



The River of Hatred

Author: *Liana Valerian*

Category: Romance, Adult

Description: A fallen angel with a grudge. A warrior of Heaven with too much to lose. And a Nephilim caught between them.

Once, Sariel would have done anything for Ithuriel. Now? He just wants to watch him fall. When the angels embark on a mission to close the rift between Hell and the human world, Sariel sees his chance for vengeance. Ithuriel let him suffer alone for centuries – now he'll make sure the righteous angel knows exactly what it means to fall. And if he has to use their captivating Nephilim companion, Jessica, to do it? Even better.

As they descend into the twisted depths of the Malebolge, facing the damned and the demons who rule them, Sariel's game of seduction takes a dangerous turn. Temptation was supposed to be his weapon. He never expected it to feel like salvation. And when the mission takes them beyond the Underworld, into a world where Heaven and Hell both have stakes, the three will have to decide what's more dangerous – the ever-growing demonic conspiracy or their forbidden desires.

Total Pages (Source): 85

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

Prologue – Jessica

Detroit, Four Years Ago

“They’ll be ready by Saturday,” I tell the smiling couple whose newborn baby just had her first photoshoot. She’s now sleeping like a, well, baby, as my satisfied customers thank me and shuffle out of my studio.

I’m in a good mood – babies and pets are my favorite models. I guess I just like cute things. I sing along to the Pink song playing on the radio while I turn off the lights in the backdrop area. The Bennets asked for a later shooting time since Mr. Bennet had to work the afternoon shift. Happy hour has come and gone and it’s dark outside, but I don’t mind. Most of my friends are busy these days, spending time with their significant others, a few even with their kids – some of my best customers – and I had just broken up with my latest disappointment of a boyfriend last week.

Well, I say broke up. What I really mean is that I found out he’s been sleeping with his secretary for months and I was the other woman. How someone who has sex like he’s running a sprint and aiming to set a new record gets to string not one, but two women along like that is beyond me.

But anyway, I don’t have anywhere I need to be and no one is waiting for me. And after Owen, I’m not in a hurry to put myself back out there. I’ve been thinking about getting a dog, though. I just can’t decide if I want a nice cuddly Retriever or something spunky and protective like a Doberman. I could go crazy and get both. I wonder if they’d get along...

My train of thought is interrupted by the ringing of my phone. I look at my smartwatch and sigh. There's only one person who would call me at this hour on a Friday evening. It's like he waits for everyone else to be done calling their loved ones, so he's alone in the room. I answer and put it on speaker, waiting for the spiel to end.

"This is a collect call from... Sterling Calloway... an inmate at the Federal Correctional Institution Milan. This call is subject to monitoring and recording. To accept, press one."

I tap the number one on my screen, having already pulled up the keypad. Years of practice – years my parents have spent in prison after defrauding millions from investors.

"Hi, pumpkin," my dad's voice fills my studio, just like his presence used to fill a boardroom. I take a second to thank the Fates or whatever gods were looking after me that I wasn't interning at my parents' company when they got arrested. They were mad at me for deviating from their plan and using the money Grandma left me to buy my own apartment and open a photography business. Once they got arrested and a brief investigation into me was over, the authorities found me not to be liable and I could move on with my life.

"Hi, Dad," I reply without enthusiasm. I hate the generic nicknames he comes up with and I know why he's calling. It's been the same conversation for years now, ever since everything my parents owned got taken away from them half a decade ago.

"I haven't heard from you for a while," he continues despite my lukewarm greeting.

Yeah, since the last time you ran out of money, I think, but I let my silence speak for itself.

When I don't reply, Dad chuckles awkwardly. "I was wondering if you might have something for your father. I'm sure you know how miserable the food here is."

Yup. I've heard all about it. From you and from Mom.

I don't think I'm a bad person. I just can't help being fed up with this. My mom and dad have always treated me like an accessory to their reputation. I had to be the best at everything, turn into their carefully curated legacy. Once I rebelled and went on my own, they cut me off without mercy. It was only after they lost everything that the calls started. Though, Mom's come less and less often. Maybe she roped some guard into doing her bidding.

I clear my suddenly narrowed throat. "I'll send something to your commissary," I promise. Before he can ask for more than last time, like he always does, I speak again: "Have you heard from Mom? How is she?"

Silence from the other side, then the sound of a heavy door closing, but nothing from the man who named me after his mother.

"Ah, no, I have not," he finally says, speaking quieter than before. He doesn't ask when I spoke with her last. Instead, he ends the conversation: "I have to go, pumpkin. Don't forget to send those funds."

He hangs up before I can get another word in and I'm left with a pit in my stomach, one that's always there after one of these phone calls.

"Yeah, love you too, Dad," I murmur.

My good mood now evaporated, I rush through the last of my closing routine, then lock the door behind me. I'm glad my apartment isn't too far away and I don't have to walk alone in the dark for long.

I'm just a couple of buildings away from mine when a dark shadow steps in front of me.

"Sorry," I say with a giggle, even though they were the one stepping into my path and not the other way around. When I take a step back, I see they're wearing a hooded cloak, combat boots peeking out from under the hem. Judging by the size of their shoulders, I'd say that it's a man and not a woman under the heavy fabric.

Okay, creepy much? A shiver skitters down my spine.

I try to sidestep him and carry on, but his hand shoots out to wrap around my arm, stopping me in place. My heartbeat picks up and I get lightheaded. This is not the time for a panic attack.

"Don't scream," a sensual male voice sounds from the darkness under the hood. "I won't hurt you. Come with me, everything will be explained."

"N-no," I stutter. I don't want to have my kidney being taken away rationally explained to me, thank you very much.

"Sorry, pumpkin." The way he says the nickname my father just used turns my stomach. Has he been watching me? "You don't have a choice," the stranger finishes with a finality.

With that, he wraps an arm around me and covers my mouth with a gloved hand. I kick and scream as he pulls me into the darkness away from the street lights, but it's useless. He's just too strong.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

I wonder how many times my dad's gonna call when he doesn't get his commissary money. And when he'll give up.

Chapter 1 – Ithuriel

Heaven, Present Day

“Are you certain you wish to pledge yourself to this task, Ithuriel? You've never traversed Sheol by yourself.”

The archangel Saraqael stands at the center of my humble quarters, observing me as I gather those belongings that may prove useful on my quest. We are both in our mortal forms, though our wings are hidden. Saraqael's twenty-foot wingspan alone would be too large for my utilitarian quarters. Even folded, the highest points of the archangel's majestic gold-dusted wings reach ten feet.

It's uncertain why our mortal forms appear the way they do – we don't exactly have an explanation within genetics. The color of our skin, hair, eyes, and even subtle nuances of our feathers make themselves known the first time we will ourselves into a humanoid shape. While demons also morph into various beastly shapes, we angels remain the same for eternity. We can only influence whether to manifest our wings physically or keep them out of sight.

Many of the older angels and archangels prefer to remain in an ethereal form – the one we were created into. Our human appearances were born out of necessity. Mortal minds cannot comprehend our forms of ether, and gazing upon them even caused physical harm to some fragile humans who have had an opportunity to do so.

Other angels – myself included – find physical exertions, such as battle training, to induce a state akin to meditation. Mortal forms also offer opportunities for more studious endeavors. On occasion, when allowed to do so, angelkind assisted with the advancement of humanity. These last decades, however, have proven that their advancement has been detrimental to themselves and their planet in many ways. As everything that unfolds is the will of the Most High, we do not question the harmful events occurring on Earth – we merely observe and document them.

“I have not wavered in my decision,” I assure my superior. Saraqaël surpasses me in age and power, as well as in his position by the Most High’s throne. He has been a wise guide to younger angels for millennia.

I scrutinize my preferred sword for any imperfections in its cleanliness, just as I am accustomed to doing every day. My armor was similarly vetted before I donned it. Both weapon and armor glow like illuminated platinum, crafted by our best artisans from the purest Celestial steel.

The archangel crosses his arms and widens his stance. He has been observing me as closely as I have been observing my equipment. “It has been centuries since the majority of angels have conversed with humans. Add to that the fact none of us are ever adequately prepared for the horrors of Hell.”

I sheathe my sword in an ornate scabbard between my shoulder blades, then turn toward the backpack I began preparing yesterday. Shouldering the weight, I face my mentor and give him my undivided attention.

“That is precisely why I am the optimal choice for this mission.” I count off the reasons with my hands. “I am among the youngest of angels and no personal grudges are held against me in Hell.” I tap the second finger. “My skills with a sword are second only to those of archangels.” I’m not boasting, it’s a matter of fact. I indicate my last point by tapping on the third finger. “I am also among the minority that spend

the most amount of their time in a mortal form. I am far less likely to act in ways a human would find unnatural.”

Saraqael is as familiar with the reasoning behind my choice as I am. It is a peculiarity of his, rehashing ad nauseam. Just as my peculiarity is ensuring my equipment is always in optimal shape. While angelkind share *raison d'être*, no two angels are ever the same – in appearance and also in personality.

After a moment of silence, he concedes. “Very well, young one.”

We talk about a few of the finer points of my tasks as we exit the dormitory and make our way to the closest gate. Elysium is as glowing as ever; both sunlit and lit from within. I take a furtive look and drink in the sight of my home. I may be absent for weeks, perhaps even months. It has been a few centuries since I last battled in Hell, longer still since there was a need for me to go to Abaddon – the fortress where those fallen angels that remain loyal to Heaven reside. Commonly known as Purgatory, it is also where the current generation of Elioud live.

With the rapid population growth of humans come more souls in need of a final resting place. While Elysium expands to the needs of its occupants, Hell remains the size at which it was made many millennia ago, after the first angels fell.

Very few vile mortals become demons – the majority are corrupted angels and their offspring or creations. Most human souls in Hell are disembodied and mindless things. An exception is made for the souls of the blackest humans – those are aware of their suffering in the Burning Pits. When an area of Hell becomes too densely packed with such souls, they gain a shape of sorts; like a cloud of the worst acid rain. Such amorphous manifestations have become more numerous these last decades – though we now know that the archdemon Belial augmented the numbers.

The Celestial Council, a lawmaking body comprised of both angels and demons,

decided that the Fallen living in Purgatory were no longer enough to police the human world from such manifestations and also any escaped demonic minions. With another nudge from Belial, the Elioud were enlisted.

As the offspring of Celestials, whether the relative is a grandparent or someone hundreds of years down the family tree, these Nephilim (with angelic blood) and Cambion (with demonic blood) are capable of using the ether to manipulate their surroundings. At least once they are brought to the Underworld. They are also stronger and heal faster than humans with no Celestial ancestry.

Some months ago, the Council was made aware of a rift in Hell – an opening through which weaker demons may enter the human realm and wreak havoc. Protecting humanity is the sacred duty of angels. If the humans of this modern era discovered otherworldly creatures, an apocalypse would surely follow. Their first choice would be to throw life-destroying weapons wherever there is a threat, essentially causing their own genocide. And even demons, at least the more rational among them, know that with a massive extermination of humans, their greatest supply of nourishment would dwindle.

The Elioud were sent to the domain of the missing Asmodai – or Asmodeus as he is perhaps better known to humans today. The rift, however, was not there. This information was confirmed by another archdemon on the Council, Ashtaroth.

And so, here I walk today, approaching one of Heaven's gates, on my way to join forces with Purgatory in discovering where this rift lies, with a secondary mission in the human realm – discovering which other humans with Celestial blood Belial may have conspired with before his imprisonment in the Burning Pits.

Saraqael and the other angels on the Council insisted the soldier from Purgatory be a Nephilim, and, apparently, the fallen angel Maalik, with whom I had some encounters in the Underworld before, has the perfect candidate within the team he has been

mentoring.

We stop in front of the gate. It's a circular waypoint decorated with the glowing symbols of our language; an alphabet that those unable to speak it refer to as Malachim. If I could travel using the ether, I wouldn't need to rely on fixed locations like this.

"Take care, Ithuriel. Do not hesitate to reach out to us when you require assistance." Saraqael means well and I find no offense with his words. Refusing to ask for aid from your superiors makes you a slave to pride, a sin governed by that ancient archdemon, Ashtaroth. I bow at the waist, my fisted hand placed over my heart. It is a necessary affectation of this form; nonverbal communication is much simpler in our ethereal forms, and emotions, such as respect towards an elder, can be conveyed with clearer nuances while in it.

Saraqael tilts his head in reciprocity, though I would never presume to expect it. I turn on my heel and step onto the waypoint. With a few spoken words and clear intent, I will it to transport me to Abaddon.

???

Upon arriving in Purgatory, I'm greeted by a hurried murmured conversation. I lift my gaze from the gray stone floor, unchanged since I walked here last, and step toward the four figures who immediately stop talking. Maalik is flanked by two Elioud women, one with long reddish-blond hair tied in a tight high ponytail, the other, taller one, with loose auburn hair.

Behind them, arms crossed and leaning against the wall with one foot braced on it, leg cocked, is somebody I used to know well before his fall. My eyes widen and my jaw goes slack. I've successfully avoided Sarel for all these many centuries, yet here he is, with a smirk on his face which tells me just how much he enjoys the shock I

must display at seeing him. His eyes are... completely black. No white or color in them at all. They were once a clear, bright sky blue.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

Maalik, likely sensing the tension in the air, clears his throat loudly. “Welcome to Purgatory, Ithuriel. It’s been a long time.”

Sariel snorts and his voice fills the hallway that is the designated destination for waypoint or portal travel. “Longer since I’ve seen him, I’m sure. It’s almost like he’s been avoiding me.”

“I have been avoiding you,” I answer coolly, though his smile only widens. For several centuries, over a millennium ago, Sariel and I were inseparable, one never to be found without the other. When Sariel began voicing his desires to interact with mankind, I thought it was a phase, merely momentary curiosity.

The emotions his fall wrought within me were powerful and perilous to my standing in Heaven. It took centuries, but I made my peace with it eventually. Or so I thought. Seeing him here now... I’m once more suffused by a feeling of unexpected longing... mixed with betrayal. It hits me like a fist in the gut.

“Ahem.” The redhead clears her throat far more delicately than Maalik did. I glance at her, then back toward my once-friend, now casually rubbing his chin. My eyes, however, snap right back to the woman.

“You sold your soul,” I accuse. I see now that the woman is a descendant of a Nephalem, a rare child of angels and demons. I had vaguely known the angel Ariel who defected to be with a demon decades ago, but she was destroyed soon after. No child had been made known to us. At least those of us not in the highest tiers of Elysium. My eyes narrow at her. “And you... feel like an archdemon.”

She blushes then flutters the fingers of her left hand, palm facing inward, showing a ring made out of demonic steel, the corrupted brother of angelic steel, and fitted with a large amber stone. Upon closer examination, I can see hellfire burning within it. I recognize the power output in it. “That would be my husband you feel,” she says.

“Ashtaroth wed you?” My brows rise. This is unexpected.

Sariel snorts again and inserts himself into the conversation once more, making it impossible to ignore him. “Wedded and bedded, old friend.”

“You are not my friend,” I interject, but he ignores me and continues.

“Living with them is a nightmare, everything constantly reeks of sex – my dick is perpetually hard,” he finishes, winking at me.

I somehow manage to choke on my own inhaled breath. A coughing fit follows and my face turns crimson. This mortal form can be very inconvenient. I compose myself, studiously averting my gaze from that evil smirk. He always enjoyed shocking me, though I have never heard anything even remotely as crude as his words now were.

The Nephalem who sold her soul – a mostly pure and uncorrupted soul – to an archdemon she also wed is an oddity I will ponder on later. “Are you the Nephilim I’m to work with?” I ask the shorter of the women, the leather-clad blonde with what seems to be a curved scimitar sheathed at her hip.

She flushes at my attention, her lashes fluttering with anxious blinks. Perhaps I’m the first Heavenly angel she has ever seen? Yes, that is likely why I unsettle her.

“T-that’s me,” she stutters and somehow manages to flush a deeper shade of red. My gaze is drawn to the way her downcast eyes show off her long pale lashes. I expect Sariel to make an inappropriate remark about her bashful behavior. When he doesn’t,

I allow myself to look at him again. A chill skitters down my spine at the intense calculating look he aims at the back of the girl's head. I frown at him and he must sense my attention – his depthless black eyes snap to mine and his face rearranges itself into an unaffected, slightly mocking mien.

“We wanted to send Liam with you, Ithuriel, but he managed to shatter his tibia just yesterday. He'll be out of commission for a few weeks. Jessica is just as skilled, however,” Maalik says, making the girl's nervous smile twitch.

“I'll be there to look after them anyhow,” Sariel chirps enthusiastically.

“What?” I say at the same time as the tall woman with an archdemon's signature does. Jessica's eyes bounce between the four of us.

“Is this why you insisted on coming with me?” The demon's bride says through gritted teeth.

“No,” Sariel replies pleasantly. “I was curious who they'd send. Besides, I wanted to fuck with Kevin a bit. Not literally, of course.” He grins at the angry woman, showing off plenty of even white teeth. I don't know what relationship they have, or who this Kevin is, but they seem to be close. Perhaps, they are as close as we once were... I send the thought off with irritation, focusing on present matters.

“We do not require your assistance,” I snap at him, then instantly regret any show of emotion as his eyes widen in triumph.

“Consider me Hell's contribution to the mission.” His smile slips into a look of fury I don't understand. “Also, I was the one present when those filthy humans under Belial's influence incinerated Armaros. I have the right to join.”

I freeze. “Armaros is gone?” The fallen angel was another member of the younger

generation of angels. He fell with the Watchers, centuries after Sarel. I did not even know they found each other here in the Underworld, let alone that he was the Fallen burned by those humans under Belial's orders. They never shared the angel's name.

Sarel's face twists with disgust. "You never even bothered to find out if it was a friend that died?"

I'm unsure if he meant the possibility of it being him or if we are still talking about Armaros. Regardless, I'm the one to flush this time. I don't answer him, having no words that wouldn't potentially inflame the situation further. Maalik, Jessica, and the now confused redhead just observe us quietly.

Sarel shakes his head at my silence. "I'll be right back," he tells Maalik. To his female friend, he says, "Don't get into trouble, Lana, or Ash will eviscerate me for leaving you alone."

She hisses at him. "I'm stronger than you are now, dickcheese!" But Sarel already disappeared before the crude words left her lips. It seems he is strong enough to use the ether for travel.

Chapter 2 – Jessica

My eyes bounce between the dark-haired fallen angel, Sarel, and the actual real-life angel, Ithuriel, as they argue over whether the former should join our mission. We're sitting at the huge table in the meeting room, Sarel and Lana across from Ithuriel, and Daniel, Maalik and I at the head.

"I don't even know where to begin with questioning your motives, Sarel." While Ithuriel is the most composed being I've ever seen, even more composed than Lana's scary husband Ashtaroth, he seems just the tiniest bit on edge, his voice wavering in a way that's barely perceptible.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

Sariel seems to hear it though, because his grin widens as he steeples his fingers in front of him. “Perhaps I merely wish to make sure my oldest friend is safe? After all, I have lost a friend to Belial already.” His face darkens with his last words and Ithuriel’s mouth closes. It is a hard one to counter unless you’re a complete asshole, I get it.

What I don’t quite get is the relationship between these two. It’s obvious they were friends before Sariel’s descent, but what happened there?

The two couldn’t be more different. They’re like yin and yang. Sariel, whom I’ve seen a few times before, but never talked with, has coal-black hair styled in a fauxhawk. His eyes, also black, are scary as fuck – no white, no colored iris, just completely black. His tall frame is incredibly muscled, but not in a pumped-with-steroids kind of way. More like he spends ten hours a day practicing with heavy weapons.

In contrast, Ithuriel’s hair is a gleaming pearl white and shorter than Sariel’s. His eyes are normal-looking, but they’re the palest gray with a dark, smoky ring. His skin is a couple of shades lighter than Sariel’s and he’s also a couple of inches shorter. While I can’t tell exactly how muscled he is under his gleaming armor, he does have broad shoulders. I try to picture what he’d look like without that armor. Does he have any hair on his body? If so, would his happy trail be white?

I flush, chastising myself for fantasizing about an angel. It’s just wrong. Like fetishizing a hot priest. As I quickly avert my gaze from the male who’s been making me feel so flustered, my eyes snag on Sariel. He’s watching me, his gaze coldly assessing. As he notices my attention, he graces me with a wicked smile and a wink.

My heart stutters.

“How can we trust you to have their backs when it comes down to it, Sariel?” Maalik’s question breaks the awkward silence and I’m relieved. What the heck is going on with me? Abaddon is full of gorgeous Fallen, why am I suddenly reacting to two Celestials like a teenager?

“Hey!” Lana protests. “You seriously think I’d let him near Jess if I thought he’d let her get hurt?”

“Aw, thanks, mom!” Sariel quips and Lana throws him a disgusted look that just makes him laugh.

“What did I say about you calling me that?” Lana’s voice is low and threatening. Sariel gives her an affectionate kiss on the cheek and flutters his thick black lashes at her. If he gave me a kiss like that, I’d probably faint. Lana just rolls her eyes.

“I think it is an excellent idea to have Sariel join, if he is willing,” Daniel speaks up for the first time since this meeting began.

“Wasn’t the point to blend in once we head Above, though?” I ask tentatively and wave a hand toward the black-haired fallen angel. “He’s gonna stand out with those eyes.”

Sariel gives me a tight smile. Why is he being cold one moment and then flirty the next? I mean, he’s flirty with everyone, but I’m the only recipient of these strange, calculating stares. “I’ll wear opaque sunglasses.” It’s all he says and I nod then flush again. Maalik’s the one who takes trips to the human realm for supplies for us Elioud, after all, and his pupils are vertical, like a snake’s. If he manages to interact with humans without causing mass hysteria, then so can Sariel.

“Right,” I mumble, then look at my lap. Lana, who’s sitting catty corner to my left, kicks me under the table. I snap out of my slouch and look at her, one eyebrow raised.

“You’re being weird,” she accuses.

“Just feels surreal to be heading up there, you know?” My answer seems to satisfy her and she gives me a sympathetic look and gently squeezes my arm.

I wasn’t fully lying; it is really fucking weird to know I’ll be back topside soon. Most of us made peace with having to be here years ago, knowing it’s the right thing to do, protecting everyone in the realm of the living. But with the number of manifestations going down somewhat after Belial’s imprisonment by Lucifer, a lot of us have also been asking if we could visit Above sometimes. It hasn’t exactly been a simple and straightforward dilemma – everyone we know likely thinks we’re dead. What would we even tell them? Could we trust them to keep the existence of Celestials a secret? Would they accept that we’d always look the same while they aged? Doubtful. And that’s just a few of the considerations.

But I’m mostly just unnerved by my reaction to the two males I’ll be spending my time with for the foreseeable future. Belial’s domain is where we’ll start and it’s likely going to take weeks for us to find the rift. Thanks to Lana’s Ashtaroth, we know it’s not in Belial’s stronghold.

I shiver at the thought of the archdemon who attacked us a few months ago and nearly killed my team leader. Her now-husband showed up in the nick of time, being warned by their little imp, Puck. Belial truly looked like a demon from a nightmare; glowing orange eyes, horns and protrusions on his head, serrated teeth in a lipless mouth, and a flat goat-like nose.

At my shiver, the angel Ithuriel scans what he can see of me as we sit at the table and I flush again, making his Fallen counterpart, Sariel, snort.

“Do you have a problem with our Nephilim?” Ithuriel asks him, his voice cold. I hate that his innocent choice of words – our Nephilim – makes my legs clench in response to the pulse of heat between them. Since I look at Sarel after Ithuriel’s question, I notice the way one side of his mouth curls into a cocky smile.

“No, no,” Sarel drawls. “She’ll be just perfect.”

Maalik throws a rolled-up map on the table between the six of us and interrupts whatever new argument between the two former friends was about to evolve. We unroll the parchment – a handmade map – and Maalik places a finger where a fortress among sand dunes is drawn in black ink. He drags that finger across the map to the mountain ridge which marks the closest border of the archdemon’s domain.

“According to intel confirmed by both Corson and Ashtaroth’s assassin-spymaster, Aim, the rift could be somewhere in the northeastern part of Belial’s lands,” Maalik begins. “You can shave two weeks’ worth of travel time if you use the ether to get there.” He looks at Sarel with his brows raised, who shakes his head.

“I’m not strong enough to carry all three of us that far. And if we asked Ash for help, with such a distance, it would either require multiple stops or one long jaunt. I’m afraid our pretty poppet’s brain would leak out of her nose and ears if we attempted it.”

He’s giving me a snake’s smile and Lana elbows him in the ribs while reminding him to be nice. As Sarel feigns outrage, my face is once again on fire. I really need to stop letting them affect me like this; I’ve been an Elioud soldier for nearly four years – I’m not the hapless twenty-five-year-old equipped with only a camera anymore.

“Before you suggest we simply leave her behind,” Ithuriel cuts into the ribbing that’s happening across the table from him, “know that I will not allow an archdemon to transport me anywhere.”

“Of course you won’t,” Sariel sneers. “Wouldn’t want to get Hell cooties on you. And I wasn’t suggesting we not take her. We are most definitely taking her.” His smirk is pure mischief.

The color on Ithuriel’s cheeks rises a minuscule amount and this time Daniel intervenes. How will these two spend what could possibly be months together? How will I? “Over the years, the Elioud residing here have proven to be more sensitive to the presence of demonic, possibly also angelic, creations and manifestations. More so than full-blooded Celestials.” He tilts his head to Ithuriel, sitting beside him. “Though we can compare it to an angel’s senses now as well. While Lana’s senses are the strongest,” he nods at my team leader, “the archangels demanded the chosen soldier be Nephilim. Liam is Lana’s second in command, now that she no longer spends the entirety of her time here, and he was our first choice. In light of his injury, however, any soldier under her command is among our finest. Jessica is vital to this mission.”

Now both Lana and I are blushing, touched by his praise.

“I will fly her,” Ithuriel decides. “It will take less than half the time, taking into consideration breaks to sleep and rest my wings.”

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“We will both be flying her,” Sariel counters, possibly just to be contrary. “It’ll cut the travel time by half again. We’ll take turns taking her,” he adds with a lascivious smile.

Lana sighs. “Ugh, ignore him, Jess. If he’s not flirting or making pervy comments, check his pulse.”

“What makes you think I have a heart, Lana dearest?” Sariel places a large hand on his broad chest, the flexing of his muscles not hidden by the tight leather vest he wears. Lana sputters, eyes wide in panic. “Just kidding,” the fallen angel chimes. “My blood’s always pumping into all the right places.” He turns away from Lana and locks his gaze with mine. “I can demonstrate if you’d like.”

“Cease talking with such vulgar innuendo,” Ithuriel growls and everyone freezes, staring at the angel.

“No need to be jea—”

“That’s enough, Sariel,” Lana interrupts him with a palm over his wicked mouth. Her eyes flash with warning and he seems to pick up that she’s being serious, because he nods, places a kiss on her palm, and gently removes it from his face.

“Apologies, Jessica, Ithuriel.” He tips his chin at us both. “Father usually locks me in his dungeon when I’m being a dick. A night spent alone and cut off from ether normally does the trick. For a while.”

Ithuriel hisses, drawing my gaze. “You call him Father?” he whispers and Sariel

actually fidgets in his chair under that stricken gaze.

“That’s what he’s been to me for about a thousand years.” He shrugs. “I was very young when I left Heaven, as you know, just a few hundred years into my existence.”

Daniel gently clears his throat. “Jessica will require more sustenance than she can carry. You will require more than you are used to in a mortal form as well, Ithuriel, being nearly cut off from Heaven’s well of power.”

Sariel speaks up, serious now. It’s as if disappointing the angel achieved far more than Lana’s warnings did. “The Lethe runs through a part of Belial’s lands. While we can’t drink from it, it does keep animals and plants alive. That domain’s a lot lusher than the majority of Hell. There are springs and plenty of trading posts, run by the less bloodthirsty of Belial’s peoples. It’s a good thing I’m going along as no one would serve you two.” His smile doesn’t quite reach his eyes.

“It’s still Hell,” Maalik warns us and I remember he briefly lived there after falling from Heaven; a long, long time ago. “The plants will try to eat you back,” he adds, his deep voice gruff. I’m sure he doesn’t like thinking of the time he was more demon than angel.

“I know the area well,” Sariel reassures him. “Ash never trusted Belial. Well, he doesn’t trust anyone,” he chuckles darkly.

Lana rolls her eyes. “He trusts you, Sar.”

The black-haired Fallen’s smile seems more genuine now. “He’d still feed me to those flesh-eating plants if I hurt you, sweetness, laughing with glee all the while as my body dissolves. So, I’ll do my best to keep your friend safe.” He swings an arm over her shoulder and tucks her close.

“That’s... oddly romantic,” I comment, sounding skeptical even to my own ears.

Lana snorts. “Yeah. Ash has the most fucked up ways of showing he cares, believe me.” She toys with the enormous gem of her wedding ring.

“An archdemon is not capable of caring for anyone.” Ithuriel sounds like the topic is making him nauseous.

“Agree to disagree,” I chirp at him, feeling more comfortable in my own skin after getting used to their presence. “You haven’t seen the lengths that spicy-hot snack has gone to for our girl.”

Sariel chokes. “Call him that to his face, I dare you.”

I widen my eyes and shake my head empathetically. “Fuck, no. I prefer to not piss myself in public.”

Everyone but Ithuriel and Daniel laughs loudly, though Daniel’s lips are curled up into an indulgent smile. Ithuriel just looks like he’s rethinking the choices that led him here among us.

“It’s settled then. Find the rift, follow it to the human realm, and close it before you continue with your mission.” Maalik concludes the meeting and pushes his chair back.

“I’ll go grab my things,” I tell no one in particular and scurry off toward my room. There are butterflies in my stomach, and I can’t tell if they’re just from apprehension due to the enormity of our mission, or something else.

It certainly can’t be from the thought of being carried by those two angels for the next couple of days.

Chapter 3 – Lana

I cross the length of the throne room in my home with confidence, ignoring the line of demons waiting for an audience with my husband. It's not a particularly long line. Not when plenty of such audiences end with the supplicant's untimely death at their archdemon's hands. As most are terrible creatures, I don't lose sleep over it.

Ashtaroth's gaze is on me, not listening to the whining words of the demon kneeling under the dais of the massive throne. "Sweetness." His voice is a purr that reaches inside me to somehow wrap around both my heart and my ovaries, and I pick up the speed of my strides. The corners of his lips curl up into a sexy smirk. This fucker is well aware of the effect he has on me, even after I've been indulging in him constantly for months now. Sariel wasn't lying – we are all over each other every chance we get, the location not a consideration.

I climb the dais and straddle his lap. "Husband," I whisper over his lips as his long fingers circle my waist to hold me steady.

"Wife." His voice is a low growl and just like that, I'm soaked. We got married a couple of weeks ago, the same day he presented me with a ring. He used hellfire to set a gem that's been his since he was an archangel in Heaven into a circle of black demonic steel. It's his hellfire that glows within the gem, just as it does in the rubies decorating my armor and swords. I've been carrying a part of him with me since he brought me to his domain. Now my domain as well.

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“How did it go?” he asks, that decadent mouth sliding over mine with his words. “Sariel asked for my permission to join.”

I sigh and lean back, keeping myself upright with my hands braced on his shoulders. “Liam was brought to Purgatory injured last night. Since we finally settled on today for the angel to come down, Jessica had to be brought up to speed so she could go instead.”

“Who is the angel? Do I need to eviscerate them?” I know he’s being serious, but I had to stop panicking every time he declared he’s going to kill someone months ago. I’d be on tenterhooks my whole life if I kept that up.

I kiss the top of his nose. “Ithuriel,” I reply. “And, no, he didn’t offend me.”

“Hmm.” Ash sounds skeptical. Would I lie to him about it? I probably would, for everyone’s sake.

“Really,” I reassure him, sliding my hands down his arms, tracing the muscles I can still feel through the leather armor he wears most of the time.

“I do not know him.”

“No. He’s young. By your standards at least. Apparently he was friends with Sariel back in the day?” I tear my gaze away from what my hands are doing to see his reaction.

“If he mentioned him, I don’t recall it,” he muses. “Perhaps he was no one important

to him.”

“Mm,” I ponder, sliding my hands up to his neck, where I can touch his warm naked skin. “Or maybe it’s exactly the opposite.”

I can’t wait anymore and lean back in to press my mouth against his. He instantly opens and takes control of the kiss, moving one hand to the back of my head so he can hold our mouths flush.

It only takes a minute of our tongues sliding against each other for me to start undulating my hips against the growing hardness between his legs. I pull back and he lets me, though clearly reluctantly. “Is it ever going to stop? This need to have you inside me all the time.”

He pulls my hips down and thrusts his up as if showing me he’s as affected by this madness as I am. “I certainly hope it never does,” he breathes and continues to grind our sexes together.

The demon kneeling behind me, one I have to admit I forgot about along with the rest of the audience in the throne room, sputters in impatience and indignation at being ignored. I wince, worried that the smell of charred flesh is imminent, but Ashtaroth just gives a short command to those present. “Get the fuck out or shut up.” He lifts me off him as he stands and deposits me on his throne. “You’re killing the vibe,” he tells his subjects and I laugh, making his eyes spark in reaction. It still amuses me when he attempts to get with the times.

My husband drops to his knees in front of me as some of the demons start filing out – including the one that’s lucky to still be alive. He unbuttons his leathers and takes himself in hand, making me bite my lip and squirm. He licks his lips.

“Lower your pants and spread your legs as wide as you can.”

Chapter 4 – Sariel

I insisted on being the first to carry our dainty Nephilim toward our destination. It gives me a chance to test the waters. I have a plan and my plans are usually a lot of fun. Well, for me at least.

A couple of hours into the flight, she's still enchanted by the new perspective of being hundreds of feet above ground. Every now and then she glances toward my black-feathered wings, her large, cornflower blue eyes gleaming. I remember that she must not have had a chance to see any up close before, what with the Fallen at Purgatory all rejecting an archdemon's aid in regaining the power to summon them.

She's also staring dazedly at Itha's snow-white wings as he flies a safe distance away so that our wings don't tangle, but close enough should Jessica need him. Because he doesn't think she's safe with me.

Ithuriel... a thousand years ago, he was one of the two reasons for my existence, right after the honor of serving God and executing His will. But that should have been the only reason. I knew not long after my creation, when I started exploring the purpose behind it, that there was something wrong with me for how much I longed to be in his presence. When we were in our mortal forms, I yearned to run my fingers through his pearlescent hair. To run the tip of my nose over the arch of his wings, perhaps eliciting a shudder. Desire would coil in my stomach, overpowering everything else, including reason.

Itha thinks I fell because I wanted to fuck mortals. I fell because I would have been his damnation. It took centuries for me to take my first lover, though he was always at the forefront of my thoughts as I'd find release.

My resolve to maintain his innocence weakened. I hoped he would come to see me. Back then I would have seduced him the moment I saw him and kept him by my side.

But then more centuries passed in silence, until today, when it became obvious to me that he had forgotten I even existed while I'd been pining over him. My heart pounds in shame and betrayal.

I'm still going to seduce him. Just not to keep him. I'm going to ruin him. And little miss Nephilim's going to help. I see the way she reacts to him, to the pale physical perfection, the goodness emanating from him. Even now she's taking furtive glances at the angel's sculpted face and chewing on her bottom lip. She couldn't have been more obvious if she tried.

I lean in to speak in her ear, giving her the illusion of privacy, fully intending to be overheard. Our hearing far surpasses hers. "He's gorgeous, isn't he?" I whisper, making her shudder. She might be attracted to Ithuriel's holy perfection, but I know how to make unholy sin feel so, so good. In the corner of my vision, I can see Itha's body stiffen mid-flight.

She quietly clears her throat. "I haven't seen an unattractive angel." She softly avoids answering directly, and I laugh.

