Devil’s Advocate

by Praemonitor

Summary

Non-chronological though interconnected ‘minisodes’ — inspired by Devil-themed idioms — to catalogue the misadventures of Lucifer and Chloe, squeezed in-between their respective and occasionally overlapping day jobs. Whether his next hurdle be preternatural or not, the Devil’s finally found his advocate. [ Deckerstar, pure and simple. ]

Minisode I - Lucifer babysits. That's all.
Minisode II - Lucifer and Chloe weather a storm.
Minisode III - Lucifer earns back his wings in a bloodier fashion.
Minisode IV - Maze learns a thing or two from Dante's Inferno.
Minisode V - Maze and Chloe take on the original she-devil.
Minisode VI - The Christmas Minisode. My personal favorite.
Minisode VII - Chloe meets the family.
Minisode VIII - Enter a certain petty dabbler in the dark arts.
Minisode IX - Lucifer fractures a wing.
Minisode X - Lucifer and Chloe go to Hell. Literally.
With all the spare time I don’t have, obviously I’ve gone and challenged myself: write Lucifer ‘minisodes’ inspired by every Devil reference, idiom, and catch-phrase in common vernacular. From the sidelines, I’ve seen a lot of fandoms come and go, and this little newborn carries a beautiful message, a healthy splash of controversy, and the potential to grow into something great. C’mon, join me in my minisode mission. Apparently the dark side doesn’t actually have cookies, but the Devil does make a mean omelet.

The ever-growing minisode master list, too daunting for one lonely writer to tackle alone:
- Devil’s Advocate
- Heaven for Climate, Hell for Company
- Make the Devil Sweat
- Come Hell or High Water
- Better the Devil You Know
- Devil of a Job
- When Hell Freezes Over
- Devil Take the Hindmost
- Hot as Hell
- Fallen Angel
- Deal with the Devil
- Devil of a Time
- Devil-May-Care
- Angel with a Shotgun
- Hell to Pay
- Give the Devil His Due
- Lucky Devil
- Play the Devil
- Jersey Devil
- Speak of the Devil
- Devil’s in the Details
- The Devil Made Me Do It
- What the Devil?
- Devil Went Down to Georgia
- Poor Devil
- Hell Hath No Fury
- Living Hell
- To Hell in a Handbasket
- Pavement on the Road to Hell
- The Devil Walks Amongst Us
- The Devil Wears Prada

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Starting with an oldie but goodie,
Minisode I:  
When Hell Freezes Over

With all the confidence she could fake, Chloe marched into Lux.

Per usual, Lucifer sat at his bar, tumbler in one hand, decanter in the other, rocking a three-piece suit and smelling of expensive whiskey at ten o’clock in the morning on a Sunday. If that man ever dared to drink water or wear t-shirts, he kept it very hush-hush.

“Morning, detective. Afraid you’re about twelve hours late for the party.” He gestured about the club, only half-cleaned, strewn with empty cocktails and other unmentionable evidence of debauchery. “Or twelve hours early,” contemplated Lucifer, “depending how you look at it.”

Chloe crossed her arms and tapped her boot. He knew her well enough to recognize the ‘I’ve-got-a-case’ look when he saw it.

Lucifer stood with a flourish and bowed deep at the waist. “What d’you need of me?” He clapped and rubbed his hands. “A hammer of justice, a ruthless smiter of the wicked and d— ”

“I need you to babysit.”

Lucifer barked more than laughed. “As you once aptly put: when Hell freezes over.”

Fully anticipating rejection, Chloe launched into an explanatory tirade. Huge drug-bust downtown. She, Dan, the whole department called in. Her mother vacationing with her new beau in Punta Cana. The usual babysitter studying for finals. Nobody to watch Trixie—

“I’m your consultant, not your nanny!” ranted Lucifer. “Hire somebody off Craigslist.”

“And I’m a homicide detective,” gaped Chloe. “D’you know how many horror stories begin with the words, ‘hire somebody off Craigslist?’”

Mere mention of putting her daughter in danger plucked some inexplicably empathetic cord within the Prince of Darkness. His jaw twitched, and his head tilted, hallmark proof that Lucifer the Eternal Asshat was locked in mortal combat with Lucifer the Bleeding Heart.

As happened more often than not nowadays, the later won. Hands down.

“I won’t be braiding hair or indulging that ninja-chemist nonsense.” He sighed, displeased but resigned, and took one last, very generous slug of whiskey. “And the Underworld best batten down its hatches for a bloody blizzard tonight.”

As expected, Trixie was over the moon about this arrangement.

“Can we make popcorn,” harangued the child, “and watch movies all day?”

Lucifer’s face ignited in that devilish grin. “We can, indeed.” He knelt to her level. “But only if you’re a dear and tell me where your mother’s hidden Hot Tub Hi—”

A pink and frilly Barbie DVD flew out of nowhere and clocked Lucifer square in the jaw. Chloe whistled innocently as he nursed his wounds, which actually bruised now. “Teeth brushed, homework done, tucked in by nine.” Trixie loudly protested, but Chloe was louder. “It’s a school night!”
Paying no attention whatsoever to the house rules, Lucifer had already hacked into Chloe’s tablet and found Angry Birds. “Oh, splendid. An outlet for my rage.”

Chloe pulled him aside, quite serious. “Trix has trouble sleeping when I’m not home.” She glanced over her shoulder at the annoyingly perceptive child, currently mulling over her favorite cartoons On Demand. “Don’t worry if she stays up reading until I’m back, or if she asks to text me before bedtime, or—”

“I lorded over Hell since time immemorial,” assured Lucifer. “I got this.”

The sting took about fourteen hours, and she didn’t return home until well past midnight.

Chloe eased open the front door and crept into her dark living room, where the Mulan DVD menu played ‘Reflection’ on endless repeat and a blinking red battery flashed across the forgotten iPad upon Lucifer’s lap.

He snored a little, unnervingly at home on her sofa, lax face illuminated in the dim light of Disney icons and a tablet in desperate need of charging. Trixie was fast asleep in the crook of his elbow and stirred only when her mother eased her into her arms.

Chloe tried her best not to disturb the Devil himself. Still, better Satan for a babysitter than the Craigslist Killer.

And miracle of miracles, he actually got Trixie to sleep. Without her mother around.

“We watched all the sing-alongs, and I beat him at Candy Crush,” whispered Trixie, bleary but glowing. “He let me stay up past bedtime, but I’m not supposed to tell.”

Chloe snorted, carrying the little one to bed and tucking her in. “How devious.”

Trixie hugged her Uglydoll. “Don’t let him leave in the morning. Luci promised to make waffles.” She yawned, though still smiling. “We have a deal. He’s not allowed to back out on deals.”

Chloe kissed her forehead, and Trixie was asleep again before mother could ask daughter to expand upon her end of the waffle-deal. Chloe flipped on the nightlight, turned to the doorway, and came face-to-face with tall, dark, and hellish.

“Jesus, quit that,” she whispered, covering her heart. “You scared me.”

“Wrong Biblical figurehead,” corrected Lucifer with a sleepy smile. “The Messiah charges double my rate for babysitting. I’m a much better hourly value. And I can cook more than bread and wine.”

Chloe crossed her arms. “I hope my daughter didn’t sell her soul for waffles.”

“No, but she did promise to go to sleep without argument, if I stayed to make her breakfast tomorrow.” He tried and failed to flatten the wrinkles in his once-pristine dress shirt. “A little bribery goes a long way, detective.”

Chloe caught his forearm as he shuffled back toward the couch.

Lucifer braced himself to get kicked out — again. “A deal’s a deal,” he implored. “I’ve no choice but to stay here until morning, and what would the neighbors think about a handsome Devil loitering on your doorstep?”

“You’ll toss and turn all night on that sofa.” Chloe rolled her eyes. “C’mon, you earned yourself a
bed.”

Even in the dark, that telltale flicker behind his eyes burned sinister and obvious, and his voice dropped a decibel or two. “Now for bonuses like that, I do charge extra.”

She clarified, “A guest bed.” Chloe pointed him down the hall and to the left, laying the ground-rules before she herself shattered them. Save her, forgive her, protect her, but Lucifer had grown on her, roguish and tempting and oh so beautiful, salacious smile and all, and she need only say the word to have him.

Though willpower, self-worth, and ‘forgetting’ to shave her legs were surprisingly effective armor.

Before vanishing into the spare room, he paused. “How’d the case go?”

Small talk took her aback. “Er— fine. Caught the bad guys. Saved the good ones. Nobody got hurt.”

“Glad to hear. G’night.” And that was that.

Chloe inched toward her own bedroom, her very safe and very empty bedroom, intent on locking the door behind her and barricading it with an armoire, because Lucifer was the Devil after all. A girl couldn’t be too careful.

Though she realized to her utmost horror, heartstrings humming at his mussed hair and gentle manner, such a fortress wasn’t as much about keeping Lucifer out anymore as keeping Chloe in.

Chapter End Notes

I spotted a few requests for Lucifer’s adventures-in-babysitting. By the time I post, this may not be the first nor best of its kind, but there you have it. Short, sweet, hopefully in-character. Would love your thoughts.
Come Hell or High Water

Chapter Notes

All my love to everyone for taking time out of your busy day to post such beautiful comments. You're an inspiration.

Also, first addendum to my minisode to-do list, and hopefully the first of many. If you think of more, please share!
- Forbidden Fruit
- Dance with the Devil
- Idle Hands
- Speak of the Devil
- Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea
- Devil’s Own

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

While the Devil’s away his demons will play,

**Minisode II:**

**Come Hell or High Water**

The California skies opened, and for four days it rained like Heaven was melting.

On the fifth day, it kept raining, and the public schools closed due to mudslides. On Chloe’s order, Dan whisked their daughter inland to stay with his parents until the storm blew over. Except it never did.

On the sixth day, it kept raining, and the city declared a state of emergency. She ignored the evacuation protocol. Big mistake. Chloe’s house flooded that night, and her power went out. She survived off Dasani, flashlights, and a good book.

On the seventh day, when it just kept on raining and her kitchen closely resembled a swamp, she finally swallowed her pride and called the one person left in L.A. stupider than her.

First, Lucifer berated her. “D’you expect me to swim to Beverly Hills?!” Though an asshole he might be, an easily thwarted asshole he was not. “Fuck it. Don’t worry. I know a guy. Ows me a favor. We’ll get you outta there.” She protested, content to drive herself downtown in the squad car, but he’d hear none of it. “Like hell you will. Noah and his bloody ark would be hard-pressed to survive this deluge.”

How he simply ‘knew a guy’ with an on-call hovercraft, Chloe would never know, but that’s how the Devil himself rescued her from the floodwaters that washed out her road, and she ended up the unwitting houseguest — hostage? — of Lucifer Morningstar.

She peered out his floor-to-ceiling windows, smattered with rain, quaking with thunder, to the yellow-green storm clouds outside. “I’ve never seen rain like this before.”

“I have.” Lucifer rubbed his face, over his nose and down his scruff. “This is some Old Testament
shit, the work of an ala.” Chloe stared blankly, and he elaborated. “An ala — elemental, weather
demon. Legions of them muck about Hell as we speak, responsible for every natural disaster since
the beginning of time. Meteorites, eruptions, droughts, hurricanes, floods, plagues—” Lucifer
clucked his tongue. “Where’d you think the Black Death came from?”

Chloe blinked, and these were the moments when her ‘I’m-not-afraid-of-you’ veneer wavered a bit
on its foundation. “You orchestrated the bubonic plague?”

“Of course not,” scoffed Lucifer, “but my job was to lock up the demons that did. Unfortunately,
with millions of them and only one of me, an ala sneaks out every so often to raise a little Hell on
Earth.” He pointed flippanly beyond the window at the downpour.

This did nothing for her nerves. Chloe backpedalled. “You mentioned Noah’s flood, twice now—”

Lucifer sat at his piano and helped himself to whiskey from a bottle more expensive than her laptop.
“The one and only time my father purposefully sicced an ala upon the world.” He plunked a few
discordant notes, before sweeping into the Devil’s Trill. “We all do things we regret now and then.”

Chloe slammed the fallboard, nearly smushing Lucifer’s fingers. “A primordial storm-god is
wreaking havoc on Greater Los Angeles, and we’re gonna do something about it before this city
goes the way of Atlantis.” A lightningbolt split the sky, and the power flickered in and out. They
turned on the weather channel before the electricity cut off permanently.

The weatherman was doom-and-gloom. “—last tropical storm to strike the West Coast made landfall
in 1939 and is dwarfed beneath the magnitude of the Pacific hurricane currently threatening southern
California and Mexico. Meteorologists are baffled at its near-Biblical proportions and strongly
recommend anyone in its direct path seeks immediate shelter in a windowless—”

Chloe crossed her arms at Lucifer. “Please tell me this demon is your old drinking buddy, and we
can barter for our lives with liquor and inside jokes.”

He looked downcast. “Imagine negotiating with an earthquake, and that’s about as effective as
pleading your case to an ala.” Lucifer gestured vaguely to his library before vanishing into the
kitchen. “I’ve got a text on Mesopotamian deities, and any self-respecting demon can’t resist a
sacrificial offering—”

While he was gone, she searched his bookshelves, variably stocked with everything from the Great
Gatsby to Homer’s Iliad and Dr. Seuss —”Linda thought I’d find the Grinch accessible and familiar.
Not a bloody clue why.” — but nothing that resembled a treatise on the supernatural.

Upon his return, milk jug and jar of honey in hand, Lucifer corrected her. “No, no, no.” He dragged
Chloe toward the decorative stone column immediately adjacent to his bookshelves. Random dots
and lines pocked its surface. “The text isn’t a book, detective. It’s here: Sumerian cuneiform,
salvaged from Kish after the Akkadian coup.”

Chloe glared. “I can’t read Sumerian.”

Lucifer shook his head in exasperation. “Illiterate savage.”

Turns out, offering milk and honey in appeasement of a Sumerian storm-god made things a lot worse
before they got better. The moment Lucifer set said groceries onto his porch, the skies grew even
darker, and the wind howled.

He latched the glass doors and scrambled back inside, soaked to the bone. “Probably best we duck-
“D’you even have a windowless room in this fishbowl?”

Lucifer ushered her into the master bathroom. Disgustingly luxurious, exactly like the rest of his penthouse, and so very him — black marble and etched glass and a shower with more heads and knobs than any one person could possibly want or need.

“Stay put,” he barked at her, and as the skyscraper trembled with another thunderclap Chloe obliged to obey. “I’ll drag the mattress in here.”

Vehement objection to ‘the mattress,’ as a singular noun, didn’t occur to her until the makeshift bed — their bed, at least for tonight — materialized in the middle of his travertine floor, draped in Egyptian cotton and decadent microfiber. And only when the power finally shorted out, and Lucifer lit a host of candles, and his rain-wet hair dried a little curly, did Chloe realize how deep a hole she’d dug.

In a remarkably uncharacteristic display of social appropriateness, he excused himself to his bedroom to change into dry clothes and returned carrying a pallet of bottled water. The man did own t-shirts and drink not-whiskey, as if today weren’t already chock-full of surprises. Lucifer also tossed her sweatpants and a Yosemite hoodie in a neatly folded stack; they smelled like laundry detergent and were oversized enough to belong to him, not a one-night stand.

Well, not a female one.

Her shock clearly showed. “Oh, sorry,” teased Lucifer, “d’you prefer to sleep in that pantsuit?”

Tonight she sure as hell would. Chloe curled into the farthest corner of the mattress, back to Lucifer, eyes slammed shut, determined not to so much as brush toes with him. She could almost hear him roll his eyes.

“Were I planning to molest you, why would I wait until now?” He huffed, turning his back to her too, like a little child giving his friend the cold-shoulder at a sleepover.

Chloe fell asleep to the relentless, pounding rain and unexpected comfort she took in his breathing.

Goddamn, was it ever cold.

Chloe woke from a dead sleep to every exhale condensing midair. She buried herself deeper under the blankets, shivering incessantly. The sound of rain had evolved into hammering hailstones, and this frigid chill in southern California was as supernatural as the storm. Mirrors in the bathroom had frosted over, and a zen fountain on the vanity was frozen solid.

This ala packed an almighty punch. Maybe it was the one from Noah’s flood, back for round two.

She only realized Lucifer was awake when he tugged on her shoulder, urging her closer. “Come here.” Chloe resisted, stubborn as an ox. “Friends help friends, detective.” She felt him shivering and took an existential half-second to ponder if the Devil had ever shivered before, given his previous and infamously toasty accommodations. “Hellspawn, remember? I hate the cold.”

He so rarely used his preternatural strength against her, but surviving Biblical floods and hailstorms was an apparent exception. Chloe found herself crushed against his chest, wrapped tight in his arms, and discovered that Lucifer probably felt so cold because he radiated heat, bled it like a breached artery, oh so warm, warmer than he should’ve been, blazing with an inner fire that stemmed from—
well, Hell itself.

But her shivering slowed, then his, until each grudgingly conceded to needing the other if they wanted to outlast the ala. Chloe tucked her head under his chin. Lucifer smelled like rainwater and fine bourbon, and his pulse thrummed against her cheek. He became a little more human every day, but never really would be.

“What’s Hell like?” she asked in a whisper, half-hoping he was asleep again and wouldn’t hear.

Instead he sighed, big and deep. They were bundled so close that the rise and fall of his chest shifted the axis of her entire universe. “You don’t need to know,” was his response. “You’ll never go there.”

“But it’s where you’re from, so I’d like to know.”

Lucifer took several long minutes to compose his answer. Odd, almost unheard of, from the man never without a comeback. “Hell is loud and stifling, filled to the brim with souls, but desolate and lonely all the same.” His fingertips absently rubbed the small of her back. Chloe ignored it. He didn’t even notice he was doing it. “Maze misses home, misses me the way I used to be.”

Chloe still feigned irritation and mere tolerance of him, but what if Lucifer tired of L.A. like he once tired of Hell? What if one day she woke and he was gone, whether by choice or force? Amenadiel was relentless, and Lucifer as changing as the tide.

She hadn’t prayed in a helluva long time, but tonight seemed as good a night as any to try. God, I know what you do with this clusterfuck of an estranged son is none of my business, but if you’re listening: please let me keep him.

That plucked her courage enough to ask, though afraid of the answer, “D’you miss home too?”

“Yes.” He didn’t even hesitate, and her heart plummeted. “But Hell’s never been my home.”

Come daybreak, they were pleasantly surprised to be above water and not engulfed in a glacier. Every window in his condo had shattered, spewing broken glass. The water damage was vast, but his piano and whiskey-wall survived. Chloe dreaded returning to her mother's cottage and surveying the fallout.

But the sun was up, the sky cloudless, the breezes balmy, and the storm had finally passed.

Lucifer crunched over glass shards and crept onto his balcony to recover a drained-dry milk jug and jar of honey. “Demon-wrangling roomie fist-bump,” he offered to Chloe, who was far too overjoyed at the sight of sunlight and dry land to deny him.

He then handed her the empty jug. “What the hell, Lucifer— ?”

“Need you to pop by the grocer, honey. We’re out of milk.”

Chapter End Notes

Needed my monster-of-the-week fix, and here it is. Also inspired by inordinate amounts of time spent pausing-and-replaying scenes that feature Lucifer’s condo, 100% necessary to appreciate all the thoughtful details put into this show. He actually does
have some sort of ancient writing on his walls, though I'm not certain it's cuneiform. Light bedtime reading, I presume.
Give the Devil His Due

Chapter Notes

From the bottom of my heart, thanks to each and every one of you for your praise and support. It means more than you can possibly know. As you may've noticed, I only recently realized I can answer comments individually! Brace yourselves to be showered with love, and be sure to read through the comments to participate in minisode brainstorming. You guys are fantastically creative; I sincerely hope we see your ideas brought to life in fanfic and canon alike!

Quick reminder these minisodes are non-chronological, to prevent confusion when Lucifer is wingless once more in subsequent installments.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"No good deed goes unpunished..."

Minisode III:
Give the Devil His Due

After an apocalyptic battle hard-won against Amenadiel — and taking an Enochian arrow to the heart in selfless defense of Trixie — Lucifer earned back his wings.

All too human now, bleeding out and barely breathing, Lucifer crumpled beneath the mortal wound. Someone sobbed his name, over and over — Trixie, it's Trixie, oh, God, he gave his life for hers. Angels and demons clashed around them, the Heavenly Host against Amenadiel’s rebels. Chloe clutched her daughter to her chest while the child cried, hysterical and hellbent in her futile attempts to wake a dead man.

When a pinpoint of pure white light ignited on the eastern horizon, a star bright enough to contend with encroaching sunrise, nobody but Chloe and the archangel Michael noticed. “What’s that?” she whispered, awestruck despite the carnage, eyes inexplicably drawn to the morning sky.

The archangel froze, mid-swing of his greatsword. “Impossible. It’s not risen for eons.”

“What hasn’t?”

“The Morningstar.”

Chloe found him standing shirtless in his bathroom, freshly showered, back to the mirror and craning his neck to gape at his now-scarless skin. By whatever magic governed angels, flesh, muscle, and bone camouflaged his newborn wings. Even Lucifer seemed somewhat skeptical that they were there.

He noticed her, reflected in the mirror. “Fucking tedious, scrubbing blood out of feathers,” griped Lucifer, but he was awful at hiding his joy over being made whole once more. Though the path to reconciliation with his father would inevitably wind and twist, they’d taken those first few baby-steps at long last.
No sooner had the Morningstar burst back to life high above than did Lucifer below. He surged off the pavement, agonized and writhing in pain, clawing frantically at his shoulders. Chloe and Trixie shrank away, beyond thunderstruck. Blood still oozed from somewhere, staining the back of his blue button-down purple.

“Get down,” ordered the archangel Michael. “Get down, get down, get down!”

Chloe and Trixie hit the asphalt in the nick of time, before razor-sharp feathers erupted from Lucifer’s back like a bursting chrysalis, snow-white and spectacular, even dripping with rivulets of ruby-red blood.

Michael barely even gave him a moment to breathe before tossing an Enochian saber his way. “Rise again with your star, big brother, and remind these rebels what all five archangels can achieve together.”

“Let me see them.” Perhaps it was a faux pas to demand an angel bare his wings, but their very first conversation concluded with Lucifer questioning if they’d ever had sex. Chloe was entitled to a few minimally invasive requests, thank you very much. “Now they’re not bloody and gross anymore.”

Lucifer nodded mechanically, void of sass and attitude, then gestured for her to step back. “My fine motor isn’t what it used to— uh—” He looked sheepish, suffering performance anxiety for the first time, and rolled his shoulders in preparation. “Still reacquainting myself.”

Chloe didn’t poke fun. She tried to imagine being paralyzed for several billion years, then suddenly regaining her legs. Lucifer might be out of practice, but flying was the angelic equivalent of riding a bicycle. In the midst of battle, he’d taken to the sky alongside his siblings, naught but a false-start. Like his soul, Lucifer’s body never truly forgot how to be an angel.

A soft rustle and whoosh were the only warning before alabaster wings burst from his back. Lucifer stared, wide-eyed at his own reflection, while Chloe approached with childlike wonder.

His wingspan was at least twelve feet, probably fourteen at full extension, though in close quarters he kept them folded. Each flight-feather had a central vane with a thousand tiny barbules, and underneath was a bed of pillow-soft downy fluff.

Thoughtlessly, Chloe stroked one wing. He flinched, and she cursed inwardly. How inconsiderate, especially since he once begged her not to touch his scars. Those wings were deeply precious and personal, and incredibly rude to grope, because the last time somebody touched them was to hack them off.

She pulled back. “Sorry.”

“No, it’s— it’s fine.” It really wasn’t. She could tell from his tone of voice. For the Devil himself, personal space was historically a non-issue, except when his wings — or lack thereof — were concerned. Even his suggestive, “Do be gentle with me, darling,” came out a little more imploring than perverse.

Chloe stood enraptured with his wings, academically of course, and didn’t dare let her imagination run amok, for fear of fanning that nuisance of desire into a rampaging wildfire. She traced the longest primary up its vane and down again, then rested her hand on its leading edge. When his feathers caught the light, they shone like mother-of-pearl.

This man, this angel, forfeit his life to save her baby girl. Chloe owed him and his family an immeasurable debt, and perhaps her gratitude was best channeled to reunite another parent and child.
She locked eyes with Lucifer in the mirror. “You really need to talk to your dad now.”

His face hardened immediately, and he didn’t even grace her with an answer before sheathing his wings and marching from the bathroom like a petulant toddler.

Chloe gave chase. “Restoring your wings, hanging your star back in the sky — he’s extended the olive branch!” She followed Lucifer through his living room and onto the balcony. “Your father misses you, as much as your brothers and sisters do, and as much as you miss him. Maybe more.”

"Idealistic and foolish whimsy, detective. My father hates nothing more than the Devil." Lucifer slapped on a carefree mask, but the thought cut deep. "Everyone knows that."

Chloe jerked her thumb skyward at the Morningstar, blazing on the eastern horizon, impervious to sunrise and sunset and driving bonkers every astronomer on Earth with the impossibility of its miraculous arrival. Science hypothesized an uncharted comet or supernova, while the faithful exalted a second coming for the Star of Bethlehem. Whispers of government conspiracy flooded the internet. Aliens, insisted the History Channel.

"They're wrong. You're wrong." Chloe never believed anything as ardently as she believed this. "Your father loves you, always has, throughout the War, after the Fall. He's loved you since creation itself, Lucifer, ever since you first opened your eyes and smiled at him."

Lucifer studied her in that fervent and disarming way. "How can you possibly know that?"

"Because I'm a parent too." But she’d also known Lucifer too long to delude herself. Logic and reason held no sway with this man, so she descended to his level instead. "Promise to give your dad the same second chance he's giving you. I'll make you a deal."

His interest piqued. Once the Devil, always the Devil. Wings be damned.

“You fly your feathered ass topside and have a sit-down with your father,” bargained Chloe. “In return, I’ll—" She stumbled, unsure where to draw the line, and Lucifer’s expectant gaze damn-near drilled a hole straight through her. Fully cognizant of the consequences, Chloe threw herself to the wolves. “Name your price.”

A beat. Lucifer searched her, that lascivious grin blooming. “Anything?”

Chloe clenched her jaw against the mistake she was doomed to make from the start. “Anything.”

She braced herself for a bodice-ripping frenzy, maybe even welcomed it. All those years of resistance, of self-denial, of back-and-forth, Chloe peacefully conceded. He’d finally won, he’d finally broken her, he’d finally have her, take her, ravish her, ruin her, and forget her, just like he always planned.

Except he…didn’t.

Still they stood on his penthouse balcony, overlooking their flawed-but-flawless City of Angels with a socially acceptable distance between them, until Lucifer set his terms. “A deal it is. I'll make a cameo in Heaven and play nice with my father.” He held out a hand in invitation. “But only if you come with me.”

Chapter End Notes
Not sure if this counts as Lucifer taking Chloe home to meet the folks, but that’s sure what it feels like.

