole ceremony of placing it on his head. Michael recognizes the thing instantly. It is the one his father himself wore on the day of his wedding when he was a young man in early twenties.

They walk to the ballroom together.

The ceremony starts in a few mere minutes. Michael sees Prince Sam still watching him with hate and his wife Lady Jessica looking at her lap with empty eyes. They are giving off their youngest brother in a hurry to a kingdom days away before they have time to get over the loss of their older brother. Michael doesn’t blame them for being distraught.

When the double doors open, Michael needs a second to breathe before he can turn his head and look. What he sees captivates him in a way he can’t understand.
The young man walking to him in King John’s arm is- Michael doesn’t know what to think. Gabriel nudges him discreetly from where he stands a step behind him. Michael rights his posture and King John takes his right hand to place his son’s left one in it. They stand in front of each other and say their vows at the Priest’s request. The smaller soft hand in his trembles a little as Michael slides the ring on. His own ring is placed on his finger a few seconds after.

As the Priest begins his long speech, Michael looks at his new husband carefully. He feels they won’t ever have a chance to just stand like this and look at each other again. Everything is happening so fast after all. Just a few weeks ago he was engaged to someone else, now he is married to this young man clad in beautiful white and grinning bitterly with dread clouding his bright blue eyes. Michael doesn’t understand. Is he reading Prince Adam wrong? He doesn’t seem at all like the cold, insufferable husband Michael imagined.

The Priest finishes his preaching and Michael leans down to press his lips softly over Prince Adam’s forehead. This one means respect and trust in Enochian tradition. He wonders if Adam was told this as the ceremony was explained to him. He waits two seconds before tilting his head further for a longer kiss on the lips. Love and faithfulness. Michael feels like anything but a lover promising these beautiful things to this young man who stands stiffly with his eyes closed. He draws back slowly catching a quiet exhale from his husband and notices now that he had been holding his own breath too.

The crowd cheers as they move to their table arm in arm. Prince Adam doesn’t say a word to him all night as they are told to start a small waltz for the guests. They stay on their feet for a quarter hour at most. Soon, Samandriel in his royal uniform comes to lead Prince Adam away. Michael briefly sees Prince Sam swallowing thickly next to his wife who is trying to play off her tears as getting emotional in the wedding of the brother she helped raise for the last few years. As soon as his son is out, King John takes the empty seat next to him. “Son, I ask you to be gentle tonight. My child is young and inexperienced. Please understand.” He pats Michael’s shoulder and forces a grim smile to make it look like he is telling a story and sharing the cheer of everyone else. Michael nods with his eyes down.

At exactly midnight, nearly an hour after Prince Adam left, another servant signals Michael that it is time to get out of the ballroom. He shakes hands and accepts a few more congratulations from nobles. He feels Prince Sam’s pleading eyes on him as he passes by their table.

Once outside, Michael walks to a window for fresh air. He knows what he has to do now. His beliefs and traditions order what will happen tonight. He never thought he would be this nervous. But then again, his husband was going to be Dean. The two of them were comfortable with each other on every level. Of course they didn’t do anything to shame their families but they grew up together and shared a few kisses and caresses when they started to understand what their situation meant. Tonight, Michael will take a stranger to bed. That stranger is as nervous as him. His whole family is concerned. Michael remembers the fainting he was told his husband had a few days ago.
Was the news actually true?

He takes a deep breath then closes the window. The servant leads him to the chambers. Michael waits for the young man to walk away and round the corner before he slowly turns the handle and steps inside.

The room is dimly lit, nearly dark. There are scented candles everywhere. Michael steps farther into the room and sees his husband stand from where he sat at the foot of the bed covered with red sheets and white rose petals. “My prince.” He hears the smooth voice of the younger man and returns the greeting. Prince Adam- No, Adam is wearing silk pants and a silk shirt all white and glowing in the yellow candle light. He takes some time to look at his husband who patiently blinks up at him under the white veil over his head. He slowly lifts the thin fabric with embroidery and fine lace and needlework covering the edges with fingers then takes it off completely. This veil represents purity, a virgin. Tomorrow, the Priest will ask to see it and help Michael to place it in a small glass box protected with prayers for him to put it somewhere in their shared bedroom in Enochia. In the wardrobe. A voice in his head immediately provides. It’s Dean, eighteen and learning about these customs for the first time laughing at almost every part of the rituals. Michael slowly lets the veil fall onto a closeby chair. He will put it in the nightside table drawer. He turns his attention on Adam. He is married to Adam now. And Adam looks scared. For real.

“I don’t want to do this any more than you do. But we have a duty. You are young do you understand this?” Adam lets out a sound between a chuckle and an exhale. “Yes my prince.” Adam’s eyes stray from his face. “That is only for when we are in public or for greetings. In private and when we are with family, you are to call me by my name.” Adam nods. He is still not looking at Michael. Honestly he too wants to run away from the room. Yet he can’t. He can’t fail his duty. They have to start somewhere if they are to get through this night.

He puts his hand on Adam’s cheek. The younger man doesn’t react other than a flutter of his long lashes. Michael leans down to press his lips against Adam’s forehead again like in their ceremony earlier. Adam becomes almost lifeless after that. Michael tries to make it as easy for both of them as possible. He helps Adam out of the silk garments and slowly strips himself too. His husband lays back and lets him do everything. He traces his hands over his skin in light caresses in an attempt to help the younger Prince relax. He can’t tell if it works or not. Even when Michael is pleasing him, Adam stays almost completely quiet under him. So Michael goes soft and makes sure Adam too finishes.

He gets up and brings a damp towel from the bathroom. Adam looks away but lets Michael clean his thighs and stomach. “For tomorrow, I have a carriage for you. A horse will probably be too much, okay?” Adam stays silent. Michael simply covers him up then gets under the duvet himself making sure to leave some distance between them but stay close enough to feel Adam’s movements. Time passes with their quiet breaths and the noise from outside lulling him to a half dozing state.
Adam turns away from him. Michael hears soft whimpers as small sobs shake the mattress a little under them. His heart breaks a little. He tried his best to not hurt Adam. Is he failing already? Michael considers saying or doing something but gives up on the idea quickly. Maybe it is for the best that Adam doesn’t know this private moment which he may need nothing more than to freely cry his heart out has been witnessed by someone else. Michael doesn’t move until Adam falls asleep then reaches to carefully rearrange the duvet around his shoulders before letting himself to drift away.

Goodbyes are hard. Michael has always hated them.

Michael watches as Adam hugs his family one by one. Prince Sam and Lady Jessica look tired and pale. Both of them probably stayed up all night wondering about the wellbeing of their little brother. He sees Prince Sam whispering in Adam’s ear. King John comes to say his goodbyes to him. “I plead you to treat my son with care. He is very young and he has never been separated from his family before. His health could deteriorate as we informed your physician if he is upset.” His own father assures his old friend. Michael nods in agreement.

In no time at all, they take their place in the carriage. Adam looks far away as he watches the scenery go by from the small window. About two hours later, Michael sees him finally looking a little more aware of his surroundings. He pulls something like a small toy out of his pocket. It is a wooden angel, no doubt carrying a large meaning. Michael watches Adam lean back with closed eyes and try to disguise his discomfort every time the carriage jerks and shakes on big rocks. “Are you hurting anywhere? We can take a break.” Adam opens his eyes with a start and quickly declines his offer. Michael still signs for a break a few minutes later telling his husband that he needs it himself.

Later, once they are back on the road now with extra cushions on the seats Samandriel brought out by his order, Adam gives him a look he can’t read.

They set up camp as soon as it gets dark. Adam walks around for a small while before joining him in their shared tent. Michael holds him close in the cold night. He can tell the younger Prince never stayed in a tent before. He should make sure Adam doesn’t get cold in the night.

Lucifer and Kelly greet them in the parlour.
Adam takes great interest to the baby and smiles at Kelly too as they softly chat. Lucifer is practically glowing with his glee as he watches his brother’s husband play with his son probably seeing the nephews and nieces that will never exist in the younger man. Even Michael is surprised at the mention of Lucifer’s gift to Adam. Lucifer doesn’t buy gifts. Not even to their father. Looks like Michael will need to keep an eye on his brother.

His father tells him to show Adam to his chambers so he can rest a little. Michael can see that Adam needs it very much. So they excuse themselves and walk out.

Adam is surprised.

Michael remembers later that the King and Queen each has separate rooms in their kingdom and they use one or the other together. They have their own space if they need to stay alone, Dean had said once. There’s nothing Michael can do about it. He chooses to find an excuse to leave Adam to settle on his own instead.

He returns to the throne room. Lucifer catches him right outside the door. “Wonderful feeling isn’t it, Michael? I see marriage has done you good already. I’m sure having your husband finally here makes you so happy brother.” Lucifer mocks a sweet smile. “-He looked happy too, De- sorry Adam. Still getting used to it, you know?” He smirks at Michael then walks inside.

Michael decides to go to the garden instead. He needs the peace and quiet too. Something is telling him Lucifer will give him no rest. At least Adam isn’t as bad as he imagined. It is a completely new era in his life now. He can do this. He won’t fail again.

Adam isn’t the sly Prince Michael thought he would be who is determined to make his life hell after all.
Chapter 3

Time passes.

Days come and go with endless hours of lessons on the history and the ancient language of Enochia. His tutor’s name is Zachariah. Adam is pretty sure that the older man hates him. Well, Zachariah and the old Head Priest who took Adam’s education on religion and complicated theology classes on himself at the King’s demand. He doesn’t understand most of it anyway. By now, he is pretty sure that the two involuntary teachers think he’s an idiot, a simpleton. Or maybe they think he is a little boy who wasn’t at all ready to be wedded into their oh so glorious kingdom. Adam sometimes wishes the Priest would tell that to his loving husband and father-in-law. It doesn’t last long. Even in fantasy, he knows that he is here to stay. He will never go home again. Even after his death, he will be a lost soul forever wandering the forests and moors, too afraid to walk to Hell and too damaged to be let into Heaven.

The days pass, each one leaves another scar on his soul and makes him age another crushing year.

Slowly, Adam gets used to it. He used to wonder how he would live. How would he continue to exist far away from all he knew and loved, in the clutches of these people who tore him away from his life?

Now he knows the answer. He will simply breathe. One breath upon the other, each breath carrying him in this hell deeper and farther.

He will breathe.

One morning, he wakes up to the morning sun falling over his eyes. The other side of the bed is empty with the sheets tangled and creased. At first he is surprised. The hour is early, a quick peek at the candle confirms it. The hour mark shows five in the morning. Michael wakes up at six. Always leaves at seven. Never without telling him. As if Adam is his keeper or something.

He doesn’t really care what the other man does or where he goes as long as he leaves. Just, their every move is scheduled here like the family dinners in the grand hall at eight sharp. Zachariah once told him that the King’s table represents the unity of the Clan thus dinner should always be eaten together with everyone present. Michael is raised to fit that lifestyle. He never does anything that’s out of place or time. Adam can’t help but to feel a tad curious. Just what drove him away at an ungodly hour? He doesn’t let himself think about it. Whenever his husband releases Adam from his presence, it is a blessing. So he decides to relieve himself of every thought of the man.
By the time the mark on the candle hits six, Adam is up and in his robe over his sleeveless nightshirt and pants. He is sitting on a sofa at the outer chamber with a novel he stole from the library hiding it among the decades old heavy tomes of boring history. Zachariah would give him one of his looks with that specific glint in his eye that tells Adam he would have been strangled to his death long ago were he not their Crowned Prince’s husband if he knew. A double one at that. He was told many times that he isn’t allowed to wear the thin silk and satin anywhere out of his bedroom. The clothes are revealing with deep necklines and the pink of his skin and his curves are visible in them under sunlight. His body is for the eyes of his husband only. He isn’t allowed to possess any nightwear made from anything else too. He isn’t a boy anymore. The Priest explained all of this to him. Honestly, Adam doesn’t know how they let an old man put his gaze on him and talk about his body which is supposed to belong to his husband now in a lewdly detailed manner.

With a soft knock on the doors, Samandriel enters carrying a large tray filled with breakfast for two. This is the best part of the day. Even if Michael sits and eats with him, Adam enjoys taking a cup of tea to the terrace and watching the courtyard with the songs of the birds filling his ears. On these moments, he can close his eyes and almost see himself back in his own kingdom in his own room’s terrace. The boy is surprised to see Adam up and out of the bed. He usually doesn’t get up until after their breakfast is brought and set.

At an instant, Samandriel notices just what Adam is wearing and bows his head with red spreading on his cheeks. “Forgive me my Prince, I must have come early. Forgive me for looking. I didn’t realize your state.” Adam wants to tell him to drop it and act normal but he takes pity on the young servant. If Michael walked in on this scene right this instant he could order for Samandriel to be taken to the dungeons or even beheaded. He has a right, even a duty to do so to any other man who sees his most cherished. The boy is scared shitless. Adam only chuckles at the absurdity of the situation and lets the servant hurriedly leave after setting up the table with his food. He wishes he could say Michael wouldn’t do such a thing. He does things he doesn’t want to do if he finds them his duty. Adam knows that from experience.

He decides to make himself a plate and carry it to the coffee table in front of his chair at the terrace after waiting a few minutes. He is sure that his husband won’t grace him with his high presence this morning. He should enjoy it.

After he eats and dresses himself in a tight red shirt and black slacks, he brings out one of the books on the religious creed of Enochia. He couldn’t bother to read the chapters the Priest assigned to him in their last lesson two days ago. He vaguely remembers that he is to discuss more of his ‘marital duties’ and if he is performing them correctly with the old man today. The decayed yellow pages he was to study for today consist of paragraphs of shameless descriptions of the spouses and their nights together. He skims over the words for an hour trying to bite back groans and disgusted scowls. He should practise more on his facial expressions. They are half the reason he is hated by his dear guides in his journey to become a suitable candidate to become a King in this beautiful kingdom someday.
It is about eight and a half when the double doors open, half an hour before his appointed class with the old pervert. Also the newcomer doesn’t knock and wait for his permission to enter. Which means-

“Good morning, Adam. I’m sorry I left without seeing you this morning. You were still asleep.”

Here comes his personal guardian demon in this firepit. He nods in acknowledgement but doesn’t look at the older man. He feels suddenly engrossed in a page showing an illustration of *handfasting*? He remembers the process from his funeral. The Priest did something like this with a piece of red cloth and his and Michael’s hands before asking for their vows. He didn’t really pay attention back then. He hears a quiet sigh which could have been confused for a usual tired exhale after morning training if he wasn’t listening ears up for a sign of his husband’s departure.

“I have something for you-” Michael sits himself on the sofa across him and Adam is forced to raise his head from the book in his lap. He hopes it isn’t some flower he knows Gabriel plucks from some corner of the garden and hands his oldest brother like the last four times Michael ‘had something for him’ or a stupid gift like a bracelet or something of which he has hundreds already. “This is the reason I went out before sunrise today. A messenger arrived in the night.” Adam silently blinks at Michael as he retrieves a few envelopes from his pockets. “There are letters from your family for you.”

The book slides off his lap to land on the carpet with a soft thud. Letters. *His father. Sam. Jessica.* He finds himself next to Michael in three seconds and two steps. The guardian demon seems to carry something of holy, angelic origin in him as Adam meets the three precious envelopes and doesn’t even take care to not touch Michael’s fingers like he normally does. For seconds, he turns his treasure in his hands. It has been three weeks since he sent his own letters he wrote on his second day here telling of the safe journey he had and assuring his family of his good health. He knew he would have to wait for the monthly delivery between the two palaces for these. They arrived early. “I sent someone six days ago for something about one of the minor treaties the Kings signed. I should have a border patrol before the winter comes. I needed permission from King John. They sent these for you.” Adam only half listens and doesn’t really try to process what he hears right now. He is seeing heavenly light in the white of the papers in his hands. Michael waits for some kind of answer for a few seconds and stands up clearing his throat when he doesn’t get one. “Our own messenger will leave tomorrow for the regular mail. I canceled your lessons today, thought you might want to have time to write comfortably without rushing anything.-” He leans down to carefully lift the dropped book and leaves it on a table between the facing sofas. “I’ll leave you to your letters then.” He says, tone a little defeated as he walks away.

“Thank you.” The words are out of his mouth before Adam can stop them. He doesn’t concern himself with it too much. This moment could be a truce. His husband brought him what he wished for the most for the last weeks. Said man stalls for a small while but quietly exits after. Adam forgets about him as soon as he goes. He is too preoccupied.

The first envelope is his father’s. Adam smiles at the familiar curly handwriting with the beautiful calligraphy.
Child,

I still can not bring myself to believe that you have fled away from the nest. This old man did not even realize when your small wings gained the strength to carry you to such distances. He still remembers the days he held you in his arms and fed you.

For the first few days after I watched you climb into that carriage in the arm of your husband, I could not find rest no matter what I did. In the end, your brother and sister-in-law found the solution in making my bed in your rooms. I stayed there for a whole week. You could not believe how silent the always lively halls around your rooms have become for I too could not. I realize now you were the joy, the light in the palace. I shall miss you terribly. I wonder if such is the fate of a father and I learn that only now that you the laughter in my life have become someone else’s. Your soonest visit can not be in for another eleven months for Enochian tradition does not let the newlywed groom or bride to leave their husband’s home for the minimum of a year. You can be sure that this heart beating for you and your siblings will count each second till then.

I hope you find your new home pleasant. I hope your new family especially your husband is tender and caring with you. You are the gift of my Queen to me, I could not bear it if I were to hear anything suggesting otherwise. I am aware that you sadly were not given much choice on the matters of your marriage so was not your husband. I am hoping that you can find a connection, respect and eventually love. I apologize as your father and King for failing to give you any better. I remember not a fear like in the night of the marvelous wedding that cheered the hearts of everyone in the two kingdoms but the real owners of it. I can only hope and desperately pray that you were not or will not be hurt in that kind of horrendous way. I deeply regret my impotence back then. I shall remember till the day I die how you had to bow down to that fate. I am sorry son. More than I could ever express with meager words.

It consoles me to know that your illness in your last days in your home did not follow you to Enochia. Write often to me and tell me about your days there. I once again apologize for the gloomy letter that is sure to cause you to shed tears. I can not find it in myself to write it any other way. And not much happened here enough to fit into this envelope and distract you. May our next letters carry happiness back and forth between us and help keep the bond of father and son strong. Not an hour passes in which I do not think of you. I plead you to look after yourself and stay well.

With love,

your father.

Adam looks at the paper for long minutes as he lets sobs shake his shoulders. He thinks of the
gentle smile of his father’s reserved for his youngest son who was a happy little menace, the baby of the family only a few years ago as he pushes the now creased paper against his chest over his heart. He isn’t that boy anymore. He isn’t allowed to be. Even this moment that he can cry for the father he left behind is the charity of his new owner. Had Michael chose to stay in the room as Adam read, he would have had to hold back love dripping down his cheeks as he couldn’t have waited for later to find some time alone. It is this realization that makes him cry even harder staining the letter with drops falling down from his chin. Just for these few minutes he lets himself be the little son afraid of the monster under his bed and cry for his father. He isn’t far from the truth. Only, he isn’t that little anymore and the monster is in his bed now.

Eventually, Adam manages to compose himself after his wails reduce to sniffs. Only then does he fold his father’s letter back and reach for the second envelope. It is Sam’s.

Adam,

_I don’t know how to begin writing this letter. I never thought there would come a day in which you would be so far away and I would have to write to you instead of simply walking to your room smiling for the last few meters as your laughing voice reached my ears. Nor did I ever think someday I would wake up without my two brothers and find myself truly alone except for my Jessica and our father. Sadly, we can’t choose fate. If man was given that kind of power, I would have cradled my baby brother and never let go._

_Are you okay? Are you doing good there? Are you eating? Are you being treated well? Does he hurt you? I’m begging you to be truthful when you write back. Adam I can’t focus on anything other than these questions haunting my every conscious moment. Jessica tears up whenever she looks at your empty chair at dinner. Just last night, she saw Kevin in the hall and asked him if he delivered you milk with ginger and honey you so love when you are ill. Even the boy bowed his head silently and accompanied her tears with a few of his own. It all happened so fast. None of us could understand a thing. One morning, father and I were in your rooms informing you of this arrangement and the next you were being led away from us, lifeless. I remember the moment that servant raised you from your table and you followed him without even lifting your head. Jessica and I sat until morning both of us trembling with terror. My greatest regret is not having roused a fight with father to keep you with us. I know he too couldn’t have done anything but I still can’t help myself. Dean was raised for that. He was even happy, a little in love too. How did he change so quickly? How could he do that to us without thinking of the consequences? I will never forgive him for this._

_Forgive me for not writing about anything good or even idle and only reminding you the pain so bad that your mind couldn’t take it and your body collapsed in father’s arms. I don’t know what to write. First Dean wounded us, then you paid the price. It is like I don’t live now. I will get better with time. We all will. I can’t do anything but to tell myself this. You get better too, Adam. In your next letter, I pray you will send me a few good words so the fire in all of us can start to be fought and put out slowly. If not, as you will be truthful and not lie to appease us, I will save you somehow brother. I promise you I will find a way to help you with everything. You used to tell your_
nightmares to me when you were a toddler. Trust your big brother like that again. And I promise I will chase away the bad dreams again.

Sam.

Adam feels another wave of sadness washing over him and triggering dry sobs. He wipes at his tear streaked face with his handkerchief and caresses his brother’s large, messy letters with a finger. He sees the golden ring with the letter M carved on the inside resting against his knuckle. How he wants to fling it out of the window and run to his brother. If he had the chance to do so, he would literally run the whole way back to his childhood home. He is trapped here. Still, he feels a little safer after reading Sam’s words. Something akin to hope blossoms in him. He has a brother who would wage a war to take him home. Even if it is impossible, just knowing that he is cared for like that renews his determination to fight to keep his head above water.

He feels a bit better after taking a few deep breaths and letting his mind calm down. Finally, he reaches for Jessica’s letter after putting Sam’s back. This one envelope is considerably thicker than the other three. Adam slowly opens it and finds three pages instead of one like his father’s and Sam’s letters. Each of them are folded on their own like separate letters. Maybe Jessica wrote for him every week or something. He starts with the one on top.

Darling little brother,

I know that I have been in the family for the last two years only but I have come to think all of you as my own kin. You are the brother I never had back at my father’s home. I am your big sister, always loving you and wondering about you ever since your departure. Your first letter relieved me of the fears of you becoming ill away from home where no one would know to make you warm milk as you like and wash your hair with a massage to ease the migraines you get. I only hope you have started to know your husband and found a good man in him so you have someone to hold you in the nights when you miss home.

How are you sweetheart? Do you like your new home? Did you meet with all of your family? I won’t ask if you like them or if anyone gives you trouble. Your beautiful heart beats to take everyone in and surround them in warm love and joy. For this reason, it isn’t possible to dislike you also. You are like the sun, the rain. I am sure everyone there already fell a little for you. How do you get along with your husband? Does he treat you well? Are you happy, brother? Tell me everything in your letter. Cry your heart out and mess the ink if you need to. First days in your new home are hard, I know. Sam owns my heart so do you and your father. You know how happy I am in here, how I belong. But believe me when I say I also cried for the first few weeks terribly missing my parents. Your father and Sam may not understand what you are going through. I also can’t comprehend it fully. I married for love. But I like to think I at least know some part of how you feel. Believe me my baby bird, after tears there will come peace and contentment.
All three of us are fine and in good health. Only your absence dampens our everyday cheer. Soon, everything will be better. I learned that you won’t be able to visit for another year. Maybe I can arrange something with Sam for us to come see you instead. I still can’t believe you are all grown up, a married man now. I get giddy thinking of the day I will ride out from here with your brother and father to come to your coronation. You will be a King. You will have your own people and family there. Someday, you will look into your husband’s eyes and find love looking back at you. I know you will. You care for everyone and everything. Just with your hands and that care, you nurture and heal everything. The orchids you planted for me bloom prettily under the sun as I write to you. One day, your new family will be flourishing just like them under your careful attention. You will give life they never had before having you. Adam, you will be happy. The hard days will pass. The clouds in the horizon will give way to the rising sun and the night will end soon.

Your sister.

Adam feels Jessica’s arms wrapped around him as he finishes the letter. He knows the truth of what he is living through. Jessica probably wrote this to brighten his mood after an hour of crying herself to be able to find these hopeful words. Still, he feels it working. He is now smiling at the signature as he reaches for the second piece of paper.

Adam,

I am writing this second letter secretly in the middle of the night. I will sneak it into my envelope before Sam seals our letters together in the morning.

Dean came home. He came from that mountain village he resides with his husband. Your father didn’t even invite them to spend the night in the palace. Instead, they were sent to the town inn. Sam had a big fight with him. Dean came when the news of your marriage reached his ears. Sam went crazy with rage. I’ve never seen him like that before. Dean wanted to immediately set out for Enochia but his husband didn’t look at all like he would let him. Just a few months ago, Dean was engaged to another man. How can his husband let him go to see that man now? I don’t know what will happen. Dean looked terrible. His husband is a farmer. I could see they loved each other so much but the new lifestyle evidently took a toll on Dean. He is thinner than I remember and tanned in a way that suggests hard labour under the sun. The colorless, rough clothes don’t suit him at all. His fine accent doesn’t go with the people of the mountains’. He doesn’t look like he is regretting choosing Castiel despite all that but he is trampled under guilt for what happened to you. His husband rightfully can’t tell the difference, I think.

He is a brother to me too. I took pity on his state and told him to write to you. The third paper I am putting in the envelope is from Dean. He has it hard, Adam. I don’t know if love alone will be
enough to keep his marriage together. You know how he is, always sacrificing himself for others. He was selfish for the first time in his life. He thinks himself a sinner for that. Castiel may not understand whatever he is willing to do to make sure you are alright. He only wanted to be happy yet he is troubled too. Please don’t be mad at him. He didn’t want to hurt you at all. I don’t know what exactly to feel too but I have to ask that of you. Be careful, Adam. Dean will do anything he sets his mind on. You know that. I don’t know how Prince Michael would receive him but not pleasant I believe. A visit like that can disrupt your life too since we both know there’s no way Dean can take you back from there. I think he won’t realize he will be damaging your relationship with your new family if he does something like that. He won’t know he will make everything worse for you.

You are a grown man now, Adam. I know you didn’t want this but you have your own family in Enochia now. A scandal would only work to turn your life to torture and for our kingdom to be dragged into war with yours now. Get a hold of your husband before that happens. I hate to ask that of you. But you need to be strong. Do whatever is necessary to keep your marriage going. If Dean comes for you, he is sure to lose his own. He can’t return home anymore too. Sam and your father won’t have him. I convinced him to wait until you write a letter to him which you will send in my envelope to me and I have it delivered to Dean. The monthly mail should arrive from you in a few days. They will be in town till then. Please Adam, you have to do something.

I apologize for this chaotic letter. I scribbled these in a few mere minutes. My thoughts are trashing in my head. I am so sorry Adam. You can’t return home for good unless you cause a war. King Charles and Prince Michael are both warriors. They were gracious enough to not blame us the first time but they won’t forgive anything a second time. I don’t think Dean knows just what he is doing. He went through a lot of pain being rejected and then hearing about you just to see the very first storm in his newfound paradise for that. Stop him before he hurts all of us and himself further.

Jessica.

Adam looks at the page dumbfounded.

Dean.

He doesn’t know how to feel about what he just read. Dean isn’t happy. He can’t process anything. Dean left on the tail of a dream to find love in his spouse. He secretly broke his engagement and almost caused a war. Adam was given to the Enochians as a substitute. Now, just as the matter has been settled, Dean is about to throw away his fresh marriage to try to save him. An impossible mission. Adam knows now just how bad the traditional, overly religious people here are on those matters. If Dean gives up Castiel to try to take him away- What can Dean even do? He is a commoner now with no army or anything valuable to offer. It’s not like he can plead Michael to take him back and let his brother go. No. Adam belongs to the Court Of Enochia now. He has
given himself, his purity. They won’t let him go anywhere. Even if they did, just that matter, purity will be a problem. Dean is damaged goods now. They would never have him back even if they could forget his previous insult to them which isn’t something that can be accepted.

Dean’s appearance here will only cause the King to break off every treaty with their kingdom and order Michael to truly tear Adam apart from his family breaking every contact with them. Enochians don’t take lightly to mistakes like that. They also keep what’s theirs. There’s no way, no possibility. Jessica is right. Dean must have lost his head in his guilt thinking his brother is being hurt because of him. It’s stupid what he wants to do. But that’s just how Winchesters are. They sacrifice themselves to solve a problem and save a loved one even if they cause a bigger problem in the process. They don’t care about anyone more than their family. Adam sadly knows his oldest brother. He would cause a war, find a way into the army and kidnap him from his husband’s home if he thinks it is the way to save him.

There is only one way to prevent all of that from happening. Adam must stay in hell and somehow make Dean give up on the idea to get him out.

Dean must believe Adam is happy here.

His hands tremble as he reads the third letter.

Adam,

I will get you out of there. It was once my dream to find happiness with my fiancé. He let me down. I was forgotten, cast away. I couldn’t bear it. I should have. It was my destiny, my punishment. But I was afraid all my life would be spent the same way waiting to be remembered by my husband. Now you are living through that. Jessica and I talked. She believes you don’t feel the same way, that you will be better. But I could see the lie in her eyes. I saw how father and Sam were wrecked. It is all my fault. I will fix this.

Dean.

Adam covers his face with his hands.

