Fallen from Grace

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Summary

When Peeta-an emotionally abused angel sculpted in God's image-is approached by Cato-a self involved demon with serious attitude problems-it becomes apparent that things are not as black and white as they seem. Forced into an alliance, both angel and demon must fight to discover the truth about the war they are fighting in. Without ripping each other's throats out first, that is. (Peetato)

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Hazel and Belial

Chapter One: Haziel and Belial

When Lucifer fell, all of the angels in heaven were forced by God to make a choice. Fall with him or stay and serve the Lord like they had for so many years prior. Many decided to fall, deciding that they were sick of lying to themselves and actually wished they had had the courage to voice the things that Lucifer did. Many also decided to stay, knowing in their hearts that what they were doing was the right thing.

All the angels that fell lost their wings and the grace that God had given them. They were branded by Lucifer with a marking that twined around their arms and neck, so everybody knew who they were. But then again, it was hard to miss. Especially since their eyes were black as the night's sky and they had slim tails with pointed ends. They weren't angels anymore, they were demons. And they were incredibly powerful as minions of Lucifer.

After the fall, it became a battle of good and evil. The angels in heaven versus the demons of hell. They battled with one another on earth, fighting over the influence of the humans that walked the planet. If a person led a good life, they'd go to heaven when they died and join God's army but if the person led a sinful life, they'd join Lucifer in hell. It was only a matter of time before one side had more people than the other and the war would break out with uneven numbers.

And it's obvious which side was winning. It's easier to sin than it is to do good.

The angels and demons didn't get along. With good enough reason, really. However, there was something going on behind the scenes that neither side really knew about. Something that was going to change everything they believed in for the worse. Nothing was as it seemed.

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"There's a man, in Panem. He's about to make a terrible mistake."

Peeta nodded, glancing at the globe that always stood nearby, and located Panem with ease. "My Lord, if you don't mind my asking, what's he about to do?" he asked. Looking back at their Lord God Snow, he continued to feel unworthy to even be in the man's presence. He knew he was God's right hand man, and he would continue to be for many years to come, but it didn't mean that he didn't feel wrong being treated like he had a right to serve God so closely.

"What have I told you Haziel?" God said. "Call me Snow."

Snow's chambers in heaven where the most extravagant in existence. His bed was huge, lined with gold, and white, and silver. His walls stretched so high Peeta felt sick every time he looked up, which was kind of ridiculous since he was an angel and flew higher than that on a daily basis. Maybe it just reminded him of God-Snow-"s power. The sheer exorbitance of the room made Peeta feel like a speck of dust that should be lost between the clouds that dusted the floor. But every single time it was him Snow called on, like he had done something to earn such intimacy
Snow was a strong man. He had been strong for many years. However, after the fall, things became . . . difficult. Snow grew tired and irritated, annoyed by the amount of his people that decided to go with Lucifer and turn into demons. He indulged himself in the very things he forbade but nobody blamed him for it. Every angel that walked heaven's clouds knew exactly how stressful the situation was getting. How dire everything was threatening to become. Nobody blamed Snow for trying to make himself feel better through greed and fornication. He was God after all, and didn't have to seek forgiveness like everyone else.

"Am I right to think that there's a . . ." Peeta trailed off, worried about what the reaction would be if he actually said the word.

"A demon?" Snow asked. He lounged lazily on his bed, drinking vibrant purple wine from a gold lined goblet. Peeta himself favoured it prior when it was water and always politely turned Snow down when he offered him some. "Yes, you would be right in thinking that. Walk with caution but with purpose. You must remember the power the other side holds over us right now."

"I do, Snow," Peeta insisted. How could he forget that hell was ahead? That they were so far in the lead that the angels couldn't even fight them anymore, lest they burn their skin on the fiery sin that coursed through the demons' blood. It seemed like only yesterday where it had felt like good had a chance of winning over evil. Now such a future seemed so bleak Peeta hated to even think about it.

"Be careful Haziel," Snow warned. "I do not wish to lose any more of my warriors, especially not the best of the best like you."

"I'm hardly the best of the best," Peeta muttered sheepishly. "There's still Gabriel. And Zehanpuryu and Chayyliel. Even if something did happen to me there would be many left who are much more worthy of your praise."

Snow sighed. "Come here Haziel."

Peeta swallowed the lump in his throat and nervously approached Lord Snow's bed. Snow took Peeta's hand and held it against his chest, where Peeta could feel his heart beating, even though Snow did not need a heart. "There's a reason I sculpted you in my own special image, Haziel. You're different from everyone else. I don't intend on doing such a thing again, certainly not because I lose you over a silly job."

"You sculpted every human being on your own image," Peeta pointed out quietly.

"In a different way and you know it," said Snow. "Do I need to tell you of where you came from again?"

Peeta looked away but shook his head. "No Lord Snow, you don't." He despised his origin story. The fact that Snow took the time and effort to sculpt an angel in his own desired image put a pressure on Peeta that he didn't want. He didn't want to be expected to be unbelievably brave, nor did he want other angels believing that he was . . . well, God's little pet. Because that's what they thought, each and every one of them. Just because Snow always told Peeta their plans first; or requested Peeta's presence while he devised an attack; or simply wanted Peeta to sit with him while he mulled over things in his mind. He still couldn't see why, out of everything God could have sculpted an angel off of, he choose to make it look like him. He wasn't special.

"You're special, Haziel, whether you like it or not," Snow assured. He tapped his lips and Peeta leaned over, pressing his own against them obediently. Snow's mouth tasted like flowers and
wine, a combination Peeta wasn't sure how he felt about. When he stood up again, Snow repeated, "You are special. Your eyes are the bluest; your hair is the most golden; your wings have a wingspan larger than any other in existence. Is it the other warriors making you feel inferior?"

"Of course not," Peeta muttered, hating how this conversation sounded like he was snitching on his bullies to the head teacher.

"They're just jealous," said Snow dismissively. "They wish they could be in your position. But they're not."

"I hardly doubt they're jealous," said Peeta. "I doubt Metatron or Lofiel have any reason to be jealous."

"Are Metatron and Lofiel the ones giving you bother?" inquired Snow.

"Oh no. Nobody's giving bother," Peeta lied. "I mean, it's the war and all that. Giving bother would break the commandments." In truth, things like the commandments and the beatitudes had gone straight out the window but nobody cared to admit it. Especially since Snow had been generous enough to write them on pieces of rock all those years ago.

Metatron was a little too conceited, especially for the position second to God. Peeta supposed it was annoying to be given such a title and then having to play third wheel to a skinny idiot who wasn't even an archangel. As for Lofiel, she was looking at conceited in the rear view mirror. But what was anyone to expect? She was an archangel as well, her name meaning 'beauty of God'. She couldn't understand why Snow wouldn't pick her to spend so much time with, since her name clearly pronounced what everyone thought when they saw her. She thought she was all he needed and couldn't understand why Snow felt the need to sculpt an angel of his own when he had her.

Snow smiled. The sort of proud smile that he reserved only for his Haziel. "Be careful out there on earth, we don't know who or what Lucifer has put out there."

"I will," Peeta said. "I promise."

"Good." Snow took Peeta's chin and pulled him down for another kiss, the flower and wine combination bombarding Peeta's senses until he almost felt like he'd drank the alcohol himself. "I love you Haziel, remember that."

"I love you too, Lord. We all do," Peeta replied.

Snow grinned and with one last kiss, bid his pet on his way.

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Peeta watched the man follow the woman from a distance. The man's thoughts ran through his head, all of it sticking to the same theme. "I'm going to show that bitch what it means to break up with me. No one, NO ONE breaks a relationship up but me." Peeta could already tell he had lost the battle; that he had come too late; but he followed the predator regardless. There was still a shimmer of hope that he could fix what was about to happen. Or at least lessen the brunt of the aftermath.

He couldn't interfere, nor could he save the woman when the man finally struck and threw her to the ground. All he could do was stand close and watch over her, holding her life between his fingers and fighting not to drop the thread. When her attacker left, the woman was unconscious and injured. Peeta leaned against the wall, watching over her, until someone passed by and came to her aid. He hated being late. There was nothing he could when he was late.
Spreading goodness was not as easy as it sounded. Peeta touched many souls on a daily basis, but when he felt that twinge of evil, he instantly knew whether it was a lost cause or not. Really, he shouldn't have come along to watch the woman's attack but he felt a duty to protect her, even if her predator's mind was too closed off to be helped. It was clear the man had closed his mind to God long ago. That or . . .

"Spreading cheer again, are we?"

Peeta looked to the top of the alleyway where Cato stood, same self-satisfied smirk on his face as usual.

Of course the demon Snow had spoken of was Cato. Why wouldn't it be? Out of all the conceited; ignorant; self-involved demons, Cato had to be the worst of them all. He had this arrogant attitude nearly twenty four seven, even before he had fallen. Every time Snow sent Peeta to earth to protect someone, it was like Lucifer sent Cato as well, just to get on the vision of God's nerves. Lucifer knew what everyone despised, even when it came to angels, and he was most likely well aware of the special seat of hatred Peeta gave Cato in his mind.

"Spreading devastation again, are we?" Peeta replied tightly.

Cato's black eyes were like endless voids, and they made Peeta shiver every time he had to look into them. "Have to make a livin' somehow," the demon replied, approaching Peeta and stopping when he was a few inches away. "Sorry you were too late. I mean, good try though. I could have saved you some time; told you that I'd touched his mind long before your God even realized the relationship had gone awry."

"But why would you do that?" Peeta challenged. He folded his arms and looked away. He couldn't believe that at one point, they had both been on the same side. Until Lucifer fell and took half of the angels with him. "Why would you hurt innocent people?"

"It's called doing what I'm told," Cato smirked. "I could ask you the same thing about why you try oh so desperately to find the best in people. How would you answer, hmmm?"

"Because God told me t"-Peeta paused and scowled. "At least I don't spread sins like a disease. I try and help people. I would never dream of hurting them."

"And that's why I fell and you didn't," Cato replied, patronizing as usual. His black eyes practically gleamed under the moonlight and he teasingly poked Peeta with the end of his tail. "How is the big guy in the sky nowadays anyway?"

Peeta batted Cato's tail away, ignoring how touching the demon's skin made his own burn like heavenly fire. "I'm not obligated to answer that," he said indignantly.

"Oh, okay," Cato grinned, pulling a face and pretending to act serious. "Not too good then. I suppose he has noticed how many people are becoming sinners every day. Is he planning another flood then? Who's going to be Noah this time? Obama? The Queen of England? How intriguing would that be, huh? Do you think they'd build an ark in time?"

Peeta rolled his eyes. "You're so blasphemous it's unbelievable," he muttered.

"Don't pretend you don't love it," Cato smirked. "You just can't admit to yourself that you might actually be attracted to a demon."

"I am not attracted to you," Peeta hissed. "You're everything that's wrong with this world. You deserve to live in hell because that's where you belong. Among the fire and the rot and the sin. All
you ever do is poison humans with the seven deadliest. I don't understand why someone like Lucifer would want to ruin so many people."

"Same reason your God wants to find the good in people. To bring them to his side and build an army," said Cato. He leaned one arm against the wall so he loomed intimidatingly over Peeta, who was smaller in height and stature. "Don't tell me that you don't believe the war won't come. Eventually all these people you're trying to save will be caught in a crossfire that's out of your control. Are you sure you're on the right side?"

Peeta glared at Cato defiantly. "I made my decision," he said. "So did you."

"Oh yeah. Too bad such a pretty face will go to waste." Peeta flinched when Cato's fingers touched his wing, stroking the feathers tenderly. "I have to admit, when we were told to choose, I knew instantly which side you'd pick. Peeta Haziel Mellark, always gunning for the good guys. It was kind of obvious, since you're practically his little bitch anyway. Haziel. Vision of God. Sculpted exactly in his vision. No wonder when everyone was forced to choose you ran to his side like the frightened little squirt you are."

"What about you? You're still Anael whether you like it or not," Peeta replied. He shrugged Cato's hand off him and brushed the feeling of his fingers off of his feathers.


Peeta scoffed, shaking his head in disgust. Of course Cato would find a way to use his ability for evil means. It was unfortunate that the angel of influencing love, passion and sexuality fell so hard from his grace. Now Cato only used it to make people lust after one another. Which was, obviously, one of the seven deadly sins.

"I bet your God is as bad as the rest of us, he just doesn't let on," Cato hissed. "I bet he built you in his image because he secretly dreams of fucking you every night."

"Don't talk about our Lord that way," Peeta snapped. "I don't care if you've fallen or about the truce. If you say something like that one more time I'll take you out myself."

Cato raised his eyebrows. "Oooh, that'd be interesting," he said. "You're clearly denying it anyway. Don't think we demons haven't heard about 'Lord's'"

Peeta gave Cato a push, his palms sizzling like he'd placed them on hot plates. Cato stepped back—not because the push was hard enough to force him back—but because he loved teasing Peeta. It was like a hobby of his to play with Peeta's last nerves every time they locked horns. "It's Lord to you," Peeta hissed.

"Oh right, sorry," Cato said with no sincerity, placing a hand on his heart—if he had one—and smirking. "Don't think we demons haven't heard about 'Lord's' breakdown. We can sense when people commit the seven deadliest, he does know that doesn't he? So if he's trying to be discreet about the fact that he's stuffing his face with food and wine and fucking angels willy nilly then he's deluding himself. It's quite amusing, actually."

"God does not worry about what you see," Peeta snapped. "He worries about the people on earth, here, right now, who he has to protect."

Cato rolled his eyes and leaned his back against the opposite wall, which was damp from the rain and smeared in the woman's blood. "When did he decide to break his own rules anyway? How long has he been a hypocrite?"

Peeta felt his blood boil in anger. No one should have the right to talk about Snow like that. "If
"It's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than to enter the kingdom of God," said Cato. He quirked an eyebrow. "Shouldn't that mean that your all good God is no better than Lucifer? Hmmm?"

Peeta felt like his ears were bleeding. He touched one curiously, just to make sure, and was relieved when it came back clean. He scowled and started to walk away. "I'm not listening to this," he snapped. "I'm not obligated to stand around and listen to you spout blasphemy and sin like you'll never get the chance to do it again."

Cato ran up behind Peeta and grabbed him before he could get away. Peeta screamed and kicked out, only to have himself held against Cato in the darkness with a hand around his mouth. "Would you listen to me, I'm trying to make a point," the demon hissed. "Out of all the angels I've ever encountered, you are by far the most tolerable. And I'm not just saying that because 'Lord' sculpted you with a bangin' body. That's why I'm trying to help."

Help?! Why the hell would a demon want to help an angel?! It was unheard of. "There's something wrong. I don't know what it is but there's something. It's not just going on here on earth, it's happening down in hell and very likely up in heaven as well. It may or may not affect how this war is going to turn out. But if we have any hope of figuring out what it is, we'll have to work together."

Peeta beat his wings hard enough that Cato was forced to let go of him. "I am not going to work with you," he snapped. "You must be mad to think I would."

"It's not about being angelic or demonic!" Cato snapped back. Peeta was taken aback by how serious he was being. Out of every spat he'd had with Cato in the past, never had Cato yelled. He had always been annoyingly cool and collected.

"What's it about then?" Peeta asked cautiously.

"The walls between heaven and hell are beginning to fade. I don't know why but they are. If we don't have that separation then what's to stop good people falling into hell or bad people going to heaven?" Cato demanded.

"That's impossible," Peeta replied. The night had grew cold and his wings drew closer to his body in an attempt to warm himself. "The walls between heaven and hell are the strongest in existence. The only way they would ever fade or break down would be if . . ." He trailed off, his eyes widening in horror.

"If someone was trying to break them down themselves," finished Cato.

Peeta's heart fluttered nervously. "I have to talk to God," he said, turning to fly back to Snow and tell him about what Cato had spoken of.

"You can't talk to God about this!" Cato snapped, grabbing Peeta's wrist to stop him, even though the angel immediately yanked it away. Cato hissed and spat out blood, the word 'God' burning his mouth like acid. "For all we know, he could be involved."

"You're nuts!" Peeta exclaimed. "Why would he be involved in such a sinister plot?"

Cato rolled his eyes and lightly smacked Peeta's arm with his tail. "Have a little perspective. Your Lord is losing. Maybe he's doing this as a last resort. Unleashing chaos on the world so that he won't lose. Are you seriously trying to tell me that after everything he has done: breaking his own rules, committing sins, fighting the good fight with dirtied morals, that you don't believe he isn't
Peeta stared at the demon long and hard. Cato was surely trying to trick him. Lucifer had sent him on a mission to break him; see if he could tempt him into believing lies about Snow. Well, Peeta wasn't going to fall for it. He backed away from Cato, keeping his eyes on the trickster the whole time. "I won't be tempted by you," he snarled. "Find someone else to feed your lies to!"

Cato groaned and rolled his eyes. " Normally I'd be all for you being stubborn but this is the most inappropriate time!" he exclaimed.

"Be silent demon!" Peeta snapped. "I won't believe your lies!"

"Oh for the love of..." Cato rubbed his temples and pointed at Peeta threateningly, "Think about what I've said. When you start noticing that I'm right-and you will notice that I'm right-come to the gates of hell and ask for Belial."

"Belial?" Peeta frowned.

Cato was already walking away. "It's my name now. Cato Belial Hadley."

Peeta watched as the demon disappeared into the mist. He clenched his fists and cocooned himself in his wings to comfort himself. Cato was wrong. The walls between heaven and hell couldn't fall. That's why they were built as strong as they were. And even if someone was trying to break them down, it certainly wouldn't be Snow. 'Belial' was barking up the wrong tree.

Belial. Peeta knew that name. It was the name of a deceptively beautiful angel but the name itself meant without worth. Why would Cato wish to be on the side of a leader who gave him a name like without worth? Why would any of the fallen angels want to be treated so horribly, anyways? Peeta parted his wings and took off with the intention of heading back to Snow and reporting everything Cato had told him. Even if the demon had been talking rubbish, Peeta still had to tell Snow, to find out why such a lie would have been concocted.

What Peeta didn't know, however, was that he and Cato were going to meet again. Very soon.

And it was going to be him that stood before the gates of hell to make it happen.
Seven Deadly Sins

Chapter Summary

Peeta is questioning Lord Snow after his encounter with Cato. Lord Snow is evasive and doesn't answer his creation's questions sensibly, only further increasing Peeta's suspicion. And when Snow tries to distract Peeta in one of the only ways he knows how, the angel suddenly wonders how much he really knows about the man who created him.

Chapter Two: Seven Deadly Sins

"Of course he was lying. He is a demon, after all. They're bred for it." Delly picked at her fingernails, blowing on the gold dust that came off in the process. "I would bet my wings he was doing it just to get a rise out of you. I mean, he has always been known for winding you up in particular."

Peeta tsked, still weirdly unsure. He had never seen Cato so serious about something and they had been colliding and having spats for thousands of years now. "I just feel weird about the whole thing. Out of everything to lie about, why this?" he asked.

"Hazel, the walls don't just break down," Delly scoffed. She sat down beside him on the cloud and brushed her feathers thoughtfully. "And if anyone was to try and create such havoc, it would be Lucifer, not our Lord. All our Lord wishes for is peace. Surely you know this, since you spend so much time with him."

Peeta felt like he should have known this. He did spend the most time with the Lord, so much so that he was allowed to call him Snow, but it still didn't sit well with him. He didn't know what it was but there was something inside of him that wanted to believe Cato. Which was odd, to say the least, since he had never had an inclination towards listening to a demon before in his entire existence.

"Armisael, what if . . . what if this is how it ends?" Peeta whispered fearfully.

Delly rolled her eyes. "Millions of years of torment and that's how you think it's going to end?" she laughed. "I doubt it. Especially since there are still babies to be born, hundreds of years in the future." Delly was the angel of the womb-or 'Armisael' as her angelic name stated-and oversaw the birth of every human on earth. She was only needed in presence when a birth was to be difficult or if Lilith was expected to be there. Lilith was one of Lucifer's minions who stole babies from their cradles and it was Delly's job to thwart her.

The sun was setting and the sky was a beautiful burnt orange. Peeta loved sitting on the clouds at sunset, especially when the night was to be clear. It had to be one of the most beautiful things he had ever seen. Sunset. Such magical sights reminded him that, even when the war seemed endless and pointless, life still went on. Human beings continued to live their lives, unaware of the fight that raged on in their name.

"Anael is a wind up merchant, trust me," Delly said, leaning back on her elbows and closing her eyes to take in the final rays of sunshine. Peeta didn't understand why she did this as her skin already had an unearthly glow to it. "He always was. Even before he fell. If there's one thing that
Lucifer can't change, it's someone's nature. And it's always been in Anael's nature to stir trouble. Textbook antagonist, he is."

Peeta marvelled at how much Delly remembered. To him, life before the fall was a blur. Like a vague dream he couldn't remember. Of course he remembered choosing his side but other than that he didn't really recall much. He couldn't even remember serving Snow like he did now but according to many sources, he was just as much a favoured member of Snow's initiative then as he was now.

"No jobs today?" asked Peeta, wanting to get away from the confusing topic of what Cato had told him.

"No," sighed Delly. "However I feel a stirring for tomorrow. I fear there may be a stillborn in Ukraine."

Peeta looked at his hands in despair. Babies were the only beings that were guaranteed entry into heaven. However, stillborn babies did not count as they had not had a chance to be baptised. Peeta didn't think Snow sent them to hell but, where ever they went, it certainly wasn't in heaven. "Isn't there a way to save them?" asked Peeta.

"You know I can't Haziel," Delly said. "I am a watcher, I don't interfere. If a baby dies I take it where it's supposed to go and I ask no questions. Same way you-or anyone else, for that matter-wouldn't dare question Snow."

Peeta considered asking Delly where the unbaptised babies were sent but before he could, Salathiel appeared. He carried his usual book of entry names and scroll of orders that had been administered to him that morning by Snow. Salathiel rescued Adam and Eve after Snow had cast them out of Eden and as punishment for this he now had to serve as Snow's messenger.

"Salathiel? Is everything alright?" asked Delly. Salathiel always wore a sour expression and it was hard to tell whether the news he brought was grave or joyous. During the hardship of the war, it was only natural to jump to the former conclusion.

"Haziel, our Lord wishes to speak to you." The words were flat and uninterested. It was nothing new for Snow to ask for Peeta's presence. In fact, it was practically expected of him. It would have been odder if there was a day that gone by that Peeta got to spend doing his own thing. "And Armisael, I recommend returning to your post rather than lounging around on the clouds."

"I was on a break," Delly said tightly. She slipped off the cloud and flew away back to earth, where she would continue to watch over earth's babies in the wombs. Peeta wished he had a job he could attend to. Instead he had nothing to do but wait until Snow sent him on a job to touch the soul of someone about to do something bad. It was a unique skill, to be able to touch people's souls, but the only reason Peeta had it was because Snow had tailored everything about him to his own desired image. If Peeta had been any old run-of-the-mill angel then he'd probably have a job like Delly or Salathiel.

The place where Snow resided each night was a palace made of glass. It shone even at night, the majesty of it too powerful for a mortal's eyes. It was guarded by huge golden gates and the only way you could enter was by either getting past Salathiel or speaking to Snow on a telepathic wave. And only Metatron and Peeta knew how to speak to Snow like that.

"Lor-Snow, I'm at the gates. Salathiel said you wish to speak to me?"

The gates popped open instantly and Peeta slipped through. He shut them again immediately and walked up the marble path that lead to the main doors. Peeta always felt intimidated by Snow's
palace. Even the servers had a way of looking more worthy of being there. At least they did something helpful. All Peeta ever felt like he did was listen to Snow for a couple of hours and then go off to do a job that he failed 75% of the time.

Fountains spat up water in the courtyard, the water turning from pink to blue to yellow to green. Transparent beauty, Peeta noticed with a smile. He loved how every aspect of heaven was delicate and beautiful. It was one of the reasons why he knew for sure that he would never survive as one of Lucifer's minions. The idea of the dusty; earthy; rotted stink of hell made Peeta's heart flip in his chest.

"I'm in the garden, Haziel."

Peeta stopped at the huge marble steps. The castle was so huge, it would take a day and a half to reach the garden at the back by foot. Peeta beat his wings and took off by flight, making it round in more than a slither of that time. Flying always made him nervous as every flap of his wings reminded him of how vulnerable he was. The demons didn't have to worry about being shot down from the sky. They were the ones that did the shooting.

Snow was, as promised, in the garden trimming roses. Peeta landed a couple of metres behind him, overly cautious about when to approach and when to stay put. He got down and one knee and murmured, "My Lord, you requested my presence?" He did this every time, even though Snow didn't like it. Despite the desire to please his Lord, Peeta could not stop himself from doing it as a sign of respect. It's like getting told by your teacher to call them by their first name. You just can't do it.

"Yes, Haziel," said Snow. "When I turn around you better be standing." Peeta quickly stood up. He noticed that something sat on the bird table with a tarp covering it. It stood out like a sore thumb, since everything else in Snow's garden was perfectly trimmed and brightly coloured. The tarp was dull and frumpy looking. Nothing like something Snow would willingly have in his garden.

"Salathiel tells me that you had some trouble with the demon you encountered," said Snow, turning around to face Peeta.

"I, ah, wouldn't call it trouble, really," Peeta explained. "It was more just a distraction. It was Cat-I mean Anael."

Snow raised his eyebrows. "Ah, Anael. I trust he's doing well?"

"He didn't try to make you fall under his spell, did he?" Snow enquired, a dark look in his eyes.

"Oh goodness no! I'd never give in to the temptation," Peeta blurted out.

Snow smiled, clearly pleased. "That's my boy," he said. "So, what sort of trouble was Anael trying to get you into?"

"I . . . ah . . . He kept saying that the walls between heaven and hell were fading. He accused you of doing it because we're losing," Peeta explained, remembering the determination in Cato's voice as he had explained this to Peeta. There had almost been a tint of . . . fear in the demon's voice. "He wanted me to help him figure out a way to stop you. I don't understand why after all these years he'd suddenly start requesting my help."

Snow clipped a rose stem, allowing the flower to break free from the rest. He held it in his hand thoughtfully before putting the trimmers down and closing the distance between himself and
Peeta. Even with the wrinkles of a millenia of war creasing his face, Snow still looked magnificent, no matter what he was doing. Peeta always felt the urge to bow to him, recognizing him as the King of All Things that he was but if there was anyone Snow did not want bowing to him, it was Peeta.

"Anael is trying to tempt you to Lucifer's side," Snow explained. He lifted the paper white rose and slipped it behind Peeta's ear, brushing his hair back so it didn't get in the way. "Lucifer knows how special you are to me and has probably sent the worst of his wind up merchants after you to pain me with the knowledge of your capability of being tempted."

"I would never let him tempt me," Peeta said firmly.

Snow chuckled. "I know, I know. Enough of this trivial jibber jabber, I have something for you." He steered Peeta by the shoulders in the direction of the tarp. "Go on, have a look."

A little unsure, Peeta glanced at Snow, who nodded encouragingly. He reached out and pulled the tarp back, revealing an iron cage underneath. Inside the cage was a baby dragon. Peeta gasped in shock and knelt down in front of the cage. The dragon's scales were dark red, lined with streaks of orange and purple. The ridges along its back reached all the way down to its pointed tail but the best part was the creature's eyes. They were huge and the greenest of greens.

"My Lord, I couldn't possibly accept such a gift," Peeta whispered in awe. The dragon had already taken a shine to him, inching closer to the iron bars and tilting its head in curiosity. "Surely there is someone more deserving of this. Metatron has surely done more than I to aid your cause."

"Why are you so petted on Metatron?" asked Snow. "Why do you try to push any praise or gifts I have for you onto him?"

"I'm not petted," Peeta denied. He reached out touched the iron bars that caged the poor creature inside. "It's just . . . I don't know. Metatron is your second in command. He's always out . . . engaged in battle. Surely you realize that he does more for you than I do." The dragon inched forward and nudged Peeta's fingertips with its muzzle. It was so small. Peeta was in complete awe at how delicate the creature was.

"Why should I reward somebody who's never here?" asked Snow. "You're always in my company, Haziel, and I appreciate that." He touched Peeta's shoulder and said, "His name is Temperance."

"Temperance," Peeta repeated in hushed awe. "He's beautiful."

"He's yours," Snow said.

Peeta stood up and turned around to face Snow. "Is he trained? Is he allowed out of the cage?"

Snow laughed at the angel's enthusiasm. "I'll show you how to hold him later on," he said.

The idea excited Peeta and he glanced back at Temperance, who flapped his feathery wings as if returning the sentiment. "I'd love that," he said.

Snow's gaze drifted to Peeta's hands and he frowned deeply in horror. "You're hurt," he said, grabbing both of Peeta's wrists and holding them so his palms were facing the sky. Peeta did not notice until now how touching Cato had burned his skin. He had felt it at the time but never thought it would leave such an ugly scar behind.

"I'm fine, really," Peeta said.
"Did he touch you without expressed consent?" Snow asked intently, touching Peeta's face as if he was afraid he was going to wither away right in front of him.

Peeta shook his head. "No. I kind of pushed him." Snow probed the burns tenderly and Peeta hissed, surprised by how much it actually did hurt. He was shocked by how long he had gone without noticing the chars on his hands. Snow glanced at him inquisitively and he explained, "He insulted you and I didn't like it."

Snow sighed and gestured for Peeta to follow him into the palace. He held his hands away from himself, the burns beginning to sting like wasp venom. "What have I always told you, Peeta? When faced with adversity you keep a level head. You don't lash out. Especially where the demons are concerned. Their advantage over us is our downfall, which is why being patient is more important than ever. Understand?"

"I understand," Peeta confirmed. Snow took Peeta to his room and treated the demon wounds. Which was difficult, since demon burns couldn't be healed by heavenly power. Peeta simply watched while Snow wrapped his hands in bandages and blessed each one. The blessing caused the wound's sting to increase but Peeta gritted his teeth and stuck it out.

The burning of angel's skin was a complex ordeal. When the demons gained advantage, the sin in their blood grew so thick it seeped through their pours and burned anything that had passed through heaven's gates. However, it only burned if the holy object itself touched it. If the demon was to touch the holy object, it would not burn. That was why Peeta's hands were the only burned parts of his body. Because he made the move to smack Cato's tail away and to push the demon away from him. When Cato grabbed him and muffled him with his hand, it had been him giving consent to touch Peeta, not Peeta taking a liberty and touching him anyway. It was an impressive defence mechanism.

Snow kissed both of the bandages on Peeta's hands. "Be careful," he murmured.

Peeta sheepishly muttered, "I am always careful."

"Not careful enough." Snow touched Peeta's face, his thumb catching the angel's lower lip. "Promise me you'll never touch the demon again."


"Do no apologize Haziel," Snow said. "You did what you did with peace in your heart. Your Lord forgives you."

"Thank you," Peeta whispered.

Snow stroked the side of his vision's face with his knuckles. "You are too gentle, my angel. You must wear an exterior of steel and heart of iron." He frowned and touched Peeta's right wing with a wrinkly hand. Peeta flinched, unintentionally leaning away from Snow.

"Sorry, sir, it's just a little"-

"You're burned here too," mused Snow.

"They might have touched Anael by accident when I beat them to escape him, its fine," said Peeta, folding his wing away from view. "The whole encounter . . . it was just so odd . . . Why would Cato say such things about you? I mean, I know that Lucifer has gone to many lengths to tarnish your reputation but this just seems, I don't know, like a below the belt blow."

Snow crossed the small distance between the bed and the gold side table. He stood there for a
moment, as if lost in contemplation, before picking an apple out of the fruit bowl that sat in the middle. He turned around and lightly leaned against the table's edge. "Lucifer is not below anything. Hitting below the belt is exactly his style."

"I understand that," Peeta said. "I just don't understand why now. You know more than anyone else how many times Cato and I have ran into each other and . . . well, you know. Why would he choose now to try to turn me against you? Turn all of us against you? He's winning. His side is faring better than ours. Why would he try and do this now, out of all possible times to do so?"

Snow took a huge bite out of his apple and chewed slowly. The apples from the Tree of Exuberance were the sweetest, juiciest apples in existence. Only few of Snow's closest angels got to eat from the tree. Not even the ones whose job it was to pick the apples from the tree got to taste the fruit. Peeta had been offered on many an occasion but he politely turned the offer down.

"Spontaneity is the best approach to some attacks," Snow said between chews. He moved the apple around in his hand thoughtfully as he spoke. "Lucifer has grown to realize that the pathway to our demise is not through the arrogance or cruelty of his minions. The demons are barbaric, we know that. They are easily dealt with however, which you always prove when you talk rings around Anael."

The soft crunch of Snow's teeth sinking into the apple was the only divide in the things that he had to say.

"I know that he has realized that the pathway to victory is easy, if he thinks about his approach logically," he continued to explain. "As callous as Lucifer is, he is no fool. My best guess is that he has changed his approach towards his recruitments. I believe he is trying to strike through the middle and bury his way outwards."

Snow poured water into a glass goblet. He passed it to Peeta and as soon as the angel's fingers curled around the stem, it turned dark red. "I don't doubt your reasoning, my Lord. I just don't think I understand. Not fully. I just . . . why the walls between heaven and hell? Why, out of everything to convince me of, why that?"

"Because there is no greater threat to the war than the walls between the realms falling apart," said Snow. He swirled his own water around in his goblet until it also stained red. "I don't doubt your reasoning, my Lord. I just don't think I understand. Not fully. I just . . . why the walls between heaven and hell? Why, out of everything to convince me of, why that?"

"Surely Lucifer and his demons wouldn't degrade themselves to something so bestial?" Peeta protested. "We all made our decisions. It should be set in stone which side we are on. Why would Lucifer try to seduce us to his side when it's clear we aren't going to go? None of us will. That's why we chose to stand by you and not him."

"I understand that and so do you. It seems, however, that Lucifer does not," Snow sighed.

Peeta stirred the wine in his cup with his little finger. "Why send Anael, do you think?" he asked.

"It amuses me how sometimes you call him Anael and sometimes you call him Cato," Snow smiled. "The causality that you regard Anael with is almost amusing."

Peeta flushed. "$I-I-I . . . $" he stuttered. "His real name is Belial, really."

"Tread with caution. He is a manipulator and a trickster," warned Snow.
Peeta stood up and reached over Snow to put the goblet down. "I know, sir. I approach Cato; I mean Belial; I mean Anael, with as much caution as I possibly can. His words have no effect on me whatsoever. I'm loyal to you and only you. Surely you know this." The thought that Snow doubted him struck fear into Peeta's heart and he was terrified of what was to become of him because of it.

"Hazel, keep the peace," said Snow. He touched Peeta's face and smiled affectionately, cradling his cheek in his hand. "I know you are loyal to me. You are most loyal of all. I would trust you with my life."

"And I you, sir," Peeta replied.

Snow sealed their lips together. Peeta, on instinct, stepped backwards. He was stopped by a hand on the small of his back, reminding him that this was far from the first time Snow had kissed him. He should be honoured that Snow wanted to kiss him and hold him and lie with him at night. Except every time it almost freaked him out. Not because of the differences in age (Snow existed before Peeta but Peeta's immortality meant that he wasn't far behind), it was more of a status thing.

"I love you, Hazel," Snow parted from the kiss to say. "If there was anyone Lucifer would wish to get to in order to destroy me, it would be you."

"I won't let him," Peeta replied. "I won't let him hurt you, Lord." As if to annunciate the point, he folded his wings around them: the only protection he could really offer. "I would die for you."

"You will not," Snow snapped. Peeta flinched, hating being shouted at by the Lord God. He could never do anything right, no matter how hard he tried to seem loyal and dedicated. Peeta shuddered when he felt Snow's hand smooth up his back, dangerously close to where his wings connected to his shoulder blades.

"Then what is my purpose if I can't be there as your defender?" Peeta demanded.

"You do as I say, Hazel. That is what will please me. And that's what you want, isn't it?" Snow touched Peeta's hair affectionately, fingering the rose that was still behind his ear.

"I do," said Peeta. "With all of my heart."

Snow drew Peeta closer to him again. "I didn't make you to be a warrior. I made you to be liaison. Someone who works closely beside me," he explained. "I can't run the risk of your being hurt. That's why I only send you out to do small jobs. You know how if I didn't the others would cause a stir."

"I can fight," Peeta insisted. "If you wanted me to, I'd"-

"You'd do anything, I know." Snow sipped his wine and held it up to Peeta's lips. Peeta turned his nose up and shook his head. "Go on. It'd make me happy."

"I'd rather drink water," Peeta shyly replied. The lip of the goblet, however, was already pressed against his mouth and when he opened his mouth Snow had all but tipped the liquid up into his mouth. He obediently swallowed, hating the tang it left behind on his tongue. Snow then reclaimed his mouth, as if he wanted to taste the wine the second time around.

"It tastes so much better when it's been in your mouth first," Snow purred.

"Thank you, sir," Peeta smiled shakily. What Cato said about Snow being a liar came into his head. About how because Snow broke his own rules, he was no better than Lucifer. He turned his head, his eyes falling on the apple core that sat on the golden table Snow leaned again. The goblet
of wine still in his hand. The fact that kept kissing him and kissing him. The fact that he probably wouldn't stop until he got his fill.

Snow moved away from the table and slipped his hand into Peeta's. He gave it a reassuring squeeze before leading him back to the bed.

"Sir, may I ask something?" Peeta enquired.

"Of course," Snow smiled.

"The 7 deadly sins," he said unsurely. "Lust is one of them, right? An inordinate craving for the pleasures of the body?"

Snow turned around and cocked his head. His lips curled into a smile. "I didn't know that you thought about things like that," he said. "You do realize that many things have changed since the war began? You understand that the war has changed many, many things? The 7 deadly sins and even the Commandments are pretty much null by now."

"But if someone murdered somebody else then you'd condemn them," Peeta pointed out.

"Because it affects our numbers," Snow responded.

Always has an answer . . .

"Lord-I mean, Snow-I . . . I love you. I do. I love you with all my heart. I can't do this though. I'm not . . . not worthy enough," said Peeta. A hand palmed his rear end and he squeaked, his wings flapping uncontrollably at the feeling. "Snow, don't, I really don't think I c"-

"Hey, settle down," Snow soothed, reaching out and stroking Peeta's wings gently. "We've done this before, remember?"

"Can't I stick to my morals? Even though it's outdated . . . I want to be as good as I can possibly be. For you, of course," said Peeta. "I'm sure there's plenty others who would more than willing to"-A hand covered his mouth and he fell silent.

"I did not spend those years modelling you as I wanted to find 'plenty of others',' Snow said. He cupped Peeta's face in both hands and brushed the rose with his thumb. "Never mind morals. That only applies to the humans to see who shall come to us or who goes to hell. We can have as much fun as we want."

Fun. Right. That sort of thing was supposed to be fun.

Peeta allowed himself to be turned around. Snow was so considerate: he knew that Peeta lying on his back was hazardous, as either his wings would cramp up; sprain; get fractured; or even broken in the worst case scenario. The bed sheets were like snow, minus the cold. It felt like laying on a marshmallow. Peeta compliantly lifted his hips when he was supposed to, folding his wings over his head to ward off the outside world. Submerging himself into a world where he could pretend that things were okay and weren't at all confusing and crippled and crazy.

Besides, this was his duty. This was what he was made for.

~FFG~

Peeta curled his finger under Temperance's chin, stroking the serrated scales along the dragon's back. It was dark out, the entire garden shrouded in darkness. Snow was sleeping, every second of it well deserved. Peeta had not wished to waken him and slipped out as quietly as he possibly
could. He couldn't resist visiting the dragon again. He adored the creature, even though he had barely gotten to know him.