At the end of this minisode, I originally intended to include a rather lengthy meta with my fan-theories involving Lucifer’s plot, but it contains religious and Christian themes. Please let me know if you might be interested to read such a thing, or if it might unintentionally offend. I’m happy to include a preface warning for those who’d rather opt out.
Idle Hands

Chapter Notes

Minisode inspired by and dedicated to RheaofSaturn. May the plot bunnies hop, indeed. :) Please note that other fabulous Lucifer fics also have an 'idle hands' theme, so be sure to check those out too. It's never my intention to step on a fellow author's toes!!

Warning for Chloe's interpretation of Bible verses, no disrespect meant. For clarity's sake, I also felt obligated to create an appendix on Dante's Inferno at the end of this minisode.

Finally, second addendum to the minisode master list. Thank you for all your fabulous suggestions, and keep 'em coming!
- Hell's Bells
- Highway to Hell
- Fresh Hell
- Hellraiser
- Locked Out of Heaven

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Remember what they say about,
Minisode IV:
Idle Hands

Google was taunting her.

Properly caffeinated and a work-free week ahead, Chloe grappled with the sheer magnitude of possibilities behind that blank search-bar and its blinking cursor. Department policy dictated seven to ten days of mandatory leave for active-duty officers causing or sustaining injury after unplanned discharge of a firearm. Legal investigation, mental health break, etcetera.

Two shootings in as many months had her name plastered all over them: once when she and Jimmy Barnes put bullets in each other, once when she almost put a bullet in Lucifer.
"For the love of God, Decker." The lieutenant was drowning in an Everest-worthy avalanche of paperwork, red tape, and ass-kissing because of one uppity detective. "Take a damn vacation."

If a week off was her only slap on the wrist for intentionally shooting Lucifer in the quadriceps, then Chloe counted her blessings. He could’ve gotten her fired. He could’ve pressed charges. He could’ve claimed she was a trigger-happy psycho, and what if Social Services took Trixie away—

Instead, he lied to protect her. Or at least told half-truths.

Lucifer never lied, so he claimed. I'm the Devil.

Ever since that man wormed his way into her life, normalcy and Newtonian physics crumbled into a psychedelic shitshow of the unexplained. A death-defying playboy whose slight-of-hand would impress Houdini. Jimmy Barnes, reduced from calculating killer to looney-tune. Hypnotism on-call.
Projectiles plucked midair. Teleporting thirty feet in an instant. Superhuman strength. Not to mention those crescent-wounds on Lucifer’s back, ragged, otherworldly, scorched into him, patterned like fossil feathers…

And in the dank and foreboding bowels of that factory, his face in the mirror. God, his face, like a demon from her nightmares. Skin flaming red, eyes alight with hellfire. She saw it. She saw something. Chloe was so certain that she rose to his challenge and shot him. But then the spell evaporated, and Lucifer was himself again: dark hair, dark eyes, dark intent, and bleeding red as any mortal should.

He was so surprised, like he’d never seen his own blood before.

Chloe and Google had a standoff. Google won. She started typing and opened Pandora’s box.

* lucifer morningstar

Up popped a gaudy website for Lux, then celebrity gossip and local news about his recent galavants with the LAPD. Chloe herself guest-starred in a few candids, always looking very short and very blonde and very pissy alongside six feet of immaturity and sass.

She glanced around her kitchen, though her mother was still visiting girlfriends in Manhattan, and Trixie was still at her dad’s, and who else might possibly be around to judge? Chloe added a single, reality-warping word to the search-bar.

* lucifer morningstar devil

Ask, oh Google, and ye shall receive.

Isaiah 14:12 — "How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"

Genesis 3:1 — "...the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field...and he said unto the woman, 'Hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?'"

Strange, how easily she envisioned her Lucifer in the Biblical role, slinking through a paradisiacal Eden, forbidden fruit in hand and plotting the Fall of Man. "C'mon, blossom." He'd smolder at Eve, offering the infamous apple and wearing naught but that devilish grin. His victim never stood a chance. "Just one little bite— there's a good girl."

Revelations 12:7 - 12:9 — "And there was War in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon...and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. He was cast out into the Earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Abundant sculptures and paintings depicted this drama and savagery, always a flurry of swords and white wings against horrific demons, or the victorious archangel looming over his fallen brother, or the lone, leathery Devil plummeting through parted clouds to Earth. Chloe read the passage over and over. She tried and failed to see anything but Lucifer’s broken, boyish face when she touched the scars on his back.

If there was War in Heaven, what hope was left for peace anywhere else?

Chloe jerked from her reverie and slammed her laptop shut. That madman’s delusions were contagious. Lucifer Morningstar was *not* the Devil, and these were only stories, allegories, lessons for life. No angels or demons, no divine plan, no grander scheme. Chloe did good deeds not because she feared damnation in the next world, but rather to make this world a better one.
Not yet twelve hours into her sabbatical, she was already stir-crazy, idle far too long. Chloe hopped in the car to run some unnecessary errands. Costco for stamps and paper towels. CVS for prescription refills. Grocery for milk and honey and to replenish a dwindling stock of Trixie’s favorite Poptarts.

She still ended her afternoon at the bookstore, purchasing a hardback of Dante’s *the Divine Comedy.*

She reread *Inferno* three times during her vacation and started a fourth over lunch.

Her leave ended as the Paola Cortez case started, and every day since Lucifer bounced into the precinct like consultants owned the place. Lieutenant Monroe always greeted him with a token, "Mr. Morningstar," and stared unabashedly at his ass. Chloe declared a small miracle if the department survived into its next fiscal year without somebody catching her boss and her ‘partner’ in the supply closet.

She bookmarked her page and tucked away the hardback to avoid unruly questions and Devil-themed banter. Unfortunately, her play wasn’t quite sneaky enough today.

“Ooh, what’s she reading?” Lucifer tossed his jacket over the back of her chair, rolled his sleeves to the elbows, and perched on her desk.

Chloe leaned conspiringly close, then shot him down. “None of your business.”

He gestured at her face. “I know shame when I see it. A naughty book, yeah? ” Lucifer whispered in an absurd not-whisper, so everyone heard him loud and clear. “Fess up, and let’s have a look, so you and I and the lieutenant can iron out all those kinky details lat— ”

“If you must know.” Chloe dropped the hardback in his lap. “*The Divine Comedy.*” Lucifer stared at the book a half-second too long. “Part one of three, Dante’s *Inferno,*” she prompted. “And before you go off about fictional depictions of Heaven and Hell getting it all wrong— ”

“Quite the contrary, detective. I said movies and television get it wrong.” Lucifer opened the text like a treasured storybook. “Though Milton demonstrates better grasp of our architecture and politics, Alighieri's geography is en pointe.” He skimmed a few more pages. “That overachiever lists all ten subcircles of the Malebolge in order.” Lucifer whistled. “Even I don’t have that memorized anymore.”

Perhaps Chloe shouldn't criticize Olivia Monroe's taste so harshly; the man was handsome, single, a small business owner, dabbled in classic poetry, and was only the tiniest bit schizophrenic. In Los Angeles, a girl could do much worse. “You've really read *Paradise Lost* and *Inferno*?”

Lucifer shot her a condescending look. “I'm top billing in both.”

She ignored him, flipping through her handwritten notes. He raised an eyebrow. “Don't patronize me.” Chloe puffed in self-defense. "The story’s complicated. I had to draw a Hell-map.”

"Oh, lovely. We can update the welcome pamphlet." He examined her diagrams. “Primitive, but surprisingly accurate.” Lucifer pointed at the very bottom of her conical doodle, where a frowning stick-figure boasted horns and a pitchfork. “Is that supposed to be me?”

Again, she refused to lend credence toward his psychosis, preferring their literary discussion. Not quite watercooler conversation, but they best walk before running. “Dante must've been a mad genius to make all this up. Boiling rivers, ice-lakes, that filthy city?”
"Dis isn't the Underworld's only metropolis. Sodom, Tyre, Gomorrah, Tartarus, the capital Pandæmonium." He sighed wistfully, like a grandpa reminiscing. "We outdid ourselves designing the Stygian councilroom. Obsidian, rubies, diamonds, screams of the damned echoing off—"

Chloe crossed her arms and glared, unamused.

Lucifer cleared his throat, switching gears. "Er— and the Phlegethon is a wonder to behold, especially at its waterfall over Geryon's Cliffs and down into the Malebolge." He made a wishy-washy sound. "I suppose 'beautiful' isn't an appropriate descriptor for the putrid river of blood that boils unrepentant murderers?"

"Generally not."

Lucifer tilted his head, bemused, and returned her book. "You still don't believe, even with proof in hand?"

"The Divine Comedy isn't a travel journal. It's metaphorical." Chloe set aside the hardback and resisted a childish urge to roll her eyes. "You're suggesting that Dante Alighieri literally went to Hell and back, then recorded it for posterity in a scrapbook?"

Lucifer glanced sidelong. "Then d'you remember how my Florentine guest metaphorically escaped the Ninth Circle?"

"That's the kicker." Chloe laughed at the absurdity; Inferno's ending was her favorite. "Hell's chock-full of gates and rivers, guardsmen and endless staircases, Alcatraz on steroids, but some idiot installed a backdoor in Judecca." She clarified, "That's the deepest—"

"I know where Judecca is," droned Lucifer, loath to repeat himself. "I lived there."

Chloe brushed him off again. "You're missing the point, the irony. Dante just waltzes out of a prison meant to contain the Devil himself." She tapped his facsimile on her map. "Satan has a secret tunnel, an escape hatch from the deepest circle of Hell!"

Lucifer gasped, "You don't say?" He pressed a palm over his heart with false concern and an impish grin. "Then what's to stop the old bastard from going topside whenever he pleases?"

He stared at Chloe, and she stared at Lucifer, until either she had to answer or he would. "Absolutely nothing," she concluded aloud, remembering all too vividly that fiery face in the mirror.

After work, she ordered John Milton's Paradise Lost off Amazon. And overnighted a Bible.

Chapter End Notes

Perhaps not an epic or groundbreaking minisode, but hopefully gets those creative wheels turning. How exactly did the Devil make his unorthodox exit, and is Hell's secret 'escape hatch' a one- or two-way door? :)

The following, very abbreviated appendix is based on Dante's the Divine Comedy and exists mostly because I needed a quick reference. I hope other writers can also put it to use! Fun fact, I learned that Dante's allegorical journey through Hell, purgatory, and finally into Heaven is instigated and partially guided by a lady named Beatrice.
Appendix I: Nine Circles of Hell

[Antehell]
The Hellmouth, Gate with the warning, “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.” A dark forest surrounds the Hellmouth.

River Acheron. The one and only road into Hell proper, policed by ferryman Charon. If you ain’t dead, he’s forbidden to transport you. Its waters run black, and along its banks is no man’s land, where souls who did nothing in life wander aimlessly.

[Upper Hell — the Lesser Circles]
First Circle (Limbo). Unlike any other circle, contains beautiful villas and meadows. No punishment here. Inhabitants include real and legendary Greeks and Romans, including philosophers, mathematicians, and political leaders.

Palace of Minos. Hell’s hall of judgement and maximum-security fortification. Seven gates, impenetrable walls, designed as an impossible labyrinth with an endless staircase (like in Super Mario 64) that permits you to descend into deeper circles, but never to ascend.

Second Circle — lust. Filled with famous adulterers and womanizers, getting blown about by incessant winds. Though locking up lustful people all together for eternity seems like flawed logic.

Third Circle — gluttony. Hell's landfill. Cerberus (i.e. Fluffy from Harry Potter) guards this circle, which contains the overindulgent in food and beverage. They wallow in slush and ice-rain. Basically what I’ve been doing all winter.

Fourth Circle — greed. Overseen by the demon Plutus, who clucks in gibberish. The circle is divided into two warring factions, hoarders versus squanders, who suffer under heavy moneybags crushing their chests.

Fifth Circle (the River Styx) — anger. Contains the heavily polluted River Styx and its swamp, in which angry people fight amongst themselves and flounder. Stygian marshes encircle the City of Dis.

[Lower Hell — the Inner Circles]
Sixth Circle (City of Dis) — heresy. Fog engulfs this walled city. Punishment includes getting baked within burning tombs.

Seventh Circle — violence. This circle has three subcircles, guarded by a minotaur, centaurs, and harpies. Torments include being mauled by dogs, boiled in a blood-river (the fetid River Phlegethon), living in a desert scorched with fire-rain, and getting turned into a tree.

Geryon’s Cliffs. A steep precipice at the center of the Seventh Circle, traversable only with wings, grappling hooks, and/or help from Geryon, a chimera monster. The River Phlegethon cascades over in a waterfall of boiling blood. Both the Eighth and Ninth Circles are accessible only via the Cliffs.

Eighth Circle (the Malebolge) — fraud. Ten subcircles (bolgia, plural bolgie), interconnected with rickety bridges, comprise this circle, each representing different
frauds that deserve a unique punishment. For example, thieves undergo forcible shapeshifting into monsters and inanimate objects. A special demon legion, the Malebranche, govern here.

[Ninth Circle — Lake Cocytus]
Frozen lake containing the following subcircles. All supernatural rivers (Acheron, Styx, Phlegethon, and the heavenly River Lethe) eventually empty into Lake Cocytus.

Caïna — treachery against family. Denizens include Cain and Mordred.

Antenora — political treachery.

Ptolomea — treachery against guests. Demons here are powerful enough to possess humans on Earth. This circle also contains every character I love to hate on Game of Thrones.

Judecca — treachery against benefactors and God. Includes the likes of Judas Iscariot, Cassius and Brutus, and Lucifer, before he moved to southern California to consult for the LAPD.

Center of the Earth. Dante then describes a secret backdoor out of Hell, carved from the tiny trickle of Heaven's only river (the River Lethe) that reaches Lake Cocytus. This tunnel leads through Earth's core to the foothills of Mount Purgatory.
My deepest apologies for falling off the face of the planet for weeks. Real-life stuff. Promise I'm still here!!

Minisode inspired by and dedicated to dolphindreamer. Even old tropes deserve a facelift, and here's to the challenge of reinvigorating an 'incubus' classic. Hope I can pleasantly surprise you!

Bonus points for spotting the Constantine and Supernatural references.

A Lucifer meta can be found at the conclusion of this minisode, and please heed the preface warning for religious and Christian themes. Appropriately timed to compliment the most recent episode, 1x09 - 'A Priest Walks into a Bar.' As always, enjoy!

When caught in the crossfire of a preternatural coup,

Minisode V:

Better the Devil You Know

Demons of every size, shape, and persuasion just crawled out of the goddamn woodwork nowadays.

Chloe’s long-delayed inauguration into all things supernatural was less Hagrid-with-a-pink-umbrella, more ruthless sorority hazing. Her nostalgia for a bygone era — when humans killed other humans for money and drugs — emerged full-force after Amenadiel reawakened the Ten Plagues, and a rebellious cherub fired lust-arrows into an unsuspecting crowd, and a wish-granting djinn fell into the wrong hands. Not to mention the rampaging Sumerian storm-god who flooded her house.

This paranormal maelstrom sweeping L.A. inevitably left a trail of hellfire-toasted breadcrumbs straight to Lucifer, though he shirked responsibility every time. “I’m retired. Letting myself go.” He patted his marble-flat abdomen like a beer-belly. “Out of the business, six years running.”

The denizens of Hell missed that memo.

Upon further reflection, Lucifer concluded that perhaps the situation had gotten a little out of hand.

The Hellmouth hemorrhaged demons in days of late, spilling onto the earthly plane like rats from a sinking ship. Their source was no mystery; Amenadiel violated the sanctity of his post and made his point with gusto, took a stand with action rather than words, threw one last Hail Mary in his fruitless quest to cast Lucifer back down. He was cowardly and cautious at first, siccing only lesser demons upon the world, but grew bolder and bolder with every failure.

Unclear if their father decreed it this way, or if Amenadiel had gone rogue. Both options were equal parts fascinating and terrifying.

Regardless, his most ambitious assault unleashed the Plagues upon Los Angeles. An immensely clever move. Lucifer himself mightn’t have thought of it. But given the homicidal infamy of the
Tenth Plague, and that both Chloe and Trixie Decker were their parents’ firstborn, this attack resonated deeply, and its vindictive sentiment earned his full and undivided attention.

As usual, crisis averted in the nick of time, though a little too close for comfort after two-and-three-quarter days of darkness. His brother knew about Detective Decker, and he knew about her child, and he knew how to exploit them. Angels were forbidden to harm humans, but Amenadiel had changed as much as Lucifer. Nothing was set in stone anymore.

And in the aftermath, the sheer number of dead frogs Maze fished out of his pool was frankly absurd.

Ever loftier than your average human stain, the detective handled herself with poise and grace despite Hell raining down around her, especially considering how painfully and inexcusably slow she was on the initial uptake. Lucifer would never forget sitting with her, watching the news explain away all those pesky Plagues as natural phenomena secondary to a volcanic eruption in the south Pacific, when Chloe turned to him and said, “Bullshit. You really are the Devil, aren't you?”

About bloody time.

Thereafter, he expected their friendship to undergo a fundamental shift. Perhaps she’d suffer a moral dilemma, perhaps she’d fear for her daughter's immortal soul, perhaps she’d file a restraining order and vanish from his life forever. But true to form, she surprised him. Nothing changed, except the detective spent more time at his penthouse pouring over ancient tomes and texts, and even dared to leave the Bible for Dummies open on his counter.

Next to her coffee. Which she brewed in his kitchen. After pulling an impromptu all-nighter, studying apocrypha in his library.

“Why’s she still here?” demanded Maze as they prepared Lux for another evening of imbibition and debauchery, while Chloe sat cross-legged in a booth reading priceless, 16th century grimoires.

“Either kick her out, or teach her to pole-dance. This is a club, not a study lounge.”

Though Lucifer relished the company of his human enigma, her messy bun and blue-jeans did disrupt the ambiance, and she checked the time in disbelief. “Oh, whoa. Sorry. Didn’t realize how late it was.” Chloe packed up his books without even asking to borrow them, slung her floral tote over one shoulder, and made it halfway up the stairs before stopping again.

“Forget something?”

The detective surveyed his club, as though she only just noticed that L.A. had any nightlife at all. “Trixie’s with her dad for the weekend.” Her eyes darted with internal struggle: let loose for once, or spend yet another Friday at home being the oldest young person in all creation.

Lucifer sweetened the deal, mostly to miff Maze. “Stay, and drinks are on me.”

“…d'you have another dress I can borrow?”

She was friends with the Devil.


When ranking this accomplishment as a win or fail on her sliding scale of life goals, the jury was very much out. His powers of persuasion were undeniably applicable in her line of work. His super-strength and telekinesis and blatant disregard for locks caused as many problems as they solved. And
he made her laugh on the rare occasion he wasn’t being a great big bag of dicks because, you know, Satan.

From his ever-growing stash of discarded women’s clothing, Lucifer lent her an unexpectedly modest cocktail dress with navy blue lace and pleats. But even a potato sack wouldn’t feel conservative enough around that lecher.

Chloe let down her hair, donned the dress, and emerged from his bathroom; he stood back to admire his creation, barefoot and backlit by the whiskey-wall's golden glow. “Oh, detective. A million times yes,” purred that insufferable man. “Lucifer likes.” His dark eyes slaked her, and she punched him in the shoulder on their way out the door. “The former owner failed to do it justice, but the same can’t be said for you.”

Though she resented his treating her like a doll, it was a really nice dress. Timeless. Classy. Her style, though should she be alarmed that Lucifer’s one-night stand shared her taste in clothes? No matter. Waste not.

Early evening at Lux was surprisingly tame and civilized. Chloe sat at the bar and met all manner of interesting people, from an eccentric Russian billionaire to the interior designer who decorated both the club and penthouse high above. Lucifer left her mostly to her own devices as he mingled and schmoozed and tickled the ivories.

Chloe was halfway through her second gin and tonic when she met Lilith.

“You must be the girl everyone’s talking about.”

These cryptic words belonged to a woman, petite and curvy in her little black dress, with auburn hair in an Elsa braid over one shoulder. She wore a single poppy for a boutonniere. Chloe didn’t recognize her. “Sorry, you’ve mistaken me for someone else.”

“Oh, I think not,” argued the stranger as she slid onto a neighboring barstool. “Detective Chloe Decker, LAPD, the slip of mortal who’s set every tongue in Hell and the Heavens wagging.”

Realization hit her like a freight train. Not human. Not safe. Sound the alarm. Chloe hated that her first instinct when faced with yet another supernatural stand-off was to search the club for Lucifer.

The woman grinned, fierce and conspiring and unnervingly familiar. “Never fear. Lilith hunts not for you.”

Chloe demanded, very reasonably: “Are you an angel or demon?”

Lilith scoffed into her martini. “Does it even matter anymore?”

There came a sudden thud and crash behind the bar, originating from a slack-jawed and thoroughly infuriated Maze. She’d dropped her cocktail shaker at the mere sight of Lilith. “What the fuck are you doing here, mother?!"

Way back in the bowels of history, Lucifer and Mazikeen first bonded over their mutual distaste for overbearing parents.

Fortunately, his father never made house-calls anymore, because the one time he did resulted in small brushfire atop Mount Sinai. But Maze could never escape her mother and innumerable siblings, not really, because they were all demons, Lilith and her Lilim, trapped together for eternal family time in the Second Circle. Talk about torture.
Until the Devil decided to take a vacation, and guess who gleefully called shotgun?

Maze was livid. "I quit Hell to escape your nagging!"

"And now I hear you're itching to come home," baited Lilith. "Miss your mama too much?"

Lucifer leapt from his piano to diffuse the situation before punches and Enochian scythes went flying. Normally he'd relish an old-fashioned brawl between she-devils, but not with his pet detective in the crossfire. "Now, now, Maze. That's no way to treat family." Next, he rounded on their uninvited guest. "Lilith. Lillie, darling." He summoned his suavest smile and stroked her face. "Shouldn't you be off raising Hell somewhere, leading good men astray, making whores of virgins, devouring lambs, strangling innocents in their sleep?"

"Tempting, master." Lilith took his hand and kissed his ring, though her focus was elsewhere — on Chloe, in fact. "But rumor begets rumor, topside and down-under. They say you've gone soft. They whisper you bleed— "

Lucifer never lied, so he deflected. His eyes flashed red. "Nothing 'soft' about me, love."

This placated Lilith, until the detective weaseled her way into business that wasn't hers. Per usual. "I read about you," realized Chloe, her wonderment on par with solving a case. "Adam's first wife. The succubus."

Lilith hissed in displeasure. "Too gender-polarizing for my taste." She plucked the olive from her cocktail. "We are the Lilim, changelings, shapeshifters, male and female, both and neither, incubi and succubi, fluid by nature." Maze was far less impassioned and enthused about their heritage than her mother. "My children lord over the Second Circle, and my eldest is the Devil's right hand."

"We're not your trophies to flaunt!"

"But you are my legion to command." Lilith somehow managed a smile devoid of any affection or warmth, before turning to the detective again. "And I'm always recruiting."

Lucifer insinuated himself bodily between the demoness and Chloe, then cut to the chase. "Did Amenadiel send you?"

"He certainly thinks so," teased Lilith with a tilt of her head. "Ever the gullible dominion."

Maze sneered with mirth. "He must be well and truly desperate."

Except this stank of deceit. The Devil became a bloodhound when rooting out liars and cheats and charlatans. Whatever Lilith's purpose, whatever favor she promised Amenadiel should he open the Hellmouth and set her free, it reeked with conspiracy. Djinn and storm-gods and fallen cherubs were one thing, but liberating Eden's very first miscreant was quite another.

Lilith came clean, blasé and disinterested. "Amenadiel asked me to lure your pretty human to Hell and make her Lilim." Now that's more like it; that Lucifer believed. The detective gaped, and Maze cackled, and Lilith looked maximally skeptical. "He hoped you might follow her down."

"Good luck with step one," muttered Lucifer. "Detective Decker bleeds righteous morality. It's exhausting."

Lilith commiserated. "Behold, another colorless handmaid of the Lord." She rolled her eyes at Chloe, looking her up and down one last time before venturing a guess: "Widowed?"
Lucifer corrected her before the detective could. “Divorced. Finally.”

Such scandal amused Lilith. “Really? How serendipitous! I’m the patron saint of divorcées.” She poured two very generous glasses of the club’s priciest shiraz and forced one upon Detective Decker. “Left my husband because he was a vagrant misogynist insistent upon missionary.”

“Me too,” mumbled Chloe into her drink, while Lucifer choked on his.

He danced like he lived, opulent and sensuous and uncensored.

Lucifer put his imposing height through its paces and engulfed his partner as though he owned her, lips at the neck, nose in her hair, his thigh nestled between hers, and a palm flat upon Lilith’s bottom to pull them flush. He swayed to a pulsing remix of *Dirty Angel*, whispering in her ear, earning a coquettish smile.

And he cut a helluva figure in that suit.

The voyeur in Chloe was too curious to turn away from something so indulgent and sinister, forbidden fruit in which the upstanding detective could never partake. Maybe she ‘bled righteous morality,’ but better safe than sorry. She did her homework, read Genesis, learned from Eve’s mistake. That man was the Devil incarnate, built to fulfill and destroy fantasies. Lucifer maimed and tortured without remorse. He manipulated and bribed and parceled out favors, consequences be damned. He was Satan, the King of Tyre, and always would be.

But he danced like most people made love, and it was hard not to watch.

“Thou shall not covet,” chastised Maze, busying herself behind the bar.

Chloe mumbled some paltry excuse before burying her face in her smartphone. But the liquor kept flowing, and the music kept thrumming, long into the night, and Lucifer’s big hand snuck ever further beneath the hem of Lilith’s little black dress. After several hours, all Chloe really coveted was the willpower to look at something that wasn't him.

If Maze felt any unease about her mother getting frisky with the Devil not ten feet away, she hid it well. Chloe dared to assume, “They were friends-with-benefits, back in Hell?”

“Demons live to serve our lord and master. Everything we are belongs to him.”

Chloe wrinkled her nose in distaste. Nobody deserved subjugation beneath the heel of a tyrant such as Lucifer, demon or angel or otherwise. “And I thought Hell a progressive place.” Her next question might prove too personal even for the Mistress of Excess, but she could never predict what did or didn’t offend the likes of Maze. “How weird is it to sleep with someone who’s also sleeping with your mother?”

Maze shrugged, downing a shot, and sounded more than a little homesick. “Social mores are moot in Hell.”

"You really do miss it, don't you?"

Maze shook her head. "I miss him, the real him, the way he used to be." She glared daggers. "Before you corrupted him."

"Maybe Satan's the corruption," argued Chloe, "and Samael's the real thing." She expected Maze to scream and roar and smash things in denial, but mostly the little Lilim looked scared. “You're strong.
You're smart. You don't need him. Why not go back without him?"

“Because protecting Lucifer is what I— ” Maze stopped mid-sentence, while Chloe waited expectantly, but the former was far too busy scanning the crowd like a frantic mother hen. “He’s gone.”

Chloe perused the dance floor. “And so is Lilith. Mystery solved.”

“No, no, no, no.” The tumbler Maze wasted ten minutes polishing shattered to the floor, and she shot toward the stairs like a bullet. “Something’s wrong.”

Chloe slugged the dregs of her wine and followed on principle.