Dean just has to be a real idiot. What does he think he can manage on his own? Doesn’t he realize he will put their kingdom in danger? Doesn’t he know he could be killed for trying to separate him
from his husband and it wouldn’t be a crime in Enochia? Doesn’t he understand just why he had to agree to this marriage? For the good of their family and kingdom. Why can’t he just accept it like everyone else, wish him happiness and live his life with his own husband he loved so much that he turned his back on their family?

A voice in his head whispers that Dean is only being selfish again.

He lays down on the sofa curling on his side. He allows himself time to come up with words to write to Dean and his family. He tries to ignore the fear in him. Ever so slowly, he rises to start writing. He forces himself to remember Jessica’s words. He makes a decision.

Soon the three envelopes are sealed.

Dean’s letter talks about a beautiful kingdom with flowing rivers and endless blue skies that just make him want to fly. It tells of this warm, fluttering feeling in him as he and his husband ride together on the mare that was a gift from his brother-in-law. Adam’s hands trembled as he wrote the words describing happy days spent by slowly knowing his new home and learning for the people he already loves with his husband’s gentle guidance. He had to grit his teeth and ignore the suffocating feeling in his chest as he told his brother of loving hours spent just with holding each other and passionate nights after which he wakes up in the embrace of his other. He didn’t want this at first. But his new family loves him. His husband cherishes him and it is really hard to not be happy here. His only worry is that he didn’t quite get used to always missing his family back in their kingdom but the letters help console his heart. His husband’s presence does too. He thinks he is falling in love. He never blamed Dean even when he didn’t know his husband yet and didn’t think he would have such a great life here. There is nothing to fix. He wishes Dean happiness with Castiel.

Adam throws himself in bed over the sheets after he gives the letters to Samandriel to be taken to the messenger. He doesn’t get up. He doesn’t eat anything. The cold wind fills the room through the window he left open.

He can’t breathe.
Chapter 4

It has been three days.

Three whole days.

Adam is still sleeping.

Michael watches his pale face. His swollen eyelids and chapped lips have a purple hue to them as his chest trembles with ragged breaths. He doesn’t understand.

The day his letters arrived, Adam was so happy. *So why?*

Everyone believes that Adam fell asleep before both the windows on either side of the headboard flung open on their own with the wind and the storm that started around noon that day got in. The physicians said Adam’s body isn’t strong enough to stay under the harsh winds dampened with rainwater and get out of it without damage. He probably woke up sometime but couldn’t move to close the windows. The servants had been dismissed too. Adam had told Samandriel to deliver his letters and not to return as he would have his lunch with Lady Kelly and Prince Gabriel. The chamber maids had been told that the Prince didn’t need a bath that evening. It is all very unfortunate, everyone says.

Michael knows better.

He was the one who found the outer chamber all dark and the bedroom door locked with breeze coming out from under the door. He broke the door down with a kick when Adam didn’t answer his calls. The sight that greeted him was-

Adam was curled on the bed in a fetal position over the sheets. Both of the windows were wide open with the curtains flying wildly in the wind. The rainwater was rushing down the windowsills like waterfalls. There were puddles of it on the floor. The sheets were soaked as were Adam’s clothes and hair. Adam wasn’t waking up. He was lifeless in Michael’s arms by the time the physicians arrived with the guards and they closed the windows securing each with vases and sculptures from around the room then had him carry Adam out from the ruined room. Michael remembers how he trembled with his teeth clattering as he held the freezing body of his husband close to his chest desperately trying to warm him up. Adam looked so little, so fragile then.
Later, he carefully examined the room. The window latches weren’t broken. Adam hadn’t been in his sleepwear or under the sheets when he found him too. The door had been locked from the inside. The manservant had been purposefully sent away. The realization made Michael almost collapse that day.

Adam did this to himself.

Why?

No matter how much he tries, Michael can’t find anything close to an answer. He merely sits on a chair pulled close to the bedside and places hot towels from the steamer pot over the fireplace under the sheets over Adam's chest. The physicians come to check on him four times every day. Michael assists in the examinations too. He eats in the room then feeds Adam soup and water with Samandriel’s help.

The hours pass agonizingly slowly. Each one takes something out of Michael.

He remembers his mother.

She was just like this too before Michael was dressed in black by his crying nanny one day and waved her goodbye with his child mind as she was put in the ground to sleep. He recognizes the heavy feeling in his heart. It is what he felt back then.

“Is he any better?” Gabriel asks tentatively, afraid to upset him or afraid to hear the answer, that Michael doesn’t know. “No changes. He is still the same.” He talks without raising his head from his still full plate. It is the fifth day of Adam’s ‘illness’. Gabriel finally convinced him to leave his chambers at least for a little while and eat with him. It is the first time he goes out since he carried Adam back from the Court Physician’s chambers five days ago and laid him on their bed. “Michael-” Gabriel puts his hand over his brother’s shoulder. “-we should inform his family. If- I mean, they should be notified so they don’t-” The younger Prince trails off but Michael understands what he is trying to say. The physicians say Adam is getting weaker each passing day. He has been living on what little soup, water and herbal tea they can get past his unmoving lips. If he doesn’t wake up soon-

He doesn’t want to think of that.
He closes his eyes and goes back to the day the two of them saw each other for the first time instead. He tries to recall the one month of their marriage. Where did he do wrong? Why did this happen? Why did he fail?

“Brother, it’s not your fault.” Gabriel gives his shoulder a light squeeze probably reading his thoughts on his face. He is telling Michael what he needs to hear. It’s not your fault, he says. But it is. Michael knows it is. He should have stayed with his husband that day. He should have known that the letters would evoke dread in the younger man. He had thought he was doing something good by getting his letters personally for him, by making sure his messenger who went to King John’s palace for business brought the precious envelopes earlier than expected. He thought Adam would like privacy to write to his family. He should have known something bad would happen. He had been told how Adam couldn’t deal with sorrow or anger, how he would end up sick. He had been warned to be careful, to take care of him. Why did he fail?

Michael is sitting on the bed holding Adam up for the physician. Apparently Adam wasn’t in a true comatose state in the last five days. But his condition is quickly progressing to that. Comatose patients can’t swallow anything. Trying to give them water would end up with some of the water in the lungs. They would die of pneumonia. Adam has to wake up. Soon.

They try the herbal pastes on his chest and feet. They use the smelling salts. They extract blood from his arms. They give him draught after draught.

In the end, Joshua the Court Physician comes forth to inform Michael and the King that they have tried every known treatment for the course of the five days. There is nothing more they can do other than to repeat all of those. He is very sorry. He advises them to send word to Adam’s family. They should be just on time.

His father sighs behind Michael. “I shall go write a letter to my old friend. The messenger can head out at dawn.” He says and walks out with one last look at the young man on the bed then his son. The physicians gather everything quietly and leave. Michael stays watching over Adam until Samandriel comes to change the younger Prince’s clothes. He throws himself out of the room too and runs to the courtyard. As he passes by the main parlour, he sees the King talking to his three brothers. Making arrangements. He sits on a stone bench and takes his head in his hands.

Adam is only nineteen.

Adam shouldn’t have been here.
Adam didn’t have anything to do with the promise between the two kingdoms.

Michael made a mistake. Dean made another. Adam shouldn’t have paid for that.

This shouldn’t have happened.

He breaths the chilly evening air in. The sun slowly goes down. Darkness falls over Michael as he sits still, body and mind numb. People come and go. Servants and knights shuffle around finished with their daily duties and getting ready to retire. They are all silent as they pass by their Crowned Prince. They don’t even look at him. Everyone in the palace walls knows what is happening. They all walk by like shadows and soon, Michael is alone with the stars.

The wind picks up. Michael feels the chill in his bones. He doesn’t tremble. It is not, it can’t be worse than the cold of the thin, white body freezing in his arms. Everything feels surreal. Did it really happen? Did Dean really send his ring back? Did his father really tell him he is to marry another? Did the three days of journey really pass in the blink of an eye? Did he really vow to forever be bound to the young man in white who stares up at him with empty eyes? Did he really return to Enochia with a husband, barely above what one would call a kid and a stranger who openly hates him? Did he really-

Is Adam really-

-dying?

A shudder goes down his spine.

A large coat is thrown over his shoulders.

Lucifer silently sinks down on the bench next to him. Michael doesn’t even have enough strength to question his presence. He can’t even move his head to look. They simply sit and watch the stars getting brighter and brighter on the night sky as the dark intensifies around them. The coat does him good. Michael gets warm enough to get feeling back in his fingers. He can’t believe out of all his family Lucifer is the one who sought him. This isn’t like the brother Michael knows. Not at all. But then again, he isn’t himself right now.
A young man who Michael doesn’t know at all and who is supposed to be his husband is on his deathbed on the bed that is supposed to be theirs. His thoughts and feelings are all over the place. He can’t believe any of what’s happening. He vaguely remembers Raphael when he first took an interest in mental diseases along with the ordinary ones he was learning to treat. He remembers one of the many excited lectures he listened just to make his little brother happy. He is in shock. Whatever he remembers from that lecture helps him deduce that much. He is in shock, the wound is warm still. The real pain will hit later.

He sits up straighter and leans back with his eyes closed. “Go to him. You owe him that much.” Lucifer’s voice startles him. He puts his green eyes on his brother’s tired face. Lucifer doesn’t care about anyone, not really. Except maybe his son. So why is he here, concerned? Is it because Adam was his guarantee that Michael would be left without heirs of his own? Does he fear that Michael will find a wife after- No. That’s not it. Not tonight, not this time.

Suddenly Michael remembers Lucifer’s mother. The beautiful woman with blonde hair and the most gentle smile in the world. The first and only consort of the King. A consort because his own mother, the first Queen existed. Sent away because Gabriel and Raphael’s mother, the second Queen didn’t want her in the palace. Separated from her little son because it was improper for the young Princes to leave the palace often. Died alone because she didn’t have any family other than seventeen-years-old Lucifer.

She is the reason why Lucifer always felt inferior. She is why he hates the King and never calls him his father. What happened to her turned him into the sad, bitter boy who felt alone surrounded by family in the palace and pushed everyone away. Her death made him like this. She shouldn’t have ended up like that. No one deserves to die alone.

Adam doesn’t too.

For the one month he spent in Enochia, he was alone in the world just like her. He is dying alone like her. Lucifer is right. Michael has to go to him. He is at fault for what happened. He should hold his young husband and talk to him until it is finally over. Adam shouldn’t be alone.

He gets up on his feet and walks back inside without looking at Lucifer. He stops in front of the double doors of their chambers. He takes a few seconds to mentally brace himself for the coming hours if not days. Inside, Samandriel is adjusting Adam’s pillows. Michael watches from the threshold of the bedroom until the servant is done. He dismisses the boy with a nod. Once the door closes behind him, he sits on the side of the bed facing Adam. The room is brightly lit with dozens of candles so the physicians can clearly see what they are doing. Right now though, it feels more like a violation to the young man’s sleep. Still, Michael takes advantage of the light to carefully inspect his husband taking in his pale face deathly white now, his dark blonde hair matted and messy and his sunken cheeks.
In the end, he gets up to blow out the candles leaving only a few so the room isn’t completely dark. Carefully, he sits right next to Adam on the bed with his back against the headboard.

“I don’t know any stories—” He starts to talk after a few minutes of silence. His own voice almost startles him as his eyes wander the wall opposite them. “-but I should talk to you. My mother would do this when I was a child and I got ill. I can’t remember the fairytales she told me anymore. I must have been five or six years old when she passed away.” He stops for a while. He never told anyone about his life before. “Your father’s first wife, Queen Mary came to her funeral with the rest of the family too. She was a far relative of my own father. She ended up staying a few more weeks with Dean who was the same age as me and Sam who was just starting to walk after your father left to get back to his work. She helped out with me, put everything in an order with my nannies and tutors and generally cared for me along with her own sons as my father grieved. My father was forever grateful to your parents afterwards. They quickly decided among each other that Dean and I could be wed to both bring the families together and keep the kingdoms at peace.”

He stops again to take a deep breath. Next to him, Adam is lying motionless. His breaths are so shallow that Michael almost wants to reach out to make sure his pulse is still there. “We were fifteen when our families officiated our betrothal. It was more than fourteen years ago. But Dean and I saw each other frequently before that too. We grew up playing together. When we were first engaged, we didn’t understand exactly what it meant. We were children. We thought it justified hours long games and riding even after dark. Whenever someone tried to separate us, we would say we were promised to each other and use it as an excuse for every little thing. Slowly, we started to get the situation. When we came to our twenties we thought the world was ours. We were convinced we loved each other.”

Michael doesn’t know if it is acceptable to tell these things to Adam who he is married to now. He doesn’t even know if Adam hears him or not. “Then things changed. I wanted to be the best King to my people. My duty was the most important thing in my life. In Enochia, we believe God chooses the King. It is our holy duty to care for our kingdom. Even being the Crowned Prince doesn’t mean all that much, it is just about age. Everyone in the King’s family, even women have a right to the throne. They all raise themselves and their children accordingly. Because God chooses who ascends to the throne. I decided to join the military when I was twenty one. It was the year our wedding was supposed to be. Dean was disappointed when the wedding was postponed but he was still supportive. He knew how important it all was to me. That didn’t last.”

Michael glances at Adam. He can’t believe this. He still can’t. “We drifted apart. I was always away at battles. I felt free as I rode in around border villages and forests. I loved leading my legion. I liked the attention. Everywhere I went, I was welcomed as a hero. As I said, I felt free. Dean became no more than another thing tying me down. I became a wayward memory binding him. Slowly, we started to understand that the young passion was running out and there wasn’t much left between us when it died. We could have been happy if we married on the planned time. Love could have developed for real. As the years went by, it became more and more unlikely. Then one day, just a few months ago I received the ring I gave to Dean back along with a short but precise letter from him. It was all over.”
“That could have caused a war between the kingdoms if our parents weren’t friends as you know. I felt- I was sad of course but I quickly realized that it was more because I had failed one of my duties to my kingdom than I had lost Dean. Honestly, I believe we both were relieved once we got ourselves free of that lie. I even considered sending Dean a gift for his marriage along with his ring but it of course wouldn’t have been appropriate. I still think of him as a friend. But that’s it. There was nothing more that day too. I wasn’t even heartbroken.”

Michael feels the cold truth behind his own words. “When my father called me to the throne room and told me of my new engagement to you, I felt scared. I knew my father was angry at me and Dean for ruining a beautiful bond between our families. I was being given a second chance to make my mistake right. I had to do my best. I couldn’t fail. Yet I did.” Michael feels weird. It’s like a knot is forming in his throat. It becomes harder to speak after that.

“For the whole month of wedding preparations, I wasn’t myself. Not really. The Priest was seeing me everyday, tutoring me on spouses and their duties to each other. The seamstress was fussing over fine cloths and threads for embroidery. There were small mounts of gifts piled everywhere in my chambers some for you and the rest for your family. My father kept constantly talking of our betrothal and you. He told me to forget the past. He told me you were young, you wouldn’t deal well with being away from your family. You weren’t educated on Enochian way of life too. He told me to be patient with you, help you, guide and guard you. He explained all of this to me. I was the older one. I was going to be the more experienced and eased one in my own kingdom while you would find yourself in a strange place with strange people and a strange man by your side. I had to take care of you. I had one job, one duty. And I failed again. I failed.” He carefully swipes a few stray strands of hair from Adam’s forehead with his fingers then lets them rest on his cheek for a few seconds. “-Look at you, you are dying because of me. Because I failed. You were beautiful. Sepulchral but beautiful and once again, I fail to protect the beautiful instead to terminate it myself.”

He draws his hand back with a sharp motion. His touch has never done Adam good. “I should have tried harder, done better. At our wedding, just your appearance striked me. I knew you weren’t happy. I wasn’t too but it didn’t give me the right to be inconsiderate. I should have never forgotten that. My beliefs are about leniency and compassion. You were scared that night. You shut your eyes and beared everything because you had no choice. I heard you crying next to me thinking I was asleep. And I felt I had done wrong. My religion orders what happened but not like that. I regret that deeply, Adam. I shouldn’t have touched you. I should have lied to the Priest. God is the most caring, surely He would have overlooked that so I could keep you from getting hurt, scarred. Why didn’t I? I asked myself this every day of the last month.”

And it is no lie. Michael has spent a good hour of each night lying silently and listening for the young man on the other side of the bed each night for the whole of their marriage. He observed how Adam jerked away from him and did his best to never make physical contact with him in any way unless absolutely necessary like when in the King’s presence. He feels like a rapist. “You hated me. Rightfully so. They gave you to me in your brother’s place. This was all like a punishment to you. It was so to me too but I wasn’t the one dragged away from my home, I wasn’t
the one forced to adjust to a completely different life all alone, I wasn’t the one who had to let myself be defiled so my brother could live happily ever after and so people I didn’t even know could live without the worry of a war. You had it harder, Adam. I should have been aware of that instead of being a coward and running away from your presence at every chance. I should have been there for you, with you. I should have told you these things, tried to talk to you and understand you too. Why couldn’t I?"

Indeed. Why couldn’t he? “You hated Enochia and with good reason too. Even your father pleaded me to be gentle on the night of our wedding. Just the fear in his eyes should have stopped me. He told me that sorrow had always been hard on you. You could fall ill if you were to be troubled like you were in here. I should have made sure that wouldn’t be the case.”

There are just too many ‘should have’s in these sentences. Michael feels worse every passing minute. “I don’t even know you, Adam. You are titled my husband. You are nineteen. You enjoy the mornings in the terrace and despise reading about history. You sleep on your side facing away from me. You seem to prefer meat over vegetables. This is all I know. I see your movements in what little time we are together. I watch the shell. I don’t know you. Not really. I should have tried to do just that. I didn’t. So you did this to yourself. They believe this is all some accident but I know better. You did this. You wanted to be rid of this life you were forced into. You wanted to go home. Those letters only made you miss your family harder. I thought I was doing the right thing that morning. I should have never left you alone as you would feel just so after reading the words of everyone you love all away from you. I should have been there. All this time you needed someone to be there. Yet I lost you on that first night. Everything could have been different. You didn’t have to become like this. You didn’t deserve this. It is my fault, Adam. I can’t even ask for forgiveness now.”

Michael means every word. Why did it take Adam trying to kill himself for him to understand these things and become able to talk it out? He was supposed to be the one more matured. Why wasn’t he? So Adam didn’t like him. All of his gifts were scowled at, whatever he did was met with a silent glare. So he felt he was the only one trying to make this relationship work. Adam didn’t try with anything. His two tutors saw Michael everyday to complain about his young husband’s indifference to such important matters and his lack of enthusiasm to learn. Adam couldn’t adjust to the most simple of rules he was to follow like knowing which outfit to wear where and in front of who. So what? Why did Michael get stuck on these things that much? Why did he expect the young man probably praying to angels to take him in their first night together to disappear in Enochia? In one month? Michael wants to laugh at his own idiocy. It takes at least three times that time for soldiers with years of experience to get used to a new horse, a different sword. “How did I expect so much of you, Adam? I am not becoming King for a long time hopefully. Couldn’t I have waited a couple of months to have you started on your education? Couldn’t I have assisted with the lessons myself? I am up and about before the servants come with breakfast anyway. Couldn’t I have messed the bed sheets on my side for the chambermaid making up the room and reporting to the King then spent the night on a sofa for a small week at least? How could I force so much on you?”

The sleeping man, of course, doesn’t answer. He can’t. Michael takes a few slow, controlled
breaths. “Adam I don’t know if you hear or not but I like to think you do. Because my mother was the same way for days before she passed away. I was little. I cried for her so my nanny took me to see her a few times telling me she was sleeping. I kissed her cheek every time and whispered her I loved her. I like to hope she heard me.” Hesitantly, Michael takes one of Adam’s hands in both of his own. “You have to wake up, Adam. You are not gone yet. You have to come back. I- I am really sorry for everything I did to you. I promise when you wake up it will all be different. I will try harder. I will do better. I promise.”

He waits a few seconds, a spark of childish hope within him. He is naturally met with silence. “Adam please. Don’t do this. Come back, give me another chance. It will be different. You have to wake up. You have to open your eyes soon. You- you just move, take a sharp breath, do something. Please try. Don’t give up. Give me some kind of sign so I know you will get better. Please, Adam. A letter will go out on its way to your family at dawn. They will be told to prepare for a funeral. Please. Try for them. You father loves you. He would drop dead in his agony. Your brother and his wife would fall ill themselves. So, try. Please. You are not dead yet, Adam. Don’t let yourself be buried alive. Not again. Do something, just enough to show me you aren’t dying. Before dawn. Please-”

At some point, Michael trails off. His voice is too hoarse to go on after hours of speaking.

It is just two hours before he falls silent and his head drops to rest against the headboard. He doesn’t fight it anymore. The exhaustion of the last five days catches up to him just then.

Michael is dreaming.

He knows he is.

His mother is here with him. He knows she is an illusion of his mind immediately. Because she is young, younger than Michael can possibly remember her. She is wearing the purple dress from the portrait of her parents painted on the same week of their marriage in his study.

Michael smiles at her and walks away.

His brothers are here. They are playing together chasing each other around on the grass. Michael watches little Lucifer laughing and waving at his mother who is sitting under a tree also watching. This isn’t possible too. Lucifer’s mother can’t be here if Raphael and Gabriel are born already.
He walks farther.

Dean is here. He hugs Michael and walks away to hold another man’s hand in front of them. Michael doesn’t see his face.

Gabriel spreads a dark green velvet cloth under their feet asking Michael if it is fine enough to go to his fiancé.

His father brings him the silver crown.

The seamstress dresses him in midnight blue.

There are white rose petals everywhere.

A young man in white with an intricate embroidered veil over his face stands in front of Michael.

He reaches out.

The young man collapses.

*He is dying.*

Michael kneels down to try to get the veil off. The young man is suffocating in his arms.

The cloth tangles itself in his fingers and pulls.

Michael is pressing down on the man’s throat with beautiful white covering his fingers.

The young man stills completely.
King John is looking down at him wearing all black.

Prince Sam holds up his wife with both their faces red and tear streaked.

His own father glares down at him.

He failed.

He is cold. Trembling.

Adam is d-

Warmth spreads over one of his hands. The sudden feeling shocks Michael enough to make him remember he is only dreaming. All at once, everyone disappears along with the corpse laying over his lap. His hand is still warm. He is being pulled.

Michael opens his eyes.

The sun is just rising. His head is resting against the headboard with his body turned sideways facing the other occupant of the bed. One of his hands fell away to his lap but the other is still holding Adam’s.

Adam is squeezing back weakly.

Michael raises his eyes to his husband’s face.

Clear blue eyes with tints of light green are on him.
“See, I know I was right to not believe your father when he said you weren’t that strong. Today you fought off Death himself son. A real warrior on the inside.” Adam gives a weak smile at King Charles and blinks once. Michael watches as his father stands up from the side of the bed. “Alright then, let’s have you eat a good broth and rest a little. You scared us real bad son. Take it easy and focus on recovering soon.” The King walks out after that.

In half an hour, the physicians are done with everything. Samandriel brings a steaming bowl and a fresh jug of water in the room. Michael takes a seat at the chair on the bedside after the smiling servant leaves the room to give them privacy.

Adam turns his head away from the spoon.

“Adam-” The voice that interrupts him is nothing like the young man’s. It sounds more like a dying deer. “Leave.-” Adam breathes hard with effort to speak. “-I can’t bear this. You- Leave. Please.” Michael drops the spoon back into the bowl.

He walks away from their chambers with the surprised look Samandriel gave him when he was called back and Adam’s last words echoing in his mind.

I don’t want you. Leave.
Chapter 5

Michael is gone.

Adam recovers painfully slowly.

He is never left alone these days. Samandriel takes shifts with Michael's manservant Bartholomew keeping him under close watch day and night. Gabriel comes and sits with him for hours everyday entertaining him with stories of his own and books he carries from the library. Kelly brings Jack to visit him. The baby squeals at the attention he gets between his mom and two uncles. Kelly and Gabriel become something of dear friends to Adam as he slowly gets back his strength. The baby brightens his mood as he eventually gets well enough to try to walk around the room with the physicians’ help. He claps at every step Adam takes and tries to stand up himself when his mother sets him down on the floor. Gabriel cheers him on. Kelly makes sure to have a glass of water ready the moment he sits back down on the bed. Day by day, Adam gets better.

The King himself drops by everyday to ask how he is faring and if he’s feeling alone now that Michael went to that border patrol. He was surprised when his son decided to change the planned route to make a few circles in King John’s weaker borders too with the other King’s permission thus making the way longer and having to set out weeks before the planned date. He is actually a little disappointed that his son had to leave so soon before Adam could even get back on his feet but he is sure that’s because he was the one scared the most and he can’t bear to see his husband unwell. So Adam is to take good care of himself to be all good and even better than before by the time the older Prince returns to the palace with lots of gifts from all around for his husband.

Adam smiles politely at the older man and promises to get better not betraying the truth he knows about his husband’s sudden departure. The day he woke up, they sent a horseman after the messenger to stop the news from reaching his family. Adam insisted that it should be kept secret until he is completely fine or his father could never rest. King Charles quickly agreed. The news of his son-in-law almost dying before the first month of his marriage could destroy his reputation among the nobles and surrounding kingdoms. Adam has no intention to tell his family what happened anyway. Neither his father or Sam and Jessica need to know that he was half dead for days.

Only one issue bothers him.

Dean.

He wrote that fake letter and sent it in Jessica’s envelope as she wanted. He knows the letters have
been delivered. The messenger brought back new ones from his family. Kelly read his father’s and Sam’s for him and scribed for him since he wasn’t strong enough to hold a pen yet. The two envelopes rest in his drawer to be sent in a few days along with the third one he wrote with his own hand as it has already been more than three weeks since then. He read Jessica’s letter on his own a few days after the day with Kelly. It only said Dean got his letter then left the town with his husband the next day. Adam doesn’t know anything more. Did he believe it? Did he want to come to Enochia still? How did Castiel take it? Where are they now? Did they go back home? What happened to Dean?

He can’t do anything. Still, he wishes he knew.

When he is alone at night with Samandriel or Bartholomew sitting in the outer chamber, Adam finds it difficult to sleep. He stays up with a book in his hand and a candle by his side. His head clouded with thoughts of everything that happened doesn’t let him enough time to read more than a few pages each night before he falls asleep a few hours before dawn.

Before dawn.

“-So, try. Please. You are not dead yet, Adam. Don’t let yourself be buried alive. Not again. Do something, just enough to show me you aren’t dying. Before dawn. Please-”

Michael.

Adam remembers. Despite what he said to the King and the physicians pretending to be scared to think about that day and not knowing what exactly happened, he does. He remembers it all.

He remembers vividly how he read Dean’s letter. The thoughts that ran in his head, the dread spreading to his being, collapsing over the sofa with tears in his eyes as he slowly composed the perfect lies both beautiful and believable, his trembling hands as he wrote the poetry like words describing an imaginary kingdom and an imaginary husband… He remembers everything. He had made the dragon sound like a Prince. He had prayed for Dean to believe it as the pen slid over the paper and the ink gained shape to proudly exhibit the lies. He had sent Samandriel and the chambermaids away. He had wanted to be alone. All alone, just as he had felt. He had locked the door of the bedroom with his own two hands. He had opened the windows to get rid of the suffocating feeling that wouldn’t let him breathe. He had stuck his head out from one gasping for air without a care for the rainwater sliding down his face making his hair stick to his forehead and washing away every trace of the dried tears. Then he had thrown himself over the bed only listening as the storm got worse and worse each passing hour.
Some part of him knew what was happening, what he was doing. Hadn’t he decided to stay strong? Hadn’t he wanted revenge? Hadn’t he decided to turn Michael’s life to hell? Hadn’t he found hope in Jessica’s white lies prettier and more graceful than his own? Hadn’t he decided to fight against fate and topple the whole palace over Michael if he dared to hurt Adam again? So why? Why couldn’t he do something to save himself? Why couldn’t he move to close those windows? Why couldn’t he force his jaw open and scream for the guards? Had he really wanted to be out of here that much? Had he wanted to die, all alone and freezing?

He still can’t be sure.

He remembers the thunderbolts exploding in his ears deafening him and making him wonder if the palace was crushing down, if the earth was opening up below to swallow them all. He remembers hearing someone calling out to him, the voice far and muffled between all of that. He remembers the banging sound louder than thunder. Someone was there with him. The door had been kicked open somehow. Someone had wanted to save him so bad, they had found such strength in themselves to destroy a double lock with their bare hands. He remembers being held as the voice in his ears screamed for someone, desperate to get him help.

Days had passed after that. Adam remembers dreaming of his childhood and his home. He had felt as if he was floating. Far away, beyond the dreams, he had heard the voices. People had come and gone. Adam hadn’t listened to any of them for the longest time. He still remembers bits and pieces of those foreign voices.

“-an’t treat him here. Get him-”

“-since whe-”

“A whole day-”

“-take such trauma. His body isn’t-”

“-ould be able to get some soup in him at least. He has to-”

“It has been three days, so why-”
Adam remembers only one voice loud and clear of all. The one he didn’t ever want to hear. Yet he was there. Always. Adam doesn’t remember it but he has heard enough times how Michael spent days by his bedside watching over him, trying to help the physicians, feeding him with small spoons, changing the wet towels over his forehead and bosom when he had a fever for two days straight… Some part of him can’t believe it. But it is all true. Why? The single question resonates in his being since he came back to life. He knows the things Michael told him. He remembers that last storytime meant to ease his mind and send him off without fear by distracting him from the black scythe dangling over his neck.