It had been a risk to open the cage but it was a sin of its own to keep such a gorgeous being so trapped. Temperance, however, immediately took to Peeta. He crawled up Peeta's arm and took perch on his shoulder. When he straightened his arm, Temperance crawled back down and sat in Peeta's cupped hand. "You're so pretty," he whispered, his voice awed. The creature's green eyes were the only thing that stood out in the darkness and Peeta felt like he could use them as a beacon or a torch to guide him for the rest of his life.

Peeta sat cross legged in the grass, creating bridges with his arms for Temperance to scurry along. "What do you think about what Cato said?" he asked. "Do you think he was being honest?" Temperance didn't answer, of course. He did cock his head in understanding and flutter his wings. Peeta smiled and stroked the dragon's red scales with the pad of his thumb.

"I don't know what to think either, really," Peeta spoke with a hushed voice. He feared the consequences if Snow woke up and found that he had sneaked off. Fear was natural. He was supposed to fear the Lord. He was supposed to be terrified of God. Of Snow. Of what would be done to him if he disobeyed. "I used to think that everything Snow did was in our best interests. But... what happened tonight... Don't get me wrong, Tempera, Snow and I have done more than I care to admit. If there is anything I can do to lessen the burden on his shoulders I'd do it but... when I mentioned what Cato said about Lucifer and God being no different... His reaction was odd."

Temperance made a nest in Peeta's lap, nuzzling his head into the angel's torso and closing his eyes. Peeta stroked his new pets back from neck to tail affectionately. When he looked up, the stars shone in the sky like a million balls of fire. Temperance's claws softly curled into the waistband of his pants, two of the nails on the right paw scraping the skin of his stomach. Peeta winced but didn't mind the pain all that much. He deserved it, really, after what he'd done to Snow. He shouldn't have been so difficult. It was his duty to do whatever Snow asked of him, no matter what it was.

"Am I a bad angel, Tempera?" Peeta murmured. "Should I really be doubting our Lord? Why am I listening to Cato now, after so many years of fighting and arguing? Snow's right. He's a trickster. Even now that I know this, why am I still thinking about it? Tricksters make you believe things that aren't true. Think things that aren't real. Cato is a trickster. He couldn't possibly be telling the truth."

Temperance made a sound that resembled a purr. He crawled up Peeta's arm again and rested his head against the angel's cheek. Peeta couldn't resist smiling and stroked the dragon's wing the way he knew felt good. Tempera showed his appreciation by waving his tail, the appendage skimming Peeta's back as it moved.

"Why can't we live in an easier world, hmm?" Peeta sighed. He looked around at the empty garden and came to a conclusion: a difficult conclusion.

He'd have to talk to Cato again. He'd have to go to hell.
Chapter Summary

Peeta has some questions for Cato and there's only one place he can go to get the answers . . .

Chapter Three: Highway to Hell

Temperance wouldn't stop following Peeta. He tried to put the dragon back into his cage but the creature refused to go without a fight, squirming and biting and flapping his wings in protest. In the end, Peeta had left the cage door open, firmly ordering Temperance to stay where he was. Except Temperance wouldn't listen. Instead, he followed Peeta like a petted dog. Peeta tried to shake him off and shoo him away but Temperance was not to be ordered around. Peeta had no choice but to scoop the reptile up and bring it with him. Temperance settled down after this and happily sat on Peeta's shoulder as he flew back down to earth.

The entrance to hell was invisible to the mortal eye. It was located in the most unlikely of places. It was designed to be unexpected and it took many years for God's warriors to find it. It wasn't in a particularly evil area, nor was it particularly generic either. Satan built the entrance to his empire in a graveyard in Amsterdam. Of course, it wasn't obvious. If it were conspicuous, the humans would easily find it. Satan did his job of hiding his accomplishment so well that it took 500 years after the fall for the angels to figure out where it was.

Lamechial was the angel who found it in the end. She had been drawn to Amsterdam for some time, like something was drawing her towards it. Snow had created Lamechial to thwart deception in any shape or form. So when Amsterdam had this magnetic pull that stirred in Lamechial's gut, it was clear that something was up. She never entered hell itself. No angel has ever passed the gates of hell, the threat has been too great. She did, however, spot the mark of Satan—a skull and crossbones with huge ram's horns—had been carved into the entry gates of the graveyard.

It was raining in Amsterdam when Peeta arrived. The sky was a cool dark blue, a few lines of drizzle dripping miscellaneously in different areas. Peeta shivered and curled his wings around his shoulders to shield Temperance from the rain. He squawked in protest but Peeta ignored him, walking along the pier in the direction of the graveyard. The gates loomed over him like the grim reaper, growing bigger and bigger the closer he got. The cold seeped through the thin material of Peeta's clothes, prickling his skin like hundreds of needles. The closer they got, the quieter Temperance grew and by the time they were right in front of the gates, the dragon had grown completely silent and still. Peeta felt ill. His stomach turned like a cake mixer and his heart didn't feel like it was there, like it had been beating so fast that it just stopped.

Thankfully, it was so late that the streets were deserted. Not that Peeta would be visible to mortal eyes but he always felt uncertain travelling around when people were surrounding him. He just couldn't shake the feeling that someone could see him, even though that was impossible. He preferred being alone.

Satan's symbol was burned into the metal of the huge locked gates. Peeta had no idea how to enter, nor did he know what he would find if he did. He reached out with a shaky hand and traced the brand with his fingertips. Temperance whined unhappily, burying his muzzle behind Peeta's
neck. As soon as he'd finished tracing the final point of the ram's horns, the entire symbol burned like a fire. Peeta stepped back nervously, terrified of what he would encounter. Tracing the brand had been a hunch but Peeta wasn't surprised that it had worked: a lot of his hunches turned out to be true. Another gift Snow had bestowed upon him.

The ground shuddered like an earthquake were about to occur and the soil melted downwards into several jagged steps, like a staircase into the centre of the earth. Grey smoke seeped out from the ground and faintly, if you squinted, the glow of the fires bounced off the soil and stone. Peeta's stomach bottomed and he began to rethink his decision to do this. Did he really have the gumption to walk straight into hell? To become the first angel to do so?

A growl captured Peeta's attention and an animal charged up the stairs as soon as he located the sound. The animal had three heads and a dog-like shape. All three heads bared their teeth and growled, barking like crazy at Peeta and Temperance. The creature was so feral looking Peeta tripped backwards, landing on the ground and scrambling backwards fearfully as the dog growled at him ferociously. All six eyes were wild and brutal, each tooth a sharpened point that could easily rip flesh from the bone. Never mind not feeling his heart anymore, Peeta couldn't feel anything but his heart now, beating rapidly in his chest. It was so hard Peeta felt like it was going to burst out of his chest. He frantically searched for Temperance, relieved when he found his dragon still perched on his shoulder.

"Well lookie what we have here!"

Peeta jumped out of his skin, cupping his hand over Temperance's head to make sure that he didn't fall off his shoulder. His head snapped up to the source of the voice. A silhouette stood out against the moonlight, standing on the points at the top of the gate. Peeta couldn't mistake the outline anywhere, mostly because of the thin moving whip like shadow protruding from the back: it was a demon.

The demon jumped from the gate and free fell from the top. It landed right in front of the downward stairwell, crouching down onto one knee to take the brunt of the impact before straightening up again. "Cerberus, heel!" the demon snapped. The dog narrowed its eyes and snapped at Peeta one last time before sauntering back to its master's side. The demon laid his yellow eyes on Peeta and smirked. "Vision of God, what are you doing here?" he asked.

"Maalik," Peeta ground out, trying to keep a level head while he calmed his heartbeat again. Maalik guarded the gates of hell and was the master of Cerberus; the dog which had nearly bitten Peeta's face off.

"Call me Marvel," Maalik replied, leaning forward and offering his hand to Peeta. Peeta eyed the hand nervously and stayed where he was on the wet ground. "Come on, don't be so suspicious. I won't bite." A wolfish grin. "All the time anyways." Peeta scoffed but held his hand out for Marvel to grasp, using the leverage to yank himself off the ground.

"I want to see Cat-I mean, Belial," said Peeta.

Marvel grinned and patted one of Cerberus' heads. "Oh, I know. Cato told me you might drop by soon. Don't know why. I can only assume you've fallen for his winning charm." His voice was flat, like even he didn't believe what he'd just said. "Finally gotten tired of plain sex with old Snowy?"

Peeta grimaced. Even Temperance hissed angrily. "That's none of your business," he said, trying to take Snow's advice and stay patient with the demon.

Marvel made no attempt to hide his curiosity as his eyes drifted up and down Peeta's frame
critically. Peeta kept his poker face, reminding himself that lust was a sin. That everything this
demon did would be sinful. He had to expect it and anticipate when it was going to come. "Well,
Snow may be many things but at least he's got good taste." Marvel stepped closer, Cerberus in
close tow, and quirked an eyebrow. "It's not like you would be able to defend yourself. Unless
you want to fry like bacon of course."

"If you think the fear of a couple of burns will prevent me from defending myself then you are a
fool," Peeta hissed, losing his composure for a moment.

Marvel looked incredibly smug, every word seeming to slide off him like water off a wing. "I
knew there was a reason I liked you," he said. "If you had have been anyone else I doubt I would
have stopped Cerberus from tearing you and your . . . pet to pieces." At this, Cerberus barked, as
if confirming Marvel's statement. Peeta flinched but did not allow himself to lose his poker face.

"Then why didn't you?" he asked instead.

"I am not an idiot," Marvel responded sourly. "I know that if Cerberus mutilated you, just like he
has mutilated thousands of angels before you, we would have the wrath of the Lord befallen on us
before I could mutter the word 'oops'."

Peeta clenched his fists and fought to hide his fear. He hated interaction with demons of any kind
and every single time he spoke with one he felt like every second would be his last. Marvel's
admission almost made him smile, as he knew that deep down the demons feared God, no matter
how much they let on that they didn't.

"Do you think," Peeta said slowly, "that if God knew where I was right now, I would still be
standing before you?"

Marvel raised his eyebrows in interest. "Has the chick flown from the nest, finally?"

"I will not discuss this with anyone but Belial," Peeta answered.

Marvel laughed—a sound like nails scratching a blackboard—and began to walk away. "Belial is in
audience with Lucifer," he said. "I do not know when he will return." He stopped at the top of the
stairs and looked over his shoulder with the same egotistical smile on his face. "Come along,
Vision of God, if you feel you can handle it."

All of the air rushed out of Peeta's lungs and he inhaled deeply, steeling himself for what was to
come. Temperance whined, unhappy and completely unsettled, but didn't move from Peeta's
shoulder as he approached the steps which led downward into hell. Immediately, he was hit with
air as thick as syrup. It trapped itself in his throat and coated his trachea until every breath was
laboured. Peeta focused on Marvel, who was nothing but a silhouette in the distance.

"Afraid of getting lost?" Marvel's voice rang out. Peeta could barely hear him over the sound of
roaring flames that was getting louder and louder the further they descended. "Need me to hold
your hand?"

"Don't patronize me," Peeta spat back. He was making progress on his own just fine. Besides, it
wasn't like the entrance was an unsolvable maze. It was literally just a huge staircase made of rock
and ash leading downwards.

The descent took three hours in total. Peeta didn't feel the time pass as time became a subjective
thing in the dimensions of heaven and hell. What is three hours feels like half an hour. If Marvel
had not been there, Peeta might have considered saving some time and flying down but even if the
guard of hell wasn't around, the idea of having to open his wings in such a putrid environment
made him feel uneasy. So he stuck to simply travelling by foot, staying a couple of steps behind Marvel the entire journey.

What enfolded at the end of the stairs had to be the most horrifying image Peeta had ever seen. It truly looked like Lucifer had hollowed out the centre of the earth and created his kingdom there. The ground was jagged and rocky. Random spires of rock pointed upwards from the ground or hung down from overhanging shelters. Lava oozed in huge pools and the seemingly endless area seemed to be constantly alit with flames. It was everything Snow had warned Peeta about and more.

"Still think you can handle it?" asked Marvel.

Peeta wanted to be sick but he resolved not to show this weakness to Marvel. He drew himself up and said, "Yes. I can handle it."

Marvel scoffed. "It's your funeral," he commented before beginning to walk again and gesturing for Peeta to follow.

Everywhere Peeta looked was devastation. Whether it be of environment or human beings; everything was just so malodorous. Only one thing didn't match the horror stories Snow told. "Do you still torture sinful humans?" he asked.

"That would certainly be foolish," Marvel scoffed. "I mean, since they are our soldiers and all that." He gave Cerberus a kick when the animal paused at the foot of a rock spire. "No. We haven't tortured sinful humans for thousands and thousands of years."

Peeta looked around with a confused frown. "Then what do you do all day? When not acting out Lucifer's . . . foul wishes?"

Marvel smirked and shrugged. "We sin."

Really, Peeta knew he should have expected an answer like that. The amount of sin he could sense in the one area was so compact and stuffed he felt like he could pass out any second. The deeper they went, the more demons started appearing. Some would be stuffing their faces on huge amounts of food. Others would be fighting; screaming and punching and beating until they were bloody. Marvel casually mentioned in passing that all wounds heal and it's the best way they could think of to deal with spats. Peeta didn't understand why they couldn't just talk it out. Apologize. Forgive. Was that really so difficult?

People hung from nooses tied around stalagmites, choking and gasping for air. Demons stood below them, laughing and poking the poor souls with sticks that had fire lit at the end of it. Marvel explained that it was incitation for sinful humans. Lucifer had to stay as a fearful entity, not someone who let people who do wrong go free without any form of punishment whatsoever.

"I don't understand how you can live a life like this," Peeta muttered.

"I don't understand how you can live a life like yours," Marvel responded, not even turning around as he spoke. "It sounds so boring."

Peeta did not care for what Marvel thought of him or the life that he led. He knew that he was the one in the right and that was all he needed.

Marvel took Peeta to a secluded corner. Stalactites crossed the area out, a clear message of 'go away'. Peeta felt the urge to do so but promptly smothered it, telling himself that he had gotten this far and he had to go all the way. Marvel was unfazed by the presence of the stalactites and climbed through the gaps like they weren't there at all. Peeta swallowed his fear and followed,
making sure that Temperance didn't get hurt along the way.

On the other side, there was a much more secluded area. It seemed almost like a room, due to the stalactites closing it off like a door. There were many demons roaming around but that did not capture Peeta's attention. Positioned in front of a waterfall of lava was a huge throne made of bones. Seated upon the bone throne, was Lucifer himself.

Clearly the fallen angel had the same thoughts as Snow and took a human vessel to protect people from the effect that his true form could have on them. The only thing that separated him from the other demons were the huge ram's horns on top of his head, growing out from his hair like gnarled tumours.

"Lord Lucifer, I've brought a present," said Marvel, approaching the hybrid as if there was nothing to fear. Peeta followed more hesitantly, fearing that if he even took a wrong step he'd be blasted to dust.

"I know," Lucifer mused. His voice was so deep Peeta practically felt it in his bones. "I smelt the goodness the moment the stairs opened." His thick, black eyes fell on Peeta and he smirked, "It's a poisonous stench."

Peeta almost laughed at this. He was the one that smelled bad? The whole of hell smelled like decaying bodies! Then again, Lucifer probably loved that smell, since he practically bathed in it every second of the day.

"The Vision of God has come to seek audience with Belial," Marvel explained.

"Belial?" Lucifer burst out laughing. "Of course. I knew Cato was not above using his powers for personal gain. So, little angel, what did he do to you to make you fall under his spell?"

"Nothing," Peeta said. "I've come of my own free will."

"Hmm," Lucifer hummed. He tapped his chin thoughtfully before announcing, "How do I know you're not just here to spy on us?"

"You can ask Ca-I mean, Belial. I'm sure he'd tell you himself how he told me to come find him," Peeta insisted. He feared what would be done to him if they suspected him of being a spy. In hell itself, any form of punishment was possible and he wished to die an honourable death. Not a pathetic one in the pits of hell.

"Belial has been sent out on a message for me," Lucifer replied. "Of course, it's never been said that I'm not one to be hospitable. You can wait for him to arrive and confirm your claims, if you wish." When it became clear that Peeta wasn't going to leave, Lucifer continued, a little impressed by the angel's bravery, "How is Snow nowadays anyway?"

"I . . . okay, I guess," Peeta replied. He was weary of Lucifer and wasn't sure how much he would be allowed to give away. "Same as usual, I suppose."

"The angel is blushing." The voice behind him made him jump out of his skin. A blonde girl appeared around his side, her eyes an unnatural scarlet red. Her lips curled up into an evil smirk. She reached out to try to touch Temperance but the dragon snapped at her. She leaned back a little with an unimpressed scowl. "Does the Vision of God find something we've said particularly disconcerting?"

"Don't touch him," Peeta said defensively. He backed away from the imposing blonde but bumped into another demon girl who stood directly behind him. This particular demon laughed and pushed him back between them. Temperance crawled around Peeta's back to sit on his other
shoulder and spat at her.

"I just thought the angels were always pink," she said, her voice thick as mud.

"Now, now Clove. Glimmer. Behave yourselves," Lucifer warned. "Don't tease our guest." The girls tutted but moved away. Marvel took the blonde one's spot. Peeta glanced back at Lucifer, brushing his hair out of the way of his face and folding his wings close to his body to keep them from harm. He'd singed his feathers a little after bumping into the demon girl but he felt no pain.

The blonde demon approached Lucifer and climbed the steps leading to the throne. She sliced her wrist with her fingernail, liberating a goblet from a small table beside her master and pressing the cut against the lip of it. Her blood slid down the glass and pooled inside. She held this position until the cup was completely filled. After this she handed it to Lucifer and took a seat by the foot of the bone throne.

"Would you care for any refreshments Vision of God?" asked Lucifer.

Peeta scrunched his nose up. "No thank you," he replied. "And I'd prefer if you called me Haziel."

"Why? Does the Vision of God not like to admit that he's the Vision of God?" Lucifer enquired, cocking his head in curiosity.

"It's not my name," Peeta answered. "It's a title . . . A rumour."

"A rumour is something that is not true. You are the Vision of God, aren't you?" Lucifer's eyes felt like they were drilling right into Peeta's soul. Pushing everything away until he was staring at him in his most vulnerable form. Peeta held his chin up and feigned indifference. "You are a vessel of God's sin. That's why he designed you in the first place."

"God designed me to work by his side," Peeta growled.

Lucifer laughed. "Very close by his side, as far as we down here are aware."

Peeta felt his resolve falter. He clenched his fists tight and forced himself to keep the placid mask on his face. Snow told him to stay strong. To never let the demons waver him. He just had to wait this out until Cato came back. "I don't have to talk to you about that," he said.

"Of course you don't," said Lucifer. "Won't stop me, however, from talking about it."

"And you think some words are going to make me fear you?" Peeta questioned.

"I just find it so fascinating how quick Snow was to break his own rules," Lucifer explained. He leaned back in his throne and sipped the blood from the goblet, intertwining his spare hand into the blonde demon who sat by his feet's hair. "You know what they say: 'You never know what you want until you've had it'. I've never had an angel before. I wonder what it's like . . ."

"I can assure you that it is no different to anyone else," Peeta answered.

"I'd say it's incredibly boring," Marvel pointed out with an exaggerated yawn. "Missionary sex with the Lord God. Even saying it is painfully monotonous." He poked Peeta's arm with his tail. "What uptight angels like you need is to be bent over and fucked hard. A little bit of foreplay probably wouldn't hurt either."

"Your thoughts are dirty and sinful," Peeta muttered. "Lust is one of the seven deadliest. Just like greed and wrath and envy. Although, I wouldn't expect any less from you lot."
Lucifer seemed constantly amused by Peeta's responses. "You mean the seven deadliest that Snow has broken? That he continues to break every night he takes you to bed?"

"He doesn't take me to bed," Peeta snapped.

"Liar," the blonde demon snapped back, her voice cracking like lightning. The conversation was taking an uncomfortable direction and Peeta willed Cato to return quickly. He didn't know how long he would be able to listen to such sinful accusations. "I can see into your memories," she accused. "Snow takes you to bed every night and sheaths his sword, so to speak. What happened to "thou shall not bear false witness" anyhow?"

"Shut up," Peeta said through gritted teeth.

"What? He doesn't fuck you then kick you out of the bed, does he?" Marvel snorted.

"Sounds a bit harsh," the other demon girl commented.

"He doesn't . . . we don't . . ." Peeta was growing flustered, not knowing what to say to get the demons to shut up. He knew it would be difficult to deal with them but he hadn't thought they were going to be this intrusive. "Don't talk about our Lord in such a gruesome manner!"

"'Our' Lord?" The blonde demon scoffed. "I think you mean your Lord. You're the only one in this entire realm who chose his side."

Peeta flushed in anger. Temperance dug his claws into his shoulder, as if reminding him to stay calm and remember what Snow told him about keeping a level head. If Cato didn't return fast then Snow would wake up and realize that Peeta was gone. And Peeta hadn't an excuse as to why he would be in Amsterdam. Not yet anyway.

Lucifer, who had been listening to the argument with great joy, finally decided to speak up. "So I'm guessing you don't enjoy the nights you spend with Snow?" he asked curiously.

Peeta froze in his tracks. How was he supposed to answer that? If he said yes, it would defeat the whole purpose of his argument but if he said no it would make Snow seem inadequate in some way. "I do whatever I can to please my Lord," he answered stiffly.

Marvel laughed. "Oh I'm sure you do," he said.

"And you don't find any form of pleasure of your own?" Lucifer enquired.

"I . . . uh . . . em . . . I do whatever I can to please my Lord," Peeta repeated helplessly.

Lucifer tutted. "That doesn't sound fun at all," he said. "If you feel you are missing out I can send for my many incubi and have them show you what it feels like to be fucked by a real man."

"That's really not necessary," Peeta stammered, reversing a little to put as much distance humanly possible between himself and the Lord of Hell.

"It's really no trouble," Lucifer purred. "Or, if you prefer to see the man you're being pleasured by, I can order Marvel to do it. I'm sure he wouldn't mind."

"I'm sure you're right but it's really not necessary," Peeta insisted. "I would rather not"-

"Commit adultery?" Lucifer smirked. "We won't tell if you won't."

"Sex is a sin!" Peeta blurted out. "I will not sin just because you are a bunch of . . . of . . .
troublemakers!"

Lucifer quirked an eyebrow. "But you will sin in the name of your God?"

"No! I . . ." Peeta's back came in contact with the wall and he yelped as his wings scraped the rock. "You are a pack of manipulators! I will not fall under your spell!" He decided he had had enough but when he turned to the exit to escape, the stalactites seemed to have gotten thicker, preventing any form of leave.

Lucifer sighed and slid down his seat so his chin pressed into his chest. "I'm bored with the blond beauty now," he said. "Marvel, give me a show, would you?"

Marvel's yellow eyes had an evil gleam to them. "Gladly," he purred.

Panic immediately began to sit in. Peeta had expected an attack, but not one of this nature. However when Marvel got too close for comfort, Temperance screeched and spat a fireball at him. It made the demon back up but the fire caused no harm to him. He cocked his head at the creature in curiosity. He swivelled around to face Lucifer and asked, "Can I get rid of the dragon first?"

There was a pause. Lucifer then nodded. "Yes. Actually, I've never owned a dragon myself. I'd quite like him as a pet."

"Don't touch him!" Peeta screamed, grabbing Temperance from his shoulder and holding him close to his chest. "He's a gift from my Lord, you can't take him from me!"

The other demon girl (Clove?) and a bystander grabbed Peeta's arms, forcing him to let go of Temperance. If their Master wanted something, they did everything in their power to get it. Thankfully Temperance did not fall, he hovered uncertainly between Marvel and Peeta, unaware of what was going on. Peeta thrashed against his captor's hold on him, kicking out when Marvel reached out to touch his dragon.

"What the hell did I just walk into?"

Peeta looked to the source of the voice desperately. Cato stood at the entrance, the stalactites no longer thick and back to their original thin form.

"We've just been entertaining your little angel friend," answered Marvel.

"Cato, tell them you told me to come, please!" Peeta exclaimed.

Cato quirked an eyebrow. "Of course I did."

Lucifer chuckled. He waved Clove and the other demon away. Peeta held his hand out towards Temperance, relieved when the reptile settled in again. Despite the anger broiling inside of him and his heart which was beating like a drum in his chest, Peeta looked at his feet and mumbled, "I forgive you all, even if you don't ask for it."

Marvel snorted before exploding into hysterical laughter.

Cato glanced at Lucifer unsurely. "What have you been doing?"

"Were we being unhospitable, Vision of God?" asked Lucifer.

Peeta continued to stare at his feet and muttered, "Of course not."

"Looking a little traumatized," Cato noted.
"Lucifer was extremely hospitable," Peeta said, meeting Cato's eyes and allowing Temperance to crawl up his arm and onto his shoulder. "Of course, anything they did that may have made me uncomfortable in any way is forgivable. As is everything."

"As is everything," Marvel mimicked, walking away from Peeta and plopping down onto the ground.

"Do not forgive seven times but seventy seven times," Peeta hissed back.

Marvel rolled his eyes but didn't comment. Glimmer stretched her thin legs out in front of her and balanced herself on her elbows. "So if Marvel had went ahead, stole your pest and pounded you into the ground you would still forgive him?" she asked.

"Okay, Glimmer," Cato said. "I think that's enough."

Peeta inhaled to smooth his frayed nerves. He smiled tightly and nodded. "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also," he stated.

Glimmer rolled her eyes. "This is why I turned my back on Snow. Anyone tries to touch what's mine will not have a dick to think with again," she said.

"You quote the words of an unstable son," Lucifer smirked.

"Snow's son is stable," Peeta snapped. He closed his head and stroked Temperance's head to calm himself down. "His words are law. I don't blame you for your misguidance, obviously." These demons were simply lost souls. Sad souls who had taken a wrong path and got twisted along the way. Peeta wished he could help them but there was nothing he could do but forgive. Always forgive.

"Romulus," Cato said, having grown tired of hearing the demons argue with Peeta, "I invited the Vision of God to our realm. We have . . . Business to attend to."

Lucifer cocked his head, grabbing Glimmer by the hair and forcing her head back. He upturned the goblet and threw the rest of the blood down her throat, pushing her away from the bone throne when the cup was empty. Glimmer rose from the ground as if nothing had happened, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand and joining Clove and the bystander in their viewing of the unfolding events.

"What sort of business?" demanded Lucifer.

"Uh . . ." Cato scratched his head and frowned. "Bestial matters. The Vision is currently under my spell. He doesn't know he is but that is my doing." Peeta stared at Cato incredulously. What in the world was he talking about? "You know how it is. Thousands of years of fighting and eventually you get tired of the tension. All I ask is that the information doesn't leave this room."

Lucifer pondered this. A moment later his fleetingly serious expression broke into a smile and he slapped Cato's back in approval. "We don't blame you," he said. "If anyone deserves a break, it's you. Go on then, enjoy the enchanted angel. Just remember not to leave any marks or Snow will be on our asses like a fleet of mosquitoes."

"Thank you Master." Cato bowed before striding towards Peeta. Clove gave Peeta a push, as if Cato wasn't moving fast enough, and the angel was about to demand what the heck the demon was one about when Cato grabbed his arm and hissed, "You'll play along if you know what's good for you," into his ear. After speaking, he closed the distance and bit Peeta's ear, making it look like that had been his intention all along. Peeta shrieked in shock and tried to pull away, but
Cato's grip was iron clad.

When he pulled away, Cato dragged Peeta to the entrance which also served as an exit, pushing him through the gap before leading him to a dark alcove along one of the many clay walls.

"What the heck was that?" Peeta shouted. Cato slapped his hand over the smaller blond's mouth, silencing him. Peeta flushed with rage, wishing he was allowed to touch demons so he could punch Cato in the mouth for ever thinking it was okay to put his mouth anywhere near his ears.

"Do you think Lucifer would have let you out of that room if he had known that you were here to discuss matters that could seem quite mutinous?" Cato hissed. Temperance jumped forward and bit Cato's hand, making the demon shout in surprise and release Peeta's mouth.

"Could there not have been something more truthful you could have told?" asked Peeta. He gently cupped Temperance's head, protecting him in case Cato decided that he did not like how the dragon had bitten him.

"Like what?!" Cato exclaimed.

"I don't know!" Peeta threw back. "Just . . . not such a wretched lie."

"Insinuating sex is not wretched! Just because you're scared of it does not make it twisted. If sex was supposed to be a sin, why did Snow create it as a form of human reproduction? Why not just invent cloning or duplication like bacteria?!" Cato ranted. "You angels are so superficial sometimes it's unbelievable."

Peeta scowled. He realized with an uncomfortable twinge that their bodies were pressed together because of the small space available in the alcove. Peeta felt self-consciousness hit him in a wave and he pressed himself further against the wall, sucking in so that he wasn't touching Cato anymore. Angels didn't have a need for clothes and most of the males walked around with nothing but a pair of pants on. Peeta had never taken to his however and cut holes into the backs of some t-shirts and tank tops so that he had something to wear.

"I'm already regretting coming here," Peeta warned. "Don't make me leave completely."

Cato rolled his eyes but conceded. "Do you believe me then?" he asked. "What made you change your mind?"

Peeta didn't meet Cato's eyes. He stared at a point in the distance and set his jaw. "Snow wouldn't listen to me when I asked him about breaking the seven deadliest. He got especially defensive when I . . ."

"When you . . . ?" Cato prompted.

Peeta closed his eyes and exhaled. "When I told him I didn't want to have sex with him."

"I see," was all Cato answered with.

"Snow is a good man," Peeta said. "But I don't know what to think of him anymore." The idea alone made tears well up in Peeta's eyes. He shuddered and forced himself to calm down. "I don't know what to think of anything anymore."

Cato, not sure what to do when the realization that Peeta was crying hit, reached out to brush the tears away. He was stopped short when Temperance hissed and flapped his wings at him. "Uh . . . does Snow know you're here right now?" he asked unsurely.
Peeta shook his head. "No."

"Then you'd better get back to him."

"Aren't we going to talk about what we're going to do?"

"Lucifer has clearly put you through enough," Cato mused. "I think you should return to your realm. Spend any longer here and you might begin to lose your mind. We'll meet again on common ground. Earth. Next time Snow sends you out on a mission. For now . . . relax and try not to focus on the possibility of the system falling apart."

Peeta laughed dryly. "Which you say as if it's easy."

"It is. Just do what you normally do." Cato leaned towards Peeta's ear again (being careful to avoid Temperance this time) and murmured, "And do us both a favour and pretend I've just fucked you. The last thing we need right now is the other demons getting suspicious of me." Peeta leaned away, momentarily fearing that the demon would bite him again. He was relieved when Cato moved back without putting his teeth anywhere near his skin.

"How do you looked like you've had intercourse?" Peeta frowned. "Is there a particular look?"

Cato cocked his head and narrowed his eyes. He glanced at Temperance and Peeta also looked at the reptile. "If I touch you for a second, would that thing attack?"

"If you mean would he attack then probably," Peeta answered. He stroked underneath Temperance's chin and said, "He's a friend. Don't hurt him," to the dragon.

Cato, satisfied that the dragon wouldn't bite him again, mussed Peeta's hair with his hands. "Forgive me for this but it's the only way," he said. Peeta was about to ask what he meant but the question was answered before it was asked in the form of a hand being pressed against the side of his head. Immediately Peeta's blood heated up and he gasped in surprise, his veins feeling like they had been set on fire. Almost as quickly as the feeling had arrived, it vanished again.

"That should put some colour in your cheeks," Cato mused.

Peeta touched his face and winced when it felt warm. "What was that for?" he demanded.

"Would you rather I kissed you?" Cato smirked.

Peeta pulled a face. "No!" he scoffed. The very idea was . . . was . . . you know!

"Go on Vision of God," Cato said giving Peeta room to exit the alcove. "Oh and you'd better limp a little. I'm known to be a bit of a rough lover."

The annoying imbecile was enjoying this! "We're finished pretty fast," Peeta replied. "Did someone take on more than they could handle?"

"Trust me, if I was given the chance with an angel I would take my damn time with him," Cato answered, his dark eyes gleaming with something Peeta couldn't decipher. He steered Peeta by the shoulders and gently pushed him out of the alcove, hoping the angel was a better actor than he was liar.

Now all he had to do was convince Romulus that nothing was going on.
Angel in Chains

Chapter Summary

Cato convinces Romulus that there's no need to worry about Peeta while the angel himself returns to heaven, where he is confronted by Snow...

Chapter Four

Cato watched Peeta leave, pleased with how the angel took his advice on board and actually limped his way across the fiery landscape. The Vision of God reached the stairs and ascended up, disappearing into the smoky gloom. Cato couldn't decipher Peeta. The youthful angel was far too complex. For someone who had constant sex with the man he idolized-sex that was obviously lost on him-Peeta was so innocent he could be mistaken for a virgin. Someone like Peeta wouldn't last an hour in hell without being attacked. Innocence never lasted in the pits. It had to be dirtied.

Cato returned to Romulus’ throne room, slipping past the stalactites to enter. Romulus still sat on his throne, watching with indifference as Glimmer and Clove dry humped on the floor. All heads turned to Cato when he returned. Even Glimmer and Clove stopped their activities upon his arrival.

"How was it?" asked Marvel. The yellow eyed demon lounged on a piece of rock that was curved like a settee. He lifted a cup while he spoke, a silent question of want, and Cato shook his head. The only blood he drank was his own.

A part of Cato wished that he didn't have to pretend that he fucked Peeta. There was something about the angel's purity that he didn't want to have to tarnish. However, if he had to, he'd do Peeta justice. "Unbelievable," he said. "I'd nearly go as far to say the best I've ever had."

Romulus raised his eyebrows, clearly intrigued. "Really now? It didn't seem to take you too long."

"I opened a time pocket so that I wouldn't miss much of the court," Cato lied. "It's been a good hour or so from my point of view."

Marvel smirked. "I knew angels were sex demons in disguise. Especially that Vision boy. Snow made him for a reason and I doubt it was for his stellar personality. Besides, it's inhuman in itself to have such innocuous eyes but such a taut ass."

"Everything about that kid is taut," Clove muttered. She tipped her head back and moaned breathily as Glimmer took one of her nipples into her mouth. "The stupid angel is constantly strung up. You wouldn't think Snow gives him everything he needs for a happy life."

"Certain people have certain definitions of happy," Cato pointed out. Peeta was well aware that he had the tools for a happy, relaxed life, but Cato knew that the Vision of God just couldn't bring himself to be so. Not when everything he believed in was in question. "It just happens that Peeta hasn't found his yet."

Romulus straightened in his throne. The room was silent, apart from Clove's loud exclamations of pleasure. Cato had grown accustomed to such displays and he didn't even spare the horny girls a second glance. All of his attention was focused on Romulus, sensing that something was wrong.
"Peeta?" Lucifer asked in curiosity.

"Uh, yeah," Cato said hesitantly. "That's Haziel's other name."

"His cursory name, yes," Romulus confirmed. "Funny. Haziel almost called you by your cursory name too. I think he thought I didn't notice."

Cato internally cursed. "I have no respect for the angel, why should I care what name I call him?" he replied.

"Indeed." Romulus sounded unconvinced. He threaded his fingers together to form an arch and held them below his nose. "Tell us what it was like to fuck an angel. We're all curious. Spare no detail." He glanced at the fornicating demons. "Okay girls, cut it out, this should be more entertaining that anything you two whores could put together."

Clove scrunched her nose up and pushed Glimmer away. The blonde demon yelped in surprise and tumbled onto her side. She puffed out an annoyed huff and sat up straight, folding her arms on top of her bare knees.

Cato resisted the urge to pull a face. He didn't want to make up lies about Peeta, certainly not of this nature, even if it would be far from the first time he had thought of Peeta that way. On his back; no clothes on; finding that spot on the boy's wings that would make him sing. But they were fantasies. Cato in no way wanted to actually voice his dirty fantasies and ruin Peeta's reputation. Romulus and the rest of the court would easily believe anything he told them. All the things Cato liked to imagine about Peeta in the seclusion of his own room.

But they were simply fantasies. Cato didn't honestly expect Peeta to purr like a kitten when his wings were stroked or gasp like a schoolgirl when a tongue teased his skin. Besides, Cato didn't want to fuck Peeta. It was just something he occasionally thought about in his spare time. The angel and the demon were a couple of steps away from mortal enemies and the only thing holding them back from that was the now common ground that they had found regarding the flaws in the system.

"It's all very hazy," he said, waving around his face as if to emphasize the point. "I really can't remember that much."

Glimmer scoffed into her arms. "Couldn't have been that good."

"Are you shy Belial?" Romulus challenged.

"What? No!" Cato scoffed. He rolled his eyes and asked, "Aren't we supposed to be discussing more pressing matters? Such as what we're going to do when our numbers are large enough to start the war? When is enough enough? When can we wage war?"

Romulus blew a lazy raspberry and leaned back in his seat. "We are close," he admitted. Cato exhaled in relief when Lucifer took the bait of distraction. "But not close enough. Be patient children, we'll get there."

"Will we?" Clove asked. "What if Snow gains an advantage in the pause between?"

"He's too busy drinking and fucking to notice a pause between of any description," said Marvel.

"Hmmm," said Romulus. "We must still tread will caution. We may not heed the 7 deadliest but what is the one I have always told you to beware of?"

"Pride, sir," Glimmer answered.
"And why's that?"

"Never be too proud because it is opening a door that welcomes trouble," Cato said.

Romulus had told them when they were infants who first fell-when their wings were ripped from their backs and a tail was stitched to the base-that they were free. Free from every restriction bar one. Pride. When you are too proud, it means you are welcoming Karma. The demons never flaunted their winning in the angels' faces. They knew that if they did, Lady Karma would turn her nose up and use her control of fate to swing an opportunity to the angels'. The only entity allowed to be proud was Lady Karma herself. You never got on the bad side of Lady Karma.

"Last thing we need is Karma on our backs," Romulus muttered.

Karma had blessed the demons in the past by favouring their side in the war. She had given them the science they needed to make their skin poison to holy contact and had given them incentives every time someone was about to do wrong; hence why Cato always managed to get there before Peeta did. Karma was a fickle woman though and if you annoyed her even in the slightest, then she would turn on you so fast you wouldn't have a chance to realize what you'd done wrong.

"Do you think Lady Karma has favoured us because of Snow's hypocrisy?" asked Marvel.

"Could be," Romulus answered. "Although it's never been sure. All we know is that she is on our side for now but that can easily change."

Cato knew that all too well. Everything hung in the balance. Despite the fact that the demons were winning, everything was still equally weighed. The slightest tip could make everything topple over, meaning no victors what-so-ever. Meaning every death thus far would have been for nothing.

Meaning everything would have been for nothing.

Everything.

~FFG~

Peeta tip-toed into Snow's room, relieved to find that his God was still sleeping. He'd just spent the past half an hour bribing Temperance so that he'd go into his cage and let him lock it. He owed the reptile three mice and a hunk of rabbit meat. Peeta stripped as quickly as he could, wishing that Snow didn't have such a good memory and wouldn't remember that he hadn't been wearing anything when they had fallen asleep after . . . after he relieved his pressure. Slipping into the bed without waking him up posed a problem but Peeta thought he managed okay. He lay on his stomach and let his wings fall over them both the way they always did, shielding his God from any threat that may present itself.

As soon as he'd settled again, Snow murmured, "Where did you go?"

Peeta closed his eyes in disgust. Of course Snow would know. He probably smelled the guilt off of him. "I went for a walk," he whispered. This wasn't untrue, as he walked through Amsterdam to get to the gates of hell. "I couldn't sleep, sir." This was also true. The whole reason Peeta had went outside to sit with Temperance had been because he couldn't sleep.

Snow sleepily reached across and fingered the joint between Peeta's shoulder blade and wing. The angel shuddered, hating how much he liked it. "Try and get some sleep," Snow mumbled.