"Ah, but there's just something about Itha. Those high cheekbones," I growl hotly. "The sad gray eyes. That pale, long neck. You've no idea how often I fantasized about just sinking my teeth into that perfect skin and marking it."

Jessica gasps and I can feel her muscles shifting as she squeezes her thighs together. Looking at Ithuriel, I see wide-open eyes and flushed cheeks. He's positively aghast. It's all I can do to stop myself from laughing. Ah, this is just perfect. I plan on having them both eat out of the palms of my hands before we even enter Belial's territory.

"This was before you fell?" the mortal asks. I cut my gaze back to her and narrow my eyes, but I see she didn't ask to get back at me for embarrassing her – she's genuinely curious about me.

“I don’t remember much from before I fell,” I lie. I remember everything. Every minute I spent apart from the angel flying beside us. Every restless night where I’d watch humans fall in love and give in to their primal urges. I would fantasize about spreading Itha’s white thighs and feasting on him.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

Jessica tilts her head and squints up at me, possibly calling me out on my lie with her gaze. “Are queer pairings more common among Celestials?” she asks instead. Curious little kitten.

Though same-gender pairings were always rarer, I did not find it peculiar that I yearned for someone who chose to identify as the same sex, even back then. For the love of chocolate-covered peanuts, I was not supposed to yearn for anyone at all! Why would the genitalia on the outside of their being matter?

I shake my head and bring myself to the present. Being in Ithuriel’s presence is making me fall into the same cycle of self-flagellation I experienced before my fall.

“As there are no pairings in Heaven, your question’s really: ‘Are queer pairings more common inHell?’” I allow us to drop a couple of feet, enjoying her frightened yelp and the way she clings to me tighter. “Demons are equal-opportunity fuckers, poppet.”

The Nephilim flushes again and I’m tempted to transfer her weight onto one arm and run the back of my hand against those scarlet cheeks, check how warm they get when she does it. “Are you trying to shock me with your words?” the kitten asks and I laugh loudly, making Itha turn toward us again, this time with an inscrutable look.

“Just making sure you’re not bored, poppet,” I murmur, my eyes still on my once-friend’s. After a couple of seconds, he looks ahead again.

“I’m being flown through Hell on the wings of angels, on a mission to save humanity via rift-closure. I’ll then go topside for the first time in years, and let me remind you,

I haven't seen the sun in that long. How could I possibly be bored?"

I snort at the Nephilim's dry humor. "I'm pretty sure that's the most you've spoken in one go since we met, kitten."

She rolls her eyes. "First poppet, now kitten. How many more diminishing nicknames can I look forward to?"

I widen my eyes in fake affront. "Diminishing? Honey, if you were any smaller, you'd disappear. You're practically a Christmas elf." Instead of being offended, the mortal throws her head back and guffaws. At least she's not one of those sticklers for political correctness.

I enjoy the sight of her mirth for a moment, then scan the ground below and in front of us again. There's been minimal movement since we began our flight – just an odd minion here and there, doing depraved minion things. We're flying away from Purgatory, away from Ash's domain, and have just entered the missing Asmodai's, just as vast and all-encompassing, just as perilous to the mortal in my arms.

"At least I don't look like I mainline steroids," she says, pulling me back to our conversation. It's my turn to laugh. Even though I'm carrying her through the air (but we just determined she's far from heavy), I somehow feel lighter than I have in months. Ever since Armaros...

Well. There went that.

Chapter 5 – Jessica

Ichew on the bite of the sandwich I took and try to pretend that things aren't awkward. Which, of course, makes them way the fuck more awkward.

“Do you want a sandwich, Ithuriel?” I offer to try and break the nearly painful silence that’s been around since we landed for a break.

The angel replies without looking away from the stone formations he’s been observing for longer than they warrant. “No, thank you, I don’t require sustenance yet.”

See? Awkward.

Sariel’s hand shooting out and taking the sandwich out of my hands startles me and I almost jump to my feet.

“Relax,” he drawls, grin wide. He slowly brings my sandwich to his mouth and bites down, exactly over the spot where I just took a chomp off. He keeps his eyes locked on mine and uses the side of his thumb to brush off a crumb stuck near the edge of his lower lip. “Mm,” he purrs, handing the sandwich back to me. I automatically accept it and look down at the now wider bite mark. My eyes lift back to his and I can feel my face twisting into the universal WTF expression. “Oh, I just wanted to know the taste.” His eyes are dancing. God, why does he always have to phrase shit like that?

“Cease with the impertinence, Sariel.” Ithuriel’s voice draws me out of the hypnosis the Fallen cast me under.

Sariel winks at me, then strides over to the angel, steps unhurried. “I don’t know what you could possibly mean, my friend.” He stops when he’s standing right in front of him, making it impossible for Ithuriel to ignore his presence.

The white-haired angel shoots up from his seated position and all but snarls in Sariel’s face. “I told you that I am not your friend. I stopped being your friend the moment you betrayed everything we believed without even confiding in me.” His voice breaks at the end and Sariel blinks. The mask slips for only a moment, though,

and then the lazy, indulgent expression is back.

“I didn’t know you wanted to go with me, Itha.” His smile is a mixture of softness and mocking. The emotions shouldn’t be able to coexist but they seem to be made for this Fallen.

“I would have stopped you.” Ithuriel’s voice shakes with emotion and there’s nothing calm and collected about him now. Sariel seems to be the chink in his icy armor.

The fallen angel’s gaze turns pitying, brows drawn, lips still set in a false smile. “No. You wouldn’t.”

Suddenly, I feel like I’m observing something I have no business seeing. I put my uneaten sandwich back in my backpack and stand up, dusting off my ass.

“What are you talking about, Sariel?” Ithuriel’s almost begging Sariel to reply when I look around, desperately hunting for a manifestation or something to go kill. There’s nothing but dry grass and thorn bushes in this area of Hell.

“Ah, does it even matter at this point?” Sariel spreads his midnight dark wings. “I’ll meet you in the sky,” he says, before shooting up into the air with a few mighty flaps. My jaw nearly hits the ground – his ascent was way gentler when he carried me.

Ithuriel shakes his head and sighs, the exhale slow and full of exasperation. Once he turns towards me, I give him a tentative smile. “I’m sorry if I’ve made you uncomfortable, Ithuriel. I’ve never seen a heavenly angel before. Or wings. Not close up at least. It’s hard not to look.”

Page 8

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

His eyes widen for a moment, before his face settles back into its usual placid lines, softening. “You don’t make me uncomfortable, Jessica.” His voice is gentle and he extends his hand towards me in a clear invitation to come closer so we can take to the sky and continue our journey.

I only manage to take half a step forward before we both freeze, Ithuriel’s head snapping a couple of inches to the left, like an eagle spotting prey in the distance, but his gaze isn’t focused on anything. I know what he’s sensing though – I feel it too. “Demons,” I gasp and twist to unsheathe my sword. I barely get to wrap my fingers around the handle before I’m flying through the air. My breath is knocked from my lungs when I land on the ground, two hundred pounds of angel on top of me. Plus however much his wings weigh. They have to be at least a hundred pounds. Since he protected my head with one hand, the arm of it holding some of that weight, I’m not a breakfast dish of pancakes with a side of fried egg, sunny side up, yolk spilled.

I hear plinking sounds like hail hitting a tin roof. My brain catches up with the new circumstances my body’s in and I focus on the angel on top of me; Ithuriel grunts and shudders, his teeth bared in a grimace of pain. A deep red needle, as long as my middle finger, is burrowed in the unprotected skin of his neck. I lift a hand toward it, but he stops me. “Poison,” he grits out, then shoves off, unsheathing a gleaming ornate sword.

I scramble up to my feet and take stock of the danger. Two grotesque creatures, each on four segmented legs, are attacking us with those red needles shooting out of multiple tentacle-like tubes. Their heads are featureless except for glowing crimson eyes; no mouths, ears, or noses. The creatures are aiming those tentacle guns at Ithuriel, who’s in the process of charging toward them, ignoring the quills bouncing

off his gleaming armor. When he gets into striking distance, it's clear that the tentacles are also prehensile, seeing as they're now trying to wrap around his extremities.

Hissing out a couple of juicy curses, I run into the fray, finally unsheathing my sword. I swing and strike the tense tube holding the angel's sword arm. I barely make a divot, despite the angelic steel, but it's enough to shock the monster into letting go of Ithuriel's limb. He uses the opportunity to slice the tentacle in half with a move that seems to take embarrassingly little effort and the creature emits an ear-splitting shriek.

The other creature recognizes me as the weaker target and turns those puckered appendages in my direction. I manage to duck in time to hear the spikes whizz past above my head, far too close for comfort. Clearly it intended to turn my face into an alopecic porcupine. Taking advantage of my position, I slice my sword into the bottom segment of the demon's leg. While I manage even less depth this time, thanks to the armor-like plates protecting it there, the creature still joins its buddy in the orchestra of screeches.

I straighten to my full height just as a black meteorite shoots down from the sky, landing with a deep thump and a cloud of dust. Sariel swings an enormous dual-bladed battle axe, which I definitely didn't see him carry before, and beheads the demon I just tested for an Achilles heel. Before the severed head lands on the ground, Ithuriel sticks his sword into the other demon's head under its chin like it's a giant cocktail olive. Once the creature slides off the blade and lands in a twitching heap next to its friend, my lungs decide it's a good time to get the oxygen my rapidly beating heart is demanding.

"What took you so long?" I ask Sariel between gasping breaths.

He flicks the ichor off his axe as easily as if he was holding a steak knife. "I flew too

high to notice anything was wrong.”

I rest my hands on my thighs and raise my brows. “How high can one fly in Hell anyway?”

The Fallen throws the axe in the air and it flips head over feet, or rather blade over grip, and disappears like it was never there. “Dunno.” He shrugs. “Eventually it feels like you’re flying up, but you’re no further away from the ground.”

Before I can wrap my head around that Groundhog Day fuckery, Ithuriel collapses heavily onto a knee and tips forward. I blink and Sariel is holding the angel’s shoulder, keeping him from face-planting into the bramble. “Woah, buddy. It’s nowhere near Halloween, way too early to put on a crown of thorns.” Ithuriel tries to react to the blaspheming with a disgusted look, but all he manages to do is appear drunk.

“We need to get the barbs out of him, he said they were poisoned.” I start carefully plucking them one by one.

“They are,” Sariel drawls. “If you weren’t wearing gloves, you’d be joining him for a nap. If you were stuck with a few, little mortal, the nap would be permanent. Howdido you avoid that?”

“I had my guardian angel with me,” I mumble and he laughs, the sound far more cynical than amused. Once I clear enough spines, he helps me remove Ithuriel’s backpack and lays him down, making it easier for me to remove the rest. “What were those things anyway?” I ask the Fallen, Ithuriel now fully passed out.

“Disposable assassins.”

“Assassins are usually dispatched by someone.” I rummage through my backpack and

take out the blanket I brought with me in case we find ourselves somewhere cold. Folding it a few times, I lift Ithuriel's head and slide it under.

Sariel is quiet for long enough that I look up at him. He's watching me trying to make the angel comfortable in his sleep with a lifted eyebrow and lips twisted in mockery. He seems to tear his gaze away from Ithuriel's sleeping face to make eye contact with me. "Yes, that's very astute."

I roll my eyes and huff impatiently. "Who would send assassins after us? Why?"

He stares at me, his face slowly clearing of any mockery and humor. "I don't know," he admits. He snaps his fingers and a bedroll appears on the ground.

"You're quite powerful." I try to keep my voice free of any admiration that he could make fun out of, just an observation.

"Ah, well. Who's your daddy and all that. Though," he smirks, "give Lana a millennium or so and she'll outperform my party tricks."

"If you can summon anything through the ether, why would we need to hunt for food?" I pull out my own sleeping bag and dust myself off as much as I can before I sit on it.

"I can only summon things that are relatively close. I'm able to keep a few items near me in the ether, but it's not a place that's really compatible with life. A second or two is fine, if not healthy, anything more than that and living cells decompose."

Ithuriel groans softly but doesn't seem to stir. "He'll be okay, right?" I chew on my bottom lip. When I turn back towards Sariel, I see he's staring at the way my teeth dig into the soft flesh. I can't forget for a minute that I'm in the company of the most sexual creature I've ever met. And I met some succubi and incubi.

“He’d be healed instantly if he returned to his ethereal form. But cut off from Heaven, that would take more energy than he can afford to dispense this early in our travels through Hell.”

“Will it be easier for him back on Earth?”

He huffs, though there’s no mockery in his gaze now. More like some reluctant... something. I’d say the affection one has toward a person they like, but reading a celestial creature isn’t as easy as reading humans born into their skins. “We’re still on Earth, just a different dimension, so to say.”

I flush and wave a hand dismissively. “Yeah, yeah, you know what I mean.”

“He’s gonna be a lot more in tune with Heaven in the human realm, yes.”

Page 9

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“So.” I lie down and look at the sky. In this area of Hell, it’s a milky yellow without any celestial objects. Each of the underworld’s domains, governed by its archdemons, has its own laws of nature. Lana told me Ashtaroth’s domain is quite rainy. I wonder just how ‘lush’ the area around Lethe will be. “Why doesn’t he just pop Above for a hit?”

“Looks like he can’t travel through the ether yet,” Sariel muses. “Power granted to me by Ash aside, angels our age usually can.”

“He doesn’t seem weak,” I protest, defending Ithuriel for unknown reasons. Maybe because he’s not conscious to do it himself. I always did root for the underdog.

Sariel chuckles and a shiver runs down my back. Fuck. “He’s not. But I didn’t see you use any ether there either.”

I fidget with the clasps of my armor. “Unless we run out of arrowheads or Ithuriel’s armor needs patching, my contribution to this mission won’t depend on manipulating the ether.”

“Hmm,” Sariel hums, pitch high with interest. “A metallurgist.”

“Nothing as powerful as creating large weapons or armor pieces, but I can draw the necessary minerals from the ground to create small objects.”

“Why don’t you show me?”

I tilt my head back to look at him. He doesn’t seem to be making fun of me. Still, the

anxious part of me makes me as prickly as Ithuriel was a few minutes ago. “What do you want, a giant butt plug?”

Sariel throws his head back and laughs. His lips are still split into a wide smile when he looks back at me. “Only if you let me use it on you.”

“No thanks, not into butt stuff,” I reply breezily, trying not to let him ruffle me.

He wags his eyebrows. “Clearly no one’s done it right then.”

Now I do flush – consider me ruffled.

Chapter 6 – Jessica

Since Ithuriel’s still... hibernating, and Sariel seems to be lost in introspection, I decide to get some rest as well.

After slowly descending into sleep, I dream that I’m in a great ballroom. A crimson ball gown is wrapped around my body and gold heels decorate my feet. Spinning in a circle, I fan out my skirts, and glittering lights wink at me wherever I turn. Someone grabs my hand and pulls me toward them. I look up and into serious pearlescent eyes. The angel is unsmiling, but his gaze shows a depth that reaches inside my very being.

Ithuriel spins me across the reflective marble floors, our feet hardly touching the ground. Breathless, I cling to the warrior’s broad shoulders, completely confident that he’d never lead me astray.

Warm breath hits the nape of my back and shivers skate down my spine. Tilting my head, I look over my shoulder until my horizon is swallowed up by enormous black wings.

Sariel's hands gently grasp my waist. Instead of pulling me toward him, he takes a step forward, herding me into Ithuriel. He doesn't stop until my front presses against the pale angel, the contours of his body now on display in a slim-fitting gray suit that does nothing to hide the hardness at the front of his pelvis. The fallen angel presses me against his old friend, and his bulge nestles against my butt. Their smell envelops me and my head spins. Ithuriel's hand gently presses my cheek against his chest as Sariel grinds against me from behind, moving my body against the white-haired angel who moans and...

Ithuriel's whimper startles me from my dream. I sit up and watch the angel subtly writhe in agony. Even unconscious, his motions are subdued. When I realize what inspired my steamy dream was the angel's chorus of pain-filled sounds, I flush, warmth suffusing me from head to toe.

I glance at Sariel from the corner of my eyes, but he's not looking at me. His unblinking gaze is lasered onto the other angel, eyes narrowed like every minute expression of pain Ithuriel displays is an affront. As if feeling my attention, his eyes slide to me without warning. His nostrils flare and his lips stretch into an insincere smile.

"Didn't peg you for a sadist, poppet," he all but purrs. "Enjoying poor Itha's misery, are we?"

That rank bastard! Isn't it common decency not to call out people on their wet dreams? Then again, idiot me for expecting a Fallen to have any kind of decency, let alone one that's common. Maalik basically put us through boot camp when we first got to Hell, after all.

I roll my eyes at the wicked angel. "I have no idea what you're talking about," I say breezily. "I was just dreaming about the entire cast of Magic Mike giving me foot massages. Taking turns. Sometimes tag-teaming." I flip my ponytail over my

shoulder and tighten it. Sariel chuckles. “What?” I growl.

“The only part of what you said that’s true is the tag-teaming. And neither of our names is Mike.”

The poisoned angel chooses that time to wake up, his eyes fluttering open, and I feel a little bit guilty for how relieved I am to have him as a buffer between Sariel and me.

Oh, no, Jess, control your thoughts; there will be no fantasizing about any sort of threesome combinations.

I lean over until I’m in Ithuriel’s line of sight. “How are you feeling?” I ask gently.

“What happened?” he asks instead of answering, his voice a husky whisper.

“Well, you decided you’d rather identify as a flying pincushion than an angel, and put your body between me and all the poisoned barbs flying at us.” I cringe while speaking, imagining how much pain the angel went through to save my squishy hide. “Thank you,” I say empathetically.

Page 10

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

Ithuriel's lips twitch into a ghost of a smile, his eyes hazy from whatever his angelic system is still fighting off. "You are welcome, Nephilim." His voice comes out stronger this time. "And it has mostly already passed. I appreciate you removing the unnecessary decoration from my flesh," he adds.

A startled giggle bursts out of me. "I didn't know angels have a sense of humor. And I couldn't have done it without Sariel. Your bones are definitely not hollow like a bird's and you weigh a ton."

All hints of amusement wipe from Ithuriel's face halfway through my riposte –right about at the mark of me mentioning the Fallen. The prone angel is looking behind me now, and the muscles of his cheeks twitch.

"No thank you for me?" Sariel asks over my shoulder.

I can almost hear Ithuriel's teeth crack from how hard he's clenching them. I probably shouldn't find their dynamic as amusing as I do. Finally, he answers. "Perhaps if you had not run off, I would not have had to protect the Nephilim alone."

"Perhaps you aren't fit to protect her," Sariel drawls.

"Perhaps she's capable of protecting herself," I mutter into the standoff.

Ithuriel stands and shakes debris off his cloak in one elegant move. "It is my turn to fly with the mortal."

Sariel's laughter booms unsettlingly loud in the quiet region of Hell we're in. I glance

around, worried we'll attract more beasties. "Some offense intended, dude," Sarel begins, "but you look like death warmed over."

I look at the angel and wince at what I see. His face is pale and drawn, and there are a few smudges of silvery blood on his cheek. He's still gloriously beautiful, though.

Shut up Jess, you whore.

"Only a little bit!" I rush to qualify Sarel's statement. Ithuriel raises a silvery eyebrow in question. "Death warmed over? Only like fifteen seconds in the microwave or so."

This sets Sarel off again and he throws his head back, laughing so hard his chest shakes, the muscles of his pectorals that peek over the edges of his vest lovingly illuminated by the reddish glow of the Underworld.

Wow. Just, wow.

???

Sarel ended up flying with me for the rest of that day and the one that followed. By now, we're nearing the border between Asmodeus' and Belial's territories and the lands below are no longer quite as abandoned. Demons travel between eerie settlements, most on foot, some using skeletal horses whose hooves leave sparks bouncing off the ground. Seeing life in Hell is surreal, like a macabre mockery of medieval times.

"How would you like to sleep in a bed tonight?" The fallen angel's deep voice rumbles through his chest, making my skin tingle where my body is pressed against his. I trample down the shiver threatening to expose my reaction.

“Is that possible?” I ask, eyeing the landscape underneath us.

The mischievous Fallen hums. “Possible? Yes. Wise, with Dove Wings over there with us?” He stops speaking to expel a malicious-sounding breathy laugh. The air hits the side of my neck and this time I can’t stop the gooseflesh from rising over my skin. I clear my throat in a clumsy attempt to divert his attention.

Sariel’s hands tighten around me and my pussy clenches in an echo. The traitorous hussy. “No,” he finally drawls.

“I do not wish to have these demon scum around our Nephilim, Sariel.” At the sound of Ithuriel’s voice, I stop daydreaming about the dark-haired angel’s hands on my naked skin. Because I’m now stuck on how Ithuriel said ‘our Nephilim’. I’m going to end this mission in a straightjacket.

“Don’t think we can keep her safe, Itha?” Sariel’s voice is the snake that tempted Eve into biting the apple.

“Why risk adversity unnecessarily?”

Sariel repeats Ithuriel’s words with a mocking lilt to his voice and I bite my lip to keep it from curling into a grin.

“There’s an inn at a crossroads not far from here,” he whispers into my ear, the silken skin of his lips brushing against the contours of my earlobe. When my neck arches, I can feel those lips spread into a smile I know oozes with arrogance.

“I know we’ve been traveling for just a few days, but I can’t say I’d mind sleeping in a bed.” My voice falters with uncertainty. “But are you sure they’ll let Ithuriel join us?”

Sariel's cheek presses against mine as he turns his head toward the angel. "My word means something in Asmodai's realm. I'm his favorite nephew after all," he finishes, the smirk heard in his voice.

The icy angel flying a wing's length away scoffs mirthlessly.

"You have something to say?" Sariel drawls lazily.

"It is widely known that aberration doesn't even know his own brood's names."

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

Sariel clicks his tongue dismissively. “He has hundreds of kids but only one nephew. And I’m super memorable.”

Ithuriel turns his head and I notice his eyes have turned into ice chips with cold fury. “You are no more his nephew than you are Ashtaroth’s son!”

The fallen angel doesn’t seem to be intimidated by the angel’s anger. No, he throws his head back and laughs heartily, the sound booming in my ear, yet I can’t help but appreciate it. It’s like playing loud music in the car – as long as you love the song, it doesn’t bother you that the volume is at maximum. But, oh, man, if you hate the song? Torture. Needless to say, I love this wicked angel’s laughter.

He points ahead to a building at a crossroads. “There’s our inn,” he says through the last chuckles, ignoring the angel’s angry outburst. Swerving, he banks toward it, Ithuriel having no choice but to follow. The closer we get, the more details I can make out.

The building seems to blend into its surroundings perfectly – the sky here is gray, with roiling ashy clouds backlit by the orange glow of Hell’s flames. The inn’s walls are cracked stone, and a worn, slanted roof covers the top, creating an attic space above the two main floors. Even though it looks worn down, warm light spills from the windows and the old-fashioned, eerie lanterns hanging along the front porch. It’s surrounded by twisted, leafless trees, the gnarled branches reaching toward the structure. I can’t decide if the inn looks inviting or foreboding, and I’m curious to see what the inside looks like.

As we gently touch down on the dusty, Hell-baked ground, I realize my stomach is

doing flips from more than just the descent.

Chapter 7 – Ithuriel

This is an ill-conceived idea. Not only are we bringing a vulnerable mortal among Hell's denizens, but we're also bringing in their age-old enemy, an angel who hasn't succumbed to mortal temptations, an angel loyal to Father above all else. It's lunacy.

I dismissed my wings as soon as we landed, hoping that the absence of their brilliance would delay the inevitable, but it was in vain. As the heavy doors creak closed behind us, the chatter within the inn comes to a halt. Mouths open, demons and fallen angels gape at us from every corner of the tavern. The barkeep freezes while pouring ale, and the foam starts spilling over the rim of the pitcher, sliding over his gnarly fingers and jolting him out of his stupor.

"Sariel!" A light, tinkling voice breaks through the oppressive silence, and a mint-skinned sex demon skips over to us, placing a claw-tipped hand on the Fallen's chest. "You haven't visited me for months." She pouts up at Sariel, her full bottom lip glistening in the light from the candles and hearth. My stomach twists and I look away to take in the rest of the demon-infested room.

"I'm sorry, Mireth, darling," the fallen angel purrs and I look heavenward. The only thing I see is the smoke-darkened, cobweb-decorated ceiling. "Unfortunately, I'm not here to play today. I have company."

"Aww," the demoness whines. "You know I don't mind company. Even if one couldn't find the clit with a map."

I flush at her crass words as Sariel chuckles. "Now, now, Mireth. I have a feeling this angel would surprise us with his intuitive prowess."

My ears are burning and a cavernous growl rumbles from deep within my chest. This damned Fallen is pushing all the buttons I didn't know I had. "Enough!" I hiss. The Nephilim and demoness both flinch, making me feel guilty alongside the already-present embarrassment. Not for the demon's feelings, of course. I was not yet in existence when the wholesale war between Heaven and Hell raged, but we have been dispatched to the Underworld to quell rebellions before. I do not consider anyone who chose to live here a creature worthy of my consideration.

Sariel whistles and gently pats the green-skinned demon's arm. "Well," he says quietly, the word trailing off. He clears his throat and addresses the barkeep. "Rukmar, a room for three and dinner for my companion would be nice."

The grubby demon hocks and spits on the ground. Lovely. "Where do you think you are, boy? I have one room free and it'll fit three if you stand side by side."

The little Nephilim's eyes bug out at the innkeeper's words, but Sariel just smiles, unconcerned. "That'll do, Ruk. Itha and I don't need to sleep anyway."

I wish I could tell him he can stuff that old diminutive where the sun doesn't shine... but that would not be very virtuous of me, would it?

"We'll talk about you bringing an angel to my joint, too, boy."

My hackles rise further at the demon's words. "Believe me, I have no desire to spend the night in this... establishment." My proclamation is met with mutters by the seated demons whose dinner we interrupted with our arrival.

"Listen here, you snooty—"

"Please excuse my friend," Sariel speaks over the barkeep's threats. "He was raised by angels."

Some of the clientele laughs at this and I feel a warm weight settle on the crook of my elbow. Turning my head, I see Jessica has placed her hand there in comfort. The notion is all but comforting to me at the moment, however, as I feel itchy and overwhelmed under the demons' malevolent gazes. I snatch my arm away and catch a look of hurt pass through her expression before she schools it. I can't bring myself to think too much about it, though. I need to get out of here. The walls are closing in. Sound begins to echo through my skull as Sariel and the vile innkeeper continue trading words and my sight goes hazy. I hear my name called as if from a great distance.

“What?”

“I said, this way.” Sariel stands in front of me, his wings out and lightly spread, hiding the room behind him. “To our room? This way, Itha.” He points a thumb over his shoulder.

Jessica is standing next to him and she gives me an encouraging smile. I have a lot to regret when it comes to my behavior toward her tonight.

Nodding, I gesture for them to take the lead, then follow, keeping my eyes on their feet and not the room around us and its inhabitants. Up the rickety stairs we go, the wood groaning under our weight. Sariel stops in front of a door that does nothing to convince me of its security and dismisses his black wings. He nudges the door open and, after glancing inside, steps to the side and allows the Nephilim to go first.

The owner wasn't lying when he said the room wouldn't situate three. There's a bed for two, the bedding surprisingly clean, and a small table. Jessica sets her backpack atop the latter and turns to face us.

“The bathroom?” she asks Sariel sheepishly.

“Down the hall, last door.”

Page 12

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

Once the Nephilim is gone, silence descends. Feeling awkward after the Fallen's considerate behavior, I lower my gaze to the floor, surprised to find it cleaner than the barkeep's grimy appearance led me to expect.

Sariel scoffs. "You should rest. Think you need it."

I straighten and throw him a glare. "I do not."

"Itha, you lost your shit. I've never really seen you lose your shit before..."

"Before you fell, leaving Heaven with no warning?" I finish his thought, making him growl in frustration. I return to the topic. "There's only one bed and the mortal needs it more."

Sariel smirks. "It's big enough for both of ya."

"I don't—" I sputter, just as the mortal in question strolls back inside the cramped room.

"What are you guys talking about?" she asks, making the Fallen grin evilly.

"I was just telling the angel he should rest; he's not fully recovered after that fight with how much flying we've had to do."

Jessica looks at me with wide, sympathetic eyes. "Of course, Ithuriel! Take off that armor and lie down."

Sariel laughs at what must be a thoroughly affronted look on my face. The human just suggested I should disrobe and join her in bed! Time in Hell must have truly corrupted her if she does not know how unseemly that would be.

Jessica looks between us, blushing. “What did I say?”

The Fallen throws an arm around her shoulders. “We’re gonna have a hard time getting Itha to lie down with you with all our swords in between you two, poppet.” Our eyes connect and he bites his bottom lip, his white teeth digging into the plump flesh. My gaze sticks to the action, rapt, when he starts speaking again. “Imagining him naked is the closest we’re going to get to him taking his armor off, I’m afraid.”

What did he just say?

“Oh, stop it, Sariel, you’re making him uncomfortable again!”

“I’m not some object to be fetishized, Fallen!” I grit through clenched teeth as he cackles.

Jessica shakes her head. “Ignore him. He’s doing it on purpose to get a rise out of you. Kindergarten tactics.”

Clearly, I should have paid more attention to humans in preschool.

???

Jessica’s light snores vibrate the sensitive membranes of my human form’s ears. I roll around and sigh.

“You’re gonna wake our chick,” Sariel murmurs from the darkened corner where the table lies.

I ignore his implication. “Why do you insist on using the humans’ vernacular?”

The Fallen’s shadow shrugs. “I like spending time there. Why?” He prolongs the question, the sound dancing in the air between us. “Does it bother you? You should hear how the current generation speaks.” A light rustle as he shakes his head. “It’s getting outta hand, TBH.”

“Tee bee... what?”

“Never mind.”

The conversation distracts me from my problem for a couple of minutes, but the issue remains. I’m lying next to another, living, breathing being. Not that I ever lay next to a deceased one.

Where is my mind going with this?

“Ithuriel...”

“What?” I whisper back.

“You have your armor on. She’s sleeping in her leathers just to make it easier on you, for Hell’s sake. Rest.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

But I can smell her body. It's not unpleasant, no; she obviously washed herself in the bathroom along with the... underthings she hung to dry over the headboard. She smells of soft, warm musk and the citrus soap she uses, a scent I familiarized myself with these last days.

I can nearly feel her warmth against the side of my body...

"We took naps in the Crystal Forest together as younglings, Itha."

"That was different," I mutter, holding my breath.

"Why?" he drawls again. "Because you didn't have impure thoughts then?"

I shoot up into a seated position and hiss at the Fallen, "I am not having impure thoughts!"

"Because I sure was," he continues, a grin in his voice.

Pins and needles travel from the top of my head to the tips of my toes. What is he saying? Was he having impure thoughts... about me? No... It was likely the humans he spied on. And that demoness from downstairs. What type of relationship does he have with her? For some reason my ears are feeling very hot.

I turn my pillow and lie back down, determined to ignore the scoundrel. Odd sensations stir in my lower stomach.

As time passes, I manage to quiet my mind, the sound of Sariel tending to his axe

with an oiled cloth lulling me into a meditative state. Until the Nephilim loses a breathy moan. My eyes open at the sound and Sariel chuckles.

“I wonder if she’s dreaming about us again,” he says. I remain quiet, almost straining to hear if Jessica will make another sound like that again. “The three of us,” he clarifies. “Our hands on her willing body.” Warmth spreads from my chest and now-pounding heart, over my neck. “You taking her from the front as I slide in from the back.”

I launch my pillow at him and awhumpsounds before multicolored feathers burst out of it and float around us. He intercepted it with his axe.

Jessica gasps and jumps up. “What? Are we under attack?”

“Yes,” Sariel laughs. “By down stuffing. You’re paying for the pillow, angel.”

I like the way he said ‘angel’ as little as I like anything else that came out of that sinful mouth tonight.

Chapter 8 – Jessica

I wake up to Ithuriel sitting at the table. I wonder if he got any sleep at all, with all the bickering he and Sariel did during the night. Bickering that ended with the demise of the angel's pillow, the evidence of which still lies strewn over the foot of the bed.

"Where's your broodier half?" I ask the angel.

"He is not my anything," he replies icily.

"I'm sorry." I try to sound contrite, but to be honest, I think Sariel's mischief is rubbing off on me and I'm enjoying teasing Ithuriel almost as much as he is.

"He went to have breakfast downstairs when I awoke."

"Okay." I chew on my lip, then muster the courage to ask the question I've been dying to ask since we left Purgatory. "What's the deal with you two?"

Ithuriel looks away to stare into emptiness. "There is no deal. I am an angel, he is Fallen."

"Yeah, but..." I hesitate. When am I going to have another chance like this though?

"You used to be friends?" The angel's gaze returns to mine, and though his eyes are the same crystalline icy color as before, they now hold a vulnerability he probably doesn't know how to hide. I'm suddenly glad Sariel isn't here to press on the wound.

"We were inseparable. Our elders often commented that Father must have created us to complement each other." The angel's mouth twists. "And yet, I did not know his intentions."

I pick at the skin around my thumbnail. "Did you know he had feelings for you?"

Ithuriel laughs mirthlessly. "There are no feelings, nor were there then. Do not let him convince you that his behavior is anything other than the need to cause discomfort to everyone around him."

I'm not so sure about that, but I don't say it. I feel like this angel isn't the type to change his mind easily. "I should go downstairs and see if I can get breakfast too," I say instead and he immediately bristles.

"I don't believe it's a good idea for you to be near those creatures."

"That's okay." I hop out of bed and gather my stuff, strapping on my weapons. Wonder if they have coffee? "Sariel's there. And I can take care of myself."

I glance at Ithuriel in time to see his jaw muscles tick.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“I am not letting you go alone,” he states, standing up.

I hesitate. “You don’t need to do that, Itha.” His face softens at my use of the nickname Sariel teases him with. A completely different reaction than the Fallen gets. “It was tough for you yesterday just walking past.”

“It will be fine... Jess.”

I beam up at him and brush past him to leave our room. As his scent hits me a shiver runs down the small of my back. How is he so delicious when he’s so forbidden?

When we get to the stairs, he gently blocks my path with his arm and takes the lead. I roll my eyes at the chivalry. I’ve been living in Hell for going on four years now. I’ve fought all types of demons – the majority quite recently, when that dickhead Belial attacked Purgatory to get to my team leader, Lana. I can handle breakfast at a demonic brothel – a term I will not be saying out loud where Itha can hear me.

We’re greeted by conversation and then laughter, like we walked down right at the punchline of a joke. Sariel sits at a long table, the only occupied one, surrounded by a scattering of mostly-humanoid-looking demons. He seems to be at the center of attention, reigning over his rapt audience. Yet, while his lips are set in a customary smirk, the implied joy doesn’t reach his black eyes. They’re flat and dead, the skin around them smooth and unwrinkled.

“Here comes my good side,” he drawls, waving us over. “Move, Zavrek,” he tells the handsome blond demon sitting to his left. “I don’t want my little angels sitting next to the likes of you.”

“You mean better looking than you and better in bed?” the hellion asks slyly, but gets up to move across from Sariel anyway. Fighting a smile, I sit down next to the Fallen, leaving space on my other side for Ithuriel.

“Tell me there’s coffee,” I ask no one in particular. From the corner of my eye, I watch as Ithuriel haltingly moves closer, obviously pondering sitting at a different table, but eventually deciding to gingerly place his ass next to mine. “You should see the riots in Abaddon when the bean runs dry,” I continue, trying to dispel the tension. A couple of demons chuckle and Sariel throws his arm around my shoulders. Though I’m now used to his touch, it’s hard to stay immune to his nearness. When I turn toward him, my heart notices just how close his face is and pitter patters an erratic rhythm in response.

“We’ll get you your java juice, sweetling,” he murmurs. I’m dazed, blinking at him, mesmerized by his low, sensual voice and my reflection in his obsidian eyes.

Wait.