“I don’t know any stories but I should talk to you. My mother would do this when I was a child and I got ill. I can’t remember the fairytales she told me anymore.” Because the Queen had died when he was little, hadn’t she? That one detail, the mere second enough for it to run through his head is all the time Adam doesn’t carry any ill will for his husband. His knows the pain. Still the sympathy isn’t enough for anything.

Michael had told him his story. Quietly, simply, truthfully. Adam had known all of that from just the tone of his voice. “-They quickly decided among each other that Dean and I could be wed-” He hadn’t wanted to listen to any of that. He was- And Michael was there, talking about himself. Adam hadn’t wanted to hear any of it. Yet the story had intrigued him. Only because it featured Dean. Only because Adam had wondered just why Dean did what he did. “-We grew up playing together.-” Adam hadn’t known that. He was after all ten years younger than his brother. “-When we came to our twenties we thought the world was ours. We were convinced we loved each other.” Then why? Had Michael tried to lie about that?

“Then things changed.-” Adam had understood just how right he was on the very first few days of
their marriage. Duty was all Michael cared about. It was more important than his friend, his fiancé, the one he was supposedly in love with. Adam had felt anger rising in him. “Dean was disappointed when the wedding was postponed but he was still supportive.” Adam hadn’t had any issue imagining that. Classic Dean. If it was Adam in his place, he would have boldly asked for what he wanted back then. Dean hadn’t. He had silently accepted everything because of his love for Michael. Once again, Adam had felt glad for Dean who had saved himself from the cruel fate. Even if it meant he had had to take his brother’s place himself.

“I felt free. Dean became no more than another thing tying me down.” How dare you, Adam had wanted to wake up just to scream that at Michael then. “I became a wayward memory binding him. Slowly, we started to understand that the young passion was running out and there wasn’t much left between us when it died.” Of course. What had Michael expected from Dean? For him to sit back and wait for him whenever he was away? For him to let himself be used as a mere toy when physical need arose then be cast away? For him to waste away all of his days for a man who saw only a burden in him and nothing more? “Then one day, just a few months ago I received the ring I gave to Dean back along with a short but precise letter from him. It was all over.” This was the end of the part Adam needed to hear. He hadn’t meant to listen to the rest.

“For the whole month of wedding preparations, I wasn’t myself.” Adam had wanted to laugh at that. Michael wasn’t himself? Michael who threw away his previous engagement because he couldn’t be bothered to take a break from his precious duties to be with his fiancé who he didn’t really love? Michael who couldn’t be tied down by anything even if he was in an arranged marriage as the Crowned Prince who led armies and as the future King who could get himself a whole harem of men and women if he so wished? Michael? Adam had been the one forced to leave his everything behind. Adam had been the one wrapped prettily in white silk and embroidered lace then simply left on the bed like a gift for the husband who wouldn’t ever see him as a person. Adam had been the one forced to spread his legs and take it no matter how he felt about it all. Adam had been the one forced to share his bed with the stranger whose only tie to him was a mere title and the memory of his hands roaming his skin. Adam had been the one literally sold off because his father’s army wasn’t strong enough to protect their borders on its own and because their people needed to earn money to feed their children. Adam had been the one thankful he was a man because the only thing worse that could happen to him was to become a breeding mare. And Michael wasn’t himself?

“I was going to be the more experienced and eased one in my own kingdom while you would find yourself in a strange place with strange people and a strange man by your side.” That hadn’t even been enough to start to describe it. Adam had been thrown into hell and abandoned to perdition. There was no angel brave or strong enough to dive in and save him. That was why he couldn’t just die. He had tried. That was it. Adam had tried to die. Yet the demon wasn’t loosening his grip on Adam’s soul. There was no escape.

“My beliefs are about leniency and compassion. You were scared that night. You shut your eyes and bore everything because you had no choice. I heard you crying next to me thinking I was asleep. And I felt I had done wrong.” So not only had Michael violated his body but he had done so to his emotions, thoughts and that single moment Adam had spared to mourn for himself. Adam
had wanted to cry all over again at that realization. He wasn’t his own person anymore. Even on the first night and after that, there was nothing belonging only to him. His body, his soul, everything… It all had become someone else’s. Dying had never sounded so good before. Suddenly the darkness had become peaceful and the bony hand reaching out to Adam under a black cloak had become an invitation to Heaven. Adam was just about to take it then. “-You had it harder, Adam. I should have been aware of that.” So he knew. How gracious. His husband carrying the name of an angel was a good man. He knew that he had hurt Adam. That apparently made him a good man. Not a scavenger robbing the dead, not someone trying to relieve his conscience still using a young man slowly dying in front of him.

“-Even your father pleaded me to be gentle on the night of our wedding. Just the fear in his eyes should have stopped me.” His father. That had made Adam come back to himself. He had remembered his family. His father, his mother, Dean, Sam, Jessica… All of their faces had appeared in his mind one by one. What would they think? His father- If Adam had died then- He had told himself to somehow survive not for himself and certainly not for the Enochians but for them. His father especially. How the man must have been drowning in guilt. How the same guilt would have killed him too. Adam had understood that fact fully. Apparently Michael had too. His father had actually asked that of Michael? Had that been why Michael was- On that night- Had that been why it wasn’t as bad as it could have been?

“-I watch the shell. I don’t know you.” Adam had wanted to wake up, to catch Michael by his shoulders and to shake him and to scream. The real Adam didn’t exist in Enochia. Ever since he had heard he was being married off, with every step till the horrendous life in his husband’s palace, the real Adam had gradually withered away in him. There was only a shell remaining. That was why. Couldn’t Michael see that? Did Michael really believe Adam had this whole other person hiding in him? Did he really believe Adam Milligan Winchester existed still? He had become Adam Shurley. The other one had died. “-You didn’t have to become like this. You didn’t deserve this.” He hadn’t. Yet no one had cared. They had killed him. “-Couldn’t I have messed the bed sheets on my side for the chambermaid then spent the night on a sofa for a small week at least? How could I force so much on you?” Regret? What good could it have done then that Adam was already slipping away? Why had no one cared before? Simple. Michael still didn’t care that day. He was only trying to get rid of the guilt he would feel later. He was staying there, appearing to care for Adam just so the Kings wouldn’t blame him afterwards. They would even praise him for doing all he could. Adam’s own father would embrace Michael as a son in place of the one who died just because he held Adam till the last moment and made sure he moved on in peace. No. Adam had told himself he had to wake up just because of that. He couldn’t have let his family confuse the demon for an angel and let him in. He had known right in that instant that he wouldn’t die.

“-You have to wake up, Adam. You are not gone yet. You have to come back. I- I am really sorry for everything I did to you. I promise when you wake up it will all be different.” Indeed. It would be different. Adam would tell Michael to leave. He would tell him that he knew everything. He would tell him that he would blame him for everything. He would run away. He would tell the King he had been beaten. He would say he had been locked in the bedroom by his husband without food or water. He would say he wanted to climb out of one of the windows to the next room. He would say the storm got in, he wasn’t strong enough to close the windows under the winds, he was hungry and tired, he fainted. He almost died because of Michael. The Crowned Prince didn’t want him at all. He was still thinking about Dean. He took his anger to Dean on Adam who shared the same
blood and looked enough like Dean when he was Adam’s age. So Michael had to leave, to stay away from Adam, to never touch him again or else Adam would ruin him. If King Charles didn’t believe it, he would find a way to tell his own family. When the war broke out, Michael still would have failed. He still would be ruined.

Yet he didn’t need to say any of that.

A simple ‘I don’t want you here.’ was enough. Michael left, his head bowed and his shoulders sunken. He never returned to their chambers. Bartholomew packed his belongings two days later and informed Adam that his husband was going on the yearly border patrol a little early this year because of the alliance with King John established after their marriage. He would travel some of their borders too. The whole thing would last longer than usual. He wouldn’t return for two months.

Adam didn’t say anything. He didn’t expect that. He didn’t even expect for Michael to leave on his demand. He didn’t think he had any power over the man. That was why the threats were necessary. But they weren’t. Michael left. Guess he too wanted to be as far from Adam as possible. He was only playing nice and sharing his bed to look like the good, the loyal son he needed to be to gain the throne. When Adam gave him a chance, he jumped on it. A small part of him regretted ever giving him that chance. But mostly he was relieved too. He had an entire lifetime to torture his dear husband and the consort with his existence. He would be a King. He would have the power. Like his father said. He wouldn’t have to put up with the woman, just the children…

Adam closes the book harshly and throws it away to a corner. It’s one of Michael’s collection in the study anyway. He pushes all of Michael’s pillows off the bed and sprawles in the middle of the huge canopy bed to sleep, comfortable as a baby in mom’s cradle now that he is alone and safe.

Two weeks before Michael’s appointed return, a horseman comes with letters from their camp. The legion is resting somewhere on the western borders where there are mountains and a few villages. The same area has borders with Adam’s own kingdom too. There are bandits there. Michael is after their chief. He might have to linger a bit more to eradicate all of them. Everyone cheers when they hear about the two other bandit groups on the northern borders that have been beaten and dispatched by Michael. Adam smiles at the King when the man turns to see his reaction at his husband’s glory but doesn’t do much else to celebrate.

In the chambers, Samandriel brings him an envelope with his name on it. The younger man has a smile spreading to his entire face. Even he looks at the letter lovingly. Adam doesn’t have the heart to frown at the thing in front of the servant who openly adores Michael and sees him as a hero. Instead, he says he will be retiring early and heads into the bedroom under Samandriel’s soft gaze. He probably thinks Adam wants to be alone to read his husband’s love words to him. Adam wants
to be alone sure but not for that.

Once in the bedroom, he turns the envelope in his hand a few times then tears it in half with the letter inside. He watches the orange flames with the frown he held back before after throwing the torn paper in a bowl and setting it on fire with a candle.

Adam is sitting under a tree with a book. Kelly and Gabriel chase Jack around as the baby half crawls and tries to take a few steps on the soft grass. The King sits under a shade lightly discussing something with Raphael. Adam stays away from everyone excusing himself with being too tired to do anything. Ever since his ‘illness’ he is treated like a delicate flower ready to wither. Even the King is almost too careful around him. In the dinnertime the chatting is light, when they are outside Samandriel or Bartholomew follows him with a jug of water and a parasol ready for use, whenever he doesn’t feel like doing something he is left alone as he wants. No one crosses him. Whatever he wants is done immediately. The old Priest and Zachariah have started the lessons again a month and a half after Michael left but it is clear that they had an earful about how to act around him. Nowadays, nothing happens when he doesn’t finish a chapter he is supposed to read before the lesson where he would have been met with a scowl and a sharp reminder that he isn’t suited for the throne as he is. Whenever he decides that he is tired the lesson ends even if it is just a few minutes in.

Adam has no complaints, no issues. Except one. They have received word that the bandits have been executed with their chief taken prisoner for the King to put on a trial. Michael is returning. Life here wasn’t too bad if not a little lonely. Now that the demon is coming back, Adam will be in hell again.

When the weather starts to get slightly chilly and Kelly carries a sleeping Jack inside, Lucifer comes to sit with Adam with a coat for him. Adam smiles and thanks the other man. They sit in comfortable silence for some time. Gabriel narrows his eyes at them and leaves with Raphael who outright glares at Lucifer. Adam sighs. It is hard to not notice how people treat the older Prince even though no one tells Adam to stay away from him or causes any scenes before his wife and child. Still, Adam finds it annoying. To him, Lucifer is always kind and considerate. He never oversteps any boundaries, never makes any remarks or asks Adam anything too personal. He always makes sure to provide whatever small thing he thinks Adam might need, like the coat. Kelly also says Lucifer asks about him and tells her to keep him company but not to bother him too much with the baby and the noise and mess little Jack makes. Adam appreciates it all. He doesn’t care what people think or say.

“You don’t really look happy, Adam.” Lucifer quietly talks without looking at him. “-Not like a newlywed who is about to see his spouse again after weeks of separation.” Adam is actually surprised at that. He knows exactly how he looks but Lucifer doesn’t involve himself with matters like this that he has no business with. It might be the most personal thing he has ever said to Adam.
“I- Please don’t get me wrong. It’s just, I have been thinking about this and- I don’t think your religion lessons cover this. If someone doesn’t tell you then you will only suffer worse later. I thought-” Adam interrupts him with sudden curiosity. “What is it? What am I not being told?” He asks fully facing Lucifer. The older Prince averts his eyes and takes a deep breath.

“Listen Adam, I know- I mean I noticed that you don’t really have much of a relationship with my brother.” Lucifer stops as if waiting for a reaction to tell him to stop or imply that he is getting ahead of himself. Adam knows he didn’t take much care to pretend to be happily in love even though he isn’t in any way disrespectful to Michael in public. Yet he never heard a speech like this from anyone in all his time here. He knows Lucifer has no ill intention towards him. He wonders what the point of this talk is. So he makes sure to look as impassive as possible. “I don’t mean to hurt you but, like I said they will hurt you. I don’t want that. You are the first person, after years, who doesn’t pay my family any mind and actually treats me like a person rather than some boogeyman. My wife and son are happy to spend time with you too. They don’t feel out of place with you since everyone else outcasts me most of the time. I want to tell you a few things if you will hear it.”

Adam nods after a second. He has noticed that much. What else has Lucifer to say? “Thank you.-” He smiles at Adam in a way he rarely does, with real joy. “-I will be frank with you. I am different than the other Princes. My mother was a consort. In Enochia, the King is allowed to have multiple spouses, Adam. It is an old tradition left away from a time with too many battles when the throne and the King’s bloodline were in danger. It is not necessary now but our Kings still exploit this rule. Do you understand what this means for you?” He asks and Adam releases a breath he had been holding. He knows about that. “I know. I heard about that actually. Thanks for trying to warn me Lucifer. You are the only one who has done that in the five months I’ve been here. I-” This time it is Lucifer who interrupts him. “No, Adam. Look, Michael’s mother the first Queen had him already when my mother was brought to the palace. Michael is three years older than me. His mother died when he was five years old. Then the King married again the next year to the second Queen who was Raphael and Gabriel’s mother and not to mine like she deserved. Instead, she was sent out of the palace. I was just four, Adam. Four-years-old. I saw my mother once or twice every week then it turned to month and more. She passed away all alone when I was seventeen, too poor to afford a servant and with no family other than me.”

Lucifer swallows thickly. Adam puts a consoling hand on his knee. “They used her, Adam. They threw her away. It was unfair. It was the worst that could happen both to her and to Michael’s mother. I grew up hating this system, this palace, this man who’s supposed to be my father. I would take my wife and son to leave but that’s treason. Princes can’t move away from the palace unless they are married off or allowed to live elsewhere to be King’s governor. I would fight, I wouldn’t care. But if I commit treason then they will kill Jack. Filicide and fratricide are practiced in Enochia again to protect the throne. They wouldn’t let the son of a traitor live. That’s why I can’t. That’s why I have to bear to be in this hell. You are the only one I care about other than my own family. The last one I cared for like this was my mother, Adam. I don’t want you to end up like her.”

There’s so much sincerity and emotion in his voice that Adam wants to reach out and hug this man.
He might have found his best friend here. Someone who cares about him, someone who knows how bad this place is, someone who has suffered as much as him… “Listen, Adam. Michael will try to tell you to not talk to me. He will say I want the throne desperately. He will say I hate all of them and want to make you like me. He will say this matter is all about consent. Don’t listen to that. Yes the King has to ask his wife or husband before bringing a consort but there are ways to make people agree. Do you know why Michael’s mother said yes?” Adam looks at the other man with confusion. He didn’t hear anything about this supposed consent. “She was ill, Adam. She knew she was going to die before Michael could grow up. She said yes so he would get to know this other woman and continue to have a mother after she passed. She wanted a mother for her son. My mother told me how she went to talk with her and plead her to not keep her son separate from me. The two of them became friends in a way. Indeed my mother called Michael her son too and Michael used to call her mother as well.” Lucifer tears up. Adam feels a tear of his own sliding down his cheek.

“Michael will tell you that he wants to ask you a question. He can do that any time, Adam. Don’t listen to him. Please don’t listen to him. They will hurt you. But you should fight against it, okay? You should. You are young, even younger than me. If you need anything, anything Adam, tell me. I will find a way to help. Just don’t let Michael hurt you. I witnessed this same story before. I know how it ends. When the time comes, say no. You have no one, nothing they can use against you. You will be a King. Even if you somehow have to agree, make sure all the women leave before conceiving. Blame them for something, make them look ill. Just have them returned to their families. You will have the power. You will need close servants too. Start gathering them now. For example your manservant. He cares about you. He cares about Michael too. Someone like him might become your eyes and hands in the palace once you are a King. Never forget this. Say no.”

Lucifer finishes his talk with silent tears. Adam doesn’t think he is strong enough to give him any other answer anyway. This man is the only one who has seen how much he hates this life. He is the only one actively trying to help. He might become the only family Adam has here along with his wife and child. So he nods. He hands a handkerchief to Lucifer and they smile bitterly at each other. For the first time in five months, someone understands.

Michael returns.

Adam remembers his talk with Lucifer nearly a week ago. He doesn’t return the weak smile his husband gives him as they stand in a long line greeting the Crowned Prince one by one. Adam only lets himself be pulled close and kissed on the forehead because the whole family and a few servants are present. He doesn’t reciprocate in any way. He doesn’t even want to breathe the same air as this man who will always try to use and hurt him. He only finds the will to force himself to stay still because he bites the inside of his cheek and squeezes one of his fists in his pockets painfully hard.
Still the disgust remains. He hates this man. He hates his touch, his eyes, his voice. Adam draws himself back sharply before anyone can see. He doesn’t expect for Michael to stumble with the movement. Before he understands what happens, he is on the floor having reflexively caught Michael who fell over him. He doesn’t hear what the shouting voices around them say.

There’s blood in his hand.
Michael does exactly that. He changes the plans and routes for his upcoming patrol. It takes two days in the King’s study next to the throne room to write everything down and handpick his best men for the legion he will take with himself. Bartholomew packs whatever he will need for the next few weeks on his own and tells Adam that he will be leaving in his place. The servant finds it a little odd. Not the packing part, years of experience gives him no issue in knowing how much of what will be necessary to his Prince on the quest. Only, the fact that the two Princes aren’t on speaking terms is difficult to understand. Why is the younger Prince rejecting his husband after what happened and in this vulnerable state that he needs someone to help him through his recovery? Michael tells his manservant not to put his nose where it doesn’t belong and to keep his questions to himself. If he needs to know something to perform his duties his Prince will inform him, he says using the sharpest tone he can muster. He wouldn’t do that normally. More often than not, he finds himself confiding in his servant. It is why Bartholomew takes the cue. Michael will eventually talk to him.

His father is surprised if not a little angry. His husband was gravely ill just the day before. They even sent a messenger to tell the other King and his family to immediately set out and be prepared for anything. They would be planning a funeral today if Adam didn’t open his eyes. So what is happening now? Why isn’t Michael staying in their chambers and looking after his husband? Why is he burying himself in his work? Why is he in such a hurry to leave the palace? Does he know just what he is doing? Is he out of his mind? Did he forget about his failed betrothal already? Did he forget why he lost Dean? Is this going to end like that too?

He will not tolerate the same mistake again, King Charles says. Michael bows his head and respectfully listens until his father calms down and finishes his tirade on how Michael is making mistake over mistake and how he needs to treat Adam better now that the young man got even more frail than before both physically and mentally. Michael knew this would happen. He knew just how his actions in the last few days would come across. He already prepared an excuse for that. He received word that there were bandits roaming their and King John’s borders, he says which is a truth. He just makes the situation sound a little more urgent than it is with a few added details of rumors that young women and men are being kidnapped on the roads either for the bandits’ own use or to be sold. It is an outright lie but Michael can easily get out of it by saying the villagers were too scared and such rumors appear around the mountain regions where the roads are empty and the renegades of every kind hide from law. Also there have been a few robberies of the richer families on the same roads which is completely true. He needs to investigate and eradicate those vile men before the situation gets out of hand.

As he guesses, the King has no choice but to relent at the mention of the kidnappings and possible
human trafficking. Soon Michael is on his way with his legion. Adam is of course excused from the ceremony the family makes of bidding him farewell since the young Prince is unable to stand from the bed. Michael lies that he went to see Adam but he was sleeping. Also he didn’t want to tell his husband too much of what he will be doing when Adam has just overcome such a vital illness and he is easily frightened these days. It was also why Michael didn’t work in his own study in their chambers. He didn’t want Adam to hear about the horrible things the barbaric men are said to be doing and how Michael will need to kill dozens if not hundreds in battles putting his own life in danger. The King half-heartedly nods his approval at his son’s thinking then pats him on the shoulder telling him to bring glory to their name once more. Everyone copies their father. Only Lucifer narrows his eyes and gives him a knowing smirk as he says a few words of encouragement of his own to his older brother.

On the road, clad in heavy armour, Michael feels light as a bird and under the gloomy grey sky, he feels he can breathe in what’s maybe weeks. He is leaving. As Adam wanted. He will be doing what he knows the best chasing the enemy on his horse and making good use of his sword. He will have at least two months to figure out a way to do what he has no idea how to. Adam will have time to heal and Michael will have time to collect himself. When he goes back home as a hero again and with victory in his hands, he will find his husband all better. He will be able to talk to him freely and they both will be more open to understand each other after being separated for so long with time and space to think. He fully believes that.

The legion moves around nonstop for five weeks straight. They encounter two small groups of bandits which don’t take more than a few days to disband with most of them killed on sight and some captured for information. Michael decides to move towards King John’s southern borders in an inhabited area with mountains and canyons after letting the party rest and celebrate their recent victories. Maintaining the soldiers’ morale is half of winning a war. This is something he has learned pretty early on. He hopes to set up camp again close by around some villages where the soldiers can take a night or two to themselves and Michael can rest his mind in his own tent away from the men and women alike who throw themselves at him. This is also a part, one he doesn’t enjoy unlike his men, of what he does. He is a Prince, Crowned at that. Young men hope to catch his eye to at least become good enough to get themselves settled in a small estate in the capital with a few visits from Michael here and there. Women dream bigger. Almost each one hopes to end up pregnant and become a lady of the Court if not a Queen. It isn’t uncommon for Kings to have commoner wives last of which was Lucifer’s mother. Michael simply hates the headache the attention causes. He always stays away and alone after a night of drinking with his men. He will do just so here.

When they set up camp for the second time just inside King John’s borders and Michael starts investigating for a bigger group of bandits, some farmers invite them to the village. As always word traveled faster and they heard weeks ago how an Enochian legion was doing a patrol close by to protect the people. Michael actually doesn’t want to go but he thinks he can find out something about the chief of the bandits who has been messing around in the border towns and villages of both of the Kingdoms. He wants to capture the man to take him back to Enochia for the two Kings to put on a trial and execute publicly. So he agrees to go with six of his higher ranked soldiers.
They find a small feast waiting for them when they enter the village square. There are about sixty or seventy houses here. Almost everyone is there to see a real commander with real soldiers who fights real battles. There is a huge fire at the center around which many tables are set with the best food the people can offer. A man who looks around sixty five, probably the elder of the village, comes and introduces himself to Michael welcoming him to their humble settling. Michael smiles and thanks all the people for honoring them by letting them into their home.

The rest of the evening and the night is spent with eating, drinking and dancing around the fire. Michael doesn’t leave the table much. He chooses to sit with the older villagers and listen to their accounts of the year around here. The bandits were seen multiple times in the last few weeks. There were a few smaller villages on the other side of the mountains raided five or six months ago by a group of lawless men, he learns. King John’s own army took care of most of them and delivered help to the people resettling them in a close by location with rations and supplies to build new houses and tame the ground to make fields. The villagers here suspect that the few men who got away from their King’s soldiers formed the groups which Michael already beat and joined the one group he is after now. The latter might have hideouts over the hills in a valley between the mountains where there are multiple caves and a small road connecting this region to the closest town. If the farmers want to sell their produce in the town, they have to use that road. The bandits attack people there so they can steal food, clothing and money.

It is quite much of information, more than Michael expected. He is already making a plan to form a search party to check out that road and the small forest close to a river one of the older women mentions. Both of them are possible even good locations to both hide themselves from plain sight and to hoard whatever goods they steal. Michael also hears mentions of black marketing during winter when many of the families with little children have to find a way to feed themselves as the valley road closes with snow and the connection to the town is broken. The elder explains that their village sticks together and makes stocks for everyone before winter so no one goes hungry. They didn’t have a problem like that in years but they heard the neighbouring villages aren’t always as lucky.

Michael will have to stick around longer than he expected. He should send word to King John and see to it that the people here have an alternative road or some other way to reach the town during winter at least for emergencies like childbirth or diseases so physicians can travel back and forth after he kills the bandits and hands their goods to the King’s army. Normally, this isn’t part of the patrol duties. Michael also never patrolled another kingdom's borders before. His marriage to Adam and the treaty the Kings signed made it possible to do so for him. The issues of the people aren’t his responsibility to solve but the longer he spends here the better it is. He will both ensure Adam has more time to himself to focus on his internal conflicts and improve the interactions between the two kingdoms by helping King John’s people too. It will also be good for his reputation as a Prince who takes care of his husband’s people and the added points in the eyes of the nobles will come in handy once he is King.

The night ends with most of the people retreated back into their houses and the fire burning low. Michael decides to return to their camp after talking to the elder once again. Some of his men have
women or men in their company so he leaves them be. They know that they have to be in the camp the next morning fully sober, he trusts they can manage that. They are his handpicked soldiers after all.

As he walks out of the village towards the visible white tents and fire, he feels someone reaching out to him behind a tree. Instinctively he catches the hand, pulls the owner to push him against the tree with his arm secured to his back and the other trapped between his chest and the tree bark. He puts his dagger on the man’s throat. Just as he is about to call for backup, the man speaks. “Is that how you greet me now?” Michael drops his stance and takes a step back in disbelief. The man turns around rubbing the wrist Michael caught and squeezed in his fist. In the dark of the night and seeing those shaggy clothes, Michael questions himself if what little alcohol he had earlier got to his head making him hear a ghost of the past and release a bandit disguised as a villager. Yet that voice is impossible to not recognize.

“I didn’t think you would come to me with your own feet, Michael. But I’m not about to look a gift horse in the mouth. You and I have things to talk.” Michael barely processes what he hears. This is Dean standing in front of him with his arms crossed over his chest and his head held high still like a Prince despite his state. And it crashes on Michael. Of all the villages in the area, he found the one where Dean ran away to and settled in with his commoner husband more than half a year ago. Dean turns towards the legion’s camp and in the blink of an eye Michael catches his arm again to stop him from walking into where most of his soldiers are still up and about. He can’t be seen with Dean. No one would recognize the ex-Prince but still… He can’t be seen taking a villager to his tent. He doesn’t do that. There will be rumours. They will reach back to Enochia before Michael.

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Dean raises a brow at him in the dark. Michael simply pulls him further into the forest. Eventually Dean gets the idea and brings them to a clearing illuminated by the moonlight a few minutes later, already knowing his way around. Michael takes a good look at the other man. The first thing that catches his attention is that Dean is thin, more so than Michael remembers. He is wearing a woolen tunic like thing over loose pants, boots and a leather belt. His hair is longer too. The only thing that assures Michael that this is indeed Dean is the vibrant light green of his eyes shining through the night with the dim white light around them.

“How could you do that you bastard!” Dean shouts swinging a fist at Michael as soon as they stop walking. It lands on his jaw. Michael stumbles back a step and braces himself but Dean doesn’t try anything else instead to watch Michael with his hands fist at his sides and his eyes full of hate. Michael can’t react. “How did you do it? How? I- I’ve known you forever! I spent half my life promised to you! You used to be a good man, Michael? How did you sink so low? Adam is- How could you!?” Dean falls silent after that. Michael swallows thickly. He understands what Dean thinks. He knows he has wronged the other man but his marriage wasn’t a move against his previous fiancé. It wasn’t even his own choice. “Dean it’s not what you think. You are-” He is interrupted before he can say more. “I’m what? Wrong? Michael you married my brother! You kept postponing our wedding for eight whole years then went and married my kid brother who was
supposed to carry our rings, who was fucking ten years old at the time! Adam is a freaking kid. How could you do that!? He wouldn’t even know what being married will- God you had the wedding night. Y- you- in Enochia- Did you share his bed? Did you touch my brother? ”

Dean looks like a madman shaking in anger and shouting at the top of his lungs at Michael with his eyes wide. Michael looks away. His own guilt about that is already too much to handle. “You did.” Dean’s voice is a hoarse whisper now. “-You really did. What were thinking? How could you?” He collapses to sit on a fallen tree. Michael slowly sits down on the grass in front of him not caring about the midnight dew wetting his clothes. They don’t talk for minutes until Michael breaches the silence. “I should apologize. I wasn’t fair to you, Dean. You were ready to dedicate your life to me and I pushed you away like it meant nothing. I hurt you and I am truly sorry for that. But Dean, my marriage wasn’t something I chose to do to hurt you or your family. When you broke off our engagement it could have caused a war. If we let the word spread, we would have to officially accuse your father for attacking our honor. The two Kings decided between them that their sons had to be wed like all the nobles and surrounding kingdoms were told. The only option was Adam. We were told only a month before the wedding. Both of us didn’t even see each other until Adam was already walking down the aisle. We didn’t even understand how everything happened so fast. Before we knew, we were alone in that room with a duty too big on both of us.”