"I'll try, sir," Peeta replied. He tried to relax but everything that had just happened in hell made this
extremely difficult. His muscles refused to co-operate and he stayed coiled like a spring. Snow was trying to be helpful, thumbing the feathers at the beginning of his wing joint and rubbing the slop of his back absentmindedly. It wasn't working though, the touch only reminded Peeta of what Marvel was going to do to him.

"Haziel," Snow murmured. Peeta glanced at his God but couldn't meet his eyes as they were closed.

"Sir?" he whispered.

"Do you love me?" Snow asked.

"Of course I do."

"Do you though? Why can I smell your guilt?" Snow insisted. "You reek of it." If Peeta could get any tenser, that single statement made it possible. "You aren't lying to me Haziel, are you?"

Peeta's heart pounded in his chest. He wasn't lying, so it should have been easy enough to deny that he was lying. However, the question had taken him so off guard that he stumbled over the words in his mouth. "I never lie, sir," Peeta stammered. "I'd never... certainly not to you... If I did my mouth would burn and my teeth would crumble away..."

Snow's face was plain and expressionless. Eyes still closed. "Haziel," he gritted out between his teeth, "I am God, and there is something you aren't telling me. I demand you tell me immediately what it is."

"My Lord, I'd never"-Peeta hissed as a burn built up in his mouth. He couldn't finish his sentence.

"Swallow your lies Haziel," Snow snapped.

Peeta hated that Snow designed him this way. All the other angels had to do was swear their fidelity but they could get away with the odd lie, even though most chose not to. Snow wanted to make sure that he could trust the angel he modelled with his heart and soul, hence why Peeta couldn't lie to Snow even if he wanted to. Minor things were okay. Big things though? He'd be lucky if he had a mouth left to speak through if he lied to Snow. "I'd never lie to you," Peeta insisted. "There's no reason to be paranoid."

"Paranoid?" Snow's eyes snapped open. "I am never paranoid. I know everything about you Haziel and if you think for one second that I cannot tell when you're being distrustful then you are deluding yourself."

That was the thing. Peeta hadn't been lying. He hadn't exactly been truthful either. Snow shouldn't be so aggravated. All he could spot was lies, not statements with bits left out. Why was he acting so unsure and paranoid? Was Snow worried about something? Doubting things in some way?

Peeta heaved himself off the mattress, sitting with the covers pooled around him. Snow stayed lying on his back, barely flinching at the movement. "You're my Lord God, I'd never lie to you," he said. "I will always be honest with you."

Snow's arm snapped out and he clenched his fist, pulling the bewildered angel towards him with an unseen force. It felt like two hands had dug into Peeta's shoulders and dragged him forward but in reality Snow had not laid a hand on him. "You are choosing your words carefully, I can sense it. However, skirting around something does not make it invisible. Tell me what you're hiding Haziel or so help me I'll-"

"All who draw the sword will die by the sword," Peeta quickly said, hoping to remind Snow of
his son's own teachings.

"Don't you dare quote my own son at me!" Snow snapped. "I know his teachings just fine."

"Sometimes I think you need reminding," Peeta murmured.

"Hazel, you're trying my patience."

"Why can't you ever trust me? All you ever do is use the link between us to catch me out. I'm modelled in your image, my Lord, why would you believe that I'd have any reason to go against you?" Peeta insisted. There was a telepathic link that Snow designed to connect them, meaning that he knew everything about Peeta. When he was lying; where he was even when he wasn't with him; what he felt; wanted; needed. Really, because of the link, Peeta had no freedom.

"You are an angel in chains, Hazel. I look into your eyes and all I see is a desire to break free of me," Snow explained. "Not that I would ever allow that to happen. I try my best with you but it seems that there's nothing I can do to earn your love."

"I love you with all I am, my Lord," said Peeta.

Snow shook his head. He released his fist and kissed Peeta fiercely. It wasn't like the sort of kiss he had ever gotten before and Peeta felt like every ounce of breath in his lungs was being sucked out. He weakened against Snow and almost felt like he was withering under God's touch. Snow pulled back and Peeta's mouth felt dry as a desert. The angel felt his heart slowing down and he clutched his chest desperately, coming to the conclusion that this was it; this was how he was going to die. At the mercy of his Lord God.

"Remember that your life is in my hands, Hazel," Snow warned. "I can take it away with something as simple as a kiss." He then grabbed Peeta's jaw and forced his mouth open, breathing air back into him. Actually, it felt more like life was being breathed back into him. Peeta gasped in as much sweet oxygen as he could and rolled off of Snow in an attempt to re-inflate his debilitated body.

"I'm . . . sorry . . . my Lord . . ." Peeta wheezed, coughing and spluttering as his lungs fighting to grow accustomed to having air to respire again. "I didn't . . . mean to . . . offend . . ."

Snow slowly rose from his lazy position on the bed. He looked down his nose at Peeta, the way he always tended to do when he was annoyed. "You are special, Hazel, more important to me than any other soldier in this army. Yet you squander yourself and your abilities on cheap tricks. If I ever find out that you're not telling me something again I will not be as lenient in my punishment, understand?"

God was wrathful. God was vengeful. Peeta knew this. He had been punished by Snow before. The more important question was, if this was Snow being lenient, how unmerciful would he be when he wasn't being lenient? He had nearly killed Peeta just then, stole the breath from his lungs with one simple trivial kiss. What could possibly be worse than that?

"I'm sorry," Peeta insisted. He didn't know what else to say.

Snow was not pleased nor enraged by his angel's response. "Just don't do it again," he spat.

"I won't," answered Peeta. He wanted to curl up into a ball and hide in the comforting sheath of his wings. Except when in Snow's presence, there was nowhere to hide. Snow dragged him back to bed; forced him to act like there was nothing wrong. Like the past ten to fifteen minutes had been a horrible nightmare. Just like he always did.
Cold lips touched his bare shoulder. Peeta closed his eyes and fell asleep to a symphony of whispered sweet nothings under toned with warning.

Do not cross me or I shall break you.

Peeta wondered if helping Cato was all that sinful after all.
Peeta sneaks away from Snow again and meets Cato behind his back. The demon has an idea of how to get the Lord off of the angel's back . . .

Chapter Five: Liquid Metal

Peeta hated that he was making a habit out of sneaking away from Snow. The only time the Lord couldn't tell where Peeta was when he was sleeping, so the next night Peeta slipped out of bed and crept away. He had to talk to Cato again about all of this. He didn't know if he could do it or not. Lucifer would be able to sense that Peeta was on earth and immediately assume that it was because Snow had sensed evil about to be done. Then, according to the pattern anyway, he would send Cato to the same place. All Peeta had to do was get down to a spot on earth and talk to Cato before Snow woke up, which thankfully wouldn't be for another few hours.

When Peeta landed on earth, Cato was already there. Typical. The demons seemed to be ahead in everything. This particular demon was frowning, leaning against the side of the Eiffel Tower as if it were nothing but a park bench. "What is it? What's wrong?" he asked.

"I can't do this," Peeta whisper-hissed. "Snow will find out. He knows everything about me. He'll kill me. Or worse. I don't know . . . Just don't make me do this. I can't betray him, he'll kill me for it!"

Cato was patient with Peeta and his panicking and waited for him to calm down a little before speaking. "How does he know everything about you?" he asked.

Peeta strummed his temple. "This stupid link. He'll know when I'm with you and what we're plotting. He already has doubts about my loyalty. I will not die at the hands of my own creator, Cato! It won't take long before he figures out that I'm sneaking off at night so that he won't hear us . . ."

"This link, is it telepathic?" Cato enquired.

"No, it's physical, can't you see the metal fishing hook tied around my ankle connecting me to Snow?" Peeta demanded sarcastically. The memory of all air escaping his lungs returned to him and he frantically ran his fingers through his hair. "He's going to kill me. He's going to crucify me and stick me in his garden like a plant as a warning to anyone else who dares to cross him."

Cato raised his eyebrows. "Snow sounds more sadistic than Romulus."

Peeta scowled. "I may be giving you a chance with this barmy plan but don't talk ill of Snow or I will leave."

"You're so confusing. One second it's: 'he's gonna crucify me!' then the next second it's: 'don't talk ill of Snow!' Jeez, make up your mind, would you?" Cato took in Peeta's clear state of hysteria and sighed. "Look, I may know a guy who can break this link but you have to be prepared for whatever aftermath this may cause between yourself and Snow."
Peeta stared at Cato, chest heaving a little from his frenzy. "Snow will know if the link has been broken," he said to Cato.

"But he won't know where you are or what you're doing anymore," Cato added.

"But . . . he's my Lord . . ." Peeta trailed off unsurely. Something leathery nuzzled his cheek and he jumped, just remembering that he had taken Temperance with him again. "I should be standing by him. I love him and he loves me. I shouldn't be . . ."

"Peeta," Cato said, the firmness in his tone making Peeta fall silent. "I'm going to ask you something and I want you to answer me honestly. You don't really have much choice anyway since your saliva will turn to tar or whatever if you lie."

Peeta narrowed his eyes but nodded slowly. Cato moved away from the tower and grabbed Peeta by the shoulders, holding him so tight the angel almost yelped in pain. "Has Snow ever forced you to do something you didn't want to do?" he asked slowly. The Vision of God clenched his jaw, knowing there was no way he could answer that question. Cato waited but when it became clear that Peeta wasn't-no, couldn't-going to answer, he said, "Now what sort of love is that?"

"He loves me," Peeta said desperately. "This will hurt him."

"But how much has he hurt you?" asked Cato.

"That's not the point."

"It's totally the point."

Peeta shook his head in denial and tried to pull away from Cato. The demon held fast, deciding that he had to get the angel on his side once and for all. "This is what I was created for. I can't . . . I won't . . . this is my purpose."

Cato sighed. "Okay, another question. Are you happy?"

The question threw Peeta off guard. He had never been asked such a thing before. He stared at Cato with wide eyes, unsure about how to go about answering. Surely there was a right answer but what was it? If he said no, it would prove Cato's point. If he said yes, his mouth would turn to dust because of how Snow designed him to be incapable of lying.

"No," he finally whispered. "I'm not."

"Well, there you go," Cato said. "Isn't that answer enough?"

Peeta looked at his feet. Just like the way angels didn't have a need for shirts, angels didn't really need shoes either, but Peeta preferred wearing them anyway. He quite liked human converse and, of course, Snow read this in his mind and conjured a pair of bright red ones up for him. Peeta squeezed his eyes shut and swallowed the lump in his throat.

'I'm sorry, my Lord.'

He met Cato's green eyes and asked, "How do you break the link?"

~xXx~

"No. No, no, no. No way." Peeta was already walking in the other direction, having concluded that returning to Snow would be the better option. Cato grabbed Peeta's arm before he got too far and dragged him back to their standing position on the opposite side of the road. They were
currently in a dark alleyway in France where, across the road, stood a rickety old structure. A dirty sign hung from the building reading:

Gloss' Glossary

There were symbols around the sign, making the nature of the inside dweller clear.

"I am not going into an imp's domain!" Peeta exclaimed.

"Do you want the link broken or not?" Cato asked. The alleyway had clearly been abandoned. Boxes lay moulding into the wet gravel; food was rotting away in the shadows; pieces of litter never picked up drifted from one side of the road to another. The perfect dwelling place for an imp.

"Not this way!" Peeta replied.

Cato held onto Peeta's arm and all but dragged him across the road. Temperance put up a good fight for the both of them, hissing and biting at Cato but the demon had grown accustomed to the nips and a kitten may as well have been scrabbling at him for all he felt it. When they stopped at the door, Peeta noticed a sign situated above a cage saying, "NO PETS ALLOWED. PUT ALL ANIMALS INTO THE CAGE."

"Ha ha, no," he said flatly, capturing Temperance in his hands and cupping one over the reptile's head.

"Just put the damn thing in the cage. I'm sure if someone tries to take him he'll screech like a bitch anyway," muttered Cato.

Peeta lifted his hand to look Temperance in the eye. The dragon made a whine of protest that broke the angel's heart. "Anything happens you scream, okay?" he told Temperance as he opened the cage. "Fly away if you have to. Return to your cage in Snow's garden." Temperance licked Peeta's hand before climbing into the cage. Peeta closed the metal door but didn't lock it, deciding if someone tried to take him he'd have to be able to escape.

Cato rolled his eyes and pushed the door open. Peeta followed close behind him. Immediately they were hit with the smell of potions and rot. The area was closed in and dark. Not dark enough that you couldn't see, but dark enough that the whole interior was depressing as hell. Shelves overflowed with what looked like various pieces of apparatus; potion ingredients; books; and cutlery. Dust covered everything in thick layers and cobwebs hung from nearly every possible corner or angiled piece of furniture.

Peeta coughed, the air so thick it even tasted bad. He glanced unsurely at Cato, who still seemed wholly confident about this plan.

A man came out from the back of the shop. He was tall and some would say handsome. His features were chiselled and his eyes were so bright they practically illuminated the dank shop on their own. "Can I help you?" he asked.

"We need you to break a telepathic link," said Cato.

"Wait, this was the imp? Peeta, who was standing a little bit behind Cato and wasn't in complete view of the imp yet, stared at the man in awe. He thought imps were tiny, purple creatures who suckled blood off of witches in return for their services. Not tall, dark, handsome males with eyes the colour of melted chocolate!

The imp—Peeta guessed his name was Gloss—raised his eyebrows. "Oh? And what link may this
"The biggest damn link you can imagine. You imps like challenges, try breaking a link created by Lord Snow himself," Cato said.

If Gloss was impressed, he didn't show it. Either that or he didn't believe a word Cato was saying. "What have you been drinking Belial?" he asked flatly.

"Nothing," Cato sighed irritably. He wrapped his fingers around Peeta's wrist—surprising the angel by actually being gentle—and carefully tugged him forward. "Snow's Vision doesn't want to be his Vision anymore."

Gloss' eyes widened. Peeta flushed at the imp's clear shock. He didn't like that he could be instantly recognized. Especially since most simply thought of him as Snow's blow up doll. "Have you him under some sort of spell, Belial? I thought you said you didn't use your magic on angels?"

"I'm not under a spell," said Peeta. "I . . . I don't want to be God's vision anymore."

Gloss walked around his dusty counter and stopped an inch away from them. "I'm sorry to break it to you but no matter what you do, you'll always be Snow's vision," he said. He eyed Peeta up and down. "I'll break your link, sure, but you have to give me something in return."

"Like what?" Cato asked sceptically.

Gloss reached out and touched Peeta's neck, sliding his fingers down the line of his throat and resting on his collarbone. "Some blood from the angel shall suffice," he said.

Peeta swallowed hard, suppressing a shudder at the awful feeling of the imp's fingers on his skin. Cato glanced at Peeta uncertainly. "It's up to you," he told the smaller blond.

Peeta inhaled and nodded. "Whatever you want. Just break the link for me, okay?"

The imp grinned and slipped his hand into Peeta's. "Step into my office," he said. He nodded his head at Cato and added, "You can keep an eye on the dragon outside." Peeta only got one last glance at Cato before he was brought into the darkness of the back area of the store. "Now, Vision—or, do you prefer to be called Haziel?"

"Just call me Peeta," Peeta nervously mumbled. He had never interacted with anyone other than the angels in heaven, God and Cato, which made this quest all the more nerve-wrecking. Going to hell was hard enough but this, for some unfathomable reason, was worse on his nervous system.

"Okay then, Peeta. You're going to have to co-operate with me, which means answering every question I ask, alright?" asked Gloss. The back was much emptier than the front. There was a lot less going on with only a metal table and rack with tools hanging from the far wall. The sight was unsettling and Peeta felt ill just looking at it. He let Gloss guide him to the table regardless anyway and sat down on it when he was told to.

"Okay," he answered.

"So, tell me, what sort of relationship do you have with Snow? Is it friendship; more family orientated; sexual?" Gloss enquired. He went to the wall of tools and picked off what looked like a wrench. "Don't be shy about answering, by the way, I've probably heard worse."

Despite this reassurance, Peeta was reluctant to answer. "It was a sexual partnership," he muttered, wishing that Cato was here for comfort. Which was an odd thing to wish since demons weren't
comforting creatures.

Gloss nodded. "I'm going to take your blood first, just to make sure that your demon pet out there doesn't burst in and whisk you away once I break the link. I've been conned one time too many by his kind," he explained. Peeta nodded, his heart speeding up fearfully. "Would you mind removing your shirt?"

"Why?" Peeta asked immediately.

Gloss raised his eyebrows. "Because I'm going to remove the blood from your stomach," he said.

"Don't you take it from someone's neck?" Peeta insisted.

"No, that's vampires. I'm an imp," Gloss replied. Peeta screwed his eyebrows up miserably, wishing that Gloss was a vampire so he didn't have to embarrass himself by taking his shirt off. Seeing no way around it, however, Peeta reached behind himself and pulled his white sleep shirt over his head. It was cold in Gloss' back room and goose pimples broke out across his skin.

Gloss was annoyingly scrutinising. His eyes would take in everything before he actually acted on something and the moments where he simply stood staring at Peeta made the angel more uncomfortable than ever. If that were possible. "You know, I'm starting to understand the rumours about you," he said.

"What rumours?" Peeta asked. There were rumours about him? Who would gossip about him other than the other angels in heaven? Surely their trivial conversations don't go down the lines as far as to reach the imps?

"That Snow didn't model you to be a perfect specimen, he modelled you to be beautiful in your own right," Gloss explained. Peeta flinched when the imp touched his shoulder. "Basically, you're not an Adonis but you're not ugly either. God's Vision sets new standards for beauty, not perfection."

Peeta couldn't look Gloss in the eye. He looked away, at the door in which they had come through. Clearly the rumours were exaggerated and stupid. Then again, wasn't all gossip? His nerves began to climb again as Gloss used the hand on his shoulder to push him over so he lay on his back on the table. Peeta expected a syringe or something to extract the blood but Gloss was empty handed. He had even put the wrench down.

"Don't look so panicked, Peeta," said Gloss, making Peeta flinch again by brushing his cheek with his knuckles. "Think of it this way: if you had been a female I'd be asking for your milk, not your blood."

Peeta shuddered. "You shouldn't take the milk of a woman. Certainly not that that's not your own," he said.

Gloss snorted. "That would mean simply suckling nipples for no reason," he stated. "Unless you want me to. Really, I wouldn't mind. You've got a cute little set there. Pink and perky, that's how I like 'em." He pinched one of the angel's nipples, laughing when Peeta yelped in surprise. Peeta flushed and suppressed the urge to curl away from Gloss. He knew the imps were . . . well . . . impish but he wished Gloss wasn't so damn crude.

"Please get back to your main point," Peeta begged.

Gloss grinned, revealing a two rows of thin, pointed teeth. Thin, pointed teeth that hadn't been there two seconds before. "If you say so," he replied. Before Peeta had a chance to react to the sudden change to Gloss' dental state, the imp had swooped down and bit into the angel's stomach.
White, hot pain laced through Peeta and he screamed in agony. Gloss planted a hand on the angel's chest, pushing him against the metal table when his upper body instinctively lurched upwards. Peeta's wings fluttered frantically, trying to evade what felt like an attack by trying to take flight, but Gloss had just about enough strength to keep the blond boy grounded.

Peeta couldn't tell if Gloss was being his usual imp self or if he was actually trying to be comforting, but the hand that kept Peeta pinned to the table gently stroked his trembling chest, alluding to the idea of comforting him. It felt like the agony was never going to end. It felt like hours passed by but it had really only been five minutes, but finally Gloss pulled his teeth out of the angel and gathered some in a glass vial for later. Peeta's blood was a steel colour, almost looking like liquefied metal gathered in the small vial.

"Thank you, Peeta," Gloss sighed, putting the vial of blood into a drawer below the wall of tools.

"Will you break the link now?" asked Peeta. Gloss returned to the table and before Peeta could get another word out, he'd raised his hand and smacked the angel's glabella, effectively knocking him out. The world went black, almost like someone had switched the television off.

~xXx~

Peeta forced his eyes open, his vision sliding in and out of focus. The world surrounding him was blurry, like he had Vaseline over his eyeballs, and when he tried to sit up, his head hollowed out and he fell back down again. His wings took the brunt of the fall and he groaned, moving his heavy body around so he lay on his stomach instead of his back. Really, he should have told Gloss that he preferred lying this way in the first place because his wings couldn't handle the pressure of being laid on for too long.

He must have been lying on the table for a long time because whenever his wings finally stretched out to their full width, the bones in them cracking and snapping into place. Peeta softly moaned in relief, rubbing his cheek against the cool, metal table and concluding that he could probably sleep for another few hours. Until he felt like he could travel, that was.

There were voices conversing somewhere behind him. Peeta strained to listen, able to distinct the two voices as Cato and Gloss. "Hey," Gloss said, "Vision of God has a nice ass."

"Hey," Cato mimicked, "shut up. Look in the wrong direction again and when you die I'll boil your eyeballs in Lucifer's soup when you join me in hell."

"Okay, okay, jeez, can't even appreciate nice things anymore," Gloss muttered. He lowered his voice to a whisper and said, "Don't worry, I appreciated yours earlier too."

Cato scoffed. "I hate dealing with imps," he muttered. "So is the link broken or what?"

"Mhmhm," Gloss said. "Should be. Took some sawing at. Snow sure knows how to make his links nice and thick doesn't he? This kid must mean a lot to him. Then again, you know what the myths say about the Vision. Captured in the Lord's own image and encapsulates everyone he meets. Although, I didn't expect him to be so . . ."

"Shy?"

"I was going to say innocent. Is it just a rumour that Snow fucks him then? The kid did say their relationship was sexual . . . ?"

"Snow does as he pleases," Cato simply replied. Peeta groaned, the mention of Snow making his heart pick up. He lifted his weak arms and feebly pushed himself up. When Cato and Gloss saw
that the angel was awake again, Cato was instantly at Peeta's side and was helping him sit up properly. "How are you feeling?" he asked.

"Wrecked," Peeta mumbled. "My wings are all cramped up."

"I was going to turn you over but demon ass over here wouldn't let me," Gloss pointed out.

"What I wouldn't let was for you to have an opportunity for a grope," Cato fired back acidly. He glanced at Peeta's wings, which were bent slightly at the tips, and winced. "I'll fix that when we get back to my place."

"Your place?" Peeta exclaimed.

"You weren't expecting to return to Snow after breaking the link?" Cato asked incredulously.

"Well, no. I just . . . well . . . I don't know what I expected, alright?" Peeta replied. "This has all happened so fast! The fact that we're still here is making me tetchy because Snow will know that the link has been broken. It will probably have woken him up and everything. It could be a matter of minutes before one of his guardians get here."

Cato clicked his fingers. "Good point." He grabbed Peeta's hand and pulled him off the table.

"Wait!" said Gloss. He took Peeta's other hand and tugged the angel against him, surprising the smaller blond by capturing his lips in a big kiss. Peeta froze in shock, unsure about what to do. When Gloss pulled back he grinned and said, "Feel free to return anytime, cutie. My door is always open for blood as delicious as yours."

Before Cato could tear the imp a new one, Gloss quirked an eyebrow and said, "Don't think I forgot about you." He jumped forward and kissed Cato, the action promptly rewarding him with a smack that made him topple head over heels onto the floor.

"Imps," Cato muttered sourly before tightening his fingers around Peeta's hand; clicking his fingers; and teleporting them away in a blazing fire.
Chapter Summary

Cato takes Peeta back to hell, where they hide out for the night. They bicker constantly, their fighting reaching almost a dangerous point that could put Peeta's safety at risk. When they are nearly found out, a new demon joins the alliance.

Chapter Six: No Less

Despite the fact that when you could look out a window and see the blazing fires of hell burning away, Cato's apartment wasn't all that frightening. In fact, it was pretty plain. One bedroom and pretty much nothing else. Demons and Angels didn't need food or supplement of any kind other than sleep so a bedroom was really all they needed. If they took more than that (for example, ate food even though they didn't need to) then it was considered greed.

Peeta felt light headed from the journey and yelped when his side burned as he accidentally leaned into Cato. Cato briefly teleported back to Gloss' shop to retrieve Temperance, who had been sleeping in the cage outdoors and was still snoozing in the demon's palm. "Sit down on the bed. I'll fix up your wings," Cato said as soon as they appeared in his room. He put Temperance down on the pillow at the top of the bed.

"What are you going to do?" Peeta asked defensively.

Cato didn't answer. He sat Peeta down and knelt behind him so he had easy access to the boy's cramped wings. He reached out, slightly unsure, and winced as he touched the feathery appendages. Peeta flinched, his blood spiking at the contact. Nobody ever touched his wings except Snow. He forced himself to keep his cool and pressed his hands between his knees to stop them from smacking Cato away from him on instinct.

Cato carefully took the bent tips between his thumb, fore and index fingers and gently rubbed, like one might do to loosen muscles. Peeta breathed in deep and closed his eyes, telling himself to focus on how nice it felt instead of who was actually doing it. "Where did you learn to fix cramped wings then?" he murmured.

"I've converted a few angels in the past," Cato explained. "Most of the time by seducing them. Giving them a wing massage was usually how the seduction started off . . ."

Peeta laughed. "You're not trying to seduce me, are you?" he teased. He frowned. "Just stay away from the bump near the joints, okay?"

"Gotcha." Cato knew exactly what bumps Peeta was talking about without even having to look for them. Angels had small lumps on their wings. They're tiny things near where the wing meets skin and were like an extra G-spot, especially if someone touched them. Cato was tempted to brush his fingertips over one, just to gauge Peeta's reaction, but restrained himself from it. Having the power of lust, passion and sexuality had its downfalls. Cato's mind was constantly on sex, whether he wanted it to be or not, and he had to resist the temptation to put Peeta through his paces.

Since when did he, as a demon, resist temptation?
As if sensing something was up with the demon behind him, Peeta stood up and folded his wings around himself. Cato noticed for the first time that the angel had left his shirt behind in Gloss' shop. Peeta had a nice body. It wasn't an overly enhanced body where every muscle was outlined with sharp edges. The planes of his torso were soft but strong. As much as Cato hated to admit it, Snow was a genius, since he was able to design a being so perfect without conforming to the stereotypes of perfect appearance and body type. He designed the most beautiful creature in existence and kept him for himself.

"Why are you staring at me?" Peeta muttered sheepishly, crossing his arms across his chest and drawing his wings closer to himself.

"I'm trying to figure you out," said Cato.

"Figure me out?" Peeta repeated dubiously.

"Yes. I mean . . . Snow designed you to be sexy as fuck and because of this you get fucked every other night by him and propositioned by everyone you meet. You're the angelic version of an unwilling incubus and yet you have the . . . mind-set of a virginal teenager."

Peeta flushed angrily. "Snow did not design me to be . . . be . . . like that! He designed me to fit his own personal preferences," he snapped.

Cato raised his eyebrows and leaned back on his elbows. "And what do you expect of the preferences of the creator of all things anyway? That'd you'd just look like your average potato like the rest of us?" he asked.

Peeta spun away from Cato in a huff, not prepared to answer that question at all. He stalked off to the corner of the room and took residence there, sliding down to sit on the floor as far away from Cato as possible. "Won't Lucifer know I'm here?" he asked.

"Romulus? Nah, he has better things to be doing," said Cato. "You know, souls to fry; demons to corrupt; angels to convert. A day's work, really. He doesn't concern himself with the people he trusts and I, as it just so happens, am one of his most trustworthy demons."

Peeta pulled one of his wings closer and rubbed the crooked, cramped tip. "How can you follow a leader who does such cruel things?" he asked quietly.

"Snow damned Romulus because he refused to bow down before man," said Cato. "I don't know about you but I don't like the idea of bowing down to a species that can't even handle ten rules written on two pieces of rock."

"That's not the point," Peeta contradicted. "There's always going to be rot in people-your master makes sure of that-but if you look past that to see the good then you shouldn't feel ashamed submitting to them. Snow assured me and the other angels that our decisions weren't in vain. We made the right choice. Good always triumphs and you know it."

"And that's why you're winning then, huh?" said Cato sarcastically. He quirked an eyebrow when Peeta scowled. "Come on, you're seriously still defending Snow? For fuck's sake you willingly choose to break off your link because you couldn't stick being with him anymore!"

"That doesn't mean I regret my decision to fight for good," Peeta hissed back.

Cato rolled his eyes but didn't comment, and they fell into silence. Peeta's wings were still uncomfortably sore but he didn't complain. He had been brought up not to complain, especially since there were greater hardships bore by people who never dream about complaining about it.
Snow always told him that when a tear slipped out during their intimacy or when Peeta questioned something they were doing out of the sake of morale.

"I'm not innocent," Peeta suddenly found himself saying.

Cato snorted, as if this was a ridiculous thing to say. "Oh?" he said sarcastically.

"There is only one stage of innocence and that is when a baby is born clean from the womb. After that it is prone to the evils of the world," Peeta muttered. "And you and I both know there are many."

Cato lay on his back on his bed and cocked his head at the ceiling. "But you weren't born," he pointed out. "Snow modelled you out of clay, like he did with Adam."

Peeta rubbed the bridge of his nose tiredly. "Don't compare me to Adam that's the last thing I need right now," he muttered.

"Why's that?"

"Adam is the original source of the world population. I am an angelic blow up doll. See the difference?" Peeta replied. "If Adam heard you he'd flip his lid."

"But that's the point. Adam can't hear me. None of them can. Not even Snow." Cato smirked at the ceiling. "How does it feel to be the first angel to rebel against Snow?"

"I feel ill," Peeta answered.

"You know, I thought you were looking a little green," Cato teased.

"Get off your high horse, demon," Peeta spat. "Remember I am helping you here. I could easily leave, it wouldn't hinder me."

"That's exactly the point," said Cato. "It will hinder you. You've broken your link with Snow. Do you really think he'll take you back if you scurry back to him crying like a nymph? You'd be lucky to make it out of the Glass Palace with your eyeballs still in your sockets. Of course, Snow is all merciful, isn't he? Go ahead and return to heaven, see how it works out for you."

Peeta ground his teeth together angrily. "You tricked me," he hissed.

"I wouldn't say tricked. More . . ." Cato grinned and lifted his head. "Seduced."

Peeta yelled in frustration. He stood up and punched one of Cato's walls, creating a huge crack running from ceiling to floor. How could he be so foolish? Of course Cato tricked him! What did he expect from a demon? Demons didn't rely on trust alone, they needed something substantial to make sure that the people they were making deals with kept their ends of the bargain. Cato made Peeta snap his link with Snow because he had to make sure Peeta wouldn't go back to his master if he ever changed his mind.

"Careful there, moody," Cato frowned. "Don't want to get too wrathful . . . You know what they say about Angels who break the Seven"-

Peeta's hand snapped up to silence the demon mid-sentence. He closed his eyes and inhaled, letting his breath escape slowly. "I'm not," he clenched his jaw and clenched his fist, "I'm not wrathful." His eyes snapped open and he trained them on Cato, who was once again propped up on his elbows. "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape."
Cato’s eyebrows lifted. "Jeez, what sort of Bible Basher are you anyway?"

"I have not touched a Bible in my life," Peeta muttered. He looked over his shoulder at the crack he created in the wall. "I went to school, just like everyone else."

"What? Those ridiculous lessons we went to before the Fall?" Cato laughed. When he saw that Peeta was serious, the laughter died and the smile fell from his face. "What? Really? You remember all that shit?"

"It's not . . ." Peeta bit his lip and scowled. "It's not like that."

"I couldn't quote you nothing," Cato said. "In fact, I probably couldn't quote you nothing back then either."

Peeta shook his head. He turned around completely and ran his pointer finger along the crack. "That's not abnormal. I'll remember anything I'm told, Snow made sure of that."

"Man, is there anything Snow didn't make sure of?" Cato scoffed. Peeta sometimes wondered the same thing. He touched his lips with his fingertips, briefly wondering what Snow was doing right now. Was he searching for him? Had he already given up? Had he even sensed the broken link yet? Surely he did . . . "So, what sort of stuff do you remember?"

"Anything."

"Erm, adultery?"

"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery . . ."

"Okay, what about greed?"

"For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord."

Cato narrowed his eyes, the desire to trap Peeta with his own logic too strong. It was like a parasite stirring inside him, desperate to cause trouble. "Homosexuality?" he challenged.

Peeta paused. He looked at his feet and stopped tracing the crack in the wall. "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them," he muttered.

"Weird," said Cato. "Last I checked, both you and Snow were guys."

"What's your problem?" Peeta snapped. "Do you get some sort of sick pleasure out of cornering me?"

Cato rolled his eyes and heaved himself off the bed. "Look, Snow is no angel, that's what I'm trying to say. You take his practices so seriously even when he doesn't. Why would a man who declares being gay as a sin run off to sleep with his own right hand man? Hardly makes any sense in my books."

"It's not . . . it's not wrong, okay?" said Peeta. "I don't think it's wrong. Some of Snow's teachings are corrupt, alright? Is that you want to hear from me? Damnit Cato, I know more than anyone that he's venal! I have spent every waking moment with him for the past, I don't know, billion years!"
"Then why do you quote him all the time?!" Cato exclaimed incredulously.

"I believe in a lot of it," Peeta said firmly. "Just not the amoral verses."

"And how much of the actual bible is made up of 'amoral' verses?"

"Don't make me do this, Cato."

Cato eyed Peeta sceptically. He wasn't completely sure which direction he should approach the angel with. Winding him up was certainly fun and he was tempted to see where Peeta's breaking point was exactly. "Did Snow hotwire you to be gay or was it just a stroke of luck?"

Peeta's eyebrows furrowed and he clenched his fists to control his emotions. He reminded himself that wrath was a sin and breathed in as calmly as he could manage. "Do you really need to know?" he frowned.

"I am the demon of love, passion and sexuality," Cato reminded him. "I mean, I'm not an angel anymore but I still have the powers that ranking had given me."

"What do you think?" Peeta threw back tightly. "Of course Snow made sure I'm gay. Why do you think he made it a sin in the first place? He wanted the pleasure of it all to himself."

Cato raised his eyebrows. "Really?" he laughed. "You're that good?"

"I wouldn't say I'm good," Peeta muttered. "I take what I'm given."

Damn, that was hot. Cato spent most of his days in hell, the hottest place you can be, without breaking a sweat and yet Peeta somehow made him feel hot under the collar. Cato tilted his head and asked, "Do you want to be straight? I can change it for you just like that." He clicked his fingers to emphasize his point.

Peeta stared at Cato incredulously. "No," he said, "of course not."

Cato smirked. "So you like being attracted to guys? Or is it just Snow you're allowed to be into?"

Peeta felt himself turn red. His face heated up and he couldn't hold eye contact with Cato. "No," he muttered sheepishly, "I like others."

"Oh? Like who?" Cato realized that he had closed the distance between himself and Peeta. The angel was merely a centimetre away, staring at the taller demon defiantly.

"Not you, that's for sure," Peeta spat back angrily. "Is that what you want to hear?"

Cato couldn't help chuckling. He admired Peeta's fire and bravery. If there wasn't the political divide between their kinds, he'd probably have incited something long ago. Cato had always had a thirst for drama and, as a demon, doing bad things had always attracted his attention. So even though Snow and Peeta had always been an item, it probably wouldn't have deterred him. In fact, it'd probably have soured him on even more.

The thing about Peeta was that he was forbidden fruit. Nobody was allowed to have him and that made him all the more desirable. Cato tried to convince himself that he wasn't at all into Peeta in that way but, if given the opportunity, he would do the pure angel just like anyone else would.

"Scared Snow will smite you if you admit to crushing on someone else?"

"I don't have to admit anything to you," Peeta scowled.
Cato laughed. "You're about as threatening as a puppy," he grinned.

"You're trying my patience," said Peeta.

"It's what I do best, really," Cato grinned back.

Peeta rolled his eyes and muttered, "What the heck am I even doing here?"

Cato playfully punched Peeta's arm. "Come on, crack a smile," he teased.

"I don't have anything to smile about."

"Yeah, you do, you're free from Snow!" said Cato.

"I didn't need to be free from Snow!" Peeta threw back. "You tricked me into believing it was the right thing to do!" He felt anger creeping up on him again and he had to step back and pace himself. He couldn't sin. If he sinned bad things would happen. The only sin he had ever broken was lust and that was something Snow had allowed him to break.

"So you want to keep on being abused by him?" Cato fired back. "You want to be raped every night by him?!"

"He doesn't rape me!" Peeta yelled. "I let him do it! That's called consent Cato! Consent!"

"You're so blind! I bet Snow can't even have sex properly! He probably just bends you over and does it and it's over in five minutes!" Cato ran a frustrated hand over his face. He saw Peeta's wings flap once in the corner of his eye; a sign that the angel was getting severely pissed off. "Don't even try and deny it. You're too innocent to have had it any other way."

"Like you know," Peeta grumbled, folding his arms and spinning away.

"Trust me Haziel, I do!" Cato spat. Peeta's eyes widened then narrowed at the use of his angelic name. "I know more on that topic than you ever will!"

"That's because it's all you disgusting demons can think about, isn't it? Who your next conquest shall be! At least I stayed with Snow. I would never betray him, ever!" Peeta said fiercely. "Can you say that about yourself Belial? Can you?"

Cato felt the demon inside him beginning to shine through. That evil part of himself that chose to fall from grace and have his wings clipped. The part that exploited his powers of passion and sexuality to do evil across the world. Frustration always made the evil rear its ugly head and every time he argued with Peeta he was always past frustration.

"You've never had the opportunity to cheat on Snow anyway," he said in a low voice. Peeta saw something shift in Cato's demeanour and suddenly he felt afraid. He stepped back slowly, scared to make any sudden movements in case he triggered something in Cato that made him blow up.

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Cato's eyes had gone black and his sharp, vampire-like canines stood out more than usual. It wasn't like it was the first time Peeta had seen Cato like this. They'd pushed each other too far many times before during arguments but he had always had a clear escape plan because they were always outside. He didn't even know where the door was here so escape was impossible.

"Are you trying to say that if I made a move, you wouldn't want me?" Cato challenged.

Peeta held his head up and said, "Of course I wouldn't," indigantly to act like he was in control when he obviously wasn't.
Cato smirked at the angel's answer. "You're such a liar," he said.

"I can't lie, remember?" said Peeta. He hadn't noticed that he was still backing up until he bumped into the wall in which he'd cracked earlier. Cato had kept up and they were still only a centimetre apart, like they were drawn to each other and couldn't stay apart too long or they'd die.

"I can see into your head," said Cato. He touched Peeta's forehead with his pointer finger. "Don't look so alarmed, I can't read all your thoughts. Only the sexual ones." Peeta was horrified at the very idea and jerked his head away from Cato, even though he had been able to read him without his finger anyway. "I'm right about Snow anyway. All he ever does is get his sickening fill. You think 'sex' is all about letting the person on top relieve themselves because that is all Snow does."

"Snow deserves relief," Peeta frowned.

"Sure he does," Cato rolled his eyes sarcastically. "You do realize there's more to it, right? You're supposed to caress your partner, not just push 'em over." He nudged Peeta's chin with his knuckle, taking evil pleasure in the way the innocent boy turned his face away from him. "You know that if you and I got together, we'd be so amazing it scares the shit out of you."

"Oh, yeah, I'm terrified," Peeta said dully. "What's gotten into you anyway? Is the evil side of you like a parasite that only comes out occasional"-Peeta's voice was muffled by Cato's hand, who put his finger to his lips in a gesture for the angel to be quiet.

"You talk too much," Cato concluded. "No wonder you don't have enough fun." Peeta flushed and tried to get Cato's hand off him. The demon was too strong and the hand stayed put. Those eyes . . . so black and bottomless . . . such disturbing features could only be forged in hell. Peeta's hand twitched by his side and next thing he knew, he'd slapped Cato across the face.

The demon's head jerked to the side, his skin turning pink. When he threw his head back around to stare at Peeta, the blackness was gone. It was like Peeta had smacked the evil right out of him. He stepped back and cocked his head, almost in obliviousness. Peeta touched his non-released mouth, his hand a little shaky as he barely managed to push back bad memories of when Snow had done similar a thing to him.