The Seal of Solomon was a brass-in-iron signet ring that had adorned the third finger of Lucifer’s right hand ever since he stole it from the eponymous King of Israel almost three millennia prior. It was forged in Heaven, of all places, and tempered in the River Lethe. Absconding with the ring proved a challenge, temple guardsmen and booby traps galore.

A worthy theft and necessary evil. The Seal imbued its wearer with uncompromised control over all seventy-two Ptolomeic possession demons, whose speciality was to outwit the unlucky exorcists assigned to evict them from even unluckier hosts. Abalam, Baal, Mnemoth, Paimon, Astaroth, the prolific mischief-maker Pazuzu himself — constituents of the second-deepest circle, each notoriously cantankerous, uncooperative, and ballsy as hell.

Folks you’d much rather fight for you than against you.

Unfortunately, every action has repercussions, and the Devil should’ve known better. From the moment Lucifer first wore the stolen ring, he never took it off — not because he didn’t want to, but because he couldn’t.

The ring wouldn’t come off. Ever. No matter how hard he pulled and twisted, smashed and sliced it, boiled and froze it, the Seal was his brand, his Mark of Cain, Heaven’s ring welded to Satan's finger.

Lilith reminisced as she explored his penthouse, running her hands over his furniture, his piano, his bar, his body. “Whomever controls the Ptolomeics controls the Underworld.” She kissed the pad of each finger on his right hand, lingering on the Seal itself. “Yet you’ve not called upon them in half a decade.”

“Lads can entertain themselves.” Lucifer urged her backwards, step-by-step until he perched her upon the piano. “Didn’t you hear about Pazuzu’s date with Mr. Constantine? Ended in tears, but fireworks while it lasted.”

The demoness wrapped around him like a poisonous vine, mouth suckling his neck, hands mussing his hair. “You left us high and dry, my lord. Forgot what wonders a changeling can offer?”

Her form and face shifted like quicksilver; Lucifer yanked back in surprise as she settled upon the guise of one Chloe Decker. A perfect visage, with wide blue eyes and a hurricane of blonde, black dress slipping from her shoulders and rucked up her thighs, pliant and open and everything he ever wanted.

His libido hit the stratosphere, while his heart plummeted into his gut. Lilith reached for his belt. “I can be whomever my master desires.” Even her voice mimicked Chloe’s, though lower and sweeter and more diffident than the real thing, and Hell really would freeze over come the day Detective Decker called him ‘master.’
Lucifer steeled against the unfamiliar feeling that broiled within his chest — revulsion, it’s revulsion, it’s a mirage, it’s not really her. None of that mattered. Sex was sex. He was good at sex, empty sex, void of connection and meaning.

He closed his eyes and forced himself to kiss her. It hurt. It felt wrong.

For the first time in forever, he wanted to say no.

But he muscled through until he opened his eyes again, when Lilith-as-Chloe reclined on the piano, ready and willing. She was beautiful, ravishing, of course she was, but that wasn’t important — she’s not here, she’s downstairs, she trusts you, don’t betray her. Suddenly, Lucifer knew why he couldn’t move, couldn’t breathe. He didn’t need Dr. Linda to explain why fucking a shapeshifter while she looked like Chloe made him nauseous.

Guilt.

Lucifer thought on his feet. “Change back, love.” He seized Lilith at the waist and yanked her against his chest. “Been far too long since it was just you, me, and a garden to defile.”

She obeyed, shifting into auburn curls and a wicked smile once more. The intrusive presence of his detective vanished, and those pesky emotions leached away, mojo restored. “This stretches far beyond you and me. Beneath our feet stirs the largest coup since you waged War in Heaven.” Lilith eased his jacket off his shoulders and unbuttoned his shirt. “Azazel, Mammon, Belphegor, Nergal, Moloch — the Infernal Throne stands empty, and each Stygian councillor yearns to fill it.”

She kissed him again, fierce and fiery. He spoke between breaths. “But you’re a Stygian councillor.”

“That I am.” Lilith bit his lip, hard enough to draw blood.

He yelped, shoving off, nursing the wound. His hand came away red.

Her eyes went wide with disbelieving thrill. “So it’s true. It’s all true.” Lilith hopped from the piano, and her human disguise fractured: fangs flashed, claws lengthened, her pupils slitted like a cat’s. Half her face melted into a skeletal corpse as she stalked toward him. “You’re mortal.”

An Enochian scythe materialized in her grasp, and she moved to amputate his hand.

His right hand, with the Seal of Solomon attached.

The elevator dinged into Lucifer’s condo, the doors slid open, and all hell broke loose.

In retrospect, Chloe reacted to the noise, Maze to the blood. One darted left, the other right. Furniture splintered and glass shattered as Lucifer and Lilith — two preternatural titans — beat the ever-loving shit out of each other in his living room.

Lilith screeched like an alley cat; Lucifer defended himself as best he could against her every attempt to hack off his right hand. For all that strength and power, Devil or not, he tiptoed closer and closer to humanity with each earthly breath he took. And humans bleed when struck.

Lilith wielded a vicious scythe and talons and teeth against his bare fists. When she stepped into the light, half her pretty face looked rotten. Like mother, like daughter — in a protective rage, Maze shifted into truer form before tackling Lilith with a siren’s scream. Their scrap bought time enough for Lucifer to scramble away, hemorrhaging from the wrist, and for Chloe to reach her floral tote, abandoned carelessly on his sofa.
She grabbed her gun. Not her regulation Glock. Her other gun — the one she loaded with silver bullets at the very start of this supernatural cluster. Petty dabbling into demonology suggested such a weapon might come in handy; now that Amenadiel regularly raised Hell on Earth, she never left home without it.

Maze and her mother still grappled, crashing into the piano and smashing a Ming vase. Chloe couldn’t find a clear shot. “Maze, down!” Years of training to avert friendly fire, and she applied it to succubus-wrangling. Go figure. “Silver bullets!”

Maze ducked and covered. Chloe squeezed off two shots, purposefully nonlethal, tagging Lilith in an arm and leg. Smoke billowed from her wounds, and the demoness wailed, clawing at herself, ripping out the slugs. But she didn’t bleed, and the injuries healed instantly, like time-lapse photography.

Seamless, without a word, Maze and Chloe swapped places. The little Lilim knelt alongside Lucifer and improvised a dishrag pressure-bandage around his bleeding wrist. Chloe covered them, gun level, stepping between her friend and his assailant.


Even soaked in his own blood, hellfire ignited within the Devil’s eyes, and his voice pitched deep into an inhuman register. “You dare equate me with those feather-toting patsies?!”

“Not all angels have wings.” Lilith meant it as an insult. Next, she rounded on Chloe, miscalculating her as the weakest link. “See reason, my dear.” Free from human guise, Lilith and her Lilim were monsters once confined to nightmares, decomposed, deadly, horrifying. “You’re already as ambitious as any Lilim. Step aside, and immortality is yours.”

Chloe felt the tiniest tug on her conscience, tickling along her neck, perhaps an onslaught of demonic coercion meant to bring average mortals to their knees. But her inexplicable immunity against the sinful and hellish never wavered. She aimed her gun again.

Failure took Lilith aback, but didn’t stop her. “Step aside,” repeated the demoness, inching closer. “It’s a modern age. High time the Underworld traded its king for a queen, don’t you think?”

“Too gender-polarizing for my taste,” quoted Chloe, finger on the trigger. “I’ll stick with the Devil I know.”

From somewhere behind, bent but not quite broken, Lucifer chirped his gratitude.

"Very well. What a waste." Lilith sighed in resignation and lunged for the kill.

As a last-ditch effort not to die, Chloe put her amateur research to use and raised her right hand, palm out. "In the names of Adam and Eve, Lilith begone!" Its effect was dramatic and immediate: Lilith slammed into an invisible wall, unable to take another step, and howled in pain, covering her ears. Chloe really had read about her — and how to defeat her. "In the names of my forebears, in the name of the woman who replaced you, in defense of God and all his angels, Lilith ab!"

Every word beat and bruised her, worse than any bullet. The changeling finally yielded, shifting from human to beast, sprouting black feathers, wings spread, an owl where the woman once stood. She screeched, slicing through the air over Chloe's head, before vanishing out the window and into the night.
Chloe eavesdropped from the kitchen while Lucifer and Maze argued in his bedroom.

"The Stygian councillors declare civil war, and my mother beelines for the Seal of Solomon!"

Restless footsteps suggested that Maze was pacing. "That ring is key to controlling Ptolomeics, and one councillor cannot overpower the others or seize the Infernal Throne without Ptolomeic support."

Chloe had no idea what the Infernal Throne or Ptolomeics were, and she probably didn't want to know. "Lilith is only the first to come for you and yours," warned Maze. "You're in danger—"

Instead of a response in words, the bed creaked, as though something heavy collapsed upon it. At first, Chloe assumed that Lucifer and his little Lilim were purging the battle's bloodlust in the best way they knew how, until Maze cried out for help.

"Decker!" Her voice was unusually high and helpless. "Decker, he's doing that human thing again!"

Chloe hurried in and found Lucifer seated on his bed, even paler than usual and too dizzy to stand. He'd lost an awful lot of blood, but fortunately not his hand. "Lay him flat." They propped him against the pillows. "Get him something to drink."

Maze scurried off.

Chloe tucked him under a blanket and took his pulse — thready, too fast, way too fast — before pointing at the floor to symbolize Hell. "Getting kinda Game of Thrones-y down there, huh?"

He scoffed, breathing harder than she liked. "Wouldn't be Hell without a smidge of political unrest."

"You want us to call an ambulance?" Lucifer shook his head. Not surprising. Waxing mortality or not, the Devil healed a little too fast and a little too well to risk some nosy criticalist poking around. And despite his fragile condition, Chloe had to ask: "What's the Seal of Solomon, and the Infernal Throne, and a Stygian councillor, and the Ptolomeics—?"

Maze returned with 'something to drink,' and that something was whiskey.

"Oh, for the love of God." Chloe rolled her eyes. "He needs water, not liquor."

Lucifer vehemently disagreed. "Gimme the bottle, Mazie." He took a deep swig. "And a glass for Detective Decker as well. Congratulations are in order." That asshole basked in her obvious and irritated confusion. "A girl never forgets her first exorcism."

Chloe dithered. "I just scared Lilith off."

"Au contraire. You expelled a higher demon from my home." He looked so introspective and bemused that, against her better judgement, Chloe picked his brain. "Well," pondered Lucifer, swirling his bourbon, "the fox had his hound, and Tony his Maria." He brimmed with insatiable curiosity. "Now the Devil's got his very own exorcist."

Chapter End Notes

Phew, that took much longer to write than I anticipated. Please let me know your thoughts. 'Action sequences' are not my forte, but I'm practicing! :)

Stop, Meta Time: If you prefer not to read metas with religious or Christian themes, please stop now. What follows are simply fan-theories for Lucifer's plot.
Others have already proposed bits and pieces of these ideas; I'd like to expand them. As far as I know, no actual spoilers — unless I’m a much better guesser than I thought!

First, full disclosure. I’m a deeply spiritual person, who believes in a positive, omniscient, guarding-and-guiding force that exists beyond my understanding. Raised a Christian, I happen to refer to this force as ‘God,’ but wholly respect that others name it differently, believe differently, or don’t believe at all. What’s really important to me is that God feels only peace, love, and forgiveness toward everyone. And when I say everyone, I mean everyone.

In my Lucifer headcanon, God already buried the hatchet and forgave his rebellious son long ago, meaning the entire Amenadiel arc — maybe unbeknownst to Amenadiel himself — is really an elaborate ploy to help Lucifer along the road to redemption. It sounds like Amenadiel's orders are not an implicit 'force Lucifer back to Hell,' instead a vague 'get Lucifer back to where he belongs.' But embracing his identity as the archangel Samael and returning to Team Heaven will likely necessitate Lucifer committing a purely altruistic self-sacrifice, perhaps in defense of Chloe and Trixie.

So God sets the necessary events in motion, but the rest is up to Lucifer.

#1) “…and a nice little act of God takes him [Delilah’s killer] out,” sounds like a throwaway line, and Lucifer blows it off as such, but that bus ‘randomly’ hitting that getaway car is the grassroots of Lucifer and Chloe’s friendship. A similar line, later in the same episode, reinforces that the big guy upstairs is oft to meddle: “Did my father send you?”

#2) A mysterious, beautiful, never-see-her-face blonde woman lures Lucifer to the exact right place at the exact right time to meet and befriend Trixie — then, aforementioned blonde vanishes into thin air. From behind, this faceless woman bears striking resemblance to a recently deceased, albeit cleaned-up, Delilah. Perhaps sent back in spirit to guide Lucifer to Trixie? What better way for Delilah to uphold her final promise to "get it together" than becoming the Devil's guardian angel?

#3) The entirety of 1x09 - ’A Priest Walks into a Bar’ implies this.
- "Oh, his plan for me was quite clear."
- "How d'you know it's finished?"

In short, brace yourselves for the biggest plot twist in history, when the show accused of ‘glorifying Satan’ might actually be a show about how God is awesome, endlessly forgiving, all-powerful, with a wicked sense of humor, and loves his kids no matter what. Ergo, beautiful message: even the very worst of us deserve a chance at redemption, and blessed are those who help them along the way.

Thanks for your attention to this important public service announcement. Now back to your regularly scheduled fanfic.
Minisode inspired by and dedicated to EV RyderWriter. An obligatory Christmas yarn for our newborn fandom. About nine months early, but I do what I want! **Major spoilers for Dan’s arc after 1x08 - ‘Et Tu, Doctor?’ and I even reveal the secret behind Santa, so proceed with extreme caution. :)**

Gotta be honest, I've no clue where Dan’s in-canon story is going. Please tell me your theories!! I can’t think of an endgame reason for his character to exist, except as an ongoing foil to Lucifer, and I dislike him enough to vilify him, but the show also highlights his many shades of grey. My spidey senses smell a juicy plot twist. However, for the purposes of this minisode, Detective Douche is bad to the bone — for the time being.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The holiday spirit never goes out of season: **Minisode VI:**
**Hell's Bells**

Dan was in prison.

Justice served, the guilty punished, her department and city safer for its mole and traitor behind bars, but the truth damn-near shattered Chloe. And only two weeks before Christmas too. Lieutenant Monroe and California law insisted she take mandatory leave during the investigation — conflict of interest, psychological distress, high-profile media firestorm, etcetera. Without work for distraction, her mother and daughter were Chloe’s only saving grace. Trixie was too young to grasp the full gravity of her father’s crime, but she understood enough. In rare maternal form, Penelope canceled her upcoming convention circuit to stay home and undertake the daily minutia that, in trying times, could so easily overwhelm her daughter: bills, housekeeping, groceries, oil changes, PTA meetings, tangled holiday lights.

As for Lucifer, Chloe hadn’t so much as texted him since they busted Dan.

When the nightmare unfolded, when she discovered in horror that the man she once loved — maybe still did — was a dirty cop, Chloe’s moral compass spun off its axis. Every fiber in her heart screamed not to turn him in. She wanted to close the case and burn her evidence and pretend it never happened. But that was wrong and selfish and profoundly illegal. If she were caught, Trixie would grow up with two felon parents instead of one.

Lucifer convinced her to do the right thing, and now Detective Espinoza awaited trial where he belonged. Behind bars.

After a wild chase through downtown Los Angeles, they finally cornered Dan in an alley. Rabid with rage, Lucifer crouched to the level of his prey, eyes blazing red. “You risked the lives of your wife and child to save yourself.” He roared, angrier than she’d ever seen, “You stood idle, miserable ingrate, while Chloe stared down the barrel of a
gun for you!”

His handsome face contorted into true Satanic form. Chloe saw it, and so did Dan.

Dan shouted, looking to her in terror and shock. “Chloe, he’s— he’s the—”

“The Devil?” She stepped closer to Lucifer and leveled her gun at Dan. “Yeah, I know.”

Though seamless and loyal on the beat, Chloe crashed and burned after they dragged him away in handcuffs. She and Lucifer ended that night with some particularly professional screaming in the precinct parking lot. He even dared to flash those Devil eyes at her, which flung Chloe’s temper straight off the deep end.

She shoved him, square in the chest with both palms. She *shoved* Satan himself, like a catfight in third grade. “I won’t be scared into submission like one of your flunkies!”

“I didn’t do that on purpose! I didn’t!” He clamped his eyes shut, took a deep breath, and they were brown again when he opened them. “Why’re you so upset?!” Lucifer came from the original broken family, where fathers disown sons and brothers cast brothers into the pits of Hell. Perhaps such drama was old news to him, but Chloe’s domestic squabbles never before ended with one spouse in prison. “We caught the bad guy!”

Chloe erupted. “Dan is *not* a bad guy!”

“He’s a criminal, a turncoat, a liar!” Lucifer gaped in disbelief. “How can you still care about him?!”

“Families don’t ostracize each other for stupid mistakes, and one bad decision doesn’t make him the root of all evil!”

Lucifer went silent, and the subtext wasn’t lost on Chloe either.

They hadn’t spoken since.

She missed him, his humor and oddity, especially as her world crumbled. Lucifer was familiar and frustrating, but consistently and predictably so. Chloe only appreciated how colorful he made life now it was back in grayscale again.

But Trixie somehow made everything better. “Can we visit Santa at the mall, ma?”

Her mother too. Shocker. “And afterward it’ll be dark enough to drive around and see the neighbors’ lights!”

The Deckers squashed in most of their holiday traditions long before the big day, because the whole family always road-tripped to Penelope’s cabin in the San Gabriel mountains for Christmas itself. Chloe and Dan used to stock up their vacation time and take the entire week off work.

But those days of togetherness were over.

They stopped at Cold Stone for sundaes on their way home from the mall. “D’you want to invite a friend along to the cabin this year, Trix?” Penelope made such an unprecedented offer because Dan’s absence would surely be felt, especially come Christmas morning. “Though I suppose most kids are busy celebrating with their own families—”
Trixie’s adorable little face burst into a chocolate-covered smile, and suddenly Chloe knew the exact words about to leave her mouth: “Maybe Lucifer can come with us!”

Chloe nipped that in the bud. “Absolutely not.” She refused to welcome along the Devil on their annual holiday. Enough scrutiny fell upon them as is, with this red-hot scandal surrounding Dan. What would people say if Chloe vanished to a mountain cabin with an affluent playboy not a month after tossing her ex-husband in the slammer?

Gold-digging whore, that’s what.

Chloe made her excuse and stuck with it. “Lucifer doesn’t celebrate Christmas.”

“You sure?” prodded Trixie.

She laughed aloud at the thought of Satan wearing an ugly sweater and singing carols. “Pretty sure.”

“His family fights a lot. Lucifer told me.” Her daughter was blissfully unaware of his devilish identity. She probably envisioned his ‘relatives’ taking afternoon tea in a sprawling manor, somewhere on the misty English moors, butlers and maids and groundskeepers catering their every whim. At least, that’s what Chloe pictured before her ignorance died in a fiery blaze of supernatural glory. “He’s lonely, I think, even if he pretends not to care.” Trixie was far too perceptive for her own good. “Maybe Lucifer doesn’t celebrate the holidays because nobody ever invites him to.”

That was…a surprisingly insightful and valid argument.

Goddamn it.

Penelope was all aboard with this insane idea, officially outnumbering Chloe two-to-one. “Plenty of space at the cabin.” The portrait of innocence, her mother finished her banana split while plotting as only a mother could. “The more, the merrier.”

Despite previous radio silence, the phone only rang once before he picked up.

As before, Lucifer charmed the bejeezus out of her mother, and Penelope forgave him for that family dinner from Hell.

Their hour-long drive into the mountains facilitated those two bonding over classic sci-fi, and the trend didn’t stop after they reached the cabin. He carried in her luggage, leaving Chloe and Trixie to fend for themselves. He popped to the grocer for truffle oil, eager to cook whatever gourmet delicacy her mother desired. He even tolerated Penelope’s flurry of last-minute holiday decorating with nary a gripe, except at the angelic tree-topper. And the Devil did an excellent impression of your average American house cat, poking, prodding, and mesmerized at the novelty of holly boughs and sparkly ornaments and a sprig of mistletoe over the door.

He stood under it, waggling his eyebrows at Chloe, who threatened him with a s’mores skewer. “Don’t even.”

Trixie lassoed him into baking gingerbread and watching her favorite holiday films. The stop-motion *Rudolph* enthralled Lucifer, inciting his soapbox when the titular character was cast out for his red nose. “Stick it to the man, mate.” The Devil crunched on peppermint bark as the plot hit a little too close to home, overshadowing an otherwise wholesome Christmas message. “Let that obese, red-suited bigot crash in a blizzard!”

“It’ll be okay.” Trixie patted his knee, solemn and earnest. “In the end, his specialness saves
Christmas, and Santa realizes that Rudolph being different makes him the greatest reindeer of all.” She stole some of his candy; he let her, clinging to every word. “Just watch. You’ll see.”

After a day or two roughing it in the woods, no internet and basic cable and company far less stimulating than the Lux frequent fliers, Chloe watched and waited for Lucifer to lose his mind from boredom. Except it never happened.

Every morning, he made them breakfast — dear God, what went into his omelets to make them taste like sin?

Every afternoon, Trixie dragged him along on one wilderness adventure or another, traipsing through the forest and collecting firewood and roasting marshmallows. Whether intentional or not, these were things Dan used to do with her.

Every evening, he sat in front of the fireplace, barefoot in dark jeans and a button-down with his sleeves rolled to the elbows, and the twinkling Christmas tree sometimes backlit his head like a halo. Lucifer usually read a book, or let Trixie read to him, or listened to Penelope reminisce about Hollywood and its limelight. Chloe already knew these stories forward and backward, so her mother relished in fresh ears.

And every night, he slept alone in the guest room, never once sneaking out to make a pass at Chloe or her mother. A devilish gentleman, as it were.

On Christmas eve, they ordered pizza and watched *It's a Wonderful Life*. The commercial breaks irritated Lucifer. “Disturbing,” he mused, “how you humans manage to market something as eternal as the winter solstice.”

After Trixie left cookies and milk on the hearth for Santa, Chloe laid down the law. “Bedtime, you little weasel.” She tickled her daughter, who squealed and scurried to her bunk. Penelope tucked her in. “Rudolph has marching orders to skip our house, unless everybody’s asleep.”

Trixie sent Lucifer a pointed look. “Hear that? Promise you won’t stay up too late.”

“My word is my bond.” He traced an X over his heart.

They waited an hour or so, ensuring the little hoodlum had dozed off, before carting presents out of hiding and arranging them beneath the tree. Chloe also took a bite of each cookie and drank the milk. “Strange,” commented the Devil, observing this ritual with fascination, “that more children aren’t alarmed by a strange fat man who descends their chimney in the dead of night once a year, stealing food and leaving mysterious parcels under a dead evergreen fire hazard.”

She grinned. “Don’t overthink it.”

Penelope kissed them both goodnight. “You heard the rules.” On her way out, she shot her daughter a devious smile only they could see, jerking her head in Lucifer’s direction. “Don’t keep each other up too late.”

Chloe glared daggers, but Lucifer was busy brewing hot chocolate with cinnamon and a dash of chili pepper; he either didn’t notice or pretended not to.

Mugs in hand, they sat together on the floor near their crackling fireplace. “I presume there’s no Christmas in Hell.” Chloe reined back their preternatural discussions while Penelope and Trixie were around, lest her family discover more than they ought. But she never ran out of questions. “Do angels celebrate holidays?”
Lucifer nodded. “They sing even more than usual.” He shifted uneasily. “But I fell from grace long before all the hubbub in that Bethlehem manger, so I’ve never— technically, this is my first— ” He aborted the sentiment, unable to voice it, and his smile was forced. “My brothers and sisters, and my dad too— whatever rubbish they do to celebrate, they’re happier without me.”

“I doubt that.” Chloe gripped his wrist. Her touch startled him. “Our table has an empty seat this year too. I don’t care what Dan did, or how corrupt he got, I wish he could be here for Christmas. I miss him. I miss having our family together.” She pointed at the cherub tree-topper Lucifer found so offensive. “And God, well— he’s missed one-third of his angels since time immemorial. Holidays should be spent with the people you love, and your dad is the kind who moves mountains and parts seas to be with his kids.”

“How do you know?”

“No offense.” Lucifer frowned into the fire.

Chloe corrected him, nursing her cocoa. “That you know of.”

They sat in silence a while, Happy Xmas playing on an old boombox. Lucifer fiddled with the loose ribbons on a gift under their tree. “What did the child desire from your heavily secularized Saint Nicholas?”

“Realistically, not much. A few toys, books, movies. Unrealistically, the moon and stars.” Chloe chuckled to herself. “Normal eight-year-olds want a Playstation and a bicycle, but my eight-year-old hears from her nana about Paris, London, Amsterdam, Istanbul, Dubai, Tokyo, Saint Petersburg, Sydney—” She sighed, loathing to deny her child. “Trixie wants to travel, but we just can’t. Especially not now.”

Lucifer furrowed his brow. “You’ve plenty of time off work. Why not now—?”

“It’s not the time; it’s the money.” Chloe usually kept these things private, but the Devil’s pathologic honesty had rubbed off. “When Trix was born, my mom set aside a little nest egg, but she’s gotta focus on retirement now. And even with dual-income, Dan and I scraped the barrel for L.A. rent, utilities, daycare…” She rubbed her eyes. “My ex-husband’s in jail.” The concept still carried a modicum of disbelief. “The weight falls to me. I can’t waste a penny while her college tuition looms like some terrifying hellbeast.” She glanced sidelong. “No offense.”

Lucifer shrugged, none taken.

“I’m scared,” admitted Chloe. “Trixie’s so smart.”

He tilted his head. “Isn’t that a good thing?”

“It’s wonderful. So much potential.” She stared into her empty mug. “But what if my daughter wants to be a doctor, or veterinarian, or lawyer?” Lucifer listened with such rapt attention, it was intimidating. “She’ll be paying off student loans forever, all because her single working mother couldn’t get shit together.”

Lucifer pondered, before making light of her woes. “You could always sell your soul to the Devil.”

Disgustingly early on Christmas morning, before Chloe was awake enough to stop her, Trixie burst into the guest room and launched herself at the slumbering lump that was Lucifer. “White Christmas!” She shook him and bounced on the mattress while Lucifer grumbled, rolling over and smothering his head with a pillow. “Snow, Luci, snow!”

“I hate the cold,” came his bleary answer.
“But snow makes the cold worth it!” Trixie yanked away his pillow and hit him with it. Chloe watched this entire saga unfold from the doorway, coffee in hand. “Have you ever even seen snow?”

His curly bedhead popped from beneath the blankets. “No, and I don’t care to.”

Wide-eyed and more than a little nervous, Lucifer stepped out into the snow. Nearly five inches fell overnight, unprecedented for Los Angeles proper but commonplace at altitude. His breath condensed into fog, flakes clung to that ink-black hair, and the cold blushed his nose. Chloe bundled him in a peacoat and gloves and earmuffs with a red scarf, because nobody knew what would happen if the Devil touched snow — matter and antimatter, explosions and apocalypse, hole in the space-time continuum?