“Did you just make a Star Wars reference?”

Sariel grins, and this time, his black eyes hold a slight sparkle. “Loved the movies.”

“Me too,” I breathe.

The hissing snickers of the demons around us break me out from under the fallen angel’s spell.

“If you two are done flirting,” the handsome Zavrek says with a grin, “Ruk brought food and coffee for the Nephilim.”

I flush. We were so engrossed we didn’t even notice stuff being placed before me. I

try to pull away from the Fallen, but he pulls me closer and kisses the top of my head before letting me go. “The food’s safe,” he tells me.

“Of course it’s safe,” someone else grumbles darkly.

“Because the barkeep looks so clean and trustworthy?” Ithuriel all but rolls his eyes.

“Don’t get into a fight,” I warn him under my breath, making him give me an appalled look. Probably never imagined himself to be the problem. I lift my hand to give his a squeeze, then remember his reaction to my touch last night and drop it. He gives my hand a sad, possibly regretful glance.

Picking up my toast, I nibble on the edge. Crunchy and tasty. Next, I pick up the mug of a black liquid more precious to me than oil and close my eyes before bringing it to my lips. Mmm. “Yummy.”

Opening my eyes, I see I’m once again the center of attention. The demons are looking at me with varying degrees of lust, Sariel’s lips are curled on one side, and even Ithuriel is uncomfortably tugging on his collar.

I cringe. “Sorry, boys. Been on the road, so to say, for a few days and will be for some more, I’m just enjoying fresh food while I can.”

“Oh, please, don’t apologize,” the cocky blond drawls. “And don’t stop on our accord, we’re enjoying the show.”

Ithuriel hisses. “Mind your tongue around a lady.”

I blush again as the demons share amused glances. I mean I’m not a lady, but I don’t know if I’d call myself one, and his doing so is just... suggestive. Like he’s invested. Between Sariel’s hug and kiss, and Ithuriel’s protectiveness, it really looks

like the two are both romantically attached to me. Aaand, now I'm relivingthatdream.

"It's okay, Itha, this is tame behavior compared to Topside." He frowns so I rush to explain. "I don't know how much time you've spent with modern humans, but most guys these days can't string two meaningful words together to a woman." I feel weird energy coming from my other side so I face Sariel, who is – shocker – smirking at me. I lift my brows at him. "You have something to add?"

"You called him Itha," he replies with a low voice that coils around my happy parts.

I open and close my mouth a few times, searching for words. In the end, I decide on bravado. "Yes. And I'll be calling you Sar from now on as well."

He chuckles softly. "As you wish, poppet. But tell me, do you have something against angelic suffixes? Or is it suffixes in general?"

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“You may call me Jess, too,” I decide magnanimously.

His depthless eyes have a knowing look, and I decide to focus on my food instead. The sooner I’m done with eating, the sooner I’ll stop being a bug under the microscope for these demons.

???

As I astutely predicted, the inn was the last foray into civilization for a while. Once we left, the demonic patrons pouting to see us go, it was Ithuriel’s turn to fly with me. After our understanding in the inn’s bedroom, the angel stopped flinching at my touch and he even let me caress the soft pearly feathers of his wings, though his expression got a bit pinched at that, so I didn’t ask to do it again since. His eyes had widened and then darted around before he sucked in a gulp of air. It must be really hard for him to let someone into his personal space.

I’m determined to make him see me as a friend though. There’s something about his stoic presence that’s healing to me, like a cold cream over a bruise. I always feel lighter when I’m near him and, at night, I’ve been putting my bedroll as close to his as I can without causing him anxiety.

The caffeine was well and truly out of my system by the time we set eyes on the Lethe for the first time. Though Lana told me Ashtaroth’s fortress is a sight to see, she’s gonna have a hard time convincing me anything in Hell can be more majestic than the misty cliffs and clear waterfalls surrounded by almost jungle-like plantlife.

Sariel says we’re close enough to the area where the rift is now rumoured to be and

that we should start sticking to the ground as much as possible, keep our senses sharpened for any signs of it.

Now that we're walking more than flying, I see how quickly I've gotten used to being in their arms. Not being in constant contact with one of them is making me feel oddly... lonely.

Chapter 9 – Sariel

“Why are you brooding alone in the dark?”

I smile at the Nephilim's teasing question. We've been camping along the length of The Lethe for weeks now, searching the canyons and caves for signs of the rift, warding off nearly nightly attacks from lesser demons. I rather miss having the firecracker in my arms in the air all day long, or watching the angel's discomfort when it was his turn to fly with her.

I'm sitting on a jutting rock overlooking the river's rapids, one foot dangling off the edge. The perfect position for brooding. I snicker to myself. The girl's humor has been a bright side of this mission. Pissing Ithuriel off has lost its luster somewhat, and I didn't expect this to take so long. As a result, I've been cranky and, yes, brooding.

Jessica sits down and scootches over to the ledge. “Wow,” she breathes. The beauty of Lethe hasn't worn off on her. It is a majestic place, as far as Hell goes, and even has a facsimile of a sun and moon, of the daily light cycle. A hazy ball of light in the sky that's yellow during the day and pitch black at night. “So, why are you here alone? You're usually trying to get under someone's skin at this time of the day.”

I huff and roll my eyes. “Even chaotic servants of Hell like a bit of peace and quiet here and there, poppet.”

“Mhm,” she hums. “It wasn’t Ithuriel taking his armor off to fix the tear in his doublet?”

I eye the flush on her rosy cheeks. Someone else liked the angel showing some ab muscle. “Do I look like someone who would leave when a bit of skin is shown?”

Jess shakes her head, some of the rosy-blond curls dancing around her face. “I think it’s more of whose skin it is that bothers you. Why are you so afraid of Itha?”

My brows lift and I scoff. “Me, afraid of him?”

“You are. Something about him scares you.”

“Honey, I didn’t even know there were things to be scared of until Armaros died.” The mortal’s mouth closes with an audible click.

“I’m sorry about that,” she whispers.

“Yeah. I am too.”

I pick up a loose rock and throw it into the water. It sails through the air until the dark and mist swallow it far below us. She’s gearing up to say something else on a topic I don’t want to discuss so I beat her to it.

“So, did you expect the eight-pack?” I wiggle my eyebrows as a gust of air leaves between her now-parted lips.

She fights with herself for a moment before giving in. “Fuuck.” She shakes her head. “I didn’t know what to expect from all that armor. The hardest part was not wolf-whistling.” She giggles quietly. I look over my shoulder at the tense-looking angel and my lips stretch into a grin.

“Don’t you wish you could run your hand down those juicy slabs of muscle? Tickle that adorable silver fuzz?” I have to suppress laughter at the way the little human stuffs her fist into her mouth.

“He smells so good, too,” she speaks into her hand. “How in Hell can you still smell that good after weeks of field-washing?”

“I wonder...” I purposefully trail off.

She bites. “What?”

“Oh, nothing. Just wondering if he took his armor off in front of us today because he wanted us to watch. The other times, he’s been hiding away like a nun.” I pitch my voice conspiratorially low, fully aware the angel is listening in and hearing everything. “Maybe he wanted us to see him?”

Page 16

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

Jessica bites her plump lower lip and groans. “Stop it, you evil creature, I haven’t gotten off in weeks.”

I’m taken aback by her candor, delighted by it. “Lies,” I whisper in her ear. “You come in your sleep.” Back at the camp, Ithuriel drops something, loud enough for me to hear it, but not the now-very-red mortal.

“Does he know?” she whispers.

He does now. “Nope. Our little secret.” I wink at her. She looks embarrassed enough to be on the verge of tears. I love it.

Jutting her chin out, she tries to act unaffected. “Well, what about you?”

I eye her with narrowed eyes. “What about me?”

“When’s the last time you got off?”

Oh-ho-ho! This little mouse has balls on her!

I lean in closer. “Maybe that’s why I moved over here,” I whisper next to her ear. “For some alone time.” She’s chewing on her lip again and I reach out to free the captured flesh. “You’ll hurt yourself,” I murmur.

She clears her throat and wipes her hands against her leathers. “I better leave you be then.”

As she goes to stand up, I place a hand on top of her leg. “Or you can stay.”

“Stay?”

“Stay,” I breathe and lift my other hand, waving my fingers in front of her face. “We could take care of ourselves... together?”

Her eyes widen to a comical degree and she quickly looks behind her to see if Ithuriel is still at a safe distance – to her notions – in the camp. “I don’t think that’s a good idea, Sariel.”

“Thought you were going to call me Sar?” I use my thumb to rub soothing circles on her thigh.

“He could hear us...”

I scoff. “Look how far away he is.” Nowhere near far enough. “He’s not going to hear a thing.” He’s going to hear everything.

Her eyes drop to my crotch, where my cock’s trying to burst through armor-thick leather pants. At the sight of the sizeable bulge there, her throat bobs on a swallow. “Fuck. Okay,” she acquiesces nearly soundlessly.

Yes! I start tugging on the laces bravely holding my pants closed against the onslaught of my erection.

Thud.

Ithuriel’s greatsword skewers into the ground not a few feet from the mortal who jumps up with a shriek. I’m gonna kill him.

“Apologies!” he shouts, jogging toward his weapon. “I believed I saw a demon stalking to where you were sitting.”

“And decided to throw your melee weapon at it?” I’m fastening my leathers back up, not hiding what I’m doing, much to the mortal’s dismay. The look on her face makes the interruption almost worth it. Almost.

The angel defends his actions: “I wasn’t sure if I would arrive in time to prevent Jessica from getting hurt.”

“Right,” I drawl. “And I’d let her get hurt?”

He gives me a scathing look. “There are many ways for her to get hurt with you.”

Yeah. Like she could come so hard it hurts. For fuck’s sake.

“Excuse me, boys,” Jess mutters, speed-walking to her bedroll in the distance.

Once she’s out of earshot, I glare at the intruder. “You could’ve waited ten minutes.”

“I cannot believe your audacity, Sariel!”

Page 17

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

I roll my eyes at the sanctimonious fool. “I wasn’t even going to fuck her, Itha. A little mutual masturbation never hurt anybody.”

It’s the angel’s turn to blush and I could swear I see steam coming out of his ears. “You are profane!” he hisses.

“You can offer your ass up if you’re so worried about the mortal’s virtue.”

I realize I’ve stepped too far even before he raises his fist to unleash a punch that would shatter a human’s skull into a million pieces. I manage to turn my head enough that the blow is glancing, but it still hurts like a motherfucker.

“Fuck!” I roar, jumping back.

“For weeks I’ve been listening to the dreck coming out of your vile mouth,” he seethes. “It ends now.”

He advances as I step back, throwing himself at me to cover the distance. We land with a thud and roll across the grass. Ithuriel’s furious punches land against any part of me he can reach as I push at his face. “Get off me!” I growl.

“You’re an abomination!”

“Maybe if you bothered to talk to me after I left Heaven I wouldn’t be!”

He rears back with incredulity. “You’re blaming me for what you’ve become?”

I bare my teeth at him. “I blame you foreverything!” I roar. “If it wasn’t for you, I’d still be in Heaven!”

The angel shakes his head and I wrap my legs around his hips to roll us over. Once I’m on top I push his shoulders down into the ground. “If you hate me so much, why not just kill me, Fallen?” he asks.

I lean down until less than an inch separates our faces. “Because you can only feel pain while you’re alive,” I hiss against his lips.

His eyes widen with shock and sorrow. My anger dissipates at the wounded look in them. The beautiful gray orbs I dreamed about for centuries. My panting breaths turn harsher as a terrible pain threatens to split my heart into two.

“Sar...” he whispers, his breath warm against my lips and I moan at the sensation. It’s then I notice he’s still not wearing his plate armor and my pelvis is nestled against the welcoming softness of his body, not cold steel. My erection returns with a vengeance.

Shuddering, I start grinding against him. “Itha,” I moan his name. His eyes dart as I rub our groins together, the friction sending plumes of flame down my back and into my balls. I’m rubbing my dick against my beautiful angel.

“Shit!” I hiss as my back arches, cum exploding out of my cockhead and into my leathers. “Shit, shit, shit,” I whisper at every consecutive pulse, shaking atop my oldest friend.

When I open my eyes, I see pity on his pale face and my stomach turns. I shove up to my feet. What the fuck did I just do? What did he make me do? This is not how it’s supposed to go, I’m not the one meant to lose control. It’s all his fucking fault.

“Fuck you, Ithuriel,” I push through gritted teeth.

Running my hand over my hair, I turn to our camp. Jessica is standing a few paces away, her mouth slack in shock. She clearly had a front-row seat to everything.

Great. Just great.

Chapter 10 – Jessica

“So... that was intense,” I murmur, watching the angel on the ground from the corner of my eyes. I don’t think he’d want me to be staring at him. Though I already got an eyeful. Oh, my.

Ithuriel, still just sitting there, stares into the distance. Is he going to snap? What if he decides this was the straw that broke the camel’s back and leaves to go back to Heaven? Can I trust Sariel to stay?

“Do you want to be alone?” I ask the angel, wringing my hands in front of me. The two angels dry humping was without a doubt the hottest thing I’ve ever seen, but now I’m feeling pretty damn awkward.

Ithuriel slowly shakes his head side-to-side. Not quite sure what comfort I can offer except my companionship, I drop to my ass next to him (but at a respectable distance) and help him stare into nothingness while he digests his once-best friend and now-enemy using his body to get off.

Oy vey.

???

I blow the cobwebs I just walked into off my nose. I don’t want to think about what

the spiders that made these look like. We are in Hell, after all. I was convinced spiders are demons before I ever learned that demons are, you know, among us.

“Are we planning to stop spelunking in these caves and move into Belial’s territory any time soon?” I ask the angels a touch crankily. It’s just been weeks since we started exploring The Lethe and it’s been one dusty fusty cave after another. Well, one was kind of cool, with a hot spring and flowers and vines. I totally shooed the boys away and took a nice long soak.

Page 18

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

Sariel chuckles at my irritable disposition. “Caves are the ideal place to hide a rift, Poppet.”

“I tend to agree with the mortal on this one,” Ithuriel joins the conversation. “If there was a rift in here, we would have sensed it by now.”

It’s remarkable how good the two of them are at pretending the grind and bump the other day didn’t happen. I think it’s a male thing. If they were women, they’d talk it out until they either made up or got into a hair-pulling fight.

“Unless Belial found a way to mask its presence,” I say reluctantly.

Sariel turns around and gives me a broad smile. “One point for angel-lite, zero points for angel.”

Ithuriel rolls his eyes. I feel like he’s humanized somewhat since we first met – his icy edges melted a few degrees. “By that logic, we could be combing up and down Hell for years. Perhaps he even hid it somewhere we would least expect, such as Ashtarothe’s territory. He wanted his consort, Lana, did he not?”

Sariel growls softly. “No, he has too much of an ego to put it in Ash’s ballpark. He tried to frame Asmodai for it. He had to have planned for it to be accidentally found, would want to have a passable excuse if it did. He put it somewhere around the edge of Asmo’s territory, either on his own side or this one.”

I gape at the Fallen. “That’s... actually brilliant.”

“I’m not just a pretty face.” Winking at me, he flicks my chin, then huffs out a laugh before pulling cobwebs out of my hair.

“Ew, ew, ew, ew!” I stomp my feet.

“Relax,” he drawls. “All the critters scattered the moment Holy Elvis entered the building.”

Giggling, I nudge Itha with my elbow and mimic Elvis’ signature lisp. “Thank you, thank you very much.”

The angel’s lip twitches once, and then again, before he finally lets a smile brighten his perfect porcelain features. “That was quite amusing,” he admits, the smile exposing brilliant white teeth. This is what people mean when they say something feels like angels smiling down at them from Heaven. Wowee.

The three of us are standing still in the flickering light from Itha’s torch. Sariel and I gape at the still-gently-smiling angel until he notices our attention, or maybe how close we all are. The smile slips off his beautiful face, and he looks at the ground. Surprisingly though, he doesn’t move away.

Sariel hums quietly before turning back the way we were heading prior to my encounter with the cobwebs. “C’mon,” he says.

A few minutes pass in silence before I feel a vibration starting at my feet. It’s just a gentle buzzing at first, then dust starts falling from the ceiling, joining whatever was still in my hair. Next thing I know, Sariel is yelling my name, Ithuriel throws the torch aside, and they both dive toward me, wings out and extended.

Thudding sounds let me know that the angels are using the appendages to shield me from rockfalls. Just as I think that’s all this earthquake is going to bring,

weightlessness hits me for a moment as the floor crumbles, before the boys snap their wings out to slow our fall. Our landing is still rough but at least it isn't bone-breaking. We roll a few times, the angels taking turns being on top of me, and, as titillating as the thought may be, being sandwiched between two gorgeous Celestials, I'm too scared and hurting to even begin to enjoy it.

As the world slows its spinning, I come to the realization that I can see the world spinning. "Uh, boys? Why aren't we underground anymore?"

Sariel pushes off me with a groan, then wipes off silvery blood that got in his eyes from a cut on his forehead. When he takes in the wide, desolate trench we're in, a dark and muted orange sky illuminating the scene, he groans louder.

"Fuck. We're in The Malebolge," he growls lowly, making Ithuriel hiss. It feels like an angel cursing.

I get my shaking legs beneath me, hoping to make the nausea stop. "Why does that sound familiar?" I ask them.

Ithuriel eyes the dirt on his once-pristine white cloak with distaste. "Likely from Dante's Inferno," he replies.

Sariel scoffs. "The pompous psychopomp," he mutters, Itha harrumphing in agreement.

My eyes flit between them. I can't even appreciate them being in agreement right now. "Wait, Dante Alighieri was a Celestial?"

"Is," Sariel corrects. "He's still around here somewhere, moralizing."

"He's a Nephtalem," Ithuriel explains. "One who decided to take on the role of a

guide to the afterlife.” The angel very nearly rolls his eyes. Guess neither of them like the poet.

“Remind me, what was the purpose of the bolge again?” I rub my arms with my hands, trying to ward off the shivers.

“According to Dante or according to me?” Sariel asks with a huff.

“Uh, both?”

“Ostentatiously, it was created to punish the fraudulent. Those souls who deceived others for their own gain,” Ithuriel begins.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“And according to me, ten bored archdemons got drunk and made a bet about who could make the sickest torture zone in Hell,” Sariel finishes.

“Oh, lovely,” I quip. “Let me think, stay in the labyrinth of doom or fly out of here?” I brace my chin on my hand in the classic Thinkerpose. “I know!” I exclaim. “I’ll take ‘leave’ for five hundred, Alex.”

Sariel grins irreverently. “As much as I’d love to have your sweet ass pressed against me again, poppet, the aforementioned archdemons cursed this place against flying.”

I gape at him. “Cursed? How?”

“Well, if we’d take off, giant hellfire balls would fly out from the ether to incinerate us. And I don’t know about you, but I’m hot enough already.” His grin turns wicked. “What am I saying, you’re definitely hot enough, darling.”

I see how he tried to lighten the mood, really, but the situation is too dire for cheap jokes. “Are you telling me we need to pass the ten trenches of torture on foot?”

“The denizens of the Malebolge would not dare cross us, Jessica,” Ithuriel tries to comfort me.

“Ten trenches of torture...” Sariel mutters pensively before speaking up. “Tots!”

Ithuriel shoots him a look that’s a mix of disgust and disappointment. “You are an infant.”

The Fallen steps between us and throws an arm over each of our shoulders. “I’m also pretty sure we’re gonna find what we’re looking for at the end of the Tots,” he says as the angel tries to escape his clutches in vain.

Ithuriel freezes and eyes Sariel with interest. “Why do you believe that?”

I bite my lip, my mind going to completely inappropriate places. They just look so good together, side by side. A contrast of colors, factions, and personalities. Sariel is the Yin to Ithuriel’s Yang. And I’m within touching distance of both gorgeous angels.

“I believe that because Belial is a crafty motherfucker,” Sariel answers the white-haired male, making him cringe at the cuss word. “You can bet your firm little tush that he had some shortcut to the void.” The owner of the firm little tush blushes furiously at the Fallen’s words. “But putting it here makes it super protected,” the fallen angel finishes.

“It makes sense,” I chime in. “We’re technically still between Asmodeus’ and Belial’s two territories and I bet not a lot of demons bother to come here.”

Sariel shakes his head. “Not unless they’re meant to be here, torturing souls.”

Cringing, I look around me again. “Speaking of tortured souls. Where in the Malebolge are we? How come no one’s here?”

“Ah,” the Fallen winces. “I think we’re at the very start.”

“So, this would be the one for...?” I let my question hang.

“Panderers and Seducers,” the angels reply simultaneously.

Chapter 11 – Ithuriel

The Malebolge: The Trench of Panderers and Seducers

We begin walking the trench and it's not long until we start encountering sinners. While the souls in Hell are most often disembodied and insentient, these were given an echo of their former lives' bodies and awareness in order to fully experience the fate they were doomed to. The Trench of Panderers and Seducers hosts those who exploit others' emotions and desires to fulfill their own selfish wishes.

Though the trench is wide, the jagged stone walls towering above us on each side give a sense of entrapment. The dull orange sky barely illuminates the cracked, barren ground, but it's enough to see the trails of blood and grime, the leavings of the endless columns of sinners marching up and down the trench to the beat of their demonic overlords' whips.

The tortured are exhausted, their faces contorted with their eternal suffering, their backs exposed and streaked with open wounds from the repeated lashings. The demonic figures lining the sides of the trenches, long, barbed whips in hand, cackle with glee each time a sinner stumbles.

What Sariel said holds true; the demons avert their eyes as we pass them, though I can feel their hateful gazes heating my back when we do. When a particularly sadistic demon licks his lips and tugs on his exposed crotch, leering at Jessica, I pull out my greatsword. I swing my weapon, ready to decapitate the offending pile of excrement when Sariel's body suddenly appears between us. There is a shriek as the Fallen tears the demon's naked member from his body, discarding it on the dirt, and I jump back. Sariel grabs the creature by his hair, pulling his head back and leaning down to say something directly in the demon's ear. The hellion's blotchy red face pales as the blood drains from it at Sariel's quiet words.

"Understood?" Sariel's murmur is heard over the demon's sobs. Cupping himself, trying to staunch the flow of blood, the creature merely trembles in shock. "I asked

you a question,” the Fallen says, each new word sharper than the previous. Finally, the demon begins nodding frantically and Sarel releases him.

Pulling a canteen out of the ether, he pours water over his hands as he walks toward where the Nephilim and I wait at a safe distance. When he looks up from his task and sees our slack-jawed expressions, he tilts his head and laughs.

Jessica bites her lip. “What did you say to him?”

“Just the truth,” he replies breezily.

“And what is the truth?” I ask.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

The Fallen's lips curl into an arrogant smirk. "That the angel and Nephilim are off limits. That they're mine."

Heat spreads from my chest to my face at his words and Jessica gulps. But despite having the sense that Sariel is expecting it, I don't argue.

???

It takes hours to reach the end of the first trench. The sharp cracks of whips mingling with the anguished cries of the punished grow quieter as we put distance between us and the endlessly marching deceased being hurt and controlled in death as they hurt and controlled others in life.

"I'm sorry guys, but I'm starving and my feet are killing me," the mortal says, pouting up at us. Sometimes I forget we're with someone who has human needs, and then her stomach rumbles or she has to take a bathroom break.

I tilt my head in acknowledgment. "Of course. We will take a break."

Sariel snorts and I raise my eyebrow in question. "Do you have to be so damn pretentious all the time?" he asks.

I bristle just as Jess steps between us, placing one hand on each of our chests. "As much as I'd love seeing you guys wrestle again, it would delay me getting my break and I can't have that."

Sariel grins like a shark while I flush at her insinuation and look away under the guise

of looking for a secluded area to rest. I spot an outcropping of rocks in the near distance and point to it. “That looks like a defensible position,” I say.

“That looks like a defensible position,” Sarel repeats in a high-pitched, mocking tone.

“Hey!” the mortal yells, slapping the Fallen’s shoulder. “We’re behaving so Jess can eat.”

“I have something Jess can wrap her lips around,” he replies, nudging her with his elbow.

A blushing Jessica mutters, “You’re incorrigible,” before stomping off toward the rocks, the two of us following with a respectable distance between us.

An hour later, we’re sitting around a fire and the well-fed Nephilim laughs at the Fallen’s immature snips. It’s still difficult to reconcile addressing Sarel that way – as a Fallen – even if it is just in my head. Seeing him now, spending so much time in his presence again, reminds me so much of our youth. I watch the way the fire sparkles in Jess’ light-blue eyes, the way it gilds the contours of Sar’s face. Lost in my mind, I pay little attention to their words until I notice the mortal squirming and blushing.

“Really?” Sarel sneers. “Not one of your limp-dicked little human boyfriends made you come?”

My ears burn. “This is not an appropriate conversation to have,” I interject.

Sarel waves his hand dismissively. “Oh, shut it, holy. Go clutch your pearls somewhere else if it bothers you. What bothers me is that no one showed this magnificent creature the pleasure she deserves.”

I sputter but don't leave. Do some men not ensure their partners are content during procreation?

Blushing furiously at what is likely a curious expression on my face, Jessica shrugs before answering, "I haven't had the best taste in men, that's for sure. They all talk a big game, but when it comes down to it, they have one move." She pumps her hand in a gesture that confuses me but makes the Fallen laugh.

Sariel slaps the palms of his hands on his thighs. "Welp," he says. "We can't be having that." Standing up, he walks up to where Jessica is sitting and sits behind her. As she looks over her shoulder at him with her mouth open, he scoots closer until the inside of his legs frame the outside of hers.

"W—what are you doing?" she stutters.

"Making sure you can't say no guy has made you come again," he speaks into her neck. The Nephilim arches her head to the side in apparent reflex. Once Sariel's hands snake to her front to cup her breasts, I shoot to my feet.

"You should not be doing that!" I exclaim.

Sariel looks at me, his black eyes alive in the firelight. "Why not?" he challenges.

"I will not allow you to hurt her," I hiss. Jessica bites her lip with uncertainty.

The Fallen chuckles. "I'm going to do the opposite of hurting her." With those words, he turns his attention back on the girl, nuzzling the side of her neck with his nose as his hands knead on the soft flesh of her chest. "I'm going to show her how good a male can make her feel if he wants to."

A soft moan escapes the Nephilim's lips and she leans back onto her seducer. My

hands clench into fists at my side and I tremble with uncertainty. Do I physically interject or leave them to it?

I already intervened once. And we know how that ended.

“Itha,” Sarel calls out. “Stop hovering,” he says, one hand moving up to the girl’s neck, the other sliding down toward her core. I stare, unmoving. “Ithuriel,” he calls for me again and we lock eyes. “Sit,” he says with finality. And I do.

Father help me, what am I doing?

Page 21

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“That’s it,” the Fallen whispers, now tugging on the laces of Jessica’s leather trousers. “We’re just going to make our little mortal feel good.”

Why is he using ‘we’?

Once he creates enough room to maneuver, his hand travels inside her bottoms. The front of her leathers bulges with his intrusion and she gasps.

“Sorry, poppet,” he murmurs into her hair. “My hand’s gonna warm up real fast though, don’t worry.”

I’m mesmerized by the movements of his hand in such a forbidden area. Does she like that? Her head is resting on Sariel’s shoulder and she’s panting, alternatively biting and licking her lips. I was so enraptured by his right hand, that I didn’t notice the left one loosening her top and snaking underneath to caress her naked skin.

“I’m going to put my hand into her panties now, Itha,” Sariel says to me.

“Why are you telling me that?” I breathe, my mind buzzing from the tension in the air.

Sariel chuckles. “Because, we’re both pleasuring our little poppet here, Itha. Look at how much she’s enjoying you looking.”

Jessica flushes as my eyes dart to hers but then nods tentatively. I gulp.

“She’s so soft here,” the Fallen whispers, drawing my attention back to the front of

her bottoms. “I’m going to open her pussy lips now.” I stop breathing at his crude words. Why am I listening to this? Why am I watching? “Fuck, she’s drenched for us, buddy,” Sariel continues. “Is this all for us, honey?” he asks the trembling mortal.

“Yeah,” she replies on an exhale.

Sariel growls gently. “That’s our good little girl.”

Something twists in my stomach at his words and Jessica moans. Does she like him calling her a little girl? Does she like him praising her?

“I’m rubbing circles over her clit with the tip of my finger now,” he narrates his actions. Jess’s legs begin to shake and twitch and her eyes roll back.

“Is it hurting her?” I ask, worried.

“N–no!” she moans. “It feels so good, Itha.”

The black-haired devil grins at her words, at her defense of his actions. My body is growing uncomfortably hot and pinpricks tingle over the expanse of my skin.

Jessica’s body convulses and I start, but Sariel explains before I can get up to intervene. “I pinched her nipple.”

“And…” I clear my throat. “And that is a good thing?”

He huffs at my ignorance, not insultingly, but still with some obvious superiority. “It’s very good, Starlight.”

I gasp at the nickname he gave me on a night long, long ago, as we were sitting on the banks of Lacus Larius, or Lake Como as it is known today. He said I reflect off

the water's surface just like the stars above us.

"I'm gonna put a finger inside her now and find the right spot..." Sarel's words cut through the warmth in my chest at old memories.

Jessica's hands grab onto the Fallen's thighs as he does what he threatened to do. "Oh my god, Sarel," she moans, making him laugh softly.

"Tell Itha how it feels, poppet," he commands.

When her beautiful blue eyes open and lock with mine, something stirs below my waist. "It feels amazing," she breathes. "Nothing ever felt this good."

As my mouth opens and closes with no words coming out, Sarel laughs and his movements in her trousers pick up speed and force. "I'm pumping two fingers into her tight tunnel now and rubbing her hot little clit with my thumb. She's gonna come pretty fast like this. Aren't you, poppet?"

Jessica's only answer is a high-pitched moan as her head thrashes from side to side on Sarel's chest. I'm so engrossed with the sight that I don't notice Sarel's attention is on me until he speaks. "Look, honey. We gave the angel his first woody."

They're both now looking below my waist and I feel the urge to cover my crotch with my hands despite my confusion. What are they talking about? But at that moment Jessica tenses and screams, "Oh, fuck, Itha! I'm coming!"

Sarel laughs darkly with glee as the mortal girl in his arms shivers with her climax, my name on her lips, and her eyes fixed on my crotch.

Once she stills, I look down at my lap and notice the large bulge at the front of my pelvis. My heart picks up speed until it feels as if it will grow its own wings and fly

out of my chest.

I have an erection.

Their lascivious show aroused me.

How could I have allowed this?

Chapter 12 – Jessica

The Malebolge: The Trench of Flatterers

I think we broke Ithuriel. He hasn't said a word in hours. He must have compartmentalized the whole dry-humping debacle, seeing as he pretended it never happened the very next day – possibly because he didn't consent to it. Last night he had every chance to get up and leave, not sit there and witness Sariel getting me off like a motherfluffing pro.

And I don't regret it; it was hot as, well, Hell, and what's a little (or huge) orgasm among friends? The only problem – besides possibly breaking an angel I grew to care about – is that I can't seem to look at Sariel the same way anymore. I always found him ridiculously sexy and as sinful as a chocolate lava cake. But now I keep looking at his beautiful hands. Thinking of them touching me. Wishing they were touching me some more. Every time his lips stretch into that devilish smile I feel them on the side of my neck again. He just gives me butterflies now. And those fuckers are dangerous.

“Penny for your thoughts,” the subject of my thoughts asks.

I raise an eyebrow. “Do you have a penny on you?”

He flicks the tip of my nose with his finger and my stomach vaults.

Damn it.

“That’s avoidance at a competitive level right there,” he says.

I grin. “You can thank my dad for that skill. He was always all up in my business. Texting me if I was five minutes late from coming home. Bugging me about boys at school. Worried I’d go off the rails and ruin his plans for me.” I glance at Itha to check if he’s paying attention to our conversation. Nope, still staring straight ahead.

Sariel frowns. “I thought only the Elioud with few social connections got taken. Wouldn’t your parents be looking for you?”

I shake my head. “Hard to look from prison.”

His eyes widen and even Ithuriel throws us a glance.

“Yeah...” I drawl. “Ponzi scheme. Big mess. Thankfully I wasn’t working for their company at the time; I had my own little photography studio.”

The fallen angel lets out a long, low whistle. “Why did I think descendants of angels would be goody-two-shoes?”

I smile at the thought. “I don’t think anyone’s ever inherently good or inherently bad. Or good all the time, bad all the time. Except maybe Belial. I’m sure he’s rotten all the time.”

He snorts at that. “I don’t think that scum sucker’s done a good thing for the right

reasons in his entire, very long existence.”

“Was no one suspicious when he suggested we be brought here to keep Hell from overflowing?” I ask, thinking of how it was that archdemon who suggested to the Celestial Council that we, mortals with Celestial blood in our veins, would be the perfect soldiers in this endeavor.

Sariel shakes his head. “It was a game of attrition, poppet. Now that we know it was all to get Lana here, it’s easy to guess he was at it for almost thirty years. Moving a chess piece here, clicking a puzzle into place there. He took his time to be subtle about it.”

I purse my lips in thought, then scrunch my nose. “What’s that god awful smell?”

“That would be the Stygian River,” Ithuriel speaks for the first time. “A river of filth to drown the flatterers who spewed filth in life.”

I gag. “Wait, it’s not The Styx, is it? The River of Hatred? Isn’t that on the other side of Belial’s territory?”

“It’s an offshoot,” Sariel answers me. “Both waters are smelly, this one’s especially putrid, though. Like Itha said, it’s part of this bolgia’s punishment.”

The silver angel’s still not looking at either of us. I’m starting to feel guilty.

“We will have to swim through it,” he says, matter-of-fact.

I stop in my tracks. “What? Ew!”

“’Fraid he’s right, poppet. Since we can’t fly or use the ether to travel here, going through’s the only option.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“Aw, man.” I stomp my foot. “Lana told me about having to swim in the sewers of Asmodeus’ ziggurat and I made fun out of it for months. Now she’s gonna hear I swam in literal poop. I’ll never hear the end of it.”

Sariel throws his head back and laughs. Even Ithuriel turns to look at the Fallen’s mirth. “The fuck was she doing swimming in Uncle’s sewers?”

Since I’m watching Itha, I can see how his facial muscles clench at Sariel’s moniker for Asmodeus. It’s almost like it causes him pain to hear Sariel has made a life here in Hell without him.

“The same thing we’re doing now, Sar-Sar,” I mutter. “Looking for the damned rift to the human world. Aren’t we about to swim through shit for it too?”

“Fair enough,” he smirks. Why does no one care that our last moments of smelling relatively good are upon us?

“Do either of you ancients have a plan for us to not – literally – smell like shit after this trench?” I ask, exasperated.

The fallen angel swings an arm around my shoulders. “Itha and I will store our things in the ether. There’s a clean pool on each side for the demons.”

“So, we’re swimming through excrement naked?” I ask for clarification.

“I will not be unclothed,” Itha says stiffly.

Sariel laughs rather evilly. “You’ll sink like a sack of bricks in all that steel.” He shakes his head at the angel.

Ithuriel doesn’t even flinch. He’s as stiff as he was on day one. “Then I will store my armor away, but I will remain in my linens.”

“Suit yourself,” the Fallen says in a singsong voice.

It’s then I have a thought. “Wait. Are there no demons to overlook the punished sinners in this trench?”

“There are,” he answers. “They’re flying above the waters.”

“How come they get to fly? And how come they can’t carry us?”

Sariel flicks my nose again. He likes doing that, the patronizing ass. “The answer to both of your questions is that they’re incorporeal. But even if they weren’t, do you think angelface over there would let a demon fly him over a river of shit?”

“No.” Ithuriel’s deadpan answer makes me laugh despite our stinky prospects.

My nose must’ve gotten somewhat desensitized to the stench as it gradually grew stronger because before I know it, we’re standing on the banks of the Stygian River.