"I'm sorry," said Cato. "Sometimes I can't control it."

"Can't control what?" Peeta asked nervously. He stayed against the wall, too scared to get any closer.

"I can't control the evil in me. It's always there and when I do something that goes against that evil it . . . it tries to push its way out. Make me do bad things," Cato explained. "Being around you doesn't help."

"Why?" asked Peeta.

Cato, who had turned around and was already picking blankets and things off his bed, glanced over his shoulder and said, "Because you're too good." He smoothed out the quilt on the bed and gently patted Temperance's head. "You can sleep on the bed, I'll take the floor. I know your wings can be . . . very sensitive."

Peeta nodded his thanks, still a little nervous about being close to Cato after that outburst. He walked around Cato, who thankfully didn't notice how skiddish the angel suddenly was, and climbed onto the bed, which creaked unhappily with his weight. Cato lay on his back on the floor, staring intensely at the ceiling as if there was a math problem written into the drywall that he had to figure out before he could sleep.
Peeta took one last look at him before he lay down beside Temperance. He stretched his wings out, trying to unbend the tiny cramps that still remained because he got up before Cato had finished, and closed his eyes. Thankfully, sleep was easy to find.

~FFG~

"You are Haziel," Snow explained slowly. "You are my angel. My vision. You are special. There is and never will be anyone else like you. Ever."

Peeta cocked his head, confusion written all over his face. A minute ago, he did not exist. Now he sat on an unfamiliar bed, naked like the newborn he was, after having broken free of the clay in which Snow had modelled him with and come to life. He was fully grown but his mind was naïve. He didn't understand anything. All he knew was that the man with the white hair owned him and he would help him understand everything else.


"Yes!" Snow beamed, extremely proud of his creation already. "You are."

"I'm . . . your vision. I . . . belong to you?" Peeta asked unsurely.

Snow grinned and touched Peeta's face. "Yes, you do," he said gently. "You belong to me. Everything you are is mine. Your thoughts," his eyes drifted lower, resting on the newborn's throat, "your feelings," his hand slid down the angel's face to rest on his shoulder, his thumb fitting neatly between the blond's shoulder and collarbone, "and your body."

"Thoughts . . . feelings . . . body," Peeta repeated. He smiled, proud of himself for remembering, and Snow smiled back. "But what do I do?"

"You have the most important job of all," Snow answered. He held onto the back of Peeta's neck with his other hand, drawing him towards him so their faces nearly touched. "You will make me very happy." Their lips touched and Peeta's eyes fluttered unsurely at the alien contact. Then Snow grew greedy and took more, his creation's fresh innocence too intoxicating to ignore.

Peeta pulled away and gasped, "I can't breathe when you do that."

Snow ignored his vision and kissed his throat instead. He continued downward, pressing his mouth against the soft, raw skin of his new slave-or 'vision'-'s skin. Peeta was too young to understand what was being done to him. It took over a hundred years of being touched that way to finally understand the concept.

"I love you, Haziel," Snow murmured into Peeta's hair that night as they lay tangled for the first time in the Lord's bed. "Never forget that."

Peeta shuddered as Snow's hand ran up and down his bare back, sloping over the delicate curve of his naked rump before running back up to between his wings. "I love you too . . . Lord." He didn't understand what love meant at this point. He was still technically a child, trapped in a body too old for what he knew of the world around him. "I'll always love you too."

Peeta didn't awake from his dream with a scream or a gasp. His eyes fluttered open to the sensation of being touched. That was not a particularly fond memory of his because his naivety still bothered him, even now, even though it wasn't his fault. Was someone touching him? He could swear he felt something on his wings. Like . . . fingers . . .

Peeta screamed when he pushed up onto his forearms and looked over his shoulder. A girl stood over him, touching his wings which were still bent at the tips. He flipped around onto his back and
scrambled backwards until his wings were smushed against the wall. He scooped Temperance into his arms for protection, even though the dragon barely stirred at the commotion. The girl had very short hair and was clearly a demon (her tail hung down from under her denim skirt). She didn't even flinch when he screamed at her presence. She simply cocked her head and grinned this horrible, wolfish grin.

"I didn't know Cato had a pet angel," she said. "Although, you look a lot like Snow's Vision. Weren't you here a couple of days ago? Rumour has it Cato fucked you for hours in a time pocket. Wouldn't spare much detail though which is why I personally believe it's all lies. One of Cato's most admirable attributes is that he doesn't abuse the natural good of Snow's Army." Her eyes flashed black, the same solid darkness that had filled Cato's own eyes the previous night. "When he isn't overcome with the flagitious parasite that lives within us all, that is."

"Who are you?" Peeta demanded to know.

"Cresil," the girl grinned. "Demon of impurity and laziness. Call me Johanna." Her grin bared all of her teeth in almost feral fashion and Peeta felt like if he made the wrong move she would be capable of biting his head off. "Your reek of purity, it's revolting," Johanna muttered, turning her nose up and walking over Cato's still sleeping frame.

Peeta stayed against the wall, holding Temperance against his chest. "What does purity smell like?" he asked.

"Roses," Johanna simply answered. She stood over Cato with her hands on her hips. Peeta thought she was going to wake up by simply giving him a shake or calling his name. You know, things that ordinary people would think to do. Instead, the demon of impurity lifted her leg and kicked the sleeping man in the stomach, making him wake with a yell of pain.

Peeta flinched, not having expected such rude behaviour, and wondered if Cato was okay. He crawled to the edge of the bed, letting Temperance—who was slowly waking—down onto the mattress again. There was a long pause were nothing happened. Cato simply lay there on his side with Johanna hovering over him with a sick smirk on her face. Then, all too quickly, Cato's hand snapped out and grabbed the girl's ankle, yanking her off her feet.

Johanna yelped and fell onto her back hard. Peeta stared at both demons incredulously, bowled over by their violent behaviour. Both demons then lay in silence and Peeta worried that they had both injured themselves severely. Then, seconds later, they both started to laugh. Peeta gaped at them both, unable to believe what he was seeing.

Cato heaved himself off the floor first and sat on the edge of the bed. Peeta nervously checked the older man's stomach for sign of injury but his eyes couldn't detect anything unnatural or pain inducing. If he could touch the demon he'd probably have wanted to look closer but knew that this was impossible unless Cato gave consent. "What do you want Cresil?" Cato asked.

Johanna propped herself up on her elbows, crossing her ankles casually as if her skirt wasn't easy to see up in the position she sat in. "I can smell your boyfriend at the other side of the realm," she smirked.

"He's not my boyfriend."

"I'm not his boyfriend."

"Never-the-less, he smells," Johanna clarified. "I am the only one who can detect the purity right now but who knows when that will change. It's not like you can disguise him. His wing span takes up half the fucking room if he stretches them properly."
Peeta flushed, his wings drawing against his body sheepishly. Johanna's eyebrows lifted and her smirk grew larger. "There's nothing I can do," he said helplessly. "I don't know how to rid the smell of purity."

"It's true, you are a complex one. Maybe it's something to do with being fucked by Snow? Since he's God"-Johanna scowled and spat blood out of her mouth-"and all that, maybe he doesn't wreck virginity when he screws. What d'ya think Vision, are you a virgin?"

"He is," Cato surprised Peeta by saying. "I can sense it."

Johanna burst out laughing. "So Snow didn't want to ruin his slave's innocence all at once. How interesting," she said. Peeta was shocked by this knowledge. He knew Snow was an envious man but he didn't think he'd go as far as making sure Peeta kept his virginity no matter what. "If you want to get rid of the stench, Belial, you'll have to get him laid by someone who's not creator of all things or Lucifer is eventually going to smell him."

"I'm not lying down with some stranger just because a smell makes you uncomfortable," said Peeta.

"You don't have to lie down with him. You could do foreplay; oral; handy work; anal fingering; the list is endless." Johanna flashed that wolfish grin again. She smirked at Cato. "How about Succorbenoth? He's been sexless for how long now?"

"He's the Chief Eunuch, he's supposed to be sexless," Cato muttered. He ran a tired hand over his face and rubbed his eyes. "Isn't there another way? Something that doesn't involve dragging Peeta kicking and screaming to someone for sex?"

Johanna narrowed her eyes. "Would he kick and scream?"

"The only person I lie with is Lord Snow," Peeta answered, feeling a little left out of the conversation.

Cato sighed. "Think Cresil! Is there any other way to get rid of the purity scent? I need to be able to stay here with him without Romulus finding out. He can't go back to Snow or he'll most likely be killed. Or worse!"

"There is one other way . . ."

"What is it?" asked Peeta.

Johanna curled her lip in distaste, like the very thought of whatever this was disgusted her. "There's Seneca Crane," she said.

"Who's that?" asked Cato.

"A collector. He runs a club in the Inbetween. He's fascinated by heavenly things. Gloss sometimes does business with him; selling angel blood to him and the like," Johanna explains. "He can do just about anything and knows just about anything too. Except if you take your pet angel there then it's very likely he won't come out."

Peeta shuddered. "Why not?"

Johanna's eyes weren't black, a sign that even though what she said next was gruesome, it wasn't the evil parasite inside of her. "The prize of his collection would be to own a set of angel wings. Real wings, not cheap humanoid knock-offs. He's relentless too. And emotionless bar one: greed. He will kidnap the Vision and saw his wings off just to put them in a glass case for his patrons to
admire."

Peeta felt sick at the very idea. His wings were a part of him. He needed them just as much as he needed his eyes or his hands. The idea of somebody sawing them off was not only painful but emotionally scarring. He looked at Cato desperately, willing the demon to say no to Johanna's proposal. "I could go alone," the older blond finally concluded. "Find out how to mask the smell and do it myself."

"Don't be ridiculous," Johanna fired back. "Seneca won't give advice without evidence."

"Who is this Seneca guy? Would I be able to protect Peeta from him?" asked Cato.

"You might," Johanna admitted. "But you'd have to be extra careful for once Seneca lays eyes on him, he will do everything in his power to get those wings. Maybe even the kid himself. A live specimen to complete his sick collection." Peeta felt faint. Surely they weren't actually discussing this?

"Why are you helping us?" Cato finally asked.

Johanna shrugged. "I know what you're trying to do. What you're both trying to do. And I want a hand in it, even if it kills me," she explained. "Seneca can help you with that, too. He knows things. Maybe he can give you some information on the walls between heaven and hell."

Peeta felt uneasy. He knew that going to see a man who could give them more information on the wall situation would be greatly beneficial, the idea of being in the presence of someone who wanted his wings made him feel sick. Cato seemed doubtful, too. "Is there anything we can offer this guy in replacement of Peeta's wings?" he asked.

Johanna jumped to her feet. She scuffed the floor with the toe of her shoe thoughtfully. "I doubt it," she said. "I mean, unless you want to offer up your tail." Her own tail curled around her leg at the thought of it herself.

Cato flinched. He didn't want to act like he had, but Peeta felt it from where he sat beside the demon. The idea of someone chopping off his wings probably had the same effect on Cato that it had on Peeta. "Neither options are particularly desirable," he said.

"Seneca isn't particularly robust," Johanna helpfully said. "If the three of us go, we could easily intimidate him."

"Three of us?" asked Cato, raising his eyebrows.

Johanna raised her own eyebrows. "Why? Are you not taking all the help you can get?" she challenged.

"I never took you for one who'd fight the corruption, Cresil," said Cato.

"I have my reasons," Johanna replied. "Just like you have yours," she said to Cato, "and you have yours," she said to Peeta. "Besides, you can't stop me coming even if you wanted to. Who's going to take you to Seneca's?"

Cato rolled his eyes and shook his head. "Come along if you like but me and him"-He jerked his thumb at Peeta--aren't the best of buddies. The only reason we're doing this is because we're on common ground about the wall between dimensions problem. I don't think he'd still be here with me if we didn't have that."

"Why's that?" Johanna frowned.
"He tricked me," Peeta muttered.

"Into what?"

"Breaking my link with Snow," said Peeta.

Johanna whistled. "Oh dear," she sighed. She glanced at Cato and chuckled. Peeta grimaced at how she didn't seem all that horrified about the fact that Cato had tricked him into doing such a thing. Johanna looked at Peeta and glowered. "What did you expect, angelcakes? That befriending a demon would be easy sailing? This is all on you, kid."

All on him. In a way, Peeta knew this all along.
Broken Wings

Chapter Summary

Peeta, Cato and Johanna set off to meet with somebody who might be able to break whatever spell Snow has put on Peeta. However, a dangerous distraction could destroy everything.

Chapter Seven: Broken Wings

For Peeta's first hundred years, he was clueless. Snow aided him with everything; teaching and explaining everything that he believed his vision had to know. Peeta was different from the other angel infants because he was an oblivious child stuck in a body he hadn't grown into yet. Snow was helpful and patient, dressing his Vision every morning and night, feeding him, washing him, teaching him what his purpose was, making love to him... 

Back then, Snow was gentler with his vision. Where now he would just smooth talk his creation into bending over for him, back then he actually took the time to kiss Peeta and touch him. Maybe it was because it was all new to the Lord and he loved playing with his new toy but he was definitely a completely different person then. Peeta, however, was too young and weak minded during his first century of existence to ever remember a time where Snow treated him this way.

Nowadays, those sorts of memories only came to Peeta in dreams. He didn't want to believe that he had been just a blank fool when he had first been created but there was a part of him that knew the dreams weren't false. There was a ring of truth he couldn't ignore, like a vague sense of déjà vu that he couldn't shake. He had been such a blank slate, all he had been able to do was ask questions and feel things, something Snow took great advantage of. Something Peeta himself still didn't fully see.

"How do you even get into the Inbetween?" Peeta asked. Teleporting wasn't possible in hell and getting out had been a bit of a novelty. There had been some demons tormenting a human near the gates and Johanna threw herself into the thick of things roaring, "CEREBURUS HAS ESCAPED! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!" to get them to scatter. The only person who saw them leave was the human who they had been tormenting. Peeta had tried to duck behind Cato as they passed but he knew for a fact that his wings had stuck out the back.

"There's a passageway in Zimbabwe," Johanna answered. "Beside... a fashion store, I think."

"Do you know which fashion store?" Cato frowned.

"I'll know it when I see it," Johanna concluded. When Cato looked unconvinced she crossed her heart and said, "Honest. I will."

Where her fingers had skimmed her skin, there was now an 'X' burned into her. Peeta shivered against the chilly Amsterdam air and rubbed his arms. "I'll change my question then, how are we going to get to Zimbabwe?" he asked. He knew he could easily fly there but he couldn't bear the weights of both Johanna and Cato. And he wasn't fond of being teleported again.

"I thought we were to teleport," said Johanna.
"If I have to teleport again, I'm going to be sick," Peeta informed her.

"Ack, you'll be fine. Grow a pair." Johanna hooked her arm around Peeta's and Cato did the same with the angel's other arm. "There you go. Nice and snug. We can't drop you this way."

"Drop me?" asked Peeta.

"Yeah. If we dropped you you'd get trapped between dimensions and" - Cato coughed and Johanna stopped talking. She stared at Cato with large, brown eyes. "You didn't tell him, did you?"

"I didn't think the information was necessary," said Cato.

"Ha ha, no thanks," Peeta replied, worming his way out of their hold. "I'll just meet you there."

Johanna scoffed. "Fine. Whatever. Where do you want to meet?"

"I don't know, I've never been to Zimbabwe!"

"Okay, okay. Meet us at the Chinhoyi Caves," said Johanna. She sighed and muttered, "This is so unnecessarily complicated. I'm beginning to understand why you two argue so much." She snapped her fingers and disappeared in a puff of smoke.

Cato rolled his eyes and smiled sheepishly at Peeta. "She's the demon of laziness, what do you expect?" he shrugged.

Peeta tsked. "I guess I can't expect much more from her," he said. He glanced at Cato and added, "Can you take Temperance?" Cato nodded and accepted the dragon from Peeta. "I'll see you there then?"

"Mmm-hmm," Cato replied. He glanced at the sky. "Will you be alright going up there on your own?"

"I've done it long before I knew you, Cato, and I'll be doing it long after we're done here," Peeta smiled. He turned around and kicked off, leaving a puff of dust behind him. What he didn't realize was that Cato stayed where he was, watching him as he flew off, and only teleported away when Peeta was completely out of sight.

It only took Peeta a minute to get past the clouds and border heaven's atmosphere. His wings flapped as fast as they could but grew tired easy, meaning he had to pause every fifteen minutes or so to shake a bit of life into them. Being so close to heaven again made him feel dizzy. After being around evil and damnation for longer than he was used to, the purity and goodness of his home was so tempting.

"HAZIEL!"

Peeta jumped in surprise and his blood went cold. He spun around and rolled his eyes. "Armisael, you scared the living daylights out of me!" he exclaimed.

"What are you doing?!” Delly yelled at him, appearing out of the cloud line and flying towards him. "Snow is frantic! Rumours are saying that you've broken the link with him and he's losing his mind trying to find you!"

"Armisael, you can't tell him you saw me," Peeta begged.

"So it's true?!"
"Yes, it is. Please, if he knows where I'm going he'll get there first and who knows what he'll do to me for this!"

Delly shook her head. "Why?" she demanded to know. "Why are you doing this? Why are you hurting our Lord so much? After he has given you so much?"

Peeta glanced over his shoulder, having the uneasy feeling that there was someone lurking somewhere behind him. "You won't understand, Armisael. You're loyal to Snow. No matter what I say to you, you won't believe me." There would have been a time where he would have been the same. No matter what anyone said to him about his God he'd have stayed completely loyal to Snow. "You just have to promise you won't say anything."

"I don't know Haziel . . . That's like treason," Delly said. She chewed on her bottom lip worriedly and glanced above Peeta's head. Her expression dropped and all words escaped her. "Uh . . ."

"What?" A hand clamped down on Peeta's shoulder and his heart dropped into his stomach. He glanced at the hand and swallowed hard at the God's seal that was branded into the perpetrator's hand. He turned around and was met with two angry grey eyes. "Hello Metatron . . . how are you?"

"What do you think you're doing?" Metatron spat at him.

"Er . . . flying?"

"Don't be smart. By the time I'm finished with you you aren't going to have a mouth to sass out of," Metatron hissed.

"I . . . uh . . . Metatron!" Delly exclaimed. "Snow's orders weren't to hurt Haziel. You had to bring him back to him! Snow said he'd deal with him himself, didn't he?"

Metatron's eyes fell on Delly and she shrank back a little. "Don't think I won't be reporting you too, Armisael. You just committed treason."

"No she didn't!" Peeta shouted, pushing Metatron away from him. "I'm the one who committed treason here!" Delly was already flying away, fleeing for her life. Peeta hoped she'd get out of this okay. "If you're going to report anyone, you're going to report me, alright?"

Metatron grabbed Peeta by both his wings, smushing them together in one big hand. Peeta squirmed in discomfort but couldn't do much besides let Metatron drag him up past the border back into heaven. The relief of heaven washed over him in a wave and Peeta felt a knot uncoil in his stomach. Metatron wasted no time and took him right back to Snow's castle, where God himself was in the huge back garden, trimming his roses.

"Look who I found exiting Amsterdam," Metatron spat, shoving Peeta in front of him but keeping his hand clutching his wings.

Snow dumped his trimmers at the sight of Peeta and, clearly very angry, marched right up to his Vision and smacked him across the face. Peeta winced and spat blood, the metallic liquid splattering Metatron's feet. "Give me a good reason why I shouldn't have Metatron whip you until the courtyard is covered in metal?" Snow hissed.

"I . . . " Peeta trailed off and frowned. He didn't know what to say. "You're God and you're not vengeful? Whipping me would be completely against your moral code!"

"It wouldn't be me, it'd be Metatron," Snow snapped. "How dare you do this you spiteful little brat! Haven't I done enough for you? Did I not give you everything you needed?"
"You gave me nothing but a suffocating relationship!" Peeta fired back spitefully. He lashed against Metatron but the stronger angel grabbed his wrists and pinned them behind his back. "I can't believe it took me so long to realize that you've barely let me breathe without questioning it!"

"I was protecting you!" Snow snapped.

"From what?!" Peeta exclaimed.

"From out there!" Snow shouted, pointing in the direction of the castle gates.

"You sent me out there nearly every day to deal with Cato-Damn it, I mean Anael!" Peeta shouted back.

Snow glowered at Peeta and growled. This side of Snow was so unfamiliar Peeta was frightened of it. He stepped back, trying to escape from him, but only succeeded in backing into Metatron. "It's him isn't it? Anael has seduced you into his filthy ways, hasn't he?" Snow slapped Peeta again and grabbed his face, his fingers digging upwards into Peeta's jaw. "Look at the state of you, you're so easy to read."

"That's the way you made me, isn't it?" Peeta hissed back. He felt Snow's hand touch his stomach, where Gloss had taken the blood from him.

"Who took your blood?" Snow asked in a low voice.

"Does it matter?"

"Yes! Tell me!"

"It was an imp!" Peeta snapped. "What does it matter?!"

Snow ripped Peeta from Metatron's hold and threw him up against the bird bath. He grabbed his hair and shoved his face into the water. Peeta gasped in surprise, all the water rushing into his lungs. He coughed and choked but Snow wouldn't let go of him. Over the layer of water, he vaguely heard Snow order Metatron to find the imp with Peeta's blood and kill him.

When Snow dragged him back out of the bird bath, Peeta felt like he was going to pass out from lack of oxygen. He couldn't die, but Snow could put him through the worst pain imaginable for what he had done. "Was it Anael?" Snow snapped.

"I don't have to answer you anymore!" Peeta fired back.

Snow growled and pushed his Vision into the stone bath, making the whole thing topple over. Peeta stumbled but managed to keep his footing. He wiped his mouth, which was now coated in his own blood. Snow was showing his true colours. The colours Cato had seen from the beginning. Peeta had been blinded by the link. Now that it was broken, he could see Snow for who he really was.

"Have you let him fuck you?" Snow hissed.

Peeta's eyes widened. "What? No!"

"I can see through you, Haziel. You have and you enjoyed every second of it because you're a dirty whore!" Snow shouted. At this rate, the whole of heaven was going to hear their spat.

"You're crazy!" Peeta yelled.
"Was he better than me?" Snow demanded to know.

Peeta couldn't comprehend what was happening. "You're being paranoid!"

Snow grabbed Peeta's wrist and yanked him towards him. "I'm never paranoid," he snapped. "I'm God, I can see all truths."

"Clearly not!" exclaimed Peeta. He screamed as his arm was pushed up his back and he was pushed against the closest wall by Snow. The bricks scraped his skin and created brash burns. "You're no God! You're no better than Lucifer!"

Snow threw his Vision to the ground, blinded by rage and kept him down by stamping on his back. Peeta groaned against the pavement, his body aching from being beaten so brutally. He felt Snow's fingers touch his feathers and, quick as a flash, plucked one right off. The pain was unbearable and Peeta screamed into the ground, his voice muffled by the solid earth beneath him.

Peeta was unnerved at not being able to see Snow and couldn't stop himself from crying into the ground at how violated he felt from the simple plucking of his feathers. He struggled against Snow's grip on him but the Lord's foot was strong and kept him pinned to the floor. Snow knew that Peeta valued his wings more than any other part of him and so he plucked feathers at his leisure, knowing that the fact that they'd grow back didn't mean anything to Peeta.

"Stop it!" Peeta begged, screaming desperately when Snow got too close to where his wings connected to his back. "Please, stop it! I can't . . . just . . . please!"

"All loving my ass!"

Peeta forced his eyes open and saw Cato and Johanna standing a metre away from them. Johanna was the one who had spoken and Cato just stood there with Temperance hovering over his shoulder. The demon's mouth hung open, completely stunned at what he saw. Snow was enraged by the sight of demons in his realm.

"Get out now demons or I'll punish you both!" he shouted.

"No wonder we're fucking winning!" Johanna declared. "God is just as bad as Lucifer! Except we don't beat one another." She nudged Cato. "That must be our secret."

"What did I just say?!" shouted Snow.

Cato approached Snow and, before the Lord could react, smashed his palm against his face. Snow roared in agony as the burn engulfed his face and he stumbled backwards into the wall. Johanna went to Peeta and helped him up, running to where she had previously stood and teleporting out of heaven.

Cato followed a second later with Temperance in his arms. "The bastard shot a fire ball at me!" he exclaimed. "What sort of fucking all-loving God is that?!"

Johanna reached out and tried to touch Peeta's wings but he backed into a wall to avoid her. "Are you alright?" she asked.

"Yeah," Peeta muttered, shaking himself off. "Snow doesn't mean it. He's just angry with me right now for breaking the link. I'll be fine. I just need to"

"Dude, you're bleeding," said Johanna.

It wouldn't have been the first time Snow made him bleed. On occasion he'd lose control when he
was angry, upset or annoyed. He'd make Peeta bleed because he was simply in the wrong place at
the wrong time. He always apologized afterward and Peeta forgave him because Snow taught him
to forgive everyone for everything.

Cato, not having any of it, passed Temperance over to Johanna and dragged Peeta over to him.
"How many feathers did he pull out?" he asked.

"I don't know, like five?" Peeta muttered. He shrugged Cato off him and started off down the
pavement. "Where are we anyway?"

"Zimbabwe," Johanna answered from somewhere behind him. "We found the store where the
entry to the Inbetween is while you and Snow were . . . uh . . . talking."

Peeta tried to walk at a quickened pace but when he went too fast, the wind that picked up around
him bristled through his wings and stung the areas where his feathers had been plucked. "Okay, so
what's the plan? Are we going to negotiate with this guy or just go straight in and make
demands?"

"Well, negotiating with him will probably end up the same way," Johanna explained. "With him
wanting to lob off your wings. I don't think trying to deal with him reasonably is going to work, if
I'm going to be brutally honest."

"I'm not really the 'making demands' type so you'll have to do it then," said Peeta. He knew that
Johanna and Cato had questions but he didn't want to answer them. He wasn't completely sure
how to explain what they had saw. Not yet. First, he had to get it completely straight in his own
head.

Cato caught up with Peeta and pulled him to a stop. "Whoa, kid, you can't go anywhere while
you're bleeding. Look at you, you're half-way to looking like the tin man."

"I'm fine," Peeta snapped.

"Oh for the love of . . ." Cato rolled his eyes. "I thought you guys had healing powers or
something?"

"I can't heal wounds inflicted by God," Peeta muttered. "Just leave it alone, alright?"

Cato was relentless. He ignored Peeta and ripped a shred of fabric off his shirt, using it to dab at
the metallic liquid oozing from between Peeta's feathers. "Does he always treat you like that?" the
demon asked quietly.

"No," Peeta answered. He let Cato do as he wanted because it was clear that he was going to do it
anyway. "He's just angry because I broke the link. He'll calm down . . . I hope." Wanting to get
away from the topic completely before it turned into a full blown conversation, he asked, "How
did you get into heaven?"

"Snow's rage created a gap in his defences," Johanna explained. "Metatron was skipping away to
play God's Bitch and didn't see us slip past."

"Why did you want to slip past?"

"Well, it had been five hours," said Cato.

Peeta had forgotten that time in heaven progressed differently from time on earth. He had only
been with Snow for ten minutes at the most but five hours had dragged by for Johanna and Cato.
No wonder they had found the entrance to the Inbetween. At least they hadn't idled around while
Peeta had vanished.

"We're going to have to get our story straight," Johanna commented as they began to walk down the drizzly streets of Ruwa. Cato was behaving like a fussing mother, keeping pace with Peeta just for the purpose of cleaning blood off his wings.

"What story?" Peeta asked, massaging his aching temples with his fingertips.

"Well . . . Seneca is going to want to know why Cato didn't just demolish your innocence himself," Johanna explained. "He is the demon of sexuality and all that shit. You can't use Snow as your excuse because the whole point that you want to get rid of your scent is because you're trying to distance yourself from Snow and hide in hell until further notice. See the dilemma?"

"How about the fact that I'm just not a slut?" Peeta felt weird saying that last word but he got a strange rush of adrenalin from breaking the rules.

Cato could see how pleased with himself Peeta was by the fact that he had said 'slut' and couldn't help smiling. "Seneca mightn't accept that as an answer," he said.

"Why not? Seems perfectly reasonable to me," Peeta replied, folding his arms indignantly.

"You never know, Seneca might be impressed by your inability to fall under Cato's spell," Johanna grinned. "I'd say it's worth a shot. Even if it doesn't work, I'm sure Crane will get a good laugh from it. I mean, somebody who said no to Anael, demon of love, passion and sexuality? What is the world coming to?!" She swooned dramatically and laughed when Cato swatted her.

"That's not fair," Peeta smiled. "It's not like Cato has even tried to put a spell on me anyway." He pulled Temperance down from the air; cupping his hands around the reptile protectively and limping ahead.

"Is that true?" Johanna asked once the angel was out of earshot.

"Is what true?" Cato asked back.

"You haven't tried putting a spell on him?"

"I tried once. When we first butted heads after the fall," Cato shrugged. "It didn't work. He just continued to shout at me, ranting about how he couldn't believe I allowed the woman to dump her baby in the dustbin and leave it to die. At the time it was rather jarring but I've just chalked it down to some angelic shit Snow has probably pulled to make sure all hands stay off his Vision."

Johanna whistled. A droplet of rain splashed on top of her head and she cursed, brushing it off grumpily. "What spell did you use? One of Enchantado's spells?"

"Enchantado's spells only work in Brazil," Cato scoffed. "No, this was one of my own. I just couldn't bear listening to him screaming at me the way he was. He just kept yelling and yelling, calling me all these horrible names for choosing to fall instead of staying with God."

Johanna frowned. She looked at Peeta up ahead. He was mostly shielded from view by his wings, which he had curled around his torso and head to protect himself from the rain. "I thought angels couldn't be wrathful," she said.

"Snow fabricated that law after the fall. This was only a month or so after. Too soon for Snow to have started to make any major decisions regarding the laws of heaven. Peeta was still young, too. Most don't remember what he was like when Snow first created him . . ." Cato trailed off, the memory of the first time he ever saw Peeta flashing in his mind like a lighthouse in the darkness.
Snow had taken himself off to his chambers one day and didn't come out for an entire year. Life in heaven was a little disjointed without him but society managed to stay uplifted without falling into anarchy in God's absence. When Snow finally came out, he came out with somebody new. He'd introduced the new angel as his Vision, expressing how important this Nephilim was to him by bringing him up to the right side of his throne.

Cato had been sitting at the fountain in Snow's courtyard with Clove and Glimmer when Snow had done this. Before the fall, Snow didn't have reason to close off his grounds and angels wandered around quite freely. After, when Romulus fell and brought those who chose to go down with him, the only people Snow trusted on his property were Peeta, Metatron, and his servants.

Peeta had looked exactly the same then as he did now. Except he was also completely different then as he was now. It had been obvious—even though he had the body and physical appearance of a twenty one year old human—that he had only been born a few minutes prior. While Snow explained who exactly this new comer was, Peeta had simply stood beside him, looking around himself with awe. He had been so fresh faced and raw, Cato almost couldn't believe what he was looking at. However, when Snow explained, things grew to be much clearer.

The fall had occurred many, many years later and by then Peeta had adapted and learned to think for himself. He grew to have his own opinions and was able to make his own decisions. Most had preferred Peeta when he had been a weak minded puppet because at least then he didn't show the rest of them up. Most also claimed that Peeta was more attractive when he had been stupid and naïve. Cato disagreed. Peeta had been ridiculously blank when he had first been born to the point where his eyes held no emotion and were completely empty of anything besides confusion. He couldn't understand anything unless it had been put to him slowly and on most occasions by Snow.

Peeta grew to be more beautiful, in Cato's opinion, when he had that spark inside him. That fire that made him keen to fight back; to argue; to be stubborn. Hence why Cato had tried to put a spell on him after the fall. If anyone asked, he'd say he wanted to rape Snow’s boyfriend in spite but that had been untrue.

In reality, he had wanted to have sex with him.

Cato couldn't help it. It was in his nature. He hated being cursed with such a trait but that was exactly what it was: a curse. He shouldn't view it as a curse. He should have been honoured to be humbled with a gift from Lucifer. But why, out of everything he could have been given, was he given the overwhelming and constant desire to pry into people's private thoughts; strip them down; and violate their most vulnerable values?

"Well, you're a big boy anyways," said Johanna. "I'm sure some name calling didn't hurt you too bad."

"Yeah," Cato vaguely agreed. Cato didn't get hurt by trivial things like name calling, especially not that which is done by angels like Peeta. However, that day had been different. He had been adjusting to life as a demon and he hadn't taken well to Haziel's scolding. Another reason why he tried to charm him. It was almost a desperate attempt to shut him up.

Nobody could shut Peeta up, it seemed. Not even God himself could smoulder the angel's burning light.
Peeta, Cato and Johanna enter the Inbetween and find Seneca Crane's club to seek his help. However, the man could pose to be more of a nuisance than a help due to his obsession with Peeta's kind. He may grow to become a threat to Peeta and the mission...
owned a club," he said, trying to distract himself.

"Club/Museum. Like one of those diners that display stereotypical things that they suppose represents America on their walls," Johanna explained, turning back around to face the stairs.

"Right, well, let's get this over with then," Cato said, slipping between Johanna and Peeta and heading down into the darkness.

"I wish I hadn't lost my last bottle of Shimmer in a bet with Clove," Johanna said as she and Peeta followed Cato. "We could have hidden your wings or something."

The stairwell wasn't too long, surprisingly. It was probably less than a quarter of the size of the stairs that led to Hell. Once they ended, there was a red door. Cato didn't pause once before pushing through and Johanna immediately followed him in. Peeta looked over his shoulder, having an awful feeling that they were being watched. He shook it off, chalking it down to nerves after his encounter with Snow, and followed.

The Inbetween was a surprisingly benign setting. It almost seemed human. Almost. The sky was an unnatural purple colour with pinkish clouds stretching from one side to another. The ground was complete cobblestone. No pavements, no walkways. Just cobblestone road. Businesses lined each side of the road and various levels of creature roamed the area. Fairies; imps; goblins; etc. There didn't seem to be any demons or angels, however.

"If I can remember correctly, the bar is this way," said Johanna. She pointed off to where the buildings seemed to almost rotate around into a turning. "It's not that far a walk."

"Why aren't there any . . . of us here?" Peeta asked as they set off.

"You mean angels and demons?" Johanna asked back.

"Yeah."

"Well . . . because most think they're too good for the Inbetween. They have entire dimensions of their own, they don't need a city that lies between them," she explained. "Some fellas have told me that I'm the only demon they've ever encountered down here. I suppose that'll mean you'll be the only angel."

"Fantastic," Peeta said dryly.

"At least you're prepared for it. Either way you spin it, you're going to get unwanted attention from Seneca," Cato sighed.

"Cato's right about that. Seneca is obsessed with your kind. It isn't even funny," Johanna muttered. "I mean, for sh*t's sake, look at your wing span kid. You could cradle us both and ten more on both sides with those puppies."

"Don't make me nervous like that," Peeta muttered.

"There's no need to worry, Peeta," Cato said firmly. "We've got you." He went to clap Peeta's back but realized that his wings were in the way so instead playfully nudged his shoulder. Johanna began walking ahead, clearly wanting to get this over with, and turned the corner, disappearing for a moment. When Cato and Peeta also turned said corner, they found her knocking on a door three buildings down.

It didn't look like much on the outside but maybe that was the idea.
"What form of payment do you wish to use?" a voice on the other side asked. As Peeta neared, he saw an open slot in the door with two yellow cat eyes peering out.

"We don't have any pecuniam," Cato whispered to Johanna.

Johanna waved him quiet. "We don't need it."

"How can you pay for something without pecuniam?" Cato hissed.

Peeta didn't know what pecuniam was but he assumed it was some form of payment. He didn't have a need for money or means of payment because . . . well . . . Snow dealt with most of that stuff. There were times when he wanted to go out and do things like that but Snow told him that he didn't need to do it.

"What form of payment are you using?" the voice insisted.

Johanna grinned and pulled her shirt up, baring her chest to the cat eyes. Peeta spun away quickly, wishing to do the polite thing and not look. Cato was unfazed and only a little taken aback after not having expected that form of payment. The cat eyes disappeared and then there was the sound of a door being unlocked. When Johanna swung it open, there was nobody there.

"Come on, let's go," she declared, plunging right into the unknown. Peeta followed her and Cato took up the rear, shutting the door between him.

The entrance corridor was tiny. Peeta could barely walk through it because his wings didn't fit and dragged along behind him. He relied on Johanna as a guide on where to go and trusted her to know the right way. Music pounded in the distance, causing the walls and floor to vibrate a little. Thankfully they didn't have to walk long and the corridor opened out into a vast room, the music having reached deafening volume.

The club was alive. Strobe lights slashed through a dancefloor in the distance; patrons downed drink after drink at the bar close to the door; people sat in leather seats off to the left and chatted while drinking coffee. Then there was the angel theme Seneca so dearly loved. Paintings of angels hung from walls; the glasses had plastic wings as handles; the occasional display case was positioned around the purple walls, showing off artefacts relating to angels . . . The whole place made Peeta feel uneasy.

"Maybe they'll think you're in dress up," Cato suddenly said. This made sense because there were people wearing little fake wings on their back. But those were easily spotted as costume wings. Peeta's were too real looking. Because, well, they were.

As they continued further into the club, more and more people began to notice who had entered. They whispered to one another and pointed. Some at Johanna and Cato but most of them at Peeta. He ignored them and stared at the floor, watching his feet as he walked and counting his steps to occupy his mind. Up ahead, there was a roped off area. Probably for VIPs or something. Steps led up to a platform where the VIPs could watch over the rest of the club.

Johanna had just declared that she needed a drink when footsteps were heard thudding upstairs. They looked up just in time to see a man with a very creative looking beard throw himself at the railing around the VIP platform. His brilliant blue eyes immediately homed in on the three of them before focusing again on the one standing in the middle. His jaw unhinged and he simply gaped.

Peeta swallowed hard. "Is that Seneca Crane?" he asked Johanna.

"Uh-huh, that's him," Johanna answered. She sounded amused, probably at how Seneca was gaping like a fish.
The owner of the club disappeared for a moment before he appeared at the top of the VIP steps, descending down them like an excited child on Christmas morning. Peeta felt the urge to turn and run. Get out as fast as he could before the crazy obsessive could reach him. However, he stayed rooted to the spot, too anxious to move.

Seneca vaulted over the red rope that guarded the VIP area once he reached it. People cleared a path for him, clearly knowing who he was, and this made his journey all the more faster. He was so quick that Cato didn't have time to even think about getting between Seneca and Peeta before the man had reached them.

Seneca stood in awe for a moment. He was so excited he was practically trembling. The amazement in his eyes made Peeta nervous and he shifted worrily under the collector's attentive gaze. "Are you real?" Seneca asked.

"Last I checked," Peeta meekly replied.

Another moment of simply staring. Johanna and Cato exchanged a look. Seneca took a step closer and Peeta instinctively stepped back. Seneca held his hands up in surrender, panic flashing across his features. "It's alright. I'm not going to hurt you," he said gently.

Peeta glanced uncertainly at Cato, who was sizing Seneca up. Johanna quickly stepped in. "We need your help Mr Crane," she explained.

"Really?" asked Seneca who didn't once take his eyes off of the disconcerted angel.

"Yeah, we need you to get rid of Peeta's smell of purity," Johanna continued. "For personal reasons. Or at least direct us to someone who can. We know you have heavy prices but if you just let us explain"-She stopped when Seneca held his hand up.

"Don't worry about it," he said. "It's done."

"Really?" Johanna and Cato asked at once.

"Of course. I'll do it," Seneca said, looking at one and then the other.

"You don't want to chop off my wings or steal my eyeballs or anything?" Peeta asked.

Seneca laughed. "Of course not."

"But you still have a price?" Johanna prompted.