Funnily enough, none of the above. Fresh powder crunched under his feet as he took to the winter wonderland with childlike thrill, smiling like a goon. “Judecca is frozen, and I hated it.” His memories hurt, but Lucifer beamed through them, holding out his hand to catch and examine snowflakes. “I never knew the cold could do this.”

A snowball smacked his arm. Trixie giggled like an imp. “And snow makes you forget the cold!”

Lucifer knelt and packed his very first snowball. “Be gentle, Old Scratch,” reminded Chloe before he tossed it.

Despite strength enough to hurl grown men through windows, the snowball burst harmlessly against Trixie’s boot. Others clocked Lucifer upside the head and knee and chest, but only when Chloe got caught in the crossfire did the real war begin. Eventually the girls ganged up on him, pelting snow from all angles, and Trixie cheered as her mother tackled him into a drift.

Sprawled across Lucifer, nose-to-nose and straddling his thigh, Chloe led herself into temptation when she teased, “The good book brags and brags about besting you. Ain’t that difficult.” Lucifer laughed, head thrown back and shoulders shaking; he was warm and hard and submitted so readily, content at her mercy. He’d look even better beneath her biblically, arched and trembling for a very different reason.

Chloe instantly succumbed to at least three of seven deadly sins at once.

Trixie tugged his arm, breaking the reverie. “Wanna build a snowman or make snow angels?”

“Former, obviously.” Lucifer scowled at this rhetorical question and clambered away from Chloe, completely oblivious to her merry jaunt through the Second Circle of Hell. Innocence was such a rare and precious commodity for him, like peering through cracks in the Devil’s veneer to glimpse a long-forgotten angel.

After Penelope woke, they made Belgian waffles and opened presents. Trixie was a wrecking ball versus wrapping paper and ribbon, so Lucifer and Chloe kept a safe distance until the child darted toward them, teensy box in hand.

“For you!” Trixie gave the present to Lucifer, then returned to her toys.

He was plumb speechless, holding the gift as though it might break. “Happy holidays, Lucifer.” Chloe prompted him with a whisper: “You’re meant to open it, not stare at it.”

He popped open the box and found a little certificate inside. “Whiskey-of-the-Month!” Penelope sidled to him, pointing at the pamphlet. “They send you a new bottle every few weeks, with fun facts about the distillery. All Chloe’s idea! She got me Wine-of-the-Month. Look here at the wineries—”
Lucifer was tickled pink for a short while, then progressively distraught. Chloe inquired, and he answered sheepishly. “I didn’t know— ” He hung his head, honest as ever. “I didn’t get you anything in return.”

Penelope kissed his cheek. “Your being here is gift enough, sweetie.”

But Trixie whispered conspiringly in his ear. “Late presents are great presents too!”

Back home on New Year’s eve, Chloe received a manila envelope in the mail, return addressed to Lux. Inside she found a stack of legal documents and a handwritten note.

Detective—
See enclosed, for you and your offspring.
May this lighten your load, as you have mine.
Sorry you married a felon. Happy holidays.

Lucifer didn’t bother signing it. Sufficiently baffled, Chloe leafed through the papers.

“What’s all that?” asked her mother from the kitchen, readying chocolate fondue and queso dip for watching the Times Square Ball drop from the comfort of their sofa. “If it’s Dan-related, roll it in dog poo and ship it back to those lawyers.” Penelope’s temper sparked. “The department knows better. Tactless, unsympathetic— ”

Chloe ignored her mother. The documents weren’t Dan-related. They were Trixie-related, bearing the title ‘529 education savings plan.’ One humble dollar sign on the last page didn’t do justice to the sheer number of zeroes that followed. Surely she was mistaken; Chloe read the fine print.

Nope. This was kosher.

She sat down before she fell down, because the Devil just bankrolled her daughter’s undergraduate degree.

How she drove herself to Lux without wrecking the car, Chloe would never know. She barely remembered the turns, the traffic lights, tossing her keys to the valet, bypassing the line and bouncer, all to find Lucifer at the bar, back in fine form, drink in hand and a supermodel on each arm.

Chloe fought through the New Year’s revelers. He spotted her and her manila envelope only a half-second before she throttled him in a hug. “Why, detective! What a lovely surprise.” He growled lowly, making no attempt to dissuade what were now three pretty girls draped across him. “Care to join our little soiree upstairs— ?”

Then he spotted her puffy face and bloodshot eyes.

He sobered in an instant. “Is that— Chloe, are you crying?” With two snaps of his fingers and single gesture to Maze, his liquor and the Brittanys vanished. Lucifer extricated himself from the throngs and whisked Chloe into a private corner of the club, clutching her shoulders with both hands.

“What’s wrong? Who hurt you?” His eyes flashed red at her again, but this time sparked something far more tingly and terrifying than her temper. “Whom do I need to kill?”

Chloe couldn’t form words. Instead, she clutched the offending envelope to her chest.

Lucifer raised an eyebrow. “You’re meant to cry over less money, not more.”
“You—” God, she hated tears. She was never a classy crier. “You prepaid my child’s college tuition.”

Lucifer nodded slowly. “Because presents are the crux of your holiday.” His confidence wavered, given Satan’s comprehension of Christmas was still shoddy at best. “You gave me a gift, so I’m supposed to give— bollocks, did I do it wrong?”

“No, no, that’s exactly how it works.” She half-laughed, half-hiccuped. “It’s just— this is too much, Lucifer, too generous. I shouldn’t accept this.” But nevertheless, Chloe kept the envelope close to her heart. Inside was Trixie’s future.

His expression softened. “Even I know the size of a gift is determined by the gifter, not the giftee.”

Chloe tried and failed to compose herself. “But I could literally sell you my soul and still never repay—”

“I was kidding, love. Your soul is yours to sully.” Lucifer grinned that maniacal grin. “How about we sully it with the Brittanys?” He revived the Casanova of old to cheer her, win a smile, earn an eye-roll, anything to stem the tears. Though she suspected the offer was also genuine.

Regardless, it worked. Chloe laughed. “Raincheck. Sorry I keep cockblocking your epic foursome.” She stared down at the envelope again. “Just— thank you.” The words felt so small in comparison to what he’d given her family. And they were only a surrogate; Lucifer deserved more, better, brothers and sisters and a father to love him and love back.

That night, she wished upon the New Year’s fireworks setting Heaven ablaze. “Please stop fighting. Please forgive him.” Chloe hoped her opinion counted for something. “That bastard would make one hell of an angel.”

Chapter End Notes

Oops. My hand slipped, and that got awful domestic, awful fast. Next time, I’ll try my best to give y’all something with more substance and less empty-calorie fluff. :)

Your comments, brainstorming, and headcanons make minisodes like this possible. Keep the ideas coming; I welcome each and every one!!
This minisode frayed my nerves from the get-go, and I'm still not 100% thrilled with the final product. Once again, apologies for the excessive delay in posting. I hope the wait is worth it! :)

**Spoilers for season one of Lucifer, including the finale.**

I typically shy away from using (semi-)original characters in fanfic, but here’s to expanding my comfort zone. These archangels intentionally and drastically diverge from their graphic novel counterparts in appearance, personality, and even gender. Hoping to paint Lucifer, his siblings, and their parents (!!) less as supernatural powerhouses, more as a broken family in need of mending. Please let me know if I’ve succeeded and how I can improve!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Remember, as far as anyone knows, we’re a nice normal family…

**Minisode VII:**

**Heaven for Climate, Hell for Company**

What an unexpected hodgepodge, this so-called Heavenly Host.

The very first angel she ever saw without guise, properly splendidous, was Amenadiel. They'd met before, back in the good old days when Chloe could safely assume her acquaintances were all human and chalked up her partner's devilish delusions of grandeur as ravings from a particularly clean-cut madman.

But then she glimpsed in a mirror the decomposing flesh of demon-Maze, and Lucifer exposed his ghoulish true form amid a rage-spiral, and they narrowly thwarted the Ten Plagues before every L.A. firstborn dropped dead, and Amenadiel finally unveiled himself as the Lord’s dark-winged emissary. As any reasonable adult would, face-to-face with the newfound supernatural and still coming to grips, Chloe had screamed and shot him. Point-blank.

Amenadiel walked it off with a quip and some ruffled feathers. Lucifer found it hysterical.


“Don’t flatter yourself.” Lucifer fiddled with his lighter, flipping it open and closed, on and off, but never actually lit the cigarette between his lips. “Besides, Amenadiel’s no archangel. He’s only a dominion, one of Mike's many flunkies.”

Her curiosity too often got the best of her. “Who the hell is Mike?”

The archangel Michael resembled a gladiator more than anything, bulky and sullen in his leather jerkin, with muddy blonde hair long enough to touch his shoulders and partially tame in braids. There was a greatsword in his hand, gold talisman around his neck, and eternal frown on his face.
He seemed stoic and serious, a warlord, a general, all business, all the time, and Chloe suspected that he and Lucifer mixed like oil and water.

Understatement, as it were.

Only true catastrophes, both earth-shattering and game-changing, warranted a house-call from the angel whom other angels exalt. For example, declaring Amenadiel with half the Heavenly Host in open rebellion.

“Half the Host?!” Lucifer was dumbstruck.

Chloe glanced sidelong. “Didn’t your rebellion only rally a third?”

Looks couldn’t kill, but his came close.

Michael dropped from the sky in an apropos blaze of glory, luminous white wings unfurled, when Lucifer refused his hellish throne one too many times and Amenadiel raised a sword in wrathful violence — against Chloe. His first swipe glanced across her clavicle and blood blossomed from the flesh wound, but his second would’ve pierced her heart had the archangel not parried. Reverb of Enochian steel-on-steel made her ears ring, and Lucifer engulfed her in a defensive bearhug by the time Chloe remembered which way was up.

The angels dueled for a few short seconds, Amenadiel’s anger utterly blinding, until Michael clocked him upside the head, slammed him to the ground, and held razor-sharp feathers to his throat like a thug with a switchblade. “Stand down, soldier!” roared the archangel. He sounded Australian, which made about as much sense as the Devil sounding British. “We’re all here brothers, Amen, brothers!” His words came from a place of grief, not fury. “Can’t you see history repeating?”

Amenadiel snarled his distaste. "And have you lost all semblance of reason?" He looked from Michael to Lucifer and back again, baffled beyond belief. "That's your adversary, your antithesis, the beast you yourself cast down!"

"Sowing regret, never pride," confessed Michael, and Lucifer stared like his brother had grown an extra head.

Amenadiel brandished a saber at Chloe. "For too long has mankind reveled in immunity and squandered privilege." His moral pollution was colder and more terrifying than the rebel angels before him ever were. "Let's make one exception, one sacrifice to spare many. Let's kill his human, just this one." That savage smile belonged amid hellfire and brimstone, not heavenly light. "Let's lock her away in the Silver City, forever beyond Lucifer's reach. Let's warp his worldly paradise into Hell on Earth."

Lucifer tightened his grip on Chloe. She let him.

Michael refused such blasphemy, this blatant insurrection, and bared his palms in reconciliation. “Set aside your grudges, your vices, your sorrow, your wrath. We're family, friends, brothers-in-arms. Forgiveness is yours, and his, and Mother's, if only you ask.” Amenadiel snatched away, and he might as well have ripped out the archangel's heart. “Please,” implored Michael, desperation building. “Don’t make the same mistake I did. Don't bring further ruin upon a house already divided. Don’t warp our father's commands to justify your vendetta.”

Amenadiel scowled. “The only vendetta here belongs to the fucking dragon.” He took a step toward Lucifer, who planted himself between Chloe and her would-be assassin. “‘Make things right,’ thus saith the Lord, ‘and show Lucifer to where he belongs.’"
Michael's resolve wavered. He blanched like he'd seen a ghost. "That's— those were his words?"

Amenadiel nodded an abrupt affirmative, and Lucifer's jaw clenched in resentment, but Chloe's fresh ear recognized those instructions for what they really were: vague. *Make things right.*

Michael shared this notion, which triggered something unbefitting an archangel: uncertainty, indecision, doubt. "I— our father bid me the same, eons ago, when there was War in Heaven. I did what I thought he wanted. I condemned my own brother to an eternity in Hell. "Angel wings were expressive, and his drooped in a frown. “Everyone called it victory, but what victory tears a family asunder and perpetuates a thousand generations of schism and pain?”

So many stories, sculptures, oils and frescos where the conquering archangel crushes Satan beneath heel, and nobody ever bothered to ask Michael how he felt about it.

These misgivings held no sway over Amenadiel, unwilling to debate and interpret and split hairs, rather ready and waiting to throttle Lucifer were a determined detective and equally adamant archangel not blocking his path. "Lucifer betrayed God himself!"

"As you betray me." Michael listed *ad nauseam* Amenadiel's sins, ever-growing in scope: hiring hitmen, communion with a Lilim, reviving the Plagues, human endangerment, corrupting half the Host, siccing higher demons upon the world, plucking a damned soul from Hell. Lucifer and Chloe bore witness to many firsthand. "You were my second, Amen, my most trusted dominion." The archangel's hand drifted to that gold talisman about his neck, while his gaze fell to its silver twin hanging from Amenadiel's. "My fellow keymaster at the Pearl Gate."

Years ago, at the auction for Lucifer's wings, Chloe first glimpsed this necklace: a pin-straight rod dangling from its chain, dapper but nondescript against Amenadiel's vest. Michael wore one too. She paid neither heed until now. *Keymasters?* Then those weren't mere trinkets. Those were keys, two keys, gold and silver.

Chloe had done her homework, buckled down, learned the lingo, read the Bible and its apocrypha, tore through tomes and papyri and grimoires emblazon with the Vatican seal, but always assumed the Keys to the Kingdom of God were a figure of speech. Joke's on her.

"Those unlock Heaven?" she asked her partner.

"And lock it again." Lucifer swallowed hard. "Silver is mine."

"Silver was yours." For the first time since his arrival, Michael acknowledged Lucifer, disparaging and more than a little skeptical. "Sometimes you forget who won the War."

Amenadiel's patience ran dry. He snarled, spread his wings, and vanished into the dusk. "You'll both lose this one."

Then they were alone in Palisades Park with the angel of angels.

Lucifer released Chloe from his protective stranglehold, and she finally looked at his brother, really looked. Michael was shorter, stouter, broad and golden instead of dark and lithe. But his wings looked just like Lucifer's — or at least, like the near-perfect fakes unveiled at auction. Chloe never even saw the real things before they burned, though *these* wings were very real and very alive, alabaster and gleaming, spread twice as wide as Michael was tall. His coverts and flight feathers were stiff and strong, ruffling with every step, while gossamer tertiaries hung nearest his back like an ornamental veil.

Chloe envisioned what they might look like attached to Lucifer, and the image was haunting. Among
"You're wounded, Detective Decker?"

She jolted. An archangel was talking to her. "Oh— I'll live." Chloe touched the thin gash across her chest. It still stung, but bled no longer. "You— how d'you know my name?"

Michael smiled in the way Chloe smiled at Trixie when she was naïve and precious. "My dear detective," said the archangel, sheathing his sword and folding his hands, a portrait of divinity, "you're all the Silver City talks about anymore."

Lucifer cleared his throat, discontent with the center of attention anywhere except him. "Shall we chat about the civil war we just declared, or waste more time spreading rumors about a detective who domesticated the Devil?"

Battle strategy was important and all, but Chloe set a few things straight first: "You're about as domesticated as the velociraptors in Jurassic Park."

Michael grinned a surprisingly impish grin, not unlike Lucifer's, yet the Devil himself was unamused. "Considering I bore the brunt of torment and injustice after the last war, locked in a prison of eternal woe and abandoned hope, perhaps you lot could muster a titch more respect for the infernal circus Amenadiel will soon unleash!"

Michael iced over. "You're not the only angel with a cross to bear."

"Name a single bloody stain upon your impeccable conscience!"

Michael's jaw clenched when he hurt and tried to hide it. A family trait, apparently. "I failed another brother."

"Oh." That put Lucifer in his place. Chloe rolled her eyes. How could he be so blind for so long, never knowing his Fall was just as traumatic for those left behind? "Well, then— don't wallow. Unbecoming for the Prince of Heaven." Surprise, surprise, the Devil was abjectly terrible at empathy or comfort, but A+ effort. "Amenadiel's always been a nonnegotiable hard-ass, and I was hopeless from the start."

Michael shook his head, apologizing profusely to Chloe. "Sorry he's your problem now."

"I'm used to it."

Lucifer snapped his fingers. "Focus, Mike." He pointed at the sky, irate and urgent. "How d'you propose to get your house back in order, with half the Host fallen?" Worry flickered across his face. "The other archangels— " He sounded afraid of the answer. "Mum sunk her claws into Amenadiel — are the other archs— "

"—squabbling as always, but loyal to our father." Love for his siblings reinvigorated Michael. "Have a little faith in our family." He shot his brother a scathing look. "Uri would flay us both alive for ever even suspecting her of treason."

Chloe's interest piqued. She'd never seen a lady-angel. "Who the hell is Uri?"

The archangel Uriel struck a celestial figure as Chloe always imagined, this gorgeous, willowy woman decked in white and gold. She knotted little jewels into her black hair, twinkling in semblance of a halo, and was the most civilized and pretentious of her siblings. Her mere presence
evoked creativity and inspiration; this archangel was a muse, an artist, an orator boasting eloquence
with words, persuasive and masterful. She belonged on a Renaissance canvas.

Chloe first met her at Lux, when the rowdiest nightlife in L.A. went silent as she sang alongside
Lucifer and his piano. The Devil wielded his voice like a weapon, but Uriel turned all melodies,
however secular, into hymns. Angels of music, indeed, and together the spell they cast was ethereal,
a dueling ballad between Heaven and Hell.

Unfortunately, their amicable reunion ended with the song.

"Now," demanded Lucifer, leaning close to his sister, "what the fuck are you doing in my club?"

Uriel perched upon his piano, ankles crossed, hands folded. "There's a war on. Consider this a
resource audit."

Lucifer took offense. "I'm no one's resource. Certainly not Father's."

"Actually, I meant her— " The archangel jerked a thumb in Chloe's direction. " —noble, pure of
heart, immune to hellish coercion, smart with notable deductive instincts and growing interest in the
occult." Uriel motioned at Lucifer with vague disinterest. "Though I suppose we could find some use
for you."

Now Lucifer really took offense. “Michael and his dominions know each other backward, forward,
and sideways. They train together, work together, live together. He needs someone unpredictable to
gain a tactical advantage over Amenadiel.” The Devil gestured proudly at himself. "And God only
knows what'll happen when all five archangels stand united in battle for the very first time.”

“Four archangels,” snapped Uriel, “and the family trainwreck.”

But Chloe knew that war was a numbers game at its core. "Amenadiel rallied half the Heavenly Host
to your mother's cause. Only a third mutinied with Lucifer.” Her partner grumbled at the comparison,
though this difference could turn the tide. "Last time, Michael fought two-to-one in his favor, but
now the odds are even."

"Tipping toward Amenadiel," corrected Lucifer. "He also bribes Stygian councillors, nephilim, the
Brujería— "

Chloe bowed her head to Uriel, slowly and surely learning how to conduct herself around
archangels. "We're at your disposal. Of course we are."

Uriel's fiery confidence wavered the slightest fraction. "Pray we do not." She hopped from the piano,
ready to make her exit, before remembering one last errand. “Oh, almost forgot.” She touched
Lucifer's shoulders, smoothing his jacket and straightening his tie, almost maternal. "I bear a message
from a friend gone topside."

Lucifer sneered. “I don’t have friends in the Silver City.”

The archangel sat beside him, hovering fingers over piano keys before sweeping into the tearjerker
that was Knockin' on Heaven's Door. Father Frank’s song. Stabbing Lucifer in the heart might've
hurt less; his expression said so. After all these years, the loss still stung, a good man dead before his
time.

Uriel stopped the torture, point made. “Your priest taught me his favorite duets, and he always listens
when you play your half alone.” She stood from the bench, flattening her skirt and adjusting her bangles, then got right in Lucifer’s face. “Don’t you dare forget what he wasted his last words to tell you.”

His sister melted into Lux’s crowd, and Lucifer clammed up.

"Wait, what— where are you going?" demanded Chloe as he slunk toward the stairs without a word.

"Goodnight, detective." That phrase in that tone usually meant Lucifer was suffering an emotional metacrisis, and either needed a hug or to punch holes in a wall. Sometimes both.

Chloe stalked him into the elevator. He didn’t look happy, but he also didn’t protest, and they stood in silence past all ten floors and even after the doors opened into his penthouse. Lucifer beelined for the whiskey-wall and a stiff drink, while Chloe found sanctuary in his library, hidden amongst codices and spell books as familiar as old friends.

There, she waited until he was ready to talk.

But when he finally opened his mouth again, it wasn’t to talk. It was to yell, and not at her.

Chloe found him on the balcony, an accusatory finger pointed at the night sky, quaking in fury, bellowing at the stars. "You selfish sods better take damn good care of Padre up there, else Amenadiel will be the least of your fucking fears!" He pitched a half-smoked cigarette into the wild blue yonder. "You stole Frank too early, truncated his life. I should make you pay. I should stand idle while this rebellion lays waste to everything you hold dear!"

"Lucifer." Perhaps his temper should frighten her more than it did. Perhaps she should feel trepidation about grabbing his arm, pulling him close, shaking his shoulders, snapping him from his funk, following him down to sit on the floor, backs to the L.A. skyline. This man possessed strength enough in his pinkie to break her neck, crush her ribs, toss her from the high-rise without a thought, but to Chloe he was Lucifer first, the Devil second.

Either way, she was safe.

Though she was also friends with Satan, for better or worse. Biblical meltdowns were an occupational hazard.

"Stop blaming your dad for all the world's evil. Stop blaming your mom for leading Amenadiel astray." Wrathful and bleak, Lucifer refused to look at her. Sometimes she forgot exactly how primordial he was, how ancient, the sheer hell he’d been through, the horrible things he endured. "A bullet killed Father Frank, not your family feud."

Lucifer glowered. "He was a bloody priest. He served faithfully, so where were the angels when he needed them?"

Chloe had no answer, and it didn’t matter. "You know better than anyone: evil has no root, no source, it just is." She touched his nape, and Lucifer leaned into her like Trixie did after a bad dream, except his nightmares were oh-so-real. "Bad things happen. People die. I'll die someday, and don't you dare blame God."

Lucifer stiffened, a red haze boiling behind his eyes. "If you die fighting this war for him—"

"—then that's my own fault, not his. Or yours." Logic was fruitless when applied to Lucifer, but Chloe tried anyway. "Think about what happened to Malcolm after an angel magicked him back from the dead. Think about the desperation, the psychosis." She implored: "Would you ever wish
that upon a friend, upon Frank, upon me?"

Lucifer frowned into his drink. "Healing and resurrection are two very different beasts. What Amenadiel did to Malcolm, plucking the condemned out of Hell, that's sacrilege. Never ends well." He finished the whiskey in one swig. "But Frank lingered before he crossed the threshold, and he was heavenbound. Raph could've healed him, no strings attached. Raph can heal anything." He inspected the empty tumbler before pitching it overhand, stone shattering glass.

Chloe regretted the question as soon as she asked. "Who the hell is Raph?"

The archangel Raphael bled brilliance, his nose ever buried in a book. He had brown skin, beautiful curls, and subtle genius, dressing in plain colors to avoid attention. Ever at his side was a briefcase filled with miracle medicines from around the globe, and some from the Silver City itself. He was the most introspective of his siblings, a healer, a scholar, science and faith in peaceful coexistence.

"Our father made the rules," he once explained. "Nature follows them.

And come hell or high water, so did Raphael.

This archangel operated by the book, no exceptions, no excuses, and the term 'stickler' didn't quite do him justice. Unlike his other siblings, Raphael only reentered Lucifer's life upon formal invitation: a summoning, performed on his penthouse patio, which involved a salt circle, an incantation, and some dried myrtle. Chloe felt ridiculous, reciting gibberish and tossing herbs, until a handsome man with a lab coat and wings materialized near the jacuzzi.

"Shit!" She nearly fell in the pool.

Lucifer offered his brother a halfhearted salute. "Doctor in the house."

"You ring, I answer." Raphael set down his briefcase, none too thrilled. "Whether I like it or not."

From sheer inundation alone, Chloe assembled her incomplete masterlist of angelic law. Hurting humans was a major no-no, as was direct interference with free will. When appropriately summoned, they couldn't refuse. Rebellion was forbidden. Resurrection was forbidden. And, logically enough, sex with demons was forbidden, such that Amenadiel and Maze were Romeo and Juliet on steroids.

Lucifer pressed a palm to his heart in mock-flattery. "I missed you too, Raph." He glared. "Glad to see you're still the same unfeeling, heartless braggart I remember."

"I've no time to indulge you, satani. There's a war on, and our healers are already spread too thin."

The archangel knew exactly which buttons to press. "Or hadn't you heard? Half the Host sides with Amenadiel. Only a third—"

"—sided with me," snapped Lucifer. "Yes, thank you. It's been brought to my attention."

Raphael folded his arms, impatient. "Tell me what you want, so I can leave."

Lucifer gestured vaguely skyward. "You're the brains of their operation, and I want you to science."

He ushered Chloe closer and closer to his brother. She resisted, feeling too much like an amoeba under a microscope. "Exhibit A: why is Detective Decker impervious to all things sinful?"

Raphael blinked at her once, twice, clearly intrigued, before side-eying Lucifer again. "I heard the rumors. A human, immune to your thrall." The Devil nodded emphatically, but the archangel tilted his head in doubt. "Show me."
Chloe sighed as Lucifer spun her on a dime and stared deep into her eyes. "Detective." His voice slowed and pitched low, smooth as silk. She tried very hard not to laugh in his face. "Tell me. What would you do in a world without consequence?" Chloe felt the tiniest chill down her spine, the softest hum in her ears, but only because she paid attention now. The Devil still couldn't sway her. "What d'you desire most in this life and the next?"

She leaned close. "For you to stop asking me that."

Lucifer threw out his arms in exasperation. "See?!" He waited expectantly for his brother to pull some groundbreaking diagnosis from his ass. "What's wrong with her?"

Raphael circled them, like a scientist judging rats in an impossible maze. “Hybrid, perhaps?”

“Considered that,” said Lucifer. "Not possible. Nephilim are resistant to angelic and demonic influence, but Amenadiel’s chronokinesis affects her like any other human.” He crossed his arms and tapped his foot. "The detective's only immune to hellspawn. A succubus once attempted to glamour her too. No dice.”

The archangel rubbed his chin, pensive. "Protective wards, enchantments, if a mage blessed her as an infant— "

"No tattoos. No brands." The brothers exchanged a look. "Trust me. I've seen every delicious inch of her."

"Standing right here, gentlemen!"

Lucifer sidled to the archangel, and they both stared at Chloe, unabashed, pondering, brainstorming. "And further to fuel that rumor mill," said the Devil, pausing just long enough to whet Raphael's insatiable curiosity, "chew on Exhibit B." He produced a pocketknife and dragged the blade across his palm, blood welling in its wake. "Why does physical proximity to Detective Decker make me mortal?"