Michael trails off after that not trusting himself to talk about the rest. Dean takes his head in his hands and sighs deeply. “I sent Adam a letter.” He confesses quietly. “-As soon as I heard about your marriage, I went to the capital with Cas. I fully planned to travel to Enochia to bring Adam home. Logically, I knew I wouldn’t be able to do anything. At most I could fight with you and cause conflict between the two kingdoms. I didn’t understand that at the time. I felt so bad, so guilty for running away and condemning my baby brother to that life. I was ready to do any reckless thing to somehow save him. I wouldn’t even- But Cas. My husband didn’t really know the whole story. He didn’t know much about Enochia. He didn’t understand. He only agreed to take me to the capital because I said I wanted to see my family and make up with them. He was sad for Adam too but he said I couldn’t do anything. He said he wouldn’t let me put myself in danger like that or disrupt the peace. Jessica, Sam’s wife, convinced me to send Adam a secret letter and wait for his answer. She told me Adam wasn’t really being hurt. She told me he could be happy there once he got used to everything. I didn’t believe her.”

Michael listens intently. He can’t believe what he hears but it’s all so much like Dean that he knows it’s all true. Dean wanted to wreck Michael’s marriage and possibly his own too to help his brother. Dean was willing to throw away the peace between the kingdoms for his brother. “This Cas must be a wise man if he managed to explain you why you couldn’t decide the fate of the peace on your own. And he supported you while doing that.” Dean nods. “Castiel is very wise. He also loves me a lot. He wants me to be happy. I proposed to him, you know? He thought I couldn’t bear to live in a village doing fieldwork and house chores just because I am a Prince. He couldn’t act on his feelings. I had a hard time adjusting, that’s true. But as long as I have Cas I can be happy in Hell. And-” Dean smiles a little while talking about his husband then his face straightens again. “-I’m sorry too, Michael. I loved you, you know that. It just didn’t work out. Guess we felt compelled to love each other and even did for a while. We were fated to fall apart. I just wish I could have done it differently. I don’t regret choosing Cas, I never will. I only regret the hurt I caused you and that I hurried. I could have waited, explained everything to you and to my family. We could have found a way to break the betrothal civilly. This wouldn’t have happened then.”
That, Michael agrees. Things could have gone differently. They can’t do anything now. They have to live with what’s in their hands. “Adam wrote back to me–” Dean’s shoulders drop. “–I didn’t believe a word of it.” Michael didn’t even know Adam received a letter from Dean. He only saw three envelopes whenever they got mail. Dean must have sent his in one of those. “What did he write?” He finds himself asking. What did Adam tell Dean? “His letter said it was beautiful in Enochia. It said you were always with him, helping him with everything and showing him new things. He said you went riding together. He said you always held him close and made sure he was warm and comfortable. He said he thought he could come to love you and that he was happy in his new home so I didn’t have to do anything. Was any part of it true?”

Michael watches Dean with wide eyes. Did Adam... lie? He wrote those things just so he could keep Dean from making another mistake. Suddenly Michael remembers the day Adam’s very first letters arrived. He was so happy to see those three envelopes. He clutched them as if Michael would take his letters away if he didn’t. His eyes lit up for the first time ever in their marriage. Then-

Did Adam do that because of the letter from Dean? Because he had to write a letter to his big brother and couldn’t even tell him of his troubles? Because he was reminded how he was trapped? Because he-

Michael bows his head. Adam isn’t happy. He never was. How could he be happy with a man a decade older to who he was given against his will? How could he be happy in a place where he was literally trapped? Adam is only nineteen. He can’t take any of what happened to him. He should be allowed to be sad. He should be allowed to cry and find comfort in his family. He shouldn’t be worrying for another scandal and trying to prevent a war. Adam doesn’t deserve any of this.

“Michael- ” Dean calls out to him sounding broken with the thoughts of his little brother who he can’t help. “–did you hurt him?” He looks at Michael and even in the dim light, Michael sees the tears over his cheeks. “I tried my best not to. I did but I am not sure I succeeded. I- Adam doesn’t really talk to me much. He does anything that’s expected of an Enochian Prince. He is learning. But we aren’t really close. I wouldn’t even call myself his friend. It’s why I started on this patrol early. You know the usual time. I wanted to give him space and time to adjust better. Adam is a good person, Dean. He is pretty strong too. I really want to make him happy. We can never separate without messing things up, I am only just accepting that myself. Things changed so fast. It was all scary for both of us and we don’t even know each other yet. I don’t know what to do, Dean. I don’t know.” He confesses it all.

Michael never noticed how much he needed someone to talk to. He knows it’s not right to tell these to Dean of all but he’s finally getting things off his chest. He decides to leave out the parts about Adam’s illness though. It wouldn’t be fair to tell Dean about that. He shouldn’t hear it. Not now. Not from Michael. “Try harder. Adam is- Michael he is probably scared out of his mind. He is so young yet he already lost control of his own life. He is alone. Adam was never alone before. He
was the baby of the family. He was the joy. He- He needs someone. He needs hope. When I went to the capital, dad was crushed under his grief. He got grays in his hair, Michael. In just a few weeks that I didn't see him, he aged half a decade. Sam and Jessica looked like ghosts wandering the halls. As soon as I saw them, I knew Adam wasn’t happy. They didn’t even receive me well. Dad didn’t look at my face once. Sam actually started a fight, threw himself over me. Jessica pitied me but she too was cold as if I was a stranger. I knew she only helped me with Adam’s letter because she wanted to protect her family and nothing more. They blamed me, I blamed myself, I blamed you. And you know what? *We are both to blame.* Adam is paying for our mistakes. So we will fix it. You will make him happy, Michael. I know I can’t get him out of Enochia or his marriage now. I will find other ways to help. I will write to him. You will help to hide that from everyone. He is my brother, Michael. If he gets hurt because of me I won’t be able to live with myself.”

Once again they fall silent. Michael raises his head to see how the stars shine and how the moon has moved a little. “How are you out at this hour, Dean? Won’t your husband wonder where you are? There are bandits around this region.” Dean tilts his head to look up too. “Cas is in the neighbouring village. He has a sister there. He went to help out on her field because she has a baby she needs to look after. It’s not really far, two hours or so on foot. He will be back tomorrow or the day after. But you are right. You should be back to the camp anyway. You can’t stay until sunrise or the soldiers will think you are *entertaining* someone. Wouldn’t be good if gossip started not even half a year in your marriage.” Michael nods absentmindedly. A few minutes later, they both get up and make their way to where Dean found Michael. “We are moving tomorrow. Probably in the noon. I got some leads on the bandits. I will return to Enochia from another road.” Dean stops and looks as if he is debating something before he carefully reaches into one of his pockets. “I wrote this to Adam a few days ago. I couldn’t find a way to send it. I got it from the house when I saw you and your men in the village.” He hands the folded piece of paper to Michael. “I will write my own letters. A messenger will leave for Enochia soon.” Dean gives him a small smile in thanks. “It was good to see you, Michael. And- I mean no hard feelings on my side.” Despite everything, Michael finds himself smiling back. “You too, Dean. And no hard feelings. I wish you happiness with Castiel.” With that, their paths separate.

Michael feels a bit better, just a bit lighter.

The return to Enochia is no easier than Michael thought it would be. Despite the extra time away Michael doesn’t feel any more confident than before he left. The horse is hard on him too. Just a few days ago, he caught the chief of the bandits. He had more men than Michael estimated. The battle was also on their ground. The arrow that landed in his side was a surprise. Michael still kept on fighting. The wound isn’t that bad, really. Nothing he didn’t have before. Nothing he can’t handle. He just hopes Adam is doing better.

In the palace, he finds his whole family waiting for him in a line with the King at the beginning followed by Adam, his brothers and Kelly. He returned home with victory. He is a hero again. His father makes sure to say all of those out loud for everyone and hug Michael tightly. Everyone
claps. He moves on to Adam.

His husband is up and on his feet so this is definitely an improvement. He doesn’t look any happier though. Michael notices the young man avoids from meeting his eyes and stands stiffly as he is greeted and kissed on the forehead as a show for the family and the servants who watch the two of them carefully. Michael knows the King is watching their every movement too so he tries to make it look as natural as possible. He feels lightheaded and tired from the long journey. This is the last part before he can go get some rest and give Dean’s letter to Adam. He only needs to act natural and loving like the husband coming back to his waiting spouse after weeks. He-

Suddenly Adam pulls himself back. Michael stumbles on his feet trying to take a step forward to stabilize himself.

He falls down but never hits the hard floor.

People shout.

Michael sleeps.

Chapter End Notes

* This chapter was hard to write but I promise the next one will be better :’D
* As a Turk my inspiration for Enochia was the Ottoman Empire in some aspects.
* Also please excuse my English. As a non-native I don’t always know how to write or describe things. I have to do a lot of research for the smallest things like the ’smelling salts’ that was mentioned as a treatment while Adam was ill.
* Thanks to everyone who read this far and supported me with their lovely comments and kudos. This is the first time I try to write a long fic and in chapters. I may not always do great but I try.
* I plan this story to be about 15 chapters. As soon as my university work is done, I will have more time to write. I hope I can make this good for you all!
Adam watches from the doorway as Bartholomew helps Michael sit down on the bed and Samandriel fixes the pillows behind his back to not bother his wounded side. The Crowned Prince scared his family quite a lot when he collapsed over Adam not even ten minutes after he came back from his patrol. To be honest, Adam felt fear only for an instant when he realized he too had ended up on the floor with his husband unconscious over his lap and with his hand that caught Michael’s side covered in blood. The rest after that minute is mostly a daze. The King’s guards carried Michael to the Court Physician as Raphael supervised from his father’s side to make sure they were careful with his brother’s injury. Kelly immediately took the baby out with Lucifer’s command and the said Prince rushed to Adam’s side to also take him after Michael and everyone else to make sure he too wasn’t hurt.

It wasn’t as bad as they initially thought though. Michael woke up in a few minutes and it was quickly understood that the six days old arrow wound at his side wasn’t stitched properly. Michael also tired himself out too much with the horse and the chainmail he wore. Being injured, tired and hungry from the way could have done much worse. Also if Adam didn’t catch him in time, the concrete flooring could have disturbed the broken stitches badly. But since that wasn’t the case, there was nothing to worry about. Joshua was going to treat the wound again and Michael would be careful moving around for a week or so. The Crowned Prince had worse before.

The King took a relieved breath at the news and left with his three sons to give the physicians space to work. Adam was temporarily forgotten on the cot he had been sat by everyone other than Lucifer who gave him an assuring smile before walking out. As the Court Physician started on his work immediately, one of the apprentices who helped Adam with walking again after his previous illness came to quickly check him up. As expected, he found nothing but he still gave Adam a draught to ‘calm his nerves’ and told him to sit there and rest for a little while since they knew by then that Adam didn’t deal well with stress. The draught apparently had a strong side effect of dizziness so Adam had to stay during the whole process of Michael’s own treatment. He would be lying if he said he wasn’t impressed how Michael simply lay back and stayed silent as the needle went into his skin again and again as if he was merely getting a haircut or something. Just how used to was he to pain?

In an hour, his husband was ‘as good as new’ as the old Physician who had cleaned the cuts on a pint-sized Michael’s knees and arms joked. They were released to go to their chambers after that with their manservants who had arrived to help them just after one of the apprentices went to inform the King.

Michael doesn’t complain when Bartholomew hands him a small glass vial but makes a disgusted face after he swallows the yellowish liquid. Probably something to help with the pain and to make him sleep. Adam can smell the daisies and the valerian root so that confirms his theory. He knows
about herbs and medicines. He used to take classes from their own Physician back at his home.

After the manservants leave to the outer chamber pulling the door closed after themselves, Adam goes to the loveseat and picks up the book he left there the night before. Michael watches him with a look of… confusion? Adam doesn’t know what his darling husband expected him to do or say this time but he doesn’t care. He can’t leave immediately or else he will have to face the two young men outside and explain why he is leaving his spouse alone when he himself had been looked after with love by the same man. So he stays in the bedroom like a good husband and keeps Michael company. He will leave once the Crowned Prince sleeps and that shouldn't be much away after the draught. “Adam—” And of course, Michael can’t just be a nice patient who closes his eyes and rests like he was asked to. “—I’m sorry if I scared you. I didn’t mean to do that. You stayed and had to see Joshua fixing the stitches too. Forgive me for that.” Adam barely resists the urge to roll his eyes that. What did Michael think? That Adam was worried for him? That Adam couldn’t take to see a little blood? That he actually cared?

“My father is an excellent hunter. He used to take Dean, Sam and me to hunting in the woods. I would always be the one to skin the deers and rabbits as even Dean was scared to do so. I also learned from the physicians and saw many patients while practising with them in our own palace. It was nothing. A few broken stitches, not even vital.” He talks without raising his head. A quiet sigh from Michael reaches his ears. “I see. Dean’s letter is in that chest on that table. It’s in an envelope with your name.”

Dean’s letter? What is Michael even talking about? He raises his eyes to meet with his husband’s. The older Prince is pointing to the table in the corner. Adam follows the pointed finger to look at the middle sized wooden chest. “Dean? What are you talking about?” Michael tilts his head again looking confused. “The letter Dean sent you. I wrote that I couldn’t send it with the messenger in case something happened and I wanted to bring it myself. Did you not get my letter?” He asks tentatively. Adam remembers the envelope he burnt and regrets the action. He should have at least opened it and skimmed over the pages. Dean’s letter could have been in there. When did Michael even meet Dean? How did he agree to bring Adam a letter from his brother? Did they talk? Did- Wasn’t Michael angry at Dean?

Adam scoffs. “I received it. I just didn’t have occasion to read it.” Michael’s face falls but it lasts no longer than a second. “I understand. Well, your letter is in there. I suppose you would like it.” Adam nods slowly and goes to the table. Just as he is about to open the chest, he remembers that Michael brought this from the patrol. It is probably filled with his personal belongings. Suddenly, Adam doesn’t want to touch the thing. He doesn’t want to see what’s inside. “Your letter is in a folder with maps.” He throws open the lid. Better to get it over.

He finds pens, bottles of ink, a few books and whatever else is found in a study. Under it all, he sees a large leather folder. He slowly gets the books out on the table and pulls the folder out. His letter is on the top. He places everything back in the chest and returns to the loveseat under Michael’s gaze. The silence is more awkward than peaceful as the older Prince lays back down and he picks up his book once more.
Adam doesn’t know how to feel with the envelope in his hand. The study is illuminated by two candles set on either side of Adam’s desk. The dim light has always had a calming effect on him but tonight he feels as if he is trapped in the last light corner with darkness all around trying to get close and suffocate him.

Last Adam knows, Dean wasn’t happy. He was about to throw away his everything to save his little brother. He was rejected by their family. He was mostly alone and unable to comprehend what his actions could lead to. His short letter mentioned Michael only once. The vague sentence didn’t give away much but it was certain that Dean wouldn’t be able to tolerate Michael’s presence anywhere near himself let alone- So how? How did those two meet? How did they look at each other’s face? What did they talk about? How did Dean manage to convince Michael to carry this letter? Surely no one knows. Dean and Michael were supposed to be married. Then Michael married someone else. Now to be seen with his old fiancé- Surely the soldiers and the people wouldn’t take that well. Yet the fact only arises more questions. How did they keep their meeting a secret? How did they plan it? Where did they see each other?

Adam sighs loudly and takes his head in his hands letting the envelope drop over the table. What did Dean even write to him this time? He still remembers what happened the day the first letter of his arrived. What if Adam’s lies didn’t work? What if Dean is still decided to try and pull something? What if he is putting himself in danger right now? What if he- What if he told Michael what Adam wrote to him? What if he learned that it was all a lie that way?

God, was that why Michael was looking at him like that earlier? Like Adam was confusing him. Like Adam’s every move was disappointing him. Like he wanted to say something to Adam but couldn’t bring himself to do so. Was that why- Did he- Did Michael think Adam was lying to all of his family the same way? Did he think those cheap sentences were what Adam was hoping for? Did he believe Adam was expecting things like that from him? He doesn’t know what Dean wanted to do. He doesn’t know why Adam had to write that letter. He doesn’t know how Adam felt disgusted with even the thought of having a relationship like that between the two of them. He doesn’t know anything. Yet if he saw that letter-

Adam shakes his head. Now it makes sense. It is all Dean’s fault. He wants to tear this one envelope to shreds too. He wishes he could. He wishes he could stay angry at his brother. Adam lied. He wanted to make Dean believe it all. How was he supposed to know that Michael and Dean’s path would cross? How was he supposed to know that the two of them would even go as far as to sit and talk to each other? It was only natural that Dean would ask about his brother. It was only natural that Michael, the idiot he is, would blurt everything out. Adam knows he didn’t value Dean. He spent all his time away and probably didn’t even know Dean as an adult. He doesn’t know what Dean is capable of. He doesn’t know. That’s why he wouldn’t even have the slightest idea about why Adam wrote that stupid letter except that it is what Adam wants and it is what he tells his family that he is trying to get. That’s why Michael is trying to-
Adam tears the envelope open and nearly does the same to the paper inside in his anger.

Adam,

After getting your answer to my first letter and returning home, I felt I needed to write to you again. I don’t yet know how I will send this letter to you. There isn’t a regular mail in the villages and even if there was, I can’t just send a letter to the Enochian palace openly anymore. I don’t know when this will reach you but I’ll still write.

I believe Jessica explained whatever happened once I got to the palace. Even if she didn’t, you would guess I wasn’t welcomed at all. Crowned Prince Dean Campbell Winchester is dead to father and Sam. Jessica too thinks like that. She only helped me so this stranger wearing the face of their late brother wouldn’t disrupt your life too. She told me all these lies about how Michael was gentle and kind to you. She told me how you two would be happy someday with both of you being great people and having this instant connection she witnessed. She talked and talked only forgetting one vital fact. I’m the one who knows Michael the best. I knew she was lying the moment she tried to describe Michael as this perfect Prince with a beautiful smile that never leaves his lips and a soft look to his eyes when looking at you, a total stranger. That’s why I wrote that letter to you. I was determined to do something, anything.

Once I read your letter, I immediately knew you too were lying. Obviously Jessica had written you what happened. I didn’t believe a word of it. Just as I was packing one night to secretly leave and find my way to Enochia, my husband came to me. He patiently explained how he only took me to the capital because he wanted me to make up with my family and how he understood the situation but my actions could be damaging. He told me I couldn’t decide the fate of the two kingdoms on my own. I couldn’t make decisions for you too because I had already made my choice when I married him. He told me we would find a way to communicate with you and if you wanted help, we would discuss it with my family to find a way to give you what you needed.

Castiel is wise. He made me see just how unreasonable I was being and how you had to lie to settle my temper. You were younger yet all the load of trying to preserve what we had was on you while I acted selfishly and juvenile. This is why I gave up on whatever I thought I would do but Adam, I’m not giving up on you. I’m your brother, I will always be here for you. I am sorry my actions led to that life for you. I owe you all the help I can give you. Someday, I hope I will be on civil terms with father at least. Then I will be more potent. And you, please take care and try your best to stay well. Michael might not be the best but he isn’t a bad man at all. He is only a little awkward and oblivious most of the time. He is no abuser, no cheater. Worst he will do is to stay away from you other than for keeping the pretense of a happy marriage. He won’t harm you knowingly. Try to adjust to Enochia as well as you can. The whole family is good. Don’t be afraid, Adam. You can do anything with that strong mind and good heart of yours. You will be lonely at first and it will be hard. But you have to try your best baby brother. Stay away from Lucifer and make sure to at least maintain a respectful relationship with Michael where you two can talk things out. I am sorry for
not being able to do more for you. Look after yourself for father, Adam. I love you.

Dean.

The letter doesn’t mention Dean’s meeting with Michael so it was likely written beforehand. Adam is actually glad that Dean gave up on messing with things more. He feels the sincerity in his brother’s words and knows that a part of Dean will always be with him. He wants to be mad. He does but this situation isn’t really anyone’s fault. Other than Michael of course but Adam can’t bring himself to blame him too much when he knows Dean found someone who deserves his love because of those actions. And there is nothing anyone can do for him. He should forget how his marriage was decided and started. He should focus on the future now that he can’t go back to the past. Dean will probably write more and guide him through this. He knows Enochia. He knows Michael. At least at that, Adam isn’t completely alone anymore.

Only the warning about Lucifer caught his eye. So Michael managed to convert Dean too to hate his brother. What do they even want from the man? He stays out of what doesn’t concern him and lives his days peacefully performing all his duties and trying to raise a son. So what if he doesn’t love the man who hurt his mother and caused her death? What if he can’t feel he truly belongs? It isn’t fair. Adam won’t treat him like a monster as everyone else seems to love to do.

With a yawn Adam folds the letter back and decides to think on these matters later. He too started to know the people here. He is starting to get the basic idea of how to act. He is starting to accept that this whole marriage is permanent. For real and not to try to convince himself like before. He won’t resent Dean. He will take whatever he can get and pray for their family to accept his brother back. Maybe that way their father won’t feel his loss as much.

Two weeks pass after Michael’s return to the palace. The Crowned Prince slowly nurses himself back to health. The first few days he has some difficulty moving around. Bartholomew helps him get in and out of bed, bathe and dress. Things Michael normally does himself and even hates when he has to ask for help. Day by day he gains his mobility back. The bandages on his side stay for eight days getting changed everyday. After a week or so, he is completely back to normal except the gasps and winces whenever he has to reach out or bend down for something. Adam helps him only once. He wakes up one night to a muffled yelp to see Michael half sitting up and covering his mouth with the back of one hand. At first he thinks the older Prince hurt himself turning around or broke his stitches again. Then he notices the glass of water on the bedside table and sits up to give the one on his own side to Michael without saying anything. As soon as he passes the glass to his husband he lies back down and turns away from him. Michael can’t even dare to thank him knowing that Adam hates being woken up but the few quiet sips and relaxed sigh afterwards are enough.
In the morning, Adam sees the two glasses on Michael’s bedside table and the peaceful sleeping face of his husband. He throws himself out of the bedroom angry at his mind that doesn’t work as it should in the early morning failing to remind him of his hate for that man and his eyes for lingering too much on the long stitches that force Michael to stay shirtless through the night. He probably woke his husband up with the door banging after him but can’t bring himself to give the slightest care. He has always been like that. He used to save rats from the traps in their own palace and set them free in the garden just because they were injured. He used to wave at the soldiers who scared him normally if he saw bandages or casts on them. And for a moment there, just because Michael is wounded-

_Around a month after Michael came back to Enochia, Adam finds everyone in the palace excited for something. He quickly learns that the winter solstice is a special event all on its own in Enochia. It doesn’t snow in this kingdom that rests far souther on the continent than his own but the people apparently found another ridiculous religious thing to associate with that day and made a huge deal of it. The Priest explains to Adam that the royal family holds a ceremony with a sermon from the King himself, some prayers and discussions just between themselves without any servants or guards every year._

This time, they will pray for Adam’s wellbeing and the lasting of his and Michael’s marriage. As the youngest of the family, other than Prince Jack who is too young yet to do it, Adam has to say a special prayer with the King and give holy water in a special silver goblet to the man who is filling for his father in Enochia and of course his husband too because why not? Why keep Michael out of just one thing Adam is expected to do around here when they can push the two of them close and watch with mirth how Adam deals with that torture?

Adam tunes out most of the thing. The ancient Enochian prayer he will have to memorize is only two small sentences wishing the King a long life and wishing his heirs whom Michael will represent with the holy water drinking nonsense happy days in their lives before asking God to bless all of the family. It’s written in one of his books and it should be simple enough to learn later so Adam gives himself the right to not listen anymore. If the old man notices, he doesn’t comment.

Adam smiles at Lucifer as he runs one of his hands over the cold silver and the jewels covering the lower half of the goblet in his hand. “I’m sorry, Adam. I didn’t know Michael already gave you a pair. These were mine from when I performed that part of the annual solstice prayers because Gabriel and Raphael were little and I was the youngest after them. My mother got them for me and I wanted to give them to Jack before you came. I should have known Michael would get you your own goblets. Sorry again.” The older Prince bites his lip actually looking flustered and Adam can’t help the chuckle that escapes from his lips. For someone so hated, Lucifer can be really sweet sometimes. Cute even. “Not at all. In fact, I would like to use these instead. Your mother’s taste is
awesome really. Michael just bought plain silver cups. I will keep them for Jack, okay?” He asks and a relaxed smile spreads over Lucifer’s face.

In the chambers, Adam throws Michael’s cups in a drawer before putting the beautiful goblets in the cushioned box for the ceremony tomorrow. Already, he feels better about the whole thing. He even thinks he will be able to smile through his own part just looking at Lucifer’s gift. These two goblets must be priceless to him. They carry memories of his mother. Adam doesn’t think he would have been able to give something so valuable away himself just to make a friend happy so the gesture is even more meaningful. He never had a friend valuing him that much before.

The solstice ceremony is just like Adam imagined. Everyone wears white. The King sits on a large cushion over a small platform. They all sit on smaller cushions in a half circle in front of the man. Adam doesn’t listen much of the one and a half hours long sermon instead to watch the decorations and the other occupants of the room around him. Gabriel looks just as bored. Raphael is still paying attention to his father. Michael, the loyal son, is of course enthusiastic about this one insignificant duty of his as any other so he sets the perfect example listening to the King with a peaceful look all over. Lucifer pretends just like Adam. He too watches Michael and shakes his head discreetly when he and Adam make eye contact. Jack falls asleep in his mother’s lap so Kelly quite obviously focuses more on her baby than the prayer but no one says a thing.

Soon, it’s time for Adam to speak. He stands up to bow before the King and gives his right hand to the man. He waits until the King finishes his own prayer for Adam and Michael then the rest of the family repeats the same words afterwards. In a few minutes, he has two heavy goblets in his hands as he carefully speaks the words he learned from that old book the day before. He goes to the King first, then to Michael who also stands up after Adam’s part. Michael furrows his brow once Adam hands him the goblet no doubt recognizing the thing but doesn’t dare to outright frown in the King’s presence. The father and son take a sip each at the same time and the whole room is silent until they finish drinking. Adam smiles wider all through the way back to his cushion and for the rest of the ceremony.

He doesn’t understand what wakes him at first.

Then he hears it again. Michael is breathing heavily and letting out breathless gasps. Adam sits up immediately and tries to shake the older Prince awake. It doesn’t work. He grabs a candle to see what’s wrong with his husband. Michael is struggling to breathe properly. His skin is covered in sweat with his hair sticking to his forehead. Adam sees a thin trail of red moving down his jaw from the corner of his lips.
Blood.

Why is there blood? What is happening? Is it about his previous injury? How could an external wound cause this? Did it get infected? Why is there blood in his mouth? Did Michael swallow something to hurt his throat? Is it because of some fever disease? Why didn’t he show any symptoms? How can something like this happen out of the blue? Why-

Adam has to do something.

He doesn’t have time to find help.

He hastily throws the covers away and pulls Michael to his lap. A quick check over his neck with three fingers tells Adam that there isn’t a large object stuck there. He forces Michael’s jaw open. There’s blood. Too much blood. He turns the unconscious man away from himself and does a few back blows while keeping Michael propped up with an arm around his chest. Then he wraps both arms around Michael’s abdomen and pulls upwards as strongly as he can. He goes back to the blows and massages the older man’s throat in circular motions with one hand as the other keeps his mouth open. He repeats everything again and again.

Finally, Michael coughs up the blood and his breaths get a bit better. Adam leaves him propped up with pillows piled behind his back and runs outside shouting for the guards.

There’s no one in front of the door.

It’s then that he notices the commotion. Guards and servants are running around shouting. He catches a few words about the King and poison.

He doesn’t understand anything.

He is shaking. His own heartbeat is too loud in his ears. Something is happening. Michael and the King- Did someone try to assassinate the King? How did they reach Michael without waking Adam too? What do all these people say? Poison? Why only the King and- How? What is happening?

Adam sinks to the floor. Someone appears in front of him. Raphael and Gabriel. They are talking. Their lips are moving. Adam doesn’t hear anything. Then he understands.
He is having a panic attack. He is hyperventilating while trying to talk.

Raphael disappears to their chambers with guards.

Adam must have managed to blurt out Michael’s name.

Gabriel tries to help him calm down still talking and rubbing his back. He looks no better himself. Adam can’t think at all.

Michael was choking on his own blood just a few minutes ago. Maybe his lungs- Or his throat- How? Poison. People are shouting about the poison. The King was poisoned. Michael too. Michael is dying. Why? Michael- Adam slept for how long while his state progressed to that? How? Michael-

Someone hauls him up on his feet. Gabriel runs towards the King’s chambers. Adam is led outside away from the chaos.

The fresh night air fills his lungs and his senses come back to him.

“Well, I didn’t think you would want to save him if you saw that let alone know what to do and who to alert. You were supposed to wake up next to a corpse tomorrow. We were supposed to hold a double funeral the day after. You ruined it all.”

He knows that voice.

Lucifer.

“Now I have to resort to something else, Adam.” He realizes that he is being restrained by the older man. “Lucifer what- Let go! What are you doing? Michael-” A slap lands on his cheek as he tries to get away. “Michael can’t come to save you. Thanks to you he won’t die. That old goat Joshua will recognize the poison. It’s all your fault.” Adam yells with the sudden pain.
What is happening? What is Lucifer doing? What is he even talking about? Why is he doing this? Lucifer is his friend. What is going on? “Now I’ll have to take drastic measures. Looks like you will be my guest for a while,” He starts dragging Adam away. “What are you doing, Lucifer? Let go! You are scaring me! What is-” A rag of cloth is pushed against his lips and nose. “You will see soon enough, Adam. Don’t worry you won’t be hurt. Just breathe for me.”

Adam knows this smell. He shouldn’t breathe it in. Yet he can’t hold his breath forever.