Seneca nodded. "All I ask is that you let me get to know your beautiful friend here," he said, almost dreamily. Peeta swallowed, trying to wet his dry throat, and clenched his fists. "Alone, of course. Meeting an angel as always been a dream of mine—as you can probably tell—and all I ask is some time to find out more about them."

"No," Cato immediately said. "We can't trust you."

Johanna slapped Cato irritably and said, "We'll do it." Peeta looked at her in alarm. What was she doing?! "Would you rather he asked for your wings?!" she hissed. Peeta supposed she sort of had a point. She took Temperance from Peeta's shoulder and nodded in Seneca's direction. "We'll be right here."

Seneca grinned almost smugly and held his hand out toward Peeta. Having no other choice, Peeta took it with one of his own and yelped as Seneca immediately dragged him off in the direction of
the VIP room. He glanced over his shoulder at Johanna and Cato, who had both immediately started arguing.

"I know you," Seneca said as he danced up the steps. "I've only ever seen painting depictions but your wing span makes it obvious. You're Haziel, God's Vision, aren't you?"

"Call me Peeta," Peeta said unsurely.

If Seneca were a teenage girl, the sound he made at Peeta's confirmation of this could have been described as a squeal. "I knew it! I knew it!" He flew into the VIP room and all but threw himself at the closest sofa. He dragged Peeta down with him, sitting on his knees on the sofa, holding both of Peeta's hands in his own. "So, tell me darling, why do you want to get rid of your lovely scent?"

"I can't really tell you," Peeta answered wearily.

"You're a very coy little thing," Seneca noted with a knowing smile. "It's very sweet. Are all angels like this?"

"No . . . I don't think so."

"Awww, so you're just shy," Seneca gushed. He rubbed his thumb along the top of Peeta's hand and smiled sweetly. "That's so cute. Is that why you want to be rid of your smell? Because you're sick of being innocent?"

Peeta shook his head and when he tried to prise his hands out of Seneca's he realized it was impossible. The man had an iron clad grip. Seneca continued to smile, looking almost like a mad man, as if he didn't notice that Peeta had tried to pull his hands away from his.

"You're going to have to give me something to go on, sweetie. Tell me, why haven't you simply sought out a good old fashioned ravishing to rid you of your scent?" he pressed.

"Because I am faithful to only God," Peeta answered. Even if he did throw me into a bird bath.

"And by the smells of it God prefers you remain virginal, am I correct?" Seneca asked. Peeta nodded, even if this wasn't strictly true. "Last I heard heaven was corrupt. I wonder why God worries himself over such trivial things."

"Don't ask me," Peeta said. He didn't like the way Seneca was looking at him. The club owner was looking at every bit of him, his eyes unable to rest on one place for too long. He knew meeting someone like him was Seneca's dream but the whole thing was just really awkward and uncomfortable. Peeta couldn't meet Seneca's eyes because the admiration in them would surely make him flush with embarrassment. He wasn't anything special and he couldn't understand why Seneca was so hyped up about talking to him.

"Some very reliable sources of mine have told me about your spat with your creator," Seneca said. He waved over a woman in a short toga dress holding a tray of drinks. As he reached up and collected two glasses, Peeta saw that the waitress was wearing fake wings as well. The fakery was obvious through the pink tinge and glitter that coated the feathers.

Peeta didn't wish to be rude and accepted the drink that Seneca offered him. He glanced uneasily over the platform and his stomach churned as he was unable to locate Cato and Johanna. They wouldn't have left him. They've probably just intergraded into the club. Peeta took a deep breath and turned his attention back to Seneca, who he didn't trust not to watch at all times.

"What am I saying?" Seneca chuckled. "Every dimension shakes when you have a row. We all
experienced mass earthquakes when that happened."

"When what happened?" Peeta asked suspiciously.

"When Snow discovered you severed the link, of course," Seneca chuckled. "Don't look so alarmed, dear, everyone knows about it."

"But how?"

"Word travels fast. Especially something with such huge gossip proportions," said Seneca.

Peeta played with the winged umbrella in his drink thoughtfully. He supposed that he shouldn't have expected something like that to stay quiet. He took a gulp of whatever was in his glass to moisture his sandpaper throat and rubbed a tired hand over his face. It tasted like strawberry and lime. Today had been such a long day he just wanted it to be over.

"Can I ask something from you?" Seneca asked.

Peeta eyed the fanatic dejectedly. "What is he?" he asked back carefully.

Seneca's eyes shone with excitement and something Peeta couldn't decipher. "May I touch them?" He nodded at Peeta's wings, which were drooping a little with exhaustion. Peeta's heart rate immediately picked up and he edged back fearfully. Seneca, face flashing with panic, held his hands up again like he was taming an animal. "Easy," he said. "I don't intend on plucking out feathers if that's what you're worried about."

Peeta's face burned. "You heard about that too?" he snapped.

"Of course," Seneca said calmly.

"No one touches my wings," Peeta told the man, trying to sound as measured as possible.

Seneca raised his eyebrows, seeming surprised by this response. "Really?" he asked, unconvinced.

"Really," Peeta deadpanned.

Seneca's blue eyes darkened to the colour the sky took on in a storm. It was in that moment that Peeta recognized what other emotion was held in that gaze.

Mischief.

"Would you rather I inform Snow of your whereabouts and what you've asked of me? I'm sure he'd value the information greatly and give me a worthy reward for it," Seneca grinned.

The smug look on Seneca's face made Peeta feel sick. He put his glass down and tried to get up to leave. Except when he moved too fast, the room spun and he fell back down. Seneca crossed the distance between their two seats and reached out towards Peeta's wings like a child reaching for forbidden candy. Peeta jumped backwards, trying to get up off the sofa again.

It became clear that he had been drugged. His muscles had turned to soup and he couldn't stand up, let alone run away. He collapsed as soon as he tried to leave, falling face first onto the sliver carpet. Peeta forced himself to move regardless and swung his numb arms out in front of him and began dragging himself to the stairs.

Seneca simply watched the angel, impressed by his drive, before putting him out of his misery and
kicking him down to the floor. Even when Peeta lay flat on the ground, Seneca didn't even have to stoop to touch his wings. The angel obsessive fingered the delicate feathers with impressive care and this was the last thing Peeta felt before he slipped out of consciousness.

~xXx~

Seneca admired his prize. He didn't consider Peeta a captive. He was simply the perfect specimen for his collection which, like he usually did, Seneca had to take by force. He'd laid the angel on the ground in his office, carefully on his back so that his wings were spread perfectly on the floor without risk of breakage. He then restrained his prize with medical tape blessed by Lady Karma herself so that Peeta didn't hurt himself.

The demons were still somewhere in the club but he'd sent someone off to deal with them. Someone who got the job done and asked questions later.

While the angel was unconscious, Seneca knelt by the prone body and stroked the tender wings that lay flat on the floor. It was impossible to describe how the feathers of the wings of God's Vision felt. It made Seneca's fingers tingle and sent a shudder through his being. Oh yes. These would be perfect for his collection.

Angels were such beautiful creatures. Not just Peeta but all of them. Seneca wanted to know everything about them, hence why he had captured Peeta now. He was going to find out everything, even if it took the rest of his life. It was a shame that Haziel would be sacrificed for this purpose but who better than God's Vision himself to be dissected for information? If Peeta knew how important it was, Seneca was confident that he'd let him proceed. There just wasn't time to explain.

Seneca ran his fingers over the angel's features that were left uncovered by the tape (really only his nose and cheeks). Snow really had outdone himself. You hear rumours about God's genius and how he could create perfection by disposing every idea of what perfect meant but it never prepares you for the real thing.

Peeta was the prime example of this. He wasn't perfect. He didn't have a perfect body or perfect appearance. He didn't have a perfect personality or perfect attitude. But at the exact same time he did. Snow somehow made an angel who could have anyone he wanted but was trapped in a looped relationship with God himself. Seneca could smell the unhappiness off of Peeta. It was thick and potent. Peeta wanted to be free.

Seneca was almost sad that Peeta would never have this but then the excitement of being able to dissect a real angel came rushing back and he giggled childishly. His fingers danced happily over the sleeping boy's sharp cheekbones as he decided what to do first. The best thing to do was cut off the wings before doing anything else. Encase them just in case something went wrong.

Peeta moaned behind the tape that wound around his mouth several times and encompassed his lips and the entire area around it. He squirmed and struggled, unaware that he was being watched due to his blind fold. Seneca watched with a sadistic thrill as his prize tried to move and whined sadly when he couldn't.

"Glad to see you're awake, Haziel," he purred. "Just in time for the main event. The prize of my collection! The wings of God's Vision himself!"

Peeta stopped squirming, frozen with terror.

Seneca grinned and laid a hand on Peeta's left wing.
Peeta screamed.
Blood of the Gods

Chapter Summary

Peeta has been kidnapped by Seneca and it's up to Cato and Johanna to save him before the angelic obsessive saws off his wings.

Chapter Nine: Blood of the Gods

"I can't believe you just let Seneca take him like that!" Cato exclaimed. Johanna rolled her eyes and headed to the bar, immediately sitting down on a chair. All of the walking around was in complete opposition to her lazy nature and it was becoming obvious that it was taking its toll on her. "You said so yourself, he's crazy and will do anything to get Peeta's wings!"

"We've got him in our eye line, genius," Johanna threw back. She pointed to the VIP platform, where Seneca had just thrown himself onto a sofa with Peeta, looking like a teenage girl dying to hear some gossip. "All this running around is taking it out of me," she huffed.

As annoyed as Cato was with Johanna, he did feel bad for her. Being the demon of laziness couldn't be easy. Even simply going for a walk took a lot of willpower on her part. This quest was probably murdering her. Cato sat down beside her and glanced uneasily at the VIP platform where Seneca continued to make Peeta uncomfortable.

Noticing Cato's terse expression, Johanna sighed and said, "Peeta's a big boy. He can look after himself."

"Peeta is a big boy," Cato agreed. "He's a big boy who's been sheltered by Snow for centuries."

"Do you really think Snow shelters him?" asked Johanna.

"Johanna, you're an original-a demon of the seven deadliest-you didn't see Peeta in the beginning."

Johanna waved the bartender (a man with no shirt on but who had cufflinks with wings sprouting out of the sides on his wrists) over and pointed at a drink on the specials board. When the man walked away, she asked, "What do you mean?"

Cato ran a tired hand through his hair. He shook his head. "When Snow created Peeta he didn't think to give him knowledge before bringing him to life. When he was born, Peeta looked as he does now but his mind was empty. Snow did everything for him."

Johanna's eyes widened. "Shit. So you think Snow sheltered Peeta because he missed the blank..."
vessel that let him do what he wanted without question?"

"Peeta's too opinionated now," Cato sighed. "He became the perfect warrior for heaven except his
drive to follow the rules means that Snow can't abuse him as easily anymore. Lust is one of the
seven and Peeta knows this. He rejects it completely but Snow takes it from him anyway." Cato
shuddered, noticing for the first time how enraged thinking about Snow's treatment of Peeta made
him. He clenched his fists and forced himself to calm down.

"Takes it from him anyway . . ." Johanna trailed off, her brown eyes soft as they gazed at Cato in
disbelief.

"He is too stubborn to admit it but Snow is a rapist. I think Peeta has suppressed this knowledge
and denied its existence. And who would blame him? Admitting that Snow does do things against
his will would break down Peeta's entire belief system. Peeta's not like the other angels. He didn't
really have a choice when the fall happened. He was literally raised to love Snow. To believe he
was good. Now that that is in jeopardy, he's terrified."

"I didn't know you cared so much," Johanna said gently.

"I didn't. Not until I went to hell and we began to notice Snow's sinful actions . . ." Cato wished
he didn't care so much. It would make things so much easier. Peeta was like an infectious disease.
Once you caught him, it was hard to be rid of him.

Temperance, who had wandered onto the counter top, hissed. He lifted his wings and flapped
them angrily. Johanna patted his head and shushed him. "It must be killing you," she said. "To
care about an angel in this way. How has your inner darkness not taken over yet?"

"It nearly did," Cato muttered. Temperance hissed again, pushing away from Johanna and trying
to take flight. Cato grabbed the reptile and kept him down. God, what had gotten into him?! It
couldn't be that the dragon was separated from Peeta, he had been away from him before. So why
was he acting like a petulant child? "Before you arrived, Peeta and I were fighting. I suppose the
frustration I felt because of Peeta's stubborn nature caused my badness to reveal itself."

"Did you hurt him?" Johanna asked.

"I scared the living shit out of him, I know that," Cato clarified.

Johanna had darkness as well. If she acted too good then her inner demon would take control of
her. That was why she was so snarky and sarcastic. She kept her demons at bay by acting like a
douche to people. It worked, most of the time, but working with an angel was taking its toll on
her, just like it was taking its toll on Cato.

Except Johanna's demon was the demon of laziness. It was where she harnessed her powers from.
When the evil inside took over her, she simply turned into a lazy slob. Cato's demon? Well, it was
a lot worse than Johanna's. It harnessed love, passion and sexuality. When it was unleashed, even
Cato feared what it would unleash.

Temperance bit Cato's hand, causing a burn to flare through his veins. Cato cursed and shook his
hand, letting go of the dragon all together. Temperance screeched an unearthly scream, flying off
in the direction of the VIP platform. Cato tried to grab him before he was out of reach but stopped
in his tracks when he realized what had riled Temperance up.

Peeta and Seneca were gone.

"Oh fuck," Johanna said behind him.
"Where did they go!" Cato shouted. He spun around just as the bartender from earlier returned with Johanna's drink. Except instead of handing it to her, he flipped the tray over and smashed it against her face. Johanna screamed in momentary pain and wretched the tray out of the man's hands. Cato took the tray from Johanna and took a swing at the bartender, who ducked underneath the bar to evade the blow. Cato climbed onto the bar, the music from the club seeming to have gotten louder as it pounded in his ears like a hammer, and jumped over onto the other side.

Seneca must have hired this fucker to take care of them while he kidnapped Peeta!

Johanna jumped onto the bar in one smooth jump, the heels of her boots causing the glasses to rattle. When the bartender stood up, she kicked him in the face so he reeled backwards into the drinks shelves. Cato grabbed a fistful of the man's shirt and slammed him down against the countertop. Once. Twice. A third time. The music was still going but nobody was dancing. Cato could feel all eyes on them. Not watching out of worry. Watching for entertainment.

"Where the fuck is Seneca?" Cato roared at the man.

"Fuck you!" The bartender spat back. His arm snapped out and swept underneath Johanna's feet, causing her to lose balance and fall off the bar. She fell backwards with a scream of surprise and landed on her back on the broken glass behind. It all happened within a millisecond and bartender took the moment of concern Cato felt to yank away from the hold he demon had on him and threw a punch at Cato. His fist connected with Cato's jaw, causing a swell of blinding pain to curl up the left side of his face.

It wasn't enough to throw Cato off, however, and he punched back, landing a blow square on the bartender's nose. The bartender tried to scramble over the bar to escape but Temperance latched onto his hair with his sharp teeth and dragged him back over so he couldn't leave. The bartender stumbled backwards and tripped over Johanna, who had curled herself up into a ball with the exact intentions make him fall. Cato jumped over Johanna and landed on top of the man, digging his knee into the man's stomach and grabbing a fistful of hair to hold him against the floor.

"Where did Seneca go?" Cato repeated.

"I don't know!" the man spat back.

Cato growled and wrapped his tail around the bartender's throat, squeezing tight enough to remove most—but not all—oxygen from his system. "Tell me or suffocate you bastard!" he shouted.

"I don't know!" he insisted.

"Were you hired?" Johanna demanded, crawling while simultaneously picking pieces of glass out of her back.

"Yes!"

"What were you hired for?" Cato snapped.

"To kill you!"

"Why?!"

The bartender thrashed frantically but Cato's grip was too firm. "Because Seneca wants to take your friend's wings! He's going to lobotomise him and use what he gets for his museum!"

Cato's ears felt like they were bleeding. He flexed his jaw and further tightened his grip on the bartender's neck. "I know that you know where they are. You have one chance to tell me or I'm
going to send you to hell a bit earlier than planned," he snapped.

"Seneca probably took him to his office but that's all I know! I don't know where his office is or how to go about finding it please don't kill me!" the man begged.

Johanna touched Cato's arm. "He's telling the truth," she said. She focused on the bartender and scowled, eyes flashing black. "Doesn't mean he deserves our pity."

Cato growled in agreement and slashed the man's throat with the point of his tail. The bartender coughed, blood spurting from his mouth. He remained this way for several minutes. Coughing and spluttering before finally going still.

Peeta wasn't here and Johanna and Cato weren't the forgiving types.

They left the man where he was, the pool of blood growing around his neck getting increasingly larger as the seconds passed. Johanna was the first to clamour back over the bar. "We need to find his office," she said.

Cato was right behind her.

~xXx~

"Your God isn't the only one," Seneca purred, rummaging around in his desk drawers. "There are hundreds of belief systems out there. Buddhism, Hinduism, Muslim, etc. Thousands of Gods in existence. Not just yours."

Peeta struggled to stay calm. He wanted to continue to thrash and scream but he knew it was expending his energy. Energy he might need later if he got a chance to escape. He was still petrified but he hid it well. Seneca couldn't know the increasingly horrifying effect he was having on his captive. Besides, what the maniac was saying was peaking Peeta's interest.

"Those who believe in your God receive punishment from your God. Those who believe in other Gods receive punishment from those Gods," Seneca continued. "I have been collecting the blood of various deities over the years. From Aphrodite herself to nicks off of Romulus. All in preparation for this moment."

What did he mean 'this moment'?

"The blood of the Gods have healing powers if applied on their own. But when they're mixed together the feuding of the different chemicals cause a burning reaction. And I have over fifty different blood types mixed together in my trusty vial," Seneca took pleasure in explaining. "It will be enough to burn your wings off of your back from the joint and not cause any damage to your or the wings themselves."

Peeta's heart picked up. His blood was thrumming so hard it felt like Seneca could hear his silent panic. He prayed that Cato and Johanna would find him before he lost his wings. Wait, no, he couldn't pray. If he prayed Snow would pick up on it and know where he was. Peeta had to physically force himself to stay silent because praying had always been second nature to him and trying to not do it was like trying not to blink.

Seneca must have been searching for the vial of blood. Peeta wondered if the man truly was crazy. Other Gods? That was impossible. There was only Snow. Clearly Seneca had heard an old wives tale and had taken it too seriously.

Peeta tried to think of a way of escape but Seneca had thought of everything. He had bound him up with bandages that had been cursed by Lady Karma. Peeta had never met Lady Karma but
Snow had warned him off of her with horror stories of her power. Peeta did not wish to ever encounter her because she held rein over everything. The tiny threads of the war hung from between her fingertips.

"Snow will most definitely kill me when the trail finally leads to me," Seneca said sombrely. "However, by then I will have my will written and my museum shall be passed down. I will hide your wings if trouble arises so that Snow doesn't confiscate what will become the main attraction of my livelihood!"

A hand suddenly touched Peeta's face and he jumped in surprise. Seneca's fingers wormed underneath the bandages, unthreading them and pulling them away from the captured angel's eyes. Relieved to finally be able to see, Peeta desperately searched his surroundings. He was in an office of some sort. Boring beige walls; a mahogany desk; cream carpet; no personal bits and bobs like photographs or nick nacks. He also checked his current state of bondage. He was tied up with bandages which had been wound numerous times around his ankles, wrists, shoulders and mouth.

"I might just take your eyes as well," Seneca decided. He spoke as if he were making diplomatic decisions. "These baby blues could bring me a lot of business."

Peeta felt an urge to do something that went against his good nature. If his mouth were free, he would have spat at the creep. Seneca was trying to be sneaky, pretending that he was only after Peeta's eyes and wings but Peeta knew the truth. Seneca was going to take every body part and feature that he could to put on display. Peeta had to escape. He had to get out. But every possible escape route would involve breaking his moral code.

"I want to tell you that this won't hurt, honey, but I'm sorry I can't," Seneca sighed. He stroked Peeta's hair like he was petting a dog. That was the thing about him: he treated Peeta like an animal, not a person.

Seneca pushed Peeta onto his side and survival instinct took over. The captured angel lashed out and, despite his being tied up, managed to kick Seneca a fair amount of times. He knocked the psycho over with his bound ankles, pushing him over onto his back. Annoyingly, he managed to keep his vial of blood in his hand without spilling any. When Peeta tried to roll away, his left wing caught on the carpet and got crushed between the floor and his body.

White hot pain laced up Peeta's back. The impact was so sudden that Peeta could physically hear the bones in his wing crushing. He screamed in agony, the sound muted behind the bandages. Seneca gasped in alarm and tried to help but as soon as his fingers grazed the injured appendage, Peeta roared in pain and kicked back at him again.

"Oh my goodness, sweetheart, what have you done?" Seneca exclaimed.

Seneca might as well have been talking to himself for all Peeta heard him. The pain was so constant and so agonizing that everything else was beginning to blot out and muffle. Black spots were appearing in his vision and his body shook with agony. He screamed and sobbed behind his gag, face coated in tears within seconds.

Seneca was so panicked that he pulled the bandages off of Peeta's face to try and get an idea of what he was to do. Except once his mouth was freed, all Peeta had the ability to do was scream and sob and yell in pain. Realizing that the angel was beyond saving, Seneca simply reached out for his vial and unscrewed the lid.

~xXx~

Cato and Johanna were tearing the VIP platform apart when they heard it. As soon as they'd dealt
with the bartender they'd ran up to where Seneca and Peeta had previously been; kicked everyone out; and tore the place apart trying to find a secret passage way or a hidden door. They obviously hadn't left the platform because if they had, Johanna or Cato would have instantly noticed so the only reasonable explanation was that Seneca had a hidden room.

A scream so loud that it made the entire club fall silent ripped through the air. Except where everyone else shrugged it off, Cato instantly recognized it.

"That was Peeta!" he exclaimed, darting off in the direction in which the scream had come from.

"There's nothing back there but a wall!" Johanna shouted, following after him.

"Or we're just meant to think that!" Cato shouted back. As soon as he reached the back wall he planted his boot into the black cushioned area. He kicked open an invisible door, one that had been designed to blend into whatever background it was put against.

"A chameleon spell," Johanna breathed. "How did we not notice that?"

"It must have been hidden," Cato answered. He darted through the door and down the single white corridor that lay beyond. Johanna followed, Temperance following close behind. There was only one door at the end of the corridor. A green door. The closer they got to this door, the louder the screams got.

Cato didn't wait a beat before kicking open the door. On the other side was an office like area. The screaming exploded into an almost unbearable volume, so much so that Cato thought his ear drums were going to burst. He barely took in any of the surroundings because the first thing he noticed was that the entire room stank of burning. And the burning was coming from the floor.

Seneca hovered over Peeta like a mad scientist doing an experiment. He was pouring something onto his captive's wings, along the joint connecting them to his back. Smoke was coming from Peeta's skin and the feathers were beginning to char. Peeta was screaming in agony, his bound hands clawing at the floor to try to escape.

Cato processed this all in a millisecond. He marched over to Seneca and kicked the bastard up the chin, sending him flying backwards before he even had time to process that there were intruders in his office. The vial of burning liquid flew out of the man's hand and smashed against the opposite wall, causing the wallpaper to moult and fall off in charred shards.

Johanna jumped from the door to the desk to Seneca's body and stamped down on his throat before he could get up. The angel obsessive yelped in surprise but didn't make another move to get up. "Give me an excuse why I shouldn't crush your throat into the floor you psychotic bastard!" she roared.

Cato was on the floor by Peeta in an instant. While he untied the bandages around Peeta's wrists, Temperance tugged impatiently on the ones around his ankles. Peeta was trembling like crazy and was still screaming even though he was losing his voice. Smoke still came from his wing, which thankfully hadn't come free of his back, and it took Cato a moment to notice that it was actually broken, not just burned.

"Fuck, Peeta, what happened?" Cato muttered.

"You still need me to tell you how to get rid of the purity, remember?" Seneca shouted hysterically, desperate not to have his throat broken by Johanna.

"Well then tell us how!" Johanna roared back.
"There's nothing I can do!" Seneca replied desperately. "He'll have to have his virginity taken from him! Properly, I mean. Not just having a freaky fuck with Snow that doesn't get rid of it. It's the only way, I swear!"

Cato swore to himself. Well, what the hell were they supposed to do now? Johanna shouted angrily and kicked Seneca in the gut to elevate her rage. "Fuck that!" she snapped. She spun around and kicked the desk as well. She pushed it out of her way, her strength causing it to smash into the far wall.

"Stay on the floor or you're dead, fucker," she threatened. She knelt down beside Cato and assessed the damage quickly. "What's happened?"

"His wing is burned near the joint and by the look of it broken," Cato said.

"What would you get from breaking it, you creep?!" Johanna threw her head over her shoulder to demand from Seneca.

"I didn't!" Seneca insisted frantically. He sat up but didn't make a move to stand up, paying heed to Johanna's threat of imminent death. "He tried to escape from me and he crushed it himself!"

Cato rubbed a hand over his face and groaned tiredly. Of course Peeta tried to escape. He cared too much about his wings to allow some psychotic collector to rip them off him. Now he had unintentionally damaged himself. "Peeta," he said softly, "Peeta, you have to stand up."

"Cato, it hurts!" Peeta shouted back, clearly not in the mood. Cato couldn't blame him for that because he had been through a lot in the past half hour.

"I understand that but we can't stay here." Cato gently touched Peeta's arm and asked, "Can you stand?"

"No!" Peeta snapped. He choked on a sob and curled up into a ball. "It's never going to heal. I'll never fly again!"

Johanna fell back onto her butt and massaged her temples. "Cato, I'm going to guard the door because if I keep watching this I'm going to do something I'll regret to Seneca." She didn't let Cato answer her as she simply stood up and left. Temperance followed, head hung low in despair.

Cato tried to touch Peeta again but the injured angel slapped his hand away from him. Smoke erupted from Peeta's palm and his skin singed away. "Don't touch me, Cato," he snapped.

"Peeta, calm down," Cato begged. "I'm trying to help you."

Peeta crawled onto his stomach and pressed his face into the carpet. His uninjured wing stood up proudly, twitching at the pain of its partner. The broken one, however, jutted out to one side. The bone had pierced through the skin and peeked out through the ruffled feathers. The burned joint was blackened and smouldering, grey blood seeping out of the cuts.

Seeing Peeta so distraught was distressing for Cato. It was odd because he was used to seeing people in pain. He lived in the dimension of pain, suffering and torture. Witnessing this sort of thing should have replenished him but instead he made him feel ill. Johanna felt it too. That was why she left the room. Was hanging around Peeta-a being of goodness from heaven—for too long causing the innocence of it all to rub off on them?

"I'm never going to fly again," Peeta whispered into the carpet.

"Now don't be silly, of course you are," Cato contradicted.
"No I won't! I can't heal myself and I'll forget everything about flying."

Cato frowned. "Isn't it like riding a bike? You never forget it?"

Peeta shook his head despondently. "It won't heal correctly."

Cato chewed his lip anxiously. There were something he could do but he didn't know if Peeta would let him. "Demons have healing abilities . . . If you can't do it, maybe I can."

Peeta's shoulders shook as he tried to stop crying. "No," he muttered. "It won't work."

"Well we don't know if we don't try, will we?" Cato placed a hand on the small of Peeta's back and held the other over his broken wing. "Just stay still, okay?" Peeta did the opposite and squirmed under Cato's hand. "Peeta, stop it. I'm trying to help."

"You can't help me!" Peeta staggered to his feet and groaned in agony as his wing drooped to the floor. He glared at Seneca and stumbled to the door. Cato scowled at the stubborn angel and stood up as well. Of course Peeta was going to try and be difficult. He was too proud to allow anyone else to help him, especially a demon.

The darkness threatened to swell up inside him. It insisted that Peeta was being ungrateful, that Cato should just kill him now. Do away with the purity ordeal, shove him into hell so Lucifer could smell him and punish him. Cato and Johanna could sort the situation out on their own. The evil consumed Cato and his eyes flashed back. He crossed the room in two long strides and shoved Peeta into the shut door. Peeta screamed in surprise, his front slamming hard into the hard wood.

"You discriminating little bastard," Cato snapped. "Why do you always refuse help? Do you think you're better than me? Do you think you're better than Johanna? Just remember that you aren't the better one in this situation. You're the odd one out. You're the one treading on line ice."

"Are you really doing this again? Really?" Peeta screamed back. He was fed up. He knew Cato's darkness was constantly there and could overcome him at any second. But now? Why now?!

"I have the advantage, I can kill you as easily as this!" Cato threw his hand behind him and shot a column of fire at Seneca. The inferno consumed the man and swallowed him whole. It happened so fast the man didn't have a chance to scream. Seconds later his charred bones fell to the floor, lying in a pile of ash. "So don't you dare cross me!"

Cato's fingers dug into Peeta's back, keeping him pinned to the door, and he shook his head. He had to win back control of his own mind and body. Inside his head, the darkness tried to consume his mind. However, the sane side of himself fought back, grabbing at the malevolent parts of his being and stuffing them to the back of his head.

Forcing his hand back up to Peeta's broken wing, Cato fought his evil nature and ignited his healing power. Peeta roared in agony as his wing began to throb, each beat burning like fire coursed through his veins. Cato held fast to him when he tried to pull away, pushing him harder against the door to keep him in place. The bones rearranging themselves in Peeta's wing was agonizing for him but no matter how hard he thrashed Cato held onto him, making sure the job got done fully.

This simple act of kindness was enough to allow Cato to push his inner demon away. It weakened him but he used his final conserve of strength to finish off healing. As soon as the job was done he collapsed to his knees, exhausted. Peeta jumped back from the door, shocked at how the burn of Cato's healing powers-how it took his breath away and felt like a knife stabbing him multiple
times in the wing had actually healed him completely.

Peeta looked at Cato's state in alarm. "Cato!" he exclaimed.

Johanna burst into the room. "Oh fuck Cato, what have you done?!" she yelled.

"I healed him," Cato replied weakly.

"Cato, what the hell?! That goes against everything you are you idiot!" Johanna shouted. She tried to pull Cato to his feet but his knees gave out as soon as he stood on two feet. "You've drained your life force. You're going to have to sleep . . . you won't be able to move anywhere until you do."

Peeta fell to his knees and wedged his arms under Cato's armpits. "I've got you," he said. "If you have to sleep here, you'll sleep outside on one of the VIP couches."

"I'm fine," Cato mumbled drowsily.

"Shut up," Peeta replied. Temperance bit down on the door handle and pulled the door open for him. "You helped me, it's my turn to help you."

"What about the clubbers? They're going to murder us if they find out we've killed Seneca," Johanna said nervously, pointing to the pile of bones and ashes that used to be the obsessive freak.

"They don't have to know. Just say he's indisposed," Peeta gritted out between his teeth. Cato was heavy but Peeta had been given just enough strength from Snow to drag him out of the corridor and out into the VIP platform. Peeta ignored the churning sensation he felt in his gut, having been in the presence of death threatening to take its toll. Peeta refused to allow it, grinding his teeth harder together and lifting Cato onto the couch.

"Rest up big guy," Johanna said, falling onto the chair beside Cato and patting his back.

Peeta knelt down in front of Cato and laid his head down beside him. "You saved me," he whispered. "I'm nothing without my wings. If I don't have them I'm nothing but Snow's plaything."

Cato's eyes were fluttering with fatigue but he managed a small smile. "You're more than that," he said sleepily. "With or without wings." The demon didn't say anything more before he fell asleep.

Peeta adjusted his sitting position by the couch and leaned his head against the couch beside Cato's.

He wasn't going anywhere.
Unearthing Memories

Chapter Summary

Cato delves into Peeta's memories to try to find the key to breaking the purity spell. What he finds is more disturbing than he had ever anticipated . . .

Chapter Notes

Dream sequences are separated by an ~

Chapter Ten

"Cato, you should be resting, this really isn't necessary," Peeta insisted.

The club had cleared out a couple of hours previously and Cato had been awake again for at least half an hour. The rest had done him good but he was still fatigued. The three of them hadn't moved from the VIP platform because there was nowhere to go. Not until they could figure out a solution to the purity problem anyway.

Cato didn't listen to Peeta and continued to examine the angel's healed wing. The demon was still tired and had to prop himself up on the sofa with his elbow just to continue his examination. Peeta sat on the floor, in the same spot in which he had sworn never to leave until Cato was better, and decided just to let the demon do what he wanted. "I have to make sure I did it properly," he replied gruffly. His finger squeezed and rubbed various parts of Peeta's left wing to make sure, without any hindrance or doubt, that he had done his job right.

"It looks healed to me," Johanna said.

"Looks can be deceiving," Cato responded. "I was battling my darkness when I did this. Who knows what I could have arranged wrong?"

"I'm fine, Cato, really," said Peeta. "You did your job really well. Look." He flapped his previously broken wing, causing the feathers to brush Cato's hands and face. The demon was taken aback by how silky they felt against his skin and leaned back against the sofa in shock. "I'm more worried about the burns."

When Peeta had grabbed Cato and dragged him out of Seneca's office, the skin on his forearms had burned badly. Johanna moved off her seat and sat on the floor beside Peeta, taking his arms into her hands and studying them. "Damn, that looks bad," she said.

"It doesn't hurt," said Peeta. "I'm just worried it will hold me back."

Johanna nodded and held her hand over Peeta's arm, using her own healing ability to seal up the wounds as best she could. Because she was lazy by nature, she couldn't complete the job properly, but she did what she was able to and the burns sealed up pretty well. Cato's head rolled around on his cushion drowsily and he declared, "I will sort that out once my energy is fully back."
"You don't have to, really," Peeta insisted. "You've helped me more that I deserve. Helping isn't in your nature so what you have done is way more than I could have asked for." Peeta looked to the floor shamefully. "I'm surprised you haven't ditched me yet because I'm so much of a bother."

"Yeah," Johanna said sarcastically, "we were actually discussing that when you were with Seneca. Maybe it's about time we bucked you out and sorted this shit out ourselves." She nudged Peeta playfully. "You're part of the team. You don't just abandon team mates randomly. Besides, it's not your fault you're cursed by Snow."

Peeta picked at his fingernails sheepishly. He didn't like hearing the words 'cursed' and 'Snow' in the same sentence. There were things he still had to come to terms with. Things he still had to admit to himself about his creator. At the back of his mind, he knew everything that was being said about him was true but he just couldn't admit it to himself. Not yet. It was too painful. Everything he had believed in all his life was falling to pieces around him.

"Even if you were a nuisance," Johanna said, her eyebrows scrunched up in deep thought, "I still think you're involved somehow."

"Involved?" Peeta asked. "What do you mean?"

"This whole walls between heaven and hell falling thing is a bit strange. If Snow is behind it, how did he plan to do it? And how has he been able to plan this without his Vision finding out? I think you're a link, somehow, I just don't know in what way," Johanna explained.

Peeta was confused. How would he be involved? How could he be a link in Snow's plans? He knew nothing of the walls failing or that it was Snow's idea to make it happen! Johanna clearly knew this and what she meant was something much deeper. That maybe Peeta was involved on a subconscious level. A level he was yet to discover himself . . .

A hand touched Peeta's shoulder and he yelped in surprise, having been so lost in his thoughts that he had forgotten that Cato was still awake. "I have a plan," the tired demon announced.

"What sort of plan?" Peeta asked nervously, turning to face Cato's sofa. Temperance nervously dug his claws into the angel's shoulder, clearly unnerved as well. Seneca claimed that the only way to cure Peeta of his scent was to take his virginity. Whatever plan Cato had couldn't be at all good.

"I can seep into the pleasure centres of your brain and maybe try to snap whatever it is making Snow's fucks be unaccounted for," Cato suggested. "I won't pretend you won't feel anything but it might be the only shot we've got."

"Are you strong enough?" Johanna asked with concern.

Cato nodded. As if to prove himself, he heaved his tired body up into a sitting position. Peeta and Johanna both jumped to their feet with worry. Johanna held Cato's arm as he stood up and Peeta stood on standby, ready to catch him if he feel. Even if it did mean burning his skin. "I'm okay," Cato pressed, waving Johanna off.

Cato turned to Peeta and gripped his shoulder with as much strength as he could muster. "Do you trust me?" he asked.

Peeta nodded. "I do."

"Then you'll believe me when I say that I won't cause unnecessary pain?" asked Cato.
Again, Peeta nodded.

"Memories may resurface while I'm searching," said Cato. His green eyes were fierce and the glowing emerald burned into Peeta like fire. "Memories of previous sexual experiences. Things that Snow may have done to you . . . and I can't guarantee that they'll all be happy."

Peeta inhaled sharply and nodded. "I understand," he replied.

Cato nodded. "Lie down on the sofa and close your eyes. I'll work as fast as I can. Johanna will have to hold your wrists down. Just in case."

"Will you be able to break Snow's spell? If you find what he's done?" Peeta asked.

"If I find it—which I'm sure I will—the upper hand that hell has over heaven should give my powers enough strength to overwhelm Snow's," Cato explained.

Peeta lay down on the sofa, heart fluttering rapidly in his chest, and closed his eyes as Cato instructed. He felt the demon come closer to him and he inhaled nervously.

"I'll be as gentle as I can," Cato said softly. Without another word he pressed his finger against Peeta's temple, plunging him into sleep and instantly taking control of his dreams. Peeta immediately frowned in displeasure, already feeling the effects of having a sex demon inside his head. Johanna held his wrists down, as instructed, having to tighten her grip a moment later as the angel began to squirm.

Inside Peeta's head, a flurry of things was happening. Flashes of images he didn't want to see exploded behind his eyelids. Acts of fornication and lust, all of them having been committed by himself. All the things he had done in the past with Snow. It felt like Cato was digging into his memories like a dog, unearthing everything Peeta had suppressed and pushed away. Everything he had denied ever happened.

~

"Snow, I learned of something new today."

Snow's hand froze over his goblet of wine. "Oh? And what was that?"

Peeta was extremely proud of himself for learning something without having to ask Snow about it. Still in his early years, he was still vulnerable and uneducated. He was slowly adapting, however, and every day he evolved more and more. Except Snow didn't like it when Peeta was taught something by someone else. There was a certain way Snow wanted his Vision to learn things and only he could do it. Except Peeta did not know this and actively sought out new learning experiences wherever he went.

"Armisael told me of the sins of the world," Peeta explained. He jumped onto the bed in front of Snow and beamed brightly. "She told me of greed and gluttony and sloth and lust and . . ." Peeta paused and frowned. "Snow, why do you lust? It's a sin!"

Snow clenched his hand into a fist and resisted the urge to get angry. "We are exceptions, my love," he said carefully.

"No one is an exception, Armisael told me," Peeta contradicted, shaking his head in denial.

"Armisael doesn't know of the exceptions. I am God and I can do as I wish."

Peeta was stubborn, having latched onto the first explanation of the seven deadliest that he had
gotten, like he did with most of his education. "No," he said.

Snow's eyes flashed dangerously. "Are you questioning me, Haziel?"

Young and naïve, Peeta scowled and said, "Yes I am."

Snow growled angrily and threw his goblet away. He grabbed his Vision by the shoulders and threw him down, slapping him harshly across the face. "You don't question me, do you understand?" he roared.

"No, I don't understand!" Peeta yelled back. "Because you're wrong!"

Snow wormed his hand between Peeta's back and the bed, his fingers crawling up the boy's wings until he found what he was looking for. Peeta screamed as Snow rubbed the bumps on his wings, massaging them between his fingers until the angel beneath him was suitably worked up. "Look at that, Haziel, you've gotten horny. Looks like you've sinned too," God jeered at Peeta.

"Stop it, that's not fair!" Peeta roared back. He hit his head off the end of the mattress angrily, his chest rising and falling rapidly to the sensation of Snow touching his wing bumps.

"You're a sinner too!" Snow jibed.

"No, I'm not!"

"You are!"