It’s somehow even worse than I imagined. The wide trench is filled with a murky dark brown river of thick excrement. The liquid churns and bubbles constantly and the sight is so revolting I’d feel nauseated even if it wasn’t for the smell. Sinners are submerged in the river, some up to their necks, some completely underwater. Most are thrashing and flailing in the putrid waters, choking on the filth, though some are unmoving, their faces frozen in anguish and despair. Looks like they checked out. I don’t blame them.

The walls around the trench are slick and slimy, streaked with waste and growing algae. And above the swirling waters and wailing sinners are shadowy, half-corporeal forms, mocking the punished below. If they care about our presence, they're not letting on.

"I really don't want to go in there," I whine futilely.

"Neither do I, sweetcheeks, but such is life in Hell," Sarel replies, patting the top of my head. "Now, strip."

With a groan, I drop my backpack and start removing my leather armor. As soon as my fingers touch the fastenings, Itha turns away. I can hear rustling behind me as Sarel tackles his vest and leather pants, and clinking on my other side, where Ithuriel unbuckles his plate. A minute later, the angel's still wearing his linen underclothes, like he said he would, I'm in my bandeau and panties, and Sarel...

Every thought in my sinful head comes to a screeching halt when I turn around and see the fallen angel standing there, buck-naked.

"Sweet mother of..." I mutter, my eyes caressing his body from the top of his black-haired head to his surprisingly attractive feet. His skin is a warm, golden tan expanse of silk, lovingly stretched over defined muscles. He has a smattering of dark hair on his forearms and calves, and a line of it between that delicious V of oblique muscles – an arrow pointing to the culmination of all my dark fantasies. I can now confirm that Sarel's cock makes my mouth water even in the most unappetizing circumstances.

Thickening in front of my eyes, it's already large. Larger than what I thought I wanted, if you had asked me ten minutes ago, but the sight of it now makes my womb ache with the need to have it inside of me, filling me. Beneath it, his balls hang heavy and round. As I picture them emptying after his wrestle with Ithuriel, my pussy starts weeping. I clench my thighs instinctively.

Sariel chuckles and lifts his arms above his head, stretching like a lazy cat. He turns to the river, presenting me with the tightest, roundest ass in existence, and snaps his fingers. From the corner of my eyes, I can see our belongings disappear into the ether, but I can't take my gaze off of the Fallen's sculpted back muscles. It's not until he's waist-deep in the Stygian that I finally look away.

Ithuriel's beautiful face is turned to where the fallen angel waits for us to join him. The expression of hunger mixed with pain on it twists my stomach and sends another pulse of lust to my clit. He wakes out of his reverie with a violent twitch and, with a furtive glance at me, starts wading through the muck to where Sariel stands, keeping a good distance between them.

With no choice, I take a deep breath of the foul air and prepare to never feel clean again, ever. I step in, the vile mud squelches between my toes, and I gag. Not the best start.

"Come on, poppet," Sariel calls out to me. "Mind over matter."

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“Yeah,” I mutter. “Fecal matter.”

As I take my next step, the sucking sound of the mud trying to keep my foot immersed in it overpowers Sariel’s amused snort. It’s like walking with resistance bands, but eventually, my shorter legs bring me to the boys.

“Easy part’s over,” the Fallen sings. I roll my eyes, then look at the silent angel beside us.

“Are you okay, Itha?” I ask tentatively.

His head slowly turns in my direction. “Why would I not be alright?” he asks with a hollow tone.

I shrug as much as the river will let me. “You’ve been awfully quiet.”

“I have nothing to say,” he replies.

I open and close my mouth a few times as Sariel starts humming the chorus of *Losing My Religion*. I press my lips together and pull my hand out of the mud with great difficulty so I can smack his shoulder. Shit flies everywhere from the point of impact, including back at my face. Well...shit.

Throwing his head back on a roar of laughter that temporarily silences the wails of the tortured, Sariel pulls me in until I have no choice but to start swimming. Ugh. I’d tell him off but I don’t want to risk opening my mouth this close to the water. Ithuriel joins us on a muted splash, and together we trudge through the thick liquid.

It's not long until we swim past the first sinners. The demons above are still ignoring us, and don't seem worried we might try to save someone from their fate. Fifteen minutes in, one of the punished souls tries to use me as a life raft. This time it's Itha that gets to her first, breaking the arms she used to crawl over me and throwing her away. After that, we make sure to stay as far away as possible.

My eyes are tearing up from the noxious fumes and even if they weren't, I feel like crying anyway. This is the most horrible thing I've gone through so far in Hell, and that includes the dislocated shoulder a couple of months ago and the three broken ribs a year before that. Finally, the edge of the other side comes into view, and the three of us find our second wind and pick up speed.

Sariel reaches the ledge first and pulls himself up. I'd appreciate the sight of his ass right in front of my face a lot more if he wasn't covered in sludge. Itha climbs up next, the sucking mud almost tugging his clothes off as he does. Turning around, he reaches for my hand. Just as I'm about to grasp it, the water starts churning underneath me, a spinning vortex ripping me out of the angel's reach.

"Jessica!" he shouts, but it's too late. The current pulls me under. As my body twirls in the maelstrom, the viscous liquid tries to force itself into my mouth, my nose. I don't know how much longer I can hold on before my body instinctively seeks air. I don't want to die in a river of shit in Hell!

Large hands find me in the darkness, sliding up my hips to my waist. If they weren't so warm and inviting, I'd think one of the sinners is trying to pull me further under. My savior and I burst through the surface of the putrid river. I spit and gulp down air, choking on stray droplets of muck. I'm passed into another pair of strong arms and pulled to safety. I open my eyes.

Ithuriel climbs up after me and gazes at me with such worry that I feel like crying all over again. "You keep saving me," I tell him.

“I won’t stop,” he vows.

“Come on, poppet,” Sarel murmurs. “The pool’s this way.”

Chapter 13 – Sarel

The Malebolge: The Trench of Simoniacs

“No wonder the demons didn’t look worried about us swimming in there,” Jess grumbles. “The river wouldn’t have let a mortal go.”

I can’t help but smile at her surliness. She’s kind of cute. “Fear not, babycakes. We weren’t gonna let ‘drowned in shit’ be the epithet on your gravestone.”

The Nephilim snorts. “What gravestone? I’d be at the bottom of the Stygian River, decomposing among the turds.”

“There will be no need for a gravestone,” my angel says vehemently.

And he is. Mine. I saw his body’s reaction to what I did with the little human, saw his reaction to my body before the literal shitstorm. I have both right where I want them. Jessica I’ll seduce with what was always out of reach for her – pleasure. Those idiot mortal boys did me a favor by being selfish lovers. As for Itha... I’ll get him with the forbidden. With the yearning for closeness, for being needed. I will make him sell his convictions.

Jess will get over it. I mean, no one will ever compare after I’m done with her, but her life will go on. Ithuriel? He’s going to feel the pain I’ve felt all these centuries without him. He’s going to be left with nothing and no one because of his feelings, just like I was until Ash found me, crawling in my misery, much like the sinners in these trenches.

“Sar.”

I shake myself out of my vengeful thoughts and focus on the little Nephilim.

“Which bolgia are we in?” she asks.

Ithuriel answers her first: “I believe we’re about to witness the punishments of those guilty of simony.”

Jess wrinkles her lightly freckled nose. “What’s that again? I didn’t pay enough attention at Sunday school.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“It’s people who sold or exploited holy things for their own gain,” I reply. “We’re talking church officials like popes.”

“Hmm,” Jess muses. “What are your thoughts on simony, Itha?”

The angel shrugs. “The Heavens do not care for idolatry. These mortals, however, thought the objects or rituals they defiled to be sacred and exploited them despite or precisely because of that. For that, their punishment is fitting.”

I wink at the surprised mortal. “Vengeful little angel, isn’t he?”

Her eyes are asking me ‘Why is that so hot?’ and I chuckle. It is hot.

“What is that punishment, exactly?” she asks aloud.

I wrinkle my nose at the smell of burned flesh. “I think we’re about to see it with our own eyes.”

A shrill scream penetrates the silence, followed by maniacal laughter. A moment later, the ever-burning flames wink into view. Sinners are suspended in holes that look remarkably similar to baptismal fonts. Only their feet are visible as they burn with the flames of their punishment.

“Jesus,” Jess hisses. Her hands fly to cover her mouth and nose as if she could keep the stench of charred soles out. “Why do some flames burn brighter than others?”

“It reflects the intensity of their crimes,” Ithuriel answers, impassively looking from

one sinner-filled pit to another.

As we continue through the trench, two scaled, winged demons appear, dragging a flailing, screeching priest by his feet. We stop to let them pass and watch as they hoist the sinner up before dropping him into his own pit. A second later, flames ignite above the sinner's hole, burning his expensive shoes away in a flash.

“Let’s get out of here,” the Nephilim whispers, as if she’s worried the demons will overhear her and decide to throw her in headfirst next.

“I didn’t have any plans to linger, poppet,” I assure her.

A pillar of fire bursts from an empty pit and Jess flinches back into me. Wrapping my arms around her, I sniff her hair. She scrubbed herself with her citrus soap until she was squeaky clean and my nose is grateful for the reprieve from unpleasant aromas. “Don’t look into the flames,” I murmur, making her shiver.

“Why not?” she asks quietly.

“The flames show you your guilt. Your regrets,” Ithuriel supplies.

“You probably shouldn’t look into them either,” I sneer, losing control over my expression for a moment.

The angel bristles. “I have no regrets.”

My lips stretch into a smile, though I definitely feel no joy. “Go on then,” I challenge.

Ithuriel grits his teeth and clenches his fists by his sides.

Jess shakes off my embrace. “You don’t have to Itha, he’s being a dick.”

“No, go on,” I urge. “Prove angels have no regrets.”

With his chin raised high, Ithuriel steps toward the pillar of fire. His mouth twitches once with what looks to be a hint of hesitation before he turns his gaze to the flickering flames. At first, not much happens. The orange glow reflects in his calm gray eyes and his breathing is steady. A moment later, his back suddenly straightens, his breath catching in his throat and staying there as he stops breathing. The angel’s face twists, first with sadness, then with desolation as his eyes narrow, silverish tears gathering on his lashes. Finally, his breath releases on a keen as his armored shoulders begin to shake.

For a second or two, I feel remorse for sending him to the fire, and then Jessica launches forward. “Enough!” she hisses, roughly pulling Ithuriel’s arm until he turns enough to break the line of sight to the revealing flames.

He stands there, dazed and unblinking and she places both palms on his cheeks, gently tipping his head down. “Itha,” she whispers. “It’s okay. It’s not real.” I can see the care she has for him and feel a pang of envy.

His eyes meet hers, then flick to mine, before settling back on the Nephilim’s face. He lifts his hands to hers, still on his face, and removes them. “Is it not?” he asks softly.

Scoffing, I brush past them and continue on the path to the next trench. Whatever he saw that affected him that much, he deserved. The Malebolge thought so.

I refuse to feel guilty.

Chapter 14 – Ithuriel

The Malebolge: The Trench of Diviners, Astrologers, and Magicians

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

I had spent the last millennia trying to avoid thinking about Sariel altogether. My closest friend since our inception, he had forsaken me and everything we ever stood for. When thoughts of him did slip through, I vacillated between thinking of him involved in debauchery on Earth or perhaps torturing wicked souls in Hell, much like the demons here in The Malebolge are. I wasn't prepared to see the anguish he felt cut off from Heaven's light. Cut off from... me.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Jess asks quietly as we walk between one trench and the next. I haven't spoken much with the sweet girl since... since I saw her find her pleasure at Sariel's hands. Since I've been tortured with thoughts of either being in his place... or in hers. I've even had thoughts of both of us... touching her... together. How good would we make her feel together if Sariel achieved what he did on his own?

"Itha?" I meet the Nephilim's eyes and feel the heat of a blush spread across my face. Sariel chooses that moment to turn around, possibly alerted by Jessica's concern. When he takes in my expression he snorts.

"Baby angel's just lost in thoughts, baby Nephilim," he says.

I clear my throat. "While I understand calling her a baby, I do believe I'm actually older than you."

The Fallen spins around and starts walking backward. "Ha. In your dreams, angelcake."

I nod at him with my chin. "Are you walking like that to fit in the trench?"

Sariel's eyes widen before he guffaws. "Jess, did you hear that? Itha's picking up a sense of humor. We're rubbing off on him."

"Pretty sure that was just you," she mutters.

Once her meaning becomes clear, my jaw unhinges. Sariel stops walking and bends over with laughter. "Are you jealous, Jess?" he asks between fits of laughter.

The Nephilim stops as well and eyes me up and down. With her eyebrows raised she turns to Sariel and says decisively, "Yes. I mean, look at him." She waves a hand in my direction. "He's perfect."

My heart is pounding in my chest. I can hear every sip of air that passes through my lips. Does she want my hands on her as much as she wanted Sariel's the other night? I look at him.

"Yes," he murmurs, suddenly pensive. "He's fucking perfect, isn't he?"

With that, he turns back around. My eyes return to Jess. It seems as if she's waiting for me to say or do something, perhaps call them out on their forwardness. Perhaps hoping I'd make another joke.

I'm saved from inactivity by the trench's sinners as they shuffle close, their heads twisted backward, forcing them to walk that way for eternity. Tears stream down their turned faces, pooling in the cracks of their misshapen necks.

"What happened to them?" Jess whispers with horror in her voice.

"They tried to look to the future, sell glimpses into it, manipulate fate. Only the Almighty is omniscient," I reply, stepping around the sinners and beckoning her to follow.

As we reach further into the trench, the presence of tortured souls becomes unavoidable. Their desperate cries mix with the oppressive atmosphere of the gloomy trench. The endless streams of tears have made the uneven terrain slippery and Jess stumbles more than once. Either Sariel or I are always there to catch her before she falls. No one is there to catch any sinner when they trip and the thuds and groans of fallen bodies echo dimly among the louder sobs.

It's not long before they begin whispering to us as we pass.

“I see your fall,” one tells me, his voice raspy from strain, and my gut clenches as my entire being tenses with denial.

“He will betray you,” another tells Jess, grabbing for her with gnarled hands. Sariel’s axe relieves the sinner of the offending appendages.

The next speaks to the Fallen: “You will drown in regret.”

I try to focus on navigating the treacherous terrain rather than dwelling on their words and possible meanings. I’d be lying if I said I am completely without fear, though. Who will I be once our mission is complete and I return to Heaven?

???

The fire is very welcome when we choose to rest – the gloomy fog seems to have seeped inside our bones. I wrap my cloak around me tighter. I’m unused to feeling cold, or hot for that matter. The temperature in Heaven is always perfect. Everything there is perfect, clean, right. But why have I felt more alive these last weeks than I ever have in Elysium?

“I know how we could warm up, Itha,” Sariel says, his black eyes reflecting the licks of flame.

Jess pauses with bread halfway to her already open mouth. Sariel snorts and tips it closed.

“Head out of the gutter, little one. I meant sparring. We haven’t had any real action in days.”

The Nephilim smirks, much to Sar’s delight, as I look between them, confused. What’s amusing?

“You’re worse than I am, poppet,” he tells her, flicking her nose as she grins widely. She truly is beautiful. Her blonde hair has a pink sheen, exacerbated by the glow of the fire. Her eyes are a cornflower blue, vivid among her round, delicate features. While she’s of smaller stature, and soft curves decorate her body rather than defined muscles, I’ve seen her fight and know she’s fast and skilled.

Page 27

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:57 am

“What do you say?” Sariel’s question interrupts my fixation with our female companion. Judging by the mirth in his eyes, he caught me gazing at her.

I frown at him, feeling skeptical. “Should we risk injury while on a mission?”

The Fallen winks at me. “You didn’t seem to care about that when you were pounding me the other day.”

Jess chokes on a bite of her food as I gasp. This innuendo I understood.

“Stop,” I whisper. They’re overwhelming – it seems that feeling alive comes with a high risk of overstimulation. “Fine, let’s spar.”

I get to my feet and move to a flat, clear area, far enough from the firepit that we don’t run the risk of injuring Jess, close enough that she doesn’t have to leave its warmth to observe. Sariel joins me, a smirk on his face, his hand gripping the haft of his double-bladed axe. As I pull out my greatsword, he rests his weapon on his shoulder, the pose deliberately casual, as if he’s telling me he doesn’t consider me and my sword a threat. In return, I throw my greatsword from hand to hand, as casually as if it were a dagger.

Sariel scoffs. “Are you compensating for something with that oversized blade?”

I feel my lips stretch into a smile. “Says the male who hides behind two edges. Afraid one won’t get the job done?”

The Fallen doesn’t rise to my bait. Instead, his smile softens right before he lunges,

the weight of his axe a blur as it arcs toward my ribcage. As I pivot on my heels and aim my sword to meet the blow, the sound of metal against metal screeches through the Malebolge's silence.

"You're sloppy," I murmur, twisting my blade in a movement that has Sariel stumbling back. "It's why you always lost to me."

Sariel's eyes narrow and he steadies himself, his axe coming up defensively. "That was years ago. I'm not the same male you used to know."

Something twists in my stomach. "Clearly," I mutter, closing my eyes for a moment. Predictably, Sariel takes advantage of my distraction, swinging low. I barely have enough time to leap back before the edge of the axe bites into the ground between us – the ground where my boots were just a second ago. With a growl, I raise the sword above my head, swinging down and slamming it onto Sariel's axe with so much force it drives him to one knee.

"Still predictable." My voice is rough from the strain of driving my weapon against his.

"And you're still insufferable," he spits back. Our faces are inches apart now, weapons locked, our breaths mingling in the charged air between us. While neither of us moves, something shifts inside us, evidenced by the way his mouth turns down, the way my breaths turn ragged.

"I trusted you," I keen quietly.

"And I trusted you to understand," he replies, his voice trembling with his emotions.

The moment snaps as quickly as it came. Sariel shoves forward, breaking the lock and resuming our sparring match. Furious blows rain on me and I dodge and parry

each, hardly getting a chance to throw any of my own. There is so much anger for me within him, it's like each strike, faint, and parry holds a message for me.

We stop at the same time, an unspoken ceasefire. Our panting breaths seem garish in the abrupt silence. Without a word, I sheathe my sword and turn to the fire. Jessica's mouth is open as wide as her eyes.

"What?" I ask her.

"You were so fast, so freaking strong, sparks flew," she says in awe. Suddenly, she stands up. Shifting her weight uncertainly from one foot to another, she plays with the hem of her top. Seemingly making a decision, she starts walking away.

"Where are you going?" Sariel questions her odd behavior.

She doesn't stop her stride as she looks over her shoulder. "I need a couple of moments of privacy."

"Oh." He grins. "Don't go too far!" he shouts after her.

"What?" I ask, confused.

"You'll hear in a minute. Looks like she enjoyed our match as much as we did." His signature devilish smirk is painted on his handsome face.

As his meaning crystallizes, my jaw unhinges.

"D-do you mean...?" My question comes out haltingly.

Sariel lies down and stretches back with his hands behind his head. "Do I mean I enjoyed our sparring so much I want to go rub one out too? Yes."

My mouth opens and closes on frozen words. In the end, I lie on my side with my back to the flames and wrap my cloak around myself.

“I’m going to rest,” I say, attempting to keep my words even.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

Sariel's chuckles mix with Jessica's muffled moans.

Chapter 15 – Jessica

The Malebolge: The Trench of Grafters

“Is it me, or is it getting hotter again?” I wish I could pull my armor away from my skin, get some air in there.

“We are entering the bolgia of the grafters,” Ithuriel says as if that alone was an explanation.

I roll my eyes. “I haven't read Dante since high school, have mercy on me.”

Sariel snickers. “Corrupt politicians, baby.” I flush at the nickname. “The trench is filled with boiling pitch.”

I boggle at him. “We're not swimming through boiling tar as well, are we, Sariel?”

He flicks the tip of my nose and I stick out my tongue.

“No, Jessica,” he says, mimicking my serious tone. “There's a path through the cliffs and bridges.”

“Then how are they keeping the sinners, you know, tortured?”

“You will meet some of Hell's most nefarious demons,” Ithuriel chimes in. “The

Malebranche.”

I shudder at the ominous-sounding name. “What are they like?” I ask.

“Sick and twisted,” the angel replies without hesitation, making Sarel snort.

“Most demons are sick and twisted in their own ways, blondie.” I’m not quite sure which of us the Fallen is referring to. “These just happen to take the cake,” he finishes.

“They are grotesque,” Itha supplies. “Their wings are gnarly and hooked, their hands are armed with large, serrated claws.”

“And they just love torturing the sinners they’re babysitting,” Sar adds.

“Great,” I mutter. “I can’t wait to meet them.”

Sarel steps closer. While I note the shrinking distance between us with a raised eyebrow, he winks at me and places his hand on the back of my neck, under my high ponytail.

“What are you doing, Sar-Sar?” I murmur. I know Itha can probably hear me, though.

Sarel’s reply is a silky whisper. “I missed feeling your skin under my fingertips, poppet.”

Goosebumps race down my spine, both from his words and the touch; so gentle yet so domineering, predatory. My heart rate picks up as I remember how his touch felt between my legs, the skillful way he made me come. I think about the insane amount of experience he must have, all the males and females he pleased, and jealousy twists my stomach.

Oh, no, Jess. Don't go down that path. He's not yours and he's one point five thousand years old. It's not like he could have been a virgin...

I look at Ithuriel, the angel casting furtive glances back at us as he walks ahead. Okay, so he could have been a virgin. But do I really want him to be? Not that I think Itha is any less sexy for being inexperienced. Quite the opposite. The things I could teach him. We could teach him.

Oh God, stop it, Jessica.

Sariel's strong fingers squeeze the nape of my neck. "Penny for your thoughts?"

I roll my eyes up at him. They're both such tall bastards. "I thought we determined you don't have a penny on you, hot stuff."

"What else can I trade to get inside you?" He smirks at my scoff. "I mean, get inside your head," he clarifies and I burst into laughter.

"You're a big baby," I tease him.

His lips twist into a wry smile. "If I say I'm a baby, can I nurse at your bosom?"

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

My breath catches at the audacity of his immature joke and I cough my way through strangled laughter.

“If you two are quite done,” the angel’s haughty voice floats from ahead. “We need to start walking in a line, one by one.”

With one last caress against my pulse point, Sariel lets go of my neck and falls back. When I reach Itha, I see why he wants us to form a line. We’ve reached the tar-filled trench.

The path takes a sharp downward turn from where we stand, elevated. I follow it with my eyes, tracing the twists and bends it takes through the bubbling black pitch. In some places, it’s nearly level with the black substance. Misshapen figures stand there, small due to the distance between us, poking at the sinners boiling in the tar. In other places, the path climbs upward again, a narrow trail with cliff ledges on each side. Several of these cliffy areas are joined by rickety-looking rope bridges.

“We have to walk across that?” I ask the stoic angel in disbelief.

He looks down at me and his eyes soften. He lifts his hand and tentatively places it on my shoulder, giving it a soft squeeze. “It will be alright, Jess,” he says softly, then releases me and turns down the path.

I fight to keep my mouth closed. That’s the first time he’s given me a casual touch. A kaleidoscope of butterflies takes flight in my stomach.

Sariel leans close to my ear. “Good job, babycakes.” His warm breath tickles my

earlobe and I shiver. With a chuckle, he gently nudges me to follow our angel. I suddenly realize it's been days since I've seen their wings. I miss the majestic sight of them.

It doesn't take us long to reach the bottom of the trench and I get to see the Malebranche for the first time up close. They're as bad as Itha said; their flesh is black and slimy, almost like they're made of tar themselves. When they see us, their large mouths open into too-wide smiles, displaying sharp fangs, each as long as my finger. I wonder when someone just took a long stroll through the Malebolge like this. If they see visitors often.

Our presence doesn't stop them from using their claws or long hooks to prod at the wailing sinners. I don't see the necessity for it; the poor fuckers are already red and pink from the steaming liquid, all the hair on their bodies melted off. Some have oozing black holes where their eyes used to be. The stench is unbelievable.

When we climb back up and away from the demons and sinners, the ground opens on each side of us and I don't really feel relieved. Each step of the way through these trenches unlocks a new fear.

The first time we cross one of the suspended bridges, my foot goes through a dried-out plank and my stomach falls to the bottom of the chasm.

"Fucking Hell," I gasp, breathless as Sariel holds me up from behind me.

"Jessica!" Ithuriel's voice is brimming with concern. He starts walking back toward us.

"Don't!" I warn him. "I'm fine, we'll be right there." The last thing I need is for him to step through a bad piece of wood as well.

We reach the pale angel and he takes us both in, checking for injuries. Sariel reaches over my head to lightly punch his shoulder. “Were you worried about us, buddy?”

“I’m not your buddy,” Itha mutters, but there’s no heat behind it; it’s just a routine reply at this point.

“Well, I was worried,” I say dramatically. “I thought my soul had left my body.”

Sariel squints at me playfully. “Nope. Still there.”

I gasp. “What does it look like?”

The wicked fallen angel’s grin widens. “Wouldn’t you like to know?”

Ithuriel sighs and turns around.

“That’s as good as an eye-roll,” Sar whispers and I giggle. If you told me weeks ago, when we met to plan this mission, how much fun I’d be having in their company, I’d laugh. And probably faint.

“There’s another bridge ahead. Attempt to control yourselves.”

“Yes, Daddy,” I chirp at the angel, enjoying the way his steps falter. Sariel tugs on my ponytail. When I look back at him, he gives me a double thumbs up. Grinning, I follow Itha onto the next bridge.

I’m more careful this time, making sure each plank is good before putting my full weight on it, holding on to the ropes tightly. As the bridge sways with our movements, suspended between the cliffs above a deep chasm filled with boiling tar, my heart pitter-patters wildly in my chest.

We're almost at the end when there's a loud creaking sound.

"Um, what was that?" I whisper. Maybe if whatever it was doesn't hear me, we'll be okay.

Ithuriel stops and turns around, slowly. His elegantly pale face is now downright pallid.

"What?" I hiss.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Hold on to her,” he tells Sariel, voice sharp.

Before I can question him further, a loud snap echoes through the trench, and a sense of déjà vu engulfs me as both angels lunge toward me. The bridge sways wildly under my feet and I pitch forward, the ropes doing nothing to stop my fall. Itha grabs my hand at the last possible moment, but then he starts to follow me over.

“Fuck!” Sariel roars, grabbing onto the other rope with one hand and Itha’s wrist with the other.

I scream as my descent stops violently, my weight pulling on the arm in the angel’s grasp. For three seconds I think we’ll make it out of the situation unscathed. Then Sariel’s depthless eyes widen with panic. Another creak and snap fill my ears as the world spins around me again. The bridge broke completely and our linked bodies are plummeting toward the cliffside.

We descend under a ledge, the wooden planks clanking and snapping at the impact above us. The trench is a blur as we swing wildly and my arm screams in protest of gravity. Through my blind panic, I register Sariel’s anguished, furious roar as we snap still.

No one speaks for half a minute. I can’t believe we’re alive. Well, that I’m alive. The angels would probably just reform.

“Are you able to pull us up?” Itha speaks first.

I look up and glimpse Sariel’s face, twisted into a pained sneer.

He hisses. “No. My shoulder’s dislocated.”

“Oh my God,” I whisper. He’s holding all three of us on a dislocated arm? “Can you teleport us with the ether, Sariel?” I ask louder.

He shakes his head. “Not all three of us.”

“You are the only one that matters, Jessica,” Ithuriel decides. “I will reform once I swim out.”

The Fallen shakes his head again. “You’ll be weakened and fuck knows what’s ahead.”

“Then what?” the angel growls, finally shaken. “We cannot fly.”

“You’ll have to transport yourself. I’ll blink to Jess and we’ll meet you on the other side.” Sariel speaks calmly and clearly, despite the agony painted on his face.

Ithuriel’s features twist. “I cannot travel with the ether yet! I never succeeded.” He looks down at me with something like devastation. “Just... take care of Jessica, I will be alright.”

“No,” Sariel growls through clenched teeth. “Look at me. I said, look at me, Starlight.” Ithuriel breaks eye contact with me and looks up at the Fallen. “Good. Now, close your eyes.”

“Why?”

“Just close your eyes, for fuck’s sake.” Sariel manages to look exasperated through the pain. “Take stock of your body. Feel every inch of yourself, every molecule. Gather your ether in your chest... then funnel it out to your extremities, to the ends of

your toes, your fingertips, that ridiculously soft, pansy-ass hair.”

I’d laugh if I were capable. The angel’s hair does look ridiculously soft. And now he feels like he’s vibrating, static electricity zapping my arm where he holds it. Either that or I lost all sensation in it forever.

“Got it?” Sariel asks softly.

The angel nods once. “Yes,” he murmurs.

“That’s it. Think of the other side of the bridge. We were almost there. You saw it clearly. A few more steps and you’d be on solid ground.”

“I see it,” Itha breathes.

“Perfect. Focus on every bit of ether coursing through you. Let go of Jess and take that last step to land.”

The angel shakes his head. “I can’t!”

“You can, Ithuriel. Just let go.” Sariel’s voice is so full of assurance that I want to let go.

“What if you don’t reach her in time?” the angel cries.

“Trust me, Starlight. I got her. I got both of you.” My stupid heart swells at the Fallen’s words. Like I’m not hanging above bubbling tar a long, long way down, like the possibility of a painful death isn’t very, very real.

“Jessica?” Ithuriel’s asking for my permission and I have to swallow three times before I’m brave enough to give it to him.

“Let me go.”

Chapter 16 – Sariel

The Malebolge: The Trench of Hypocrites

One moment I’m looking at Ithuriel’s beautiful face, scrunched up in concentration, the next, he lets go and disappears. Fuck yes.

Jessica begins to plummet toward the boiling black below, her scream catching on a choked inhale, and I burst into action. Lana would castrate me if I got her friend stewed. I eye the rate at which she’s falling and blink underneath her, my good arm ready to sweep her up. Plus, I have to admit, she’s quite... cute. My wings burst out, and I extend them wide, capturing the air and stopping at a hover. Got her. Before the curse could retaliate for my wing use, I transport us to where I hope Ithuriel is waiting on the other side of the cliff above us.

As the world solidifies around me, I see the silver angel pacing the ledge, a hand mussing up his gleaming hair in obvious worry. Seeing how agitated he is, I get the irrational urge to push him off. He’d just transport himself back and be fine. Probably. But how fucking dare he show this much fear for us now, when he abandoned me so thoroughly a thousand years ago?

Before my dark side makes angel Shakshuka out of him, he spots me and my Nephilim cargo.

“There you are,” he breathes, approaching us hurriedly. Stopping just a hairsbreadth

away, he places a hand on my shoulder. Voluntarily. He's touching me while the mortal is sandwiched between us like a delicious-smelling lemon drop. I should have pushed him off. I shouldn't have taught him how to travel with the ether, let him charbroil a bit. I want to hurt him. But I also want to fuck him.

Is this cute aggression?

"We're fine," Jessica says to the angel who's looking at me with his face all scrunched up.

I place the human between us and give her a little nudge until she has no choice but to brace herself against him. With that, I turn around and step onto the path, then pop my shoulder back into place with a merciless yank.

"Let's go," I say. "We're almost out of here."

I don't turn around to see if they're following.

???

"Why are they grimacing?" Jessica asks as we weave between more rows of endlessly matching sinners.

"Their cloaks are lined with lead," Ithuriel answers. "It is their punishment."

The sinners around us don't moan and wail in pain like in some of the other trenches. They bear the weight of their punishments – both literally and figuratively speaking – in silence, their hunched backs and pained expressions the only testament to their hardships.

"What did they do to deserve it?" Jess whispers. Trying to spare the sinners' feelings?

Hah. Kindhearted mortal.

“This is the bolgia of the hypocrites, poppet. They avoided the weight of consequences in life, so they carry it in death.” I enjoy the way her cornflower-blue eyes widen with whatever emotions my statement brought to life inside her. Bet her eyes will pop open like that the first time she takes my cock.

Oh, I’m in a mood. One moment I want to toss the mortal to the ground and rut her, right in front of all these sinners while the angel watches in shock and horror. The next I feel guilty for using the Nephilim to get a rise out of the angel like that. I’ve never felt guilty for fucking anyone; maidens, widows, females who belong to other males. Why should I start now?

“These sinners acted all high and mighty, holier than thou, but in reality, they were much more corrupt than those they judged,” I continue, a note of bitterness invading my voice. Whyever could that be? “You know who we could find here?” I nudge her with my elbow.

“Who?” she asks, rapt and waiting for the tea.

“Caiaphas,” I say, lifting my eyebrows dramatically.

She chews on her bottom lip for a second before her eyes turn round again. “Isn’t he the priest who put Jesus on the cross?”

I scoff. “Trust me, love, he didn’t dirty a finger. But he did make it happen.”

“Woah,” she breathes, stepping up on her tiptoes and looking around.

I snicker. “Would you even know him if you saw him?”

She deflates, her shoulders dropping as she falls back onto her heels. “Oh. Right.”

I can’t help wrapping an arm around her shoulder and pulling her close until we walk in tandem. I must be schizophrenic or something.

“Nah, I don’t think so. My uncle had schizophrenia and he’d go around doing things he had no memory of later.”

Page 32

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I frown down at Jessica's head, the strawberry blonde of her hair looking dull and gray in this desolate lighting. Did I say that out loud? Ithuriel's looking back at me over his shoulder, a frown on his unblemished face.

Great.

"Did you ever meet him?"

It takes me a second to register Jessica's question.

I look back down at her. "Who?" I ask, bewildered.

"Caiaphas?" Her voice is careful, unsure.

Oh, for fuck's sake. I really am acting like a complete lunatic.

"No, dove. He died centuries before I was created."

I realize I've been gliding my hand over her arm as we walk together. Having her near has been surprisingly comfortable.

"Which was when?" she asks.

"The fifth century," Ithuriel speaks for the first time in a while.

"A while before he was," I tell the mortal.

“No,” the angel denies and a grin spreads over my face at the familiar argument.

“Why don’t you check with an archivist next time you’re in Elysium?” I tease. We always said we would but never did.

“It is a shame Syriniana perished before we came into existence,” Itha says next. “She would have accurately corroborated.”

I snort and Jessica looks up at me with curiosity. “Who was Syriniana?”

“A legendary archivist of old,” Ithuriel says wistfully before I can even open my mouth. She’s always been a role model for him.

“She died on the battlefield in Hell eons ago, during the peak of the Celestial Conflict,” I continue. “Just before corrupt mortal souls began entering Hell as their final place of unrest. Around the time Ash offered what’s now known as Purgatory as a place of in-between.”

I see Itha’s lip curl in my periphery. He needs to get over this reaction to anything Father.

“Can angels be killed then?”

I nod at my poppet. “If catastrophic damage is dealt repeatedly, the bindings holding us together don’t have the energy to reform. And since we don’t have souls, there’s no afterlife for us. We return to the ether.”

Her face falls and I squeeze her against me in answer.

“There was one being with a particularly large death toll,” Itha continues the story, oblivious to Jessica’s discomfort.

“Ah, yes. Good old Nephithar. Ash was never a fan.” I don’t know why I’m avoiding addressing him as Father in front of the angel. “Then again, Father is a fan of exactly one and a half people, the half split up between me, my cousin Naamah, and Uncle Asmo.” Why do I feel a bit nauseous?

“Why did you call him a being instead of a demon?” Jess asks, distracting me from the expression on Ithuriel’s perfect face.

“Demon wasn’t a word that was thrown around a lot around the inception of this place. It came later. Besides, Nephithar was something... other.”

Itha takes over. “He was Lucifer’s attempt at making his own angel. He made Nephithar in his image and called him his son.”

“Though, according to Ash, he’s never mentioned him since his death. And he hasn’t made another like him.” I shrug. “Maybe he considered it a failed experiment.”

“It merely shows us that you can call someone Son but that does not make them one,” Ithuriel mumbles.