"Mortal— ?" His brother grabbed the knife, inspecting it, determined to expose a con. Of course, he found only stainless steel, nothing otherworldly, and Raphael stuttered in bafflement. "That's not— Luci, that's impossible."

Lucifer waved a bloodied palm in the archangel's face. "I walked her through fire, and I burned."

A beat. "Fire cannot burn the Devil."

"Around the detective, it most certainly can."

For his cool, calm, and collected countenance, Raphael did a piss-poor job hiding panic. "Whom have you told?"

"You lot," said Lucifer to present company. "Maze." He hesitated. "And I may've mentioned it to Amenadiel."

"Fuck." Raphael paced along the balcony, restless and fearful, drumming his lips. "The danger's too extreme, and you're no use to anyone dead and buried in Judecca." He pointed between Chloe and her Devil. "We should separate you two, as far apart as possible for the duration of this war— "

"No," chorused Lucifer and Chloe. Each looked surprised and more than a little flattered to hear such unexpected conviction from the other. Apparently, they'd fight the good fight together or not at all. Who knew.
Raphael gaped at his brother, once so selfish and distant, now recklessly endangering himself to keep company with a human. "She's a hazard, your Achilles' heel, a liability we cannot afford!"

"Uriel says she's an asset."

Raphael scoffed. "Uriel's an impulsive fireball, overconfident and rash." He rubbed his forehead, staring at Chloe in wonderment. To stump the Silver City's preeminent thinker was no easy feat. She deserved a medal, a placard, a trophy; what she got was poked and prodded. "I'll take these samples to my apothecary for analysis. Hair at the root, skin scrape, venous blood." He locked the vials in his briefcase, then rounded on Lucifer. "And until I find a way to nullify the detective's deleterious effect on you, I insist we tell Michael."

The Devil snarled, "You'll do no such thing."

“Father's plan is far too intricate for man or angel to comprehend,” reminded Raphael, "but your mind must've melted in the Ninth Circle to befriend walking, talking kryptonite and think it could end in anything but disaster."

Lucifer shrugged. "No worries, Raph. I'm already seeing a shrink."

"I'll need a consult after this." Bag in hand, he spread his wings, vast and wide with white-blue feathers, and only then did Chloe realize how exhausted he looked. "I sometimes question Father's logic in compartmentalizing his angels, subdividing the Host, separating us by vocation." His brother sighed in defeat. "But when we're all asked to cooperate and the bickering starts, suddenly I remember. And when it guarantees Michael and Gabbs only speak to each other every few decades, suddenly I'm grateful."

With that, Raphael took to the sky.

And by now, Chloe should've learned her lesson. “Who the hell is Gabbs?”

The archangel Gabriel took careful pains for her human guise to resemble every unassuming, twenty-something brunette. She wouldn’t turn heads in a college class. She could pass for a Beelzebean barista. Rocking pigtail braids and freckles and blue-jeans, nothing suggested she might be the angel of annunciation, nor God’s herald on Earth. Her gifts were abstract: emotion, protection, a zest for life.

Ironically enough, this archangel was a humanist.

Chloe still grappled with the realization: “You’re a woman?”

“Of course.” Gabriel wandered about the living room, tilting her head at Penelope Decker's film posters and appreciating the doodles taped to Trixie's door. “Would’ve been kinda dumb for Dad to send some creep to tell a terrified virgin what-to-expect-when-you’re-expecting-the-Messiah.” She envisioned this scene with poorly-contained glee. "Sounds like a prank to get Mike and Raph pepper-sprayed."

Lucifer questioned his sister from afar, not necessarily afraid of her, but keeping a cautionary distance from across the kitchen. "What business brings you to the earthly plane?" He suspected ulterior motive in everything his family did, and with their track record Chloe couldn't blame him. "No divine pregnancies to annunciate?" He patted his own belly for emphasis.

"Dunno, Luci," teased the archangel. "You're practically glowing." Gabriel conspired with Chloe. "Truth is, I love your world more than I should. The ocean, the wind, the sun, though angels cannot
linger too long on Earth. It changes us." She didn't elaborate. Amenadiel and Lucifer were examples enough. "Heaven is Heaven, of course, and the Silver City grand, but our father's greatest creation is down here."

Lucifer was skeptical. "Sightseeing, really?"

His sister shared that impish grin. "In a manner." She locked eyes with Chloe. "I wanted to meet you."

Chloe blinked and pointed at herself. "Me?"

"The other archs won't stop talking about you. I felt left out." Gabriel flopped onto the sofa and patted a neighboring cushion. Chloe sat beside her, compelled to obey. "Uriel thinks you'll win the war for us, but Michael says you bleed like any mortal should. And Raphael hasn't left his apothecary in weeks, obsessing over those samples, trying and failing to expose your secret." The archangel furrowed her brow, searching Chloe for God-knows-what. "I planned to sweet-talk you into confessing, but you're as confused as the rest of us, aren't you?"

Chloe nodded mutely.

Gabriel glanced across the room to her brother. "D'you mean Lucifer harm?"

"Never," she swore. "He's my friend."

The archangel squeezed her hand; tranquility and warmth washed through Chloe like a wave. "Thank you for caring." Gabriel swallowed, choosing words wisely. "It's been a long time since anybody but me prayed for him."

Trixie's door creaked open. "Mommy?" The child crept from her bedroom, Uglydoll in hand. "Who're you talking to?" A half-second later, she spotted her favorite person, though the token "Lucifer!" was subdued and bleary from sleep.

Chloe stood to calm and comfort her daughter, but the Devil reached her first. "Come along, child. Well past your bedtime." He tried very hard to shuffle Trixie away before she saw Gabriel, but to no avail. The little hellraiser peered around Lucifer, curious to a fault. Like mother, like daughter.

Trixie pointed at the incognito archangel. "Who's she?"

Lucifer was ever-honest. "My little sister."

The child waved. "Hiya. I'm Trixie."

"Gabbs." The archangel stood, then bowed deep. "Apologies if we woke you, cherub."

Trixie shrugged, hiking a thumb at Lucifer. "Happens all the time." Her next question was disbelieving and meant for the Devil himself. "How many brothers and sisters d'you actually have?"

"Billions," he muttered.

Gabriel stuck out her tongue. "He hates me least."

Trixie continued to pry. "Lucifer says you all fight a lot."

Chloe deflected. "That's rude, Trix—"

"Yet never anything truer." The archangel answered without shame. "We agree on precious little, my
brother Michael and me in particular." Gabriel bit her lip and dipped her head. "He— long, long ago, he and Lucifer tore our family apart, and our mother left our father. I tried to forgive them. Still, I try. They don't make it easy."

Trixie nodded knowingly. "My parents are divorced too. But you can love and hate each other at the same time. That's what family is." She hugged her doll. "And that's why my nana made Lucifer an honorary Decker."

The Devil choked in surprise, while his sister beamed. "What earns him such a lofty title?"

Trixie contemplated a while. "He spent Christmas at our cabin and fixes us dinner once a week. He helps me laugh when I'm sad, and my mom really likes him." She grinned her missing-teeth grin. "I'm little, but I'm not stupid. I know why he sticks around, and I know who he really is."

Gabriel startled, and Lucifer blanched, and Chloe launched into a lie, desperate to spare her child this horrifying reality of good and evil, angels and demons, Heaven and Hell. They sheltered Trixie so carefully, but she must've overheard... "Lucifer's just a name, baby. He's not really the Devil."

"Duh, of course not." Trixie rolled her eyes, much to everyone's surprise. "The Devil wouldn't bother to protect me from bullies or help you catch bad guys. The Devil wouldn't bake us lasagna or read *Harry Potter* with me." The child shifted her sass back at Lucifer. "I know why you do all that, and who you really are." Terror flashed across his face, but whatever deep, dark secret he expected her to divulge, she didn't: "You're our guardian angel."

As she was wont to do, Trixie hugged him about the waist, and as Lucifer was wont to do, he pretended to hate it.

"Night-night," said the child, innocent as a lamb, before toddling back to bed.

Stunned to silence, both Gabriel and Chloe stared at Lucifer, who fidgeted and fussed with his suit jacket. Eventually, he erupted under their scrutiny. "Bloody hell— what?!"

"Out of the mouths of babes." His sister swelled with impossible hope, pressing a hand to Lucifer's chest. She was on the brink of tears. "I thought Sam was lost forever, but that asshole's still in there somewhere."

Chloe didn't understand. "Who the hell is Sam?"

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The archangel Samael was, well— Samael was Lucifer, the Lightbringer fallen from grace, tall, dark, and aloof. He wore a black shirt, black vest, black slacks, and wasted inordinate lengths of time pretending he wasn’t emotionally invested in anything.

But after one too many years and one too many good deeds, Chloe knew better.

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Chapter End Notes

I really admire other writers in our fandom for utilizing original characters to highlight in-canon favorites without overshadowing them, and this is my paltry attempt to emulate! Please let me know how I did.

If you’ve a hankering to world-build with me, below are fancasting suggestions for each
archangel, and please share your own ideas! Images from various fansites. None are mine.

**Michael**: inspired by Gannicus [Dustin Clare] from Spartacus (television series)

![Gannicus](image)

**Uriel**: inspired by Mako Mori [Rinko Kikuchi] from Pacific Rim (film)

![Mako Mori](image)

**Raphael**: inspired by Dr. Foreman [Omar Epps] from House (television series)

![Dr. Foreman](image)

**Gabriel**: inspired by Carmen [America Ferrera] from Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants
And last but not least, before the Fall,

**Samael**: inspired by Lucifer Morningstar [Tom Ellis] from *Lucifer* (television series)
Chapter Notes

Minisode inspired by and dedicated to Cyberbutterfly, CloudXMK, and all the Hellblazers. Many spectacular crossovers already exist, and I want to play too. Gif herein isn't mine, but was too perfect not to share. :)

My deep dark confession is I've never read Hellblazer, only watched (and still adore) the cancelled-before-its-time Constantine television series. Therefore, the John Constantine you're about to read is based upon the show, considered by many a tamer character than in the comics. **Minisode spoiler, but potential trigger warning: diagnosis of terminal lung cancer secondary to smoking.**

If you haven't watched Constantine or his brief reprisal on Arrow, you're missing out on the swagger and heartbreaking genius that is actor Matt Ryan. But a sappy intro is too out-of-character for the trench coat exorcist, so without further ado:

![On with the show.](image)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#).

Exorcist, demonologist, and petty dabbler in the dark arts,
**Minisode VIII: Hellblazer**

As though his recent walkabout in Star City weren’t diverting enough, John Constantine spent the next few weeks living motel to motel while jerry-rigging a ruse to smuggle himself through the Hellmouth, across the River Acheron, and into Limbo for a quick chat with Virgil.

He had a question about the *Aeneid*. Constantine preferred his answers from a primary source.

Stunts like this were old news, par for the course, another day in the life. He wasted enough of his time popping in and out of Hell to warrant a penthouse timeshare. Besides, the upper circles were much easier to breech than the inner ones, because who'd be crazy enough to break into the Underworld?

John bloody Constantine, that's who.

And for the most part, his ingenious plan worked. Sorta. He improvised a bit, whacking the boatman Charon over the head with his own oar to bum a ride downriver. But nobody died, which was a bit rare whenever Hellblazer shenanigans went pear-shaped. He was in, out, done in a jiffy, though
these solemn, distinguished shades of the First Circle were surprisingly juicy gossips compared to their tight-lipped brethren deeper below.

Intel gathered, mission accomplished, Constantine quipped on his way out: "Give Lucifer a kiss for me."

“Oh, the Devil quit. Eight years ago.”

...Alrighty then. "That a fact?"

"Assumed you of all people already heard." As the only Stygian councillor with an ounce of virtue, higher education, or conscience, Virgil shook his head. "Bossman took a vacation, never came back." The once-dignified philosopher was at wits’ end, clearly exasperated. "Been a political pigsty down here ever since, and the chaos is leeching topside. Hadn't you noticed?"

Well, even a pope threw in the towel a while back, and the cultish Brujería descended to new depths of depravity in their bimonthly bids for world domination, but this was new. Describing a relentless and unprecedented supernatural upheaval as 'chaos leeching topside' won understatement of the fucking decade. Higher demons ran rampant through the streets. Cursed artifacts resurfaced after millennia underground. Angels reduced themselves into allegiance with the Hellblazer. The situation was bad, really bad, and ever-escalating since Constantine first embroiled himself in this whole Rising Darkness affair.

Which kickstarted eight goddamn years ago. In direct correlation with Satan slithering his fallen ass out of Hell.

Perhaps somebody should've appraised the world's foremost demonologist that Old Scratch had flown the coop, and thereafter the eternal balance between good and evil promptly fell to shit. Pertinent details, better late than never, or else the biggest coincidence since God flipped on the lights.

"On holiday, you say?" Constantine feigned casual interest. "Whereabouts?"

Constantine hated LAX.

In fact, he hated everything about airplanes and rich people, both of which flock to LAX in spades. But driving cross-country from Georgia to California was impractical, lonely, and moderately illegal, what with Chas off visiting his daughter, Zed's worsening seizures, and Constantine's woefully expired (read: suspended) license. Not to mention the fifty-fifty chance their jalopy of a taxi might break down halfway through the Mojave desert.

So he swallowed his pride and flew out of Atlanta International. Five hours crammed into the bitch seat between chattering housewives and a screaming infant were longer and more miserable than his previous afternoon literally spent in Hell.

Between touchdown and shuttling to the taxi stand, Constantine did what any 21st century demonologist with an iPhone does in hot pursuit of a quarry. Google it: lucifer in los angeles. Up popped reviews for a popular bar called Lux, and he hailed a cab to the Sunset Strip.

After wandering three blocks in the wrong direction before his GPS chastised him, Constantine located the nightclub on ground level of a luxury high-rise. Black-and-white placards boasted its name. Nearby were vintage boutiques and trendy restaurants and designer shops, nothing supernatural, nothing extraordinary. A most unlikely place to find the fugitive Satan, but what could Virgil possibly gain from sending Constantine on a wild goose chase through downtown
Hollywood?

He loitered on the street corner, trying and failing to peer through drawn curtains, until his unkempt air, trench coat, and chain-smoking earned scathing and suspicion from passersby. Constantine sidestepped beneath an ornate archway and red-velvet rope to rattle the club's front door. Locked, obviously, at noontime on a Wednesday.

He ensured the coast was clear before waving a hand over the deadbolt and whispering an Egyptian incantation, first utilized for tomb robbery during the New Kingdom and recorded for posterity's thieves. Its magic disengaged the lock, along with any potential booby traps, granting the Hellblazer entry without care or caution.

Lux was posh and well-lit with rows upon rows of golden, glowing orbs that dangled overhead. Toeing a fine line between burlesque theatre and cigar parlor, the bar looked clean, inviting, and not at all what Constantine expected: something seedy, perhaps, black and red with fire and wrought iron, dark and dank and dismal like the hellhole from whence its proprietor came. Not this. Not upscale elegance and cream-leather couches and a black Steinway.

Color him impressed and humbled, because the Devil's lounge was far classier than Constantine's favorite pub.

He moseyed about the booths and barstools, tapping some nonsensical notes on the piano. Nothing about this felt evil. Sordid, maybe, naughty and wicked, nightlife at its best, but never evil.

Which is why he startled so badly when protective wards pricked to life across his skin.

Electric and painful, his sacred tattoos were Aramaic and cuneiform, blessed to detect and deter demons. They sounded the alarm, loud and clear without warning: hellspawn approach. Constantine whipped around, searching the shadows, scanning the rafters, finding nothing. He leapt up, over, and behind the bar not two seconds before a man and woman descended the grand staircase into Lux.

Constantine braced himself for an inevitable firefight.

But strangely enough, at least in the world of John Constantine, nothing exploded. Nobody got possessed or eviscerated or turned into a zombie. Hellbeasts didn't burst from the cabinetry. Vengeful ghosts didn't rise through the floorboards. Demons didn't drag anyone to their doom. Instead, the man and woman chattered amongst themselves, discussing business and contracts, monthly revenues, celebrity visitors, renovations to the nightclub. She sounded American, he British.

Enchantments still humming, defenses up, Constantine peeped from hiding. The woman was petite and pretty, wearing a fashionable corset and lots of leather. The man was ridiculously tall and disgustingly handsome with an easy laugh and three-piece suit worth more than the Atlanta mill house and Chas' taxi combined. Neither looked familiar.

"Drink, Maze?" The man grabbed a decanter atop the bar and poured himself a brandy.

Maze shook her head, attention buried in her phone as she paced the club. "Your pet detective's late."

"Patience." The man sat on a barstool, nursing his drink. "She's taking her offspring to chorus rehearsal."

"I know. Beatrice told me." Maze continued texting, but meandered closer and closer to the bar. "Her concert's this Saturday. She bought us tickets with her allowance. We're going."
The man rolled his eyes, but didn’t object. "Stygian councillors and Ptolomeics once quaked in fear of the name Lucifer, and now I spend my weekends at fifth-grade recitals." The Devil chuckled into his liquor, less resentful than amused. "How the mighty fall."

Constantine's jaw dropped. It was true, all of it. Satan escaped Hell and retired to a piano bar in L.A.

What the actual fuck.

Despite countless forays into Hades, Constantine came face-to-face with the Devil himself only once before, eons ago when he was younger and even stupider, during a particularly bold excursion through the Inner Circles and straight into its capital. Pandæmonium was a cesspool of corruption, greed, and crumbling marble. It embodied everything awful about cities: garbage, sewage, traffic, smog, the unholy racket of crowds and overpopulation with the very worst souls ever to smear what little remained of humanity's good name.

Lucifer looked different back then, titanic upon the Infernal Throne, fiery skin writhing like magma and eyes alight with hellfire. He presided over his Stygian council with an iron fist. No one questioned him, no one challenged, no one disobeyed. He was their master, the King of Tyre, the Lord of Hell, so Constantine alone had the cojones to steal two of thirty infamous silver denarii — Iscariot's blood money, the so-called Pentecostal coins — from lockup in the capital vault.

The first he used immediately, a one-way ticket out of the Underworld and homeward bound.

The second he saved for a rainy day.

Constantine's dirty little secret, the skeleton in his closet, penultimate ace in the hole. That leftover Pentecostal coin still bounced around his ratty carpetbag, which he clutched tight to his chest. Even death can't keep a good mage down. Damned for eternity his soul might be, but no matter how reckless, how crazy, how utterly and completely moronic or potentially suicidal his plans, the Hellblazer had a get-outta-jail-free card.

After all this time, skirting mortality and cheating fate, inventing new and increasingly creative ways to slip in and out of Hell without wasting his trump card, Constantine wondered if he might need to cash in his coin at long last when Maze rounded the bar and came face-to-face with the trench coat exorcist himself.

Unblinking, they stared at each other for an instant before twenty years of instinct took hold, and Constantine extended his right hand. "The Sacred Cross commands you!" The little demon yelped, dropping her phone as she doubled over in pain. "The Star of David commands you! The Omkar, the Lotus, and the Shahada command you!" Constantine leapt to his feet, bearing down. "Flee this place! Disperges in vent — "

A glass tumbler hurtled across the bar and smashed Constantine square in the temple. He stuttered, stumbled, dizzy and bleeding, but beyond that Lucifer didn't actually attack. Instead, he rushed to Maze, holding her as she reeled and retched from the aborted spell, her once-beautiful guise fracturing to expose the skeletal Lilim beneath.

Lilim, she's Lilim, a creature of Lilith. He bested one of her sisters several years before: Lamashu, who'd infiltrated a Mexican convent for the Brujería. Emboldened from experience, Constantine rallied, found his footing, and raised both arms, palms out, a mage on the offensive. Lucifer shoved Maze from harm's way, grabbed a decanter, and pitched it overhand, followed by a wine bottle, and a martini shaker, and a fifth of bourbon—

Constantine retreated, step by step, dripping wet and sliced to ribbons. "Quit throwing booze at me!"
Lucifer lobbed a handle of vodka. "Quit exorcizing my bartender!"

"LAPD!" came a booming voice from the balcony above. "Hands where I can see 'em!"

Unlike the late Detective Corrigan, whose green-tinged spectre haunted Constantine with unfinished business and unsolved murders like a parodic Christmas Carol, the Devil's copper was surprisingly professional and straightlaced. She arrived amid the fray, Glock level, eyes and barrel trained on Constantine as she descended the staircase. Mage-magic did nothing to deflect bullets, so he obeyed her command, lifting his arms above his head despite blood and whiskey seeping down his face.

"Who's Mr. Trench Coat?" demanded the detective of Lucifer, who fretted and fussed like a mother hen over the half-exorcized Maze. Ignoring all else, he hoisted her into his arms, set her down on a sofa, and knelt at her side. The detective asked again, irritated and still holding Constantine at gunpoint: "Burglar, or friend of yours? He looks shady as hell."

"Oi, excuse you." Constantine was always a little hardscrabble, loose tie and unshaven with ill-fitted slacks, but jet lag hit him really hard, okay? He bloody hated flying.

Maze coughed pitifully, curling into Lucifer like a kicked puppy, and he glared over his shoulder. "Shoot while you can, detective, else you'll live to regret it." His brown eyes steamed an otherworldly red. Ah, speak of the Devil. "That's John Constantine — exorcist, conartist, perpetual pain in my ass, and it'd be my personal pleasure to hurl his soul into Hell where it belongs."

"An exorcist?" Something paramount shifted within the detective. "Really?" Her gun dropped the tiniest fraction, as this unflappable cornerstone of moral integrity became an insatiably inquisitive student.

Constantine knew that look, like a mirror of his teenage self the very first time he ever saw magic. The occult horrified and repelled most people, decent people, normal people, but dark artistry was addiction more than hobby for a few unfortunate souls. Poor girl had no idea what she was getting herself into, yet far be it from John Constantine to snub opportunity.

"You dabble too, love?" He thickened his accent, smarmy and smooth.

The detective shook her head much too fast, obviously lying. "That stuff's crock."

Constantine blinked at her. "No suspension of disbelief," he mused, dumbfounded, "even while starring in Nancy Drew and the Mystery of Satan's Midlife Crisis." He took a step forward, and her firearm launched back to attention. "Easy now. Indulge a bloke. Spend enough time riding shotgun to the Devil, and you must have a tale or two to spin."

"Well— " The detective swallowed, still torn between duty and curiosity. "I exorcized Lilith once."

Constantine half-smiled, crooked and snarky. "Funny. But seriously."

The detective prickled. "I am serious."

Constantine rolled his eyes. "Lilith's a Stygian councillor, a higher demon, hardly amateur hour. I'd struggle to cast her down." Calling temporary time-out, he looked to Lucifer. "Honestly, mate, you can't expect me to believe—"

"—that Detective Decker possesses a very unique and particular skill set against all things hellish?" If Constantine didn't know better, the Devil actually sounded proud of someone other than himself.

His pet detective stared at Maze, still recumbent and slow to recover, the fierce and fiery demon
flattened beneath nothing more than one man's power of intention. "She can mow down a dozen gangsters with her bare hands," marveled Detective Decker, "and you cripple her with a single spell." She whispered it like a dirty word. "Did you come here to kill Maze?" Such a notion ruffled her.

"Of course not." Constantine finally lowered his hands. His arms were tired, and the detective seemed more chatty than trigger-happy. For the moment. "One little Lilim's nowhere near motivation enough to suffer in economy across four time zones." He jerked his thumb at Lucifer. "I'm here to haul his delinquent ass back downstairs."

Lucifer scoffed. "Get in line."

"You left animals running the bloody zoo!"

Lucifer mocked his on-off Mancunian dialect. "Ain't me problem no more."

Their argument continued like this for a while, pointless and circular and sassy, until Constantine sank into a grumbly funk upon realizing he'd spent more of the last decade in Hades than the Devil himself. If ever there were cause for a drink, that was probably it.

He helped himself to the draughts before sliding a pint across the bar to Lucifer. "You do realize," prompted Constantine, "the Brujería's master plan is to demolish the Palace of Minos and merge Hell and Earth into one?" The Devil's eyebrow hit his hairline, and he drank deep. "Suboptimal for everybody, and mutually exclusive for your retirement." Only then did truth dawn. "If your brother's working with them—"

"—then Amenadiel's given up on dragging me to Hell," reasoned Lucifer, "and instead hopes to drag Hell to me."

Banished to a booth with naught but soda water, a magazine, and one stuporous Lilim for entertainment, Detective Decker arrived at the same impossible conclusion that Constantine did, only he rolled with the punches while her pent-up frustration erupted. "So after all this time, you two are actually fighting for the same side?!"

Enemies of enemies are friends, after all. Constantine tilted his head, intrigued and amused, which never boded well for the unlucky sods on its receiving end. "I'm starting to like you lot. A little bit." Against his better judgement, he raised his glass in toast and handed Lucifer a business card. "Don't abuse the privilege."

——

His phone rang during the best telly hour. Los Angeles area code.

"Er—hello," came the voice of that upstanding detective. "Is this Mr. Constantine?"

He muted the Food Network and rubbed his brow. "John, detective. I insist."

She paused before reciprocating. "Chloe." This first-name basis bolstered her confidence. "We've a...situation here in L.A."

"What's Amenadiel done now?"

"Released the nephilim from Hell."

Constantine coughed, mid-drag of a cigarette. The halfbreeds, angel-human hybrids, were no laughing matter, sacrilegious corruptions on par with invunche and the Brujería. Like their fellow
Old Testament hellraisers, nephilim went extinct in the Great Flood — or more accurately, the Great Flood came forth to exterminate them. "How many escaped?"

A beat. "All of them."

He caught the next redeye out of Atlanta International, landed at LAX with a carpetbag full of duty-free smokes and airplane bottles, and hailed a cab straight to Lux. Detective Decker awaited him at the curb, so he didn't get lost this time.

What with the threat of murderous nephilim looming overhead, figuratively and literally, Constantine grabbed her arm, hauled her inside, and bolted the locks behind them. He also raided the bar for salt to draw protective semicircles on the floor around each entryway: doors, windows, even air vents. Nephilim were tricky and clever.

Chloe watched in fascination while Lucifer bemoaned the waste. "Salt's meant for margaritas!"

"Salt's a spiritual barrier." Constantine dusted his hands and sized up the club. "If halfbreeds hunt you, then say a prayer, because those blighters are relentless." He rifled through his carpetbag for a vial of Noah's floodwater, the only substance in Heaven or Hell potent enough to kill nephilim. Their hybrid vigor was as legendary as the strength it imparted, and their impermeability to Enochian steel notorious. Like roaches in a nuclear winter: vermin and scavengers, but survivors. "Our only hope's to establish a safe house and batten down the hatches until their horde moves on."

Pure and noble as ever, the detective frowned. "Why're they so hateful? What's the motive?"

Constantine shrugged. "Cain was the first halfbreed, bastard of Eve and the fallen angel Mammon. He committed the first murder, earned his people their notoriety and name. Nephilim translates as 'the violent ones.'"

Such injustice enraged Chloe, who rounded on Lucifer. "An entire race was condemned for the crime of one man?"

He threw out his arms in frustration. "Sure, right, typical: blame me for Cain's rage issues, the halfbreeds' plight, blame me because Mammon couldn't keep it in his pants! My father played favorites and drowned everybody else in a deluge, but nobody points fingers at him." Adding insult to injury, the Devil wasn't particularly happy to see Constantine either. "Which also begs why the Hellblazer's back in my bar, preaching the importance of divine birth control?"