“It’s alright, Adam. Breathe for me.”

It’s the last thing he hears before everything goes black.

Chapter End Notes

I knew this was gonna happen from the start. Why does it hurt still? (D’;)
I wanted to love Lucifer despite everything...
Michael wakes up in the Physician’s Chambers. For a few seconds only, he doesn’t remember how he got there. Then it all comes back to him. He had just entered the palace. He was greeting his father. The King had made a speech about his bravery and his latest victories. Then he had moved on to Adam. Adam.

Michael remembers how the younger man kept his eyes down and looked cheerless. He was standing on his own so that was good but- God, he had fallen on his husband. With all his weight and the chainmail over his chest added to it too. Did he hurt Adam? Is he okay? Where is- He sees Adam sitting on another cot on the opposite side of the room watching the physicians check his body to report to the awaiting King. Right. The King is still in the room too. “Just broken stitches sir. Nothing dangerous or hard to treat. My Prince must have weared himself out too much carrying armor and riding all the way on a horse. The wound itself is days old and not that deep. Looks like an arrow but nothing vital was hit thankfully. As I said, it’s just the stitches. They must have broken when my Prince fell earlier. And dizziness is a common side effect of exhaustion even without a wound. I will fix the stitches and with some rest in the next two weeks or so he should be more than fine.”

Joshua notices that Michael opened his eyes halfway through his speech and smiles down at Michael. His father nods with relief and gets out of the chambers with his brothers following him to not disturb the old man and his team as they work. Only Adam remains. Michael sees a steaming cup in his hand. All through the process of having his old stitches removed and new ones placed in, Adam watches. Michael feels bad. It is his fault for undermining his injury and coming all the way almost with no breaks. Because of him Adam is once again in the presence of the physicians who he must be sick of by now. And it’s likely that it wasn’t so long ago that he was deemed recovered. Now he is drinking a draught again. Just because Michael was careless enough to scare his family like that other than stumbling over the young man and bringing him down with himself too of course. “How fortunate it is that Prince Adam caught you before you could hit the floor my Prince. With the weight of the chainmail and the concrete floor, your wound could have gotten worse. It is very lucky that wasn’t the case.” Joshua smiles at Adam over his shoulder too. The young man’s face hardens.

Very lucky indeed.

“Adam I’m sorry if I scared you. I didn’t mean to do that. You stayed and had to see Joshua fixing the stitches too. Forgive me for that.” As always, Michael is the one trying to start a conversation. Adam stays silent and looks way too interested in a book that surely is only good enough to be left
open on the loveseat. He doesn’t want to talk to Michael. “My father is an excellent hunter. He
used to take Dean, Sam and me to hunting in the woods. I would always be the one to skin the
deers and rabbits as even Dean was scared to do so. I also learned from the physicians and saw
many patients while practising with them in our own palace. It was nothing. A few broken stitches,
not even vital.”

Not even vital. Michael wishes he could say for sure that Adam didn’t say that to hurt him. “I see.
Dean’s letter is in that chest on that table. It’s in an envelope with your name.” He understands that
Adam doesn’t like him still. He understands but is he hated enough to not be asked about a letter
from a brother Adam must be missing terribly? Michael thought Adam would want to have that the
moment they were alone yet he is the one having to mention Dean first. Why? “Dean? What are
you talking about?” What is Adam talking about? “The letter Dean sent you. I wrote that I couldn’t
send it with the messenger in case something happened and I wanted to bring it myself. Did you
not get my letter?” Did something really happen to the messenger? But his father knew about his
first two victories too. If the man didn’t make it to the palace for some reason then how did the
King-

“I received it. I just didn’t have occasion to read it.” Of course. Adam didn’t read the letter. Why
would he when he received it privately as it was a personal letter from his husband and had no
obligation to do anything in the safety of their chambers where he doesn’t have to pretend he
doesn’t despise his marriage or his husband like in the presence of the King and the rest of the
royal family? He probably burnt the envelope itself. Michael would have if he were Adam.

Michael recovers gradually. Bartholomew has to help him with the most mundane things for a few
days even bathing and shaving as he had to be careful with the bandages around water and raising
his arm made his side tremble with small bolts of pain. Luckily, this isn’t as worse as some of the
other wounds he had before and he is in the palace instead of a tent in who knows which border
village. He gets better quickly enough.

Adam stays to himself just like before the patrol. Michael remembers his talk with Dean. He tries
to find an opening to talk with the younger Prince but is almost always shrugged off too easily
everytime. Even though he is injured and in pain daily, Adam doesn’t seem softer or even pitying.
Michael knows he isn’t someone who would enjoy another’s suffering but it gets hard sometimes
to remember that when he doubles in pain while reaching for an object close by just to see his
young husband either watching him with cold eyes or turning his head away sharply with a frown.

His work will be harder than he imagined. Make him happy, Dean said. How can he do that when
Adam builds all these walls around himself and refuses to let Michael anywhere near close? How
should he go about it? He doesn’t want Adam to be unhappy here where it’s supposed to be his
own home. He really doesn’t. He knows he has made mistakes before and hurt Adam badly
without even realizing it but how can he make up for all of that if he can’t even talk to the other
man and properly apologize first? Like this, Adam will only keep pushing him away until their marriage crumbles or one of them dies. He doesn’t know what to do. Adam doesn’t care about him rightfully and at all. He can’t do anything about it.

Just, one night he wakes up with a dry throat and quietly props himself up to reach for the glass of water on the bedside table. The movement hurts his side naturally. He tries not to make a noise. Adam is sleeping. He wakes the younger Prince anyway. Adam doesn’t glare at him in the dark like he does normally. He simply hands Michael his own water and goes back to sleep. In the morning, his usual bad mood around Michael returns, the banging door tells him this much. Maybe he should have at least said thank you in the night. He should really find a way to talk to Adam and soon. This can’t go on for much longer.

The winter solstice is two days away. The Priest reports that Adam has been taught his own role in the prayers of the royal family. This year, the King wants to dedicate the whole event to his son’s marriage and his son-in-law like he did for Lucifer and Kelly almost three years ago. He instructs Michael to make sure his husband knows what this religious ceremony about and is prepared fully for it.

Michael decides to unpack and polish the pair of goblets he bought the day before just for Adam’s first solstice prayer. They are simple. But there was a reason why Michael chose that specific pair. On one side of each goblet, close to the upper half, there is a small angel carved about an inch tall. When he saw those, Michael remembered the journey to Enochia after their wedding. Adam had an angel just like these back then, probably a toy left from one of his siblings or made for him by one of his parents. Adam’s theology books strewn around the chambers are mostly on Heaven too. Angels must hold a special meaning for him. So he hopes Adam will like these.

The evening of the solstice finds Michael getting dressed with Bartholomew’s help as Adam waits at the outer chamber having been ready for the last half hour. Both of them wear matching white ceremonial robes. They walk side by side in silence like in all almost all their moments together. Adam carries the box of the goblets with both hands although it’s not large or heavy at all. Michael only puts a hand on one of his shoulders when they meet the King. They sit side by side during the sermon.

Adam’s part comes. He says the prayer correctly if a little awkwardly still not used to the foreign language. Then he gives the King one of the goblets and the other to Michael.

Lucifer’s goblets.
Adam actually smiles.

Why does Michael feel like this? Despite his best efforts, Lucifer found a way to get close to Adam. His young husband even considers his brother a friend. So Lucifer gave these to him. And Adam didn’t like the ones with the angels. He is smiling. He looks almost... *happy*. That’s good. It was what Michael was trying to achieve too anyway. He tries to smile at his husband. The expression falls off not even a second later. He must be too tired. The holy water tastes a little bitter on his tongue. *Must be his imagination.*

Michael feels tired, drained. The ceremony didn’t last any longer than every year. His side is healed too. He didn’t even do any hard work today. Yet he can’t keep his eyes open. And it’s too hot. He washes his face and hair with cold water not paying any mind to Samandriel’s worried chastising. Still he doesn’t feel any better. He almost falls asleep in the tub.

After the dinner with everyone, Michael decides to go to bed immediately. He forgoes the shirt and kicks the heavy duvet away from himself. It is only nine, three hours before his normal bedtime. Adam looks at him weirdly but doesn’t say anything as he sits at the vanity table wearing a light blue satin robe with embroidered birds and does his own thing. Michael watches with half lidded eyes as the young man mixes a cream to protect his sensitive skin from the cold and damp air.

He is dozing, not yet asleep fully when he hears Adam shrugging off his robe and getting under the sheets next to him. The younger Prince falls asleep almost immediately. His soft breaths lull Michael to sleep too.

He can’t breathe.

He is too hot and his throat is clenching painfully. His chest tightens as if a huge boulder fell on him. He tries to move, to sit up. He can’t even move his jaw to take deep breaths.

Adam wakes up. Michael feels his husband’s hands on him as the young man tries to shake him awake. He must think Michael is still sleeping. In a minute or so, the duvet is kicked away from the bed. Adam pulls Michael to himself. Harsh blows land on his upper back between his shoulders. Then Adam’s arms wrap around him just below his ribcage. For someone so thin, Adam
sure has a strong hold. Michael knows he isn’t exactly light. He would be surprised at even the fact that Adam managed to move him when his muscles are rigid and his jaw is stuck shut like this, when he is no better than deadweight. He feels one of Adam’s hands forcing his mouth open and three fingers slipping in to keep it that way as the other hand first forces his head down then rubs at his throat. Michael doesn’t know what good all these will do. He still can’t breathe properly after minutes. “Come on, Michael. Cough it out.” Cough what out? Is he really choking? He feels panic rising in him. Adam goes back to the back blows then repeats everything afterwards after five or so hard hits over his spine. Michael still can’t move. He still can’t breathe. Adam’s movements become sloppy and erratic. He must be panicking too. Michael wishes he could speak a few words to calm him down. Adam shouldn’t be getting upset. The last time- Michael will be fine anyway. He didn’t swallow anything to choke him. He didn’t. He didn’t leave any of his wounds untreated. He doesn’t know why this is happening but it will pass. Adam starts breathing heavily too. His hands must be hurting by now. He is considerably slower. He must be getting tired. Still he pushes on.

At an instant, a series of harsh coughs shake his whole body. Michael feels air rushing in his lungs. It’s still too hot, still impossible to move. But at least his breaths return to him. “Thank God.” Adam’s voice is far from steady, he sounds almost as if he is on the verge of tears. “-Guards! Help! Someone, we need help! Call physicians!” Adam leaps off the bed probably stumbling over the dropped duvet on the floor in his haste to run outside. No one comes back for minutes. Where are the guards? What is all that noise echoing in the halls? What is happening in the dead of the night? He doesn’t understand anything. He only knows there’s something big going on.

“Michael!” Large hands immediately start roaming his throat and jawline checking for something. Raphael. “He is alive! Adam managed to clear his airways somehow. Most of the poison should be out of his system by now with that blood. Get me one of the physicians right now!” Michael hears several sets of heavy footsteps. Probably the armored guards. Raphael stays by his side inspecting his eyes and the inside of his mouth. “Hang in there, Michael. We need you. We will need you more than ever in the close future.”

More than ever in the close future. Michael feels fear creeping in his heart. What does Raphael mean? There must be something big going on indeed.

When Michael finally gets back to himself, it is early evening. The dull orange rays and the long shadows in the bedroom tell him this much. The first thing he sees is Raphael leaning over him with a piece of damp cotton he uses to lightly pat at his lips to wet them. “Michael, can you hear me?” He blinks at his younger brother a few times before nodding once. The slight movement makes his vision blur a little and he feels a wave of dizziness hitting him. Raphael seems surprised for a second before he sighs in relief and draws away from Michael to walk to the other side of the bed where vials of every color and size are strewn along with cloths, a basin of water, brushes, salves in bowls and numerous other things from a physician’s table. He calmly takes two vials, mixes them in a cup along with water and brings it to Michael to gently cradle the back of his skull with one hand and help him take a few sips. “This will help with dizziness and nausea. You will be
fine, Michael.” The younger Prince gingerly lays his head back down over the pillows. Michael realizes that this is the softest he has ever seen his brother act.

He shuts his eyes tightly. He remembers bits and pieces from the night he got ill. He was having trouble breathing. Adam was there. He did something to make him better. He went away. Then Raphael came. Michael passed out after that. Now he is in his room, in his brother’s care. Raphael seems exhausted. It’s evening. He aches everywhere. Especially his stomach. He feels as if he hasn’t eaten in weeks. His mouth is dry even after that watery medicine. The room is a mess. As if the manservants didn’t come by in days. There are random stuff thrown everywhere. He sees sheets and clothes on the floor, basins and jugs on the loveseat, those things on the bed next to him and more of that herbs and vials on the vanity table across the bed. Adam’s bowl of cream and his light blue robe are still there too. But where is Adam himself? What happened?

Raphael moves to sit on the bed next to him then pushes a spoon in his mouth. The thing tastes bland. It isn’t even warm but Michael’s stomach is so empty he would probably eat handfuls of dirt by this point. He takes deep breaths and lets his brother feed him… whatever this is. They both stay silent until Michael finishes the small bowl. His throat gets better after eating. “Ra- Raphael, what… Adam?” He is nowhere good enough to for a full sentence right now. A dark look crosses over his brother’s face. “Adam is staying in my chambers, Michael. We didn’t want him to see you like this. He tried to help when you got ill in the night. He was scared enough. He will come to visit you after you rest a bit and we clean this place up.” Raphael talks with that stoic tone of his he uses with the servants and the patients he treats. The soft voice in near whispers is gone. Michael doesn’t feel satisfied by the answer for a reason unbeknownst to even himself. “But Ad-” His younger brother doesn’t let him finish. “He will come.”

Adam doesn’t come.

Michael wakes to the next day in a clean room with his manservant by his side but with his husband still nowhere to be seen. He asks. Bartholomew bows his head and murmurs the same lie of Raphael’s from the day before. Michael knows it’s a lie. He didn’t just get ill all of a sudden. Something happened. Something bad happened. Adam saved him then. Now the young Prince is gone. *Something happened to Adam.* His father is missing too. The man would have been by Michael’s side at a heartbeat normally even if he only grazed his arm in training. So where is he now? Where are everyone else? Why isn’t anyone coming to see him?

The answer to his questions is harder to believe than he imagined it would be.

The King has been poisoned. He has been poisoned along with his father. Only the two of them. Somehow the tasters let a plate with death in it on the King’s table. Where everyone eats together, even little Jack. Somehow that poison only affected Michael and his father. Somehow their security
was breached. Somehow someone tried to assassinate the King. Somehow their trusted servants betrayed them. Somehow poison entered the King’s private dining hall.

Or it didn’t.

Lucifer is missing. Kelly and Jack have disappeared with him.

And Adam-

*No one has seen Adam since the night of the winter solstice.*

They found the goblets in Adam’s closet. The ones Michael bought him were shoved in some drawer. Adam purposefully hid them there and used the other pair.

The ones with remnants of arsenic in them.

Adam did this to them. Of course. Only Michael and the King drank from those. No one thought to check the goblets before the ceremony. Michael had already showed the ones he bought to the Head Guard and packed them in front of the man. No one knew Adam exchanged them. No one thought something like this could ever happen. Yet it did. *Why?*

Why did Adam do it? Did he hate them that much? Did he despise Enochia enough to want to make the whole kingdom collapse? Did he tell these to Lucifer? Did the two of them really conspire together? Was that why they were so close? Was that why Adam kept pushing Michael away? Did he really plan to kill him? Did his own brother really go mad enough to openly commit treason like this?

What if they succeeded? What was going to happen then? Would they kill Raphael and Gabriel too? Would they return with an army to a palace with two deaths and no one to protect it with their Crowned Prince gone? Would they-

Were *they* even a thing?

Did Adam really do this willingly?
Four whole days pass after the winter solstice.

Michael recovers almost completely.

The King isn’t so lucky.

Michael watches as his brothers sit by their dying father and pray as Joshua tries to make the man as comfortable as possible. That’s it by this point and nothing more. Michael isn’t a naive child. He sees it in the old physician’s eyes. There’s no saving the King now. The poison stayed too long in his body. He was all alone choking on his own blood like Michael. He didn’t have someone doing anything they could to make him cough it up. Now he is dying.

“It doesn’t make sense, Michael. It just doesn’t.” Gabriel comes to sit next to Michael on the sofa in the outer chamber of the King’s bedroom. Michael knows that much. He has been contemplating the same thing for days now. “If they planned this together, why did they run away like that? If Adam wanted you dead, why did he save you? Why did he alert us instead of running to Lucifer so they could finish everything off? If he planned to leave with him like that, why didn’t he prepare? Why didn’t he pack anything? Why didn’t he take his horse? I don’t- It doesn’t make sense! You two weren’t in love yet and- and Adam was way too close with Lucifer but he isn’t like that. He isn’t a murderer. He isn’t like Lucifer. Why would they do this? Say Adam wanted the throne like Lucifer, wouldn’t it be easier to kill father and have himself coronated with you? Wouldn’t it be easier to kill you afterwards and- If you died Adam would become your widower with no right to anything. Everyone would instantly know Lucifer did it and he helped. So why? I don’t understand, Michael. Hell I’m probably not even making any sense. Our father is dying. I can’t think!”

The younger Prince takes his head in his hands and slouches forward. Michael knows the feeling. He knows it way too well.

The King is dying. Two Princes are missing. They are probably traitors. Michael is trying to keep the King alive, to keep some order in the palace, to find Adam and Lucifer, to keep everything a secret from the people and the surrounding kingdoms.
He is about to go crazy. His head has stopped working. He doesn’t understand a thing.

The mail arrives. There are letters from Adam’s family.

What will he even tell them? How will Michael explain what his youngest son did to King John? How will- Dean. What will he think? Will they even believe it? That Adam poisoned his husband and father-in-law with his own hands then ran away with his brother-in-law to somewhere?

Does he even believe it himself?

He remembers the moment he first set his eyes on the young man. How young and scared Adam looked that day, how beautiful and innocent in white… Then he had been brought to Enochia and became this cold, lifeless shell moving around as expected and pretending to live. He had almost died. Almost killed himself. So what happened? What happened to make him decide to kill the King instead? What was Adam going to gain from that? If Michael died, Adam would be either sent back to his family with no children of his existing here or he would live the rest of his life as a widower in Enochia. Did he want to go back to his family that much? Did he- No. It just doesn’t make sense. No one would kill two men for that. Adam wouldn’t. As far as Michael knows him, he would never hand poison to his worst enemy knowingly.

Maybe Michael doesn’t kn- Or Adam didn’t know.

That’s it.

Adam didn’t know. Those were Lucifer’s goblets. Lucifer did this. He befriended Adam. He planned to use the younger man all along. He pulled Adam to his own side using Adam’s hatred against his husband and his new life. He probably played the victim too to gain Adam’s sympathy. He used his baby to make Adam believe he’s nothing more than a good man worrying only for his child. And Adam is kind. Although Michael was never the receiving party to that kindness, he has witnessed it. He saw Adam playing with Jack, chatting with Gabriel, pretending to be content here in the King’s company for the man’s sake, feeding the birds with leftover breakfast in their terrace, talking to Bartholomew and Samandriel with cheer and making them smile, asking the maids and guards about their day… Adam is a good person. That night, Adam aided him when he could have just left him to die, when he could have waited to call for help. He could have gotten rid of this man who was only a demon in his eyes. He didn’t. Adam isn’t cruel.
He didn’t know about the poison.

Lucifer did it. So where is Adam now? Did Lucifer-

No.

Michael doesn’t want to think like that. It can’t be. Adam is too young. He is- no one could look at him and manage to-

He knows what happens to the ones with a finger in a plot like this. It doesn’t matter if they were willing. Just the fact that they were useful for some time, just that they might know crumbs of the truth is enough. They are all silenced.

Was Adam silenced too?

Was there never only a fragment of genuine care in his friendship with Lucifer? Did his brother really- Could he- To Adam.

Michael squeezes his fist around the four envelopes in his hand. The fear has never been greater. His father is dying. His brother escaped. His husband is missing and probably- four. There are four envelopes. He drops them in his lap and looks at each one. Three of them have foreign royal seals. One has an Enochian seal. The seal of a Prince. Adam’s.

The page inside the envelope almost tears in his shaking hands.

I must say this didn’t turn out the way I planned. I had even told the carpenter to order enough fine wood for two pyres. Now there will be only one. You have Adam to thank for that. I believe you realize what happened by now. I will clarify it for you. Adam didn’t know he was handing you one of your last drinks that evening. I didn’t tell him because I knew he would never agree. Though I didn’t think he would object to find you dead. He surprised me a little there, helping you and all. I’m even more in awe of him for that. I would have never saved a man like you if I were in his place especially after being forcefully given to you. I would have thanked God for being granted my freedom from your grasp. But then again, Adam isn’t like me. He is something else. As always, you got the best of everything brother. And as always you broke it. You hurt Adam. You defiled him. You left him alone. Yet he didn’t leave you.
He still keeps mumbling your name even though I assured him many times that you are alive. It’s a pity. Someone so beautiful, so loyal and loving... Every man in the world would give anything to have him. I would have given anything to have him to myself. The lucky bastard you are. He doesn’t hate you, Mikey. You two might both believe that but he doesn’t. I would have never wanted to hurt someone so great, gorgeous both in soul and looks. I would have made him happy, given him everything. I would have even sent him back to his home after we held the double funeral instead of forcing him like you. It’s your fault for not dying that Adam will have to do that in your place. And you won’t last brother. You must still be weak. The death of the King, the riots it will cause, the awaiting enemies striking from every border will be too much for you on their own. And I exist too. Don’t worry, I will make sure to build a grand tomb for you. Adam will have one too. I have plans for him, things I will do to him before I kill him. The forest will echo with his lovely voice screaming for me. Maybe you will even hear it. I wonder, how does it feel not being able to save someone you care for? Someone who saved you? Someone who will suffer and die just because of you? Maybe you can tell me before I run my sword through your chest in our next meeting.

Your favorite little brother.

Michael feels a chill running down his spine. He shudders all over. Lucifer has Adam. Lucifer will hurt Adam. He will kill Adam. Michael doesn’t even know where to look for them. They left no trails behind. No one saw them, no servant had been ordered to do anything for them, no guard opened a gate for them. They vanished into the night. Lucifer kidnapped Adam. He will kill him just to torture Michael.

Adam will die.

He will be all alone, far away where Michael can’t find him. Where Michael can’t save him. This is his fault. It’s all his fault. Everything ever since the beginning. His mistakes condemned Adam to this. He couldn’t fix anything. He didn’t try hard enough. He doesn’t even know how much time he has before it will be too late to find Adam. He doesn’t know where to start. But-

The letter said something about a forest.

Forest. This is all he has in his hands. It’s not nearly enough. What forest? Where? In or out of their borders? Which hidden corner of said forest?

It’s not enough, yet it has to be.

He has to find Adam.
Chapter End Notes

What do you think? Does Lucifer care at all for Adam? Will he kill him? What about that letter? Once Michael clears his head a little, will he realize things about that?
Chapter 9

For the first time in weeks, Adam wakes up alone.

He doesn’t know where he is. He has never seen this room before. There’s a small dresser, a desk and a chair in front of a small window. The room is narrow. The dim lighting a single candle by his bedside and two others on the desk and the windowsill provide makes it look even narrower with the shadows all around. Then he remembers.

"-Breathe for me."

He remembers being out in some corner of the courtyard. Being dragged to there. Arms around him keeping him in place. A voice in his ear whispering. A cloth over his face muffling his screams. A face looking down at him watching as he passes out. A wicked grin.

Lucifer did that to him. Why? Lucifer is his friend. Why would he want to hurt Adam? Why would he talk all that nonsense? Everyone in the palace was awake that night. They were all running, shouting. Gabriel and Raphael joined them too. They left Adam sitting on the hard marble floor in a corner sobbing and trying to breathe. Then Lucifer came to him to help. At a time like that, why would he- God. Michael. What happened to Michael? Adam remembers waking to his husband’s pained gasps to find him choking on his own blood. He remembers trying every trick he learned from Ellen the Court Physician back at home to make him breathe somehow. He remembers running for help leaving Michael half dead on a pile of pillows his face, neck and upper chest covered in his own blood. Did he manage to get him help? Did he- He remembers hearing random words trying to focus around. The King. Suddenly. Run. The Princes. Quick. Joshua. Poison. Was Michael… poisoned too? Did he survive the night? What if he didn’t? What if-

Adam takes his head between his hands and takes deep breaths to calm himself. He can’t know anything for sure. He doesn’t even know where he is. First, he should understand his own situation and find a way to help himself. And… and Michael is strong. He was breathing on his own last Adam saw him. He vomited a little coughing up all that blood too. The poison must have come out mostly. Raphael and Gabriel saw Adam’s state then. Surely someone thought to check up on Michael. Surely they aided him in time. Michael is strong. Adam remembers the countless scars he saw on his husband’s chest some faded, some still red. How he acquired all of them, how he survived each and every one of those injuries… Michael had worse before. He should be fine.

Adam shakes his head to clear the dark, blurry images of his husband trembling and whimpering for air in his lap away from his mind. Then he throws the covers and stands from the bed. The
room is cold. He is still wearing his light blue satin night clothes. The sleeveless top with a deep neckline doesn’t help at all. He shivers as he walks around the room with bare feet. He tries the door first. Locked obviously. The other, smaller door leads to a bathroom the size of Adam’s wardrobe. The window sees only trees with the closest one at least meters away from the building. He is on the third story. The window latch is nailed onto place. It doesn’t even budge. Losing all hope, Adam walks back to sit on the bed. Then he notices a large jug and a glass on the bedside table. He drinks after a moment of hesitation. If he was to be killed, that could have easily been achieved when he was unconscious. Instead, they locked him in here and even took care to lay him down properly tucked under the sheets. They want something with him. And it means time. As long as he doesn’t give whatever they want to them, he will be kept alive. He is a Prince Of Enochia. He is married to the Crowned Prince. Soldiers must be looking for him checking under every stone. Surely he will be found. He only needs to buy some time.

The lock clicks as a key is pushed into place. Adam looks around frantically for something to wield as a weapon. There is only the jug and that is too heavy to lift, he could only manage to tilt it down before. The door opens. A blonde women walks inside with what looks like folded clothes and a bag in her arms. She shut the door and stands in front of it for a few seconds when she notices he’s awake. “Don’t make any sudden movements. There are armed soldiers everywhere. We are in the middle of nowhere. You can’t run from here. Is that clear?” Her tone is cold, she sounds bored if not irritated. Deciding to not take any risks, Adam nods. She is wearing light armour too. There’s a sword and at least two daggers tucked into her leather belt. Her posture is upright and her steps are heavy. She is clearly a trained soldier. He can’t beat her anyway.

The woman walks closer and dumps everything on the bed. “Who are you?” Adam asks trying to keep his head up and his voice steady. The woman sneers at him. “Name’s Lilith. Who I am though, that doesn’t concern you. Now change. Sadly we can’t have you freeze.” Adam looks down at the clothes and the pair of boots in the bag. He needs these. There’s barely anything on him and his shirt and pants are covered in splotches of dark red and brown. He held Michael close after all. “Hurry up darling. Can’t wait all night for you.” Adam raises his eyes to hers again. “I need privacy. Get out of the room.” That earns him a frown and another sneer. Lilith’s hands twitch at her side. She is holding herself back. She has been ordered to not hurt him. Good. “Shut up and change. Or else, I’ll have to do it for you. Honestly, if it were up to me I would take you out like that, leave you in the barn and let the men here a couple hours to play with you. You are the little sly serpent who ruined the plan after all.” And that proves it. Adam decides to push a little. “Then why don’t you?” Anger flares in Lilith’s face. Still she doesn’t do any more than to sharply take a step closer. “Orders from my Prince. Pretty little thing you are, he knows his taste. That’s for certain. I’m warning you for the last time. You either get dressed or I will drag you downstairs in that.”

Adam reaches for the pile after that deeming it enough for now. She must be talking about Lucifer. And she said she will take Adam out of the room. He might have a chance to do something out there. He finds a white shirt, black trousers, a grey vest and a crimson overcoat. The fabric is soft but thick. It’s almost the same quality as his normal outfits. The fit is perfect too as if these were tailored for him.
They walk out immediately after Adam buttons up the coat. Lilith holds his wrist in a tight grip all the way until she brings him in front of a large door. He is in some kind of small mansion, probably a seasonal house used by a nobleman to hunt or take vacations. He understands that much looking around at the furniture in the rooms they pass. The door they stop in front of opens to a place like a drawing room with big windows and a fireplace. Adam walks in before Lilith. The woman closes the door a little too loudly after herself. From the other side of the room, a man walks into sight deserting his previous place behind a bookshelf.