I groan. “Don’t be a fucking hypocrite or you’ll get a cloak of your own. Or did you stop addressing God as Father? Ash hasn’t.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

It brings me such pleasure to see the flush spread over the angel's marble-pale skin. Yeah, you little two-faced feather duster.

"So, this Nephithar killed a lot of angels?" Jessica interjects, ever the knight in shining armor – though that's more Itha's appearance. I snicker to myself and earn an appalled look.

"I was thinking of something else, jeez, don't skewer me with those pale eyes of yours," I say to both.

"Any eyes are pale compared to yours," she says from the corner of her mouth. Itha moves his surprised glare onto her and my laughter echoes in the oppressive silence of the trench.

"He had a thing for hacking off angel wings," our angel says, clearly attempting to salvage the conversation with the facts of history. "It has been recorded that it was out of jealousy for not receiving any of his own upon his creation."

Jess forces herself to sober up. "When was this? Was it recorded in hieroglyphs or something?"

"Cuneiforms were used to record words at the time," Itha says so pompously that I roll my eyes. He was always good at remembering things. "Though the mortals had only just begun to write properly, us angels already had our own established written word, one that Syriniana expanded as well."

I roll my eyes. "It was about five thousand years ago, poppet. The dominant human

civilization were the Sumerians, later Akkadians, though other civilizations began emerging then as well.”

“Bet Lana would love to pick your brains about that,” Jess giggles.

“Trust me, she tried,” I grumble. No idea why Father’s main squeeze doesn’t want to talk about more fun things, like Roman orgies.

Jessica taps a finger against her lips. “Did anyone see Nephithar or Syriniana die?”

Ithuriel frowns. “Not that I know of. I never thought to ask how they died and it wasn’t in any records I’ve read. There were so many casualties on both sides.”

The petite human rolls her lips together. “And did Syriniana ever write about Nephithar?” she asks.

“Why, yes,” Ithuriel replies, obviously surprised at the question. “In fact, her last entries were solely about that demon. We know what he looked like and how he fought in astonishing detail for someone who had perished eons ago.”

The Nephilim waggles her eyebrows. “Uh-huh.”

“What?” I drawl. Where is that mind of hers going?

“Don’t you find it a bit suspicious that two notorious beings perished at the same time, no one knows who killed them, and one was obsessively writing about the other?” There’s a glint of superiority in her eyes.

Ithuriel seems taken aback. “I would not say she wrote about him obsessively. She was merely a devoted archivist.”

The puzzle pieces she was putting together click and I scoff. “I’m with Itha, poppet. You think an angel and demon fell in love on the battlefield and ran away together, faking their deaths? And no one knew about it? You read too many romance novels.”

She ducks out from underneath my arm and rounds on me, her hands braced on her hips. Sexy.

“And why not?” she asks with her cute nose up in the air. “Lana’s grandparents were an angel and demon and they fell in love.”

I look at Itha at the same time as he looks at me and we both avert our gazes.

“That is so extremely rare, poppet,” I murmur.

“For an angel to forsake Heaven for a demon,” Itha says incredulously.

“For a demon to care for another being above everything else,” I add.

Jess’ eyes bounce between us as we avoid looking at each other.

“Uh-huh,” she says again. “Completely unheard of.”

Chapter 17 – Ithuriel

The Malebolge: The Trench of Thieves

“What’s that sound?” Jess whispers over the increasingly loud hissing coming from ahead.

“Snakes,” I reply grimly.

The Nephilim snorts. “On a plane?”

“In a trench,” Sariel says with a smirk.

I look at first one, then the other, shaking my head in my puzzlement. “What are you two talking about?”

“Mature things,” the Fallen drawls.

I roll my eyes at him. “I hope a snake bites you in the ass.”

Jess chokes on a startled laugh while Sariel flat-out guffaws. “That’s not very do-no-harm-unto-others, Itha,” he chides and my lips tug up.

“Well, Itha already got poisoned on this excursion, Sar, I think it is your turn.”

We pin the mortal with our gazes before Sariel bursts into motion, leaning down and throwing her over a shoulder in one smooth motion. Her laughter bounces from the desolate rocky landscape as she ineffectually hits the Fallen’s back with her open palms.

I wish I could touch them so freely.

Stopping, I look at my dusty boots. Where did that thought come from? While I often preferred my mortal form over the more common ethereal one, I never saw the point

in casual physicality. Why does watching Sariel and Jessica play make me yearn to experience it for myself?

I remember what else I watched them do and flush. Every time the thought enters my mind – and it is often – I feel a little bit less guilty. That is the slippery slope of sin. It insidiously makes itself at home in your heart and before you know it it's taken over.

“Hurry up, slowpoke!”

My fists ball at my side as I pick up my steps again. I have never wanted things that were bad for me, or even that just did not enrich my existence in some way. I never considered that perhaps it would be things that are bad for me enriching my existence.

“Where's your head at?” Sariel asks once I catch up. Jess is now perched on his back, her legs wrapped around his torso like a baby lemur. I raise an eyebrow at her instead of answering the Fallen's prying question.

“I've decided I'm staying away from the snakes. I should be safe atop my prancing Pegasus.” A beaming smile lights up her face. “See what I did there? Cuz he has wings?” She seems so proud of herself that I only purse my lips, keeping my thoughts to myself.

Sariel isn't that considerate though. “I don't take prancing as a compliment, love. You might just find yourself bucked off your horsie if you're not careful.” He tempers the threat by caressing her arms, crossed at his chest and my chest squeezes with yearning.

Sariel and I didn't touch to evoke sensation but we did lean on each other. Sit back-to-back so we could each enjoy our own tomes. I haven't interacted like that with anyone since he fell, afraid to potentially feel the same dangerous emotions again.

Angels do not fall often, but when they do, it's a devastating loss for Heaven. Sariel's falling was a devastating loss for my heart.

The Fallen spins, using Jess' hip to nudge me. "You're extra mopey today," he comments as Jessica turns beet-red. "Do you want to climb on, too? The only snake threatening you then will be the one in my pants." A giant grin overtakes his face as my face heats up as well.

"Hey, don't go offering rides to other people, pony," the mortal interjects.

Sariel's brows climb up. "And why not?" he asks. "I'm hung enough for both. I mean, horse enough for both," he corrects himself, obviously insincerely. My eyes involuntarily drop to his crotch, something that doesn't go unnoticed by my wicked companions. Their laughter once again drowns out the malevolent sounds of the hissing snakes and whimpering sinners.

Before either can comment on my orbital faux pas, the trench's sinners and their punishments come into view. The air is nearly humming with the sound of thousands of reptiles tasting the air with their forked tongues as their scales glint in the eerie, dim blue light.

"Shit," Jess hisses, the sound weaving seamlessly into the reptilian chorus.

Her wide eyes observe the animals coiling around the sinners, some of them keening, some screaming soundlessly, their mouths open, but no breath in their constricted lungs. She gasps as a snake bites a nearby sinner and they burst into flame, reforming into a grotesque, barely humanoid shape.

"What did they do?" she asks breathlessly.

"They're thieves," Sariel replies.

“I stole chewing gum from a store as a kid.” Jessica’s whispered words are full of dread.

“I wouldn’t say that any louder,” I murmur.

Both of them turn surprised eyes in my direction.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Did you just make a joke?” the stupefied Fallen asks.

I shrug and face the trench again. “I’ve been known to produce the occasional witticism.”

“And you’ve ruined it.”

I smirk at Sariel’s grumbled words, enjoying Jessica’s amused chuckle. We can’t stand here joking around all day; we must find a way through. This is the seventh bolgia – we’re nearly done. The mortal has come too close to death one time too many. There’s a path leading through the trench, but patrolling it are winged demons armed with long spears.

“Friends of yours, Sariel?” My voice comes out sounding somewhat sour.

“No,” my former friend drawls. “They don’t look like they’d be any fun in a brothel on a Saturday night.”

I feel nauseous even as the Nephilim smirks. “I wouldn’t mind meeting the ones that are.”

She might not mind Sariel’s philandering ways, but my mouth still tastes sour. What is this feeling again? I feel like I’m losing all sense of identity in this place, just as these thieves are, metamorphosing into unrecognizable shapes in front of our eyes.

“I don’t think I’ll subject you to them, poppet,” the Fallen purrs, indifferent to the war within me. “As for these demons, I say we give it a good old fake-it-until-you-make-

it try.”

I frown. “What do you mean?”

“Just that walking in like you own the place works ninety percent of the time.”

“You want to just casually stroll through?” Jess frowns down at Sariel, her cheek pressed against his temple.

He turns his head without warning, bringing their lips an inch apart. “Hold on to your bra straps, honeybunches.”

The girl’s dazed eyes are heavy-lidded as she whispers: “I’m not wearing a bra.”

“I know,” he breathes back, just as quietly.

I tug at my collar. “If you two are done flirting...”

Sariel faces me with a smirk. “Jealous?”

I growl under my breath. “Cease ascribing emotions to me.”

Heaven help me, I am jealous. This sour, burning feeling is jealousy. I’m just not certain whether it’s him I am jealous of, or her.

“Both.”

I startle. “Excuse me?”

Sariel gives me a deadpan look. “I was answering Jess. She asked who the threat was; the snakes or the demons.”

Oh.

“But the demons elsewhere ignored us,” she says through a pout.

He reaches up to tug on her bottom lip and she waves him off, cringing. “That could’ve gone either way,” he murmurs distractedly, still looking at her lips.

“Let’s go,” I growl, leaving them and their damnable tension behind.

“He likes to walk away in a huff, doesn’t he?” Jess whispers, probably thinking I can’t hear her. Just like she thought I couldn’t hear her and Sariel at that cliff’s edge before we found ourselves in The Malebolge.

The fallen angel snorts and I hear his footsteps begin to follow mine. “It’s almost like he’s running away from something, isn’t it?” he says breezily, knowing well I’m listening.

Jessica scoffs and I can almost see her rolling her eyes in my mind’s eye. “Yeah, us.” She’s playing right into his hands.

“You think so?” Sariel asks with a heaping of mock innocence. “Are we that scary?”

Page 36

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“We’re that sexy,” she giggles. They’re going to be the end of me. “Giddy up, horsie, he’s getting away.”

“He knows there’s no getting rid of us, poppet.”

By the time I reach the first sinners, they’re back at my heels. We’re not going anywhere in a hurry though. Three armed demons are blocking our path, their features hidden behind heavy helmets, their brutish muscles covered by grimy armor. Their menacing spears are pointed at the air and they look right through me, as if I’m not even here.

“Are you Lord Sariel?” one aims the question over my shoulder, speaking with a voice rusty from disuse.

“Well, it’s not her,” the Fallen replies, stepping to my side. No, a step ahead of me. As if to shield me with his body. As if he cares about my safety.

“Master Ashtaroth has sent word of your presence,” the demon continues, not commenting on the snark.

“Has he?” Sariel drawls. He sniffs the air theatrically. “I thought I smelled Aim in the air.”

“What is aim?” I ask, puzzled, ignoring the demons as much as they seem to be ignoring me.

Jessica sighs, lifting one hand to her forehead to act out a swoon. Unfortunately, that

means her other arm is now choking the Fallen who's back she still clings to. "Spymaster hottie," she moans.

"Jessica," Sarel grits out through clenched teeth, blindly searching for her arm with his own.

"Oh, oops!" She leans forward and restores his airflow.

Sarel clears his throat a few times, shaking his head. "Aim is Father's master of intelligence. Officially. Assassin unofficially."

I ignore his epithet for the archdemon. Perhaps I'm getting used to it. "I see. The demon lord?"

"The hottie," Jessica nods fervently.

"I know of him," I murmur.

The demons have been turning their heads, following the conversation, sizing us up. It must be terribly dull here, torturing the same sinners for centuries.

"What did the hottie say?" Sarel asks the demons, making Jessica laugh again, a melodic tinkle that has the torturers looking at her. I clench my teeth and move closer to my old and new friend.

The demon bows in Sarel's direction. "We are to ensure your safe passage through this trench."

The Fallen rubs his hands together. "Wonderful. Lead the way out."

With a quick nod, the demons turn and form a line. The snakes and lizards skitter and

slither away from their path.

“Did not expect this,” Jess whisper-shouts.

I catch Sariel’s dark eyes. We look at each other for a moment before the corner of his lips twitch up. “Why don’t you watch our backs?”

“He can’t see your back, Sar, I’m covering it.”

Laughing, Sariel follows the departing demons. “Arma would have loved you,” he tells her bitterly. He glances back at me before adding: “Probably both of you.”

Chapter 18 – Ashtaroth

Earlier that day

“What the fuck are they doing in the Malebolge?” I growl at the demon lord standing in front of me, his head bowed not from fear, but out of the respect he owes me.

“Not sure, my lord. They did not enter it by traditional means, that is certain,” Aim adds with confidence. “I spoke with the guardians. No one living has entered recently.”

If there was information to be had, this demon would have brought it to me. That he does not know is concerning.

“What does it mean?” my lamb asks quietly, peering up at me from where she sits on my lap.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I swipe my thumb over her enticing lower lip and her tongue flicks out to lick at my skin. “Perhaps there is instability between the realms,” I murmur, admiring the sheen of her saliva on my finger, the way she marked me as hers. “The prolonged presence of a rift could likely cause such an anomaly. My son chose wisely to search the trenches.”

“Is it dangerous?” she asks, regrettably ceasing the tempting play of her pink tongue against my flesh. I tug her back until her round ass is cushioning my hardening cock.

“It is nothing Sariel cannot handle, sweetness. But still...” I look away from the incomparable view of Lana’s décolletage and focus on the demon. “Enter the Malebolge. Ensure the demons know I will personally fuck them with my sword until only bloodied pieces remain if they hinder my son and my consort’s teammate in any way.”

Lana’s lips curl into a smile at my crude threat and she wiggles on my lap, seeking friction. Purring, I snake my hand down between her legs, cupping her roughly. “Are you wet for your Master, sweetness?”

Biting her lip, she looks at Aim and flushes. Her chest trembles.

“I asked you a question.”

“Y–yes,” she stutters, still nervously looking at our company.

Oh, lamb. You have sealed your fate.

“Yes, what?” I whisper.

Her face completely red, Lana closes her eyes before quietly answering: “Master. Yes, Master.”

“Good girl,” I praise, then lift my eyes to the spymaster.

“I’ll depart now, my lord,” he says with a quick bow.

“Stay.”

His face betrays his surprise for less than a second before he nods in acknowledgment.

“Ash,” my lamb murmurs shakily.

I glide my nose against the shell of her ear before kissing it and speaking directly into it. “Aim is going to watch you please me.”

Her trembling body turns my cock rock hard and I grab the fabric of her soft leggings, ripping them open. There’s a wet patch on the front of her panties.

I click my tongue. “Look at that, lamb. What a messy girl you are.” Looking up, I see Aim still gazing at the floor. We can’t have that. No one other than me will ever touch my mortal, but I know she enjoys it when we have an audience. “Is that not so, Aim?”

The assassin’s eyes shoot to the apex of Lana’s thighs as if drawn there by a magnet. “Such a filthy girl, Master,” he agrees.

Lana whimpers at the honorific and I chuckle. Since Lana entered my existence, I

have had no desire to copulate with anyone other than her. I will not be Aim's Master in that sense again. But perhaps I should call someone to fuck him while we observe? I know Sarel would have been the first to volunteer were he here.

"Take the underwear off, sweetness. Show Aim how wet your pretty cunt gets when you're being watched."

Keening softly, she uses a shaking hand to push the flimsy material down to her knees.

"That's a good girl," Aim tells her softly and I can feel her muscles clench from the words.

I grin against her neck. "Are you hard for us, Aim?" I ask the spymaster.

"Yes, Master," he replies without hesitation.

"Show her," I command.

The demon grins wickedly and a lock of silky black hair falls over his blue eyes as he reaches to unclasp his leathers. I laugh in anticipation. The demon's cock is as pretty as he is and covered in metal adornments.

"Oh fuck," Lana breathes as he reveals it, the piercings glinting in the light of the chandeliers. I shove two fingers inside her while she's occupied with admiring Aim's manhood and she bucks back against my own bulge. Growling, I hook my fingers and press against the sensitive nerve endings there.

"Aim has a beautiful cock, does he not?" I ask over the sounds of her panting breaths. She nods soundlessly as the demon's fingers play with the piercing bisecting his cockhead. "Were I a less possessive Master, I would have you suck him off while I

take your sweet ass.”

Her tunnel squeezes my fingers and her eyes roll to the back of her head. Laughing, I lift her up and free my own cock. I replace my soaked fingers with the tip of my shaft, letting her impale herself at her own pace.

“Aim.”

“Yes, Master?”

“I believe my lamb would love to see you come for her.”

With a choked gasp from my human, my dick embeds itself inside her, her juices wetting the tops of my thighs. Aim flicks his tongue out to nudge the hoop piercing at the center of his lower lip.

“I think she should ask me for it, Master,” he counters with a smirk.

I laugh, delighted by Aim’s cooperation. “Marvelous idea.” I slap Lana’s flank and she jumps on my cock. “Go on, pet.”

“A–Aim,” she gasps. “Pl–please...”

“Please, what, sweetheart?” Aim asks her.

Lana takes a deep bracing breath before speaking louder. “Please play with your dick for me. Let me see you come.”

The handsome male bites his lower lip before firmly palming his now-leaking cock. “It would be my pleasure,” he purrs.

His hand shuttles over his hardness with a squelching sound that makes Lana squirm on my lap, on my dick.

“Watch him, pet,” I order, moving a hand between her legs and the other to her chest. I tug down her top, freeing her soft breasts, the exposed nipples hardening under my gaze.

She moans as my fingers find her clit and begin to rub concise circles over it, just how she likes it. Her nails dig into my arms as she starts swiveling her hips atop me.

“Mmm,” Aim growls, his pace picking up. “What a good little toy, warming your Master’s cock on his throne.”

“Yes,” she agrees with a moan, completely mindless. I can feel them both approaching their peaks and have to hold back my own release at the thought of the meal their mutual orgasms will provide for me.

“Look how hard he is for you, sweetness,” I whisper, edging them on.

“So. Fucking. Hard,” she agrees, punctuating each word with a bounce on my cock.

“Oh, fuck!” Aim hisses, watching her swinging breasts. “I’m gonna come for you,” he groans, squeezing his dick hard, twisting on the upward motion.

“I’m coming with you,” Lana sobs.

Laughing, I wrap my ether around them, ready to receive their offerings.

Aim shoots first, his semen landing at our feet, his head falling back as he roars his release. Lana cries out, stilling for a moment before grinding down and fucking herself on me with shallow, quick movements.

I bite the inside of my cheek to stop myself from following. Once Lana stills, I push her off me.

“Kneel before me,” I growl, squeezing the root of my shaft.

She’s on her knees in a blink and I lean back, watching her eager face as I pump myself. It only takes a few passes of my hand against the sensitive flesh before I explode, white streaks covering my pet’s lovely cheeks and her obscenely exposed breasts, pushed up by her top.

Once my balls are empty, I reach out a hand for her. She rises on shaky legs and crawls back onto my lap, facing me, shimmying up until her head is tucked under my chin. By the time she settles, we’re both covered in my spend and I roll my eyes.

Aim put his cock away and fixed his clothes and now stands there with a happy little smile. I haven’t played with him in decades and he certainly didn’t expect this today.

“Thank you, Aim.” I dismiss him.

He bows his head once more and steps back. “Thank you, my lord. Lana,” he says before disappearing into a cloud of gray smoke.

I look down at my lamb. “Are you sleeping?”

“Yes,” she murmurs sleepily, wiggling a little bit to find a more comfortable position.

Page 39

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

She should rest. I have a feeling I will wear her out trying to distract myself from worrying about my son.

I kiss the top of her head and call for a servant to clean the floor.

Chapter 19 – Jessica

The Malebolge: The Trench of Evil Counselors

“Fuck, it’s getting hot again,” I whine. My armor is sticking to me and I’m crankier with each step.

“This trench is a fiery prison,” Itha murmurs after throwing me a sympathetic glance.

“The sinners are encased within cells made of fire.”

Groaning, I fight the urge to stomp my feet. Didn’t I read somewhere it was meant to be cold in Dante’s Hell? Why is the titty-sweat to perky-nipples ratio favoring the former?

Sariel pokes my side. “Why are you so crabby, poppet? It’s too soon for you to have your period again.”

I blow air out of my nose. “Why are you mansplaining my cycle to me, Sariel?”

He opens his eyes to a comical degree and makes a show of backing away from me with his hands up. “You’re right, none of my business.”

Shit. Now I'm mad because I feel guilty. Ithuriel's gloved hand lands on my shoulder and I'm so surprised that I don't even mind the extra warmth.

"You've seen nothing but misery and suffering for over a week, not to mention nearly suffered the sinner's fate yourself in a few of the trenches. It's expected that you feel on edge."

I deflate at his acceptance and look at Sariel from under my lashes. "Sorry, hotstuff."

He gives me a crooked grin, then eyes Itha's arm still resting on me, the leather of his gloves creaking as he subtly caresses me with his thumb. I bite my lip.

"Sure, sure," he says with a wave of his hand. "If you want to take it out on me in a naked wrestling match, I'm here for you."

Just like that, I'm laughing again.

"You're magic, Sar," I tell him with a wink. He looks taken aback for less than a second before his usual cocky grin is back.

"Took you long enough to realize, poppet."

Itha's arm disappears as he resumes walking and I immediately sense the loss of contact. Messed-up family aside, I never considered myself as having daddy issues. So why, for all that is unholy, is my mood depending on the attention of not one, but two males? Two very out-of-reach, forbidden males.

I groan again and Sariel chuckles. "Guess my magic didn't last very long then."

I pretend to stumble so I can bump into him. "Help me, oh, gallant knight," I exclaim. "For my buns are already golden brown in this oven."

Scoffing, he pushes me away, straight into the angel's embrace. "There's your knight. And your buns have seen nothing yet."

Ithuriel's breath caresses the back of my sweaty neck and an echo of pleasure blooms between my legs. "I'm afraid Sariel is correct," he says near my ear. "If I am not mistaken, and I find that I rarely am, we're about to walk into a flaming maze of sinners' prisons."

Sariel snorts. "You really know how to sweet-talk a girl, buddy."

I'm surprised when the angel doesn't utter his usual retort in the lines of 'I'm not your buddy, buddy' and just blushes. As his cheek is so close to mine, I can feel the warmth of the blood suffusing his face. It makes me want to lean back and fall asleep in his arms. There's just something so... safe about him.

"I'm not sweet-talking her," he murmurs, placing his arms on my shoulders as if to push me away. But he just holds me there.

Sariel raises an eyebrow. "Clearly," he says quietly, then spins to continue the way we were walking.

???

I observe the sweltering labyrinth of fire below us in awe. "Wow, you weren't kidding."

Sariel tugs on my drooping ponytail. "Feels like Lucifer himself made this trench, eh?"

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I look up at him with wide eyes. “Could he have? Do we know which big bad made which bolgia?”

Sadly, he shakes his head in negation. “Nah. And Ash never told me. Maybe he even forgot, who knows? Can’t be easy being older than the dinosaurs.”

I choke on an inhale. “My friend’s being boned by someone who’s older than T-Rex?”

My choice of words makes his grin reach his eyes for a change. “Again, who knows? He either won’t or can’t tell us how old he is either.”

“I don’t think I’d still bother with sex after a few thousand years.” I shrug. “I mean, it has to get boring right? I’d probably even get tired of pizza after a few hundred years of eating it every day, and I love pizza with a passion that cannot be contained.”

Sariel snorts while Ithuriel turns his eyes heavenward. I love teasing them. Their reactions are unique. Predictable but still enjoyable.

“I’d never let that happen, poppet.” Is he talking about pizza or sex? “If you ever feel like giving up on sex, call me and I’ll rock your world.”

I give him a droll look. “Do I dial oh eight hundred S-A-R-I-E-L?”

“No.” His smile turns smug. “Use smoke signals. Or Morse code. It’s dotdotdot-dotdash-dotdashdot-dotdot-dot-dotdashdotdot-dotdotdot-dash-dotdotdotdot-dotdashdotdotdot-dot-dotdotdot-dash-dot-dotdotdot-dash-dotdotdotdot-dashdotdotdot-

dot-dotdotdotdash-dot-dotdashdot.”

Ithuriel frowns disapprovingly, but the Morse code was too fast for my brain to catch up. “Wait, wait, wait! Do it again.”

The angel sighs. “Please, do not.”

Thankfully the Fallen doesn’t listen and this time I sound the letters out. “Sa... riel... is... the... best... lover? Lame.”

The best lover looks affronted. “It’s the truth. I did a survey and every single partner said ‘oh, oh, Sariel, right there, yes, you’re the best’ right before they came.”

I throw my head back and laugh, the sound drowning out the shrieks of the burning sinners in the trench below.

“I was told never to trust anything anyone says when in the throes of an org— wait, Itha, where are you going?”

“Away from you two Jezebels,” the departing angel throws over his shoulder.

Sariel chuckles and wraps his arm around me, the gesture as familiar as it is welcome after days in the trenches. “Don’t worry about him,” he says, tilting his chin toward the silver-haired beauty as we begin to follow. “Hey, how’d you know Morse code anyway?”

“I was a girl scout,” I say proudly, puffing out my chest.

The Fallen scoffs. “Of course, you were. Rich white chick. Gotta get those college credits while still in diapers.”

I pinch his arm, naked due to him wearing only his typical leather vest. I'll probably wish I was wearing less in a moment, too; the flames are getting closer with each step we take, overtaking the horizon.

"I'm over this place, Sar." I suddenly feel exhausted. Maybe it's heat exhaustion? "I feel like we've been in the Maleboge for months. You know we've hardly been eating since we're low on food and nothing freaking grows here except shit mushrooms."

He squeezes my shoulders with a chuckle just as Ithuriel drops back to join us at my other side. "We're almost through the trenches, Jessica," he soothes me with his clear, serious voice.

Sariel nudges me and I bump into the angel. "I know," he says. "What's the first thing you're gonna eat once we get to the human realm?"

It takes a moment for his words to penetrate – I haven't even been thinking about what's at the end of this proverbial tunnel, we've been so occupied with surviving it. "You mean, you have human money?"

The dark-haired trickster scoffs. "Do I have money? I'm one thousand five hundred years old. If I hadn't accumulated cash I'd be an idiot. Or an angel." He smirks at Itha who gives him a droll look.

"What would an angel do with money? We do not indulge in any human needs or pleasures."

As we reach a crossroads of flames, I have to intervene. "As much as I'd love to hear Sariel's sure-to-be funny answer to that question, I think we should start paying attention to where we're going, boys." I point to the flaming fork in the road. "Which way do we go? If we get lost in here, I'm gonna start taking bites out of you two."

Sariel ruffles my hair. “While you’ll definitely be taking us into that wicked mouth of yours, chewing hopefully won’t be involved.” The angel and I both blush, Itha muttering some choice epithets, while the Fallen continues. “No worries, though, I memorized the way while we stood above the trench.”

“So did I,” Ithuriel pipes in.

“Great,” I huff, swiping away a lock of hair that got stuck to my cheek. “Where to?”

“Left.”

“Right.”

Chapter 20 – Ithuriel

The Malebolge: The Trench of Sowers of Discord

I’m being haunted. Images of Sariel’s suffering after his fall are ripping my insides open. The sounds of Jessica’s pleasure echo in my ears, louder than any sinner’s lament. The dual assault is a punishment worse than any the demons who manifested these trenches could conjure up.

I’m possessed by a creature who longs to feel the soft skin of a Nephilim’s throat under their fingers, a creature who dares to close the Fallen’s mouth with their own.

I do not rest, I do not eat, I speak less with every passing day. I’ve been away from Heaven’s light too long, besieged by these temptations.

Father, I tried so hard not to look, not to hear, not to want. Not to feel.

“Itha?” A gentle whisper makes my heart grow wings and take flight. “I asked if you know where we are.”

Jessica plucks the crumbs of hard cheese from her lap and plops them into her mouth; we’re days without fresh food, and every morsel matters to her mortal body. I watch the way her reddish-blond hair sways, free from her usual tight ponytail for the

night. When she leans forward, the shirt she's wearing, the one that prevents her armor from chaffing as we move around Hell, stretches over her high, round breasts. There's a crumb stuck in the linen material there too.

"Ithuriel?" she calls my name again. I want to tell her not to bother whispering. Sariel is not truly sleeping, merely in a meditative, restorative state. Even our Celestial bodies are depleted after the trek in the steaming trench of earlier.

"Yes." I clear my throat of its hoarseness. "I know where we are." I tug the collar of my own shirt away from my sweaty neck. We're not far away from the flames yet. Or I'm not far away enough from my personal flames. The latter seems more likely with each passing day. Hope is leaving me and I can't help but dwell on the words of the future teller. Is my fall inevitable? "We're in the ninth and penultimate trench. The sinners here are being punished for causing strife and division. In death, they are being torn apart as they delighted in tearing apart lives when alive."

The sweet-faced girl presses a hand against the chest which my eyes stray to far too often. "You mean... body parts torn off?" She swallows and cringes, likely imagining the carnage ahead.

I nod, distracted by the deterioration of my thoughts. "The path through the trench will likely be littered with remains."

"But if they get quartered, how is the punishment eternal?"

Sariel speaks up from where he lies on his back, arms supporting his sinfully handsome head. A head I had never qualified as such while we still lived together in Heaven. "They grow back, of course," he drawls, drawing Jessica's gaze. His damp chest glistens in the orange haze of the sky and the Nephilim swallows, her eyes locked on it and glassy. "We wouldn't want the fun to be over too soon, would we?" he continues, seemingly oblivious to both of our stares.

“You consider watching torture day after day to be fun then?” I ask, my voice sounding hollow even to my own ears.

Sariel opens an eye and smirks. “Your high horse is about to throw you off, Ithuriel.”

“I have no idea what you’re on about,” I mutter and pull my sword into my lap to begin cleaning it.

“I’m sure,” he murmurs, then groans as he stretches and flips over onto his hands and knees. “Jessica,” he breathes. “You look like you’re wearing too much. And I’m bored.”

“Oh?” she gasps with a shaky voice.

“Oh,” Sariel confirms as he starts slinking toward her.

I slam my sword down between them.

“It seems you two are rested enough to continue.”

Jessica blushes as Sariel growls. “I’m getting real tired of your cockblocking, Captain Downy Fuzz.”

“Not as tired as I am of your preposterous behavior. If you had stayed put in your Father’s castle and engaged in your debauchery there, Jessica and I would have surely closed the rift by now and stopped the rest of the human culprits responsible for Armaros’ death.”

Jessica gasps at my words. “You don’t mean that, Itha!”

Sariel throws his head back and laughs, no joy in the sound, only the hollow ringing

of a death knell. “Look at you.” He shakes his head. “Redirecting your feelings of guilt and lashing out is something human children grow out of in their first decades.”

I feel heat spreading from my chest and up my neck. My teeth clench along with my fists and my grip on the sword turns shaky.

“Oh, do you want to hit me, angel?” the Fallen taunts. He brings his head close to mine. “Do you want to take out all those nasty feelings inside you, take it out on me?”

Page 42

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

Jessica's hand grips his shoulder. "Boys, it's this damned trench influencing you, don't fight again."

"That's a cop-out, poppet. Hewantsto hit me. It's either that or... do other things to me." Sariel grins, showing his even white teeth.

A growl rumbles up from my chest. "Hell has made you delusional."

The rascal clicks his tongue. "I see the way you look at me. At us."

Shame churns in my stomach and I drop my sword in favor of gripping my tormentor's neck. Jessica gasps my name, but I ignore her.

I pull him even closer and whisper: "Shut your lying mouth."

He blinks innocently, his lips twisted into a smug smile. "Why don't you shut it for me?" he breathes.

I pull back to rush forward and slam my... lips against his.

I don't know what I'm doing, but Sariel's soft mouth opens up to me on a groan and his tongue spears into my mouth to twine with mine. Damp, soft, and lightly textured, it rubs over the tip of mine, mating with it. My hands move into his hair, tugging on it rhythmically, my pelvis tilting up to the same beat. This isn't right.

As my grip on the Fallen's hair eases, he pulls back. Before I can devote a second of thought to what I had just done, he pulls Jessica closer and shoves her into my arms,

her mouth landing on top of mine. With a soft moan, she begins licking the traces of Sariel's wetness off my lips and chin.

My head spins as her nimble fingers travel under my shirt and up the planes of my stomach and chest, caressing every inch of my skin she can reach as fast as she can, like she fears it will be the only chance she gets to do so. And it should have been. I should push her away. Instead, I grab her hips and pull her into my lap, our pelvises flush against each other.

"That's it," Sariel whispers, and I open an eye to see him rubbing a soothing hand down the girl's back. I lose what's left of my sanity as Jessica starts grinding against me, Sariel's hands now on her hips to spur her along, biting his lip as he watches our pleasure.

With a wisp of black smoke, our clothes lie to the side, and Jessica's naked, wet sex presses against mine, hard and throbbing. A keening sound leaves my throat at the first sensation of flesh against flesh, at the forbidden touch of her petal-soft folds over the swollen head of my member.

"I should not," I groan, my hands sliding down to her waist, stopping where they encounter the fallen angel's grip on her sides.

"Please, Itha," Jess cries, making my heart crack open. "Please, I want you so much."

With those words, I damn my principles. I tip my head back and squeeze my eyes shut.

"Lift," I hear Sariel's murmur a second before I feel his firm, callused grip on my manhood. With a groan, he gives me two long, blood-heating pumps, as if he can't help himself from partaking, then he holds me at an angle until I feel Jessica's heat kiss my cockhead.

Though I do not have a soul, I can only describe what I feel as one leaving my body. Jessica's womanhood opens to take me inside, its silken grip encompassing increasing amounts of my needy flesh. My head spins as she sobs, and I bottom out, her hot breaths caressing my chest where she rests.

"Good, that's good," Sarel breathes. "You're inside her, Itha." His words make my penis pulse inside the Nephilim and she lets out a sound close to a purr. His lustful chuckle inflames me to a fever pitch. With a rustle of skin against skin, he embraces Jessica from behind, angling her atop me.

"She's gonna move now," he whispers before gently biting down on her neck. The girl arches up and my length leaves her with the movement, then she slides back down, gripping me inside her again. It feels like... Heaven.

"Rub your little clitty against him, love," he commands her, gripping her naked breasts with his tanned hands.

Helpless sounds leave my throat as the Nephilim begins the mating dance, lifting and then lowering herself over me repeatedly with the Fallen's assistance and praise.

"Itha," he calls for me. My eyes meet his, the black holes sucking what's left of me in. "Tilt your pelvis up."

I blink in my confusion.

"Trust me."

Trust him? He's the one orchestrating my downfall! But as Jessica's sheath clenches around me, I do as he commands, adjusting our angle, immediately rewarded by a new hitch in her breath.

“Mmm, yeah,” he praises, his breaths staccato. I can see his right arm pumping behind Jessica’s shoulders, his mouth open to accommodate his greater need for air. He is... pleasuring himself?

“I–I’m close,” Jessica says with awe in her voice.

“Fuck, yeah, you are,” Sarel growls, his arm moving faster, his breathing picking up speed. “You’re gonna come and he’s gonna flood you. Aren’t you, Starlight? You’re gonna flood our girl with your cum? Fill her up to the brim until it drips down her legs?”

My head is shaking in negation as he speaks, but my limbs start to tremble too, pulses of electricity traveling down my spine and between my legs.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“No, no, no,” I chant, my hands clenching reflexively on Jessica’s slim waistline, stopping her movements.

“Oh, Itha, you feel so good,” Jessica moans, wrapping her arms around my neck and bringing her forehead to mine. “I wanted this for weeks, more and more every day. You’re so handsome, and kind, and smart, and brave. I... I love you,” she whispers against my lips.