"I'm not!"

~

Peeta's eyes flew open and he screamed in shock. Johanna loomed over him, still holding onto his wrists. "It's okay, Peeta," she assured. Her voice begun to fade again as Cato's rummaging in Peeta's head pulled him back under into unconsciousness. He didn't want to go again, to face what else was to be unearthed, but he had no choice as his eyes snapped shut and he went limp once more.

~

"Why was Hermesiel speaking to you?"

Peeta shrugged, turning the taps on to draw Snow his bath. "He was just asking if I would drop by the cathedral and listen to the new song he's working on for the choirs," he explained. "He said that he wanted my opinion because I would know what pleases you most." The thought made him smile. Everyone wanted to please the Lord Snow.

"Are you sure that's all he wanted?" Snow appeared beside Peeta, night gown tied tight around his waist.

"It's all he asked for," Peeta replied, straightening up as the bath filled up. "What else could he possibly want?"

"You're only half a millennia old, Haziel. You're still very young. Some angels are jealous of your closeness to me. Others . . . well . . . others are weak. They very easily fall under the spell you cast," Snow explained.

"What spell?" Peeta scoffed. He walked around Snow and grabbed the bath salts he knew the
Lord adored. Scent of roses. "I don't cast any spell."

Snow shook his head. He dipped his hand into the water as it filled the bath and stirred it with his fingertips. "It's a spell you cast unwittingly. I created you, therefore you are aesthetically pleasing to not only me. The angels have begun to notice the angelic assets I blessed you with."

Peeta pulled a face. "You're making it sound like all anyone sees me as is an object to lust after."

"Anyone who lusts after you will be no angel of mine," Snow assured, laying a comforting hand on his vision's shoulder. "I'd damn them to hell faster than they could say 'whoops'. That's why I have to know Hermesiel's true intentions . . ."

"His true intentions were for the choirs," Peeta finished for Snow. He returned to the bath and shook in the rose salts. "I'd know if he had been trying to imply something else. Hermesiel is a respected angel, sir. He would never . . . Angels can't break the seven deadliest anyway. The consequences would be . . . not at all worth it."

"You still live by the exaggerated lies that Armisael fed you when you were young," mused Snow. "Now that the blasphemous heathens have been smited from heaven and the war has begun, there is no longer time to worry about being too wrathful or too lustful. It just happens, my pet." Snow's voice was gentle but there was an undertone of something firmer that made Peeta feel nervous.

"Still . . . I'd rather live by your original rules," Peeta explained. "It's not like it would do any harm."

Snow tsked.

"Snow, sir, are you sure you're not just, um, a little bit envious?" asked Peeta.

"Me?! Jealous?!" Snow roared back. "How dare you accuse me of such a thing!" He was so angry in that millisecond that he couldn't control himself and he smacked Peeta across the face, raking his fingernails down his cheek in the process.

Peeta yelled with pain and cupped his face as it began to bleed. Metal hued liquid began to seep profusely from his cheek, slipping from between his fingers down his hand and wrist. He looked at Snow with horror. This was the first time he'd ever struck him. Snow's eyes immediately softened but when he reached out for Peeta, his vision stepped back with fear.

"Haziel," Snow said, his voice warning, "don't make me force this."

Peeta was shaking with terror and mortification. He was still bleeding and his face stung badly. He forced himself to stay still as the Lord stepped closer to him again and wound his arms tight around him in a hug. Snow shushed Peeta as he trembled in his arms.

"There, there," he whispered. "You've learned your lesson."

"I'm sorry," Peeta whispered back. "Is there anything I can do to make up for it?"

Snow wedged a hand between them and undid his bathrobe. He walked around Peeta and shrugged it off before climbing into the bath. Peeta spun on his heel, thinking it was going to be a simple request like wash his back or hair. Snow had something else in mind.

"Take your clothes off and get in with me," he said.

"Why, sir?"
Snow grinned. "How else are you going to make up for it?"

~

Peeta awoke again with a high pitched scream. His body felt like it was burning. He felt like someone had set him on fire and his skin and hair was singeing away slowly. Johanna was sitting completely on top of him now, her body pinning his hips to the sofa. He jerked his head to the side and saw Cato, kneeling by his side with his head bowed low. His fingers were still pressed against Peeta's temple.

"You have to close your eyes again," Johanna shouted desperately. "He'll get lost if you don't!"

Peeta felt tears swell in his eyes as he wrestled with himself. He didn't want to do this anymore. There was a reason he buried those memories. They were too painful to relive. But if he didn't, Cato was going to get lost. Peeta inhaled sharply and forced his eyes shut, the abrupt action being just enough to cause the tears to slip out and dampen his cheeks.

~

Snow pulled Peeta down on top of him and kissed him fiercely. Peeta was still unsure, the things he had been told about the seven deadliest fresh in his mind. "Don't worry, Haziel," the Lord murmured into his Vision's ear, "when I'm finished, I'll make sure you don't remember a thing."

~

Cato pulled his fingers away from Peeta's temple and dragged Johanna down to the ground just as Peeta bolted up from the sofa and screamed as fire flushed through his entire body. He fell off the sofa onto his face, panting out huge puffs to try to get his breath back. The whole ordeal had been traumatising. Having to live through all those memories.

"Did you do it?" Peeta panted.

Cato reached out and touched Peeta's sweaty head fondly. "Yeah. I got it." He grinned. "Welcome to the world of impurity."
Chapter Summary

Cato, Peeta and Johanna hide out in a motel for the night, leading to an intimate moment between the boys.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Eleven

"Peeta, this is like your life story!" Johanna cackled as she munched on a handful of wosits. The angel and demons were hiding out in a motel in Zimbabwe as to stay under the radar for a while. They were planning to go back to hell tomorrow but Peeta needed to rest after having his mind practically raped just to snap a spell Snow had put on him.

It was easy to get into the motel. Humans couldn't see them so it was easy to find a room. Most household hauntings were entities spending the night in the human world but Johanna promised she'd stay in their room and not cause any havoc.

Peeta frowned at the t.v screen. "If that is my life story, wouldn't that make Lord Snow the transvestite?"

"It would! Which just makes it all the more fucking hilarious!" Johanna laughed.

"And where do we fit into this 'life story'?" asked Cato.

"We're the aliens," Johanna clarified.

"The brother and sister who have sex?!"

"Well, minus that bit obviously. Could be worse. Peeta's been running around in gold knickers through the entirety of it!"

Peeta didn't know how the human remote that controlled the picture box worked or how Johanna used it to switch it on in the first place but when he pressed the big red button, the picture disappeared. "I'll never understand human entertainment," he muttered.

"Don't have to," said Johanna, throwing her packet to the floor and licking her fingers. "Better than what we do. Torturing the demented gets boring after a while, you know. Despite popular opinion."

Peeta pushed the threaded blanket that lay on top of the bed to the very bottom with his foot because there was a questionable stain on it. "I thought you were lazy . . . Wouldn't that mean you don't have to do anything?"

Johanna snorted. "I wish," she said.

"She's a demon of the seven deadliest," Cato explained. He nudged the blinds out of the way and peered out of the window. "Romulus created her after the fall to embody and punish those who
break the sin 'loth'."

Peeta was surprised by this. He raised his eyebrows at Johanna. "So you were never in heaven?"
he asked.

Johanna clicked her tongue and shook her head. "Nope," she replied, dramatically popping the 'p'.
She brushed her fingers through her short hair and sighed. "Although it sounds awful. No offence
or anything but it sounds like the land of the goody two shoes. Which it technically is. Suck up
world for all the suckiest suck ups. I would love a set of wings though. They're pretty beast."

Peeta scratched his right wing subconsciously, like Johanna mentioning it had sparked the itch in
the first place. "So you're kind of like me then?" he asked.

"Sure," Johanna said. "Except Romulus didn't slave over it for days or whatever. He just clicked
his fingers and erected us with his magic."

"Remember Glimmer?" Cato asked. "She was the blonde demon in Romulus' court that day you
came to see me?" Peeta nodded. "Well, she's the demon of lust. She sparks it where ever she
goes."

"Although her powers are nowhere near as strong as Cato's," Johanna added. "Glimmer can spark
lust but Cato can control sexuality."

Peeta remembered when Cato offered to change his sexuality because it was against what the
bible taught. Peeta wasn't ashamed of his sexuality. Snow had raised him to always trust in his
instincts (even if Snow himself sometimes turned them on their head). Peeta wasn't going to let
anyone change him, especially not in terms of who he was or wasn't attracted to.

"I don't know about you guys but I'm zonked," Johanna sighed. She stood up and looked at the
two beds in the room. "Sleeping arrangements?"

Cato moved away from the window and sighed. "Maybe it's for the best we just went back to hell
tonight," he said.

"No, I'm knackered," Johanna complained. "I haven't slept in six hours!" She threw herself onto a
bed and climbed under the covers, knocking the lamp off and plunging them into darkness. "You
two share!"

Peeta looked at Cato and flushed. "You okay with sharing?"

"Yeah. I'm fine with it." Cato scratched his head nervously. "Ah, do you want to get in first
because of your . . ." He gestured at Peeta's wings.

"Um, sure." Peeta threw the comforter back and climbed into the bed. He faced inwards so that
his wings rested over the edge and wouldn't smother Cato when he got in as well. Cato
awkwardly climbed into the bed as well, lying down so that he was facing Peeta. Because it was a
single bed, they were extremely close together.

Peeta held his breath anxiously, scared to so much as let his chest deflate as he let it go in case it
caused disruption to their position. "What if I accidentally touch you?" he whispered fearfully.

Cato chewed on his lip thoughtfully. "How about I put my hands on you now so that you won't
knock into them in your sleep?" he asked.

Peeta wasn't sure but it sounded better than bumping into Cato's hands in the middle of the night
and burning his skin down to the bone. "Yeah okay," he answered. Peeta could have sworn that
Cato turned a little pink himself as he brushed the angel's shirt up a little and placed his hands firmly on his bare waist. It was the only way to do it. Clothes didn't make an impact. He had to be touching bare skin.

Peeta's eyes flickered up to Cato's nervously. They were tinted black still but not in the thick, never ending way that they were when Cato's darkness took over. There were patterns on the demon's neck. Small black burns that looked almost like beads threading around his neck and down his arms. "What are the burns from?" Peeta whispered.

"What burns?" Cato asked back.

"On your neck and arms."

"Oh. Those aren't burns. They're brands. Every demon has them. Romulus marked each one of us with them once he sawed off our wings. Like a . . . reminder of what side we are on," Cato explained.

"Did that hurt?" asked Peeta.

"Oh yeah. It hurt. I've never experienced agony like it."

Peeta couldn't imagine losing his wings. He still couldn't understand why the angels who fell chose to endure such pain. "Did Romulus use the blood of the Gods like Seneca was going to?" he asked.

Cato shook his head. "Where would he have gotten that?" he asked wearily. "No, Romulus used a saw. This huge motherfucker of a saw that took hours to get our wings off with. It was a real bloodbath."

Peeta swallowed hard. "I'm sorry you had to go through that."

"Hey, no point being sorry. I chose it," Cato replied. "You would have had to go through the same thing if you had chosen it. The only ones who didn't were the seven deadliest like Johanna. Besides, it was a couple of hour's pain for a lifetime of contentment. I'm happy where I am. I never felt that way in heaven. Are you content?"

Peeta looked away and shook his head. "No."

Cato touched the angel's face, ignoring the way he flinched at the contact. "I can see were Snow has struck you," he whispered. "He hit you when you were caught by Metatron, didn't he?"

"He might have," Peeta reluctantly admitted. He instinctively pushed his face into Cato's hand to seek comfort and flinched back when it stung. Cato pressed his hand tighter, having felt the way Peeta had wanted to do so but couldn't because of the burn. "Snow does a lot of things."

"I have a feeling that Snow is viewed as this extremely patient and loving man because he takes his anger out on you," said Cato. "Am I right?"

Peeta looked over his shoulder to where Temperance slept on the floor. The dragon was the only thing he had left of Snow. The only reminder that he had ever been shackled to him. "You might be."

Cato couldn't understand why Peeta stayed with Snow for so long, even after he hurt him so badly. There were things he saw in Peeta's memories that he was never going to forget. Distorted images of pain and agony, love and deception, all stuffed away to the back of Peeta's head where he couldn't relive them. It seemed that the angel had selective memory and had decided to ignore
anything that involved Snow being violent and deny its existence.

The annoying thing was, Peeta was a nice person. Snow hadn't corrupted him or turned him into an unbearable asshole. Peeta remained genuine. He could have built a stable life for himself in heaven if he had been born into different circumstances. He was beautiful too. He could have anyone he wanted for partnership and whoever got him would have been very lucky indeed.

Cato impulsively leaned forward and connected their lips. Peeta squeaked with surprise, having not expected that at all. He lay still, frozen in shock. Many panicked thoughts flew through his head in a millisecond. What was going on? Was Cato mad? What should he do? Should he push him away? Thoughts of a different nature also passed through. He wasn't tied to Snow anymore. He could do what he wanted. He had his own free will. Did he want this to happen?

Peeta couldn't kiss back. That was the hard thing. If he kissed back, his mouth would burn. The only way he could express his feelings to Cato was by moaning what had to be the quietest moan that ever passed a living creature's lips. It was so minute that Johanna didn't even hear it in the next bed over.

Cato was surprised that Peeta hadn't pushed him away. He had done this on impulse and had expected to be pushed out of the bed and forced to sleep on the floor again. Peeta's compliance invigorated him. The hand on the angel's waist drew the smaller boy closer so their clothed bodies were pressed together. Peeta placed his hands on the demon's chest where he knew they'd be safe from harm as long as the shirt stayed on.

As Cato's tongue tasted Peeta's lips and further, adoring how the angel tasted of innocence, he let his guard down. It was only for a millisecond but it was enough. The kiss had just been too damn good. It was hot, passionate, fuelled by desperation and want and just a hint of lust. Cato had lost train of thought and didn't think of the darkness that still dwelled inside of him.

The evil seized hold of Cato while his guard was down. It controlled Cato like a puppet master pulling the strings to move its creation's limbs. Cato kissed the boy in front of him harder, biting his full bottom lip with his sharp teeth. If Peeta's eyes had been open, he would have witnessed the change between good Cato and evil Cato. But he hadn't.

The darkness knew what would make Peeta tick. To an angel, letting another person touch their wings in a sexual manner was as important as giving their virginity. It was the perfect target.

Of course the darkness had some fun first. It pretended to be Cato well. It kissed Peeta, teased him, even had a sneaky squeeze of the angel's backside, all exactly the way that Cato's good, sane side would. The sane side which was currently fighting the evil before it could mentally scare Peeta for life.

Cato fought hard against the darkness the same way he did in Seneca's office. He couldn't let it hurt Peeta. Not when he had just made the discovery that maybe they had a shot of having something. If the evil violated Peeta's wings then that would be game over. They were too important to Peeta for Cato to let that happen.

Greedy, malevolent fingers crawled over the smaller boy's side, sliding dangerously close to the joint where back became bone and bone became wing. Cato had just enough strength to tear himself away. He threw himself off the bed and purposely knocked his head against the floor to gain control of himself again.

"Cato!" Peeta exclaimed. "Are you alright?"

Cato staggered to his feet. "Y-yeah," he said. "I'm good. I think I might sleep with Johanna"
tonight though." He stumbled over to Johanna's bed and forced her to nudge over.

"You two better not have been fucking doing what I think you were doing," Johanna muttered sleepily as she moved to give Cato room.

As both demons fell asleep, Peeta stayed awake for hours afterward, feeling like a fool for thinking that intimacy with Cato would ever be possible.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Poor Peeta. If only he knew that Cato was protecting him :( 

The movie they were watching at the beginning, for those who couldn't guess, was The Rocky Horror Picture Show ^_^
The Truth and Nothing But

Chapter Summary

A startling revelation . . .

Chapter Twelve: The Truth and Nothing But

"Johanna."

"Johanna."

"Johanna."

"Cato, I better be fucking dreaming right now and you aren't really waking me up in the middle of
the night," Johanna hissed, eyes still shut as if she were still sleeping.

"Johanna," Cato said seriously, looking over the demon of laziness' shoulder to ensure that their
roommate was still asleep, "I'm worried."

Johanna sighed and cracked one eye open, the black hole of an iris straining to see in the thick
dark of the room. " Worried about what?" she asked tiredly. "Couldn't we have waited to discuss
this in the morning? I need at least fifteen hours sleep or I won't be able to function properly. You
knew this when you allowed me to come!"

Cato shook his head slightly, his movements limited due to how he lay on the bed so close to his
friend. "I don't want to bring this up when Peeta is awake. It might scare him. Well, I don't mean
scare him. He's tough as old boots really but this is on a whole other level. It's not a matter of
loving or hating Snow or loving or hating Romulus. Or which side we've all chosen."

Her other eye slid open as Johanna's curiosity peaked over her fatigue. "What do you mean? What
are you blathering about?" she asked impatiently.

"When I was in Peeta's head," Cato said slowly, "I saw something I shouldn't have."

"What do you mean shouldn't have?" Johanna asked.

"When I hack into someone's mind, due to the nature of my powers I should only see thoughts
and memories directly linked to their sexuality," Cato whispered quickly. "Except when Peeta
jolted awake for the second time and I almost slipped, I saw a memory that my powers shouldn't
have allowed through. Something so suppressed that even when I unearthed it myself, Peeta still
doesn't remember it."

Johanna tried to prop herself up on her elbow but Cato pulled her back down, fearing that her
sitting up would cause Peeta to wake. "You're not making sense!" she hissed quietly. "What do
you mean that your powers shouldn't have allowed? If it shouldn't have been allowed then it
shouldn't have gotten through! And what do you mean so suppressed that Peeta still doesn't
remember it? How bad can it be?"

"Cresil," Cato said, his voice so stern yet fearful that she fell silent instantly, "I'm being serious. I
shouldn't have saw what I did but now that I have I can't shake its relation to the events that have been unfolding recently."

Johanna shifted uncomfortably on the spot. "What did you see?" she asked.

Cato closed his eyes, the images of all the abuse he had witnessed forever engraved into his mind, and wished he could deny their existence like Peeta did. "Snow didn't just create Peeta for the sake of it, he made him for a reason."

"What sort of reason?" Johanna asked apprehensively. "Stop fucking around, what did you actually, physically see, Belial?"

"I saw Snow experimenting on Peeta," Cato hissed, angry with himself for having to actually say such a thing out loud. "He's been doing it ever since Peeta was born!"

Johanna went stiff beside Cato. Her breathing accelerated as her blood ran cold with fear. "Experimenting?" she repeated in question. "What sort of experimenting?"

"What sort of experimenting do you think?!" Cato exclaimed in a hushed voice. "Operating tables, straps, surgical instruments, the whole deal! The sort of shit we put sinners through every day!"

"But what reason would Snow have to experiment on something he created himself?" Johanna asked helplessly. "It doesn't make sense, none of this makes any sense!"

"I think if it was intended to make sense, this whole ordeal would have been over ages ago," Cato muttered. He couldn't shake what he had witnessed out of his head.

Ever since the darkness seized hold of him when he kissed Peeta, he had been in a complete state of distress. Every gory, gruesome detail of Snow's torturous actions towards his creation. Running wild in Cato's head. Including the worst of them all: the table; the gigantic head piece holding the prisoner down; the blood and the guts; the instruments and the painful thrashing . . . Snow's maniac laughter harmonised by the agonising scream of his subject . . . It was the stuff of nightmares.

And Peeta didn't remember any of it. Maybe it was better that way.

"Do you think it's something to do with the fading of the walls?" Johanna whispered, having calmed down a notch.

Cato was silent before nodding. "Yes. I do." He feared what connection it did have to the walls fading but it couldn't be a coincidence. Johanna had definitely been right when she said that Peeta was involved somehow. Involved without being aware that he was involved.

Johanna turned onto her stomach and buried her face into her pillow. "This is going to end with shit hitting the fan, isn't it?" she muttered into the feathered pillow.

"I don't think there's any way to avoid it," Cato agreed.

Johanna groaned angrily into her pillow. "Well, I at least want my sleep then," she declared, rolling away from Cato and tugging the duvet away from him. "So shut up."

Cato tried to fall asleep, to get some rest like Peeta and Johanna, but he couldn't. When he shut his eyes, all he could see was how crazed Snow had looked as he did whatever it was he did to Peeta. Cato had seen many fucked up things in hell but never had anything haunted his dreams as much as Peeta's piercing scream did.
A knocking on the door tore Cato from his nightmares. He jolted awake so fast that the sudden movement jerked Johanna up and over the side of the bed. She fell with a shocked yelp, her body smacking the floor like a rock. She groaned, clearly annoyed, and sat up angrily. "Who the fuck is that?" she demanded. "Nobody should know we're here!"

Cato cautiously stood up and moved to the door. He peered through the peep hole and frowned at what he saw. He threw the door open in confusion. "Marvel?" he asked, perplexed.

The Guard of Hell quirked an eyebrow and invited himself into the room. Johanna eyed the demon suspiciously, clamouring back onto the bed and rubbing her eyes to rid them of the sleep in them. "I am here because Romulus wants to know where the fuck you've gotten to."

"Uh . . ."

"Clove has been driven mad with worry. She's come to the conclusion that you've ran off with that silly pet angel of yours." Marvel's black eyes slid past Cato and landed on the bed where Peeta still slept. "Who knew she was right?" He stepped forward but Cato intercepted, placing a hand on Marvel's chest in warning.

"Don't wake him up," Cato said firmly.

Marvel raised his eyebrows. "And why not?"

"Just don't, Maalik."

Marvel's eyes flashed dangerously. He shoved Cato's hand off him. "Are you seriously doing what I think you're doing?" he asked. "Are you both in cahoots with angels now? Tell me it's not what I think and you've really been torturing Snow by kidnapping his Vision or something, please!"

"You don't know what you're talking about, Maalik," Johanna answered. "This is for your own good, not just ours. You'll thank us someday."

"For what? Going against what we promised Romulus? Did you really go through the agony of sawing off your wings just to convert back?" Marvel asked incredulously.

"We aren't converting," Cato replied. "I still don't believe in Snow's values. However, this has nothing to do with what side we're on. It's bigger than all of us and the only connection we can find is Peeta. So, yes, Marvel, maybe I am in cahoots with angels. If it means sorting this problem out then you're damn right I am!"

Marvel looked disgusted. "I am so disappointed in you both. I thought you were better than this. It's what he wants, you know!" He pointed at Peeta's sleeping form threateningly. "He wants you both to turn back to God!" He ignored the acidic aftertaste than came with saying the 'G' word and continued to rant, blood seeping out of his mouth and dripping down his chin like a vampire. "That angel is nothing but a mindless slave who has it wired into his brain to spread his legs whenever Snow clicks his fingers! He isn't as blessed or good or innocent as he pretends to be!"

"You don't know anything about him," Cato snapped angrily.

"Oh, don't I?" Marvel snapped back. "And what don't I know? Do tell, I'm curious!" They were chest to chest, glaring at each other menacingly. Johanna lingered nervously behind them. She wanted to wake Peeta out of fear of what Marvel would do but was worried that any sudden movement would make them act.
It was Marvel who hit Cato first. He swung at the slightly taller demon and took him by surprise, his fist making perfect contact with Cato's temple and knocking him over. The impact threw Cato's vision off balance, made his head spin and his eyes slide out of focus. Johanna immediately jumped to his defence. She lurched across the room and grabbed Marvel round the neck. She was too light compared to Marvel, however, and the stronger demon threw her off with ease.

Cato tried to get to his feet but Marvel's punch had concussed him. He felt like he was going to throw up and the floor was spinning like a tornado beneath him. Marvel climbed onto Cato and grabbed him by the neck, lifting his fist and bringing it down against his face repeatedly.


Johanna tried to unseat Marvel by throwing herself at him full force but the demon was too well built and she bounced off him into the wall. Cato was seeing red. Whether it was his blood or his eyes he didn't know. All he could feel was pain and all he heard was Johanna's enraged screaming alongside Marvel's angered yelling.

Then there was silence. Johanna stopped screaming. Marvel stopped yelling.

Peeta had woken up during the fight. He had jumped out of bed-unnoticed during the ruckus—went straight to the sink in all the commotion and filled a glass with water. He now stood over Marvel, glass held perfectly over the demon's head.

"Get out of here right now or I will make you leave myself," the angel threatened, his voice darker than Cato had ever heard from any of God's followers.

"What are you going to do? Blast me out with goodness?" Marvel snorted. His eyes fell on the glass in Peeta's hand. "Or by throwing water at me?" He rolled his eyes and turned back to Cato, raising his fist for another hit. Johanna was about to throw herself back in before he could hit Cato again but paused when Peeta did something odd.

He tipped the glass upside down so all the water splashed out onto Marvel's head. The demon flushed angrily and stood up. "You little fucker," he growled. Johanna crawled across the floor to Cato and helped him sit up.

Peeta regarded Marvel calmly as the demon sized himself up to him. Despite Peeta's superiority in wing span, his height did not quite match Marvel's. The demon grinned wolfishly, trying to get the smaller boy to shrivel in fear of him. "We didn't get to finish what we started in hell, did we?" he taunted. "I was supposed to show you what it was like to get fucked properly, wasn't I?"

Cato knew that if Marvel tried to hurt Peeta, he'd throw himself at him, even if the room was still spinning.

Peeta didn't flinch. His gaze was cool and unwavering. Even when Marvel was so close that there was no space between them, he didn't back down. He held his chin up high and stared right into Marvel's eyes, unafraid.

"I don't hear you saying no," Marvel teased.

"He's not saying yes either!" Johanna spat, confused with Peeta's silence.

Marvel ignored her and leaned his face forward towards the young blond's. "Is that it, Vision of God?" he taunted, his lips skimming Peeta's with each word he spoke. "You want to feel the true evil I am capable of unleashing? I'd be more than glad to pound that tight little ass of yours, all you
have to do is ask."

Peeta, still weirdly cool, began to speak. "God's creature, water, I cast out the demon from you in
the name of God + the Father almighty, in the name of Jesus + Christ, His Son, our Lord, and in
the power of the Holy + Spirit," he said emotionlessly.

Cato and Johanna gawked as Marvel stumbled backwards, realizing with horror what Peeta was
doing. Smoke began to rise from his head and shoulders, where the water still soaked his skin and
hair. Peeta was exorcising him!

"May you be a purified water, empowered to drive afar all power of the enemy, in fact, to root out
and banish the enemy himself, along with his fallen angels," Peeta continued, driving Marvel
insane as the water transformed into heavenly fire, burning the demon with the power of God.
"We ask this through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is coming to judge both the living
and the dead and the world by fire"-

"This is not over!" Marvel roared before disappearing from the room in a puff of smoke, probably
teleported back to hell.

Peeta threw the glass onto the bed and muttered, "Amen."

"Peeta, that was amazing!" Johanna said, jumping off the ground and enfolding him in a hug.
"You were so badass! You showed him who runs the show!"

"Except now he'll probably go and declare you both traitors down in hell," Peeta said
despondently. When Johanna released him, he crouched beside Cato. "Are you alright?"

"I've received worse," Cato said, trying to joke off the pain. He reached out and touched Peeta's
face. "Are you okay? Marvel was pretty invasive . . ."

"Nothing that won't fade with time," Peeta shrugged, removing Cato's hand from his face. Cato
tried not to let this hurt him. Johanna watched the interaction with a sullen expression, sitting on
Peeta's bed and absentmindedly stroking Temperance. "I want to thank you both, for helping me
see the truth. It's been greatly appreciated."

Johanna frowned. "You're talking as if you're leaving."

Peeta looked at the ground. "To exorcise Marvel I had to pray to Snow. The fact that it worked
means that he responded and knows where I am. Metatron will be here in a matter of moments."

"Well we'll leave then!" Johanna quickly said, jumping to her feet.

Even Cato knew there was no time. His stomach bottomed out. Peeta risked his freedom to save
him from being beaten to a pulp by Marvel. Not caring about the previous night or how Peeta was
clearly still hurt by it, he grabbed the angel by his shoulders and kissed him fiercely. Peeta made
an alarmed sound at the back of his throat, his gasp of surprise so sweet and innocent. When Cato
pulled away, he heaved himself to his feet and formed a protective stance around Peeta. "If Snow
wants you, he'll have to go through us first."

Johanna was staring behind Cato with wide eyes. "Oh my . . . ."

When Cato turned back around, Peeta was already gone. Vanished into thin air.

~xXx~

Peeta knew what the risks were when he exorcised Marvel. There wasn't anything else he could
do. Marvel was beating Cato into the ground! Peeta couldn't touch the demon, he'd have only
done injury to himself, so the only other option was to exorcise him with water. Even if Peeta was
still embarrassed and ashamed of what happened the previous night, he couldn't allow Cato to be
beaten to death. Not when there was something he could have done.

Now he was being escorted back to Snow by Metatron, who seemed hugely pleased with himself.
Peeta tried to jerk out of the archangel's grip every so often but it was pointless. They were in
Snow's palace, which was deep and endless. Even if he did break free, Metatron would easily
catch up with him before he got anywhere near the door.

Metatron took him to Snow's bedroom. Snow himself was sitting at the end of his bed with folded
arms, waiting for their arrival. There was a red burn in the shape of a hand taking up half of his
face. Peeta realized with a pleasured twinge that that had been where Cato had pushed his hand
against the Lord's face.

"Would you like me to stay in the room, my Lord?" asked Metatron.

"No. Leave us," Snow said curtly.

Metatron nodded and stepped outside, shutting the doors behind him.

Snow did exactly what he did when Metatron brought Peeta back the first time. He went straight
to him and smacked him across the face. Peeta's sealed his lips together defiantly, nostrils flaring
as he fought not to show any emotion on his face. "I don't think I need to express to you how
wholly disappointed I am in you," the Lord hissed.

"I don't care," Peeta said steadily.

Snow grabbed his creation's face, his fingers digging into the boy's soft skin really hard. "Your
lips are dirtied," he said with disgust. "You've been kissing a demon." Snow's eyes widened as
realization dawned on him. "You aren't virginal anymore, either." His once wide eyes narrowed
dangerously and he pushed Peeta away from him. "You disgusting tramp. You've been sleeping
around."

"Yes because my belief in the seven deadliest evaporated overnight," Peeta answered flatly.

"You've even developed an attitude," Snow scowled.

"Maybe it's all the time I've been spending with demons!" Peeta replied.

Snow clenched his jaw and forced himself to remain calm. "You are behaving so childishly
Haziel! This is why I never wanted you to interact with the outside world!"

"You wanted me as a pet!" Peeta spat back. "You always have! That's why you created me in the
first place! Why you didn't want me seeking help from anyone but you! If I hadn't have spoken to
Armisael and the other angels, you probably would have trained me to believe that the only
important things in life were sex and food! It's all you cared about then and it's all you care about
now!"

Snow was so angry, his chest was heaving like he'd ran a marathon. "You will not speak to me
like that," he threatened. "After all I've done for you"-

"What have you done for me?!" Peeta interrupted. "Besides corrupt me, abuse me, groom me,
beat me, isolate me, treat me like a common whore and" -Snow grabbed a clump of Peeta's hair
and dragged him across the room. Peeta yelled angrily and tried to pull back against Snow's grip
but it only succeeded in causing him further pain.
"I made you beautiful!" Snow roared as he pulled Peeta along behind him. "I made you clever and important! I fed you, bathed you, and breathed life into you! I fulfilled your every need. I did not abuse you, you ungrateful brat! I only punished you when you misbehaved! Do you want to know what it really feels like to be abused, Haziel? Do you?!

Snow threw Peeta into the tiled wall in the bathroom. Peeta smacked his head hard and the whole world tilted to one side. Blood began to seep from his eyebrow immediately but he forced himself not to show any sign of pain on his face. He spun around and pressed his back against the wall, glaring at the man who created him in loathing.

"Take your clothes off, Haziel," Snow said sternly. "I need to see how far you have let the demons corrupt you."

Peeta glared and spat at Snow, causing the older man to glower impatiently. He shoved his fingers into his mouth and whistled. Metatron came back into the room and entered the bathroom when Snow gestured him over. "Hazel is being difficult. The demons have corrupted him. We have to make him turn back to God," Snow explained. Peeta glared at them both acidly. When Metatron glanced at him, clearly amused that Snow's little bitch had fallen from grace, Peeta spat at him as well.

"Shouldn't we just cast him out?" asked Metatron.

"No," Snow said firmly.

Metatron couldn't question Snow. As his Lord, he was obligated to believe that everything Snow said was right. "What do you want me to do?"

"He's been dirtied by different demons; I can see differing marks on his face and neck. I don't know how far it's gone. The extent it reaches. I asked him to take his clothes off so I could see but it seems that not only have they made him turn away from me, they've also affected his level of obedience," Snow sighed.

"I'll take care of it, my Lord," said Metatron.

Peeta tried to run around the bath and slip out through the door but, as previously predicted, Metatron was too fast and caught him at the bedroom. Peeta screamed—not out of fear or embarrassment, but anger and rage—as Metatron tore his clothes from his back. Snow entered the room a moment later and sighed.

"As I feared," he said, "you've let them touch what was supposed to be only mine, haven't you?"

"I'm not your property!" Peeta hissed. He pushed Metatron away from him angrily and smacked Snow's hand when he tried to touch his arm in what was probably supposed to be an attempt at comforting him. "Don't touch me you perverted old man. Who else have you had sex with besides me? I'm sure I'm not the only one!"

Snow rolled his eyes. "Don't be so dramatic. Of course I've only been faithful to you. Something that you can't say for yourself."

"Cry me a river!" Peeta snapped back.

"Metatron, you can leave now," Snow ordered.

Metatron nodded and left again, informing Snow that he would remain outside in case he needed help. The moment the door shut, Snow had Peeta by the throat, sucking all the air from his lungs
just as he had that night Peeta had lied to him.

"You will not leave me again, do you understand?" Snow said firmly. Peeta choked and coughed, clawing at Snow's hands in a desperate attempt to be freed. He couldn't let himself die. He had to get back to Cato and Johanna somehow and he didn't intend to be killed by the man that gave him life in the first place.

Snow's eyes softened and he released one of the hands he had around Peeta's throat, now only holding him with one. He traced his hand down the side of his creation's face and sighed. "I will fix you," he said firmly. "I am not going to let those awful demons turn you away from me."

Peeta narrowed his eyes at Snow. He touched Snow's hand gently and tried to look sympathetic. Snow smiled, thinking he had already gotten through to Peeta, but was swiftly proven wrong as Peeta took advantage of the distraction and bit his arm. Snow yelled in pain and let go of Peeta. Beautiful, fresh air flooded the angel's system and he breathed it in greedily.

Snow glowered at Peeta, the gaze so vengeful it could stop a clock. "I want to know why you were exorcising a demon," he said.

"Why should you care? You think I'm in cahoots with them anyway!" Peeta replied, sitting down on the edge of the bed and rubbing the painful handprints on his neck.

"Just answer the damn question!" Snow shouted. "Or I will not be as considerate when I throttle you next!"

Peeta rolled his eyes and muttered, "One of Romulus' drones came and attacked Belial. I wanted to protect him."

"So it's Anael again, is it?" Snow spat.

"It's always been him!" Peeta snapped. "He helped me see that I didn't deserve to be treated the way you are treating me! He helped me see that all my life I've been abused for no good reason! By you!"

Snow laughed. The sound alarmed Peeta. It was galling to hear Snow laugh after he had been so mad previously. "You actually believe that Anael cares about you!" he barked in amusement.

"Anael doesn't care about you! He only cares about saving his own skin. I bet he's been abusing you as well, since you clearly can't tell the difference between what is and isn't abuse!"

The previous night came into mind. Of how Cato had tricked Peeta into kissing him and then pushed him away like he was a disease after doing just enough to him to make him feel like a needy slut when he was gone. Peeta shook his head in denial. No. That wasn't abuse. There was an explanation for that, Cato just didn't have time to tell him what it was.

"I can see his touch on your body," Snow taunted. "Everyone leaves an imprint behind. Your lips are covered with different marks. The imp's. Anael's. Even that psychotic bastard Seneca Crane has pecked your lips. You've been whoring your mouth out to whoever wants it. Only Anael's mark goes further. It's all over you, with only the smallest dustings of the imp's from when he took your blood."

Peeta felt very exposed under Snow's eyes. The feeling only came now because he knew Snow could tell how far he had went with Cato. He didn't care that he was naked. Snow had seen him like that plenty of times before. But the knowledge that Snow could see the print of everyone that touched him? That was unnerving.

"What about you?" Peeta shouted back, standing up and squaring himself up to Snow. For once,
he was the taller one. His wings dwarfed Snow and made the Lord look miniature compared to
Peeta. "What marks have you left behind?"

"That doesn't matter because I am your creator," Snow said calmly.

"I don't mean your goddamn imprint!" Peeta yelled. "I mean the bruises! The signs of how you've
been beating me ever since you created me! Why create an angel and then spend the rest of your
life stopping him from going outside? Beating him bloody when he misbehaved? Only letting him
out when it was necessary? Why do that if you're just going to"-

"Because your life matters!" Snow roared back.

Peeta stopped talking and frowned at him. What was he talking about? "What do you mean 'my
life matters'?" he demanded. "Every life matters, that's the point of this stupid war!"

"Your life matters because I created you to be the link," Snow said threateningly. "As long as you
live, the walls between heaven and hell continue to fade."

Peeta's eyes widened in horror and he backed away from Snow as the realization dropped upon
him like a weight.

"As long as you live, the walls don't."
Chapter Thirteen

"We are so going to win this war!" Cato roared to the sky. He stamped his foot against the rocky ground and yelled to the heavens, "The demons will rule the earth and all angels will bow down to us because we are the mightier creatures!" Johanna stood nearby, rubbing her arm against the cold. They stood outside the Chinhoyi Caves in the early hours of the morning, on the rocky landscape by the waterfall. The scenery was magical but both demons were too occupied to concentrate on it. There were more pressing matters to attend to.

"Will this even work?" the demon of laziness asked tiredly.

"Demons are the overlord of all living beings!" Cato screamed into the baby blue abyss of the sky. "We are the best!"

Johanna rolled her eyes and pressed, "Cato, seriously, are you sure this will work?"

"I have to try, Johanna!" Cato spat back. Nothing mattered more than getting Peeta back before Snow did something to hurt him. It had only been an hour since he'd been stolen but who knew how long that had been in heaven's timeline. Cato feared too long.

He was trying to summon Lady Karma. She knew everything. If she showed up for them then Cato would interrogate her for any and all things she knew about Snow’s experiments on Peeta and the failing of the walls. Cato didn't care about what hung in the balance or how in doing his he was putting her favour of hell in jeopardy. The war was the last thing on his mind presently.

"Romulus will rule the world and we shall own the humans for the remainder of time!" Cato yelled, his voice echoing in the empty caverns of the caves.

Johanna held Temperance in her hands. The dragon had been weak and upset since Peeta had been stolen. He didn't even want to fly anymore. She didn't think that shouting cocky one liners was going to achieve anything. Lady Karma wouldn't appear because of that. All this would achieve was the potential ruining of Hell's upper hand over Heaven. Lady Karma could dislike Cato's words and swing an opportunity to Snow. Then that would be doing exactly the opposite of what they were trying to do: save Peeta.

"We are better than all creatures; living or entity!" Cato roared.

"Really, Belial, do you honestly expect me to believe that?"

Cato and Johanna spun around. Lady Karma stood behind them. In the flesh. Lady Karma never appeared to people unless it was important! Meaning that either she was about to do something huge or something devastating. She wasn't what Cato had imagined. Her smoky eyes regarded both demons coolly, not showing an inkling of fear. Her brunette hair was braided and floated calmly in the air alongside stray strands, as if she were underwater.
"Lady Karma," Johanna gawked.