“Adam, I am glad to see you are awake and well.” Lucifer smiles and Adam has difficulty believing he is the cause of that night. He almost thinks he got everything wrong and this man with the radiant smile is actually innocent, that he brought Adam to this place to protect him from something or what. Except one doesn’t lock their friend inside the bedroom. Lucifer nods to Lilith and the woman exits immediately. The two of them sit across each other on two armchairs around a coffee table. Adam stays silent. He has too much to ask, too much he doesn’t understand. He doesn’t know where to start. Lucifer sighs. “Listen, Adam. I know you must be confused and scared. But it’s okay. You won’t be harmed, not at all. We are far away from all the chaos in the palace now. It will all be over in a few weeks tops.” He speaks softly, as if he is consoling a child. Adam can’t believe this. He remembers what Lucifer told him about his ruined plan and how it’s Adam’s fault that Michael will live. He is certain that he didn’t imagine those words. Yet-

“How much time has passed?” He asks. He needs to see if Lucifer is willing to tell him things. He needs to learn as much as possible. “ Barely more than a day. The solstice was the day before yesterday.-” His eyes widen. He didn’t expect to get an actual answer. And he slept through all that time too. “I’m telling you, it’s alright, Adam. We are safe here. We will be fine.” Lucifer reaches out to brush stray hair away from his forehead with his fingers letting them linger enough for Adam to feel the warmth of his hand. This gesture is familiar, comforting. His mother used to do it, ever since the day he described that to Lucifer during one of their chats in the garden with Jack playing on the grass next to them, the older Prince does it too. Adam feels nauseous. Did this same man try to kill his own brother? Did he really make Adam carry the poison to his husband? He knows that there’s no other possible explanation for everything, for Lucifer’s behaviour that night. He knows but he doesn’t want to believe any of it. He cared for Lucifer and Lucifer understood, he cared for Adam too. He was a good father, a great friend, a lonely but kind man. How did he bear that much anger and hatred inside? How did he- How does he hide it so well?

“You brought me here without my consent, Lucifer. And the night of the solstice… you did that. You tried to- Forget the King, I know you hate him but- but Michael is your brother. You cared for Michael. How could you!? He is- He might be dead by now. How could you betray Michael like that? You betrayed me too. You- you used me. You are my friend. Michael-” Lucifer’s soft expression falls off. What Adam sees actually makes him want to look away, to turn away from his friend. So much pain, so much anger, so much hurt… Lucifer looks betrayed. As if he isn’t the one who betrayed Adam’s trust. He has the audacity to look sad. Adam wants to be angry. He wants to scream, to attack the older man, to break everything within reach. He can’t. Some part of him cares despite what happened. Some part of him knows that Lucifer still loves him in a twisted way. Even now, he doesn’t feel threatened although every last fiber of logic in him screams at him that he should. He isn’t afraid. Not of Lucifer. He is only devastated and disappointed after the friend he lost. That one blow is hard on him, harder than almost everything since his marriage. That near death experience months ago wasn’t this horrifying. He didn’t feel like this then. He recovered. He
had Lucifer then. Now he has lost the one he confided in for all that time. It hurts.

“Michael. All you talk about is Michael. Why, Adam? Why? Didn’t he hurt you? Wasn’t he bad against you? Why do you care so much about him?” Lucifer interrupts his speech with an edge to his tone Adam can’t identify. Indeed why does he care? How can he not? Michael was dying. A person was slowly, painfully dying in his arms. Adam remembers his mother. He remembers her teachings to him. He should respect life. He should protect life. He should help whoever is in need. He should care and heal. These were all threaded into his mind, his soul. Michael was dying with his blood dripping on Adam. How could he have not helped? How could he have left a human being to perish like that? Even his worst enemy, even the one he hates the most doesn’t deserve that. Michael too didn’t.

“Adam I’m sorry. I’m so sorry you had to witness all of that. I understand, I do. You are a good person. You have a heart so great that you made even me start to care for someone in that damned hell after ašš that time. You couldn’t have abandoned Michael to his fate. I’m sorry you had to get involved with this matter. You are the one person I didn’t want to harm in the smallest way. I didn’t want this. I didn’t want my brother to suffer too. But I had to. I had no choice.” He sounds so sincere, so broken, so helpless that Adam almost forgets what he did. Fratricide. What made Lucifer think it was doable in any way? Why?

“Why did you have no choice? Why did you do all of this to us?” Adam sees something shattering in the eyes of the older Prince. He realizes what he said at once. He used to tell Lucifer how much he hated the palace. He used to tell him how he couldn’t imagine himself with a family there. Lucifer even knew Adam didn’t love Michael. He knew Adam wanted nothing to do with his older brother. ‘Us’ was Lucifer the outcast and Adam the prisoner. ‘Us’ was the ones who knew the royal family’s true faces. ‘Us’ was the only two who despised that place and all the injustice and cruelty of it. Yet just now, he used that word for himself and Michael. He counted himself on their side. He left Lucifer alone. He too turned his back on Lucifer. Even in this situation, Adam wants to be mad at himself.

“You already know my story-” Lucifer starts with a tired sigh. His eyes become empty, glassy after Adam’s last words. “-You know how my mother died. You know how that wounded me. You know what you mean to me. But I don’t think you understand it completely. Listen, in Enochia, everyone in the royal family has a right to the throne. We believe the loyal bloodline is holy, God chooses the King. Everyone carrying the holy blood might become the next ruler of the whole kingdom. We have a Crowned Prince yes, but that title is only about age and the heir’s mother. If one heir is the child of a Queen and the others’ mothers are all Consorts, then the Queen’s child becomes the Crowned Prince or Princess. If not, the oldest is the Crowned. It doesn’t mean he or she will surely be the next after the current King. After the King dies, whoever gets to the throne first claims it. Whoever has the support of the soldiers and the noblemen becomes King. Whoever is the strongest, wisest, most talented becomes the King. As you might guess, this causes wars for the throne between brothers and sisters. In the early history of Enochia, the kingdom almost collapsed a few times because of that. So they made a whole law about it.”
Lucifer takes a moment to breathe and close his eyes. Adam believes in that moment that choosing the right words and convincing him is really important to Lucifer. “Basically, the law says once a heir ascends to the throne and their siblings are causing trouble or even have the potential to harm the throne, they are allowed to execute them. Along with all their children too so the next generation of Princes and Princesses don’t grow up with vendetta against the King.” To kill their siblings, nephews and nieces? Is that really- Adam remembers hearing something like this from Zachariah. But it was supposed to be a long time ago since this law was put into practise. Do they still-

“Our current King was an only child Adam. He claimed the throne at the age of eighteen because his father died early. The previous King had three sisters and a brother, all of them died in early childhood because of a disease their mother too had and passed onto them. So this practise hasn’t been around in the last five decades or so but before that, the King’s grandfather- Adam he had eight brothers and four sisters. All of them had their own children. All of them were working as the King’s governors because the borders were constantly under attack back then. The King’s grandfather was the one who returned to the capital the fastest and with the biggest army once his father died. The day of his coronation is still remembered with regret but everyone thinks it was necessary just because that murderous bastard stabilized the army and made a few treaties to eliminate some war. They said he had to protect his reign. His reign. His family died that day, Adam. Twenty six coffins left the palace. Twenty six, twelve large and fourteen small coffins, Adam. The youngest Princess was just one week old. The oldest Princess was pregnant. Is this really just? Is this what the God wants, Adam? Enochia is a holy kingdom, the King is tasked by the God to rule and protect the people but murder his own family in cold blood? Could you do that to your own brothers, Adam? ”

His own brothers. Sam and Dean. Their faces flash before his eyes and Adam finds himself shaking his head with a cold shiver running down his spine. “They hate me. You know that too. I wouldn’t care but- but- Jack. He is a baby, Adam. He- Look since the royal blood is holy, you can’t spill it. If you execute a Prince or Princess you have to do it without spilling the blood. The most common way is to be strangled. It lasts minutes. It hurts. And Adam, Jack is a baby. Since the day he was born, I keep having one single nightmare. The King dies. Michael gets coronated. I wake up in the middle of the night to see one of the five or so deathsmen wrapping the rope around my son’s neck as the rest hold me back and try to fit my head into a noose as well. Jack wails for me. His voice dies down right in front of my eyes. And you know what’s the worst? This is a probable scenario, Adam. It was going to happen. It was. So I had to do this. I had to be the one to survive. For my child. I wasn’t going to watch that happen to him. I commited treason. I put my life on the line to not sacrifice my baby to this bloody game. It’s either Michael or me and Jack. There’s no other way. I love my brother, my heart breaks but Adam, I love my son more. Jack is my everything. He is my only real family. He is a part of me, part of my soul. People be damned. The King and his vile kingdom too. I have to protect my child. This is why I had no choice.”

Adam has to lean back and take deep breaths. By now his face has a few tear streaks matching Lucifer’s. He doesn’t want to believe it. Lucifer tried to assassinate the King. Lucifer commited treason. There’s no explanation for that. There shouldn’t be. Lucifer is lying. But- Lucifer never lied to him. Never up until that moment he handed Adam the poisoned goblets. He runs a hand over his face. It’s true that Lucifer is hated by his own family. It’s true that he is the odd one, the black goat. It’s true but- Jack is a baby. Lucifer is Michael’s brother. Adam doesn’t love Michael. He
hates his marriage. But Michael isn’t- Michael wouldn’t-

Michael might not be the best but he isn’t a bad man at all. Even Dean said that in his letter. Dean who was hurt the most by Michael’s hand. Even he believed in Michael to be good, to do good. Adam thinks through all his time in Enochia. He didn’t want that life. He was hurt. Michael didn’t understand. Michael harmed him and didn’t even acknowledge that. Even when he did, he didn’t fully get Adam. He was going to use Adam. He was going to want his own heirs. Just as Adam’s father explained to him. Michael was going to torment Adam all through his existence. But now that Adam thinks, he can’t find a single occasion in Enochia in which Michael hurt him himself rather than Adam’s poisonous thoughts about his husband and his situation. Michael isn’t innocent. He hurt Dean. He took Adam away from his home. On their first night, Adam wasn’t willing. In Enochia, he was too scared to go to sleep on that bed with Michael next to him for the first few days. But did he say all of that? Did he make sure Michael knew? Does he know every thought passing through his husband’s mind? So how was Michael supposed to do just that?

In fact, Michael was probably trying to be kind in his own way. The realization crashes on him almost knocking the breath out of him. Michael talked to him, tried to be gentle that night. He wanted to make the journey as comfortable for him as possible. He broke down a door with a double lock to reach him and save him. He stayed with Adam for days. He told his story. He thought Adam wouldn’t see the sunrise ever again. He stayed, not to ease his conscience, not to make the Kings think he did everything he could. Adam just said the word and he left. He came back wounded, felt bad for making Adam watch himself be stitched.

And Adam never thought like this before. He looked for an ulterior motive, thought Michael didn’t care at all, thought he saw Adam as part of a duty only, thought he was a toy in Michael’s hands. He didn’t talk to Michael unless absolutely necessary. He didn’t trust Michael with anything. He didn’t ever return one of his smiles even in public. He looked down at all the small flowers, all the new books, everything Michael gifted to him. Even those silver goblets with angels carved on them. He had called them plain silver cups to Michael’s face who was biting his lip in anticipation of his reaction. He had- Could it be… that Adam was the one pushing Michael away? Did he punish Michael unfairly? Did he torment his husband being that difficult all the time?

Could it be that he was at fault as much as Michael?

“Adam I’m sorry I pulled you into this. I really am. But trust me, you will never be hurt. Once it’s all over, once I am King, you will be free to return home. Everything will be better then. Try to understand. I’m not doing this out of the evil in my heart or something. Don’t hate me, please. Not you too. Or do you already hate me?” Adam comes back to himself with those words. He looks at the ice blue eyes searching his with… hope.

He bows his head in silence.
He needs time to process everything. Now, it’s all just too much. On one side, there’s Michael. Adam was forced into a life with him. Every moment next to him was torture. That first night, he cried himself to sleep praying to someday be able to forget the feel of Michael’s hands on him. After that his father’s words about Enochia and their nonsensical traditionalism haunted his every conscious moment. He hated Michael. This was the first rule he set for himself. *Hate Michael. Fight Michael. Turn Michael’s life into hell.* Simply because he saw himself as the victim. It was true in some ways. He really was the victim when his family decided to give him off to a stranger, he was the victim when he had to let that stranger touch him, he was the victim when he was forced to adapt to Enochia and become a completely different person for the people in his new home. But other than that…

“You hated me. Rightfully so. They gave you to me in your brother’s place. This was all like a punishment to you. It was so to me too but I wasn’t the one dragged away from my home, I wasn’t the one forced to adjust to a completely different life all alone, I wasn’t the one who had to let myself be defiled so my brother could live happily ever after and so people I didn’t even know could live without the worry of a war. You had it harder, Adam. I should have been aware of that instead of being a coward and running away from your presence at every chance. I should have been there for you, with you. I should have told you these things, tried to talk to you and understand you too. Why couldn’t I?”

Michael’s voice rings in his ears. How angry he was at those words back when he first heard them. He had called Michael a scavenger in his head. He had thought what Michael was doing was no different than robbing the dead. Because he was dying and Michael was still using him even in that state to get rid of guilt and shame. Had he been wrong?

He can’t be sure, not right now. He doesn’t want to rush into conclusions. All he knows is that Michael isn’t bad at the core. He isn’t. He didn’t deserve to be poisoned. He didn’t deserve the fear he must be feeling right this moment somewhere far away. God knows what he thinks. Maybe he believes Adam ran off with Lucifer. Maybe he believes Adam was a spy all along. Maybe he believes he has been betrayed not only by his brother but by his husband too. And betrayal… Michael didn’t deserve that.

On the other hand, there’s Lucifer. He lost his mother to the royal family and the Enochian laws’ cruelty. He never had a father. He grew up casted away. He felt different, inferior. He was alone all his life. Now he has a son. Adam knows what Lucifer told him about the law is true. He just thought ‘a long time ago’ as Zachariah said was a few centuries earlier and not half of one. The way he was treated, it is normal Lucifer grew up fearing for his life and later for his son’s. But all this… it’s too much. Would Michael really do something like that? To his own brother and nephew? Raphael and Gabriel do not have worries like that. Wouldn’t Michael want to kill them all and be done with it? Adam knows Gabriel’s sense of justice. The youngest heir wouldn’t be as sad for Lucifer maybe but for Jack? Gabriel would wreck the capital down. He would become a traitor too.
Adam’s head feels like it will explode at any moment. Lucifer fears for his son. And fear can make people do everything. Is he justified? Would he be justified if he firmly believed there was a danger of his child being murdered and did nothing? Would he be justified to trust his brother’s word in a kingdom where fathers and older brothers have killed sons and younger brothers? Would it be okay to destroy his own brother to protect his baby? How did he make such a choice? What has he lived through to decide? What is he living through, what storm is ambush his heart now that he has decided? Adam doesn’t know.

Two brothers on two different edges of a sword... Which one is right? Which one will win? Which one will kill the other? Which one can do that to the other? Which one deserves less to live? Which one should be the last one standing?

Adam feels as if he is going to break apart himself just thinking about this.

Lucifer quietly stands up and leaves the room.

Adam never answered him.

One week passes. Adam is never locked in anywhere again. Lilith follows him around. Lucifer moves forward with his plans slowly gathering up soldiers. They dine together sometimes but don’t talk more than a few words. Adam sees Kelly and Jack everyday. They are here too, in fine health but with heavy hearts. Jack mostly feels his mother’s worries. And Kelly, she is having an internal crisis. She is here only for her baby. But she doesn’t like what they have had to do. She seems off, distant to anyone but her child. She feels guilty. Adam now sees that they aren’t too much of spouses.

“Our marriage was arranged too, Adam. We never loved each other. We thought we would be stuck together for long years at least. We had duties. In the first night, we talked about all of this. Only when Jack came that we managed to become somewhat friends. But there’s no love, nothing. Lucifer respects me and all my rights and decisions. He always will. We have a child we take care of together. We share most of our time. That’s it. Our divorce was going to be in respectful and peaceful terms too. I’d be allowed to visit Jack as much as I wanted. Lucifer would bring Jack to me too. He would be allowed to come by and stay at my home with his nanny and personal guards once he grew up a little. We really went and planned all of that.” Kelly lets out a bitter chuckle watching her son sleep in her arms as she and Adam have a chat in front of the fireplace. “If he wins, this is still what’s gonna happen. But if he loses now, everything will be over. Isn’t it funny that I worry for a man I never loved and who never loved me this much?”
Adam doesn’t say anything. Nothing surprises him anymore. He thinks he lost the ability to feel that some time ago. “Honestly, I think you are the one he loves.” Adam snaps his head up to face the young woman with bags under her eyes and a tired smile on her face. “I’m serious. We are friends after all. We spent all those years together. No one can know Lucifer better than me. He loves you. I don’t know what love means for him. But I never saw him looking at anyone other than Jack with that much adoration in his eyes. I never saw him caring, wanting to make sure someone else in that palace he hates with a passion is alright. I never saw him patiently explaining himself to anyone else. I never saw him looking at Michael with envy despite everything in his life before you came around. I think he wants you by his side at least. But be careful. Lucifer isn’t pure evil yes though that doesn’t mean he isn’t capable of doing evil. Being loved by him is almost as hard as coming to love him, Adam. Be careful.”

Kelly stands up to go to her room. She needs to put Jack in his crib. Adam just stares after her the words refusing to sink in. Lucifer is- Adam was his friend nothing more. Lucifer is his brother-in-law. And Adam would know. He would know.

He watches Lucifer carefully that night on the dinner table. Kelly doesn’t join them tonight too. She never does. Does she not want to come down here or- Does Lucifer tell her to keep to herself? Adam knows they aren’t on the best terms now. Kelly is drowning in sadness, withering away with guilt and fear eating at her. Lucifer never loses his composure. Never again after their first talk here.

Adam remembers Kelly’s words. He shakes his head to clear the thoughts away. He would know if it was true. Even if it’s true, he can’t look at Lucifer like that. Ever. And even if he could, he is married. He might not like it but he has his honor. He has his mother and father’s teachings to him. And Michael- Adam wonders how he is. Did he recover from the poison completely? Is he okay? Can he do all the work that surely fell on his shoulders with the King being in a bad state? Is he holding it together? What does he think happened that night? Does he blame Adam? Did Lucifer make any more attempts at-

The door opens. Lilith walks inside with her usual heavy steps. Lucifer nods at her to speak. She looks back and forth between Adam and her Prince once but another nod forces her to talk. “The bait worked my lord. We are now ready for the next part. Prince Michael is getting close on us.” Lucifer doesn’t react other than a blink and a slow nod for Lilith to depart.

What bait? Next part? Michael is getting close?

Is Michael about to find them?
Is he coming here?

Bait.

*Is Michael walking into a trap?*

Adam feels his pulse picking up with fear. Soon the two brothers will face each other. Lucifer seems to have the upper hand. Will Michael win and maybe spare his nephew at least? Will he lose? Will Lucifer act faster and finish Michael off?

Adam drops his fork with nausea washing over him.

He doesn’t love Michael. He doesn’t. But the hate he so believed he had for his husband is nonexistent too, he understood this much here in Lucifer’s grasp.

And he can’t help but to pray.

*He is your chosen. God keep him safe.*

Chapter End Notes

-As I said, Ottoman Empire was my inspiration for Enochia. Such brutal laws existed once sadly :( 
-I wanted to make Adam face the cruelty of the situation. It's hard. Will he be able to choose a side? 
-Also, I want to thank everyone for all your lovely comments that make my days and inspire me to write!!! I never thought this story would be successful. I hope I can make it worth reading for all of you <3
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Michael sits on a desk in the King’s study with his head bowed over a map. They looked everywhere. Every forest has been searched. The Enochian army walked the whole kingdom already. The news of the husband of the Crowned Prince being kidnapped spread fast. People learned of the King’s ‘illness’ too. It was going to be impossible to keep it all a secret for much longer anyway. At least Prince Sam brought a big legion of his own soldiers when he arrived to the capital to help Michael out.

He runs a hand over his face, trying to keep his eyes open, to see something new in the same old maps he grew up studying since the days he played with wooden soldiers pretending to defend the lands on the greens and browns painted to depict Enochia. It doesn’t work. He can’t think of anything useful. Instead he keeps turning the same events over and over again in his mind. He thinks of the night of the winter solstice. That was already more than a week ago. He tries to remember something, anything, a single detail to help him solve all of this and find out where his husband is. Nothing comes up.

It was on the eighth day after the solstice that Prince Sam arrived with his men. They had sent their best horseman to deliver the news to King John and his family in the night of the fourth. The road lasts three to four days with a large party but a single man can make it in a day and a half if he takes a single break and rides from dawn to dusk. So Prince Sam had immediately set out once he got the news leaving his wife to take care of the King who was devastated with the news of his youngest son’s disappearance. He remembers the very first words the younger Prince had spoken as soon as he dismounted his horse. Father loved Adam the best. He was the baby of the family, the joy in our home. He was the sunshine. You took him away then you lost him. If I have to take a pinewood coffin back to our father, I promise you your father will never know which wild dogs ate your corpse in which mountain.

And he was right then. The fact that the servants and nobles talk as if Adam is a traitor who poisoned his own husband and his King just to run away with his brother-in-law makes Prince Sam angrier. Technically, Adam did poison them but Michael is sure that it wasn’t his intention to do so. Lucifer used him. Plain and simple. Prince Sam thinks so too. Michael told him everything he knows about the incident truthfully. He went back and even told the other man about the time Adam was the one awaiting death on their bed. The punch he got was well deserved.

He stands up with a quite exhale after another half hour. It will be sunrise soon. He needs to rest as much as he can force himself to. The walk to their chambers is silent. He doesn’t stop once, not even in the hall leading to the King’s chambers where Raphael and Gabriel are desperately trying to save their father with childish hope. He can’t bear to go there and see his shattered family. A dying father, two of his three brothers half dead themselves and the absence of the one who has shared Michael’s days and nights with the thoughts of him for the past months if not his presence.
itself. Michael can’t do that to himself. He already knows what will happen. Soon, there will be a coronation in this palace.

The candles are mostly gone with a few of them already out but the room is lit nonetheless. Michael finds bread, cheese, a salad and some cold dishes waiting in case he came back hungry. He doesn’t have the appetite. He moves to the two jugs instead. One is water, the other is wine probably mostly water too. Samandriel tries to make sure Michael doesn’t succumb to the mess King John is said to be making of himself believing his child passed somewhere cold and far away from home. Michael knows the young servant adores Adam. He was the one who spent the most time with Adam and took care of his every small need. He was the one helping Michael feed an unconscious Adam soup he asked for special permission from the cook to make himself thinking the recipe from his village could help Adam somewhat. He was the one talking softly to the dying Prince telling him to try to come back for everyone who loved him. He is as sad as everyone else now, maybe even more so. He deals with that by taking care of Michael in every small way he can think of. So Michael doesn’t touch the wine no matter how much he wants to. He drains a glass of water, forces himself to take a few bites of bread having to remind himself to chew then he moves to the bedroom.

The room is nicely warm. The fireplace has been lit for him, the fresh ashes tell him that much. There are two buckets placed among them. The water is still hot enough for a bath. He is used to cold water too anyway, being a soldier taught him at least that about meager life. The door to the joined bathroom is open. Candles are lit there too. Fresh towels and everything else he might need are placed neatly waiting ready for use. Michael pulls the door closed and turns to get the nightshirt and pants hanging from the wardrobe door. He only has enough energy to throw his clothes on the loveseat instead of the floor. Then he gets himself under the sheets. Something shining in the yellow light on Adam’s side catches his eye as he turns on his side. He reaches and draws the covers back in one swift motion.

It’s a set of Adam’s nightclothes. A sleeveless red shirt and pants of the same color are spread to their full length over the matching red robe to cover almost half of the bed. Michael doesn’t understand it at first. Why would Samandriel do something like this? He tentatively puts his hand on the warm silk and takes a deep breath. Then he notices it. This set is the one Adam wore the night before the solstice. It doesn’t smell of lavender like all the clothes Samandriel brings to hang in the wardrobe once in every three days after doing their laundry. The young servant picks both the clothes from the previous day and their nightclothes from the bedroom every morning as he makes up the room then takes them to be washed. This one has been brought back without being washed. Michael hesitates for a few minutes before finally letting himself to pull the shirt close and sniff. It smells of ink from the study and the cream Adam makes himself. Michael slowly puts the shirt back as he found it then turns around on his other side. It’s absurd. He used to sleep with his mother’s favorite shawl in his bed on her last weeks. He isn’t a child anymore.

Still, he drifts off just a little faster.
The King doesn’t get any better.

Michael watches with impotence as his brothers get worse instead. Especially Gabriel. He has mostly stopped eating. He refuses to leave the King’s chambers and Raphael says he doesn’t sleep nearly enough too. Michael sees it all happen right before his eyes but he can’t do anything to help his withering brother. Gabriel is the one maybe loving his father the most among the four of them.

He was little when the King divorced their mother and the woman married a knight. Her new husband wanted children of his own. So he never liked Gabriel and Raphael visiting their mother. He was even mean to Gabriel who desperately needed a little affection from his mother and clung to every crumb of it thrown his way. The tiny Prince hid his tears and the bruises every time the knight hurt him because he thought revealing everything would mean never seeing his mother again. It lasted for months. Michael was the one who found it out when he let his then eight-years-old brother sleep in his bed one night in a nightshirt too big on his small frame that showed his shoulders and upper chest. He patiently questioned Gabriel in the morning. And the boy couldn’t keep it in any longer. The next week, the knight was banished from the capital and stripped off his title. Gabriel’s mother followed shortly after the first time her two sons visited her after the incident and she delivered a strong slap on her younger son knowing what happened to her husband was because of the child. The King was furious then. Michael was too.

It took years for Gabriel to get over that dark time in his childhood and get his cheer back. He didn’t talk much, he was afraid for a long while to play with anyone else but his brothers. In that time, their father helped his youngest child the most. He showered Gabriel in his love like he never did any of them. The little Prince lived in the King’s chambers in a separate bedroom filled to the brim with toys of any shape and kind until he was fourteen. Their father took time to play with him and take care of some of his needs like helping him bathe and dress in place of the servants. He did all he could to salvage his tiny son’s happiness. Thus Gabriel bonded with him on a level mostly incomprehensible to Michael. He smiled and laughed, he always stayed little even though years passed and he became a young man. To Gabriel, their father is happiness. Without him, there won’t be laughter anymore.

If this was an ordinary illness, if the whole family was together, he could have been saved. Lucifer could have helped their youngest brother like he did back when he was a silent, scared child. They used to have a friendship so great that Michael would often find himself wondering if he did something wrong with his youngest brother. Because Gabriel loved Lucifer the most, openly and clearly. Lucifer taught him everything he knew. They read and studied together, went riding together, practised with swords and found tricks to mess with the servants and their brothers together. They were inseparable. Gabriel was like Lucifer’s little shadow, an apprentice. Then Lucifer’s mother passed away when he was seventeen and Gabriel, eleven. Lucifer was never the same again. He was always a little bitter but when the one person he loved the most died like that, Lucifer stopped hiding it. As the years went by, Gabriel drifted apart with him like everyone else. Lucifer was left truly alone in his home with the growing hatred to the palace and everyone in it. Still, Gabriel tried to mend things with him once his wife came and their son was born. Lucifer wasrediscovering the soft spot he had for the little menace who used to follow him around to
everywhere. And he knows what Gabriel is going through, losing the only parent who loved him in an unair way. If this wasn’t his fault, he could have helped.

Now though, Michael has to find a way to do that himself.

Days pass among piles of papers from the Court, the soldiers and the nobles all around. Michael finds himself thrown into the role of a full fledged King while simultaneously trying to stop a possible strike against the throne he knows nothing about. He does his best. He governs the Court, guides the nobles in the King’s place and works alongside Prince Sam and his men looking for Lucifer. Samandriel runs around after him in the palace always making sure there’s warm food in his stomach, pristine clothes on his back and a comfortable place to send him to much needed sleep faster. The young servant doesn’t mention Adam in any way. He thinks it would devastate Michael further to constantly hear about his missing husband. Michael heard that much as Samandriel talked to the chambermaids and asked them to be considerate too who nodded and shed a few tears each for Adam. He is only thankful, he tries to stay strong and lets himself be cared for by the young man who terribly misses his own Prince too. At times when these thoughts come up, Michael understands just how kind and good Adam is to win the hearts of the servants and the royal family in the whole of their marriage which is just shy of half a year.

Half a year. Michael feels like that time passed in the blink of an eye before he could understand anything while thinking it must have been way longer than just a few mere months with all that has happened. He remembers the day his father talked to him about his approaching marriage. He was terrified then. He was afraid of the King’s wrath, afraid of the mistake he made, afraid of the stranger that was going to use him to ascend to the throne and torment him each and every day of his life. He was afraid of the new responsibilities marriage would bring him. He used to dream of a big wedding lasting days at least in which he would have the time of his life with his best friend in his arm and his family laughing all around when he was a boy and wasn’t yet crushed under the duties of the Crowned Prince. Even in their twenty first years, Dean and him had joked about taking their horses and riding until sunrise in their first night to find themselves a meadow to watch the orange rays in the horizon and consummate their union with a kiss warming them in their thin ceremonial robes wetted with morning dew on the grass. Dean would have found a way to make that happen then the two of them would get the scolding of their lives from the Kings who would be shamed themselves treating two grown and married men like children. They would have laughed at that for years on end.

He was instead married to a stranger, Dean’s brother. Adam was just that for Michael for the whole month he readied himself. Then when he finally called him his husband mentally and meant it, he realised he had already lost the chance of ever being as content as he would have been if his first wedding had been held on the planned date. He had made a mistake just in the first night, in the very first hours of this marriage to Adam. The younger Prince had shut himself off, become a quiet shadow sharing his chambers and nothing more. Michael should have sat and thought earlier that it probably wasn’t himself only who lost much being married off.
Adam had dreams of his own too. He probably had plans, things he wanted to do with his life as he was the third Prince and not in a position to be expected to become a King anyway. Instead, he was given away to this tall and dark stranger who knew nothing other than to fight wars and lead soldiers. He wasn’t even twenty yet but his fate had been drawn out for him. The first thing he heard from his husband was a reminder of a duty too big on his shoulders and the first thing he did with his husband was to remove his clothes for that duty. He had been used, cleaned and left on that bed to try to keep himself from wailing out loud while the stranger slept without a care. It must have been crushing to know at that moment that everything could have been different if his brother hadn’t run away or his husband had simply taken the time to chat, to know him a little, to calm him, to prepare him not just physically and enough to fit without an obstacle at that. He must have died a little on the inside. It all could have been different. He was barely an adult. His first experience was most likely going to scar him for the rest of his life. And it is Michael’s fault. He-

The door to the study bangs with several knocks hammering on the other side. A guard rushes inside.