Tears glide down my cheeks and Jessica kisses them away one by one. Behind her, Sariel is frozen still, his mouth open at Jessica’s declaration. My hands open and close as I feel the last of my reluctance leave me in a painful schism, before I firmly grab her ass and jerk her against me, tipping my hips up at the same time, seating myself inside her to the hilt.

“Take your pleasure, sweetheart,” I whisper to her. “I want to make you feel good.”

She peppers my face with kisses, murmuring her thanks against my skin and we burst into motion again, Jessica frantically seeking her climax, Sariel’s arm pumping himself behind her as the other massages her swinging breasts, and me bucking my hips up to hit deep inside her.

The girl repeats the shortened version of my name like a prayer as her eyes roll back and her mouth drops open. Her head leans back against Sariel’s shoulder as she lets out a guttural shriek, her flesh squeezing and releasing mine rhythmically with her orgasm.

“Fuck, that’s hot,” Sariel gasps, leaning in so Jessica splays over my chest, his face

inches from mine. “Don’t stop fucking her.”

I frown at his crude words but my hips obey, still pressing my engorged member into the trembling mortal. Sariel’s free arm grabs the back of my head. “Come with me,” he snarls. I shake my head. “Yes, Itha, come with me,” he repeats. “Please, I’ve been dreaming about this for fifteen hundred years. Dreaming of making you feel good like this.”

My mouth falls open as my breath catches in my throat. I feel every inch of my body tingle with heat.

“Ah!” I shout, just as my manhood explodes with pleasure, every muscle in my body freezing. The exhausted girl between us moans weakly as she feels my spend hitting her sensitive channel, and Sariel roars at the skies, the tendons on his neck bulging as something wet and warm splashes on my legs. It’s his seed, marking Jessica’s flesh, marking mine, marking us as his. His to debauch, his to corrupt.

His to own.

Chapter 21 – Sariel

The Malebolge: The Trench of Sowers of Discord

Idid it. I made the angel forsake his life and fall from grace. I took my revenge in the sweetest possible way, free to finish what I started and twist the knife as he comes to the realization that he will no longer be welcome in Heaven.

So why does the lifeless expression on his face twist the knife in me instead? Why is the hopeless look in his eyes more painful than those years of being the demons’ toy until Ash took me in and gave me the confidence to walk in Hell not as a pawn, but a ruler?

I see him trying to avoid hurting the girl's feelings by giving her the cold shoulder. At first, they walked hand-in-hand, but at a distance. Now, their bodies touch with each step, like they can't get enough of the contact. She clings to his side, gazing up at him with a lovestruck expression, just a bit too delulu with the post-orgasm glow to see the male is in a crisis.

Thankfully, the appearance of severed limbs and strewn body parts gives me the excuse I need to stop thinking about this shit. Two sinners shuffle past, one holding his severed head in his fingerless hands, the other missing her arms altogether and Jess cringes back to collide with me.

I gently grab her trembling shoulders. Sometimes I forget there are still occupants of Hell who are unused to such macabre scenes. "Wanna hop on and ride me?" I ask in a whisper. She looks up at me with a raised eyebrow and I expel a huffed laugh. "On my back, poppet, not my dick."

With a roll of her blue eyes, she nods and gestures for me to lean down. Itha's just standing there, looking awkward as fuck, his eyes bouncing between the two lovers he just fucked and the two dismembered sinners, obviously not knowing which sight he prefers less.

Once Jess is secured, I slap his back and take the lead. "Come on, Starlight, let's get out of this shithole."

An hour later, my pants and boots are smeared with gore knee-high, Jess threatens to puke on me for the fiftieth time, and Ithuriel studiously avoids acknowledging that he just stepped in a pile of entrails.

"Who's that huge demon up ahead?" Jess asks over the squelch of Itha's foot dislodging from the trap of guts.

I don't have to look to know who she means. "He has no known name," I tell her. "He doesn't speak, just acts as the bolgia's executioner, cutting these sinners."

Itha takes over. "Tearing them apart as they tore apart families, countries, religions."

He speaks.

Inwardly rolling my eyes, I steady the angel before he falls face-first into a puddle of blood. Okay, he's way too graceful to fall, I just wanted an excuse to touch him. I had my hand on his dick for all of five seconds and I can still feel its imprint on my skin, still want it inside me like it was inside of Jessica, pumping out its first load. I normally prefer to top, but for this angel, I'd bend over right here in this abattoir.

Surprisingly, he doesn't flinch away and his gloved hand grazes mine. That simple touch is enough to have precum spurt into my pants. Fuck, I'm pathetic.

Angry at myself, I stride forward with Jess still clinging to my back, ignoring the demon in the center of the trench. His ochre skin stretches over a brutally muscled frame, the heavy weight of his enormous cock swinging between his legs with every strike of his gargantuan sword.

I know when the Nephilim notices the gigantic appendage as her breath catches in her throat on a gasp. "Holy mother of sausages," she whispers in my ear.

I cackle. "I bet size suddenly does matter, eh poppet?"

Page 44

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

Ithuriel sighs behind us. “Don’t be vu—”

“Yeah, yeah,” I interrupt. “I’ll show you vulgar when I slurp your dick down like it’s a straw in my mango and passionfruit bubble tea.”

The angel sputters. “I– I have no idea what you just said.”

Oh, you know enough.

“Can I watch?” the little vixen purrs.

“No.” I shake my head. “You’ll be too busy sucking me off while Itha buries his face in your juicy cunt. We’re gonna make our own human centipede.”

Jessica gags and I can’t hold back my laughter.

“You didntjust say that!” she shrieks, drawing the executioner demon’s attention away from the stumbling sinners.

“Howdy!” I wave at him.

“Stop that!” Itha hisses. Spoilsport.

Suddenly, the demon charges, his target our angel companion, his massive jagged sword raised high.

“Fuck!” I growl, tapping Jessica’s leg to let her know she needs to dismount and arm

herself. Ithuriel's sword is already in his hands, the cleanest object in this filth-covered butchery.

As the demon reaches us, he flaps his ragged wings, the gust of air knocking Jess back on her ass. Hissing, I cover her, while Itha takes the first blow, a brutal downward strike, clearly aiming to cleave the angel in half, like he's used to doing to the sinners. Itha dodges in the last possible moment and the sheer force of the blow cracks open the ground where he was standing just a second ago. Shards of bone and rock fly from the impact area, pebbling my wings as I summon and spread them to protect our girl.

The demon takes another overhead swing, but twists the blade mid-motion, slashing sideways.

"Itha!" I scream, reaching my hand for him as if I could pull him away from the blow. The angel stumbles back, the tip of the demon's greatsword cutting a line into his mighty armor, splitting open his pale skin. He then grabs my Starlight's throat, lifting him off the ground. His claws must be as hot as molten metal, because Ithuriel's skin starts sizzling and smoking at the point of contact.

Just as I summon my axe, the demon slams my angel onto the ground, cracking the stone beneath them. As Ithuriel lies unmoving, an unholy growl releases from my throat.

I hurl my weapon into the demon's side, aiming for his ribs. The axe embeds itself into the demon's dirty ochre skin and the beast roars in pain.

"That's right, motherfucker!" I spit. "You're in for a world of hurt!"

I sprint at the executioner, grabbing onto the axe's hilt with both hands and using the momentum of my body to dislodge it from between the demon's ribs, swinging to the

ground and landing on my feet. I throw a glance at the immobile angel before I launch another assault on the monster who dared to hurt him. As I aim for the legs and neck, Jessica joins the fight.

“Get away!” I yell at her. One hit of the demon’s massive fists and she’d be dead.

“No way!” she shouts back, darting around our nemesis. “If he gets to you too, I’m fighting him alone anyway.”

Growling, I start swinging faster, not allowing the demon a moment of respite during which he could turn on the human girl. There’s no way I’m letting her get killed now. Not when I haven’t fucked her yet. Not when she means so much to Itha. To... me.

As the demon leans down to charge me, the mortal jumps onto his back, her scimitar driving into the base of his skull. My mouth opens in shock. I knew the humans could fight; I sparred with Lana enough times to see it for myself. But damn, the Fallen of Purgatory clearly trained all of them to be badass.

I spin at the last moment, avoiding being crushed by the falling demon, Jessica’s scimitar sticking out like a conqueror’s flag. She blows the wild strands of her hair out of her eyes and places her hands on her hips.

“I guess I saved your asses this time, eh?”

I whistle a low tune. “Fuck yeah, you did.”

Sobering, she runs to the prone angel. “Itha!” she gasps, crouching over him to pat the side of his face. He coughs, silvery blood spilling out the side of his mouth.

Damn it. He’s going to need to phase to his ethereal form.

“His organs are crushed,” I tell the mortal. “He needs to turn incorporeal, and when he does, he’ll likely not have the strength to return to a human form until we reach topside.”

Jessica’s lower lip trembles and her fingers flutter in the air above the angel once blood begins to spill from his nose and ears too, not knowing where to touch him.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I crouch down and grab his chin. “Look at me,” I command. “I said, look at me.” I shake him to the sounds of Jess’ protests.

“Why are you so rough?” she asks.

“He needs to hurry the fuck up,” I growl. “He’s incredibly vulnerable like this.”

Itha’s eyes open and he struggles to focus on our faces. Once he comes to the realization that the damage his form sustained is critical, he stubbornly looks at the mortal.

“I won’t let anything happen to her,” I promise. “But if you delay much longer, it’ll be just me and her in the human world, and the first thing I’m doing is taking her to a brothel.”

Even gravely injured, Itha manages to roll his pale gray eyes at me. With one last look at the mortal girl, he turns into pearlescent gray beams of light, the radiance of him reflecting in Jessica’s wide-open, enamored orbs.

This time I roll my eyes. Dusting myself off, I help her stand up too. She’s still gazing at him as I pick up my weapon and flick the demon’s blood off it.

“Can you talk to us?” she asks Ithuriel, her voice dazed. I forgot what effect the angelic form has on humans – it’s been so long since we revealed ourselves to any, even before I fell.

After a beat of hesitation, Itha’s voice rings in our minds.

Yes.

“Woah.” She grabs her head and I snort.

Are you both unharmed?

“Yup,” I answer, wishing he had a back I could slap him on. “You generously offered your body as a punching bag so we could take him down. Actually,” I correct myself, “Jessica took him down, I just distracted him once you stopped moving and being an interesting target.”

Ithuriel’s tendrils of light pulse twice as if in pleasure.

Well done, Jessica.

Why am I suddenly jealous of a baby human?

“Aw, I got lucky.” She waves off the praise. “Is it dead?”

“No,” I hum, pulling her scimitar out of the bottom of the demon’s skull with a squelch. I wipe it off on one of his tattered wings. “In fact, he’s gonna be up pretty damn quick, so we might wanna move.”

“Can I touch you?” Jess asks Ithuriel, ignoring me, still gazing at the angel like a lovestruck fool.

I snort and tug on her ponytail. “In-cor-po-re-al,” I sound out. I kiss her cheek and linger, enjoying the heat of her blush against my lips. “You’ll have to do with me until we’re Above, babe.”

As we stand there embraced, Ithuriel sends his light to wrap around our arms and

legs, twining with us until all we see is a glow I know is reminiscent of Heaven. His way of hugging us now.

Chapter 22 – Jessica

The Malebolge: The Trench of Falsifiers

The last of the clean water ran out yesterday and I'd be lying if I said I wasn't scared. What if it takes longer than another day to reach the end of the trenches? What if... what if we're wrong? What if there is no portal to the human world on the other side? What if we have to walk all the way back to the entrance of the Malebolge – I don't think I can survive the trek without water.

“Why so gloomy, kiddo?” Sarel asks as we follow in Ithuriel's wake through the final trench.

“I'm thinking about how long a human can survive without water. Was it two or three days? Do you know?”

He purses his lips. “No idea. But I do know that I can give you a drink right here, right now, if you're up for a blowie.”

I give him a deadpan look. That was vile and pervy and... totally him. Ithuriel's light flashes like a lightning storm.

“Oh, my,” Sarel drawls. “I do believe our boy would knock me onto my ass now if he could have. Only question is, if he'd ride it after, give it a good beating.”

We are wasting time listening to your preposterous ideas for a solution. We set out to save humanity but are failing to keep one alive.

Page 46

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

Sariel pokes my side. “I’m just trying to distract our poppet. Hop on, sweet cheeks.” He turns his back to me. “I’ll do the legwork for you.”

Sighing with relief, I hop onto the Fallen Express. “I’m gonna miss this when we’re out of here,” I say, nuzzling the side of his face.

“Who says we can’t make this your regular mode of transportation?” he purrs, nuzzling me right back.

“W–well,” I stutter. Does he mean he wants to see me even after we’re done with what we set out to do? “Once our mission is over, we won’t really see each other.” I can’t help the wistful note in my voice.

Great, I’m turning into a stage five clinger and the male hasn’t even fucked me yet.

“Won’t we?” he muses, then begins to whistle a merry tune.

What the Hell is that supposed to mean? But he’s not the only one I’m going to miss after we’re done.

“Itha?” I call for the angel hesitantly.

Yes, dear heart?

I melt into a puddle all over the Fallen’s back. No more water shortage.

I try to form my next question as delicately as possible. I know what we did, being

intimate, closed the doors of Heaven for him. And I feel guilty, I do, but I'm also a selfish bitch because I love him and don't want to say goodbye. I'm clearly not as strong as Sariel was a thousand years ago when he fell rather than acted on his urges.

"Will you stay with me when we're done? In Purgatory?"

The angel pauses for a moment, like a human missing a step, but Sariel speaks before he can answer me.

"No. He won't."

My heart sinks into my stomach. "W-what? Why not?" And why am I stuttering so much all of a sudden?

"You heard me," Sariel says, his voice unyielding.

"Why are you being like this?" I whisper, not bothering to hide the hurt. I squirm for him to let me go, but he tightens his grip and turns his head to give me a warning glare. It's only now I realize how much his demeanor has changed over the weeks, how much he warmed up to us.

Let us focus on leaving this place whole and fast. Our path is about to become perilous to navigate.

Once Itha says the words, I start smelling the putrid stench of rot and decay.

"Ugh, what is that?" It's as bad as the trench of poop.

"We're in the trench of falsifiers," Sariel says as if that's an explanation. When I let my silence speak for itself, he continues. "The sinners here are punished by deteriorating mentally and physically, much like their lies corrupted humanity when

they were alive.”

I scrunch my nose. “So, they’re just... rotting away?”

“Let’s just say you’re gonna be glad I’m carrying you in a minute.”

Sariel wasn’t wrong. Soon, the ground is littered with writhing figures, their bodies in various advanced stages of decay, their abused throats emitting agonized rasps as they crawl over each other. The Fallen is hard-pressed to find a clear spot to step on.

“Can you fly up, Itha?” I ask the angel still floating next to us. There’s no point in him enduring this rancid smelly miasma too.

I’m uncertain of the extent of the curse, but rather err on the side of caution and predict the archdemons who created this place wouldn’t allow Celestials to float around in their ethereal form any more than they’d allow flying. Especially if the Celestial in question is an angel.

Fallen angel, I think, but don’t say it out loud. Does Heaven already know they’re one short in their ranks?

Why would he give up an eternity of living in the light to muck among the corpses with us? He didn’t say ‘I love you’ back, but, surely, he must? Surely it wasn’t just lust? Ugh, I hate my inner doubts. Shut up, you nasty cow, I tell the voice that’s always criticizing me, always raining on my parade.

I’m distracted by the sinners’ screams as they claw at their own flesh, causing the boils covering it to erupt in rancid pus. Some of the bodies are swollen and bloated, and I dread witnessing them burst, seeing what comes out, or worse, smelling it.

My nose twitches and itches. In fact, everything is starting to burn a bit. I squirm

against Sarel's back, trying to scratch the spreading itch.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“What are you doing, poppet? It’s not the time for a bump and grind.”

“I’m just... so damn itchy!” I growl, letting go of his neck to scratch mine.

Stop for a moment, Sarel.

The tone of Itha’s incorporeal voice gives me pause. Something’s clearly wrong.

“What is it?” I ask. “What’s happening?” God, I would kill for a sip of water.

Itha’s lights flash alarmingly and Sarel rumbles with frustration.

“Fuck. We need to hurry.”

With that, the fallen angel picks up the pace, no longer caring if he steps on a sinner’s rotten face, gracefully keeping his balance even with me anchoring him down.

“Is someone gonna tell me what’s wrong?” I shout, the speed at which we’re traveling whisking the words away. But the angels hear me.

You are decaying.

“I’mwhat?” I shriek, bringing one hand up to inspect it. What I see makes the breath leave my lungs. Sinister black veins are spreading over my skin like ghoulish webbing.

“Sar,” I whine, my voice like a lost child’s.

His jaw muscles tick against my cheek as he clenches his teeth. “I’ve got you, sweetheart. We’re not gonna let anything happen to you,” he vows.

Sinners protest as his heavy, booted steps stomp over their squishy bodies, some yelling out, some only mustering a groan. All the while, I watch in terror as boils start appearing on my skin.

“I don’t want to end up like them,” I whisper. The agony, the indignity of such an end...

We will not allow that.

Minutes pass, or maybe hours, until, finally, the layer of sinners underfoot begins to thin.

“Itha, over there,” Sariel murmurs to the angel.

I see it.

“What?” I question. “Is it the portal?” I’m not above praying, even though we’re as far from Heaven as we can get down here.

“Yes.”

“Ugh, that’s the sweetest thing you’ve ever said to me,” I sigh into his hair. I’m so very tired, it feels like my neck can’t keep my head up anymore.

“I’ll scream it for you later. Just hang on.” He sounds so worried. Could give a girl butterflies.

“M’... hangin’ on,” I mumble. It’s hard to hang on though. My arms hurt so much.

Every step Sarel takes rubs them against his leather vest and it feels like my skin is getting stuck to it and peeling off with the movement.

“You have to hang on, Jess,” he repeats. Am I not hanging on?

I will enter first and see that it’s safe.

I crack my eyes open and see the rift to the human realm. Jagged and flickering, it pulses like a wound struggling to stay open. It’s also freezing cold. Or is that just me?

“Hurry,” Sarel urges the angel. Either the void is spreading and taking over the world, or the edges of my vision are turning black.

With a flash of light, Ithuriel’s gone, and I’m left alone with the pacing fallen angel. I try to speak, but it feels like swallowing shards of glass.

“We’re almost there,” he whispers softly. My arms finally lose the last of their strength and I start sliding down his back. Faster than lightning, he turns and sweeps me up into his arms.

“Stay with me, baby girl,” he pleads. I want to ask him if he cares whether I live or die. A part of me wants to know if my death will matter to him, just a little bit, if he’ll mourn me like he mourned his friend, Armaros.

Page 48

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

Ithuriel returns with a whoosh.

It is safe. An alleyway in a human city. There are rats and it smells of urine so it took me a moment to ascertain I'm not still in Hell.

It's weird that Sariel doesn't snort at the angel's humor. I would if I could. But I don't get to question it for too long. Darkness pulls me in.

Part Two

Chapter 23 – Ithuriel

Paris

Sariel hovers over the unconscious mortal whose flesh cleared up the moment we left the Malebolge.

Once we got to the other side, he said: "That's the Eiffel Tower, you dolt, how did you not know this is Paris?" Perhaps I knew it, perhaps I didn't. He then proceeded to instruct me to return to my mortal form and, after we easily closed the rift which remained invisible to the human eye for years, led me to the apartment he keeps in Montmartre. Likely for its proximity to the Moulin Rouge.

"Why isn't she waking up?" he asks now, standing next to the bed where the mortal lies, his hands on his hips.

"Her body went through a lot and, unlike me, she didn't get a burst of power just by

leaving Hell.” I place my hand on his shoulder and squeeze it gently. “We washed her, we helped her take some water. Let her rest and recover from the ordeal.”

He turns slowly and his downcast eyes rise to meet mine. “You’re sure she’ll be okay?”

I slide my trembling hand down to his waist. I never touched anyone like this before, casual yet proprietary. He might own me, but I own him as well, whether he knows it or not.

“I know it,” I finally answer his question.

“Itha...” he begins. “You gave up everything you are for her.”

I’m shaking my head before he even finishes his thought. “I gave up half of what I am for the both of you. The other half died when you left me.” I tilt my head. “By my calculations, with the two of you, I’m now finally whole.”

Silver tears well up in Sariel’s eyes and his lower lip twitches before he digs his teeth into it to keep it still. A primal instinct takes over and I use my thumb to release the tortured flesh. My eyes locked on his endless ones, I bring my thumb to my mouth and lick off his saliva, eliciting a shuddering moan from my... lover. No longer merely a friend.

My manhood hardens at the thought, and I grab his waist firmly with both hands before pulling him flush against my body. With a sigh, I capture his lips with mine. Firm, but yielding, they glide against mine for a moment, before they part and allow me to conquer his mouth.

His hands dig into my behind as he insistently tugs me closer, rhythmically grinding our pelvises together to the same beat as the battle between our tongues. He then

walks us to the other side of the bed, pushes me down onto the soft mattress, and follows.

“What are we doing?” I ask breathlessly, my eyes swinging between the male above me and the sleeping female at my side.

Not immediately answering, Sarel leans back and tugs off his vest. I’m already in my linen underclothes, having not bothered to put the plate armor on after we cleaned ourselves. His muscular chest, lovingly illuminated by the moonlight from the window, begs for my touch.

“What we should have done a thousand years ago,” he finally murmurs, before capturing my mouth and trailing his down my chin, over my jaw, and to my neck, where he gently sucks on my skin. “You’re going to make love to me.”

I shudder as his words penetrate me and sink in, feeling so right. I was blind, but now I see. This is my future, the people in this bed, they were always meant to share it.

“Show me how,” I moan, massaging the nape of his head and pressing him against my chest.

He lifts his gaze to smirk at me. “I’ll show you everything. And together we’ll make this girl the happiest female in every realm.”

I gaze at the sleeping beauty, my lips curling into a smile of contentment. Then a thought hits me and I gasp.

“What is it?” Sarel asks and when I turn back to him, wide-eyed, I see he’s frowning with concern.

“When I made love to Jessica in the bolgia... we... culminated.”

His frown turns into a wild grin. “Yes, yes you did.”

I shake my head impatiently. “No, I mean... we mated.”

Sariel’s eyes narrow before he rolls them at me. “For the love of cinnamony French toast, Itha – just say you gave her a creampie.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

Heat spreads over my chest and up my neck before reaching my cheeks. “I finished inside her, we did not use any of the mortals’ protection methods.”

“Oh.” He bites his lower lip. “Oh,” he groans again, thrusting against me. “Fuuuck, I’m gonna come in my pants if I keep thinking of our baby inside her.” He shakes his head as if to clear it of the thoughts, but now they’ve gone to mine, and my member twitches, wetness dribbling out of the tip.

“Our baby?” I ask on a moan. “It would not matter to you who the father is?”

“Fuck no,” he breathes. “I’ve just decided she’s gonna be pregnant every year and may the best love juice win. I fully intend on giving Uncle Asmo a run for his money in the baby-making department.” He leans down and takes my nipple into his mouth. My head falls back on a groan. “I hope she’s already pregnant,” he finishes when he stops the torture to my areola.

“Me too,” I voice my blasphemous wish. I want to be tied to her forever.

“For now, though,” he says, then flips us over until I’m on top. Our clothes disappear. “Practice making babies on me.”

My now naked cock spurts more fluid between our bodies. Why are his crass words so arousing?

Sariel leans over to the nightstand and opens the drawer. He produces a shiny bottle, shakes it, uncaps it, and pours the contents into his waiting palm. With a lascivious look, he holds my gaze and brings the hand to my penis. As the liquid hits my erect

manhood, my back arches uncontrollably.

“W—what’s that for?” I ask, stuttering.

The Fallen smirks. “Well, unfortunately, males don’t self-lubricate. But if we did, trust me, I’d be wet for you.”

“I—I know that,” I mutter, the impact of the words diminished by my continued stutter as his hand wraps around me and he starts spreading the viscous lubricant over every inch of my manhood. I can’t help thrusting up into his grip. “But I will be the one to...” I trail off.

“Fuck me, Itha? Yes.”

My stomach clenches at the thought of taking possession of him like that. I know I should think it’s wrong, God, I do.

Seemingly satisfied with the state of my member, Sarel pushes me away until he can lift both of his legs up, exposing his back entrance to me. I swallow convulsively at the sight of the tight, puckered hole. I knew how men showed other men their love, but never gave thought to how it must feel for them to see their partners in such a way. To sink into them and find pleasure in their bodies.

“You’re gonna have to prep me.”

I blink at Sarel. “I don’t know how.”

He beckons for my hand. Once I extend it, he places the bottle onto my palm. “Drizzle it over my hole, then press it in.”

I shake my head, looking at the bottle like it might bite me. “What if I hurt you?” I

ask, my voice shaky.

The rascal smirks. "I can take it."

Blowing out a great gust of air, I finally uncap the bottle and tip it over his exposed privates. It drizzles over his throbbing penis, tight balls, and down the crack of his ass to my destination. Once he's covered, I carefully close the bottle, buying myself time, and place it on the nightstand. With one more deep breath, I extend a finger to the tight ring, under his patient gaze. I test the give, then carefully press inside. Sariel grunts and I pull back.

"Did I hurt you?" I ask, holding my hand in front of my chest like it's a beast that needs to be controlled.

"Hell no," he groans. "Do it again. Add a finger. Add two."

My eyes widen at his request. Hesitantly, I return to my task and reinsert the first one, then add the other like he wanted. It's so tight. How will my manhood fit in here?

My question must be written on my face because he answers it: "It's gonna fit, Starlight. It was made for it."

I nearly bowl over with the punch of lust to my stomach at hearing those words. I add a third finger with more confidence, stretching his hole for me.

"Is that okay?" I ask, slowly pumping my fingers in and out.

"Ugh, fuck, yes, fuck," he replies and the corners of my lips tilt up. I feel so powerful in this moment. "Get in there," he whines and my mouth splits with a full-blown smile. He wants this, he wants me.

Positioning myself over him, I grab my slicked-up member and place the tip at the tight rosebud. “You are certain?” I ask, unable to completely banish all my self-doubt.

In answer, Sarel lets go of his thighs and grabs my behind, pulling me to him until the tip of my cock slides home.

“Mmm,” we both moan, him deeper, mine coming out more high-pitched. This is the second time I enter a lover’s hot body, but it feels so different from making love to Jessica. I’m scared. Scared of hurting him, scared of what I’m feeling. This is Sarel underneath me, taking me inside him. My Sarel.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“My Sariel,” I say out loud, unable to hold it in. I slide an inch deeper.

“My Itha,” he replies, pulling my face down for a soft kiss. As he does, my cock bottoms out in his ass and he hisses against my lips. “Mmm, so fucking good,” he grunts. “You’re perfect, Itha,” he praises me next.

I’m trembling, overwhelmed by our connection and by the sensations originating in my groin. Our tongues clash as I instinctively begin moving in a dance as old as time, claiming my love. My sack hits his round ass each time I bottom out, and each time I pull out I feel the tight ring of his opening milking me. I don’t think I’ll last long.

Just as I have the thought, Sar speaks up. “Change your angle. Fuck, that’s it, just like that. Faster,” he commands.

“I’m... close,” I grit through clenched teeth.

My words are followed by a muffled moan to my right. Our eyes turn and we take in Jessica, one hand covering her mouth, the other between her legs. “Don’t stop,” she breathes after removing her hand. “I’m so close too.”

“You’re both so fucking hot,” Sariel growls, then digs his hands into my flesh, urging me on.

Less than a dozen pumps later, I’m keening into Sariel’s wide-open mouth as my spend floods his tight tunnel. I feel Sariel erupting between our bodies, deep growls leaving his throat in time with the spurts of liquid. Jessica sobs at our sides, chanting our names as she rides her own climax.

“Welcome... to the city of love,” Sarel says haltingly between ragged breaths.

Chapter 24 – Jessica

Paris

Can’t believe I’m having coffee and croissants in Paris’ artsy district. After four years in Hell, though, I’d even take Death Valley. Heck, I’d take a burnt ‘Bucks drip from a drive-thru.

“So you don’t think the bad people are here in Paris?” I ask Sarel, wiping a crumb off my chin and sighing with contentment.

“Bad people? What are you, five?” He shakes his head and tugs on my ponytail.

After watching the hottest live sex show ever and fifteen more hours of sleep, I spent two hours in Sarel’s bathtub, scrubbing every inch of myself in the world’s bubbliest bubble bath.

“But, no,” he continues, his gaze now on the angel with us – not having any coffee, but observing the throng of tourists and the art displays – so handsome in his borrowed human clothing. “The compound where Arma... their compound was in the south of France. We heard intel about a warehouse in Marseille and were about to check it out when... yeah.”

I place my hand on top of the Fallen’s, his eyes hidden by opaque sunglasses. I have no idea how they managed to go unnoticed from wherever the rift was to Sar’s apartment in filthy armor and carrying an unconscious woman. His broken speech and effort to avoid mentioning Armaros’ death out loud show me how raw the wound still is for him. I heard from Lana that they were more than just friends.

On my other side, Itha grabs Sariel's shoulder, completing the circle. A young woman from the neighboring table throws us a curious glance before turning back to her book. I squint to read the title. Their Darkest Desire by Amaya Jax. I've read that – Lana has Maalik bringing all sorts of smut down to Purgatory for years. If the woman only knew paranormal creatures are already right next to her.

“What is the best way to get to Marseille?” Itha asks, breaking the silence. “I don't think flying is possible among humans anymore. Their technology is too advanced.”

I shake my head. “Hell, no. We'd be on the news before you could say ‘They are among us – call Mulder and Scully.’”

Sariel smirks. “She's right; they'd think aliens way before angels. E.T.'s on the TV way more than Jesus.”

“So that leaves us with...? Isn't Marseille on the other side of France?” I chew on my bottom lip, mentally preparing for an all-night road trip. Though I bet Sariel owns some sexy cars, if his luxury apartment is anything to go by.

“If we take the TGV, we'll be there in three hours,” he says as if it's already decided.

“What is the TGV?” Itha asks and I nod along with the question.

“It's the bullet train here. It's fast as fuck, comfortable, there's food and the view doesn't suck either.”

So, it's decided. After two more coffees, as befits an addict as deprived as I was, we take the metro to Gare de Lyon. I love listening to Sariel speak French. While I had French at school and passed the classes, he uses it like he was born here. I guess it makes sense since he was around at its inception. If anyone finds it weird that the two men with me are wearing sunglasses in the underground metro, they don't show it.

Everyone seems to be minding their own business.

Sariel finds two empty seats and pulls me into his lap, patting the other for Itha to join. I tip the angel's chin up and lean down to give him a soft kiss. After a few seconds, I can feel Sar hardening under my ass. It's gonna be awkward when we get up.

"We should come here once we're done," I whisper against Ithuriel's lips. "If Maalik and Daniel will let me. Head up to the Eiffel Tower. Visit the catacombs. Oh, and I always wanted to see Versailles and the Louvre." I squirm in excitement, making Sariel grunt a warning. Flushing, I freeze, looking around to see if we're drawing any gazes. Surprisingly, no one cares that we're an obvious threesome.

I take a longer look at the people around us. I'm not sure how I feel being surrounded by just normal humans, no leather armor, no weapons, no orange glow of Hell. I always thought I'd be overwhelmed by emotion if I could come back here. Now, I think I'm so anchored by the two angels with me that my feelings don't have a chance to drag me away. Before them, I was afloat in Detroit, afloat in Hell, and would have been afloat here too.

Sariel interrupts my thoughts by squeezing my thigh. "We have to change lines at the next stop."

Page 51

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

We shuffle back up to the surface, preferring a slightly longer walk on ground level, to a shorter one in the underground passages. We've all spent long enough without the human sky.

But I almost regret the decision halfway to the next station. Just as we're walking past a famous sandwich chain, I do a double-take and nearly run into Itha as my head's on a swivel.

"Did that woman... just lift her skirt to pee right there?"

Sariel covers my eyes and pushes me onward. "Sometimes the human world is as bad as Hell, poppet."

Ain't that the truth.

"I guess that explains these squiggles of dried liquid over the ground." I wrinkle my nose.

"The tourist areas are much nicer," Sariel promises. "And you'll love Provence. It's warm, smells like herbs... and overpriced soap. There's fields of lavender, like something from a screensaver. Those make the place smell like a fancy candle. There's lots of rosé and overpriced food. But don't worry, I'll be your sugar daddy." He winks at me before bopping my nose.

I sigh wistfully. I haven't smelled nice things in too long. "It sounds like Heaven," I say.

Itha scoffs. “There are no violent humans in Heaven.”

I bug my eyes out and look to Sar for an explanation.

“Well, there’s a lot of drug and gang-related violence in Marseille. I’m guessing Belial’s cultists fit right in.”

Huh. No wonder Simone high-tailed it out of there. She told us she was from New Orleans and no one questioned her French accent. She was always skittish, like she was running away from something and it hit us that much harder when she disappeared and we thought she was dead.

Though it turned out she was kidnapped by another archdemon, Asmodeus, and became his baby momma. I need the story there like I need air. And these hotter than Hell – pun intended – archdemons need to stop going all *veni vidi vici* on our soldiers. Though Kevin, another teammate, got accosted by a succubus. Last I knew, he was still moping around Abaddon, missing her. I wonder if he admitted it to her yet – or at least himself.

“Earth to Jessica,” Sarel murmurs into my hair. “Where were you?”

“In a soap opera.” I smirk at my own wittiness. If you can’t amuse yourself, what’s even the point? Grinning, I hold my hand out for Ithuriel to hold. We may be heading into danger, but right now I’m in (mostly) beautiful Paris, with subjectively the hottest two males on the planet.

Chapter 25 – Sarel

Marseille

“Why do I always pull the short straw for these fast food runs?” I pout at my lovers

from my perch on Ithuriel's chest. We're in bed, I'm lying belly-down with my chin resting on Itha's torso and Jessica is just a couple of inches away, cuddled up against his side.

"I don't eat," the angel murmurs, eyes closed seemingly peacefully. But I've noticed his sadness when our poppet isn't looking.

"And I have social anxiety," she chirps, nuzzling the angel's neck.

We've been in Marseille for a few days now and this is the first night we're resting together like this. None of us have the energy for even a quickie, least of all Jess with her mortal body. A body that needs food.

"I promised you five-course meals with views of lavender fields. So far I dragged you through the port and fed you Micky D's. I'm a shit sugar daddy," I sigh.

As soon as we got to Marseille, we hit Les Terrasses du Port for some more clothes for Jess – I didn't want her wearing the cast-offs of random chicks and escorts Arma and I entertained in our Paris apartment. While we were there, we encountered several Cambion mortals – all male – and decided to follow them. Unsurprisingly, they led us into the sketchier side of the port. We've been spying on them since, and only now took a break to shower and for Jess to sleep in a bed and not in one of our laps. Though she ended up sprawled over us anyway.

"Well, you got us this nice Airbnb," she soothes, her palm resting on my cheek. I turn my head to kiss the center of it.

"Yeah, nothing says romance like making your girlfriend sleep in dirty warehouses," I mock our situation.

Jess' eyes round and her mouth pops open. "What did you call me?" she breathes.

I grin at her surprise. “Did you think I’d let just anyone sleep on me so rats don’t nibble on her toes?”

“But you...” she hesitates.

“But I what?” I prompt, pushing myself up to have a better view of her face.

“When I asked Itha if he’ll stay with me in Purgatory you got all mad. I thought you didn’t want me around you two.” She bites her lower lip as tears well up in her eyes.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“What the fuck?” I explode.

“Language,” Itha rumbles, observing our conversation with interest in his pearlescent gray eyes.

“Oh, shut it, pigeon boy.” I lightly punch his arm. “For days, our girl was under the impression that I didn’t want her with us, that deserves an f-bomb or two.” Crawling over the angel, I push Jess onto her back and drop down on top of her as she squeals. “I meant he’s not going to be staying in Abaddon with those stuffy pricks because you’re not going to be staying in Abaddon with those stuffy pricks.”