"Call me Katniss," Lady Karma responded with a sickly grin. She folded her slim arms, finger tapping impatiently against her elbow. "So? You called me here for a reason? I don't waste time faffing around, you should know this. Tell me what you want!"

"Peeta has been taken by Snow. Tell me what Snow wants with him right now!" Cato demanded, weaving around Johanna and squaring up to Katniss. Katniss looked at him with a bored expression, seeming to already be tired of the events unfolding before her.

"You know what Snow wants with Peeta," said Katniss. She cocked her head, feigning ignorance. "He is Snow's Vision. He belongs to the Lord body and soul. Snow has the right to snatch Peeta from this world into his whenever he pleases."

"Cut the bullshit Karma!" Johanna snapped. "We know that there's something fishy going on here. We're not idiots."

"What makes you think that?" Katniss asked. It was hard to tell if she was genuinely curious or just pulling their legs. She was like that. She would pop in and out as she pleased, acting like she was completely invested in what was happening, then drop her interest like a hot potato once everyone believed in her sincerity.

"Because the walls are fading and every time we try to think of a way to fix it, everything leads back to Peeta. Things keep drawing him back to Snow-his link, his purity scent, that stupid spell that made him a virgin-and no matter how hard we tried to fix it or get rid of it or stop it, it kept happening," Cato said.

"Don't you believe in innocent coincidence?" asked Katniss.

"This is beyond coincidence!" Cato snapped. "I saw inside Peeta's mind, I saw what Snow did to him! I know that you know what's been going on! You could change this whole war if the fancy took you so don't act like you don't know! There's no time!"

Katniss brushed past Cato and Johanna. She stood on the edge of the rocks that overhung the river that flowed into the caves. She was beautiful, no one could mistake that. The sun seemed to follow her, like it chose to shine on her and only her. The green dress she wore billowed in the breeze, almost like the way her hair did.

"Of course I know. I control the balance of everything. Never mind God or Lucifer or humans on the Earth. I'm the higher being," Katniss said, her voice almost melodic against the thrashing of the water.

"Then tell us!" Cato snapped, passing Johanna again and standing beside Katniss again. He knew Lady Karma would be difficult to deal and his patience was already running thin.

"Why should I?" Katniss spat. She whirled around on him angrily, charcoal eyes ablaze with rage. "Why should I take spiteful orders from a demon beneath me? You watch what you say to me Belial or Anael or whatever your name is! Do you want me to swing an opportunity to Snow? Do you want to be responsible for your side's demise?"

Cato stepped back, realizing just how sensitive the woman in front of him was. He had been warned of Lady Karma's whims and how easily she was swayed. He had just never imagined this. "I'm not your enemy Katniss," he said firmly. "We both want the same thing here."

"And what is that?" Katniss fired back.
There was a pause as they both stared each other down. Cato had to choose his words carefully or he was going to lose Katniss' interest entirely. He knew what he wanted to put across, it was just finding a way to portray this to Lady Karma that was confusing him.

"An end," Johanna piped up. Katniss and Cato looked to her with frowns. "An end to this stupid war."

"And you think your useless friend is the end?" Katniss started to laugh. "Your friend is the beginning of hell on earth!"

Cato grabbed Katniss and forced her to look at him. "What do you mean the beginning of hell on earth?" he demanded.

Katniss sniffed and glanced at Cato's hands with disinterest. "You really care about this, don't you?" she sighed.

"Yes!"

"I can't possibly imagine why," Katniss yawned.

"Please," Cato pleaded. "I'm begging you now, just tell us!"

Katniss sighed again and stepped out of Cato's hold. "Touch me again and I won't tell you anything," she threatened. Cato nodded, his heart lifting at the possibility of some help. Katniss huffed, causing a strand of hair to leap from her eyes and fall back onto her head. "Snow didn't create your friend to be a confidante or a partner. He created your friend to be the ending to the war but the start of something else completely."

"What do you mean?" asked Johanna.

"I mean that Snow knew he was going to lose," Katniss said. "He knew I hated how much of a spiteful bastard he is. He knew I would side with Romulus and give him all the opportunities to win that I can muster. That's why he created Haziel."

"But he created Peeta before the Fall even happened," Cato interjected. "I remember the day Snow showed him to us. I was still an angel then."

Katniss shook her head. "Haziel was built to be a vessel. Snow made him in advance as preparation in case something like the Fall happened. So when Romulus did question Snow and was cast out, it was the perfect opening for Snow to start to do what he had originally planned Haziel to be."

"What was he planned to be?" Cato asked.

"The beginning of hell on earth," Katniss answered.

"I don't understand," said Johanna.

"When the Fall happened and the heathen were cast from heaven, that's when Snow started to experiment on your friend," explained Katniss. "He would cut Haziel open and try to figure out how he could make him a link in the chain of the war. Once he was finished he would abolish the wounds and wipe Haziel's memory of it ever happening. It took years for him to finally figure out what he could do to ensure that if he didn't win the war then no one did."

"And what was that?" asked Cato, heart pounding in his chest in fear of what Katniss would say.
"Snow linked Haziel's consciousness to the walls dividing heaven and hell. As long as it remained alive and sentient, the walls would break down," Katniss explained. Her eyes darkened. "Hazel has been alive for thousands upon thousands of years. The walls aren't strong enough to withstand any longer."

A lump had formed in Cato's throat as the implication of what Katniss was saying slowly sunk in. Johanna's hands trembled as she stepped closer and asked, "Are you trying to say that to stop all hell breaking loose then . . . ?"

"Hazel must die," Katniss confirmed.

Cato turned away from Lady Karma and walked a few yards away before spinning around again. "No! There has to be another way!" he shouted.

"There is no other way," Katniss hissed. Her pupils' slitted and turned thin, like a cat's, and her front teeth turned into canines. "Don't you think I would have stopped all of this BS if there was 'another way'?" She straightened and closed her eyes. Cato watched angrily as she inhaled slowly and let it go. When she opened her eyes again, they were back to normal and her teeth were once again regular.

"I'm not letting Peeta die," Cato said firmly. Johanna nodded with finality, expressing that she felt the same.

"You don't have a choice," Katniss said, her solemn composure regained. She cocked her head, sympathy flashing across her features. "I can see affection in your eyes, Belial. Have you let yourself fall prey to Chamuel?"

"Chamuel's domain is the earth!" Cato answered, not keen on talking about his feelings for Peeta to a woman who held the balance of fate between her thumb and forefinger.

"Chamuel's domain is everywhere. In the air we breathe and the land we walk on," Katniss replied. "He doesn't focus on human or entity, he just works where he sees a bond between two people grow regardless of sex, nationality . . ." Katniss' eyes twinkled " . . . or what side they are on."

Cato didn't want to believe that he had developed feelings for Peeta. It would make everything so complicated. The war; what side they were on; the outcome of this conflict. Everything was so complex and fucked up. His feelings for Peeta were strong but the environment they currently resided in tried to dampen it wherever it could find the opportunity.

"How do you even know so much? You control fate but you can't see every gritty detail surely?" asked Johanna.

"Why do you think I gave Romulus the knowledge on how to make your skin burn the touch of a holy object?" Katniss asked back, her eyes not leaving Cato at all, like she was trying to solve a puzzle. "I warned Snow that if he didn't stop the experiments then I would give Romulus a huge advantage. He laughed in my face and threw a bloodied scalpel at me."

Katniss was the most powerful being in the universe. However she couldn't control an individual's actions. She could change events and favour people and sides and plans but she couldn't hold her hand up and tell someone to stop what they were doing because she wasn't that strong. It was her only weakness. Cato looked at Katniss, properly, and saw something deeper than just a fickle bitch who couldn't choose a side. She had genuinely wanted Snow to stop what he had been doing to Hazel. So when he refused, she turned her back on him completely.
"I can still hear Haziel's screams when I close my eyes," Katniss said, her voice trembling. "But he must die now for everything to end. This war will never find a finish. Not in the foreseeable future anyway. It will rage for many, many years to come. The humans cannot be caught in the crossfire, however. Innocents have to go to heaven and sinners must go to hell. If the walls die then that will be scuppered."

"I will not let Peeta die!" Cato shouted.

Katniss shook her head. "Yes you will! You know you have to! Haziel already knows, do you think he's going to let himself continue to live now that he knows what his own life is doing to the divide?"

"Peeta won't kill himself," Johanna adamantly denied.

"You're right," Katniss said, surprising both Cato and Johanna. "Snow won't let that happen."

"Then what are you blathering about?!" Cato asked tiredly.

"Peeta won't kill himself because Snow won't let it happen," Katniss repeated. She sighed and looked out to the waterfall. Her expression was saddened and no longer plastered with indifference. "That's why you must do it for him."

~FFG~

Metatron was sickeningly pleased.

Peeta noticed with a tint of irritation that Metatron was delighted with the position that he was currently in. Of course, Metatron had never hidden the fact that he despised Peeta and how close he was to Snow. In fact, he had always made it adamantly clear. However, Peeta had never thought that the angel could be so sadistic when it came to a situation where Peeta got the sucky draw of the cards.

Snow had immediately predicted what Peeta's thought process would be once he discovered the truth. Peeta knew what he had to do. To ensure that the walls didn't collapse, Peeta knew he would have to kill himself. But Snow wasn't allowing that to happen. He had his Vision bound to the headboard of the bed by his wrists and he was to be on constant watch by at least one angel at all times when Snow was absent. If Peeta tried anything funny, Snow was to be alerted to put an end to it.

Metatron was on watch a lot and the sick grin on his face disgusted Peeta. Metatron was a joke. The values of heaven were loving and forgiveness yet all Metatron did was be spiteful and envious. It was a wonder that he hadn't chosen to fall. Or maybe Snow had brainwashed him. He had obviously done it to Peeta, why not other angels? It made sense. So they wouldn't question what Snow was doing and would just go along with it..

"This is pleasing you too much," Peeta practically gritted out. His teeth were clenched together as he refused to drink the water Metatron was giving him. It wasn't going very well so far but it had only been a few hours.

"It's pleasing me immensely," Metatron agreed. "I find it positively hilarious that you have fallen from grace, Haziel. You aren't the prefect little trophy husband your reputation depicted you to be."

"I didn't fall from grace, I still have it," Peeta snapped. "I am still God's Vision, whether you like it or not!" Actually, he wasn't. And he didn't want to be. But in the situation that he was currently in, baiting Metatron was all he had.
"Sure," Metatron once again agreed. "But in this situation you're tied up and defenseless. You can't act on God's whims anymore and I'll be the one who Snow will choose next to be his right hand man. When he realizes you're beyond help anyhow."

Peeta twisted away from the lip of the glass, sealing his mouth shut tight. Metatron grew tired of it and forced Peeta to swallow by punching him hard in the gut so he gasped and dropping the water into his mouth in the moment of weakness. Pain exploded in Peeta's stomach. The water soaked his face and only some got into his system. Peeta choked on most of it, coughing it back up and spitting it out onto the floor again.

Metatron growled and angrily smacked Peeta across the face. Snow had given him permission to punish Peeta as he saw fit. As long as it didn't go as far as to put Peeta at risk or nearly kill him, Metatron had the power to do as much as he wanted to him.

"Why are you doing this?" Peeta gasped between breaths. "We don't need water or food. Taking sustenance that we don't need is greed!"

"Exactly," said Metatron. He stepped back and placed the glass onto the bedside table. His red hair fell in clumps over his dark eyes, like curtains trying to cover the evil that resided within. "You're already a sinner, Haziel. I'm only trying to feed the ugly demons that live within you."

"I'm not a sinner, Metatron," Peeta said evenly. "If you knew the truth of what was going on, maybe you wouldn't be so keen to assist Lord Snow."

Metatron laughed and headed for the door. "'The truth'?!" he cackled. "I know what the truth is! You are the enemy, Haziel. You always have been. You abused the power you had because you knew Lord Snow loved you more than anything else. You seduced your way into God's heart because you knew you were his only weakness. Why should I believe anything that comes from your blasphemous mouth?!"

"Because if you don't, life as we know it is going to descend into chaos," Peeta said quietly. He ground his teeth together to suppress his anger and whispered darkly, "You've always wanted to kill me, Metatron. Now you have you chance. You should take the opportunity before you miss it."

Metatron stared at the door for five long minutes. He looked over his shoulder with a cruel smile on his face. "Clearly you are trying to bait me," he said. "I'm not an idiot, Haziel. Why would you tempt your own death?"

"Because I'm a sinner, aren't I?" Peeta insisted. "Why not rid this universe of my filth and rid your Lord of his only weakness? Make him more powerful and almighty than he already is! Kill me Metatron and you will be a hero in Snow's eyes!"

Metatron's eyes flashed with the allurement of Peeta's words. Peeta knew that the older angel had always wanted rid of him. He saw him as a tumor on Snow's side, laboring the Lord and suppressing his full potential. Maybe if Peeta could hit the right buttons, he wouldn't have to kill himself. Metatron would do it for him.

Peeta leaned forward, as far as his chained wrists would let him, and stared Metatron dead in the eyes. "Go on, I know you want to," he tempted. "Snow thinks he knows what he's doing but you and I both know that if I was gone, everything would be so much easier. Do it, Metatron, and become heaven's hero. Not only will the angels love you but Snow will praise you and adore you; more than he even adored me!"
Metatron released the door handle and turned back around. He took a couple of steps closer to Peeta, murderous intent clear on his face. Peeta leaned back, his wings pressing against the cool metal of the bed's headboard. He squeezed his eyes shut and prepared himself for death. He didn't know what happened to angels' who died. All he knew was that it was possible.

Peeta could hear Metatron reaching for him, fingers clenched tight as they prepared to wrap around his neck. He was really going to do it. Peeta released a breath. One in which he assumed would be his last-

The doors to the bedroom burst open.

"Metatron, out now!" Snow roared.

Metatron was gone in an instant. Peeta groaned and slumped against the bed in defeat. When he opened his eyes, only Snow was in the room. He stood in the doorway, chest heaving, hands clenched. He glared at Peeta angrily, ignition clear on his wrinkled features.

"Watch yourself, Haziel," he warned.

"Or what? You'll kill me?!" Peeta shouted back. "Go on then, do it! I dare you!"

Snow kicked the doors shut and smacked his Vision hard. It burned like hellfire, the pain sharp as the sting from Metatron's strike had not yet sated when Snow's came along. Peeta tasted blood in his mouth. He spat it out, staining the pristine white sheets of Snow's bed with the ugly grey of his blood.

"Don't tempt me, Haziel," Snow threatened. "I may not be able to kill you but there are other means of suffering?"

"Like you haven't already put me through them," Peeta scoffed, unafraid. He glared at Snow spitefully. "I know you've been suppressing my memories. I know you've been making me forget things. How much have you really put me through, huh? Tell me!"

"Besides the tedious hours of experimentation it took to link your life to the sustainability of the walls? Nothing."

Snow had no reason to lie anymore but Peeta still didn't feel like he could trust him. "You honestly expect me to believe that?" he asked, unconvincing.

"No," Snow said. "But it's the truth. I reprimanded you when you misbehaved, that was it."

"I'm not just talking physical abuse. I'm talking emotional as well. Our whole relationship is a product of Stockholm Syndrome," Peeta replied. "You convinced me that there was nothing else out there besides what you were giving me. You kept me inside to exploit what you needed from me. Not to mention that you couldn't accept that I didn't want to eat or drink or fuck with you. You ignored my beliefs to fulfill your own selfish means!"

Snow wandered around the room while Peeta ranted, his dander coming to a stop in front of the water pitcher. He waved his hand over it and the water turned to wine. He picked the whole pitcher up and drank from it like it was a glass.

"I told you time and time again that the seven deadliest became moot during the war!" he snapped after three greedy gulps. "You wouldn't listen to me!"

"Because I still believed in them!" Peeta shouted back.
Snow sat down on the space beside Peeta on the bed. He drank more from the pitcher and let it rest between his knees. "I still love you, Haziel. Believe it or not I always have."

"And that's why you treated me like a slave?" asked Peeta, completely unconvinced.

"That's why I chose to link you to the walls. Because I would fight for my life to keep you alive," Snow corrected.

"What do you want from me? Do you expect me to thank you? I don't have anything to be grateful for. You've made my life a danger to everything!" Peeta exclaimed. His exasperation was growing by the second.

Snow drank the rest of the wine in one long gulp. Peeta watched with disgust. When it was all gone, Snow threw the pitcher away so it smashed against the wall into a million tiny shards of glass. "Metatron will clean that up later," he muttered.

"So Metatron is going to be your little bitch now that I'm not compliant?" Peeta rolled his eyes. He should have known.

"No," Snow answered, surprising Peeta. "Metatron is like you in many regards. He is more than willing to serve me but he's too keen on the old rules. He wouldn't let me fuck him if I asked him to." Snow glanced at Peeta skeptically. "Since you're clearly not going to."

"You don't need it," Peeta said. "You act like it's keeping you alive."

"Obviously not. But it's something I enjoy," Snow replied.

"But everyone here obey the old rules," Peeta insisted. "Nobody is going to let you"-

"Lofiel would," Snow said.

"Lofiel would do anything," Peeta scoffed. "That's not necessarily a good thing."

Snow sighed. "But I don't want Lofiel. Or Metatron. I just want you."

Peeta wrinkled his nose. "Yeah well you screwed it up," he answered. "I'm going to do whatever I can to make sure I die before the walls fall. It's my responsibility to ensure the safety of the humans. The humans you created. I will not let myself be the reason that good people go to hell while sinners come here. I will not let what I have been fighting for go wrong just because I don't want to die."

"Don't you fear death?" Snow challenged.

"Of course," Peeta answered, determination clear as day on his face. "But that's not going to stop me."
The Past

Chapter Summary

An insight into the past. A look into how Snow tortured Peeta and the true reason why demons are untouchable to angels.

Chapter Notes

Warning: This chapter contains graphic violence and gore

Chapter Fourteen: The Past

~A billion life times ago~

Katniss flashed into the living quarters of Lord Snow, rage radiating from her pores like smoke from a fire. As previously foresaw, the Lord God stood in the middle of his room with the angel he had created not long before. His creation was strapped to a table, not unconscious but not sentient.

"Stop Cornelius!" Katniss screamed, pointing at the Lord with a threatening finger. "I know what you're trying to do!"

Snow glanced up at Lady Karma with an evil smirk. "I know," he said. "I would be a fool to believe that you wouldn't see what I was trying to accomplish here. I want you to see. Look at the masterpiece I have created."

Katniss glared at the Lord with spiteful anger, her chest heaving as she fought to smother her ignition. She stepped closer to the table, the skirts of her dress trailing behind her. She hadn't seen Haziel, the Vision of God. She had only heard of his existence. Entities spoke of Snow's handiwork. Of how, if you looked closely enough, you could see the Lord's fingerprints set deep into the angel's skin. Like marks to clay.

"Why experiment on him?" Katniss demanded to know. She laid a gentle hand on the suffering angel's cheek, using her power to soothe him into a plane of non-feeling consciousness.

"I thought you said that you knew," Snow grinned.

"I know you are working with evil intent," Katniss threw back. She stroked the angel's cheekbone with the pad of her thumb, knowing that such caresses were probably lost on the abused creation. "Something you swore against when you created the earth and all life around it!"

"I know whose side you are on," said Snow. "Don't come here and act like you didn't choose to be part of Romulus' army and not my own."

"You know why I am part of Romulus' army," Katniss hissed.
This caused Snow's sick grin to widen, so much that it resembled a grimace. "That was your own fault," he stated.

"I could never have accepted your hand in marriage, Snow," Katniss said stiffly. "You know that."

"Not enough cause to turn your back against me completely," Snow commented.

Katniss narrowed her eyes dangerously. "Don't start with me, Cornelius," she snapped. "You know exactly why I chose Romulus' side."

"Oh, are you referring to the fact that we had sex?" Snow asked, pretending to sound innocent.

"We didn't have sex," Katniss snapped. "You had a dirty grope because you wouldn't let me go unless I gave you something." She scoffed. "As if I owed you something for turning you down. That's why you created this poor creature, isn't it? To fulfill the dirty hole that my leaving left behind!"

Snow only seemed mildly interested in Katniss' anger. "Do you really think so highly of yourself?" he scoffed. "Do you want to know why I created this, as you put it, 'poor creature'?"

"Not really but I feel you're going to tell me," Katniss responded, folding her arms and sighing.

Snow gestured to the angel on the table, who was still unconscious by Katniss' hand. "I saw this image in my dreams. Every detail of the body in front of you is the product of my own mind. The part that dwells in consciousness while I sleep. When I woke up, I knew I had to create him. Not just for my own sake but for heaven's. He is a vessel of what is to come. He will be our victory. His life will ensure that Romulus doesn't win this."

Katniss was confused. "What are you blathering about?" she snapped. "I don't understand what you're telling me. What do you mean 'ensure that Romulus doesn't win this'? He's a scrawny angel with a big wingspan. That means nothing!"

"Right now it means nothing," Snow agreed. His fingers drifted lovingly up and down the sleeping angel's arm before cutting across to one of its wings, which drooped limply over the side of the medical bed and bunched up on the floor. "But I will make him magnificent."

Katniss concluded.

"I haven't!" Snow barked back. Katniss flinched, only slightly. It would take a lot more than God to frighten her. "I know exactly what I'm doing. When I succeed, treacherous tramps like you will quiver in your boots as the world falls apart around us all!"

Katniss looked down at her feet. Tanned and bare as always. Clothes were only useful for her in one sense: to stop idiots gawking at her naked form. It was why she wore so few. Only a skirt that parted just below her crotch and hung behind her legs like a silk curtain that bunched at the floor and a silken tube top with sleeves that stopped at her elbows. Anything else wasn't necessary because she didn't appear in her solid form very often.

Her eyes found Snow again. "Nobody will ever quiver in their boots by anything caused by you," she hissed. "We aren't simple minded like your humans or your angels or your . . . your . . . pets!"

Snow's scowl could burn through steel. If it had been directed at anyone else, they probably would have wilted like an aged rose. Katniss stood her ground, knowing that she was higher above Snow, and glared her own right back.
Snow was fed up with Katniss' games. He pushed her back a couple of steps, shocking the entity with the nerve to lay his hands on her. Her own hand was forced from Haziel's head and his conscious began to rise again into wakefulness. Snow smiled fondly at his creation and Katniss would have felt disgusted by it if her own rage hadn't forced its way to the surface again.

"How dare you so much as lay a hand on me Cornelius!" she roared. "I told you to never, ever touch me again after what you did! Your touch makes my skin crawl, do you hear me?!

"Tut, tut Lady Karma, you do have a taste for the theatrical," Snow smirked. "You didn't seem to mind it so much when my fingers were digging into your"-

"Don't you fucking dare go there!" Katniss screamed. She glared at the body lying on the table before her eyes softened in pity. "I feel really bad for that creation of yours. You're going to ruin him. Just like you ruin everything!"

"Nothing will ever ruin him," Snow practically purred, stroking the angel's temple with his index finger. The boy shuddered and began to squirm, unable to unseat himself from the table. "He will sit high above us all when everything goes to hell."

Katniss shook her head with repugnance. She felt sick just being in the same room as such an abhorrent man. "You're going to regret this, Snow," she muttered.

"I don't think I will," Snow replied.

Katniss' lip turned in disgust as she watched the Lord kiss his frightened creature on the mouth. The boy was calling out for Snow, not understanding that it was Snow himself doing such things to him. Katniss was sure that the Lord would ensure that the boy wouldn't remember anything that was about to happen but right now it was and it was stomach turning.

"What are you doing?" Katniss asked apprehensively.

Snow ignored Katniss as he licked the side of his captive's face, his own face twisted like a distorted Halloween mask. For once in her life, Katniss felt fear. She took a step back and then another. A scalpel appeared in the Lord's hand. Katniss gaped.

"Snow, don't!" she exclaimed. "If you continue then I'll throw an advantage to Romulus!"

"Do it then!" Snow cackled, his voice ringing out like a mad man's. He drove the scalpel into his creation's stomach, letting it go so it stood upright like a stake. The angel screamed in agony, the sound so deafening, so full of sorrow, it made Katniss' ears bleed.

"Stop it!" Katniss screamed. "You're hurting him!"

"I'm saving him!" Snow replied. He wound his fingers around the scalpel and started to hack. He hacked at the poor boy's stomach like an inexperienced surgeon. Katniss covered her bleeding ears, desperately trying to drown out the angel's pained roaring. "He will thank me!"

"Snow!" Katniss yelled over the manic laughter and petrified screams. "I'm serious! Stop this madness or you will deeply regret it!"

"I don't need you, Karma!" Snow cackled. He ripped the scalpel out, blood spurting from the wound and seeping everywhere. It was dark grey and stained the white carpets like wine. Haziel was near death already. A thin trail of blood had seeped from his lips and his chest jerked as he hacked and coughed.

Snow noticed this and quickly pushed his mouth against the angel's, breathing life into him just so
that he could be revived into the world of fresh agony once more. Snow cleaned the blood from Haziel's mouth with his own tongue, lapping at it like a disgusting dog.

"You will regret this!" Katniss shouted.

Snow scowled and fired the scalpel at Katniss. It lodged into her left shoulder, the force of it throwing her to the floor. Katniss had had enough. She ripped the bloodied scalpel from her shoulder, a spurt of fresh blue blood spilling from the stinging cut. Staggering to her feet, she threw the scalpel to the ground and, with one last regretful gaze at Haziel's screaming, pained face, disappeared.

~FFG~

"Will you stay still?!"

"Well maybe if you took less time, I wouldn't be squirming!" Katniss snapped. "Ow, you bastard, that hurts!" Lady Karma lay sprawled over Romulus' lap while he picked at the wound Snow left in her shoulder. "I know you get off on this shit but can you not?"

Romulus rolled his eyes and placed his palm over the wound. Katniss winced but held still, biting her lip as the healing burn infected her veins and spread throughout her entire body. As it faded, she felt exhilarated, the fire having jolted her nerve endings to life. Romulus kept his hand on her shoulder, the tips of his fingers grazing her chest, and stroked her tanned skin lovingly.

"What happened up there?" he asked.

"Snow is doing something to that angel he created," Katniss murmured, nuzzling her neck into Lucifer's and holding him close. "I don't know what . . . but it can't be good."

"He is poisoned by his goodness, how bad could it truly be?" Romulus said.

The fires of hell made Katniss feel claustrophobic. She straightened up in Romulus' lap and shook her head. "You don't understand," she insisted. "I think Snow is corrupted. You know what he did to me when I wouldn't marry him. Now he's got an angel that has no choice. An angel which he's experimenting on."

"Experimenting . . ." Romulus mused thoughtfully.

"I'm worried," Katniss honestly admitted. She wouldn't admit such a thing to anyone but Romulus. Because when Snow hurt her, nobody would believe that such a beacon of love and care would be capable of such hurt just because someone turned down his hand in marriage. Except Romulus. He understood Snow's whims and knew what the Lord was fully capable of. He believed Katniss.

"Don't be," Romulus said, stroking his thumb over her shoulder to rid her skin of the mark left behind.

Katniss scoffed. "You say it like it's easy."

"You're Lady Karma, the most powerful being of all, don't act like something like this would cause you difficulty," Romulus teased.

Katniss' eyes fell on the demons before them. The demons of Lust and Anger fucking each other in vain attempts to please their master. Katniss shivered and crossed her arms across her chest. She felt a chill, the supernatural element of it clear as there was no way there was an actual chill in the stifling heat of hell.
"I don't have a good feeling about this," Katniss muttered.

Romulus sighed and rested his chin on her shoulder. He slipped his hands underneath her arms, his palms engulfing her full breasts in his powerful heat. Katniss sighed and leaned against him, her legs wide without care. "You shouldn't worry about the trivial," Lucifer purred.

"This doesn't seem trivial," Katniss replied.

"Snow is losing. It's only natural for him to lash out against his familiars. These experiments are probably his way of venting his rage," Romulus explained.

"You don't understand," Katniss denied. "You weren't there. You didn't see it. He was mad. His laugh . . . it was manic. I think he's lost his mind."

Romulus considered this. Katniss watched Lucifer's face carefully, her chest heaving as her heart fluttered in her chest. She had grown to love the man who had shown her kindness. Her choosing of side was not just down to politics. She couldn't turn her back on the man who had believed her for the man who had lashed out against her. It would have been a stupid decision.

"I will send someone to look into it if it will please you," said Romulus.

Katniss let out a relieved exhale. She felt like she had been holding that breath since she had left Snow to torture his creation. "Thank you," she replied.

"Now, will you relax?" asked Romulus. Katniss laughed as she felt Romulus' hands massage her breasts. It caused the man to pause. "Is something funny?"

"I want to show you something," said Katniss. She slid from Romulus' lap, her naked rump causing Lucifer to practically drool as she skipped down the steps to where the demons of Lust and Anger were fucking. Katniss gazed back up at Lucifer, who sat on his throne like a magnificent ruler. "Do you have anything holy? Like water or a prisoner?"

Romulus pursed his lips thoughtfully. "Glimmer!" he barked. The blonde demon—the demon of Lust—snapped her head up from her ministrations on Anger's crotch. "Fetch the prisoner!"

Glimmer ditched Anger quick as a flash, her Master's orders impertinent to follow. Anger huffed and sat up, face pink with flush. Katniss dragged her to her feet and told Romulus, "I can give you an advantage. A huge one. Something Snow will never see coming."

Romulus' eyes darkened with intrigue. "Oh?" he inquired.

Katniss nodded. She turned to face Anger and kissed her roughly. The demon gladly accepted, grabbing Katniss' shapely waist and digging her fingertips into her skin so hard to draw blood. Katniss gasped as blue rivulets of blood slid down her legs but she ignored the pain. She focused on Anger. Katniss turned her own spit to acid, passing from her mouth into Anger's. The demon screeched and pushed Katniss away.

Katniss laughed as the demon clutched her throat desperately as a painful burn began to fuse itself with her blood.

"Karma," Romulus sang, "I don't take kindly to you hurting my familiars."

"I'm not hurting her," said Katniss.

A moment later, Anger straightened up, any sign of pain gone from her face.
"How do you feel Clove?" Romulus asked.

"Okay," Clove frowned.

When Glimmer returned with an angel, Katniss quirked an eyebrow at Romulus. "What?" the demon master replied. "She fell!"

"She just hasn't lost her wings yet," Glimmer snarled.

The red headed angel trembled fearfully. Katniss rolled her head to gaze at Clove and said, "Touch her."

Clove scowled. "Why should I?" she snapped.

Romulus saw how Katniss glowered at being spoken back to and quickly shouted, "Do it, Clove!" before Lady Karma changed her mind about this 'advantage'. Clove's scowl deepened but she obeyed, slugging towards the red head with annoyed reluctance. Glimmer pushed the whimpering angel forward, clearly unconvinced that anything of interest was going to happen.

Clove slapped her hand against the angel's face, pressing her palm against her cheek as hard as she could. There was a sizzle and smoke began to emanate from the demon's hand. The red head screamed in pain. Clove jumped back and gazed at her hand in awe. "Whoa," she said.

"What did you do?!" Glimmer exclaimed as the red head fell to her knees and cupped her scarred face.

"I can make your skin poison to holy things," Katniss explained, her hair falling into her face and giving her expression an almost ghoulish look. "Every single demon, untouchable by angels." She glanced at Romulus, who was smirking in amusement.

"Ooooh, do me!" Glimmer squealed, pushing Clove out of the way to reach Katniss.

Katniss repeated the same thing for Glimmer. The demon of lust spun around and stamped her foot down against the red head's hand. Smoke sizzled from the angel's skin and she wailed in agony. Glimmer laughed and grinned at Clove. Both girls grabbed an arm and dragged the red headed angel away to show everyone else the power of Lady Karma.

"I can refine it," Katniss explained, stepping closer to Romulus' throne. "So that it will only burn if an angel touches a demon. It's easier that way."

Romulus stood up and joined Katniss at the bottom of his throne. "You truly are amazing."

Katniss smiled as Lucifer pulled her against him for a tight hug. "Yeah," she replied unconvincingly. Her eyes fluttered shut and, as soon as the darkness consumed her, the raucous cries of Haziel's agony ripped through her being. A tiny stream of blue blood slid out of her ear and dripped to the floor. "That's what I'm afraid of."
Noah's Ark

Chapter Summary

Twenty Four Hours.

Chapter Fifteen: Noah's Ark

"How long do we have until the walls break down completely?" Cato asked Katniss.

Katniss looked out at the waterfall, the water that spilled over the rocks reflecting in her grey eyes. "There's twenty four hours left, I can sense it," she said. "You must find Haziel within twenty two hours or I will take the situation into my own hands."

"What do you mean?!" Johanna snapped.

Katniss shrugged, her eyes faraway and dreamy. "I will not allow the walls to break down. If you don't take care of Haziel-or let him take care of himself-I will save you the hardship." She looked back at Cato. He could see from her expression that she was deadly serious. "Twenty two hours," she repeated. Without another word, she vanished.

Cato was immediately running past Johanna. "We have to find Peeta," he said quickly.

"And do what?" Johanna asked helplessly. "There's nothing we can do to stop this!"

"I don't know, Johanna! Find Peeta, take him away, hide him from Katniss . . . something! I'm not letting him die!" Cato shouted. "Not when . . . not when I've just . . . It's not fair!"

"Cato, what are you talking about?!" Johanna exclaimed.

Cato stopped. He turned around to face Johanna again. She stiffened when she saw the tears in his eyes. Demons didn't cry. Not ever. It would damage their skin because their tears were made of acid. Even now she could see the tiny stream of smoke rising from Cato's eyes, even though he showed no pain. "Why does everybody that I grow to care about leave me?" he demanded.

Johanna looked to the ground. "It's the life you chose," she said quietly.

"I didn't think I'd grow to care about someone!" Cato snapped back. "I didn't think that . . . of all the entities in this world . . . that I'd fall for him. But I have. And now he has to die. Well, I'm not letting it happen! I don't care if he wants to kill himself, I'm saying no!"

"So you're going to let the world fall apart? You're going to choose Peeta over the world? Over this war that we've been fighting in for hundreds of thousands of years?" Johanna demanded. "Is he really worth all of that?"

The answer for Cato was easy.

"Yes."

~FFG~
"How long?"

Snow shrugged. "Twenty four hours, give or take."

Peeta rolled his head around on the headboard, his back beginning to cramp up from having to sit up so straight for so long. "And what happens me? When the walls fall apart? Do I cease to exist? Do I live or die?" he asked.

Snow, who had seated himself quite comfortably beside Peeta with his arm around his captive's back, smiled. His greedy fingers dug into Peeta's side, making the angel pull a face of disgust and lean away. "I couldn't risk continuing my experiments once I was successful with connecting your mind to the walls. But once they fall apart I can do what I want again. I want to see if I can unburden your mind again. Make you the way you were when you were first created again."

"You're going to turn me into a zombie again?" Peeta snapped.

"If you like . . ." Snow answered. "Although, I prefer to think of it as naivety."

Peeta laughed. "Oh my . . . You really are delusional!"

Snow tutted, like he was scolding a child. "I just want to be able to look after you again," he said, pouting like a spoiled brat. He started fixing Peeta's hair, like a fussing mother on her son's first day of school. "I miss doing the little things for you. Teaching you new things, brushing your hair, grooming your wings . . . You've just gotten so independent and I miss being the one you rely on."

"Right . . . so basically you've been waiting for the day you could turn me back into your mindless puppet again and the only reason you haven't done so yet is because you don't want to screw up your stupid connection?" Peeta clarified.

"You have an awful habit of making things sound worse than they are, Haziel," Snow scolded.

"How the hell can I make it sound better?!" Peeta exclaimed.

"You should be lucky to have someone who loves you enough to want to take care of you so much," Snow snapped, getting fed up.

"You don't want to take care of me!" Peeta shouted back. "You just want to have a dumb, empty headed slave who won't question you when you tell them that you're going to put your dick in their mouth!"

Snow scowled and smacked Peeta. Peeta rolled his eyes and flexed his jaw, adjusting to the sensation of getting slapped across the face. "I did more for you than you'll ever know, Haziel! If you got that stick out of your behind maybe you'd realize that!" Snow yelled.

"Oh I got the stick out of my ass long ago, Snow. Cato had to surgically remove it with his words but it worked well enough! He helped me see what you were doing to me!" Peeta yelled back.

It felt like every waking minute was taken up by screaming matches now.

Snow was at the end of his tether. Peeta's disobedience was niggling at him the wrong way. He was getting fed up. Really fed up. He turned around where he was sitting and ran his palm along the curve of Peeta's wing, ignoring how uncomfortable it made his creation. "Do you know how long it took me to craft these wings for you?" he asked, almost rhetorically

"No," Peeta huffed petulantly.
"One hundred and fifty years," Snow sighed. "They had to be perfect." His fingertips ran gently over the feathers of his creation's wings, the silkiness almost impossible to describe. "I wanted to give you everything I had."

"If you're expecting a thank you you'll be waiting a long time," said Peeta. He stiffened as he felt Snow's fingers get uncomfortably close to the bumps near the joints of his wings. "Snow, stop touching me."

"You telling me to stop touching you is like an object telling its owner to stop using it."

"So I'm an object now?" asked Peeta. He shook his head. "What am I saying? Of course I'm still an object to you."

Snow grimaced. His fingers curled into a fist. He was trembling, more violently than Peeta had ever seen before. It made Peeta feel uneasy, like any moment Snow was going to explode and do something horrible. Peeta didn't know what sort of abhorrent act that the Lord would commit once he reached his boiling point but he felt if he pushed even just a little bit more, he might just find out.

Peeta would have been more than willing to prod Snow to see how far he could take it, to see if it would result in his death, however he knew it wouldn't. Snow could be reckless when he was angry but he wasn't stupid. He wouldn't kill Peeta in blind rage, he'd do something much worse. Peeta didn't want to spend his final hours screaming in agony just because he didn't know when to shut his mouth.

"You'll see," Snow said darkly. "When the walls fall, I will fix you, and everything will be good again."

"Nothing will be good again!" Peeta insisted. "Everything will descend into chaos! Nothing will be safe, not even you!"

"The castle is fortified," Snow answered. "You and I will be safe forever."

Peeta shook his head. He wouldn't accept that this was the end of everything. He'd find a way somehow to end his life. He wasn't going to allow himself to be the cause of the death and destruction that was to entail if the walls were destroyed. Even if Snow did wipe his mind; make him brainless; turn him into a puppet; make him believe that what went on in the outside world wasn't his fault; it would always have been his fault anyway. Nothing Snow could do would ever remove that fact.

"Don't do this, Snow," Peeta pleaded. "I am begging you, from the bottom of my heart, to kill me and end this madness." Emotion and stress were beginning to take over, his frustration reaching its boiling point and causing tears to form in his eyes. "I don't want to be responsible for the end of all things. Please don't put this pressure on me. If you loved me, you wouldn't do this!"

Sympathy flashed in Snow's snakelike eyes. He leaned forward and hugged Peeta. Despite everything, Peeta felt comforted by this. Snow would remain his creator, no matter what he said or did, and the embrace that seemed genuinely filled with love and comfort comforted Peeta in his distress. It pushed him off his emotional cliff and he burst into tears, poisoned by violent sobs that racked his being almost painfully.

"Sssh," hushed Snow, "it's ok."

Peeta shook his head in denial, unable to speak but moving his lips to mouth, "It's not, it never will be, it's not okay, it's not!"
Snow stroked his Vision's head lovingly, trying to pet him into a plane of calm. Peeta forced himself to pull himself together. He took deep breaths, having to restrain himself from allowing any more tears to spill. Snow was pleased when the crying stopped, letting out a deep breath that Peeta hadn't realized that the Lord had been holding until now.

"There we go," Snow soothed, smoothing his thumbs along Peeta's cheeks to wipe away the trails of salt water that had dampened his face. "You're okay. Don't panic, my love, everything will be fine."