They have caught the woman who gave Lucifer’s letter to the messenger returning from Adam’s kingdom with the monthly mail.

Michael literally runs the whole way to the dungeon.

Dagon.

The obstetrician who helped Kelly during her pregnancy and stayed as a wet nurse for Jack for a few weeks. Michael recognizes the woman almost immediately because he had been going through the records of everyone entering the palace for the last three years or so in a futile hope to find someone close to Lucifer who would be easier to catch. Prince Sam stands with his arms folded in front of the woman chained to the wall looking all too ready to explode and kill her with his bare hands. Dagon raises her head at the approaching footsteps and hastily tries to make the official bowing salute of Enochia making the chains on her wrists jingle. Prince Sam turns his cold eyes to Michael and nods towards the woman.

“Talk woman, so your dispatch will at least be merciful. If you won’t, the information will be forced out of you and there will no longer be need for an official execution with the gallows and the people to witness it.” If he had been anyone else, if he hadn’t seen battles and killed many, Michael would have shuddered at the cold voice echoing in the dark, damp and empty hall of fourteen cells in total. He steps up closer to Dagon. “We were told you carried Lucifer’s letter to our messenger. You know where some of his accomplices hide at least if not Lucifer himself. Your
actions of treason will be judged on a proper trial along with everyone else caught. I advise you to reveal everything you know.” He says on a softer tone. Dagon’s eyes wander around the cell. She squints, trying to see everyone around her in the dark. In the end, she turns her gaze to Michael again. “I want to speak with you alone, my Prince. I will only confess if you are the only one lis-” She starts but Sam stomps forward and interrupts. “Absolutely not! You are in no position to make demands woman! You are going to talk either way! Where is Adam!? ” They younger Prince isn’t this aggressive normally. Michael sees just how the absence of his brother crazes the Prince known to be a pacifist in a good day.

“Why do you want to be alone with me?” He decides to ask. The woman bows her head and bites her lip in consideration for a single moment. “There are things only you may know my Prince. Please, this is important.” Her tone becomes pleading and too believable to be fake. Michael thinks to ask Sam to leave with all the guards but he can’t do that. Not to Adam’s brother when he might feel a few minutes are longer than centuries to hear about his little brother. Why would a prisoner ask to be interrogated by a single man in a situation like this anyway?

Easy. There must be spies. She is afraid what she reveals now will later get her killed if Lucifer is to win somehow. Like this, she won’t talk much. Michael’s years capturing and questioning enemy soldiers have taught him that one fact very well. Next to him, he sees Prince Sam’s face contorting. While the younger man doesn’t have nearly as much experience as Michael, he too has lead a few quests and patrols around his own kingdom since Dean was too busy educating himself on Enochia and preparing to become a King at Michael’s side. After a few seconds of silence, he looks at Michael gesturing to the guards. Michael nods his permission. Soon the heavy wooden door shuts above the staircase and it’s only Dagon, Prince Sam and Michael left in the whole level. The woman looks back and forth between them but must deem it enough because she takes a deep breath to talk.

“My Prince you are being lured into a trap.” Michael furrows his brows and frowns at that. “This was all a ploy to get you out of the capital. Lucifer poisoned the King and you. He planned for your death but when that failed, he took Prince Adam instead. He had a small army placed in the palace and the nearby castles of the few nobles who want him to be the next King. He was going to claim the throne forcefully after you passed. Now he positioned his soldiers in a forest where he keeps Prince Adam. He purposefully had me giving that letter to the messenger. That man works for Lucifer too. You catching me like this after he confessed getting that fourth letter from me was planned too. I was going to tell you their location and he would destroy your legion with the unexpected amount of soldiers he had and their attacks. If not, he would ask you to turn yourself in to save your husband’s life. He planned a whole battle where he has the advantage of surprise, a hostage and an army in strategic positions just waiting for you. You should be better prepared my Prince.”

Michael considers what the woman says silently. It does sound like his brother. Preparing a trap like that. And Adam. He has Adam in his grasp. Michael knows he wouldn’t be able to help himself but risk getting beaten by Lucifer to get Adam out of there. “Why should we believe you?” Sam speaks with narrowed eyes. Indeed. Ho do they know this isn’t the trap. Dagon reaches a hand down the neckline of her dress into her corset and fishes out a crumpled envelope. Of course the
soldiers didn’t have the time to search other than the obvious weapons. The woman is dressed like an ordinary lady from the middle class too. Sam is the one tearing the thing out of hand. There’s a single page folded in eight and something else Sam takes out and hands Michael after inspecting it in the dark. A golden ring.

Adam’s ring.

Indeed Michael can feel his own initial carved on the inside of the small ring when he puts a finger through it. Sam shows him the paper next. It’s Adam’s handwriting.

_Believe Dagon. She is loyal to Kelly and Jack. I have seen with my own two eyes how guilt eats Kelly alive. Dagon came to us telling us about this trap and how she would need to be caught and interrogated by you. This desperate attempt was all I could think of. I am okay. I am sending you my ring so you are sure it’s really me. Kelly agreed to run away with Lucifer only because she was afraid for her baby. She helped me with this too. Spare Dagon. Lucifer won’t kill me. He recently said he wants me by his side after he gets coronated as King. Don’t believe anything he says. Don’t come here blindly. You will walk into your death. You must know I didn’t mean to give you poison. I know you are searching for me and my family is too. I am not wanted as a traitor so you must already believe me. Take your time to build a fortress around the palace and gather your army. Lucifer will eventually have to come to you if you don’t go to him. Don’t come Michael. Please don’t. Stay where you are safe. You don’t deserve to die like that. God chooses the King Of Enochia. You are chosen to be the next, you’re chosen to protect your family and your people. Don’t throw that away for nothing. Don’t come._

Michael stares at the paper dumbfounded. Sam’s gaze has softened for the first time in what may be days as he watches Michael trace the ink with a finger. Adam wrote this, he is sure. Could this be part of the ploy? Could they have forced- No. Adam is asking him to stay in the capital. He is asking Michael to stop trying to save him. He knows Michael doesn’t blame him for what happened yet he tells Michael to stay in the palace.

Michael takes two steps back and braces himself on the bars. He reads through the letter again and looks at the ring in his palm. _He can’t._

“Tell me everything you know. Where is Lucifer? Where does he keep Adam? Who are the nobles who support Lucifer? What about his troops? Their numbers? Their locations? Everything. Tell me the names of everyone who could know more. Talk and you will be spared. Adam asked that of me.” Both Prince Sam and Dagon look at him with wide eyes. Michael made his mind already.

He is not leaving Adam there.
The next nine days are hard. Michael checks the backgrounds of every nobleman and noblewoman Dagon gives the name of. They are all either against the King because of tax and liberal commerce issues or they have showed interest in the only Prince with an heir of his own in tournaments and other events. He can’t make a move against any of them. Lucifer can’t know that Michael is aware of the trap set for him. He also finds many servants spying for Lucifer most important of whom is unfortunately Bartholomew. Of course. The manservant was almost too nosy and he seemed to have no life, no past of his own contrary to Samandriel who constantly talks of his village and his siblings. Michael had found him ‘cleaning’ his study almost too many times. He has all the keys to the important cupboards and he doesn’t leave anything out in the open but still... He doesn’t do anything. Bartholomew must be constantly feeding information to Lucifer. Cutting that channel will reveal Michael’s plan. It will have to wait until everything is over.

Prince Sam brings more men under the guise of wanting to spread the search party farther. Michael ‘reinforces’ the palace guards because the King is ‘ill’ and a Prince was kidnapped not long ago. The troops they found of the new soldiers are carefully disguised in all and every report. No one other than Prince Sam and Michael knows what really will happen.

Michael will go first. He will head straight to the forest Dagon told them about with troops three times of what he writes in the reports and of what Lucifer's spies will tell him as Prince Sam’s ‘search party’ is slowly spreading out and leaving some men hidden in almost every village. The ones who are found will pretend to be lookout for possible activity of Lucifer’s supporters. They will join Michael on the way and Michael will take almost every extra soldier he brings to the palace as additional guards at the last moment. He will go to Lucifer before the news of the rash decision. He will find Adam.

Michael slowly lowers himself on the bed next to another set of Adam’s nightclothes laid out to help ease his mind openly now since he never said anything about the first one and Samandriel observed him sleeping more. He puts a hand on the soft fabric that smells of a homemade cream with daisies and mint in it before he closes his eyes and prepares himself to do something he hasn’t done in years at least. Tomorrow is the big day. The beginning of the end. He doesn’t know if his voice will be heard, doesn’t know if he deserves the help he asks for. But he wants it for Adam so it should be alright he tells himself. He takes a deep breath and ever so quietly, he prays.

I am the one who damned him to eternal suffering away from his home. I am the one at fault for everything he has lived through. I regret it and ask for your forgiveness. Give me strength please to make it alright. You are the most caring and forgiving. Help me find him so I can amend. I want to work to gain his forgiveness too. I want to make him happy as he deserves. I ask you to protect one of the most beautiful of your own creation. Until I find him, please keep harm away from him. Adam shouldn’t pay for my mistakes, my sins. Punish me if you will but protect him. God keep him safe.
He hopes at least the angels Adam so loves hear him.

Chapter End Notes

-Hello again! I've had a very busy week with finals and a loved one having a surgery so this chapter took time to write...
-A lovely friend from tumblr shared a beautiful song with me. It is named Hurricane by Halsey. The song helped with the mood to write too so I wanted to share!
-We are getting close to the end. I originally planned this fic to be 15 chapters at most but we will see.
-Thank you all for sticking with me and helping me through this exciting experience with your support. I can't tell you how much you all mean to me. <3
Chapter 11

Adam can’t believe what he hears.

This woman, Dagon, who he sees around more and more came to Kelly and Jack’s room suddenly as Adam played with the baby trying to lighten the small Prince’s mood. Kelly still has her half empty wine glass in her hand. She finally gave in to the urge a few days ago when Lucifer gleefully announced ‘the bait’ worked and the first part of his trap had been completed. Adam pities the young woman rapidly losing the strength to keep herself together for her son. It seems he isn’t the only one. Dagon held Kelly close and let her cry on her shoulder after Adam moved to the other side of the room with Jack to both give them privacy on that moment and to keep the already distressed baby from seeing his mother like that. After a few minutes they ushered Adam close again for Dagon to explain them her role in Lucifer’s plan.

“They will lead Michael here. You will be caught on purpose and- Michael will want to raid here to arrest Lucifer.” Adam states what he understands more to organize his own thoughts than to get a confirmation from Dagon.

According to what she told them, Lucifer sent Michael a letter telling him Adam is his hostage and is completely innocent on the matter of them being poisoned. That was the bait. Michael would want to find them to save Adam and capture Lucifer for a trial in the capital for his crimes against the throne. The usual messenger works for Lucifer too. He will confess he got the letter from Dagon. Michael will recognize the name. Dagon will be caught and she will give them Lucifer’s location along with some false information. This way Michael will walk into Lucifer’s trap with way too few soldiers and die. Then Lucifer will march to the capital to claim the throne with his army.

As Dagon talks, Kelly covers her face with her hands and begins to cry as quietly as possible. Jack senses his mother’s sorrow immediately and starts to wail. Adam gives all his attention to trying to calm the baby, gently rocking him and trying to recite a fairytale he remembers from his childhood. Dagon puts a hand on Kelly’s shoulder but she too can’t do anything. It’s hard. This situation is impossible for Kelly. Her husband is a traitor. Her son is in danger of being killed with him. So either she supports Lucifer going against every right she knows or she will take the risk to lose her baby. This is too much, more than the young woman can handle. And Dagon… Adam has learned that she was Jack’s wet nurse for the first few weeks of his life and Kelly’s obstetrician before that. The woman loves Kelly like a sister and Jack as her own. She grew to see them as family. This is why she told Kelly all of this. She knew Kelly would never forgive herself otherwise.

In this situation, Adam wouldn’t too. He has to do something. He has to find a way to reach
Michael. He has to find a way to at least mess Lucifer’s side of the plan by doing some unexpected thing here so Michael will have a greater chance. Though the first idea is better. Michael shouldn’t ever come here. He will be safe in the palace. He can gather the patrols, the troops spread around the kingdom and the royal guards to found an army and defend the palace against every outer attack. If he doesn’t come here, then Lucifer will have no choice but to go invade the capital outrightly. Michael will have the advantage then. He can capture Lucifer for his trial.

Adam looks down at the sniffing baby in his arms. Jack isn’t even a year old yet. In the time he spent here, Adam cared for him a lot to help ease Kelly’s burden. He loves the little Prince. Jack is innocent, he doesn’t have anything to do with whatever thing his father is pulling. And Michael isn’t some murdererous tyrant. My beliefs are about leniency and compassion. Adam remembers Michael’s words. He didn’t believe that at the time but Michael really did regret causing Adam hurt. God is the most caring, surely He would have overlooked that so I could keep you from getting hurt, scarred. If Michael is able to think and say something like that, surely he will want to protect his nephew too. Adam can convince him to do that. If not- There’s no ‘if not’. He just can’t see Michael ordering the death of an infant. Maybe he will have to execute his brother but, Jack doesn’t have to die. He shouldn’t. Michael can’t. Adam thinks he came to know his husband in the last few months that he has been a married man to say at least that much.

Kelly wipes her tears away with a handkerchief Dagon hands her. She is innocent too. She doesn’t want any of this. She doesn’t want Michael to die. Adam doesn’t too. This situation is just unfair by nature. But Lucifer signed his own death warrant the moment he handed Adam the poisoned goblets. Right now, Michael is doing the right thing to keep his kingdom safe. Adam understands why Lucifer did what he did. But it doesn’t mean he can be forgiven. If Michael captures Lucifer and somehow decides to not execute him but to sentence him for life instead, Lucifer can even redeem himself. But even redemption isn’t about forgiveness. It is about knowing and acknowledging all the wrong and the bad one has done and using that to never repeat the mistakes. It is about comprehending the dark actions and working to find light. To forgive those deeds isn’t part of redemption. And Lucifer can never be forgiven. Therefore, Michael should be the one getting out on top if the younger Prince really calls his own brother his enemy. Adam has decided that much in the sleepless nights here and in Jack’s silent company as he tries to find a way to make the baby smile and giggle again.

If only Adam had a way to reach Michael… If only there was someone who would- It dawns on him. Dagon. “You will go along with it. You will tell Michael what you have told us.” Both Kelly and Dagon snap their heads up to face Adam. “I will write a note to Michael to make sure he believes you. You will somehow keep that hidden and give it to Michael. I know he will want to interrogate you personally. This is the only way.” He finishes talking and Kelly’s eyes fill with tears once again as she glances at her baby now asleep in Adam’s arms. “Kelly, you know Michael wouldn’t order Jack’s death, right? I- You have known him longer than I. You must know I am not in love with Michael or something but I can say and mean it that he is a good man. Until very recently I myself wasn’t aware of how much he is so. He doesn’t deserve to die. Not like this. Lucifer doesn’t too but he should be judged for what he did. He literally tried to kill his own brother. He is still trying to do that right now. I- That’s wrong. If we let this happen without doing something…”
Adam trails off. He is asking for too much. Jack is Kelly’s child. Adam is asking her to take the risk of losing him.

It is a complete surprise when Kelly nods weakly and Dagon takes the baby from Adam after getting him paper and ink to write.

Adam dines with Lucifer that night again like most nights. Kelly retired early after getting herself too tired and a little drunk with Adam’s idea being set into motion. Jack was exhausted too. The baby woke up once and fell back asleep almost immediately after Dagon helped Adam feed him warm milk and vegetable mash with yogurt. The new place, seeing his father less and the pitiful state his mother is in affects the baby too much. Adam finds a growing attachment to the little one over his already existing affection. He wants to make sure that Jack gets out of all this alright the most. He wants to see the baby grow up happy and become a young Prince to pride his mom and his kingdom. Jack is helpless but not oblivious to his surroundings. He needs protection but he will be aware of it if he doesn’t get that. Adam shudders with fear just thinking Jack could experience lasting effects of these times later.

Lucifer reaches for something. The movement breaks Adam out of his thoughts. He silently passes the jug to the older Prince keeping his eyes on his plate. “You are silent tonight. Is something bothering you, Adam?” Adam doesn’t answer. Something is bothering him. He is thinking about his note he gave to Dagon. The woman will leave tomorrow. Adam is pretty certain that she can get the note out of here just fine but what about when Michael’s soldiers catch her? What if she loses it somehow? What if they search her clothes for weapons? What if Michael doesn’t believe her? He might even think Dagon telling him about a trap set to murder him could be the trap itself. He might execute Dagon for treason. It is too dangerous. The woman is already showing great courage for Kelly’ and Jack’s sakes.

“You aren’t wearing your ring.” Lucifer states with something akin to surprise and wonder in his voice as he takes hold of Adam’s left hand and looks at his fingers again. Adam grits his teeth to not pull his hand away sharply. He should try to act the same as always. Lucifer is a clever man. Adam shouldn’t raise suspicion that something other than the whole treason is going on. Or else, Lucifer might discover his only means of helping Michael.

The older Prince looks at Adam with a look he can’t quite decipher. He doesn’t need to anyway. “Adam did you- do you- I knew you didn’t love Michael. You are a good person. You helped him that night just because of that didn’t you? I knew it. I- I understand it must have been a hard decision but- Adam you just made me so happy.” Lucifer smiles his entire face brightening. Adam feels nauseous.

He isn’t wearing his ring because he gave it to Dagon. He knew Michael would recognize his
handwriting and know he wrote the letter anyway but he wanted to make sure. As Jack slept in Dagon’s arms and Kelly closed her eyes with her head resting on her arms curled on the side of the sofa, Adam wrote whatever he could think of. He tried to make it precise but believable. The last part was his ring. He raised his left hand in front of his face then slid the golden thing off slowly telling Dagon not to lose it. It was surprisingly hard indeed. It wasn’t so long ago that Adam hated the weight around his finger and he wanted to get rid of it more than anything. But just today, it was hard to remove his ring.

Lucifer is still smiling at him with hope shining in his gaze. Adam wants to close his eyes, turn his head away. Kelly was right. Lucifer has this nonsense in his head that Adam and him have a spark between them. Just a few days ago, Lucifer told him that he wants Adam by his side. They were out in the garden. Adam was trying to entertain Jack under the sun. Lucifer watched him for a long time. After they dined together, he rambled on about how much he valued Adam and how he would be happy to find Adam always with himself. It was just shy of an outright proposal. Adam was rendered speechless. Lucifer was his friend. Adam thought Lucifer wouldn’t ever think something like that. Yet-

And now, Lucifer believes Adam chose him. He thinks Adam really thought about it like Lucifer asked him to and finally stopped wearing the ring Michael gave him. Adam never removed it before. Never. Lucifer knows that too. That fact confirms it for him that Adam is accepting his- whatever he thinks he feels.

A thumb caresses his finger. Adam shivers. He has to act normal. He has to keep himself from doing something rash. This is good anyway. Lucifer won’t suspect him this way. So Adam braces himself with a deep breath. He has to pretend just a little. If he can, everything will be alright soon. “Yes, Lucifer. I just- I need some time. I know what I want. Just, too much has happened. But- but yes.” He tries to force a smile on his face. He doesn’t know if he succeeds but Lucifer immediately draws his hands back and clears his throat. He is still grinning. “Of course, Adam. I totally understand. Just like how I always did. Take your time please. I will go at your pace. You know I wouldn’t ever want to hurt you. Just this much is- Thank you, Adam.”

They hold each other’s gaze for a few seconds before Adam stands up. He rushes to his room after managing to bid a brief goodnight to Lucifer. As soon as he slams the door shut and leans against it, tears run down his cheeks. He falls to sit on the floor and pulls his knees up to his chest to wrap his arms around them. He lets himself cry until the sobs turn dry. He doesn’t love Michael. He doesn’t but he is married to Michael. Adam is Michael’s husband. He isn’t a cheater. He can’t be. How could-

He thought he had a friend.
It is time for Dagon to leave in the late morning. The plan is that she will be caught in the capital. The messenger was supposed to confess he works for Lucifer and Dagon brings him his orders from Lucifer’s hideout. Then he would tell Michael he could find Dagon in the capital seeing every spy one by one to deliver their orders too. As she is an obstetrician, she travels a lot between villages and towns to see the women who take her services. It’s a part of her job so no one would suspect her movements just because she worked for Kelly too a few months ago. No one would deduce she could be loyal to Lucifer. Indeed she is perfect for the job.

The woman hugs both Kelly and Jack as if she would never see them again then she moves to Adam and takes the offered handshake. Soon, Lilith comes to lead her away sneering at all of them. They try to keep their interactions to pretense that Dagon was checking on the little Prince and his mother one last time before departing when Lilith arrives. It was one of her jobs here in the last weeks after all. The blonde woman doesn’t seem entirely convinced.

After the door shuts closed, Kelly tells Adam that she needs to lay down and rest her eyes a little. Adam simply takes Jack and goes to the garden after stopping to get some wooden toys. He sets the baby on the grass and plays with him until it’s naptime.

That night, he retires early skipping dinner completely. He tells Lilith that he is very tired after spending almost all day with Jack who was cranky for some reason and didn’t stop crying. The blonde woman narrows her eyes at him throwing one of her nasty looks then angrily leaves. She is always like this lately. Kelly says she dreamt of being Lucifer’s Queen once they successfully killed the King and Michael. She thinks Lilith hates Adam because he stole Lucifer’s attention from her. She did the same things to Kelly too apparently. Now though, her main foe is Adam. He listens to that with his head bowed and doesn’t return Kelly’s angry chuckles at all.

He wakes up in the middle of the night to loud wails echoing through the hall. Kelly’s room is just two doors away from his. Jack is crying. He waits and tries to go back to sleep. Jack doesn’t stop, instead his voice gets louder. Adam bolts from the bed and nearly runs the whole way there after another few minutes. The baby sounds like he is in pain.

He knocks a few times but doesn’t get an answer. In the end, he lets himself in. Kelly is asleep on the bed, Jack is sitting up and crying his lungs out. Adam’s heart leaps. It is impossible to not wake up when the baby is screaming like that. He fears for the worst as he stands frozen on his feet for three seconds. Realizing he needs to act, he immediately picks Jack up. The baby is burning with fever. Kelly still doesn’t wake up. Adam reaches out a hand to shake her a little and call out her name while rocking Jack gently to try to ease his mind.

Then he sees the small glass bottle on the nightstand. He takes it immediately and brings it closer to his face to take a sniff. Daisies and valerian root. Images of Michael in the physician’s chambers getting stitches and lying shirtless on their bed with bandages around his chest in that first night flashes in front of his eyes. Kelly will be asleep until morning if she drained half of this bottle just
this evening. Adam thinks for a second then grabs Jack’s blanket and bag prepared for when they take him outside. He returns to his own room.

He changes Jack’s diaper and every other layer. He gets out the glass baby bottle and gives him some water then waits a few minutes to see if his temperature will go down somewhat. Jack relaxes a little but starts to cry again as soon as Adam takes the bottle away. Adam starts rocking him again. It doesn’t work.

The door opens as he paces around the room with a window open halfway to make it colder. Lucifer appears with Lilith trailing behind. “Adam what’s happening?” He runs inside to take a look at his wailing son still in Adam’s arms. “He has a fever. Kelly took a sleeping draught.” Lucifer looks panicked. He puts a hand on Jack’s forehead. “There are no physicians here. What-Is it something serious?” For a second, Adam is striked by the pure fear in the older Prince’s eyes. This is it. Lucifer is a father, a man afraid of losing someone he loves again and not the traitor who tried to take lives. If only he could have stayed like this. “I can treat him. Infants get fevers often. I’ll need assistance.” He goes to lay Jack on the bed uner Lucifer’s worried gaze. “What do you need?” The blond man asks immediately. Adam starts to list everything he remembers. “A large basin, two smaller basins, a bucket of lukewarm water, epsom salt if possible, mint leaves if not. Apple cider vinegar, towels, peppermint or cinnamon bark oil, a fresh sheet and more candles.” Lucifer looks overwhelmed but Adam knows he memorized every item by heart. He bolts outside with Lilith.

Once the room is brightly lit, Adam makes a bath with epsom salt and lukewarm water. He lays Jack in the basin with a towel folded to keep the baby’s head above water. Lucifer helps to keep him steady as Adam lightly massages Jack. They remove and dry him ten minutes later. By now Jack is calmer but he still lets out a few cries here and there. He is also still warm. Adam dresses him in another diaper and a light shirt. He then soaks towels in a mixture of apple cider vinegar, peppermint oil and water to place them on Jack’s forehead and inside his shirt over his chest. The baby lays on the middle of the bed. Lucifer and him sit on either side and refresh the towels. Adam makes another bottle with warm milk and honey this time. Lucifer softly talks to his son as the baby tiredly drinks. Finally, Jack breaks the fever just before dawn and falls asleep. Adam removes the soaked shirt then covers him with the light sheet he asked for. Lucifer lets out a relieved sigh once Adam confirms that Jack is better.

“Thank you, Adam. Just- thank you. My child was in pain and I wouldn’t even know what to do if not for you.” Lucifer doesn’t take his eyes off the little Prince sleeping with one arm raised above his head and a thumb in his mouth. Adam just nods.

He remembers the nights after Michael’s return from his border patrol. He ran fevers just like this. Adam was there, right there. He didn’t do anything but to merely watch as Michael shrugged off his shirt and trembled until morning when he would go to Joshua. His husband wasn’t much different from this innocent baby on those times. He needed help. Why didn’t Adam make him wet towels at least? Why did he turn a blind eye? Sure fevers aren’t as bad for adults as babies but-Michael was injured too on top of that. Michael felt bad just causing Adam to watch him get his
wound treated thinking he had no experience with blood. Michael apologized for collapsing on him, something that wasn’t even his fault. Adam feels worse every time he remembers something with himself and his husband.

Lucifer notices Adam spaced out and leaves the room, apologizing for keeping him from getting some rest. He offers to take Jack but Adam doesn’t want the baby to be moved and possibly wake up after the terrible night he had. Lucifer offers his own room to Adam to rest instead. Adam refuses again excusing it with wanting to keep an eye on Jack. He will wait until Kelly is up then try to sleep himself. Lucifer leaves him alone after that.

They learn that Dagon was ‘caught’ all according to the plan. At least, Kelly and Adam deduce that much once Lucifer tells Adam that another part of his plan went successfully. Adam loses all hope when Lilith barges into the dining room a few days later to announce Michael is on his way. Did Dagon not make it? Did Michael not believe the note? Did the ring get lost somehow? How much reinforcement does Michael have? Will he be alright?

Adam closes his eyes with a deep breath and repeats his prayer he made a habit of mentally saying whenever he remembers to. God keep him safe. He knows his thoughts about his husband changed drastically but he means it with his whole being. He wants Michael to be safe. He wants Michael to survive this. Whenever he closes his eyes and lets himself think, he finds another reason why he was as much at fault as Michael in everything in their marriage. If Michael is a bad man, then Adam isn't much different than him. He doesn’t believe Michael is bad. He doesn’t. Not anymore. Not like when he got scared by the very first thing his father told him about his fiancé and he looked for a culprit for being forced into a life he didn’t want. Not like when he convinced himself that Michael was a demon there for the sole purpose of torturing him. Michael isn’t bad. So Adam repeats.

God keep him safe.

Things change fast. Lucifer loses his glee. There is a problem. Something isn’t going the way he planned. It doesn’t take long for Adam to learn it. Michael is coming along with Sam. Their combined army is bigger than Lucifer anticipated. Adam smiles genuinely for the first time in weeks. Dagon managed it. Michael somehow founded an army strong enough to beat Lucifer without alerting the younger Prince. He will win this. He will.
When Michael arrives at the forest with his men, Lucifer gathers all his soldiers around the mansion. Adam sits until morning with Kelly. Lucifer hasn’t appeared to him in days. He knows what is to come. When Michael makes it through to the mansion, Lucifer will use Adam as a hostage to get away. There is nothing else he can do. Adam braces himself for the upcoming fight between the Princes. Kelly looks defeated and anticipated at the same time. She is still a little afraid of Michael but she is more afraid of what will happen if Lucifer manages to win. Adam prays that isn’t the case.

The battle gets close. Every single guard leaves the halls. Kelly and Adam wait in Lucifer’s room where it’s safest. Outside, horses and men can be heard. In the early evening, Adam sees small fires and listens to the agonized shouts. Kelly tries to hush her baby. Even little Jack seems to know people are dying outside. Adam tries to stay calm for Jack’s sake at least. He wonders what’s going on out there. Is Michael here himself already? Did he and Lucifer face each other? What is Michael doing right now? Did he get wounded again? Is he okay? Is he-

He jumps when the door slams against the wall being opened with a kick. Before Adam can process what’s going on, Lilith runs inside with her sword drawn and catches Kelly by her neck. “You did this! You sly fox, you did this! That Dagon was your dog! You betrayed our Prince! You will pay!” Jack falls from his mother’s arms and screams. “Lilith what are you doing!? Stop!” He isn’t even heard.