“What do you mean?” she asks innocently.

“I mean that you’ll both be staying with me, in my villa in Uncle Asmo’s territory by the Lethe, of course,” I say as if it should have been obvious to her. Thinking back, I could’ve maybe elaborated sooner.

“We are?” Her lower lip trembles enticingly.

I lower my lips to the side of her neck and lick a path up to her ear. “You are,” I whisper into it. “I have no intention of going days without fucking you.”

At that moment, her stomach rumbles loudly, and my shoulders drop. “Except for right now,” I grumble, pushing back and onto my feet, my hard cock bobbing inside my boxer briefs.

You’re gonna have to wait, boy. Our woman’s hungry.

I eye Itha as I pull on my black jeans and button down – exchange the jeans for slacks and I’ll be looking just like Ash. The angel’s been even quieter than usual. I know he can’t be over the fact that he’ll no longer be welcomed in Heaven. After I lost sight of my reasons for leaving him behind, I spent centuries resenting him for not finding me. But now I’m fully committed to not letting anything or anyone hurt him – even himself. He’s going to implode one of these days and I’ll be here to hold him together when he does.

“I’ll get you brunch and an extra-large coffee, my queen.” I bow to the grinning mortal, then I scoff internally; I had grand plans to have them under my thumb, and here I am, her ready and willing golden retriever.

“We should meet at the port,” Itha says, obviously done with whatever meditation he was doing, attested by him following my lead and getting out of bed. He’s wearing a pair of my sweatpants and a long black tee. I look at his crotch and bite my lower lip. There’s just something about a dick in gray sweatpants that Hell’s fashion police hasn’t gotten the memo of yet.

“Right,” Jess sighs, bouncing to the bed’s edge. I took the apartment with the biggest bed I could find so we could all rest together. I have no intention of letting either of them sleep (or meditate) alone ever again.

“I guess we should get this mission over with so you can take us to your villa and screw our brains out,” she purrs while stretching, her pebbled nipples standing in relief against the thin T-shirt she’s wearing.

A growl resonates from deep within my chest. Curse these meddling mortals and their nefarious plans. All I want to do is teach the two a lesson about teasing me with their unassumingly sexy clothing.

???

I sip on my Frappuccino, Itha shooting me a glare every time the straw makes slurping sounds.

“What?” I mouth after the tenth time. It’s not like the mortals can hear us from this distance, and if they could, the slurping wouldn’t be what got us in trouble. After all, Jess and I played a game of ‘who’s their daddy’ the night before last, wondering where in their ancestry the mortals in the warehouse below have demon blood.

“They could have demonic allies with them,” Itha hisses.

Jess shakes her head. “Not without us sensing it, hon.”

“We could be mistaken at this distance,” he doubles down.

I step behind him and rest my chin on his shoulder. “You’re right,” I concede. “I’ll be more careful. I’m just bored shitless looking at these idiots watching old sitcom reruns and drinking beer.”

The corner of my lip tips up when I see my breath stirring goosebumps on Ithuriel’s pristine skin. The boy has it bad for me.

Jessica snorts delicately. “It does seem kind of pointless. It’s like a high school AV club gone bald.”

I bite my fist to hold the laughter in and feel Itha’s sigh as it lifts and lowers his chest. We’re on the roof of the cultist’s warehouse, looking in through the worn skylights, and while they can’t hear hushed conversations, my laughing would probably raise some alarms.

“Ooh, we have movement,” Jess says, raising her binoculars to her eyes. The downside of not being a full-blown Celestial, she can’t see or hear the miscreants as

well as we do. “Looks like they’re dragging someone in. A guy.”

I stand next to her and look at the commotion far below. She’s right; the thugs are dragging in a young man, kicking and screaming.

“Look what we have here, boys,” I murmur, translating for Jessica’s sake. “Where’d you find that fag?” I continue. “I thought I’d seen him following us around. We grabbed him outside.”

Jessica whines lowly. “What if he’s just some innocent boy?”

“No.” Itha shakes his head. “Don’t you sense it? He’s a Nephalem.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Shit, no, I don’t, it’s too far. I’m not as good at this as Lana.”

I focus on the young male and whistle quietly. “Fuck, Itha’s right. That’s deffo a Nephalem.”

“But why is he following these scumbags? How does it even know to? I don’t recognize him from Purgatory, why wasn’t he taken?”

I don’t have any of the answers Jessica wants so I just shake my head and watch as the cultists lock the youngster in a separate room, chaining him to a chair.

“What are they going to do to him?” our Nephilim murmurs, the kind heart clearly worried about the demon worshippers’ new prisoner.

“I’m not sure. It looks like they’re waiting for someone.” I don’t like this. The last time those fuckers took a prisoner it was a child they tortured to trap Arma and me. Only one of us made it out. I press my lips together tightly and shoot Itha a look.

His eyes soften before he nods. “We’ll get the boy out.”

“Let’s wait a bit.”

Surprised, I whip my head in Jessica’s direction. “For what? Them to kill him?”

She chews her bottom lip. “I guess you’re right. I just thought we might see who they’d call to deal with him, you know?”

“It’s not worth the risk,” Itha says, saving me the trouble.

“Okay. So, how are we getting down there and then getting the guy out without blowing our cover?” Jess asks.

“We climb,” I decide.

Chapter 26 – Jessica

Marseille

I cut my palm on a rusty support beam and nearly fall off the structure to my death.

“Think I can get tetanus or something now that I’m not in Hell?” I ask Sar in a whisper once we’re safely on the dusty ground. He just bops my nose. That’s not an answer, Mister.

The three of us skulk through the warehouse, careful not to run into one of the creeps around a dark corner. Thankfully, Itha memorized the layout from above, because I got turned around the moment we hit the ground level. Orientation is not my strong suit.

It’s not long until we’re standing at the entrance to where they locked up the Nephalem boy. Careful not to make the hinges squeak, we open the metal door just wide enough for us to be able to enter.

In the gloomy light from the skylights above, the young man gazes at us curiously. “Who are you?” he whispers. I think it’s funny he immediately knows we’re not one of the cultists.

“Friends,” I whisper back, holding my palms up in a show of innocence. “I’ll get

those chains off you,” I say, approaching him slowly. They’re padlocked, but I can disintegrate a link or two using the ether and they’ll detach soundlessly.

“No, wait!” the boy hisses and I freeze.

“Why?” Sariel drawls, stepping to my side protectively, Itha joining right after.

“They’re going to bring their boss in to question me. It’s a demon lord insomeone’s court. I know that much from spying on them this last year, but I don’t know who it is exactly.”

So, he knows about demons and courts and probably about what he is. Curiouser and curiouser.

Sariel leans down and removes his sunglasses. “You’re gonna get yourself killed, boy.”

The mortal on the chair rolls his eyes sassily. I kinda like him.

“You don’t scare me with those eyes. My dad’s eyes are red, imagine those glaring at you when you’re caught skipping school to hang out with the local bad boy.” The human has a shit-eating grin that’s on par to the Fallen he’s talking to.

“Dad?” Itha repeats. “Your father is a demon?”

The young man tilts his head. “Yes?”

“And your mom?” Sariel asks next.

The boy gulps. “She’s an angel,” he whispers, then looks at Itha. “Actually, she looks a lot like you.”

I cover my mouth with my hand. “That makes him a full-blown Nephalem,” I say through my fingers.

Sariel blows a woosh of air before speaking up. “Wonder what Lana would think about him.”

The boy freezes, then gapes at the dark-haired angel. “You know Lana?” His voice shakes and his body starts trembling as he waits for an answer. He looks like he scarcely dares to hope we’re talking about the same person. But what are the odds?

“Yes,” I finally say, putting him out of his misery. Sariel throws me a dirty look, but I really don’t think this mortal is out to hurt our girl. “She’s my team leader.” I grin at Sariel. “And this one’s stepmom.”

“She’s alive?” the Nephalem asks, tears welling in his beautiful brown eyes.

“She’s great,” I confirm, placing a hand on his shoulder. “Happy. In love. Ruling a good chunk of the Underworld. But how do you know her?”

The boy sighs and it looks like he’s releasing years of worry. “She’s my best friend,” he says innocently. “I’ve been trying to find out what happened to her for so long, I was sure I’d never find any answers.”

A light bulb goes off in my head. “Wait, are you Mike?”

The boy’s tears run over his soft-looking cheeks. “She talks about me?”

“Of course!” I whisper-shout. “We got drunk one day on patrol, well, actually, more than just one day, but on this particular day she told us about her friend Mike and, oh, you don’t care about any of that.” I wave my hand as if to shoo off my rambling. “Now that you know Lana’s safe, are you sure you still want to stay locked up?”

He's shaking his blonde head before I finish speaking. “No, you don’t understand. These demons in charge, they want to wipe out all half-mortal descendants, purify the Celestial race.”

Sariel grunts. “Great, demon Nazis, like the human ones weren’t bad enough.”

“Do the mortal cultists not understand that would mean their own end as well?” Ithuriel asks.

“They’re either too dumb to understand or too delusional to care,” Mike replies with a roll of his eyes. “When Lana disappeared, I was sure they got to her.”

“You knew what she is?” I ask.

Mike nods with a wince. “It’s why I befriended her. But I really do love her,” he swears.

“I believe you,” Sariel huffs. “You’ve been looking for clues for years.”

“How did you not get recruited to the Underworld by the Council?” Itha asks next.

Mike grimaces. “I heard these guys talk about humans in Hell, and that’s when I

hoped the disappearances were connected to that rather than their unholy purging crusade. But I didn't even know about it until recently. My parents might have protected me from it."

"Who are your—" Itha's question is interrupted by approaching footsteps.

"Fuck," Sariel growls. "That's a demon lord approaching."

"Free the boy and shield him in the corner," Itha orders, facing the door and broadening his stance.

Crouching down next to Mike, I pull on the ether and disintegrate a few chain links at his sides. I don't bother muffling their fall as I drag them off the wide-eyed Nephalem.

"Hurry," I tell him, pulling him up and walking him to a darkened part of the room. I have zero chance of surviving a fight with a demon lord and Mike looks like a strong wind could tip him over. "Do you know how to fight?" I ask him, harried.

"Y-yeah," he stutters. "My dad taught me as soon as I was old enough to hold a plastic sword in my hands. Unfortunately, I have my mom's girlish figure."

I snicker at his dry sense of humor despite the dangerous situation we're in. No wonder he was best friends with Lana, the queen of sarcasm.

The footsteps grow louder and clearer until five more figures crowd the shrinking room. Four are the unkempt cultists, but the one in the front stands out. He's tall, leanly muscled, and has a well-maintained goatee covering half of his cold-looking face. His eyes are like lifeless ice chips.

"Andras," Sariel drawls, hooking his thumbs into his jeans' belt loops, casual as can

be.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Sariel.” The demon doesn’t seem surprised to find us here, or surprised at seeing it’s the fallen angel who’s in front of him. “Came back for more?”

A barely audible growl vibrates the air as Sariel takes a step forward. Itha’s arm shoots out to his shoulder, holding him back. That was clearly a dig at the loss of Armaros.

“Interesting company you’re keeping,” the demon lord remarks, eyeing first Ithuriel, then me and Mike behind me.

“I could say the same about you,” Sariel sneers, no hint of fake amity left in his demeanor. “What’s with the slacker brigade?”

The demon, Andras, looks at his companions with disinterest. “They have their uses.”

“And when they no longer do, you dispose of them?” Itha asks.

Andras smirks. “Whyever would you think that, angel?” He then looks at Mike, half hidden behind me. “What stories have you been filling their heads with, Nephtalem?”

“Don’t talk to him,” Sariel snaps.

Andras fakes being taken aback. “Oh, my, such protectiveness. Have you been fucking the boy that’s been spying on us for years, Sariel? What would Armaros have said?”

Sariel’s lips pull into a razor-sharp smile. “Arma would have been all over that tiny

twink ass. But we'll never know because you and your lackeys used Belial's hellfire to kill him," he finishes with a hiss.

The demon lifts an eyebrow. "Did we?"

The Fallen's hands open and close at his sides and I'm worried blood's about to flow. I take another small step back, pressing Mike into the wall.

"What would Uncle Asmo say if he knew one of his lieutenants was in league with that scumbag Belial?" Sariel asks through clenched teeth.

Andras smirks. "I'm not quite sure what you mean. Regardless, neither archdemon is around to answer any questions."

Itha squeezes Sariel's shoulder. "We will take our leave now."

The demon lord's brows climb up his forehead at the casual contact between the two angels. Still, he doesn't remark on it. "Why? We've only just started talking." He starts pacing in front of the door as his lackeys cross their arms, forming a wall between us and the exit.

"We have nothing to say to you," Ithuriel says dispassionately, sounding like the angel I met all those weeks ago.

Andras stops pacing and looks at Itha with feigned surprise. "Oh? Surely that boy has something to say if he's been skulking around for so long?"

"Nope, we're good," Mike chirps and I elbow him with a hiss.

The cold demon taps his lips thoughtfully, then seemingly comes to a decision. "You can leave, but the boy stays."

Sariel shakes his head. “You might not be afraid of Uncle Asmo or that bellend Belial, Andras, but surely you’re not about to provoke the Council by harming a human?”

Andras grins. “Who said anything about harming him? I just want to have a chat about his parentage. Besides, whether or not he should be considered a human is debatable. One step into Hell and he’d be nearly as powerful as a newly-created angel. Or demon.”

I glance at Mike. Whoisthis boy?

He blinks his round eyes at me, sooty lashes fluttering innocently.

“Do you want a fight, Andras?” Sariel asks coldly. “Because you’re massively outgunned.”

The cultists against the other wall grumble in protest. Idiots.

Andras’ lips tighten with the first hints of anger. He turns to the side. “Laissez-les partir,” he growls, ordering them to let us leave.

Reluctantly, the humans move aside.

Sariel goes first, not showing a hint of fear as he passes by the demon lord. Itha turns to Mike and me, beckoning for us to follow. I wrap my arm around Mike’s shoulders and pass by the cultists and their leader, my chin raised high, though my heart pitter-patters with worry for Ithuriel. No one’s watching his back. We leave the warehouse with our escort of four Cambions, the rest in attendance watching us curiously, probably wondering where we came from and why we’re just allowed to leave.

I breathe a sigh of relief once the Mediterranean sun warms the top of my head. “Oh,

boy,” I whisper.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“I was about ready to pee my pants,” Mike agrees.

“Are you alright?” Ithuriel asks Sar, who’s still silent and tense as he leads our charge.

“No,” he replies. “But I need to talk to Father. I’m gonna have to return to Hell.”

“No need,” a voice sounds from the shadows of a neighboring building and I jump in fright as a delicious-looking Aim casually falls in step with us.

Mmm, if I wasn’t thoroughly taken...

Sariel stops and whirls on his father’s spymaster. “Have you been following us? Why hide?” he accuses.

Aim lifts both hands, the rings on his fingers sparkling in the sun. Not very stealthy of him. “Relax, Sar. I was following Andras. I got tipped off that he’s coming here and wanted to make sure you three aren’t in the crosshairs.” He raises a pierced eyebrow at the last part. “Guess my instincts were spot-on.”

“Who tipped you off about Andras?” Sar asks accusingly.

Aim winks seductively. “Not about to burn my sources.” He takes us all in, his gaze lingering on Itha’s sweatpants, my dusty T-shirt, and the dirty smudges on Mike’s cheeks. “Catch me up?”

Sariel sighs, looking exhausted. “Get Lana. Tell her Mike needs her.”

The boy in question brightens up at Sariel's words and my heart swells for him. I can't imagine thinking my best friend is dead for years only to find out she's alive and that I'll be seeing her soon in the span of one hour.

"Then tell Father he needs to talk to the Council," Sar continues. "Looks like this goes beyond Belial. Andras is part of Asmodai's court and we don't know if he's the only one who shares these ideals."

"What ideals?" the assassin inquires.

"Of a pure Celestial race," I interject, drawing his denim blue eyes. Feeling a flutter in my nether regions, I clear my throat. "They want to exterminate all halflings," I finish.

Aim's eyes widen at that and he looks at my angels for confirmation that I expressed myself accurately. Once they nod, he swears and straightens.

"I'll go now," he says. "Where do we meet?"

Mike clears his throat, calling for attention. "On Saint-Giniez in the Eighth Arrondissement," he says.

"What's there?" Sariel asks.

"My parents' home."

Chapter 27 – Ithuriel

Marseille

This part of Marseille is very beautiful. The streets are narrow and winding, the

houses have terracotta roofs and colorful shutters. Most homes have gardens with olive trees and lavender. Every now and then, Jessica stops to take in a lungful of the fragrant Mediterranean air.

“I thought you were American,” she asks a now more cheerful Mike.

“I am,” he confirms. “But my parents moved to Europe when my search for Lana brought me here. They were over life in The States anyway. Came there with the original settlers,” he says proudly.

Sariel and I share a look. Angel and demon pairings are so rare, and we know for a fact that Lana’s grandparents were killed by Belial. Who could this boy’s parents be?

Jessica skips over to Sariel and hangs onto his arm. She hops up and down excitedly. “I know you probably have a killer home by the Lethe, Sar, but can we please, please, please get a house here too?”

The Fallen looks at her indulgently, then grins back at me, lifting an eyebrow as if to say ‘So?’.

My lips twitch into a smile. “D’accord,” I whisper.

“Yess,” she hisses, jumping up to kiss the Fallen’s cheek, then throwing her arms around my neck. It’s so good to see her happy. I get the overwhelming urge to call my wings and fly her up into the sky for a dance among the clouds. Instead, I pick her up and give her a spin, enjoying her giggles.

“Sorry to interrupt,” a smiling Mike says. “But that’s my family’s home.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

He points to the end of the street we found ourselves on, to an iron-wrought gate with an arch of jasmine and honeysuckle above it, perfuming the air. The two-story villa behind it glows in the late afternoon sun and, as we come closer, the sound of buzzing bees joins the chorus of chirping birds, their home a garden of lavender, rosemary, and climbing bougainvillea.

The front door, painted a deep, rich blue, contrasts against the earth-toned façade, and as we watch, a golden retriever noses it open before running to the Nephalem boy.

“Come here, sweetheart!” Mike kneels down and roughly ruffles the dog’s fur, letting it lick his face clean.

“Aww, a puppy!” Jessica squeals with excitement. I don’t correct her that the dog is clearly no longer a puppy, but rather an adult. “What’s her name?” she asks Mike.

“Bau the fifth,” he replies. “Just Bau for short.”

At that moment a sweet female voice rings out from the house. “Michael? Is that you, my heart?”

A deep man’s voice follows, the owner of it clearly irritated. “Wait,” it growls. “He isn’t alone.”

“It’s angels,” she replies hesitantly.

The short argument ends when two figures appear at the doorway. One is a silver-haired female, her coloring as reminiscent of mine as Mike said it was. The other is a

male with long black hair, deep red eyes, and a five-o'clock-yesterday shadow of a beard on his chiseled, barbarically handsome face.

I stand rooted to the ground, observing my role model. "You're alive," I gasp at her.

"I knew it!" Jessica crows.

Sariel's voice sounds next, tinged with disgust, addressing the son of the devil: "You let her name your son after an archangel?"

???

As we sit in Nephithar and Syriniana's Provençal sitting room, with its exposed wooden beams, cool terracotta tiles, and (unlit) stone fireplace, the archivist flutters around Mike and Jess, making sure they have enough food and drink. The ancient general throws us disgruntled looks, clearly not too happy that his son brought outsiders to their home.

"Does anyone else know you're alive?" I ask him, drawing his gaze to me. I try to not think about the fact that he was once known as Angelbane, millennia before my creation, and delighted in hacking our wings off.

"We have encountered a few over the years. It's unavoidable."

"Did you kill them after?" Sariel drawls, crossing a foot over his knee.

Nephithar smiles for the first time. "Didn't need to. Don't be the first."

Our Fallen throws his head back in laughter and the dog, Bau, barks from her bed near the fireplace. Just what we needed; for these two to become best friends. The chaos...

While they chat about life in the human realm and the goings-on in Hell, Syriniana sits down next to me, but at a respectable distance.

“You’ve fallen for love,” she says quietly with a soft smile on her lips. She looks the same age as her son, though who can truly know how his aging is, being a full-blooded Nephalem. Some age normally, and some have a stronger connection to their Celestial roots.

I clear my throat. “So did he,” I say. “It merely took me a thousand years to realize it.”

I glance at Sariel to see that, while he’s still in conversation with Nephithar, his eyes are on me. When he catches mine, he gives me a little wink. We’ve come so far in our relationship these last few days. Are there really no traces of his animosity against me left?

“I never had to confront my brethren after I left them,” the archivist says sadly. “You won’t have that luxury, I fear.”

I squeeze my eyes shut. Whenever I think of Saraqael’s reaction to my choices, my heart freezes in my chest and dread spears through my stomach. Sometimes I consider not confronting him, merely hiding myself in whatever home Sariel has for us in Hell, never leaving.

Jessica’s behind lands in my lap and her arms twine around my neck. “He won’t be alone,” she tells the other angel while looking at me. “Sariel and I will always be with him, every step of the way.”

A burden lifts from my chest. Yes, I can do anything as long as they are with me.

“Can I have two boyfriends too, Dad?” I hear Mike asking his father.

“Have five, Son,” Nephithar replies. “As long as none of them are an archangel.”

His consort smiles at us warmly and I nod my head in her direction “Thank you, Syriniana.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Syrin to my friends,” she corrects me as her demon groans.

“Must you befriend every stray, Muluskara?” he asks her.

I haven’t heard Ancient Sumerian in millennia!

“Alright, let’s cut to the chase before Aim and Lana get here,” Sariel interjects.

Nephithar straightens. “Aim? That spy is coming to my home?” he growls.

“Relax,” the Fallen drawls. “Aim is loyal to Ash and would never do anything to harm anyone close to his master’s consort.”

I can see almost the thoughts connecting in the demon’s head as well as the moment of realization before his mouth opens. “Ashtaroth?”

“Did we not mention that?” Sariel asks innocently.

“Woah, wait,” Mike jumps in. “Lan-Lan is playing hide the salami with the archdemon Ashtaroth?”

Jessica covers her smiling mouth before nodding vigorously.

Sariel snorts. “Hiding the salami, churning the butter, dancing the horizontal tango, filling the love taco, paddling the pink canoe, releasing the kraken – you name it, they’re doing it. Everywhere. All the time,” he says with feeling.

Mike shakes his head, eyes wide open. “I couldn’t get her to go on a date and then she bags a baddie?”

“If it makes you feel any better, their courtship started with him making her dry hump his thigh in thanks for saving her life from a golem.” My mouth falls open at Jess’ words. “Then he kidnapped her,” she continues.

“And then he claimed her on the dinner table in front of his entire court to make sure no one gets any funny ideas,” Sariel finishes.

I look up at Jessica, then to the other couch at Sariel. “And she loves this creature?” I ask, aghast. Syrin looks as scandalized as I feel.

“She’s crazy about him!” Jess exclaims. “And I don’t blame her, mmm, daddy, yes.”

She must realize she said too much out loud because she turns beet red. It’s too late, however; Mike and Sariel are nearly rolling on the floor from laughter.

“Please, for the love of baby seals, do not tell him I said that,” she begs those present.

“I’m sure you can bribe me into forgetting it.” Sariel winks at her.

“You can’t, however, bribe me,” Aim says from the doorway.

Chapter 28 – Lana

“Do you have human clothes you can wear in public?” Aim asks as we walk to my and Ash’s quarters.

“Um, sure. I have more leggings and tops and flats. They’re not jeans and sneakers, but they shouldn’t stand out. Where are we going, what’s the weather like?”

“Marseille, France,” the spymaster replies. “It’s warm.”

Ash is our silent escort and I peer up at him with worry. Is this too much for him?
“I’ll be okay,” I promise.

His lips tighten with disapproval. Ever since Aim interrupted our movie night with Kev and Naamah with the news that I’m wanted in the human realms where he can’t follow, he’s been distant. I know Arma’s death is fresh on his mind right now.

“Do you think the Council would let you into the human world if you explained what’s going on?”

He clicks his tongue. “They have nothing to do with it. Archdemons being confined to the Underworld was a part of the truce between Heaven and Hell. Our threat to humans was simply too great.” He tilts his head. “There are two beings who could negotiate an amendment and I sincerely doubt they would find my need to protect my lamb a pressing enough matter to do so.”

“I will protect her with my life, and so will Sariel,” Aim says. “But don’t forget she has a good amount of your power now, my lord.”

I tug on Ash’s hand until he faces me. Even though I’m tall, I still have to step on my tiptoes to kiss his cheek.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“He’s right,” I tell him. “I’m as safe as kittens.” I frown. “Wait, why is that a saying? Have you ever been scratched by a kitten? Those things have needle-sharp claws. And are they safe? There’s foxes, rats, other cats, so many predators...”

Ash’s lips slowly tip up until he’s smiling down at me indulgently. He grabs me by the neck and leans down to ravage my mouth. By the time his tongue is done exploring every crevice of my mouth, I’m breathless and dizzy.

I turn my head toward Aim, blushing when I see him standing so close, a devious smirk on his dangerously handsome face. He looks like the guy who’d make you cross the street if you saw him walking toward you. But then you’d be kicking yourself halfway across because you’d realize you do want to be his gang princess.

“If you’re up for another show, I’m sure Mike can wait,” he says silkily.

“No...” I gasp. “No,” I say firmer, but still breathless and slightly wistful.

I extricate myself from Ash’s possessive hold and open the door to our rooms. Puck, my baby imp gumdrop sweetheart, is sprawled over our bed, lightly snoring. I hope Ash doesn’t ignore him too much while I’m gone. He needs constant attention or things get broken.

I step into the walk-in closet I had Ash make for us. One dresser just wasn’t enough for my clothes and armor, not to mention the weapons he keeps gifting me with like they’re jewelry. I kept the dresser, of course, and the lambs carved into it greet me when I fling open its doors.

Ash's taste in my clothes lean toward the refined, even for the casual and comfortable pieces. I bypass the dresses and gowns, their red and black silk and lace inviting my touch, and hone in on a pair of sturdy leather pants. If I pair these with low booties and a silky black T-shirt, I'll be slightly more protected than if I was wearing leggings and flats, but still not draw unwanted attention from the humans. Feeling proud of myself, I change into my chosen ensemble.

When I poke my head out, I see Aim holding a rucksack. "I packed your armor," he says.

Ash hands me two gorgeous jewel-encrusted black daggers. "And I chose your weapons."

I grin at the two demons acting like my personal servants. "Thanks, Mom and Dad," I simper.

Sheathing the daggers, I stuff them next to my armor, then sling the backpack over one shoulder. It's not exactly feather-light.

"Think Kev and Nah are ready?" I ask my handmaidens.

"I'll go get them. Meet you at the gate." Aim leaves and I'm left alone with a brooding Ash. I reach up and take his angelic face in my hands, my thumb sweeping over his delicious lower lip.

"If you feed on anyone while I'm gone, I'll cut your balls off, paint them red, and feed them to Puck," I threaten sweetly.

He smiles under my fingers. "They're too big for him, but just right for you, and you'd miss having them in your mouth too much to do that to me."

I grin back. “Test me and I’ll show you.”

“Luckily for everyone involved, I find myself without an appetite when you are not around, sweetness.” He grabs my wrist and kisses the center of my palm. “So hurry back to me.”

???

I’m hyperventilating. I can’t take my eyes off the setting sun, probably lucky my corneas are supernatural. Kevin joins me and wraps an arm around my shoulder – either in comfort or because he’s not feeling very stable either right now.

“I can’t believe we’re here,” he whispers with an awed voice.

“Me neither,” I murmur, snaking my arm around his waist.

We just took Ash’s gate to travel to the human world, and while I was anxious about parting with him, I also couldn’t wait to breathe fresh air. It’s been four years since I saw the blue sky, even longer than that since I bothered to take in the sunset. I’ll never take one for granted again.

Kevin leans his head against mine. “So, are you replacing me with Mike now?”

His question makes me snort and I poke his ribs with two stiffened fingers. “You’re irreplaceable, buster,” I tell him.

“I have to agree,” Naamah purrs, sauntering to our side.

“Yes, you have to,” Kevin says with a roll of his eyes, stressing the last part. These two always make me giggle with their antics. I knew they’d end up together the moment I saw their dynamic.

“Are we standing here all night, ladies?” Aim asks, clearly not as impressed with nature’s beauty as we are.

“Spoilsport,” I mutter. After one last longing glance at our planet’s star, I turn my back on it and start following the assassin. “Do you know this city well?” I ask, looking at the charming boats docked at the old city port. “How long is the walk to where we’re going?”

He gives me an amused glance and his lip ring sparkles when the corner of his mouth tilts in a crooked smile. A couple of women sitting on the terrace of a café nearly dislocate their heads to follow him with their gazes. I cough into my hand to hide my laughter.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“I know every city well,” he replies cockily. “And about forty-five minutes, depending on how rubbery your necks are.”

“Hey, I’ve been stuck in literal Hell for four years, bucko,” I defend myself.

“Ditto,” Kevin says from behind us. I look back to see Naamah wrapped around his arm as they take in the sights. With her wings, tail, and horns hidden, and with him looking casual in ripped jeans and a T-shirt, they look like a young couple fresh off a cruise ship.

A handsome black man throws me a flirty smile as he wipes down his fish stall. The Moroccan croons something in the lilting cadence of his homeland before Aim shuts him down with a swift glare.

“Nsaha,” the spymaster growls and the man averts his eyes.

“What did he say?” I whisper to Aim, curiosity getting the better of me.

The demon harrumphs. “Hbibti, are your eyes casting a spell on me? I told him to forget about it.”

Naamah cackles. “He probably saw those grass-green eyes of yours and thought you were a goddess come to sail away with him.”

Kevin snorts at that. “Should we tell His Dukeness that the first threat to you came so early in our mission?”

I grin back at the pair. “Threat to me? That was a threat to Aim’s pretty pierced dick if he had to tell Ash I ran off with a sailor.”

“I’m always looking out for my pretty pierced dick, thank you very much,” the assassin says.

“You haven’t participated in any court orgies in decades, Aim,” Naamah says suspiciously, her eyes narrowed. “So how does our duchess know if your dick is pretty or pierced?”

Winking at her, I turn back around. “I plead the Fifth!”

“We’re in France,” she grumbles.

After an hour and a decent uphill climb, followed by Kevin grumbling about taxis, the sun is fully set, and we’ve arrived in what Aim said is Saint-Barnabé.

“Where to now?” I ask him.

He lifts both eyebrows. “You tell me. What do you sense?”

Right. I was so mesmerized by the flora and architecture that I didn’t even think to scan for Celestials. So, what do we have here?

“Three angels, two halflings, and a... demon lord? Archdemon? That’s not possible.”

Aim hisses and lets loose a juicy string of expletives. “Where are they?”

I point to the end of the street we’re on. “What’s going on?” I ask. “Who’s the archdemon I’m sensing?”

“A ghost,” he mutters before heading in the direction I indicated.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Kevin asks, still out of breath from the inclines and now jogging after the demon lord.

“Who do you suspect, Aim?” Naamah asks coolly, effortlessly keeping pace in her high-heeled boots.

“The lost prodigal son,” he answers.

We’re entering someone’s yard under an archway of jasmine and honeysuckle by the time Naamah puts the pieces together. “You mean Nephithar.”

Muffled conversation can be heard through open windows, and that’s definitely Sariel’s laugh. My heart hurts at hearing it, realizing just how long it’s been since I heard a sincere one coming from his mouth.

Since everyone inside is a Celestial or their offspring (and what does that say about Mike? Did he know what he is, what I am?), our presence probably isn’t a surprise. Still, I feel a bit awkward when Aim pushes the door open without knocking and just enters.

Jessica’s voice sounds out, then Sariel’s, and then Aim speaks up: “You can’t, however, bribe me.”

Chapter 29 – Sariel

Page 61

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“So, it is you,” Aim says, glaring at Nephithar. “You fucking asshole.”

The red-eyed demon stands up and lifts his palms as if to say ‘here I am’. “I’m sorry, sweetheart, I’m married now.”

Aim scoffs. “This isn’t about that. I’ve seen golems more interested in fucking than you were. But you played dead for over five thousand years without telling me. I thought we were friends.”

Jess sidles up to me. “Is everyone in Hell pansexual?” she murmurs.

“Pretty much,” I reply, just as quietly. I’m into the drama – I wish I had popcorn for this.

Lana ruins the moment, though. “Excuse you,” she says, pushing her way past Jess and me toward Mike.

“Lan!”

The two meet halfway and embrace, the top of the boy’s head barely reaching Lana’s nose.

“No wonder you never introduced me to your parents,” she grumbles into his hair. “They look younger than I do.”

“I’m sorry, I wanted to tell you, but they wouldn’t let me,” Mike whines.

She holds him out at arms-length. “It’s okay. I guess you couldn’t have sent an owl with a letter inviting me to supernatural school.”

As Mike smiles his face goes from cute to handsome, the masculine version of his angelic mother, with his father’s lethal grin. He actually reminds me of Armaros a bit... maybe a bit too much.

Lana takes in the room, from our trio to Mike’s parents and finally Bau, her tail thumping against the ground, completely unperturbed by the number of people suddenly here.

“Um, Mike?” Her voice is tentative as she gazes at the softly smiling Syrin and the neutral Nephithar.

“Yeah?”

“How the frick are your eyes brown?”

Huh. That is a good question and I should have thought about it myself.

“Ah.” The boy flushes and runs a hand through his blonde hair. “They’re actually not. My eyes are really red like my dad’s – these are contacts.”

Lana gapes at her old best friend. “You’ve managed to hide that from me for forever!” she accuses. “How could I have missed it?”

“Well,” he drawls. “Your nose was hidden in some smutty book or another most of the time. You barely noticed anything.”

The ladies giggle at Mike’s words. Must be a girl thing.

“What about you?” I ask Nephithar. “Contacts aren’t your thing?”

The demon’s grin is so sharp, it could cut glass. “If my eyes bother the humans, they can look away.”

His son snorts. “We just tell people he has a rare condition. But we have to move every few years anyway or people start noticing how they don’t age.”

Lana must remember her manners because she finally stops staring at the two and extends her arm to introduce herself. “I’m Lana,” she says, shaking first the demon’s and then the angel’s hand. “It’s so nice to finally meet you.”

Syriniana takes Lana’s hand in both of hers, beaming at her welcomingly. “We’ve heard so much about you, Lana,” she says, making our girl blush.

“Hopefully not the embarrassing parts,” she murmurs bashfully.

“Oh, no, I want to hear those the most,” Kevin pipes in from the doorway.

“Me too,” Naamah agrees, her grin almost as scary as Nephithar’s was.

“Three angels, three demons, and four halflings walk into a bar,” I say.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Don’t forget about the puppy,” Jess reminds me and Bau emphasizes her point with a bark.

Sighing with resignation, I plop back down onto the couch. “How could I forget about the puppy wuppy,” I mutter.

“So, what did we miss, cousin?” Naamah asks from where she’s leaning against the wall, one suspicious eye on the puppy. I mean dog. The dog.

“Well, let’s see.” I lean back so I can see everyone’s reactions better. “We nearly died half a dozen times in the Malebolge, but we found and closed the rift,” I begin. “One of Uncle Asmo’s lieutenants, Andras, and his Cambion brigade are planning on wiping out every Celestial halfling for a pure Celestial race,” I continue. I tap my lips, thinking. “What else? Oh! Yes. I’m fucking both Ithuriel and Jessica, and they’ll be moving in with me once we’re done here.”

Kevin and Lana’s mouths drop open, Naamah blinks dazedly, Aim rubs his forehead in exasperation, Itha and Jess look like they want the ground to swallow them up (again), and Mike and his parents look like they’re experiencing varying doses of secondhand embarrassment.