"I called him." Chloe crossed her arms in defiance. "You keep his business card on your fridge."

Lucifer tugged her aside. "You should consult me before hiring freelancers! We're partners—"

Constantine bobbed on his heels, hands stuffed in his pockets, whistling to himself while Chloe and Lucifer squabbled like a married couple, though the true nature of their relationship still baffled him. Neither noticed when the elevator doors slid open and a little girl wearing denim overalls crept down the grand staircase into Lux. She stared incessantly at Constantine, more interesting a study than the schoolwork in her arms.

Born of sheer boredom, and a begrudging but undeniable fondness for children, he acknowledged the girl with a kind smile and jerked a thumb at the Devil and his lawful advocate. "They bicker a lot?"

"All the time." She perked at his accent. "You sound like Lucifer."

"Coincidence, rest assured."
Her spirits fell. "Oh. He has brothers, so I thought—" She shrugged, interest waning.

Unsure if flattery or offense were warranted at being mistaken for an angel, given his distaste for the flighty and unhelpful, Constantine changed the subject. "You must be the detective's daughter, yeah?" She nodded. "What's your name?"

"Trixie." She sat on a stair step.

"I'm John." He sat next to her.

The child assessed his trench coat, carpetbag, and half-smoked cig. "You look like somebody my mom should arrest."

"Cheers, but L.A. probably keeps its criminals classier than me."

She smiled. "You're funny. D'you have kids?" asked Trixie. "Weird dads are the best dads."

Now that he considered a compliment. "None I know of," answered Constantine, though his heart hurt to remember Astra, an orphan when she died, his in all but name. Fatherhood was a gift he'd never deserve, not after failing her as miserably as he did. "But my best mate has a daughter about your age. Lives in New York with her mum, calls me Uncle John."

Only then did Chloe surface from a domestic dispute with Satan to discourage her daughter from chatting with the Hellblazer. "Trix, I told you to stay upstairs with Maze and do your homework!"

"Long division confuses her too. And I want gelato. For my brain."

The detective crouched down. "We talked about this. We need to stay inside. Some bad guys escaped from H—" She caught herself. Constantine suspected the child was supernaturally naïve, at least in part. "—escaped from jail, sorta. They're angry, not evil, but they might do evil, unfair things because evil, unfair things were done to them."

"I know what evil is," reminded Trixie. "Evil was inside the man who kidnapped me and shot Lucifer." Constantine recoiled. Holy shit. That little girl was a lot tougher than she looked, still to be bright and carefree and learning arithmetic after such an ordeal. "I ran away and hid while you put four bullets in evil." Her resolve solidified. "But I'm done running and hiding. I wanna help."

"That's the spirit." Constantine respected her more and more with every word, including the bit about gelato. "Though I hate to be the bearer of bad news, our current plan is indeed to run and hide from evil."

The child demanded of her mother, "Isn't John here to help too?" before adding, "Proactively."

Chloe swallowed hard, unsure how to explain. "Trix, baby, Mr. Constantine's here to— well, he's—"

"A magician," volunteered Lucifer. It wasn't a lie.

Any idiot with a grimoire could cast spells, and Zed's glioma-induced visions were an anomaly, but true mastery of the dark arts ran in families. An ancient, irreverent line of Laughing Magicians sired the very first Konstantyn in Roman Britannia. Whether she liked it or not, Liv Aberdeen inherited a potent clairvoyance from her estranged father, who inherited from his father, and his father before him. The voodoo dynasty of House Laveau produced virtuosos in Papa Midnite and his dead-but-not-gone sister Cedella, inseparable even across that great divide.
Something preternatural permeated the Deckers too, because Trixie stood as transfixed as her mother at the prospect of magic. "You're a wizard?! Oh, please show me a trick!" She glowed with mirth. "Please, John, please?"

Constantine humored her. "Fetch a napkin." Trixie stole one off the bar. "Now fold it, small as you can, and lay it in your palm." She obeyed, and he cupped his hand over hers. "Repeat after me." Trixie nodded emphatically as Constantine spoke, slow and steady. "Metamorphoun." The child parroted his words, imperfect but close. "Aeternum. Floresco."

He moved his hand to reveal a perfect paper flower, napkin folded like origami in her palm. Trixie squealed. "You *are* a magician!" She hugged the flimsy bauble. "A good wizard like Dumbledore and Gandalf!"

"Mage," corrected Constantine, gentle but firm. "Proper term for a magician."

Trixie soaked information like a sponge. "Mage."

"That there was only little magic." Constantine pointed at her origami. "Next is real mage-magic, a protection spell, with lights and noise." He knelt to her level. "Much scarier. You'll need to be brave to protect your mum."

Trixie clutched the detective's hand. "You're a good wizard. You won't hurt us."

Constantine should've stopped her there, warned her, told her the truth. Nothing about him was good. He was a nasty piece of work, a homewrecker, a conman who played both sides of the court and condemned the righteous to violent ends. But it'd been so bloody long since anybody saw anything in him worth saving, and even longer still since he held out any hope in himself.

Astra was gone, an innocent dragged to Hell on his account, and his soul rightly damned for it. Gary Lester was dead after days of exquisite agony; a Ptolomeic possession demon called Mnemoth consumed him from the inside out. Constantine knew because he put it there. Not to mention his very first acts in the world: strangle his identical twin *in ureto*, murder his mother in childbirth. The list never ended. It never would.

"Killer," his father always called him, and Constantine had yet to prove him wrong.

He was selfish and bitter and broken, worried Lucifer himself might be the better man. Sod it. Let one little girl believe her fairytale about good wizards and justice. Let her believe Satan and the Hellblazer deserved redemption. Let her believe, dreaming dreams free from nightmares, at least until wartime horrors came knocking and they let fly their true colors.

Constantine emptied the vial of floodwater over his hands, spread his arms, took a breath, and started the spell. "Protego *totalum. Cave inimicum."

Bottles clattered and clinked on their shelves, glasses rattled, and the lights flickered ominously. "Akasha *mi geill mo prana ri sibh nephilimi. Protego totalum. Cave inimicum."

The fusebox sparked and imploded, pitching the club into inky blackness. Trixie chirped for her mother.

Constantine didn't relent. Perhaps her naivety would fizzle and die much sooner than expected. For the best, really. Lifespans increased exponentially with distance kept from the Hellblazer. "Protego totalum. Cave inimicum. Akasha *mi geill mo prana ri sibh nephilimi."

Blue fluorescence crackled from the saltwater wetting his fingers, gathering and growing until it bathed the entirety of Lux and climbed its walls like a strangler vine. No better shield against nephilim than weaponizing the
"Constantine..." worried Lucifer, concerned either for his bar or his mortals.

He pressed on. "Protego totalum. Cave inimicum. Nephilim de hoc mundo exisse in nomine Dei iuberis!" Blue light became blue fire, consuming Constantine to both elbows and emitting a fetid stench, before it spiraled overhead like a geyser and scorched the ceiling. "Protego totalum. Cave inimicum. By the blood of man, in the name of God and all his angels, be not, and be gone!"

Sapphire flames sputtered and spat, raining like brimstone, filling Lux with foul smoke, until the spell petered out. Then, nothing but darkness and the rhythmic drips of water off Constantine's hands.

Trixie spoke first. "Mommy? Lucifer?" Her voice trembled, but she wasn't crying. "You okay?"

"Yeah, monkey. You?"

Lucifer's focus lie elsewhere. "Did it work?" he demanded. "Is my tower secure?"

Constantine flicked open his lighter and held it high to illuminate the ceiling, where his ritual had emblazon an enormous rune into the paint and woodwork. It shimmered like a prism, the sigil of Noah. "It worked. Hybrid-proof skyscraper, as requested."

While the detective searched for flashlights and Lucifer inspected the fusebox, Trixie huddled close to the glow of Constantine's lighter and tugged on his coat. "Are we safe from the bad guys now?"

"Inside this building you are, but don't wander off." He knelt again. "Sorry I scared you."

"Don't be sorry." Trixie smiled at him, gap-toothed and nonplussed, as though she hadn't watched him chant in tongues and set himself on fire. "The very best things in life are always a little scary."

With protective wards in place and electricity restored, Lucifer and Chloe engaged deeply in discussion once more, half-arguing, half-fretting over one another's safety at detriment to his or her own. "Stay here with your offspring," he insisted. "I'll patrol outside for—"

"Like hell. You heard Constantine. Brute force won't work against nephilim—"

"Patience isn't amongst my threadbare virtues."

"If you're going out there, so am I. We're partners." The detective was stubborn as an ox, but so was the Devil, and whether or not they'd fucked yet became a forgone conclusion. Though Lucifer mopped within the friendzone like a crated dog begrudging confinement, oftentimes Chloe seemed to forget why she banished him there in the first place. For a reason, surely a good one, but sooner or later dams would break and smother reason. Constantine could already see the cracks.

Lucifer looked conflicted. "You can't risk your neck in a war that's not yours."

"Your war's my war." Chloe laid down the law. "You can't risk your neck on the front lines while I sit at home knitting."

"Everyone's staying right here," decided her child, diplomatic and final, holding her math workbook, "because somebody has to teach me long division." Brave and wise and practical, this one. Chloe raised her right. "And we still need to tell Maze that I finally know what I wanna be when I grow up." Earnest and true, Trixie peered through a grumpy old man from Liverpool and somehow saw a hero lying in wait, whiskey-breath and mortal sins be damned. "I'll be a mage," swore the detective's daughter, still cradling that origami flower, "like John Constantine."
His phone rang in the dead of night. Los Angeles area code.

“Hey, Johnny.” That musical voice sent a chill up Constantine’s spine, because the very first time he heard it sing was amidst blues crooning and screams of the condemned, scorched onto an accursed acetate. The Devil's vinyl indeed. “Miss me?”

Constantine only groaned sleepily.

Lucifer cut to the chase. "Know a guy called Papa Midnite, big into voodoo?"

That woke him because his heart fell into his gut. "Why d'you ask?"

"Because he's working for my brother," said Lucifer, "and twelve hours after he arrived on the west coast, every corpse in L.A. lazarused up from the grave like a *Walking Dead* finale."

Zombies. Constantine hated zombies. Give him an incubus or poltergeist or demonic possession any day, but zombie outbreaks were messy and smelly and bitey and usually involved inordinate amounts of running. "Barricade yourselves inside Lux. Keep a hatchet and a lighter handy." Honestly, numerous layman handbooks detailed exactly how dummies might outlast the zombie apocalypse, *Zombieland* contained an excellent survival checklist, and voodoo zombification wasn't even contagious. "Decapitate and incinerate, tried-and-true zombie busters. I'll fly out tomorrow."

A loud bang echoed through the receiver, followed by a woman screaming. “Constantine.” Lucifer's tone changed, subtle but dark. He almost sounded scared, and God save them when the Devil himself called for reinforcements. “Haul your petty dabbling ass back to California before your voodoo bestie, my brother, and his Brujería lay waste to this entire bloody state.”

The Devil hung up, forcing Constantine to waste the last of his frequent flier miles to hear the whole story. And to make that very long story much shorter, he arrived in Los Angeles to complete and total bedlam, his duck-and-cover recommendations rapidly devolving into a mad sprint down Sunset Boulevard, pursued by the voracious undead.

Hundreds of them.

Papa Midnite was one helluva mage, and Constantine finally felt secure enough to admit it. Bar none, most people believed one of the two of them to be best in the business. At this precise moment, the Hellblazer couldn't in good faith vote for himself. Midnite had innumerable friends on the other side, including a very verbose sister, who probably told him about the Devil's jailbreak no less than eight years before Constantine ever heard a whisper. Midnite rolled in resources, time and flunkies and cash to burn. Now he was in bed with Amenadiel's rebel angels and the Brujería. No telling what fresh hell awaited.

And his stupid magic voodoo fairy-dust caught Constantine off guard every damn time.

Quite clever, really. Midnite used dust as a vehicle for spells, which he flung without mercy. Constantine understood just enough Haitian to recognize the curse that blasted him, powder straight to the face, caused shortness of breath — in a lifelong smoker running from zombies during July in southern California.

*Fuck you too, asshole.*

During their dash, somewhere between West Hollywood and Beverly Hills, he and Trixie were forcibly separated from her mother. Half the undead went one way, half the other. To the child's credit, she suppressed fulminant panic and pointed Constantine in the direction of her nana's cottage.
"Five blocks," she repeated, while he coughed and gasped and his lips turned blue. "Only five more blocks."

They made it, by the skin of their teeth, skidding through the front door as shrieking zombies in varying states of decay groped at his trench coat and her hair. But an undead hand reached through the frame, clawing, searching, as Trixie tried and failed to slam the door closed.

Constantine could only watch, helpless and powerless, wheezing on the floor. Trixie was too small, too weak to hold the door and stave off the horde. He raised a hand, started an incantation, but couldn't breathe, couldn't finish. Midnite's voodoo was indomitable. Even in health, Constantine struggled to counter it.

But the detective's daughter wouldn't go gentle into that good night. Her little voice spoke for Constantine: "Protego totalum. Cave inimicum." Though meek and feeble, she threw all her strength into closing that door and keeping hell at bay. "Protego totalum. Cave inimicum. In nomine Dei iub — in nomine Dei—" Trixie couldn't remember the rest, but forged courageously onward. "By the blood of man, be not, and be gone!"

The zombies wailed in pain, but pushed back, her magic a mere pinprick.

Like her mother, Trixie was determined to a fault. "Protego totalum. Cave inimicum. By the blood of man, in the name of God and all his angels, I'm done running, done hiding!" She roared, louder and more vicious than anyone ever thought that girl could be: "Be not, and be gone!"

Now that was the power of intention, if Constantine ever heard it. Confident, bold, unwavering. Well-executed. Good form.

And it worked. The houselights flickered, the zombies convulsed, the door locked, and an undead arm sliced off below the shoulder, flopping like a limp noodle on the Decker's hardwood. As any reasonable fifth-grader would, Trixie shrieked and kicked it halfway across the room, then beat the damn thing with a frying pan until its disembodied fingers stopped twitching.

A ten-year-old overcame Papa Midnite's voodoo. Constantine had quite a few reasons to faint, hypoxia and heatstroke notwithstanding. He roused seconds later, when she tossed aside the skillet with a clatter and shook his shoulders. "How'd I do?"

Constantine scoffed while clambering to his feet, dizzy and seeing stars. Trixie guided him to a chair; he sat down before he fell down. "Misprounounced every word." They laughed together, breathless and grateful to be alive. Truth be told, he'd never been this impressed. Ever. And Zed's clairsentience was pretty nifty. "You recited that protection ward from memory?"

"No, we learn demonology in school now." Trixie rolled her eyes. "But you only heard me say it once!"

She pointed at the cork board on her bedroom door, a collage of crayon drawings and photos...and that ridiculous origami flower he magicked for her months ago. "You made an impression, Uncle John, and I meant what I said." Trixie was dead-serious. "I'll be a mage, just like you." In spite, she quoted his least favorite person. "My word is my bond."

True to form, the other half of their dream team — comprised of Lucifer, Chloe, and that little Lilim who Constantine should probably apologize for half-exorcizing — somehow found the Brujería's headquarters and destroyed the burial shroud of voodoo queen Marie Laveau, which rendered inanimate every zombie in Greater Los Angeles. Trixie and her mother hugged in tearful reunion.
while Lucifer gloated in victory over his nefarious brother, and Constantine left California with a persistent cough and charley horses in both calves.

But long after Midnite's magic faded, Constantine still fought for breath, winded by walking, and that was the very first night he started coughing and couldn't stop. He blamed life-sapping voodoo, stress and sleeplessness inherent to outrunning zombies, and that godforsaken eastbound time change. Chas and Zed might've believed, except the sputum he hacked up was bloody. They wrestled him into the taxi and beelined for urgent care.

Chest x-rays showed a mass in his right superior lung lobe, and CT detected the metastases.

His phone rang, wrecking the exquisitely intricate spell he spent days perfecting. Los Angeles area code.

"You busy, John?" asked the detective.

"Does it bloody matter?" Face smeared with red ochre and chest painted in Incan glyphs, Constantine snuffed his prayer candle and put her on speaker while fixing himself a drink. Better yet, two drinks. And a ciggy. No use quitting now. Chemo might buy six months, probably less. And considering he declined treatment, Constantine was a dead man walking.

The Underworld loomed ever closer, and that spare Pentecostal coin never left his pocket nowadays.

Oblivious, the detective launched into a lengthy and convoluted story about demons killing angels, angels killing demons, angels killing angels — not casting each other into Heaven or Hell, but well and truly *killing* each other, destroying each other, purging their victims from creation forever.

Such a thing shouldn't be possible, and Constantine told her so.

"Amenadiel stole Pandora's box."

Scratch that. Such a thing shouldn't be possible without Pandora's box.

"That's the most powerful piece of supernatural kit since the Ark and Grail." Last Constantine laid eyes on it, Pandora's box was locked away in the capital vaults of Pandæmonium, Pentecostal coins on one side, Spear of Destiny on the other. He might've stolen two coins and given the spear a twirl, but even he wasn't daft enough to open that box. "Pray tell, how'd Amenadiel come by it?"

Chloe sighed into the phone. "Lucifer brought it with him to L.A. and stored it in a shipping container with his wings."

Constantine hopped a plane to the west coast, hellbent on reading Satan the riot act in person before throttling that reckless son of a bitch with his bare hands. One last chance to sucker-punch the Devil before cancer did what cancer does. But when he arrived, the detective had handily taken care of business and reduced Lucifer to pouting on his living room sofa like a scolded child.

In her fury, Chloe paced the penthouse, back and forth in front of the boys, who watched her like mistrusting antelope watch a sleeping lion on the Serengeti. "I always knew something was off about those Russian dolls. Decoy my ass." She planted her hands on her hips, confused and perturbed. "Is Pandora's box the actual box or the dolls inside the box?"

"Both." Lucifer dared to speak for the first time since his partner started screaming at him. "Pandora's box is the box, and each of the nine dolls contains one of the world's nine evils." He glanced sidelong at Constantine. "Prudent to package each one individually, under several layers, and avoid a
repeat of that ugly incident when the whole lot escaped. Ergo, Russian dolls."

Constantine puffed his cigarette and nursed a gin. "Unorthodox, but ingenious."

"My life in review."

A massive manhunt through L.A. eventually bore fruit, and they sieged Amenadiel's lair for three days before the actual fighting commenced. Hand-to-hand combat was never Constantine's forte, but with an Enochian sabre in hand and a few dozen hexes up his sleeve, he made himself marginally useful on the battlefield. When illness sapped his stamina, magic was a crutch. *Fuck cancer. Flinging fire and summoning tornados required more mental than physical discipline anyway.*

Only when a rebel angel loomed over Detective Decker, largest of the nine Russian dolls in hand, did the stakes hit maximum.

A flawless marksman, Chloe planted silver bullets into his knee, abdomen, sternum, and both wings, shattering bone and spilling blood. He seemed surprised more than painful, staggering and wilting, but clung to consciousness long enough to peel away the doll's layers, determined to unleash whichever evil it contained.

Perhaps the biggest doll contained the worst evil? Were evils even comparable: bigotry to sorrow, famine to tyranny, depravity to death, war to pestilence? None lesser, none greater, all horrible. "Stop him!" Lucifer struggled against Amenadiel's headlock, clocking his nose with an elbow, tearing out feathers, scrambling for purchase. He tried to teleport away; his brother tore him down. "Oblivion, that one's oblivion— don't let him open it! Don't let it touch her!"

Oblivion wasn't death. Death terminated in Heaven or Hell, and the soul lived on; oblivion pitted matter versus antimatter, perfect destruction, nothingness and void. If oblivion touched the detective, she wouldn't die. She'd cease to exist.

Constantine grabbed a casualty's abandoned shield — polished, gilded, close enough to a mirror — then chanted a reflection spell in Latin, covered Chloe with himself, and himself with the shield. The dreaded doll hit the ground in pieces, cracked open to its core, and a dark cloud billowed forth. Oblivion incarnate.

First it consumed the fallen angel, dispelling his body like smoke, but slammed into Constantine's mage-magic as a typhoon crashes against levees. It rebounded, reflected off the shield and back into the Russian doll, which self-assembled before thunking closed again, a deceptively innocuous smile painted across her face.

The battle lulled after that, however briefly, once the Devil extricated himself and the rebels retreated. Constantine never saw anyone cling to another person as tightly as Lucifer clung to his detective. "All right?" he asked her, over and over. Chloe nodded into his button-down, and he mouthed a thank-you over her shoulder to Constantine.

"Don't mention it, old son."

Repossessing the other eight evils was no cakewalk either, but they divided and conquered, leaving Amenadiel with an empty box and a lot of explaining to do. Unsure where exactly to store nine Russian dolls capable of initiating armageddon, the Devil arranged them on his library bookshelves and poured Constantine a drink. They sat together in the penthouse for a long while, wordlessly shooting whiskey.

His relentless coughing aggravated Lucifer to no end. "What the hell's wrong with you, plague?"
"Lung cancer. Small cell carcinoma."

This news digested. Lucifer took a whole minute to comprehend. "What?"

"A pack a day for twenty years is what's wrong with me."

Once articulate, the Devil grasped for words now. "But that's not— that's not fair. I only just learned to tolerate you. I don't— I don't want you to— " For a split second, he actually thought Lucifer might wax sentimental, but anger blossomed instead. "There's a war on, you inconsiderate cretin! We need a demonologist. You can't up and leave!"

"I'm dying, not retiring."

"Same bloody difference!" raged Lucifer. "You're no help to anybody padlocked in Hell." He slugged one last shot and shoved away from his desk, muttering to himself. "Righteous idiots, no sense of strategy, flushing a resource like John fucking Constantine down the— " Lucifer bellowed at the ceiling, message obviously bound for the Silver City. "Raphael. Raph? Oi, sanctimonious git!" Hardly appropriate protocol to summon an angel. Constantine rubbed his temples. No way this garnered sympathy. "Raphael, get your all-healing ass down here— " He gestured vaguely at Constantine. " —and fix this!"

No answer. Surprise, surprise. Constantine asked the same favor for Zed's brain tumor, and her seizures only got worse.

He shrugged. "Neither of us accrued enough brownie points with the big guy upstairs." Come to think, they two probably occupied the tippy-top of God's shitlist. "Wasn't really expecting any divine favors toward the end."

The Devil waggled a finger. "My father may not like your methods, but you're an asset, and he moves mountains and parts seas for his assets." Lucifer tossed a priceless Gutenberg Bible into Constantine's lap. "Trust me. Plenty of precedent." He stuck two fingers in his mouth and whistled, piercing and shrill. "Raph, I know you can hear me!"

A draft rustled Constantine's hair. The Bible suddenly vanished, and a third man materialized in the library, blonde and rugged, sitting with his muddy boots propped on the Devil's desk and flipping through the good book as though he didn't already know it by heart.

Lucifer groaned in disappointment. "Piss off, Mikey. I need someone useful."

The archangel Michael set down his Bible with reverence. "Raphael's otherwise engaged."

"Doing what?!"

Michael scowled. "Helping homeless children survive smoke inhalation after an orphanage fire in Bangladesh."

"Solid excuse," mused Constantine, though Lucifer wasn't sold.

The archangel Michael came nowhere close to his pristine and immaculate portrayal in art. Upon closer inspection, his leather jerkin was frayed and his face dusty, with iconic yellow hair tied in an unceremonious bun. He appeared fresh from the trenches, dirt packed under his nails, sporting remnants of a half-healed black eye. His lips were cracked, his knuckles raw, and the sword at his hip and gatekey about his neck splattered with blood that probably wasn't his. Amenadiel's rebellion impacted everyone, and Michael was hardly the sort of general to sit back while his soldiers fought battles for him.
Constantine respected that and bowed his head in formal greeting, an honor he rarely bestowed. "Archangel." Though behind civility lurked ulterior motive. He coveted Michael's golden necklace; with that key in hand, impenetrable gates to the Silver City opened like the red carpet for Brad and Angelina. Five-finger discounting his way into Heaven agreed with the Hellblazer.

If the archangel noticed, he pretended not to. "My condolences for your failing health, Mr. Constantine."

Constantine twirled a cigarette between his forefinger and thumb, still eying the Key to the Kingdom as a grand larcener eyes the Mona Lisa — impossible to steal, fun to fantasize. "Nobody's fault but mine."

"Nobody's fault but his." In a heavenly direction, Lucifer flipped the bird.

"Father doesn't cause cancer." Michael was exasperated. "Smoking causes cancer."

Lucifer forcibly spun his brother's swivel chair. "Dad made the universe. He can bloody well stop a few cells from dividing."

The archangel's temper finally snapped. "You're the Devil. You yearn to drag John Constantine to Hell." Michael was tired and battered and more than a little baffled. "All humans die eventually. Why d'you care how or when?"

Their exchange nearly came to blows. "Why don't you care?!" spat his brother.

Himself a veteran of shirking responsibility, switching sides, and evading questions, Constantine couldn't help but notice Lucifer's failure to address the elephant in the room. After those two Pentecostal coins went missing, rumor held — when the time came, natural or orchestrated — Satan would collect the Hellblazer personally, probably to prevent conning his soul out of damnation. Thus far, Constantine remained the only human ever to earn such privilege. Lucky me.

And yet here stood Lucifer, petitioning the Heavens on his behalf. How times change.

"Defeating Amenadiel and the Brujería will require more than a few unsavory alliances." The Devil shot Constantine a pointed look before waving between himself and his angelic brother. "You need me, I need you, we need John, and nobody's tickled about it." Michael huffed in concurrence. "But that mage rescued me and mine from the jaws of oblivion, stemmed the apocalypse with a wave of his hand. And not for the first time."

Michael quirked his brow. "Why do what you do, Mr. Constantine?"

"I'd really like to avoid forever burning in Hell."

Lucifer sported his shit-eating grin. "Careful. Grass is always greener, and the Silver City will bore you to tears."

Somehow, he doubted it. "The Prince of Heaven's an Aussie." Constantine winked at the archangel, who lived in blissful ignorance of his own accent. "Upstairs can't possibly be that dull, not with a patron saint of alcohol, Vegemite, congeniality, and badass wildlife."

Amusement flickered across Michael as he stood from sitting, only an inch or so taller than Constantine but twice as broad. When he bowed his head, bidding his brother farewell, the veneration visibly startled Lucifer. This was the appropriate way to address archangels, but nobody treated the Devil as an archangel since his Fall. How times change indeed. "When our healers return home," assured Michael, "I'll appraise them of Mr. Constantine's unfortunate diagnosis." His tone
was far from optimistic. "Strict laws govern whom they can and cannot treat. Raph never bends rules."

Constantine tucked a cigarette behind his ear. "Cheers for trying, chief."

"In return," insisted the archangel, "I ask you concede Pandora's box to safekeeping in the Empyrean vaults."

They calmly and carefully explained why the titular box itself was nonessential before handing over all nine Russian dolls without question, and hoped never again to see the evils inside.

Fat chance.