She knows. Lilith knows. Lilith is going to kill them.

Kelly tries to fight the other woman off. Adam bolts to take Jack. The baby doesn’t seem to be hurt. He is only scared. Lilith turns her attention to them. She slowly walks closer. “And you. Who do you think you are!? Just because my Prince took an interest in you… You helped her, didn’t you!? You work for your dear husband.-” She lets out a maniacal laugh. “-Well, I will make sure your husband will never save you. It will all be over for you today. And that little bastard too.” Adam sees Kelly slowly standing up behind Lilith as he backs away to a wall with Jack. Lilith raises her sword. “I will give him as many as he wants if my Prince so wishes. There is no need for either of you.” Adam shuts his eyes tightly and curls himself around Jack, desperate to keep the baby safe.

The blow never comes. Lilith screams. Kelly hit her head with the fire iron. Lilith drops her sword but immediately draws a dagger and turns to Kelly. Adam runs out of the room. He doesn't want to leave Kelly. But Jack is what’s important right now. Adam needs to get him somewhere safe. His mother has to hold her own until Adam can return to help her.

He hears Kelly’s voice even from downstairs. Jack let out a wail ripping his lungs out. Adam runs faster. A part of him knows what happened. He can’t let himself to stall. He needs to protect his
Adam stands frozen in front of the stairs in the parlour.

There are dead men, fallen soldiers all around. There’s blood everywhere. He wants to vomit at the sight of the severed limbs and red coated swords on the ground.

In front of him, Lucifer stands with his back to them, sword drawn and posture ready to attack. Heavy footsteps get closer. Even after weeks, Adam recognizes the pattern.

Michael.

“Get out of here, Adam. Take Jack away, please!” He hears Lucifer almost begging. He doesn’t move. Michael comes just then. Their eyes meet. How he changed in the little time Adam didn’t see him, how tired he looks, how sorrowful… Yet even in that state, Michael has an air of dignity and righteousness in his straight stance and firm hold of his sword. Something shines in his eyes as he looks at Adam. Something like-

Lucifer strikes. Michael is only a second late to move. He doesn’t fall behind. The duel starts. Jack cries louder. “Adam get outside! Your brother is there!” Michael shouts before the two swords clash again. He can’t move past the two Princes to the door. Lucifer is purposely keeping the fight in front of the door. “Give up, brother. You already committed treason. There’s no reason keeping this up! I don’t want to kill you myself. Not like this.” Michael delivers another slash that meets Lucifer’s chainmail. “You know I love you, Michael. I wouldn’t want to do this either. Only that man… I had to get my revenge on him. I had to make my move to not be killed off like my mother in his hands! You know what’s worse? He made you like himself too! You would kill me and my son as soon as you got coronated! You and your father gave me no choice!” A pained expression crosses over Michael’s face. “Lady Becky wouldn’t have wanted you to do this, Lucifer! She only…” Michael stumbles back a few steps. Lucifer strikes with newfound vigor. “Shut up! You wouldn’t know what she wanted! No one knew! She only wanted to be happy with me! She was my mother, she even called you her son too! And for what!? Your family collectively killed her! Don’t you talk about her!”

Adam breathes heavily as he leans back against a wall and holds Jack tighter. The two brothers battle for minutes. Lucifer’s rage gives him power. Michael doesn’t try to strike to kill. He is only defensive. He is still trying to convince his brother to let go. He drops his sword.
Michael falls down.

No. No

Lucifer points his own sword to Michael’s throat.

Adam hears himself scream along with the baby in his arms.

Then he sees it. A fallen soldier right next to him.

His mind stops. He moves before he can process the thought.

He looks down on himself.

His hands are drenched red. His clothes are red. Red.

Lucifer falls to his knees with a pitiful sob.

There’s a sword in his chest entering from his back. Michael watches with wide eyes as his brother collapses in front of him. “L-lucifer! Brother!” He catches the younger man. It’s over. Jack is screaming, crying for the second parent he lost today behind Adam where he sits on the carpet next to the corpse that has just lost his sword.

Adam looks down at his trembling hands.

They are red.
It feels like he is dreaming, floating. The voices come muffled and far away. He can’t feel anything. He can’t understand anything. Sam has his arms wrapped around Adam’s shoulders so tightly, it must hurt actually. He doesn’t know. Adam can’t feel anything. Jack is still crying. Michael is still kneeling on the ground with his lifeless brother over his lap.

What just happened?

Did he-

The return to Enochia is hard.

Adam can’t gather himself no matter what he does. He never lets Jack go. Sam shares his horse so Adam can hold the baby as they ride.

Michael doesn’t share his tent.

Sam talks, whispering soothing words in his ears as they ride together.

Adam can’t process any of it.


Blood.

Lucifer’s blood in his hands.

Adam did it. He killed a man. He killed his friend. He killed Jack’s father. He killed Michael’s brother. He killed Lucifer. How could he do that? How?
Lucifer was going to kill Michael.

How?

Adam killed Lucifer.

The palace is gloomier than Adam remembers even under the orange lights of dawn. But then again, maybe that’s his imagination.

His family is on their way to Enochia. Raphael tells him that much as he looks down at the pathetic state of his nephew in Adam’s arms. He knows. Everyone knows.

Adam goes to their chambers and doesn’t even question the crying servants all around. He doesn’t think to ask why his father is coming to Enochia. He sits on the bed and sings a lullaby his mother used to sing to him. Something about angels guiding and guarding the sweet baby. Jack listens quietly and falls to a deep sleep in no time at all. He is used to Adam now. He sleeps in the arms of his father’s killer.

Adam feels nauseous as he lays the baby down in the middle of the bed and watches him sleep.

Michael comes.

Adam turns to look at him.

He understands. Just by the red rimmed eyes and the sunken shoulders, Adam understands. He stands and walks closer to Michael. There’s nothing he can do. Nothing to help his husband. Ever so slowly, he pulls the older Prince into a hug. They fall to their knees. Michael lets out the most broken sobs ever shake his whole body. He buries his face in Adam’s neck and trembles all over. Right now, he is a child. A small boy seeking comfort. Adam wraps his arms tighter around his husband and accompanies his sobs with silent tears. He doesn’t try to say anything. There is nothing to be said.

The King is dead.
Lucifer is dead too.

Michael’s reign is starting today.

Rest in peace, the King.

Long live the King.

Chapter End Notes

-This was a painful chapter. (D’;)
-Also after long hesitation, I finally decided to reveal Lucifer's mother...
-Poor Mike. And poor Adam. Now they need each other more than ever.
Michael feels numb. He walks slowly through the halls with bowing servants all around. He is wearing heavy ceremonial robes adorned with jewels and golden thread. Everyone follows him in the corner of their eyes as he passes by. He knows he looks anything but the part of a new King just getting coronated. How can he do that? After everything- It has been just two days since he returned to Enochia with Adam and Jack, *since he left his brother behind*.

He remembers the moment he saw Lucifer waiting for him with his sword drawn and Adam behind him, terrified with Jack crying as loud as his tiny self probably could. He remembers the panic, the fear, the desperation on Lucifer’s face. Then anger when Michael uttered his mother’s name. *Lady Becky.* How the woman used to call Michael her son, how she would let both Michael and Lucifer sleep in her bed tucked in on her sides… How she was sent away when Michael was just seven years old… Michael remembers pleading to his brother to let go, to give up. He remembers thinking at that moment, asking himself how it came to that. *How did they become like that?* Lucifer is- was his baby brother. Lucifer was the little boy Michael always felt he had to protect and half raise. How did they fall apart? How did Lucifer came to the point that he felt he had to- *How?* How did Michael not see it coming? How did that malice grow in him? How did it consume Lucifer whole?

Michael remembers the moment his brother raised the sword over his head. He remembers how Lucifer froze with a pained gasp and fell to his knees with red spreading over his white shirt. He remembers catching his little brother in his arms and raising his head to see Adam looking back down at him with wide eyes. Adam had tears over his cheeks and blood on his clothes and hands. Jack was wailing, crying for his father. Adam was trembling horrified at himself, at what he had done. Then Adam’s brother came to surround him in his arms. Michael’s own brother was dead on his lap.

Lucifer had died, Kelly had died, many of his men had died. Lucifer was buried on a silent hill, in a lonely grave. He had died as a traitor. He wouldn’t be allowed to sleep in the holy lands of the Enochian capital. He would forever lay alone and forgotten, covered just to keep the animals from tearing at his flesh and unmarked to keep people from messing with his body. He would never have a funeral. The only one to cry after him would be his infant son who sensed at that moment the sword entered Lucifer’s back that he had lost his father, the one to bring him to life. Lucifer is gone now. Michael will never see him again.

He stops a moment to take a deep breath in front of the doors. From now on, his life will be different. He doesn’t know what the future will bring him and he will never have another minute like this to brace himself against all that. He takes another breath. The servants open the doors from both sides. Michael steps out into the bright day.
People are mostly silent. How can they not be? This is a day of mourning. There are two pyres within the palace walls still ablaze. Kelly and- Michael bites the inside of his cheek to keep his face still. His father. His father is dead, burning now. Michael is taking his place before even his ashes can be collected.

The Head Priest starts talking. He gives the traditional speech of a coronation and says the prayers in ancient Enochian. Michael steps closer to the ledge to be better seen. Adam stands in front of him in ceremonial robes also. He chose darker colors that bring out the tone of his skin deadly white today. Even the silver circlet shining on the dark blonde locks over his head doesn’t give him some kind of life. The Priest finishes talking. Adam opens the velvet cushioned chest on a stool next to him and brings out a golden crown. Michael leans down in a small curtsy. Adam places the crown on his head. Michael stands straight again and looks down at the people in the courtyard. “The King is dead. May God give his unlived years to you. May your reign be strong. May you live healthy and long. Long live the King.” Adam speaks loud. The crowd echoes him. Long live the King. Michael isn’t so sure he wants to.

The Court gathers in the throne room. The nobles come forth one by one. They voice their consolations for King Charles and their good wishes for King Michael and Prince Adam. They all shuffle around slowly in their black clothing. Michael watches silently with his head held high. Next to him, Adam’s eyes are on Jack who sleeps in Dagon’s arms somewhere close by to the two thrones. They almost didn’t see each other at all in the last two days with Michael busy with the preparations of the funerals and his coronation. Adam wasn’t free either. He couldn’t even find time to properly rest after whatever he lived through away from the capital first with Jack crying constantly and second with his family arriving to the palace. Adam stayed in Kelly’s chambers the first night saying he needed to keep an eye on Jack. And last night, Michael didn’t sleep at all instead to sit in the study until dawn when the pyres needed to be lit. Adam woke up a few times but didn’t do more than to stand at the threshold to the study in their chambers and watch Michael for a few minutes each time.

At dawn, Samandriel came with their robes and helped both of them to dress. Afterwards they went to the pyres together. Adam stood with Jack a few meters behind Michael as they watched the fire claim the late King and Lady of the Court. They didn’t say a word to each other. They didn’t even look at each other. Even when Adam was placing the new Crown on Michael’s head, he kept his eyes down. Michael didn’t initiate anything too. He doesn’t have the will or energy to do anything. And he is sure he is the last person Adam would want to talk to. Honestly, he doesn’t feel like talking to Adam too. He just doesn’t have the strength to deal with the curt answers that leave him striving to understand what Adam is feeling or the sharp words and cold eyes he tries to be euphemistic about but fails every time these days. The silence is better. They have long learned to move around each other without bothering one another and avoiding or simply ignoring each other’s presence. This should work until-
There is only one question in Michael’s head. Why? Why did Adam do it? Why did he run that sword through Lucifer’s chest? Adam isn’t the kind who is used to fighting and taking lives. How did he do that just at the right instant? Why? Why didn’t he run with the baby? Michael had managed to take the duel with his brother away from the exit after the first few minutes? Why did Adam stay? Was he in shock? Then how did he manage to move and do something so- He saw Lucifer as his friend, Michael knows that much. Sure, Lucifer kidnapped him but Dagon’s detailed report the day they got back told Michael that he wasn’t treated as a prisoner. He had been offered a place at Lucifer’s side. He hated Enochia. He hated Michael. Lucifer was good. Lucifer was his friend. He loved Jack. So why? Why did he choose Michael? Why did Adam save his life twice now? Maybe he was opposed to killing the King and his husband but Michael is sure Lucifer told him all about the system of the throne being claimed. He is sure Lucifer tried to deceive Adam. So how did Adam not fall for it? Why did he choose Michael?

“Son, I am aware that this is the hardest time of your life. But it is so for my child too. Your father was a good man, a great friend of mine who I will remember for the rest of my days and always pray for. I am so sorry for your loss and I hate to deliver this speech now but you must understand, from today on your life will change drastically. You are a King now. The hard days will pass. Soon the tides will settle and everything will go back to an order. I have to do this before that happens. Because then, it will be almost impossible.” King John takes a moment to take a sip of wine. They are dining alone. It was the older man’s request to do so. Michael already knows what this talk is about. He has been prepared for a while now.

“As only you were coronated as King, is it safe to assume you foresaw this?” Michael doesn’t answer immediately, allowing himself a few seconds to choose his words. Then he nods. “It was only going to be harder and more complicated later if Adam was a King rather than a Prince. I’ve thought about all of that. Yet I didn’t expect for you to be the one to discuss this matter with me the first.” And he didn’t. He was so sure the first thing Adam would say to him after Michael stopped crying and Adam could release him from that embrace of pity would be- “Adam didn’t say anything?” King John looks genuinely confused. Michael doesn’t understand too. He decides to free the older man from that. “We were both very busy in the last two days.” He answers shortly and picks up a small piece of chicken with his fork he probably won’t be able to keep down anyway. King John sighs. “I really hate to do this. You are the son of my old friend. I can’t possibly be angry with you. But I am a father also, one day you too will be. Adam is my child. There is no one, nothing else more important to me than him. I believe we can come to an agreement in this situation.”

Michael chews slowly, forcing himself to not gag. He agrees with the other King. They need to resolve this as soon as possible. Or else, it will be hard not only for the Court of Enochia but for the two royal families too. A part of him tells him this counts as giving up. Another part knows it is the right thing to do. Adam nearly died before his first month as a married man. He got involved with treason and the assassination of a King. He was kidnapped. Now, after all that, Michael can’t. It would be unfair to both of them. This was wrong from the start. “I think so too. I already declared to the Court that the traitor was Lucifer alone and Adam was kidnapped to be kept as a hostage. I will respect my father’s treaty with you, I assure you on that. And-” He has to swallow once before
he can voice the rest. Even talking, his own, voice hurts his throat. “Adam will be ready to leave with you. The divorce process won’t take too long. We will need to talk to the Head Priest. Then the decision will be officially announced to the Court and the treaty will be signed again after negotiations and the parts being kept by my marriage to your son are edited. It all should take a few days at most.”

They don’t say anything for a few seconds. King John seems surprised. Maybe he didn’t expect for Michael to accept this all so soon. Maybe he thought Michael would demand things from him in exchange of his son. Truthfully, Michael would have done anything to benefit his Kingdom on a normal basis but this time… He can’t force Adam to stay any longer. Adam threw his own life in danger. Adam saved Michael’s life two separate times. Michael can’t expect anything more. He has no right. They were trapped in this marriage anyway. Adam was never happy in Enochia. Michael tried, maybe not his best but he still made an effort. If the latest events didn’t happen, if things were different, he still would have kept doing that. Now, he can’t. He is the King. His divorce will no longer cause a war when he is on the same page as the other King. This is the best course of action to take. Soon it will all be over. And Michael will- He will-

He doesn’t know. His head is heavy and his thoughts are all jumbled together. He doesn’t know what he will do. He will take care of the Court matters, sign treaties, throw feasts, send the army out in patrols and rule his kingdom for the rest of his life. Yet he doesn’t know what he will do in the close future. Just trying to think makes his head spin and ache. He decides to focus on the moment instead. “I only ask you to talk to Adam first. I do not believe myself capable of handling that part alone in a time of mourning like this.” King John nods immediately and politely thanks Michael for his wise decision fitting for a King indeed. Soon it will be over.

Soon Adam will be gone.

That night Michael lets Balthazar, his new manservant, to bring him a jug of wine as he sits in front of the fireplace. He hasn’t touched it since before Lucifer poisoned him and their father. He tried to keep himself together as he looked for his brother and Adam. Now, he feels a drink might do him good. He dismisses Balthazar almost immediately. The man leaves slowly if not a little reluctantly. He keeps looking back and pausing all the way to the double doors of the outer chamber. Michael revels the silence after the doors shut closed again. He needs it. Hell knows he needs all the peace and quiet, a week of sleep. He needs to get his head together soon. He needs to snap out of this pathetic phase. He is a King. He should be strong. There are many unsolved matters awaiting him just outside these very chambers.

The Court is already troubled. Nobles and his advisors have started to whisper in his ears. All of them say the same things as if they have secretly met and agreed. But then again, they probably did. Michael knows about the poisonous games, plans being made and broken every moment in the palace’s halls. It is just the nature of life as royalty. Beware of everyone. Trust no one. Have
something dangling over everyone’s heads to keep them in line. As long as their benefit lies with you, they will all love you. Use that. Know everything. See everything. Make them all respect and fear you but be mindful of the balance. Or you will lose everything. Michael grew up as the Crowned Prince. These rules have been drilled into his head at an age so young, he would be still considered a kid. So he listens and thinks. They all say three words. The traitor’s son.

Jack.

Michael remembers the day of Lucifer’s wedding. He remembers Kelly, the pretty young woman who seemed to gather the sunshine on herself in her beauty with her white dress and flowers of every color in her hair. Now, Kelly is gone. Lucifer is too. They have died leaving their baby behind and without anyone. Lucifer did everything to protect his son, he thought it was the only way to do so. Kelly died to buy Adam time to take her baby away from danger. Now Jack is alone in the world.

He remembers the day Jack was born, two weeks early and after eleven hours of struggle. Kelly had woken up screaming. Lucifer had initially thought he was losing them. Michael had been the one to sit and watch as his younger brother paced around to ‘keep an eye on Lucifer’ as their father had wanted. Then the chambermaid had bursted through the doors. Lucifer had run the whole way there. Michael remembers the expression full of pure awe, wonder and adoration on his brother’s face when Dagon brought the tiny bundle and Lucifer saw his sleeping newborn for the first time. It was the only day he smiled, really smiled in years. His brother was happy. All of them were happy. Jack had brought joy to them.

Now, the Court wants Michael to kill Jack. Because Michael is the King. And Lucifer betrayed them. Jack isn’t allowed to live anymore. Michael is supposed to call the deathsmen and send them to Jack’s nursery with nooses in their hands. Mute men in black, murdering his nephew in cold blood and by his order… The tiniest coffin in their hands being carried to his father’s final resting place to join him...

Michael finishes his whole goblet in one swing then refills. Just the thought makes him almost go crazy. He knows this isn’t a first. Infants have been killed in this very palace before. Michael knows the tales of his great grandfather way too well. He knows. Still- Jack is his nephew, the son of his brother. Jack is his family. Jack is a baby. Michael can’t live with himself if he has to condemn him to death. How will he even do it? How?

The little Prince is already in pain. Dagon constantly reports to Michael now. She says Jack doesn’t have an appetite. The baby is upset almost all the time and uses all his energy to cry. Dagon is afraid he will get sick like this. He knows his loss. It is unbelievable but even a mind so young understands what happened to him. He recognizes Kelly and Lucifer’s absence. Even her and Adam’s care can’t do much to help Jack right now. She only hopes time will heal the little wounded heart and make him forget as he grows up.
Michael gives himself another refill. Will Jack even have a chance to grow up in the first place? Will he hide hatred in his heart to fill the gaps his parents left if he does? Will he become like Lucifer? Or is Kelly’s influence stronger? Will an orphan Prince be strong enough to threaten the throne later? Jack isn’t even in line for it anymore. Will he see this as injustice? Will he want revenge? Is it really dangerous to let him live? If not, how will Michael kill his baby nephew?

His head starts spinning. The alcohol doesn’t ease the thoughts swimming in his head. His heart is still heavy. Stubbornly, he takes another gulp of the fine wine. It tastes bitter on his tongue and burns his throat now. He closes his eyes longing for the floating feeling that should leave his mind blissfully empty every time intoxication hits him. It just doesn’t seem to happen tonight. Instead, he thinks about Adam of all.

He remembers the way back to Enochia. How Adam held Jack close almost trying to hide him away from everyone… How Adam tightened his arms around the baby and bowed his head when Michael stepped towards him almost afraid… Almost- As if Michael would- As if they would take Jack away and- Adam loves the baby, everyone knows that. He was friends with both Kelly and Lucifer. Dagon told Michael all about how Adam dedicated himself to caring for Jack as Kelly was trying to get her head together and Lucifer was moving on with his plans. Michael sees how Adam is still doing just that while he and his brothers mourn for the King. Michael doesn’t really understand. He thought Adam would be bitter, angry at everyone who caused him to be kidnapped and undergo who knows what. He thought Adam would walk out, away with his family the day they returned. He saved Jack’s life. But Mihael didn’t expect for him to stick around. Not after what happened to him. Not when he is supposed to be wrecked and furious at the royal family who separated him from his home promising him a great life in peace then made him suffer. He isn’t. He is probably trying to help out as best as he can, says Dagon and Samandriel. Michael doesn’t understand. Why would Adam even feel such an obligation? Is it because Kelly and Lucifer were close to him? Is it because Kelly entrusted her child to him? Is it because- Does he blame himself for Lucifer’s death?

He was the one who delivered the lethal blow, sure. But- Adam is the most innocent in that happening. Michael is the one who couldn’t protect his brother. He is the one who let his brother go mad. He is the one who was never there for his brother throughout their lives. He is the one who knew how hard it all was for Lucifer and still let him think he was all alone. He is the one that brother eventually turned against. Michael is to blame. Michael was duelling with his own brother to the death. Adam only saved Michael. He doesn’t understand that either but Adam saved him. Adam got both him and Jack out of there alive. He isn’t at fault. It’s on Michael. All of it.

It gets hot and stuffy in the room. Michael undoes a few buttons of his shirt with one hand popping one or two out as he drains his goblet again then wipes his mouth with the back of a hand. A voice in his head reminds him that he should have stopped long ago. He will feel this in the morning. That morning looks like it will be a late one with him going like this. He knows he is being unreasonable. He knows wine is never the friend of man, it is idiocy to seek comfort it simply won’t give in the bottom of a jug. Still, this is better than nothing. Michael doesn’t want to think,
doesn’t want to feel. He never drinks this much anyway. He lets himself to make an exception just for tonight. He reaches for a refill. He catches the last few drops carefully and manages to fill only almost half of the goblet. The whole jug is gone. Michael didn’t even notice when he drank all of it. And it certainly didn’t do much to him. His mind is still running. His chest is still tightening. He still sits in the same chair in front of the fireplace that now has ambers only. He is still alone and awake. He still hates everything.

He finishes his drink and wants another but finds he can’t walk more than a few steps before stumbling and throwing himself to the sofa. Maybe this is the sign he has had enough. Maybe the alcohol in his veins will kick in soon and knock him unconscious. The sofa is nice and comfortable anyway. Maybe he should just close his eyes for a few minutes. He does that. Soon, darkness claims him.

“-chael! Mi-”

There is a voice in his head. It echoes all around him yet comes from far. Michael doesn’t know who is talking or what they are saying. He knows he is sleeping. He doesn’t remember how he went to bed. There’s a gross taste in his mouth an his throat is dry. His back hurts too. Then he feels himself starting to shake. “Michael wake up!” He knows that voice. He opens his eyes. Adam’s worried expression relaxes with something that looks like… relief?

“Thank God. Michael what were you thinking drinking that much? Honestly-” Adam takes hold of his shoulders and slowly pulls him into a sitting position. “-you could have poisoned yourself with a whole jug.” Adam braces him against the backrest and puts throw pillows around him to keep him sitting up. Michael watches the younger man walk around the chambers appearing with things every few seconds. He first brings more candles and places them in a safe distance but close enough to light the area. Then comes a chamberpot freshly emptied and washed by the manservants. A fresh shirt, towels and finally water. Adam doesn’t let him hold the cup as he sits next to Michael on the sofa and pours the water in his mouth in small sips.

“Michael you know where you are, who I am, simple things right?” What an unreasonable question. Of course he knows who Adam is. How can he not? How can he forget when he has spent the last half year trying to figure out this same young man? How can he not recognize his very husband who was always a shadow and nothing more, who didn’t deem him worthy to talk to? He knows Adam. He just doesn’t know what Adam is doing. Is he trying to help? Why? Michael isn’t drunk or something. He isn’t. He may have had a little too much but poison himself? With alcohol? He isn’t some intolerant kid. There were days he had a lot more than a mere jug at the camps with his soldiers. This is nothing.

He still nods. He doesn’t feel like talking. “Good. That’s good. You have no difficulty keeping eye
contact and staying upright now. This means you are fine for now. We will keep you up for an hour and see if it’s still kicking in. Besides, you had a whole jug of wine, you will be vomiting it out soon. You will be better awake than asleep when that happens. Then you will sleep this off. You will have a nice bath in the morning and we will get you a draught for aches. You will be fine.”

Adam squeezes one of his hands then gives him more water. It happens exactly as Adam says. Michael empties his stomach into the chamberpot. Adam has to take him to the bathroom with an arm around his waist and help him wash his face and rinse his mouth. Once they get in the bedroom, Adam seems to slow down a little and hesitate on something. Then he brings a set of night clothes for Michael and helps him into them as quickly as possible with Michael’s limbs still heavy and his head hurting. In a few minutes after that, Michael is on the bed in a fetal position with pillows tucked both in front of him and behind his back to keep him on his side. Adam covers him up to his chest then disappears out of Michael’s sight with his own night clothes. Michael dozes off before he sees anything else.

The morning finds Michael trying to make sense of the pounding headache and dizziness. He sits up carefully on the bed shrugging the many pillows around him away and glances at the candle on the bedside table. The time mark says it’s ten in the morning. He can’t believe it for a second. It’s already well into the day and he is just getting up. Then he remembers why. He remembers drinking the previous night. He had overdone it. Then- Then he passed out on the sofa. He remembers those parts well. The rest is fuzzy. He knows Adam came some time and carried him to the bathroom. He knows he must have had help to change and tuck himself in too. But that’s it. He doesn’t know what Adam said, what exactly he did. A quick check on the other side of the bed says Adam must have gotten a few hours in too. That’s good at least. He looks around once more to find water on the bedside table too. He drinks with huge gulps before noticing a small vial and a note. *Turmeric, ginger and mint will taste bad together. Drink all of this so you won’t feel nauseous at least. It should help with the lingering effects from last night.*

He recognizes Adam’s handwriting right away. He is surprised enough to want to stupidly gape at the slip of paper in his hand. Adam helped last night. Adam is helping now. Adam saved his life before yes but he was never like this. He never wanted to be anywhere close to Michael before. He took extra care to not touch him in any way and stay quiet when around him. He is different.

Michael would think Adam would leave him to sleep on the sofa or call Balthazar or something if he thought Michael needed help really bad. This is all… unexpected. What is even happening? Last Michael remembers Adam avoided him at all costs and chose to use Lucifer’s gifts in the night of the solstice. Of course he didn’t know they were poisoned and he might have simply not liked Michael’s but… Last he remembers they were two strangers. What changed in the time Adam was captive with Lucifer? Why did he choose to save Michael again when he could have simply chose Lucifer’s side and- Why is he like this now? Why is he helping Michael?

He doesn’t understand. He drags his feet to the bathroom to wash up after drinking the draught which indeed tastes bad. He decides to get himself together and focus on Court’s work. He
shouldn’t trouble himself with these matters anymore. He will talk to the Head Priest after talking to Adam today. Soon, it will be over. Adam will leave with his family.

The whole day passes with mundane paperwork and accepting a few consolations. King John tells Michael he talked to his son. Michael works in the throne room until eleven then braces himself to go back finally. The manservants have already been dismissed when he arrives at the chambers. He stops on his tracks in front of the door to the bedroom. “May there always be angels to watch over you. To guide you each step of the way. To guard you and keep you safe from all harm. Loo-li, loo-li, lai-lay…” Adam is singing. Jack blinks up at Adam as he quietly drinks from the glass baby bottle Adam holds up for him. The younger man is sitting on the bed with his back against the headboard and the baby over his lap. Michael watches them for some time. Adam finishes the lullaby. Jack falls asleep. Adam sees Michael when he gets up to take Jack back to his nursery and Dagon.

They look at each other silently. Adam lays the baby on the bed then tells a guard to fetch Dagon instead. They sit side by side on Jack’s sides until the woman takes her charge away for the night. Michael takes time to think how to begin this talk. It shouldn’t be hard anyway. Adam should be happy. He is finally getting what he wants. Michael should be happy too. He will be free of the duty heavy on him. He will be free to make his own choice. They will both get their lives back. This will be good for both of them. He inhales deeply to get rid of the unreasonable tightness in his chest. This will be good and for good for them. They can even be good friends once they are no longer forced to share a life. Adam isn’t a bad person. Michael likes to think he isn’t too. They are just-They can’t make this work. They no longer have to. “Father talked to me. I was waiting for you to say something.” Adam beats him to speaking. Michael nods without looking at his husband. He swallows once.

“We can start the process tomorrow. The divorce shouldn’t take long.”

Chapter End Notes

-The lullaby is Sleepsong by Secret Garden. I like that a lot!
-Luci is really gone. I want to cry a little. Michael and Adam have things to work out too. Also Jack...
-Thank you all for reading this far and all your comments. They are much appreciated!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!