"How can you say that?" Peeta asked, voice weak from exhaustion. "How can you say that the destruction of the people that you created is 'fine'?"

"Remember Noah's Ark?" Snow asked.

Peeta narrowed his eyes, his vision blurring due to lingering tears. "Yes," he said.

"Do you remember what I told you when I flooded the world?"

"Of course not, I was only a child."

Snow nodded. "You were. You stood by my side as I filled the Earth with water and you know what you said to me?" Peeta didn't say anything. "You said, 'Snow, why must they die?' And I told you this: 'Death is a part of life as much as life is a part of death. The humans don't believe in us anymore, they don't love or trust us. I am saving one man, his family and the animals to start again.' It's happening again, Haziel."

"No, it's not because you're not sparing anyone!" Peeta snapped.

Snow grinned maliciously. "The only person I need to spare is you."
Chapter Sixteen: Anger is a deadly master

Cato and Johanna transported to the gates of heaven. Immediately, they were met with the crippling weight of purity and goodness. How could Snow be so corrupt but manage to uphold such a wholesome reputation? It must be some Godly Voodoo or something. Johanna looked green as they waded through the clouds to reach the gates.

"How you lived here for thousands of years is beyond me," the demon of laziness muttered bitterly.

"It was actually an alright residing place," Cato admitted, peering past the gates to the world that lay beyond. "I just couldn't bring myself to stay when I didn't agree with Snow's values."

Because of the rapidly fading walls, there was no guard at the gate. Maybe the angels were at different posts, or they were oblivious to Snow in their homes, not knowing that he was the cause of all of this devastation and that in praying to him, they were probably making him stronger and increasing the walls' fading time.

"What made you realize that you didn't agree with Snow's values anyways?" asked Johanna. They pushed past the gates and started across the grassy meadow beyond, in the direction of Snow's castle, which sat in the near-distance.

Cato paused. "Peeta, actually."

Johanna frowned, picking a daffodil out of the ground and burning it in her hand. "I thought he was a brainless pile of mush or something when you lived here?" she asked.

"He was but . . . it was the fact that Snow was willing to allow him to stay as a brainless pile of mush that made me second guess his goodness," Cato explained. "Armisael once taught Peeta about the seven deadly sins-including lust-and how they believed it was wrong. Snow flipped his lid and almost exiled Armisael because the only person he wanted teaching Peeta things was himself."

"So that he could fill Peeta's head with sick lies," Johanna sighed.

"Exactly."
Johanna shook her head. Not in disgust—demons, especially demons of the seven deadliest like Johanna, couldn't feel disgusted at evil deeds—but in despair of Peeta's abuse. "It's amazing how similar Romulus and Snow are to each other," she said. "Except one fatal difference: Romulus doesn't pretend to be good, he knows he's an evil cunt."

What she said made sense. Romulus never pretended to be right. He always told his familiars that they were on the side of evil and destruction. Snow convinced his angels that he was good and loving. Yet he treated Peeta like a blow up doll and was the master of the annihilation that was imminent.

"What are we going to do when we have Peeta and the walls collapse completely?" Johanna asked.

"Go to hell, maybe?" Cato guessed. "Hell will not have a problem adjusting to the walls being destroyed. If we convinced Romulus to allow us to take Peeta in, he may be safe."

Hell would not be affected when the walls were completely ruined. Demons would seep into heaven and ransack the place, however the angels who fell into hell would not be able to do any damage. The demons that remained would simply capture and torture them. Earth would be the middle land where both sides would go for different reasons. One would search sanctuary, the other would wreak havoc.

"Cato, what if Romulus asks for Peeta's wings?" Johanna frowned.

Cato chewed the inside of his mouth thoughtfully. Sawing off Peeta's wings was not an option. He was not putting Peeta through that and Peeta would not allow himself to be put through that. "Then we hide him. I snapped his purity, he should be safe now."

"You can't hide him forever," Johanna said as they reached the gates to heaven.

"Watch me," Cato replied.

Due to heaven's current vulnerability, the gates were open from the inside. Cato simply had to push on them and they creaked open. Snow's palace loomed overhead, larger than any giant from the Inbetween. Both demons looked upwards, not able to see the top through the shrouding of thick clouds even when their heads were parallel to the sky.

"Holy hell," Johanna whistled.

Cato hummed his agreement. "It takes days to get from one side of that palace to the other."

"Did you ever try to when you were an angel?"

Cato shook his head. "I have only ever been in the courtyard. Only the most esteemed angels were allowed inside, even fewer allowed into Snow's Quarters."

"Ooooh, I'm delighted to have the privilege then," Johanna said teasingly, stopping in front of the water fountain and rubbing her hands together. "Ready to teleport?"

The skies overhead were beginning to grey, an unusual sight for heaven. The sky was always pink as candyfloss or a deep baby blue. Sometimes, Cato would wonder if Snow purposely made Peeta's eyes match that of heaven's skies or if he reformed the skies to match Peeta's eyes . . . Whichever way, the gloomy grey was not a good sign. The walls were continuing to deplete, who knew how much longer they had left?
Cato took Johanna's hand, being the only one of the two who vaguely had an idea of how the palace's interior was made up. They disappeared in a flare of fire and reappeared moments later in a seemingly endless corridor that stretched from one end to the other. There was something off about the inside of Snow's palace. He had expected it to be brighter, cheerier. You know, something that would match the luminous radiance that one would usually relate to God's palace.

Johanna whistled again, listening to it echo along the ominous corridor curiously. "What does Snow need all this space for?" she whispered.

"I don't know," Cato shrugged. "From what the rumours used to say, he just really uses his room."

"How wasteful," Johanna chided, not that she cared, really.

"I knew I smelled rot," an amused voice echoed around the walls.

Cato and Johanna looked up the corridor, to where a red headed angel was quickly approaching. They weren't nothing to look at and as soon as they got close enough, Cato recognized them. Metatron. Otherwise known as God's bitch dog. Compared to Peeta, Metatron was a purse puppy in Snow's eyes and everyone knew it, even before the Fall. It was obvious why. Peeta was superior in looks and personality. In fact, when the Fall happened, most had expected Metatron to join Romulus, he had that much of a foul attitude.

"Long time no see Metatron," Cato said.

"How unfortunate it is for us to meet again in these circumstances," Metatron answered.

"Johanna, this is Metatron," Cato introduced. "He is most famous for his obedience to Snow that matches that of a bitch dog."

Johanna snorted. "Ah," she said as Metatron scowled.

"Where's Peeta?" Cato demanded.

Metatron raised his eyebrows, taking the final steps towards them. "Do you really think I'm going to tell you two where the traitor is?" he laughed. "That would be against all of my values as Lord Snow's right-hand man."

Johanna frowned. "Traitor?" she repeated slowly. "What's his crime?"

"He betrayed our Lord," Metatron answered, his voice shaking with rage at the idea. "Now he is serving his time for it." "Now he is serving his time for it."

Cato sighed heavily and rolled his eyes. "Your 'Lord' deserved the betrayal," he snapped. "Peeta was just right to do what he did. He could see what so many of you can't. Snow's desire to keep him close meant that he was able to see the corruption within the ranks. Corruption that you will never be aware of Metatron because Snow will never care enough to let you be close to him."

Metatron glared at Cato. "I don't expect you lesser beings to understand," he said. "You're easily ensnared by Haziel's Incubi-like qualities."


"Yet you're still here," Metatron said, cocking his head in faux confusion. "You must be under some sort of impression that Haziel will do you any good if put into your hands. What do you want with him?"
"None of your business," Johanna snapped back.

"Does someone have unwanted feelings for the repulsive backstabber?" Metatron probed, grinning sordidly.

"Nobody is more repulsive than you, Metatron," Cato was quick to throw back. Normally he wouldn't rise to such bait but he was getting anxious and didn't want to waste any time in stopping Peeta from killing himself.

"I'm going to take that as a yes," Metatron smirked.

Cato grimaced. "They are not unwanted feelings," he said. "Some of us are fully capable of admitting our emotions for the people we care about. I've grown to love Peeta, yes, and I've no problem admitting that. Maybe it's because I'm the demon of love, passion and sexuality, I don't know, but what I do know is that I am not going to let Snow keep him captive any longer."

"What do you mean 'some of us'?" Metatron glowered.

"Metatron, your love for Snow is clearly more than you let it on to be. You're as subtle as a gun and everyone noticed it, even before the Fall. Even before Peeta was even born," Cato harshly explained. "You were so obvious I wouldn't be surprised if I found out that Snow was aware of your feelings and was using them to make you do his bidding. Would fit a revolting man such as himself to do such a thing."

Metatron's face twisted and yelled angrily. He tried to punch Cato but, having expected it, Cato lifted his arms to protect his face, trapping Metatron's fist between them. Because Metatron initiated the contact, his skin began to sizzle and burn. He screamed, trying to pull out of the lock Cato had on his fist, but the demon refused.

No matter how hard Metatron thrashed and screamed, Cato did not relent. Metatron sank to his knees as his hand became a bloody mess, his voice going rough and dying in his pained throat. Cato let go when there was nothing left but torn flesh and bone. Metatron kept screaming in agony, lying down on the floor of the corridor and cradling his hand against his chest.

Cato and Johanna stepped over him like it was nothing. They had witnessed worse in the pits of hell. "Follow us and I will make sure your remaining hand turns to dust," Cato called as they walked away, leaving Metatron on the ground to sob and mourn the loss of his hand.

~xXx~

Peeta felt odd. Everything was sort of nebulous and blurry. He couldn't think straight, or remember much. He felt like he was waking up from a dream of some sort. He recognized his surroundings, at least. He was in Snow and his room in God's palace. However, Peeta could not remember much from the previous day, nor could he place what had been going on recently.

"Morning sleepyhead."

"Snow?" Peeta groaned sleepily, turning on his side in the bed to look at his master. Snow lay beside him, glowing like a new born star. "What's happened? I can't remember anything."

"Sssh, it's okay," Snow whispered, reaching out and caressing the side of Peeta's face. "You hit your head, that's all."

"Oh." Peeta touched his head, confused when it didn't so much as sting.

Snow leaned forward and connected their lips, further confusing Peeta by his urgency. His lips
moved fast against Peeta's, his tongue slipping past and exploring the warmth within. Peeta squeaked in alarm and protest, his hands finding Snow's shoulders and trying to push away and ask what was going on. Snow pushed on, however, rolling himself over on top of his angel and seating himself between Peeta's legs.

Peeta realized, with a twinge of unease, that he was naked. His intimacy rubbed against Snow's as the older man began to move against the younger's body while they kissed. Peeta didn't know why this frightened him-he had done this with Snow many, many times before—but yet he felt distressed as his blood began to heat and rush to his neither regions.

Peeta broke their kiss, ripping his mouth away and throwing his head to the side. He could see his wings now, spread out carefully beneath him on the bed, so large that they lapsed over the side of the mattress. He internally groaned as Snow entered him, his master going so far in that his bottom nearly lifted right off the bed. Snow continued to move with fluency and a confusing urgency. Almost like he was in some sort of rush.

Snow went for his creation's neck, his mouth still fast and greedy and a little sloppy. His hands slide from Peeta's face to his wings, where his fingers stroked the satin-like feathers delicately. Peeta squirmed, somewhat uncomfortable, and tried to ask what was going on again. That was when he realized he was gagged.

Perplexed, Peeta tried to gain Snow's attention by pulling on his hair and pushing on his shoulders. Snow ignored him, however, dragging his lips down the center of the angel's neck to kiss the planes of his chest and stomach. Peeta melted, coming to the conclusion that nothing was wrong. It couldn't be. Snow was just being overly affectionate. Showing his love for him in the most intimate of ways.

Peeta pushed his hips up, his hands clutching Snow's back as they moved with each other. He moaned as Snow's fingers found the bumps on his wings, the combination of that, the kisses and the ways his master filled him wholly, was overwhelming. Peeta couldn't decide if it was in a good way, though. He only knew that he was confused, lost and overwhelmed. And none of those were usually very good emotions.

Then it came rushing back to him. Like he had been whacked over the head with a bucket of memories.

Cato.

Johanna.

The walls breaking down.

The end of the world.

His fault.

His death.

Snow.

Peeta screamed behind his gag and thrashed against Snow, realizing that his wrists were still chained to the bedposts. How could that be? He had just been...? He kicked out with his legs and, upon seeing that Peeta was coming to his senses, Snow sped up even further. Peeta lashed out violently, digging his heels into Snow's back and trying to get leverage to push him away with.
"Now calm down, Haziel," Snow chastised, his body trembling as he neared his end. Peeta tried to unseat him, but bucking his hips only resulted helping Snow along. "I'm nearly finished."

Peeta roared when Snow came into his body, disgusted by the entire ordeal. Snow lay his body against his creation, shrouding them beneath the bed covers. Peeta cried, unable to stop himself, admitting to himself for the first time ever that Snow was a fully-fledged rapist and there was nothing to do about it.

"I simply drugged you for a small while so I could relieve myself," Snow explained, kissing his angel's nipple affectionately.

Peeta was barely listening. He was sobbing too hard, beyond upset at how his life was beginning to turn out. In a matter of hours, the world was going to end, and it was going to be his fault. To top it all off now, he had been raped by his master. Even if it hadn't been the first time, it was the first time he was ever fully aware of it as it happened.

It was just as Snow was disappearing beneath the sheets, intent on helping Peeta reach his finish that the door burst open and two people barged in. Peeta immediately recognized them, his heart soaring in his chest with hope as Cato and Johanna marched into the room, both holding balls of fire in their hands.

They were going to save him!
*The Hell that is Heaven*

Chapter Summary

A final showdown . . .

Chapter Seventeen: The Hell that is Heaven

The scene Cato and Johanna had stumbled upon was a gruesome one. Cato's eyes were immediately drawn to Peeta, which wasn't necessarily a good thing by the position that the angel was in. Gagged; bound; with Snow sitting on top of him, about to disappear under the sheets . . . Cato was so enraged that he had been ready to blow the Lord God sky high, if Johanna hadn't grabbed his arm and stopped him.

"You could hurt Peeta," she hissed.

"Mfo!" Peeta exclaimed, trying to say Cato's name but prevented from doing so. The way his eyes brightened at the sight of the demon made Cato all the more determined to keep him alive at all costs. However, it was hard to miss how wet his face was. The red that ringed his eyes and the bright, pink slap marks on his face. Snow had been hurting him.

"Snow, get out from under there before I force your sorry ass out!" Cato roared.

Snow casually popped his head out from beneath the bed sheets as if two angry demons hadn't just stormed into his chambers. He turned and regarded Cato and Johanna with a tint of boredom. "Can I help you?" he asked.

"Let Peeta go," said Cato. "Right now."

"Why? So you can kill him?" Snow scoffed. He quirked an eyebrow at Cato's merciless expression; how his black eyes almost held a desperation rather than an anger; and how his hand, which held a flame ready to be projected into a fireball, trembled with fear. "Or . . . not?"

"We're not going to play your sick game, Snow," Johanna spat. "Connecting the walls to the consciousness of a being is just twisted, and you know it. All loving? How dare you claim to be so. Look at the boy beneath you. Is the terror you're causing him really a sign of an all loving God?"

Snow glanced at Peeta over his shoulder. The angel had gathered his wits; stopped himself from crying and was trying to look like he hadn't been sobbing at all. His chest was heaving, trying to regain his composure, and his shackled wrists were dripping with grey blood. Snow could never feel animosity towards his creature, nor could he prevent the smile that crept onto his face every time he laid eyes on him.

"Haziel is confused," Snow simply stated. He turned back around, his snakelike eyes glowing with anger. "You confused him."

"We did nothing of the sort," Johanna snapped.

"We helped him see the truth," Cato said.
Snow cocked his head, an evil smile on his face. "As long as I'm so close to him, you won't dare hurt me," he said. "You won't risk burning him alive, like you did to Seneca Crane."

Snow was right, to Johanna and Cato's dismay. They couldn't guarantee Peeta would survive if they tried to burn Snow with their demonic fire because Snow was practically sitting on top of Peeta, nor could they try to force Snow away because the Lord had powers of his own and could easily deflect their advances.

"And Haziel's input won't help you in your quest to keep him alive, will it Haziel?" Snow practically cooed, stroking his knuckle along his creation's cheek before hooking his finger underneath the gag and pulling it down.

"You can do it, Cato!" Peeta immediately said. "If I stay alive, the walls will fall apart! I need to die to protect everything! It's the only way!"

Cato couldn't keep looking at Peeta, having known all along that he would be willing to sacrifice himself to protect the walls and stop them falling apart. "I know," the demon murmured quietly.

"Then what are you waiting for?!" Peeta shouted. "Kill me!"

"I can't do that, Peeta."

Peeta stared at Cato like he was mad. Snow connected their lips, distracting the angel momentarily as he cringed away but couldn't go anywhere. Peeta must have bitten Snow or something because a second later the Lord yelped with pain and smacked the angel across the face.

Cato growled and stepped forward, but Johanna stopped him by grabbing his arm. They still hadn't figured out a way to get Snow away from Peeta long enough to escape. They hadn't expected to walk in on such a scene. Cato knew that Snow did this sort of thing to Peeta but seeing it so clearly, so pronounced, right in front of his face, was galling.

"Kill me!" Peeta screamed at him, not at all thankful for the demon's hesitance. "Stop being an idiot and just do it!"

"Don't you see my little pet?" Snow purred, looking over his shoulder and grinning wickedly at both demons, Cato in particular. "Anael has fallen in love with you."

Peeta stared past Snow at Cato with wide, disbelieving eyes. "Demons aren't capable of love," he answered.

"Didn't I always say you were special?" Snow teased. "Of course you would be the one that changed that."

Peeta shook his head in denial. He met Cato's eyes, blue on black, and said, "Is he telling the truth? Tell me he's just poking fun again!"

Cato gritted his teeth and cursed to himself. He was good at lying, yet every time he looked in Peeta's eyes, he would himself faltering. Anything that came out of his mouth would be unconvincing. His silence was answer enough and where Snow burst out laughing, finding the situation utterly hilarious, Peeta's eyes softened.

The angel was about to say something in response when the doors suddenly burst open. Metatron barged in and pushed Cato and Johanna aside. "I'll look after you, my Lord!" he screamed hysterically, clearly having been driven mad by the loss of his hand. The pain-driven angel grabbed Snow and dragged him away from Peeta, clearly thinking he was taking him out of the line of fire.
Snow started screaming obscenities but Metatron was too far gone to care. All he wanted was to protect his Lord, like he always did.

Cato jumped in immediately and untied Peeta. He snatched a pair of pants off the floor and was about to head for the door when Peeta yanked his wrist away. "What are you doing?!" Cato shouted. "Are you crazy!?

"You have to kill me," Peeta said firmly. "I'm not going anywhere. I need to die."

"Peeta, this isn't the time!" Johanna shouted, keeping her eyes trained on the hysterical Metatron and enraged Lord.

"The world will end if I don't die," Peeta shouted back. He looked at Cato, blue eyes burning like wildfire. "Kill me now or I will never forgive you!"

Cato cursed and grabbed Peeta's arm, dragging him into the closet in the corner of Snow's room, where it was quieter and he could hear himself think properly. "Peeta, we have little time to be discussing this. We can talk about it later."

"You'll try to talk me out of it later," Peeta answered, pulling the pants Cato grabbed for him on quickly. He shook his head firmly. "You must do this. If the world ends simply because I'm alive then I will never forgive you or myself. Besides, I think Snow has a plan up his sleeve to turn me back into a mindless dope when the walls break down. Like a trip switch or a trigger in my brain." His eyes watered at the thought. "You can't let me turn into that brainless idiot again. Please."

Cato was confused and frustrated. He ran his fingers through his hair and yelled in irritation. "This isn't fair!" he shouted. "Why did this have to happen now?! When I finally let myself . . . When I finally learned how to . . ." He punched the wall, burning a hole into it that left a acidic smell behind. "No! I can't do this!"

"Cato," Peeta whispered, his voice hoarse but desperate, "I appreciate every second of the time I had with you. You saved me when I couldn't save myself. Now it is my turn to do the right thing. To stop being a damsel in distress and actually do something right with my life." "Dying is not the right thing to do," Cato growled. He grabbed Peeta's shoulders and shook him. "Please, Peeta. You can't die. I love you! Snow was right. I don't fucking know how but I've fallen in love with you and you can't just die it's not fair!"

"And what's the alternative? The world burns and I return to a primitive ball of mush that can't as much as think for myself?" Peeta whimpered. He touched Cato's face and hissed when it burned, quickly pulling it back again. "I love you, too. I really, really do. But the world cannot end just because of this."

"My world will end if you die," Cato answered. He knew the direction this was headed. Ultimately, he knew what was going to happen. He just didn't want it to be true.

Peeta burst into tears, the sight making Cato get choked up too. "You're making this so hard!" the angel cried.

Cato kissed Peeta, desperately trying to take the pain away. Peeta kissed him back, his lips tasting of salt water and strawberries. Cato felt a tear slip out of his eye, and trail down his cheek. It burned the entire journey, the acid that his tears were made up of destroying his skin completely. How was he supposed to do this? How was he supposed to kill the angel he loved?

"I want to hold you," Peeta whispered, his face crinkled as he tried not to start crying again. Cato's
heart broke as the angel looked at him again with tearful blue eyes. "I want to know what it feels like to hold you."

"You'll burn," Cato croaked.

Peeta nodded and whispered, "I know."

Cato gasped for breath and nodded. "I love you," he said, one last time.

Peeta closed his eyes and nodded as well. "I love you too."

Peeta then stepped forward and hugged Cato.

It took a moment. A brief moment where Cato hoped that the laws of the demons and angels had been broken by Katniss and that Peeta would not burn. In that moment he felt what it was like to be held. To have Peeta's arms around him and to feel his head against his chest. He felt all the love that Peeta was capable of giving to him, and all the compassion that he had thought he didn't need, but what had ultimately been missing from his life. Cato imagined them stepping back, laughing, and leaving the hell that was heaven to live their lives together away from Snow and Romulus and the angels and the demons. Together.

Then Peeta began to scream.

Cato tried to step back, unable to take it, but Peeta held fast. Cato could hear Peeta burning, hear the acid as it ate away at his skin. It felt like it went on forever. Cato was helpless to do anything, to stop the pain that Peeta was feeling, and he simply began to cry. Not a single tear. Hundreds. All of them tore down his face, deforming him until his face was nearly burned away to the bone. The pain was so agonizing he couldn't even begin to explain it. Not of his face been burned away, but of having to listen to Peeta die so slowly and so excruciatingly.

Then it stopped.

Silence.

Never ending silence.

The pain ended all of a sudden. Peeta could not move for a moment. He looked up at Cato's face. His poor, misunderstood demon, as he cried and cried and cried. Peeta wanted to comfort him, tell him that he had survived and was okay, but something was wrong. Something didn't sit right. Cato fell to his knees, still holding Peeta's body, but somehow Peeta's point of view remained standing.

Now Peeta was staring at both Cato and himself. Cato's angry screams were muted, his rage somehow dampened down as he clutched a broken angel to his chest, cursing Snow and Romulus and the rest of the world for what had happened. His expression was miserable, outraged, terrified, upset.

It was then Peeta realized.

He had died.

It made sense. His spirit had separated from his body, which was still in Cato's arms, and was now in limbo, the fearful inbetween. The acid must have reached his heart, stopping it instantly. His body was charred; his skin an angry red colour, blistered everywhere. In some areas you could even see bone. Thankfully Peeta could not remember the pain that being burned so badly had caused. His eyes were closed, forever shut out to the rest of the world.
A figure appeared, as if they had stepped in through the room while the door stayed shut.

Katniss.

Lady Karma smiled softly at Peeta. Not the Peeta in Cato's arms. The Peeta who stood over them like the angel of death. She held her hand out towards him and said, "Come with me." It was obvious. She had come to take him to where-ever his spirit was supposed to go next.

"Promise me you'll look after him," Peeta said firmly.

Katniss nodded. "I will keep a watchful eye," she promised.

Peeta took a final look at Cato. He desperately wanted to comfort Cato. To tell him that it was going to be okay, that he was fine, that Katniss was going to take his spirit to somewhere good. But he couldn't. That wasn't how it worked. The dead didn't have voices.

"I love you, Belial," Peeta whispered. He pressed a kiss to the top of Cato's head and, without looking back, turned to Katniss and took her hand. There was a bright light and a pool of heat warmed Peeta's face. He closed his eyes and welcomed it gratefully.

"You will be remembered Haziel," Katniss promised as she led him onwards to the next realm. "You will never be forgotten."

They stepped into the light.

Peeta finally found peace.
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

The End.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Epilogue

Johanna burst into the closet a moment later. She found Cato sobbing on his knees, cradling Peeta's dead body in his arms. The angel had been burned severely, not by demonic fire but by something else. Cato's face was unrecognizable, shreds having been burned away by his tears. He almost looked demented, like his mind had ran away and left him behind.

"Haziel!" Snow roared. He blasted Metatron into the opposite wall and pushed Johanna away as he stumbled into the closet. "No," the Lord whispered, "not him, anyone but him . . ." He reached out with a trembling hand and touched Peeta's hair, as if it was going to goad a reaction from the body.

"There's no point, Snow," Johanna muttered. "He's gone."

"No, he's not, he's just sleeping!" Snow roared back.

"Don't touch him!" Cato shouted when Snow tried to touch the body again. "It's your fault he had to do this! It's your fault he's dead! Just go away! This is what you have done! This is what you made him resort to!" He dragged Peeta up into his arms and held the angel's head against his shoulder. Cato closed his eyes, as if he could blot it all out.

"What are you going to do now, Snow?" Johanna snapped vindictively. "Create another angel? Wait another million years until the walls tremble and fall again? Make them want to kill themselves? It won't work. It'll just go around and around and around and around."

"What the hell do you mean create another angel?" Snow shouted. He stood up, face flushed red with despair. "You know nothing about me, or why I did what I did. I created Peeta because the image of him came into my head and I fell in love with him. I don't just create angels willy nilly you stupid demon. It was later that I decided to try to link his conscious self to the walls between Heaven and Hell. Now that he's gone I have nothing."

Cato rocked forward onto his knees and laid Peeta's body onto the ground. He made sure not to trap Peeta's wings underneath his body, because he knew that Peeta didn't like it when that happened. Cato pressed his forehead against the angel's, trying to collect himself before speaking. He sat up and passed his fingers over Peeta's eyes, locking the beautiful sapphire blue away from the rest of the world forever. Now, despite his burned, blistered, bloody skin, Peeta looked like he was simply sleeping and could wake at any moment. Cato stroked Peeta's cheek before finally dragging himself up to stand.

Cato walked over to Snow and squared himself up. Snow didn't cringe away, or show sign of fear, but the upset that both the demon and Lord were feeling meant that both were extremely
emotionally charged. With his face torn and bleeding, Cato looked demented; intimidating; crazy almost, and as he glared at the Lord God with every ounce of anger and fire he could muster, he even made Johanna back away with fear.

"You deserve to be blasted into flames," Cato snarled, chest heaving as he physically restrained himself from actually doing what he just stated. "But Peeta would not want that."

"You're a demon," Snow said with disgust. "I don't believe that you would be able to control yourself. You clearly couldn't control yourself when Haziel decided to die by your hand."

"It wasn't by his hand!" Johanna shouted.

Cato held his hand up to silence her, clearly not in the mood for raised voices, or baiting, or even shouting. "You drove Peeta to this, no matter how much you try to convince yourself otherwise," he said. "The fact that Peeta was brave enough to die because of what you did to him shows how no matter how much you tried, you couldn't make him like you. You couldn't change the goodness in his heart to fit the rot in yours. Peeta is dead because of you, no one else."

Without waiting to gauge Snow's reaction, Cato turned back around and lifted Peeta up into his arms. The body was still warm, and it took all the strength that Cato had not to break down again when Peeta's head hung limply over the end of his elbow. Johanna looked on forlornly as Cato passed her, intent on leaving the palace and bringing Peeta with him.

"You can't just take him!" Snow screamed desperately. "He belongs to me!"

"He never belonged to you," Cato answered calmly.

Johanna followed Cato out of Snow's chambers, leaving the Lord with nothing but an unconscious angel and broken tears. Snow lashed out. He tore the room apart bit by bit until the entire area was in shreds. He screamed and yelled and cursed himself. He should have done more. He should have tried harder. There had to be something he could have done to have prevented his love's death.

But he hadn't.

He had failed.

Cato carried Peeta through the empty palace; corridor after corridor of nothing but emptiness. The only sounds were his footsteps, with Johanna's slightly out of sync behind him, and the soft swishing of Peeta's wings as they brushed the floor beneath them. Snow's mansion was huge, and walking through it took days. Cato didn't stop; didn't quiver; didn't falter; he just kept walking.

Snow could have followed them, or sent Metatron when he woke up, but he didn't. He let them leave, even if the means were peculiar.

Eventually Johanna could not go on any longer. She teleported to the front door and fell asleep, giving her powers some respite while she waited for Cato to arrive. The angels began to notice the presence of a demon at their Lord's mansion, and gathered at the gates with curiosity. They murmured fearfully to one another, confused by Cresil's presence.

Johanna sat in front of the mansion for weeks. She didn't fully understand why Cato chose to walk through the mansion instead of teleporting, but she guessed that it had something to do with the demon believing that these were his final moments with Peeta. There was no doubt about it, once Romulus discovered that they had been in heaven, cohorting with Peeta and Snow, they would be executed. However, demons and angels didn't go to the same places when they died. Once Cato let go of Peeta, it would be for the last time.
A month after Johanna took residence on Snow's doorstep, the door was pushed open and Cato came out. He didn't look tired, which wasn't surprising since most demons could go months without rest-Johanna being a different case because she was the demon of laziness-especially when they were determined.

It was odd that Peeta's body still looked the same. Maybe angels' bodies didn't decay, maybe preserved by some sort of angelic force, or maybe Peeta was a special case, the fact that Snow created his body meaning that he would never fade. Whatever the reason, Peeta still looked the same as he had done the day he died. Almost as if he had fallen asleep in Cato's arms and the demon was taking him home.

Cato didn't say anything to the on looking angels. His eyes were too busy flicking over Peeta's sleeping face, having no trouble committing every curve and crevice to memory. He wished he had more time, for a month hadn't been enough, but Cato knew that now he had to do it. Now he had to let go. He carefully knelt down and laid Peeta out on the doorstep to Snow's mansion, making sure that every single angel who stood at the gate to the Lord's home knew who was responsible for this.

Johanna watched as Cato kissed Peeta's forehead one last time, a drop of acid sliding down her cheek and burning her chest. Cato stood up again, looked to the demon of laziness. Never had Johanna ever seen such pain expressed in such black eyes; nor could she ever say that with a face as burned; bloody; deformed; and damaged as Cato's was in that moment had she ever seen such vulnerability. When Cato looked to her and nodded, she nodded back. It was time to go.

Johanna teleported away first. Cato remained standing for a while after, his gaze resting on his beautiful, broken angel. He didn't want to go. In fact, he almost didn't. The urge to sit down beside Peeta's body was like a ball of fire in his chest, the desperation to break down so overwhelming that Cato almost submitted to it.

For once, he did not give in to temptation.

~FFG~

Cato and Johanna couldn't return to hell. Lucifer knew that they had been in heaven; that they had been in cahoots with Peeta and, through incorrect assumption, Snow. They were forced to go on the run, to constantly be one step ahead, which was difficult considering that Lucifer was a mightier being than them. Maybe he was toying with them, watching them run through the realms like startled ants because it was funny. It seemed to be the only logical explanation as to why they weren't dead yet.

Cato had thought that Katniss would have ratted them out. Her favour of Romulus' side had always been clear, she had never attempted to hide it, yet for some reason it seemed that she had held her tongue. It couldn't be because she liked them, or felt they were worth her mercy, she was too hard a person to crack for that. Cato and Johanna didn't question it, but it was ultimately very confusing.

After sixty years of running, Romulus finally grew bored of the game. He wanted something new to play with and began sending demons out to tempt the humans again. He ordered Marvel to go after Cato and Johanna, to kill them quickly so they could get on with their lives without their 'traitorous hides'. Normally, Romulus would order a slow death. A tedious and painful one. But he had always had a soft spot for the demon of laziness and the demon of love, passion and sexuality. It didn't pain him to be rid of them, though. He simply wanted it done fast.

Through the sixty years, Johanna and Cato grew weary. Demons didn't age but being on the run for so long, without much time to pause in one area for too long, took its toll on them. Johanna
especially. Being without the fires of hell for so long meant that Johanna and Cato were weak. Only a tenth of what they used to be. Never did Cato regret his decision to fight for Peeta's cause, even when he endured some of the worst torture ever while on the run. Peeta, despite no longer being with them, was still worth it all.

When Marvel found them in the cobbled streets of the Inbetween Realm, he went for Johanna first. Cato fought Maalik for as long as he could, however Marvel had Romulus' blessing on his side, and this caused him to easily overpower the now weakened demon. Terrified, Johanna portalled away, where she was found on the other side by one of Romulus' minions and executed.

Marvel took pleasure in informing Cato of this, laughing manically when the disfigured demon tried to fight back again, having been fueled by rage and rage alone.

It wasn't enough.

Despite his desire to make Cato suffer, Marvel had no choice but to follow Romulus' orders. So, as soon as Cato was in his clutches, the Guard of Hell stuck his hand through the other demon's chest and ripped out his heart. Clean. Fast. Simple.

Cato felt no pain. It was like he was somehow numbed to it. He had accepted that when he went on the run with Johanna that they were both going to die eventually. He knew that it was only a matter of time before they got caught. Sixty years was an impressive amount of time to have 'eluded' Romulus, but he had prepared himself for his death as soon as they left Snow's mansion. He wasn't afraid, he was ready.

Ready for the blackness that came with death. The nothingness that a demon like him would surely only see when he died. Demons didn't go on to another world, you see. There was no haven for the dead souls of hell. There couldn't be. They didn't deserve it.

And as Marvel walked away, leaving Cato on the street like a piece of trash, the dying demon decided that it was okay. He was ready. Nobody could live forever, even entities like Snow and Romulus and maybe even Katniss would eventually reach an ending. Like the final page of a book. The page you don't want to reach but inevitably know that you will.

There was a spark of light in Cato's eyes. For a moment, all he saw was his blood seeping between the cobblestones in the streets and he decided that it must have been a reflection from the sky in the red liquid. Then it happened again. Cato squinted, his tired eyes barely staying open as his strength slowly sapped out of him. What was that?

The light suddenly exploded, becoming so blinding that Cato almost believed that he had lost his ability to see. It was pure white, so white it was almost impossible to look at too long, if at all. Cato's eyes slowly adjusted to it, however, and he began to see a shadow moving closer.

The shadow moved towards him, turning into a solid form.

"Cato," a soothing voice that he recognized all too clearly whispered.

Cato shook his head in denial, his stomach churning. That voice struck more fear in him than being murdered by Marvel had done. Why? Because he was too scared to believe it was real.

Peeta came out of the light, glimmering like a celestial God. His wings stretched out behind him, huge and bold and beautiful. Each feather shimmered, bristling in an invisible breeze. There wasn't a single burn on Peeta's body, and seeing him there, standing before him so perfect and beautiful made Cato cry for the first time in sixty years.

"You can't be real," the demon croaked brokenly.
Peeta reached out his hand, a soft smile on his face. "Come with me," he said.

"I can't. Demons and angels don't go to the same place when we die."

"Johanna is here," said Peeta. "We're waiting for you."

"You're a hallucination, you have to be!" Cato shouted.

Peeta stepped closer, tears welling in his beautiful blue eyes. "Please believe me," he whispered, his voice melodic and relaxing. "I'm here to take you home."

Cato shook his head, acidic tears burning his already disfigured face. Slowly, like a video put on slow motion, his soul dragged itself from his demonic body and sat on the cobblestone like a newborn baby. He stared at Peeta desperately, knowing that he was dead now but unsure where to go. "If this is my punishment for the side that I chose then it's a very cruel thing to do," he said.

"Take my hand, Cato," Peeta said. He smiled. "Trust me."

Cato let out a choked sob, unable to handle the grief of not having seen his beloved in sixty years. Maybe this was a hoax. Maybe Romulus was taunting him before stealing his soul for damnation. Whatever the reason, he didn't care. For Peeta was in front of him, an angel of grace who fell too fast. Who gave up his life for the sake of the world.

Cato outstretched his hand, which trembled violently with fear. Peeta threaded his fingers through Cato's and hauled him to his feet, reaching up and touching his now perfect face with his free hand. "You've been so sad," Peeta whispered. "I'm sorry."

"Are you real?" Cato asked, frightened of the truth.

Peeta looked back towards the light. "Come with me."

"I'm a demon, I can't go there."

Ignoring him, Peeta walked back to the light, guiding Cato behind him. When the light was unbearably bright again, so much that Cato couldn't see where he was walking, Peeta looked over his shoulder at him. Like a snap of the fingers everything else faded, and all that mattered in that moment was Peeta's small smile and his big blue eyes.

Peeta turned and took Cato's hands in his own. There was no more burning, no more demonic fire keeping them apart. The angel drew the demon close, and enfolded his wings around them both. A protective barrier, blotting out the rest of the world. This was their time. Nothing else mattered.

"Trust me?" Peeta asked.

Cato nodded. "Always."

They walked through the light, to the realm beyond, passing onto a world that could not be put into words. For everyone who went there were souls of pure intention. No matter the decisions they made in their lifetime, if their intentions were good and pure and just, they would be able to enter the new realm. There was only one requirement: passing on.

The world would continue to move without them. Snow and Romulus would continuing fighting but with the walls no longer in danger of collapsing, who knew how long it would be before the Second Coming, when nobody could stop the realms from spilling into the earth. Snow never made another angel. Despite what they thought, in his own twisted way he had loved Peeta, and
nobody would ever match up to him. As for Romulus, he remained unaware of the events that had unfolded, the only part he had ever played being the murder of Cresil and Belial.

Cato died that night, sixty years after the boy he fell in love with. The boy he fell in love with, however, waited for him, so he could lead him into the new world, just how Lady Karma had led him.

The Vision of God and the Demon of Love.

Together.

At last.

Chapter End Notes

A big thank you to everyone who has read and reviewed this story! It wouldn't have been possible without you guys though, and for your support I am eternally grateful.

This will not be the end of my Peetato ventures! Once I have the majority of my current Malec and Everlark fics finished, I have another idea that I intend to publish. I shall leave the rough blurb here for you to read, and ponder whether you'll read it once it's up!

District 212-By Blueberrychills94

"Cato Hadley and Peeta Mellark took the whole of Panem by storm, becoming the most popular musical duo of modern times. Their band 'District 212' became a household name in every District of the country. As they begin work in the Capitol, however, it becomes clear that the highlife is not as rosy as it seems. As their popularity grows, their privacy begins to decrease as the demanding citizens of the Capitol want to know everything that's going on in their lives. And when Peeta is struck down by a medical condition he has had since he was a baby, causing him to need to use a cane for the remainder of his life, their agent Cornelius Snow goes to dangerous lengths to make sure they stabilize their 'perfect image' to the masses.

Cato and Peeta have been through a lot because no matter what, their music means the world to them, but how much can they endure before they are pushed over the edge?"

Think it'd be interesting? Let me know!

Again, a massive thank you to everyone who has read and reviewed for this story! Every fave, follow and comment means the world to me ^_^

End Notes

So, tell me what you think? I have big plans for this story that will involve love; deception;
heartache; passion; sex; violence; friendship; magic and probably much more. The end
game is Peetato which I wouldn't normally give away if I wasn't so sure that some readers
may question this through the progress of the story. Trust me, it's Peetato. There may be
parts-many parts-where you'll think, "Ehhh, are you sure this is Peetato?" but believe me,
it is. In the beginning it's a love/hate relationship but, come on, there's nothing like a good
heated squabble to get the passion stirring ;)

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