His phone rang — Los Angeles area code — and interrupted a particularly spectacular one-night stand.

Lips still sealed on his neck and an eager hand at his belt, Constantine answered without giving his caller the dignity of a word in edgewise. With bad days outnumbering good, his lungs filled with more tumor than air, he'd precious little time left on Earth for shagging. Not a second to lose.

“Lucifer, detective, unless there's another bloody apocalypse— ”

Except this voice was decidedly undevilish, nor a woman. “Mr. Constantine?” In fact, it was nothing short of deep, angelic, and intensely Australian. “It's Michael.”

Now that was intriguing enough for Constantine to roll away from his pretty brunette bedfellow. The twenty-something frat boy looked profoundly disappointed. “Nothing personal, mate.” Shirt rebuttoned, tie adjusted, Constantine returned to his business call from on high. “Talk to me, chief.”

"I can't— I don't know who might be listening." From anyone else, it might've sounded paranoid and melodramatic. From Michael, it was chilling. "Amenadiel has spies everywhere." If a frightened Devil made him nervous, then a frightened archangel warranted panic. "I thought most of my soldiers were loyal, but I— I don't know who to trust anymore."

Valid concern. Claiming allegiance to God was moot nowadays, considering the Host had split itself straight down the middle. War in Heaven was exactly as inconvenient and bipartisan as it sounded. "But you trust me?" asked Constantine, dubious yet flattered.

"Lucifer trusts you," answered the archangel, "and who better than the Devil to judge character?"

Something was very wrong. Constantine felt it in his bones. "Michael, what— ?"

"I'm so sorry, John. Honestly, truly, I swear I didn't know— " The archangel was shaken to his core, faith uprooted, confidence shattered. Such a notion was petrifying. "The dominion we sent to protect you. Emmanuel. Manny— " Constantine's heart stopped. "He belongs to the rebellion, to Amenadiel and the Brujería. A traitor. He's fallen."

Constantine froze, only one arm in his trench coat.

Michael couldn't bear the silence. "Constantine?"

"Is anyone hurt?"

"No." His relief was palpable. "The detective ousted him just in time."

At least he'd earned back enough airline miles for a free flight. "Sit tight. I'll be there by morning."
For the very first time, there was no traffic to the airport. No overbooking. No crying babies or discontent business tycoons or sneezing grandmas. No technical delays or broken loos. Plenty of overhead space. Seamless connections. He even nabbed an aisle seat on short notice. Somebody upstairs must've pulled a few strings to ensure Constantine arrived in L.A. early and without incident.

Maze never quite forgave or forgot that attempted exorcism last year, but she buzzed him into the high-rise and ushered him to an elevator regardless. Her only words were, "They're upstairs," before skulking back to the bar.

The penthouse appeared empty when Constantine entered, until he heard voices on the balcony.

"—and you're dragging that sorry sod across the country in his condition?!" Lucifer was irate and locked in a very private conversation with his brother, God and sunrise their only witnesses. Like any self-respecting conman, Constantine crept through the living room to eavesdrop. "He's dying, Michael."

The archangel's blinding-white wings ruffled with malcontent. "He volunteered to help. There's no stopping him."

"That asshole spent his last twenty years spitting on all things holy, digging his soul a tunnel straight to Hell." But Lucifer didn't gloat, didn't smack talk, didn't threaten or preen or look very happy at all. "And yet, Chloe and Beatrice and Maze would be dead or worse if Constantine hadn't found me when he did." The Devil leaned on his railing, deeply introspective. "Nearly a decade since I left Hades, and the Hellblazer hands me his business card exactly when we need him." His eyes flitted skyward. "Funny coincidence."

"You believe—" Michael didn't belittle. He marveled, blind eyes open, truth never more apparent, his stoney countenance blooming into the loveliest smile ever smiled. It almost outshone his wings. "You think Father sent you Constantine?"

Constantine's cynical snort almost betrayed his hiding spot. What complete and utter bollocks: him, the Hellblazer, divine harbinger and gift from God? Un-fucking-likely. Destruction and death followed wherever he went. He lied and stole and cheated since his first word, smoking and drinking and whoring his way to an early grave. The Devil carved a special circle of Hell with his name on it. John Constantine was many things, the Almighty's instrument not amongst them.

Because when things went bump in the night, he didn't negotiate. He bloody well bumped back.

But then again, what were the chances?

Still on the balcony, Lucifer looked to his brother, grasping at straws. "Raphael can cure cancer. I've seen it. He could—"

"—violate laws, disregard Father, heal a condemned man?" The impossibility sunk in. "I asked. He could, but he won't."

Lucifer slammed his fist against the railing. Stainless steel bent like playdough. "Condemned?! What good's that key you wear if not to unlock Heaven for those who earn it?" Michael tried to defend himself, but his brother wouldn't listen. "I know Dad gets his jollies from killing humans before their time. Fine. Be that way. Take John like you took Father Frank. But he's repentant. He atoned." Constantine couldn't believe his ears when the Devil himself decreed: "He doesn't deserve Hell."

"I agree."

Out of pure habit, Lucifer didn't process these words appropriately. "C'mon, don't be stubborn."
Then he paused, stared at his brother, backpedalled, and gaped. "I'm sorry. I hallucinated. Did you just—?"

"—agree with you? Surprises me too." Michael chuckled, deep, melodious, unnervingly beautiful, and off-limits as fuck. Constantine ignored the archangel's long hair, leather breeches, square jaw, because objectifying the Prince of Heaven could only make things worse. "Mr. Constantine fought the Brujería since they resurfaced. He survived despite impossible odds. He's the greatest mage who ever was or will be."

A glimmer of hope flashed through Lucifer. "So he's heavenbound?"

Michael sighed. "Salvation isn't mine to give or take." Lucifer glowered, ready and waiting to argue, though his brother was nowhere near finished. "But my opinion still means something. I'll put in a good word with Father." He grasped Lucifer by both shoulders, affectionate but distant, before throwing caution to the wind and bearhugging him for the first time since the beginning of time.

It was terrible and awkward and stiff at first; Lucifer looked more likely to punch than reciprocate, until he finally surrendered, let go of grudges, forgot about wars, past and present, and buried his face deep into his brother's hair. "Promise me," demanded the Devil, squeezing Michael tight, "you'll talk sense into Dad."

"I'll damn well try."

Good enough for government work, apparently, as Lucifer exceeded his quota for family time and heart-to-hearts. He aggressively shoved Michael away, smoothed his suit and tie, and marched straight from the balcony into the elevator, cold and austere as ever by the time those doors slid shut. Constantine shrank behind a column, intent to avoid discovery. He only took two steps backward before slamming into a wide, leather-bound chest belonging to the archangel Michael.

That winged bastard knew Constantine was listening the whole time! "You're a loud breather."

Caught redhanded. "Er— hey, chief."

"It's very difficult to like you." The archangel folded his arms and rustled his wings, cross and condescending.

Constantine shrugged. "You called, remember?"

"I said it's difficult," reiterated Michael with grudging fondness. "Not impossible." His brow furrowed at Constantine's gaunt cheekbones, his weight loss and shallow breathing, that far-too-frequent cough which served to remind that cancer was one demon even the Hellblazer couldn't exorcize.

Constantine stuffed his hands in his pockets and touched the leftover Pentecostal coin, his very last saving grace, a one-use, one-way ticket to and from Hell. Everyone assumed he spent it years ago. Joke's on them. "So your doctor-brother refused to heal me?"

"I'm sorry."

"Rules are rules. Not your fault."

The archangel drooped his shoulders, and his wings drooped with them. "But what happened with Manny— that is my fault. He's my dominion. I put your life in his hands, and I failed you." He laughed sardonically. "For an archangel, I fail an awful lot."
"I fail every damn day, and people die for it." Constantine shook his head. "Free will's a bitch, and fallen angels are wily. Met more than a few in my time." Michael seemed interested, so he forged onward: "They love pretending to be something they're not, singing those pretty Enochian tunes, lulling you into false heaven, then sweeping in for the kill."

The archangel studied him. "D'you speak our language?"

Constantine teased, "You Aussies have a lingo all your own."

Perplexed, Michael tilted his head, still patently ignoring his own accent. "I meant Enochian."

Constantine knew what he meant. "Nah." He fiddled with the buttons on his trench coat. "No angel likes to keep company with the Hellblazer, at least not long enough to tutor me in the native tongue of your Silver bloody City." Bitterness bubbled, a man resigned to damnation no matter how many lives he saved, nor how vehemently the Prince of Heaven might plead his case. Some sins were too heinous ever to sweep under the rug. "I'll never walk those gilded streets anyway. No point in learning a language, never to use it."

"Never say never. I heard you can be quite persuasive." If Michael weren't, you know, Michael, divine and infallible and straight as an arrow — in more ways than one — then every fiber in Constantine would swear upon that double entendre.

Nail in the coffin of surprises, the archangel untied a small flask from his belt and gave it to Constantine. The soft deerskin was branded with an asklepian.

He uncapped it, sniffing. Not booze. His disappointment must've showed.

Michael all but rolled his eyes. "Healing water from the Springs at Bethesda."

Every mage worth his salt knew that legend, and everyone else had heard its other moniker: the Fountain of Youth. Constantine stared at the flask. "Headwaters of the River Lethe?" Whatever he expected, that sure wasn't it. "Wellspring of the Heavens?" Men and demons would slaughter thousands for a single drop from the Silver City's fountain. Unsavories like Papa Midnite or Felix Faust could rain hell with spells catalyzed through Bethesdan water. "D'you toddle around with the sacred springs in your knapsack like bloody Gatorade?"

"No. I...borrowed some." Michael was vague and evasive. "From Raph's apothecary."

Constantine blinked. Not so divine, nor infallible. "You stole it?"

The archangel dithered, scuffing a boot on his brother's Italian marble. "You sacrificed much for our cause. In return, we sent a rebel angel to lead you astray. In your time of need, our healers turn away. Watching you wither and die is wrong. Damning you to Hell is wrong." He folded his hands behind his back and beneath his feathers, noble, honest, guilty, but a helluva lot holier than any angel Constantine ever met before. The Prince of Heaven deserved his title. "Medicine is Raphael's domain," continued Michael, nowhere near as learned, "but I do know drinking Bethesdan water won't cure cancer. Only slows the spread, buys more time than you had." The archangel bowed his head, diffident and apologetic. "The best a mere soldier can do."

Michael also tossed him a Nicorette pack, practical if not particularly celestial. Constantine raised an eyebrow and parroted all the reasons he wasn't worth the risk: "Doesn't this violate your laws and disregard your father, healing a condemned man?" Nevertheless, he clutched that flask tight.

The archangel shrugged. "If Lucifer taught me anything, better to beg forgiveness than ask permission."
Constantine lifted the pilfered flask in toast, tossing back its healing water like a shot, and pocketed the gum. Nothing miraculous happened; he didn't feel any different. He still coughed, every breath a chore, but maybe a little faith was in order. In a moment of rampant insanity, he even considered confessing to the Pentecostal coin in his pocket, handing it over, scrubbing clean yet another blot from his soul.

But he didn't.

The Hellblazer wasn't a saint. He stole that coin, fair and square, and might need a fastpass outta Hell sooner rather than later.

"You're a good man, Mr. Constantine." Michael spread those pearl-white wings and took flight. "Try not to forget it."

Together, they dealt with Manny's treachery as best they could, mostly damage control and reconnaissance. Afterward, a five-hour layover in Denver felt like pregaming for Hell, and upon long-awaited arrival back at the Atlanta mill house Constantine downed a beer in two swigs before collapsing face-first on his couch, trench coat, tie, and all. He'd every intention of drinking himself into a deathlike slumber that put Snow bloody White to shame.

But instead of his usual bedtime cig, he popped a Nicorette and fell fast asleep without another drop of liquor.

Overnight, he didn't cough once.

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His phone rang at the asscrack of dawn. Los Angeles area code.

Enough was enough. “Chas, Zed, pack your shit. We’re moving to L.A.”

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Chapter End Notes

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Mr. John Constantine: exorcist, demonologist, and human disaster, now a minisode regular. I've never been so proud to add tags and sincerely hope this minisode does Constantine's complexities justice. Let there be peace on Earth, mercy mild, Hellblazer and Lucifer reconciled. We're all a hellfire-singed family, yeah? :)

If you're curious, most of the spells in this fic are derived in part or full from Constantine episodes. Others come from the repertoire of another famous, fictional wizard. Bonus points for guessing who, and apologies for the grammatically incorrect use of beautiful foreign languages as incantations!

Last but not least, thank you for your ongoing patience and support. Slow writing is my greatest vice, but I sincerely believe that you all deserve the best. As always, I hope these minisodes are worth the wait!
...sheepishly, I'm back.

My sincerest apologies for such an extended delay. I've no acceptable excuse, except that real-life ran away with me. This minisode celebrates our devilish second season on the eve of its winter hiatus. My writing feels a bit rusty, but I hope it's worth the wait!

Potential trigger warning: medical gore, facilitating hurt/comfort theme. Also, I'm dumb and mistakenly posted (then deleted, in a subsequent panic) an incomplete draft of this minisode several days ago. I'm so very sorry if my oopsie resulted in any confusion.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"If your wings are broken, borrow mine 'til yours can open too."

Minisode IX:

Fallen Angel

Nobody warned Chloe that angels could break bones.

War in Heaven taught her more about the divine than any human ought ever learn. With the right weapon in the wrong hands, angels bled, angels bent, angels died. They weren't immutable. Lucifer proved it years ago, the first and only to mutilate his own wings. And now that his father saw fit to restore them, Lucifer proved it again during aerial combat with a nephilim.

"One angel can hurt another," he once lectured, mulling over another oil-on-canvas of illustrious Saint Michael with his devilish adversary at swordpoint. Turns out, half-angels were equally capable and twice as ruthless, because that nephilim swatted Lucifer from the sky like a gnat.

Mid-flight over West Hollywood, the titan swung her warhammer and caught him square in the chest. Lucifer slammed into a skyscraper, lost consciousness, and free-fell sixty stories onto solid asphalt. Impact fractured his radius and ulna.

Not the radius and ulna in his arm.

The radius and ulna in his wing.

The Heavenly Host operated like a well-oiled machine.

Several soldiers retreated from battle to haul their battered brother into Lux. In a flurry of limbs and feathers, broken wing at an unnatural angle, Chloe helped lay him prone on the bar. Injured angels warranted the best healer on Earth or in Heaven, so Raphael zipped into the club before sealing its doors.

Outside, the war raged on.

Once home, headquarters, and sanctuary, Lux now became a fortress, armored in nephilim-repellent spells. Even still, the halfbreeds beat on concrete walls, shook boarded windows, snarled beyond
deadbolts, banging, rattling, hellbent upon slaughter. Chloe prayed that the big guy upstairs might bolster Constantine's mage-magic, because it alone stood between her and an Old Testament remake.

She didn't want to die.

She didn't want Lucifer to die.

What if they both died, one heavenbound, the other condemned? A fear they shared, relentless and consuming: to be separated forever, above and below, like some twisted Greek tragedy. What if her self-sacrifice and public servitude bought a fastpass into the Silver City, but his resurrected wings were only a wartime ceasefire between father and son? Or what if Lucifer really was redeemed, Heaven's favorite once more, while damnation awaited a woman with lifelong distain for religion?

This angelic bloodfeud served well to remind of her own mortality — and his, when within 42 feet of her.

They measured.

On the bar-turned-triage, Lucifer was dizzy with whiplash. Ragged bones protruded from an open fracture, hemorrhaging through white feathers, and Raphael launched to action. The archangel shouted for his briefcase, for hemostats and cautery and tourniquets, for syringes and sedatives and extra hands. Despite all efforts, the Devil bled and bled.

"Why won't he heal!" cried a dominion, applying pressure to his wound. Her hands dripped crimson. "An angel should heal—!"

Cogs whirred within Raphael as he rounded on Chloe, deductive and pitiless. "It's you. You're killing him."

"No, I— " Such denial was instinctive. But, considering her 42-foot radius subjected Lucifer to bullets and knives and fists, perhaps it also put the kibosh on his preternatural metabolism. She backed away, too slowly, guilty and overwrought. "I can't shut it off— he's my friend, I'd never hurt — not on purpose—"

Fear poisoned the once-unquakable physician. "Get the fuck away from my brother."

Before Chloe finished blinking, that blood-soaked dominion whisked her to a distant corner of the club, just far enough to liberate Lucifer from her inexplicable death-aura. She appealed to the soldier, for lack of anyone else within earshot. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I only want to help—"

The angel offered sympathy, but no comfort. "Then keep far from Lucifer."

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The archangel Raphael and three dominions donated blood to replace the volume their brother lost. Chloe watched from afar as fluid lines ran red, catheters pierced veins, and Lucifer snoozed under the influence of a supernatural opiate, derived from Heaven's elysium poppy.

Raphael also packed the fracture site with violet powder, which Chloe later learned was, "Procoagulant batroxobin milked from pit viper venom." It smelled caustic, but stopped the bleeding when nothing else would. Despite this small victory, bad news outweighed good as the archangel palpated Lucifer's thready pulses and shattered wing-bones.

After much deliberation, Raphael conferred with the soldiers, an argument in whispers which concluded — to Chloe's utmost dismay — with her beckoned closer. She hesitated, eyeing an unconscious Devil across Lux. He looked ethereal and innocent, like a fallen dove, with alabaster
wings hanging limp and lifeless. Her heart ached to be near him, yet she dare not. What if he hemorrhaged again? What if her presence suppressed his immune system and quickened sepsis? What if she killed Lucifer?

Patience lost, Raphael flew to her instead, blood splatter still wet on his surgeon-greens. "Left wing, proximal radioulnar fracture with brachial arterial laceration. Open, articular, and highly comminuted." At Chloe's expression, blank and petrified, he dumbed it down: "Without surgery, he'll never fly again."

Chloe could barely wrap her head around an archangel in scrubs, let alone medical jargon. "You can't do surgery in a nightclub."

"I have," argued Raphael, "and I will. A broken wing can't retract. He's unsafe to move." The archangel exhaled, rubbing a palm down his face. "But all my orthopedic equipment and surgical assistants are in the apothecary." He pointed straight up. "Topside."

Outside, beyond the high-rise, something very large and very determined shook Lux like an earthquake. Art crashed from the walls, chairs toppled, and liquor bottles smashed on the floor. With barbarians at their gate, nobody was going anywhere fast. Certainly not to the Silver City and back.

For his part, Lucifer snored straight through it. Apparently, angels dealt some sweet narcotics.

Halfbreed hordes be damned, Raphael would risk life and limb for a patient: break through the siege, traverse no man's land to the Pearl Gate, and return with delicate surgical instruments in tow.

"Respectfully," protested a pragmatic dominion, "that's noble suicide."

"Respectfully," insisted the archangel, "he's family."

They splinted his wing in a figure-eight with PVC pipes and duct tape. Fracture reduction hurt like a bitch, and Lucifer roared from his opiate-slumber, kicking and punching and flapping. His siblings tried and failed to soothe him; only then did Chloe cross that 42-foot threshold and sprint to her partner's side. Carrying on like this, he'd surely hemorrhage again, with or without her influence.

"Lucifer, quit!" She shoved him flat on the bartop. He let her. "Your brother's doing his job."

Raphael tightened the splint, and the Devil bellowed in pain. "I hate you so dad-damn much—!" Bleary but aware, he glanced sidelong at his busted wing. "Oh, shit." Lux trembled again, the Sunset Strip still an active war zone, as another intravenous cocktail flushed through his PIC line. Drugs numbed every nerve, and soon Lucifer slurred speech: "S'fine, gimme an icepack. I'll walk i'off."

Chloe shushed him into narcotic dreamland before questioning the archangel. "Why surgery? A splint's not enough?"

"Our physiology differs from yours." Raphael hurriedly packed his things. "Wing fractures are surgically emergent, because angel bones fuse within hours and require deadly force to rebreak. Without internal fixators, the Lightbringer will heal in permanent malunion by sunrise." The archangel glared at Chloe. "Well, he would've healed by sunrise."

Now she was angry. "You think I enjoy being Satan's kryptonite?!" Chloe bit back. "I'd trade my thrall-immunity to break this curse." She seized Raphael at the elbow. "You poked and prodded and tested us both, and even the best doctor in all creation can't understand why I make Lucifer mortal."

The archangel nodded, solemn and knowing. "I suspect my brother's affliction is less of the body
than the heart." Chloe's hopes and dreams caught in her throat, so Raphael continued: "Our father finds purpose for everything, and today your curse becomes his blessing." He parked her on a barstool. "Don't move. Your physical presence buys Lucifer time, delaying osteogenesis long enough for me to fetch the equipment and support staff necessary for functional wing repair."

Ironically enough, because of her death-aura, the Devil stood a fighting chance.

A slim, madcap, desperate chance, to be sure, but that was kinda their jam. Those nephilim wouldn't rest until Los Angeles reduced to ash, and the Goddess of Creation commanded her halfbreed grandbabies with murderous gusto. What would happen if the bad guys won, if Amenadiel's rebellion overtook the Silver City, if the Stygian councillors united against their absent king, if the Brujería brought Hell to Earth?

As she so often did, Chloe looked to Lucifer, her anchor in this celestial shitstorm. He slept soundly upon the bar, broken wing bandaged and bundled, feathers askew. He'd tell her not to worry. He'd know what to do. No matter how bleak the crisis, he endured: creative differences with a supreme deity, eternal damnation, the meddling mother from Hell. Nothing doused his spirit. Nothing shattered his will. No matter how hopeless, he always found another deal, another trick, another way.

He'd fly again. No doubt.

Chloe hoped she'd live to see it.

Dodging arrows, swords, and rebel angels, Raphael and the dominions took flight from the penthouse balcony.

They weren't gone twenty minutes before Lucifer woke again. This time, he roused with no memory of his fall or fracture, drunk off elysium poppy and woozy from hypoxia. Chloe worried he might be bleeding again, batroxobin powder or no, but that cockamamie grin promised trouble of a different sort.

"Detective!" he blurted, deliriously thrilled to see her. "Good morning." It was midnight. He shifted atop the bar, and his flight-feathers brushed her elbow.

Chloe still acclimated to this angelic Lucifer. Each wing was seven feet of divinity incarnate, blinding white, lean and lithe as him, almost sporty, the fucking Ferraris of wings. And he flew as recklessly as he drove. If the Devil cracked a wing in half not three days after regrowing them, no wonder his dad never let him have nice things.

"How d'you feel?" She checked his bandage for strikethrough.

Lucifer paused, considering. "Thirsty."

She balked. Right, of course. He'd fought through cosmic battles, left a Devil-size crater in Sunset Boulevard, painted Lux with his lifeblood, and he had to ask for water. What a terrible caregiver she was. Chloe propped his head, filled a tumbler, and brought it to his lips.

He sipped, then coughed. "That's not bourbon."

Typical. "You tried to die. Again." Too weak to argue, he finished the glass. "No alcohol. Imagine the savage bender that awaits if you mix whiskey with supernatural narcotics."

His big brown eyes were oh-so-glassy, and Lucifer struggled to keep them open. Exactly how potent was intravenous elysium poppy? Was this reaction normal? Out of the blue, in vino veritas, he
volunteered: "I dream now. When I sleep. Never used to." Chloe wondered why this surprised her as much as it did. "I dream of before."

_s Satan's high as a kite._ Deathly curious, Chloe prompted, "Of before...your Fall?"

He dismissed that, as though Heaven itself paled in comparison. "I dream of solving murders and making sandwiches." The Devil was a needy drunk, an emotional yoyo, and he sounded so goddamn broken. "I dream of before I ruined your life."

That hurt like Azrael's blade to the soul. "You didn't ruin—"

Their enemies rumbled outside. He wasn't listening. "I should've protected you, kept my distance. I'm sorry I couldn't. You make me too happy." Head tilted, face filthy, he appealed her with innocent confusion. "Why d'you make me so happy?"

"I don't— er—" A loaded and nonsensical question, though he was unlikely to remember the answer given his current blood-opiate ratio, and Chloe dare not lend his brother's theory credence. "You're stoned. Anyone with loose morals and a pretty smile makes you happy."

Lucifer huffed and gestured at her features, her hair, even her breasts. "Dad designed these on a particularly good day." Then he jabbed an index finger over her heart, "But you made you, and that's the best part," before promptly falling asleep again.

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Hours later — so late that Chloe feared the worst — Maze finally smuggled the Silver City's medical retinue back into Lux through its prohibition tunnels. They burst through a trapdoor beneath the bar, beaten and bruised, surgical instruments intact, surgeon less so. Impervious to his own limp and nosebleed, the archangel Raphael rallied his healers around their fallen brother, orthopedic drills and Enochian steel bone-plates at the ready.

No time to lose. With a mask over the Devil's nose and mouth, anesthetic flowing, Chloe felt his hand go slack in hers.

She yanked Maze aside. "Raph looks like hell. What took so long?"

"Nephilim ambush. They collapsed the west tunnel." Maze herself sported a black eye, bloody lip, grit in her hair, and dust on her clothes. "The Hellblazer beat them back, and your offspring magicked us from the rubble." She assuaged the worried mother: "Constantine's acolyte can hold her own in a fight."

Chloe's concern morphed to pride. "Trixie rescued you?"

"Without her, five angels would still be buried alive."

"And you, Maze. You're important too."

Raphael interrupted. "Detective." He was already scrubbed, gowned, and gloved. "Keep your distance for the duration of this procedure and my brother's recovery." Unlike his siblings, this archangel never beat around the bush; he ordered Chloe to that distant corner of Lux, where her 42-foot radius could do Lucifer no harm.

It was for the best. She knew that. Her partner would be unconscious for the foreseeable future, broken wing extended, prepped, and draped in sterile blue. Scalpels out, her job well done, Chloe's nearness could only hurt him now. Beelining for the far side of the nightclub, she leaned into Maze. "Look after Old Scratch?"
Despite angelic glares, the little Lilim parked a chair at his side. "I always do."

Chloe didn't remember falling asleep in the deejay booth.

Her original intention — to watch surgery from afar via security cameras — fell prey to mental and physical exhaustion. She woke almost twelve hours later, curled in a swivel-chair, to someone very large and very strong carrying her downstairs. In a dreamlike stupor, several long seconds elapsed before she realized it was Lucifer.

Chloe relished the softness and warmth of his black silk bathrobe until reality slapped her. *We're too close.* He might not know she impeded his preternatural healing, amongst her myriad of detrimental side effects. "Put me down. I'll hurt you." Chloe wriggled in protest. "Your wing—"

His grip only tightened. "Never fear, detective." He set her atop the piano. "I'm flightworthy again."

That must be true, because Lucifer never lied, was finally sober, and had retracted both wings. "Wing retraction's impossible with an unstable fracture," she parroted from Raphael's recent crash-course.

"Clever girl, studying angelic anatomy." Back in fine form, the Devil waggled his eyebrows. "Need a tutor?"

He was himself again, her partner and friend and safe harbor. He was okay. She hugged him with unbridled relief, arms about his neck, nose in his hair. Even with his impudence and innuendos, even inundated with angels of all shapes, sizes, and creeds, Chloe understood why Lucifer was the favorite. He was her favorite too.

Cleaning surgical instruments at the bar, Raphael cleared his throat. "This war's far from over."

On cue, the assailing nephilim shook Lux to its foundation again; celebration ended in favor of strategy, but Chloe didn't apologize because she wasn't sorry. Not for *that*, at least.

Maze debriefed them. "Constantine and Beatrice secured the east tunnel." She armed herself with daggers and throwing stars, then tossed Chloe a mag of silver bullets. "We'll escape underground, reconvene with Michael's battalion—"

Lucifer glanced at his bathrobe and toddled behind a column. "Shall I slip into something more battlefield-chic?"

Other wounds to mend and lives to save, Raphael and his healers descended the ladder, one by one, into a subterranean labyrinth beneath West Hollywood. The archangel went last, along with an afterthought. "Oh, and detective— your daughter. The savant who saved us from these tunnels. Please convey my gratitude." Chloe nodded, but he hadn't finished. "Upon completion of her apprenticeship to Mr. Constantine, I could employ a mage of her courage and caliber. Especially in such trying times."

Her ten-year-old impressed an archangel of the Heavenly Host, enough to hire her as a magical consultant. "Er— thank you." Chloe felt more like Trixie's agent than her mother. "She'll...take that under advisement." *After she graduates middle school.*

"Rest assured, she'll receive other offers. I watch her career with interest." He vanished through the trapdoor.

Maze followed, small armory in tow, and downloaded a schematic map of the tunnelwork to her
smartphone. Nephilim fought dirty, but that little Lilim was a decade more Earth-savvy. Few primordial beings had mastered the wartime luxury of Google. Hell, a microwave once bested the Goddess of Creation.

At the rear, Lucifer finally remerged, strapping into a practical jerkin and vambraces embroidered with the Morningstar sigil. A military uniform, maybe, old and well-worn; it fit him too perfectly to be borrowed. Perhaps his brother brought more than medical supplies down from Heaven? The archangel Samael must've worn something before his Fall, and that body was red-hot sin in boiled leather with a cutlass riding his hip.

But Chloe stared less at his chest and more at the blackish-green bruise across it — where that warhammer landed its fateful blow, smack in the solar plexus. With his broken wing for distraction, she nearly forgot its cause.

He mistook this for gawking. "Thirsty, detective?"

"You said you'd healed," she accused, more than a little peeved. He promised never to lie to her.

Caught redhanded, the Devil explained himself. "You only asked about my wing."

"Keep 42 feet from me until you're better." Chloe backed away from the trapdoor. "I'll stay behind—"

"Out of the fucking question." Every ounce of Rico Suave pretense melted away. "Lux might not withstand this siege."

*What if they both died, separated forever, above and below...*

Stubborn as ever, she insisted. "It's my decision."

"And it's my decision that your decision's moronic." He left that swordbelt dangling, abandoned his shirt half-laced, and stood in the middle of Lux like the particularly disheveled hero of a trashy romance. Given the millions of souls at stake, it shouldn't have been as amusing, arousing, or absurd as it was. "You go, I go. You stay, I stay."

She crossed her arms and tapped her foot. "Put your clothes on, and climb your ass down that ladder."

"Make me."

He was the Lightbringer, the Morningstar, indispensable in this war. Chloe was not. "I won't risk your safety anymore. I'm not going."

He sighed heavily, "Very well," then toed his boots and stripped off his breeches.

Again with the nudity. "What the hell, Lucifer?!" Chloe averted her eyes.

"We'll be here awhile," he reasoned. "Lemme put my robe back on."

Within their very first month of friendship, Chloe quickly surpassed her lifetime quota for pretend-not-to-look, definitely-don't-touch below Lucifer Morningstar's belt. But her post-Dan dry spell somehow evolved into years of apocalyptic drought, and she was only human. To bunk in a deserted nightclub with the naked Devil after his near-death experience was — grossly understated — a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad idea.
Best not doom herself to the plot of a skin flick. "Fine." She marched to the trapdoor. "You win. Just keep your pants on."

"Oh, my dear detective." He dressed himself, but bemoaned her loss for days. "Nobody wins with pants on."

Chapter End Notes

Amid Lucifer's heartbreaking 2x06 guilt-spiral, headcanon confirmed: angels can't get drunk, per se. But never fear, I found a loophole to make it so.

Your comments and reviews brighten my day, and I strive to respond personally to each and every one! Any new inspiration or prompts for minisodes? Are you hankering for something light and whimsical, angsty and heart-wrenching, or maybe a little of both? Here's the most recent addendum to our minisode master list:
- Path to Paradise
- The Devil Himself
- To Hell and Back
- The Devil Within
- Mephistopheles
- Hell is Empty
- Devil in Disguise
- Devil on Your Shoulder
- Pandæmonium

And last but not least, a Season One throwback courtesy of the Lucifer wiki. Painted across the container where Lucifer hid his severed wings (1x06) is a star-like Sumerian glyph, which cameos in this fic as the Morningstar sigil on his old uniform. This cuneiform symbol (dingir) traditionally denotes divinity, both good and evil.
Minisode inspired by and dedicated to BecomeMyObsession. A deal’s a deal, though this must be the most belated birthday gift in recorded history. Forgive me? :) And let’s celebrate Seasons Two and Three making this fic more AU by the minute. Love it!

This minisode's weird, guys, but I kinda like it. The writing style is an experiment on my part. I do worry it's confusing as we pinball between present and flashbacks. Please let me know your thoughts. In the cruelest and most deceptive way possible, here follows the (very) long-awaited continuation of Minisode III - "Give the Devil His Due." Sorry in advance.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The only other way to go is down…

Minisode X: Locked Out of Heaven

Hell was an unadulterated shithole.

The detective looked so incongruous amid its horrors, like fireworks against grayscale, a sunbeam through ashes and filth. Hades was no place for someone as good and noble and pure. She shouldn't be here. The Devil would know. He once swore she'd never see this wasteland, never feel its heat or suffer its torments, but Lucifer's dissuasion — “A king needs no escort through his own kingdom!” — fell upon deaf ears.

Even with soot clinging to her hair, burning her eyes, singeing her throat, Chloe Decker was nothing if not driven. "Friends don't let friends descend into Hell alone, and you've snuck in one too many times without me."

They were partners, as above, so below, and this foray into the Underworld had an objective, a mission, a quest upon which rested the souls of all mankind. Adamant and loyal and plucky as ever, the detective walked straight into Hell with him, wielding Dante's Inferno like a supernatural GPS, and suddenly the impossible seemed a little less so.

The war was over, and he'd lost.

Rebellion squashed, Mother banished, Brujería scattered, the Flaming Sword forever extinguished. In penultimate defiance, Amenadiel tore the silver key from his neck and held it over the blazing pit of the Hellmouth. A necessary evil, he told himself. Corruption ran rampant through the Silver City, Lucifer its wellspring. Even archangels fell prey. Michael, doubting his own righteousness, questioning their father’s authority? Gabriel, blameful and discontent, coveting a life on Earth?

They welcomed the Devil himself back into their fold. They commiserated with the dregs of human depravity, brokering with that trench coat conjurer. Fools, idealists, heretical traitors! They were the fallen angels, not him! Why couldn’t anyone see?
It ended now. Cull the afflicted. Carve out the infection. Halt the plague in its tracks.

He dropped his silver key into the inferno. “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.”

His divine connection shattered, cold and sudden. All around the world, his brothers and sisters listened in fear and confusion as the Empyrean choirs faded and their father’s voice went abruptly silent.

The Pearl Gate had two keys, silver and gold, halves of a whole, each useless absent the other. With one lost in Hades, those still inside the Silver City were trapped there, unable to guard and guide their loved ones below. And those on an earthly plane — angel or human alike — were cut off from paradise.

If Amenadiel couldn’t return to Heaven, then nobody would.

Lucifer felt the severance too, flaying every nerve, every feather, every fiber of his vindicated soul. He collapsed to his knees, celestial warmth gone ice-cold again: the cruelest fate for a risen archangel. Not seconds before, the detective convinced him to fly topside on new-grown wings, issue his dad a halfhearted parley, and he convinced her to ride shotgun.

Chloe would outshine Heaven itself, and the Devil couldn't wait to rub it in his house-proud father's face.

But now the air was frigid, bleak, Judecca all over. It felt as desolate as the Fall. It hurt even more than cleaving his wings. Without both Keys to the Kingdom in angelic hands, no one could enter Heaven. And contrary to popular belief, the Devil favored quality over quantity. Give him your narcissists, your warmongers, your rapists and killers, but he'd no interest in damning innocents. The Silver City deserved its goody-goodies. Boredom and harps became them.

Company over climate, as it were.

So down the hellhole they went, through the ash labyrinths of Caïna, across the muck and mire of the Malebolge, and Lucifer remembered how much he hated this godforsaken place. He bitched and moaned and griped every step of the way, but Chloe never peeped a protest. Instead, she shed tears for the sinners eternally frozen and contorted beneath Lake Coccytus. She grasped at his waistcoat, floundering against the abominable sandstorms. Seasick while sailing the Phlegethon, she retched overboard into that boiling blood-river.

She weathered Hell even better than the Devil himself, but such baseless punishment drove home the enormity of their task. Lucifer had no choice but to recover the silver key — *my key, once* — and reopen the Pearl Gate. Or else someday, decades from now, when his detective took her last mortal breath, there'd be nowhere to go but down.

Finding a four-inch silver key, hidden somewhere in these sprawling Nine Circles, was akin to digging the holiest of needles from an infernal haystack. But who better to try than the Devil and his advocate? Chloe's mettle went above and beyond. She was in Hell, the dreaded inferno. People lived entire lives with the express goal never to know this place. They prayed and prostrated and tossed alms into the basket every Sunday, while the detective damned herself willingly because it was the right thing to do.

The war was over, but their work far from done.

As luck would have it, when plotting illicit incursions into the Underworld, they had *the* professional on-call. In rare display of semi-selflessness, a terminally ill John
Constantine donated the very last Pentecostal coin to be found north of the Hellmouth. It was their only route into Hades, death notwithstanding, but came with strings attached.

The Hellblazer had one condition which might separate him and his precious coin. "Years ago, the Stygian councillor Nergal dragged a blameless child into the Underworld. A little girl, only Trixie's age. Astra." He choked on her name. "It was my fault. I tried over and over to find her. I tried—"

Bedridden for good reason, lips blue and sputum red, Constantine nearly hacked up a cancerous lung. His ever-faithful acolyte kept sleepless vigil at his side; Beatrice shushed and soothed her Uncle John as best she could with ice chips, sympathy, and a nebulizer. But even at death's door, this condemned man would surrender his get outta jail free card to save an innocent soul.

*Heaven best rearrange its roster, or there'll be words.*

Despite the spawn's urging that he rest, be still, be quiet, Constantine found a feeble voice. "I couldn't rescue Astra from Hell." He appealed to Lucifer, monster to monster. "But maybe the Devil could."

"We'll find her, John. I promise." Chloe sounded so sure, because she knew nothing yet of that unholy abyss where hope and optimism go to die. Even the Devil almost believed. "We'll bring her back with us. Her and the key."

Deal struck, for better or worse, Lucifer snatched the silver denarius. "Without a second coin, we've no escape plan."

Beatrice, however, did. A good mage does her homework. "There are more Pentecostal coins in Hades."

She clutched to Constantine's hand, skeletal and ghost-pale, as though her tiny grip might overpower death itself. Maybe it could. That girl was the next Hellblazer, not to mention the detective's daughter. In their veins flowed stubbornness and miracles.

The offspring looked to Lucifer. "Please don't take my mom to the Underworld. I'll go with you instead."

"Trix, baby—" Chloe sounded stricken.

"No secrets, ma. No lies. We promised each other." Beatrice wore fortitude well. "I'll rob Hell blind, find the key, save Astra, steal every coin they've got. You know I can." She was her master's acolyte, fearing nothing and no one. "My magic's worthless if it can't save Uncle John." The child was crying now, crying and furious, and the Devil knew best what danger dwells in an exorcist with everything to lose. *Father have mercy upon her enemies, because Beatrice Decker will not.*

Even half-dead, Constantine looked proud. "My apprentice." He squeezed her fingers. "I forbid you to go."

"But Uncle John—!"

He silenced his acolyte with a stern glare. "Give your mum what spells she'll need. Keep it simple. She's a gifted amateur." Still Beatrice protested, but the deathbed demands of her mage-master took precedent. "Stay here with me," coughed Constantine, closing the argument once and for all. "I'd rather not die alone."
With that, student became teacher as daughter schooled mother, and Chloe made even more promises that Lucifer doubted she'd keep. How many more hellish errands could they possibly run? Repossess the silver key, spring Astra from the big house, nab a few Pentecostal coins along the way. What little remained of Iscariot's blood money sat under lockdown in the capital vaults of Pandæmonium, and that meant stealing from the most heavily guarded safe ever designed, inside the most heavily fortified city ever built, within a maximum-security prison meant to contain Satan himself.

Obviously, they got caught.

Chloe well and truly despised him sometimes. "This is your fault."

They sat back to back, shackled together within a slimy cage in the Pandæmonian slums. If evildoers on Earth thought the penitentiaries upstairs were bad, just wait until they crossed over. That smell alone scalded her throat, ammonia and excrement and rot, and she tried not to think about the cockroaches skittering across her jeans.

Only Lucifer could look on the bright side of Hell. "At least we're inside the city now!" Traipsing about his old stomping ground with all the subtlety of a trainwreck, those baffled guardsmen took their long-absent overlord into custody at the capital gate. He didn't even negotiate or bribe or resist. "I'm a Trojan horse, only prettier."

It finally clicked. He got us caught on purpose. What better way to smuggle themselves into an impenetrable city? Amidst his cheeky smiles, fitted vests, and gourmet omelets, oftentimes Chloe plumb forgot he was Satan. "Next time, share your plan with the class, asshat."

"You would've vetoed. Especially given the small, but not insignificant chance those Malebranche might've just eaten us instead of arresting us." Lucifer rested the back of his head against hers, wriggling their bound wrists in futility. "Though, full disclosure, I didn't think quite this far ahead."

Chloe snarled back. "Quit the theatrics. You can unlock anything. You escaped handcuffs before."

"Human handcuffs, human locks." He rattled their chains. "These beauties are Enochian steel, and the jailbars too."

Great. They were officially hostages in Sixth Circle. She really, truly despised him sometimes.

The Stygian councillor Nergal was an eight-foot monstrosity with ram's horns, talons, and a forked tail. Surprisingly fat and oafish for a hellbeast, he smelled like a slaughterhouse and looked a helluva lot more like the Devil than Lucifer did. "I'll take that as a compliment," mumbled her partner.

Those demonic guardsmen — Malebranche, she learned — were patsies to the highest bidder and hauled their prisoners uptown to prostrate before the Infernal Throne. Unlike the hellish suburbs and capital ghetto, this neck of the woods was decidedly not a shithole. The palace dripped in obsidian and rubies, awash with nubile concubines from the Second Circle, and in that moment Chloe understood why the councillors launched a coup d'état in Lucifer's absence.

A coup won, for the time being, by Nergal. "Welcome," said the underling atop a stolen throne, "to Pandæmonium."

Ever a detective, even behind bars and staring down a demon king, Chloe grilled him. "Where's Astra?"
Nergal ignored her, standing to pace around their cage, gloating at Lucifer in chains. "Oh, how the mighty fall, m'lord."

"Where. is. Astra?" Chloe kicked and rattled the bars.

Nergal snarled, rank breath on her face, rotten teeth bared. "Far beyond your reach, insolent cretin." He sniffed at Chloe's ponytail, then reached through the cage to engulf her neck with sickle claws. "But how fortuitous that you are well within mine."

Lucifer fucking lost it. "Pluck one hair from her head," he roared, eyes red, voice deep and corrupted with rage, "and I'll cast you down deep enough to carve a Tenth Circle."

For the first time in a long time, the denizens of Hades witnessed their master and commander in all his glory. Nergal recoiled on instinct. The Malebranche trembled. Even the Infernal Throne seemed to recognize him; its torches burned hotter, welcoming the Devil home. Lucifer quaked behind Chloe, wrists still bound to hers, and he shed retirement like it never happened. "Apologize to the detective, else you'll apologize to the seventy-two Ptolomeics I sic upon traitors."

But the councillor's laugh was cruel and sinister. "Go ahead. Call the Ptolomeics, here and now. How they crave a taste of raw human." Lucifer stiffened against her back, and Chloe knew the threat was far from idle. "Or spread your wings, and slice her to ribbons. Maybe summon hellfire, and burn her alive." Shit, shit, shit. Handcuffing her to Lucifer was purposeful. It nullified every weapon the Devil possessed.

Lucifer couldn't kill Nergal without killing Chloe too.

"You may wield the Seal of Solomon," spat the demon king, "but I serve no archangel."

The war was over, and Lucifer was leaving.

Michael decreed it. "Angels can’t linger too long on Earth. It changes us, for better or worse." The Prince of Heaven preached what they already knew. "We must recover the silver key and go home." He shot his elder brother a pointed look. "All of us."

Why Chloe felt so uprooted, she'd no idea. This was long in coming. Angels descended to fight a second civil war, blessedly over, and now they wanted to get the fuck home. Understandable. For God’s sake, their home was literally Heaven. Paradise. Elysium. Nirvana. Eternal bliss.

And the Devil was an archangel again. He’d obviously leave L.A. and go back with his family.

Despite such logic and reason, a single truth pervaded and devoured her: Lucifer was leaving, and soon.

Conceal, don't feel. Mind on their hellbound mission, she drove the cruiser to Constantine's hospice. Halfway there, Lucifer piped from the passenger seat — his seat, soon to be cold and empty once more. “Something troubles you, detective.” A statement, not a question. "Besides our impending condemnation and doom."

They promised never to lie to each other, and Chloe refused to start now. “You’re my best friend, my partner, my— ” This was so embarrassing. "I’ll miss you." There, she said it, out in the open like a gaping wound. But her voice kept babbling: “When you go back to Heaven with your— ”
“I know what you meant.” He didn’t belittle nor comfort her. If anything, Lucifer sounded as conflicted as she felt.

Chloe digested this. “Aren’t you— you wanna go back, right?”

Nergal left them, chained together and caged like animals, at the foot of an obsidian throne that once belonged to Lucifer. The torches snuffed, the guards thinned, and then they were alone at the beating heart of Hades. Outside the palace, Chloe heard a never-ending chorus of tormented screams. The smell of burnt flesh was pervasive.

"This is terrible." She hardly expected a cakewalk, but Chloe wouldn't wish this Underworld upon her worst enemy. "I see why you quit." Funnier if they weren't imprisoned by a maniacal usurper, but Lucifer laughed anyway. A beautiful laugh. She'd miss it.

They sat in silence for a while, still handcuffed back to back. The Devil spoke over his shoulder. "You won't die here."

"Glad one of us is sure."

Lucifer was steadfast. "I'll get you home safe. I promise."

He never lied, so Chloe let herself believe, but what would happen after their great escape from the inferno? "Once we find the key, will Michael escort you and the Host back to Heaven straight away, or— " She choked a little. "Or will you have time to say goodbye?"

A beat. "My brother doesn't dillydally."

Don't. fucking. cry. Currently prisoners of a demon king, they had much bigger problems than Chloe's possessive and irrational fondness for Satan. An unbidden thought came to her, selfish and truly evil: if they never found the Key to the Kingdom, then all angels on Earth were forever trapped there, Lucifer included. But no human souls would ever enter Heaven either, not Dr. Linda, nor Dan and her mother, not even Ella and Trixie. With what Chloe now knew of Hell, she'd damn herself a thousand times to spare her family and friends this place, and she'd pay any price to bring that key home.

"Once you're in the Silver City, will you— can you visit us?" Chloe hated how small her voice sounded, but she'd always envisioned Lucifer there to photobomb Trixie's prom, torture her college roommates, hoot at her graduations, dance in her wedding. After millennia on walkabout, couldn't he play hooky from Heaven for another afternoon? Chloe swore to spend his time wisely, so wisely, much wiser than their last decade. "Or does your dad not allow...fraternization?"

Lucifer turned his head, and she felt breath on her ear, his voice brimming with pleasure and heat. "Since when did Father's rules stop me?"

In the blinding dark and deafening quiet, she wished so desperately to see his face, his eyes, to read him and know if everything she'd ever hoped and wished for might possibly come true. But shackles still bound them, wrist to wrist, and all Chloe got was a skipped breath, his warmth against her spine and the twitch of callused fingertips against hers. Lucifer's departure from Earth a forgone conclusion, still she clung to a fruitless and familiar prayer. God, if you're listening, please let me keep him.

But without the silver key, his father couldn't hear her.

Or maybe he could.
God and the Devil shared a sadistic sense of humor, like father, like son, because only at the depths of Chloe's despair did a miracle arrive in the unlikeliest form. While the palace slept, a Malebranche slipped into the Stygian councilroom, unlocked their cage, and sprang their shackles with a skeleton key. He was a nervous, wart-ridden creature, stinky and dressed in rags, but in that moment she'd never seen anybody so beautiful.

Lucifer rubbed his wrists, raw from bondage. "Why're you helping us?"

"I missed you, boss." The Malebranche smiled, or tried to, with a misshapen face that put Freddy Krueger to shame. "M'lord still has loyalists in Pandemonium. Absent the Seal of Solomon and Ptolomeic support, Nergal's claim to your throne is weak." The demon brightened even further. "Oh, and— " He produced a leather satchel, jangling with silver denarii. "Without these, the Stygian councillors are shit out of luck."

He stole the Pentecostal coins too — all of them! Chloe pocketed the gift, because the God she never worshipped before now worked in mysterious ways through the weirdest people. After one too many years playing house with Maze, she understood better than most the demonic potential for goodness. Who knew.

"Nergal will kill you for freeing us." Chloe fished two denarii from the satchel and slipped them into the Malebranche's rags. "Escape while you can."

Unaccustomed to mercy and speechless for it, the demon dithered. "M'lady, I— I only need one coin." He shrugged at Lucifer. "Rumor has it, once you visit Earth, you never want to leave." The two devils shared a knowing look.

Chloe shook her head. "The spare's not for you. It's to save John Constantine."

"The Hellblazer?" His reputation preceded him, and the Malebranche was afraid.

Right, of course. Traditionally, hellspawn and exorcists were poor bedfellows, but Maze and Trixie got along like a house on fire, and Lucifer's whiskey often became Constantine's hangover. Anything was possible. Chloe clasped the Malebranche's hand, rough with scales. "Go topside to Los Angeles. Find my daughter, Beatrice Decker, and tell her together we robbed Hell blind." She squeezed his fingers in reassurance. "Trixie will see the Pentecostal coin to Mr. Constantine, and you'll be safe with her." Chloe sealed this promise in a way the demon might understand. "My word is my bond."

"Why should she trust me?"

Lucifer answered. "The child's a rather outstanding judge of character."

Somewhere above their heads sounded a deep, bellowing horn. "Alarms for the capital vault," panicked the Malebranche, reaching into the pocket with his stolen denarii. "I'll seek out your daughter and help the Hellblazer." Too earnest for the lot he was dealt, the demon returned her vow. "My word is my bond."

Chloe hugged her new friend before he vanished topside in a puff of sulfur and brimstone. Trixie was gonna love that guy.

Down the corridor came a clatter of swords and armor, then the incited roar of Nergal as he barreled into the councilroom with three dozen guardsmen at the ready. Chloe drew her gun, ripe with silver bullets, and Lucifer unfurled his wings, grinning that manic grin. "Give 'em hell, detective!"

And did they ever.
Silver cut down Malebranche like sitting ducks, while the fistfight between Nergal and Lucifer was violent enough to render earthquakes abovenground. Eventually, when Chloe found herself surrounded, she raised her free hand, palm out, the universal sign for an exorcist on the offensive. Fear paralyzed every demon in the line of fire.

Her daughter was an excellent teacher. "The Sacred Cross commands you! The Star of David commands you!" Chloe exorcized Lilith before, easy peasy, and if you've exorcized one Stygian councillor, you've exorcized them all. Hopefully. "The Omkar, the Lotus, and the Shahada command you! Flee this place! Disperges in ventum!" And finally, the invocation: "In the name of God and all his angels, be not, and begone!"

Nergal and his army braced themselves, but nothing happened. Sadistic laughter slithered through their ranks. "Amateur." The demon king advanced, huge and menacing. "No angel can hear you this deep in the inferno."

Chloe had an epiphany, glancing from the councillor to Lucifer and back. "Wanna bet?"

She rallied again, Trixie's voice in her head, harping about inner strength and the power of intention. "Believe you can win," her little monkey would say, sagely and clever beyond her years. "Invoke an angel you trust." In her darkest moments, in her hours of need, Chloe always trusted one angel above all others. And if that angel also happened to be a philandering dick, so be it.

"In the name of the archangel Samael." Never surer of anything in her life, Chloe dropped her gun and had faith in him, in them, partners and friends, as above, so below. All it took was a whisper. "Be not, and begone."

Something detonated deep inside her, a flash brighter than creation itself, and then something actually detonated inside Nergal, catapulting him clear across the councilroom, smashing marble and quartz to smithereens, burying his guardsmen in rubble. Behind her, Chloe also heard a heavy weight hit the floor only to realize it was Lucifer, gasping and clutching his chest.

"Bloody hell," groaned the Devil, head hung, wings limp. "You just punted my soul!"

He was the Lightbringer and Morningstar, after all, and she grenade-launched a small supernova at his expense. Rude. "Trix didn't tell me that part!" She helped him up, brushing dust and debris off his feathers. "I'm so sorry—"

"Don't be sorry." Nergal lay unmoving under a few tons of rock, and Lucifer praised her aim. "Nice shooting, tex."

They hurried, the commotion sure to attract more unwelcome attention. Lucifer swiped Enochian sabers off the unconscious Malebranche, and Chloe ascended stairs to the Infernal Throne in search of a portable torch. When she found one, it spontaneously ignited, bathing the throne in embers and dancing shadow. They needed to leave, like yesterday, flee the capital, find the silver key, save Astra and all humanity, but Chloe still felt the wild compulsion to stop, reach out, and touch an armrest. It was slick, obsidian, uncomfortably hot.

Lucifer snuck up behind her. "Go on. Have a sit," the Devil goaded in her ear. "You know you want to."

She almost refused, on principle, because that bastard made kinky something as innocuous as a chair. But if everybody else in the universe vied for his kingdom, why shouldn't the Devil's advocate have a go? Fair's fair, and when in Hell...
For the first, last, and only time, Chloe Decker sat upon the Infernal Throne, legs crossed, chin proud, Queen of the Damned for exactly three seconds before Lucifer snapped a photo with his phone. "For the Insta."

Chapter End Notes

As promised, weird-ish minisode, but hopefully fun! Trixie as Constantine's acolyte brings my muse to life. :) And honestly, though, would you really be satisfied with Lucifer flying Chloe up to the Silver City, easy as pie, happily ever after? We all know good and well that "the path to Heaven runs through miles of clouded Hell..."

P.S. I'm sorry I periodically vanish for months!! I love you all!

Works inspired by this one: Lucifer Morningstar by TricksterKat209

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