I give them all my best shark’s grin. “What? What did I say?”

???

“I suggest we wait for instructions from the Council,” Aim says. We’re sitting at the ancient couple’s massive oak dining room table, the mortals enjoying a late dinner,

the immortals enjoying top-tier French wine. Well, except for Itha and, for some reason, Naamah.

“Are you alright, Cuz?” I ask her, poking her with my elbow.

“Just feeling funky.” She shrugs, obviously unconcerned, so I let it go.

I return my focus to Lana. “Yeah,” she sighs, answering Aim. “We wouldn’t want a repeat of your last bad-guy extermination, would we?”

I grin savagely. The bastards who killed Armaros and an innocent human child deserved every ounce of pain they got at Aim and Belias’ hands. Ash’s lieutenants wiped out every fucker involved and a good part of their relatives.

“Why aren’t they afraid of this Council,” Mike asks, a huge yawn betraying his exhaustion.

“Maybe their punishments are too mild,” Itha suggests. His vengeful side really makes my dick hard.

“Think big daddy S will get involved again?” Lana asks with a smirk. Kudos to her for calling him that even after she met him. Or maybe it’s because she met him and came away unscathed.

“You cannot rely on Father to do the expected thing,” Nephithar adds to the conversation.

“Oh, wow, I keep forgetting he’s your dad,” Jessica whispers in awe. I extend an arm to poke her shoulder. She’s not allowed to get that look on her face for anyone except Itha and me. Blushing, she swats me away, then leans her head on Itha’s shoulder.

“In a manner of speaking,” the red-eyed demon replies with a wry twist to his brutally set lips.

“Well, I guess we’re not going to achieve anything today,” Lana concludes, wiping her bleary eyes. She turns them on me. “Where are you guys staying? Is there room for four more?”

“Three,” Aim corrects. “It’ll be most efficient if I return to the Great Duke and await instructions.

Lana nods at the spymaster. “Three then.” She looks at the rest of us. “We better go.”

“Nonsense,” Syrin interrupts. “We have room for a small army in this house,” she says, Nephithar’s groan serving as backing vocals. His despondence would make me want to stay even if I felt like traveling to our Airbnb.

“How generous,” I purr, holding the old demon’s gaze as Mike cackles.

“As much as I love seeing someone challenge my old man, I’m dead on my feet,” the Nephalem says. “Is my room okay for me to use, Mom?”

Syrin’s beautiful eyes, gray with a hint of purple, soften in the way a mother’s eyes do when they look at their child – no matter if the child is a baby or a parent themselves.

“Of course, darling,” she says. “Wherever we are, there’s always a room for you.”

Mike kisses his mother’s cheek and leaves with a sleepy shuffle, Bau getting up to follow.

“I’ll be back tomorrow,” Aim says before disappearing into the ether, not waiting for

anyone's good night.

"I'll show you to the guest rooms," the long-presumed-dead archivist tells us.

We file after her, our group getting smaller as Kevin and Naamah take the first room, Lana takes the second, and Syrin shows us to a third.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“This one has an extra-large bed,” she says when she opens the door, her porcelain skin turning pink with a faint blush. Over five millennia since she’s last been to Heaven and she’s still so pure.

Jessica beams at her. “Thanks so much, Syrin.”

Itha merely nods respectfully before following our Nephilim.

“Surprised your husband left you alone with us,” I tell the angel.

Her lips curl up into a confident smile that belies her earlier shyness. “He knows my aim is immaculate.” With one last grin, the angel turns to join her demon.

I close the door behind me before joining my lovers in what is to be our bedroom for the time being. I lift one hand to Itha’s cheek, wrapping the other around Jessica’s waist.

“I haven’t made either of you come in days,” I whisper. “I’d say I should be punished, but I prefer being the one doing the spanking.”

The scandalized look on Itha’s face could sustain me for a century. But I really do need to get inside someone right now, so I slide my hand behind Itha’s head and bring his lips to mine for a devouring kiss. Jess is already rubbing her pussy against my thigh, the heat of it warming me through the clothing, when I switch to capture her mouth as well. She moans into mine, wrapping both arms around my waist to pull me closer.

Chuckling, I disengage. “Greedy girl,” I tell her.

She pouts, whining, “I want you, Sarel.”

“And you’ll have me, poppet.” I push her toward the bed, taking our angel along. “You’ll have both of us.”

As Jess’ big blue eyes become even rounder, Ithuriel flushes, pink crawling up the lickable column of his neck. “Perhaps we should not be doing this in someone else’s house?” he says with a voice so uncertain it comes out like a question.

“I don’t give a fuck if they all pull up a chair to watch,” I growl. “I’m fucking you both tonight, all fucking night long.”

I don’t know if it’s my many f-bombs or my intentions, but Itha looks like he just swallowed his tongue. I have other plans for his mouth.

“On your knees,” I tell him, then turn to our girl. “You too,” I command. May as well teach them both at the same time.

The angel sputters in protest, but Jessica gently shushes him, pulling him to the ground with her until they’re both looking up at me, ready and willing receptacles for my cum. I feel my lips curling into a Cheshire Cat grin.

“Take my cock out,” I order, not caring who does the deed. As Itha remains frozen, Jessica’s the one to unbutton and then unzip my jeans, pulling them and my boxers down enough that my already hard dick springs out, eager for them.

I take it in my hand just as Jess licks her lips in invitation. Who am I to deny my girl her treat? Angling my pelvis toward her, I grab the back of her head and pull her to me.

“Open up.” I tap the side of my dick against her cheek. “That’s a good girl,” I croon when she obeys without hesitation.

I place the leaking tip at the center of her soft tongue and look at our angel, who’s clearly torn between his principles and the need to please.

“Show Itha how to be a good cocksucker, sweetheart.”

Her breathing picks up as she wraps her lips around my stiff rod, her cheeks hollowing with her first strong pull. I let my head tip back on a moan before I gather my senses. This is a teachable moment, after all.

I caress Itha’s cheek with one hand, the other fisted in our girl’s hair. His eyes are glued to Jessica’s actions.

“Her mouth is so hot,” I murmur to him and he glances at me before looking back at what’s happening with my dick, as if drawn by a magnet. Snorting softly, I carefully lift my foot and press it against his crotch.

“Mph,” he grunts as my booted foot finds him hard and wanting.

When he looks at me again, his eyes are soft and pleading.

“Open up,” I whisper. He swallows convulsively before his lips part ever so slowly, making room for me. I tap the back of Jessica’s head and she slides off my dick with a pop. Grinning, I aim my shaft in the direction of my male lover. But I’m not about to do the hard work for him, no. He needs to make the choice.

“Take me into your mouth,” I command, stroking myself just inches from his face.

It only takes a few blinks of those pearlescent gray orbs before he tentatively extends

his tongue to taste the bead of precum and traces of Jess' saliva. Closing his eyes on a soft whimper, he finally takes me into his mouth.

“Fuck yes, that’s my good boy. Feels so fucking good,” I praise him. His hips start moving, rubbing his crotch against my boot. I hold on to both of their shoulders as he goes wild, slurping on my dick like it’s a candy cane and humping my foot.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I laugh when Jess leans in to suck on my balls, fighting with Itha for space. When his movements become jerky, I know I need to stop this before he comes in his sweatpants, ruining the only clothes he has here. It's time to take the edge off. Taking my foot off Itha's crotch, I pull back and wait for them to give me their eyes.

"Open your mouths, tongues out," I instruct, holding myself at the root.

The Nephilim obeys instantly, her pink tongue extended eagerly. Itha takes a moment longer and by the time I see the inside of his mouth, his face is flushed with heat.

Growling, I roughly jerk my slickened cock, shiny with their combined spit. Pulling on it violently, twisting at the top, I feel my orgasm approaching with a tingle at the base of my spine and a tightening of my sack. As a shot of heat travels from the base of my cock to the tip, I aim at their beautiful, waiting faces.

"Ah, ah!" I sigh as the first spurt lands on Itha's cheek, the other on Jess's nose, dripping down into her mouth. Well, that was shit aiming, I think to myself with a feral grin, allowing the following, weaker spurts to find their target on their extended tongues.

I use my pointer finger to wipe my cum off Itha's cheek, then bring it to his mouth. When he eagerly licks it clean, I slap the side of his face patronizingly, making him flush with shame.

"I'm not done with you two yet," I say. "Take off your clothes and get on the bed."

Those three are going to kill me.

I tug on my nipple and squirm, squeezing my thighs together as I listen to the angel and Nephilim trio getting it on.

God, I miss Ash.

I haven't slept alone in a year, haven't gone this long without him fucking one of my holes in almost as long.

At Jessica's next sharp gasp, I give up the ghost and snake my hand into my panties. I'm fucking soaked.

Kevin and Naamah are surprisingly quiet in the room next door. You'd think with all the lust permeating this side of the house, the succubus would be having a party.

Putting them out of my mind, I think back to the first time I saw my husband. The most handsome male I'd ever seen, before or since, just saved my life and wanted my orgasm as payment.

I twirl a finger through my wetness, slicking it up before gently pressing it inside my fluttering channel. Moaning, I think about the cruel set of Ashtarothe's lips as he watched me debase myself. He wanted an orgasm but didn't lift a finger to make it happen.

I bite my lip and lift my hips up rhythmically, pretending he's here, or maybe that I'm back by the Phlegethon, riding his leg – the two fantasies mesh and blend, ramping me up. My other hand leaves my breast, joining the first in my panties. I use two fingers to rub tight circles around my clit, pressing down in time with the thrusts inside me.

As male groans sound from the room next door, I picture Ash's face when he's in the throes of an orgasm. Fuck, I love that face so much.

My legs start shaking as my climax approaches and I move faster, fucking, humping, rubbing, taking in the sounds of sex, picturing my man.

I jackknife as I come, clenching my teeth hard to stop myself from screaming out. Still, a sharp keening noise escapes me and I can hear Sarel's guttural groan in response through the wall.

When my breathing slows down and my muscles stop twitching, I let the warmth spreading through my veins lull me to sleep, enjoying the moans rising to a crescendo elsewhere in the house.

I don't think this will be the only time I'll have to take care of myself tonight, after all. It's gonna be a long night.

Chapter 31 – Jessica

Following Sarel's command, I remove my T-shirt, sneakers and leggings and sit on the bed. I shuffle back until my back rests against the headboard, then let my knees fall open, showing the boys the wet patch I can feel on my white panties.

Sarel chuckles at the sight, patting Ithuriel's back. "You're slacking," he says, then tugs on his sweatshirt. "Get that off and join her."

Gulping, Itha grabs hold of the shirt, pulls it over his head, and drops it onto one corner of the bed. His knees hit the mattress and he crawls forward until he's positioned between my legs. With a look at our fallen angel, he waits for further instructions.

My underwear's going to immolate at this point. Can they be any hotter?

"Take her panties off," Sarel commands next as he starts unbuttoning his shirt. His dick is still out, semi-hard even after his orgasm. Itha's hands obey and grab hold of the material at each of my sides. I lift my butt so he can slide them off and they join his sweatshirt.

"Get down there and lick her sweet cunt, from asshole to the top of her clit."

Itha's eyes bug out at Sarel's crass words and he looks at my exposed pussy like it's going to bite him. Or maybe...

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“You’re not going to hurt me,” I soothe him, already panting with anticipation.

With a bracing inhale, he leans down on his elbows and kisses the inside of my thigh.

“That’s so sweet.” Sariel’s murmur draws my eyes to him. He’s already naked, stroking his cock back to hardness. It’s not long until the angel’s breath on my wet center narrows my focus to what’s happening between my legs.

I watch as Ithuriel’s soft lips part and he places an open-mouthed kiss on the top of my mound. They slide down, skimming over my folds until his nose is buried at my entrance and his tongue presses against my back hole.

When I start squirming under the assault, Sariel warns me to stay still. “Make our girl come. I have plans for her,” he tells Itha.

The angel between my legs looks up at me before his hands slide to my core and he takes my clit between his lips. My jaw drops open when I feel his finger gently probing my entrance.

“Oh, yeah, I taught him how to prepare my ass for fucking,” the Fallen chuckles. “You can move a little faster with a pussy, Starlight. They’re softer, more giving,” he whispers, caressing the angel’s cheek with one hand, the other still on his hard dick.

Trusting Sariel, Itha inserts first one, then another finger inside me, and starts pumping. Intuitive, he starts playing with angles until a sharp gasp betrays me. Sucking on my needy nub, he hits the right spot inside me again and again.

“That’s it,” Sarel spurs him on, now a bit breathless himself.

It’s not long until my hands clench around Itha’s hair and I’m lifting up my butt, rubbing against his face.

“Fuck, I’m close,” I groan, shuddering with restraint. I don’t want this to end.

“Let go, poppet,” Sarel says sharply and my body obeys. With a deep moan, I climax against Ithuriel’s beautiful, innocent face.

When I open my eyes, I see Sarel tugging on his balls, smiling down at us indulgently. Like a puppeteer proud of his dolls.

“That was perfect,” he praises with a grin. “Get on your back, Itha,” he says next, before joining us on the bed as well.

Clearly uncertain, the angel still obeys, and I chew on my bottom lip, impatiently awaiting my own orders. I don’t have to wait long.

“Straddle him, love,” he orders me with a gentler smile. I push up to kiss his cheek, enjoying the feel of his skin against my lips before I swing a leg over Itha’s narrow hips.

“His sweatpants are in the way,” I whine, playing the brat.

Sarel taps a finger against his chin. “So they are,” he says. “Let’s take care of that, shall we?”

With a rapid movement and swift tug, he pulls down Itha’s pants and boxers in one go. The angel’s cock stands up, the crown purple and damp with precum.

“That’s better,” I chirp, lowering my slick sex against the angel’s. The tendons on his neck stand in relief as I swivel my hips to wet his cock with my juices and his own saliva.

In a familiar move, Sariel’s hands caress my sides before he lifts me up to grab Itha’s cock. Aiming it at my entrance, he helps me impale myself on the angel’s rod. Before I can start moving, he pushes on my back until my chest is pressed against Itha’s, our lips inches apart.

“What are you going to do?” I ask Sariel with my lips against the angel’s underneath me.

He doesn’t answer, but I feel his breath against my ass a second later, followed by the press of his lips. He spreads my ass cheeks with both hands and presses his stiffened tongue into my asshole. I arch on instinct, nearly dislodging Itha’s cock in the process.

Sariel spans me lightly. “Stay,” he commands.

Something colder dips into the crack of my ass and I gasp against Itha’s neck. “What’s that?” I ask, confused. I don’t think he brought lube with him to our warehouse stakeout.

Sariel’s chuckle sounds from behind me. “I swiped the small bottle of the demon’s expensive olive oil from the table.”

“You planned this?” I pant, itching to start moving on Itha’s throbbing dick.

Sariel crawls up over me to place the closed bottle on the nightstand and whispers into my ear: “I planned on having both of us inside you at the same time since I first saw you look at him.” I shudder. “And we will,” he continues. “Be inside you at the

same time. In. Every. Possible. Way.”

With that, he lifts up to start massaging my tight rosebud with his fingers.

“I never had anyone there,” I murmur. My voice must have been shaking, because suddenly Itha gently grabs my face with both hands and speaks up for the first time in a long while.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“We don’t have to do this, Jessica.” He looks over my shoulder at the Fallen. “I will not do anything that hurts her.”

Sariel’s back in a flash, his cheek pressed against mine as he answers the angel lips to lips. “It might feel full or uncomfortable at first, but not painful.” He turns his head to kiss my cheek. “If you don’t like it, just tell me and I’ll stop, okay?”

I nod bravely and melt under his beaming smile. He retreats and begins preparing me to receive both of them. One finger breaches my asshole and I clench around Itha, making him groan, the vibrations traveling from his chest to mine. Once I get used to one finger, Sariel takes it out and I know two will follow.

“Breathe and push against them,” he instructs before pressing the digits against my hole. As they breach, I exhale in a gust, dropping down and taking Itha a bit deeper.

As Sariel moves two fingers inside my tight tunnel, Itha starts shaking.

“What?” I mouth, looking up at him. He’s not the one about to be stuffed fuller than a Thanksgiving turkey.

“His fingers,” the angel groans. “They’re rubbing against me from inside you.”

I groan at the visual he paints and Sariel lightly laughs behind me. “Wait until it’s my cock in there.”

With that threat, he removes his fingers and presses his pelvis flush against my ass. “Are you ready?” he murmurs, grinding his hard cock against my crack.

“As ready as I’ll ever be,” I giggle nervously.

Ithuriel finds my hands and intertwines our fingers as Sariel places the tip of his dick against my rosebud. “Bear down on it, sweetheart,” he says, lightly pushing in.

The pressure is insane, my skin stretched from the angel already inside me, but I breathe through it. With a bit of effort, the tip of Sariel’s dick finds its home in my ass. Groaning, he rubs soothing circles on my flank. He starts to shallowly fuck me with his cockhead, Ithuriel producing soft whining noises in my ear.

“You’re doing so good,” Sariel tells me. “Taking both of us like this. That’s our girl.” His words hit the spot and I start moving too, slowly taking him deeper and deeper. “Slow down, baby,” he warns, caressing my back.

“No,” I say petulantly. “I want both of my men balls deep inside me.”

Chuckling, Sariel grabs my hips. “That might be a bit ambitious, but I’ll see what we can do. How are you doing there, Starlight?” he asks the angel underneath me.

I lift my head to see beads of sweat decorating the angel’s pale face. He’s taking it harder than I am, and I’m the one with two sizable angel schlongs in my holes.

“You feel incredible,” the angel gasps. “Both of you.”

Something in his words must trigger Sariel, because he finally presses in, entering me as deep as he can. I’m breathing through my nose, clenching my fingers around Itha’s as my body gets used to the double intrusion. It doesn’t feel particularly pleasurable right now, but if it makes my angels happy, I’ll gladly be the filling in their sandwich.

“Good?” Sariel asks. He sounds like he’s speaking through clenched teeth.

“Good,” I reply, resting my head in the crook of Itha’s neck.

That’s when Sariel starts moving and nerve endings I didn’t know I had inside me come to life.

Oh.Oh.

“Move with me,” I hear Sariel saying to Itha through ringing ears. Once both cocks start thrusting, Sariel’s shoving Itha’s into my G-spot, I start seeing stars.

“Oh my God, oh my God, ohmygodohmygod,” I start chanting. I feel like my body is on fire.

“Do you want us to stop?” Sariel asks with laughter in his voice, sounding like he’s in a tunnel a million miles away.

“Don’t you dare stop!” I scream.

“Shhh,” the Fallen hushes me through laughter. “The whole house is gonna know you’re taking two cocks like a dirty little whore.”

I don’t even care right now. I’m drooling on Itha’s chest and my eyes are permanently rolled to the back of my head. I can feel my orgasm coming, but I’m afraid it’ll kill me.

Unintelligible noises leave my throat as the angels take turns thrusting, my body just a receptacle for their pleasure. A knot in my womb winds so tight I’m worried something will break from how hard I’m clenching my muscles.

Sariel collects my hair into his hand, then tugs on it until he lifts me from Itha’s chest. “Jess,” he calls for me. I make a sound that I hope sounds affirmative. “Push when

you're coming, okay?"

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I try to nod, but I'm not sure I manage. When the knot of tension inside me reaches a critical point, I obey the fallen angel and bear down. Wetness splashes over Ithuriel's lap as I squirt for the first time in my life, the orgasm so strong, I feel like I'm having a seizure. Itha shouts something as I feel his dick inside me kick against my walls and Sariel's invading cock.

When I come to, I realize I must have passed out for a second. Sar's hand is holding my drooling mouth shut, and I know I must've screamed unholy Hell.

"Fuck," I mumble against his palm. When he removes it, I try to form more words. "I love you," I slur.

The Fallen chuckles and grabs my neck. "We're not done yet."

Chapter 32 – Ithuriel

My softening manhood is still gently pulsing inside of Jessica, held in place by Sariel's hard sex. I'm covered in our combined fluids; the results of my and Jessica's orgasms, her drool and sweat, as well as my own. I had no idea intercourse was so... messy.

As Sariel slides out of her, so do I. "Roll over," he says. When both Jess and I just lie there, spent, he sighs and picks up our girl, dropping her on her back next to me. With the next move, he pulls me up and over, manipulating me until I'm on top of her. I shudder at his domineering behavior.

"Fuck her," he commands in a low voice and I can see goosebumps lifting on the skin

of Jessica's neck in response.

"I am not... entirely at attention," I murmur, embarrassed to be disappointing them.

Sariel merely snickers. "Not for long."

He leans over to grab the little flask of oil, uncorking it with a pop. The liquid hitting the overheated flesh of my buttocks makes every hair on my body lift. My spent manhood stirs before he even touches me. A millennium and a half of chastity, and I become ravenous in the span of mere weeks.

When Sariel's fingers press against my hole, I welcome them. I will welcome any part of him he wishes to give me. He penetrates me with a digit, then adds more when my muscles loosen around them. It's not long until I'm pushing back into his hand, my penis bobbing against Jessica's mound.

The girl is chewing on her bottom lip, observing the play of emotions on my face, the sounds coming out of my mouth. When our eyes meet, she smiles and lifts her legs, holding them up as Sariel did just days ago. I accept her invitation and lead my manhood back inside her core.

As Sariel hits an electric spot inside me, stars burst into existence behind my now tightly-closed eyelids, and the double stimulation at my back and front threaten to drive me insane.

Without my volition, words come out of my mouth, aimed at the male thrusting his fingers into my body: "Make love to me, Sariel."

The male growls and spreads me open with one hand, replacing his fingers with his manhood. As he pushes past that first tight ring, inhuman sounds echo in the room, grunts and groans intertwining as our bodies do.

Sariel braces himself to thrust harder, moving my body into Jessica's with each shove forward. Her head thrashes from side to side as Sariel's weight pushes my pelvis against hers, providing the friction she needs to find her release.

I am lost in the haze of pleasure and time ceases to hold meaning. All that I am aware of is that my body is now a part of these two beings, just as their hearts are a part of mine.

Jessica climaxes first, calling out both our names as she finds her release, much gentler than last time, her tunnel clenching around my manhood nevertheless. It's the milking of her sex, combined with Sariel changing his angle and pressing against the right spot with each thrust, that brings me over next. My mouth opens and no sound comes out, but I can feel myself clench around Sariel's hardness, squeezing it.

"Oh, fuck, fuck, fuck, Itha!" he yells, thrusting one more time, so hard it hurts, then stilling inside me as he releases impossibly deep.

Sariel's breaths warm my back as our heartbeats synchronize and I look down to see Jess has already fallen asleep. After a moment, Sar rolls off, landing on one side of our girl, the mattress bouncing not disturbing her at all.

More carefully, I extract myself and lie down on her other side, watching her breathe peacefully. I feel Sariel's dark eyes on me and look at him. Smiling, he extends his hand and I meet him halfway, our fingers intertwining atop our sleeping human love.

???

"I was gonna make you fall and then leave you."

Sariel's confession in the dark chills me down to my bones. We were lying in silence, enjoying the peaceful aftermath of our lovemaking.

“Make you suffer how I suffered those centuries, thinking you’d just forgotten about me when I fell to spare you,” he continues.

“Why are you telling me this?” I murmur, my voice betraying the hurt I feel, his words cutting deeper than I could have imagined. I feel so vulnerable after giving him my body.

Sariel squeezes my hand and it’s then I realize he’s still holding it. I want to pull it back, but he won’t allow it.

“Because I need you to know that this is real,” he stresses. “What I feel for you is so real, Ithuriel.” I refuse to look at him, so he tugs on my hand until I give him my eyes. “It’s so strong I gave up Heaven,” he says once our eyes meet. “It’s so strong it endured even after years of being tortured by the demons as I landed in Hell.”

I close my eyes, feeling a tear escape the confines of my eyelids. “I saw that, in the bolgia. It’s what the flames showed me.” I release a choppy exhale. “They tortured you and you called for me.” My voice breaks on the last word.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I hear rustling, then feel Sariel's other hand on my cheek, wiping away my tears.

"I saw how you grew to resent me," I finish in a barely audible whisper.

"But I never stopped loving you," he says with feeling, making me open my eyes again.

I shake my head. "If love erased hate, there would be no wars." My voice sounds as despondent as I feel.

"But me growing the fuck up and pulling my head out of my ass does." I wince at his colorful vocabulary.

"What do you mean?" I ask, a hint of hope lightening the burden in my heart.

"Blaming you for me falling in love with you was asinine," he explains. "My Fall? It was my choice." He clenches his jaw, the muscles of his cheek jumping with the tension. "Everything that followed was my choice. You were and still are the Ithuriel I fell in love with in Heaven."

My tears are flowing freely, too fast for the Fallen to wipe them away. Though, should I still be calling him that now? What am I if not Fallen myself – I have fallen for the two beings in this bed, the three of us covered in each other's fluids.

"What about Jessica?" I ask, thinking of our mortal heart. "Was she merely a part of your plan to ruin me?"

The corner of Sarel's mouth twists up into that wry grin I love, though with an edge of pain. "Well, obviously I failed at not getting attached to her too. She's not going anywhere," he adds with force, looking down at the Nephilim.

"Good," the sleepy girl murmurs, making us both chuckle.

"Do you always merely pretend to be asleep?" I ask her, shaking my head in exasperation.

She smirks, not bothering to open her eyes as she replies: "How else would I see or hear all the good stuff?"

I flush thinking of how she caught me making love to Sarel in Paris, her hand already between her thighs before we noticed she was awake.

"I'll tell Aim he's gonna be out of a job as a spymaster soon," Sarel jokes before laying his head on her stomach and wrapping himself around her.

Sighing, I kiss her cheek and place my head on the pillow next to hers. "Get some rest, dear heart," I tell her, then close my own eyes to meditate on Sarel's words.

Will facing the consequences of my actions and emotions be easier knowing I have both in my corner, irrevocably? We will have to see once I am faced with Saraquel and my peers.

Chapter 33 – Ashtaroth

"We are meant to take the word of your assassin, Ashtaroth?"

I do not have time to respond before Heaven returns the volley.

“If Ithuriel attests to it, then it is true.”

“Right, because Heaven would lose sleep over the potentially unnecessary destruction of a demon lord.”

“We will not sit here and listen to this.”

I rub my forehead. Suffering from a migraine should not be possible for me, yet here we are. I have been listening to this back and forth between Heaven and Hell for hours – hours I spent away from my lamb, hours during which she is somewhere I cannot reach. As my son would say, I am thoroughly and completely over it.

“Silence,” I say quietly, though they all hear. Even the angels cease their murmurings. “It was my court which suffered the most following Belial’s schemes,” I continue. I look at the archangel Saraqael before speaking again. “Do not allow a loss such as that of Armaros to repeat itself merely because you prefer to argue the point for decades before acting.”

The angel’s golden hair glints in the firelight as he slightly tilts his head, the only reaction he allows.

“Andras is Asmodai’s lieutenant,” Marbas states. “How do we know he is not acting on his orders?”

I bare my teeth at the idiot. “My brother has been with Sataniel for two years, he is not leading any petty revolutions.”

“So you have said,” Cassiel from Heaven’s side chimes in. “How do we know this is not an elaborate demonic coup?”

I grit my teeth at the sheer stupidity of that question. I take a moment to compose

myself before speaking again. “If this was a scheme, would I be here invoking the Council’s intervention?”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Belial invoked intervention,” a younger angel whose name I do not know adds.

“And he was correct in doing so, was he not?” Eisheth purrs, inspecting her sharp talons.

I have not asked Father for anything in millennia, but I find myself nearly praying for patience. “We are losing sight of the matter again,” I chastise. “There are envoys of both Heaven and Hell waiting in the human world for orders on how to proceed regarding a threat to every unaware halfling. I would argue that they are mostly innocent and undeserving of the fate Andras has planned for them,” I continue with a grimace, “but we all know I do not care. However, my consort and son do, and they. Are. Waiting.”

“I would like to see proof of Andras’ involvement,” Agares, another of my nephew’s lieutenants, speaks into the silence.

I blow air out of my nose. It is not ideal, but it is a reasonable request, one that I would likely make myself were the tables turned. I tip my head in acknowledgment.

“We would also request proof of Asmodai’s involvement or lack thereof,” Saraqael adds quietly, but with a voice so resonant it does not need to be loud to be heard and understood.

“And how do you propose I do that?” I ask, irritated. “Shall I ask Sataniel to join us and testify my nephew is with him in the Pits?”

The archangel smiles placidly. “I am sure you will find a way, Ashtaroth. Regardless,

that is a secondary goal at the moment.”

I clench my teeth so hard they squeak before I regain control of my reactions. I will not give them the pleasure.

“I will bid Aim to procure this proof you seek,” I say with a voice steeped in irony. “At least this time you cannot blame me for the casualties,” I add with a grin.

I want to leave and set things in motion so Lana can return soon, but, unfortunately, the idiots blather on for some time. By the time I return to my stronghold and find Aim in my throne room, half a day has passed since Lana’s departure and the sky above my domain lightens to a gray a nuance lighter than during the night.

“What has been decided, my lord?” Aim asks as I march toward my seat. I have no intention of waiting for Lana in our bedroom where everything smells of her, an evocative mix of basil and rainstorms.

“You are to bring proof to the Council before it is decided how we will proceed,” I grit out, annoyed once more.

Clearly agreeing with my sentiments, Aim clicks his tongue with frustration. “Andras knows we’re onto him. He’ll either quicken his plans or go into the wind to fight another day. We should act first.”

Sitting on my throne, I lean back and close my eyes. Has being with my lamb made me a smidge mortal? Why am I exhausted? “I am not arguing with you, Aim; I’m relaying what the Council demands.” I open my eyes and pin him with a stare. “Now, how shall we acquire this proof?”

The demon bites his lip, the hoop piercing glinting in the light of the chandeliers with the movement. “Not without hassle, but the most foolproof way would probably be to

bring one of his accomplices to the Council chambers for a testimonial.”

I snort. “Why would a Cambion who was rejected in the original recruitment of Elioud know Andras’ plans?”

Aim shakes his head, a dark strand of hair flopping over one eye. He blows it away before speaking again. “They would at least know who their boss is and what the end goal is. It should be enough to proceed.”

Sighing, I clench my hands on the throne’s armrest. “Very well. Return to the mortal world. Get the Council their proof.” I lean forward. “Lana is powerful, but her control over her hellfire is poor at best. Make sure she does not conflagrate my son or niece.”

It is Aim’s turn to snort. “What about Kevin?” he asks with a grin. “Do we not care if she roasts him?”

“No. Yes,” I correct myself with a groan. “She would never forgive herself if she did and I would suffer more than he does.”

“Very well, Master,” Aim snickers. “I’ll take care of the youngsters.”

“Speaking of. Anything to report?” I ask. It has only been hours and I am already eager to hear how my sweetness is doing. Pathetic.

“Actually, there is. It seems that Sariel has gotten himself involved with both the angel and the Nephilim he was paired with for this mission. They all seem enamored with each other.”

I throw my head back and laugh. “How typical,” I say. What I do not express is how glad I am that my son is seemingly returning to higher spirits and more joyful pursuits. He has not been the same since Armaros perished in his arms.

“How about Lana’s friend? Mike was his name?” I steeple my fingers and bounce my foot, the tension leaving somewhat at Aim’s good news.

“Fuck, how could I forget!” Aim exclaims and I come to a standstill.

“What is wrong?” I growl.

“Oh, nothing’s wrong, I just forgot to lead with the fact that Lana is currently in the home of – oh, you’ll never guess.”

I bare my teeth at my spy and assassin. “If you do not speak up, you will never guess anything again.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Apologies, Master.” Aim bows his head. “But it turns out Nephithar is alive, and Lana’s friend, Mike? He’s his son with an angel, Syriniana, she was an archivist.”

“I remember her,” I mumble. “But Nephithar, Sataniel’s sullen brat?”

The demon in front of me smirks. “Still just as sullen, though I did see him smile at his woman and child a couple of times.”

I scoff and shake my head in disbelief. “Sataniel made it seem like he perished during that final battle, though I remembered seeing him there as the negotiations began. I just did not care enough to doubt the Devil’s word.” I click my tongue. “Which is an imbecilic thing to say out loud.”

Aim’s lips stretch into a mischievous grin. “I would not say that, Duke.”

I roll my eyes. “Of course not. You still enjoy being alive.”

Flapping sounds follow my words and we both turn our gazes to the nuisance of an imp flying above, though flying is an overstatement. What he is doing is more akin to drunken aerial acrobatics. After a few ineffectual wingbeats, Puck lands in my lap, mere inches from Lana’s favorite pastime. I try to grab him by the scruff, but he wraps his arms and legs around my forearm instead. I shake the appendage a few times but have no success in dislodging him.

Sighing, I look at my lieutenant in desperation. “Hurry,” I say. “Bring my wife home.”

Chapter 34 – Sariel

We're having breakfast and waiting for Aim to return to give us some direction. If it was up to me, we'd be at that warehouse, kicking ass. But that kind of thinking got us into trouble the last time.

Chewing the cinnamon and vanilla French toast Syrin prepared, I look at the sleepy faces of my companions. Doesn't look like anyone rested this night. I grin to myself, reliving the depraved things I did to my little toys.

Speaking of toys. I nudge my cousin. "Psst, Nah. You went back to get your mortal?"

"Huh?" she asks in a daze. What is up with her, seriously? "Oh, yes. He got himself kidnapped by a few of Belial's flunkies and Uncle sent me to fetch him. So I kept him." She preens, looking more like herself.

I swallow a piece of toast and grin at her. Good for her.

Aim's back before I can start teasing the Cambion. It's about time.

"They want proof," he says instead of a hello.

"What kind of proof?" Jess asks, yawning the words out. Aim gives me a look of reproach.

"What?" I mouth. It's not my fault my trouser snake needs regular milking.

"Proof that Andras is involved, proof of what he plans to do," Aim grouses. "We decided it's best if we bring back one of the Cambions to testify in front of the Council."

“Then we should gonow,” Ithuriel stresses.

“He’s right,” Jess adds. “That warehouse is gonna be empty before you can say, ‘I’d like to talk to you about your car’s extended warranty.’”

I smirk at my poppet, Kevin snorts, and Itha does a good job of ignoring the joke he doesn’t understand.

“Alright then,” Naamah says, sweeping her long black curls off her shoulder in a graceful motion. “What are we waiting for?”

“You shouldn’t go anywhere dangerous in your state,” Syrin gently reprimands the succubus.

The Cambion glances between the angel and his succubus. “What state?” he asks, notes of panic in his voice. “Are you sick?” he asks his lover accusingly.

“I can’t get sick,” she sighs, rolling her eyes. “Are you sure?” she then asks the angel.

Syriniana flushes and lifts her palms in apology. “I thought you knew.”

“Knew what?” Kevin asks and I drop my face into my palms at his confusion.

“I wasn’t certain,” Naamah admits, a grin blooming on her face. “I began suspecting last night.”

“Are you saying what I think you’re saying?” Lana asks, her fork halfway to her mouth.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Can someone please fill me in?” Kevin asks with a shout.

“You were the one doing the filling,” Mike mutters and I give him a thumbs up at the joke.

“Keep up, pet,” my cousin purrs at her lover. “We’re pregnant.”

Everyone cheers, except for Nephithar and Ithuriel, but the latter does have a gentle smile on his lips. It makes me want to kiss him.

“That’s impossible!” Kevin’s voice breaks and his face turns as pale as the cheese he was eating.

Lana rolls her eyes and places a hand on his shoulder. She begins speaking in a patronizing tone: “When a male and a female love each other very much...”

Kevin shakes her hand off. “I know how babies are made, asshole, I meant that we literally just decided to have them! I thought I’d have more time to get ready.”

“Well,” Naamah drawls nonchalantly. She’s clearly not upset by Kevin’s less-than-stellar reaction. “I have hundreds of siblings, sweetie. You really should have considered that fertility runs in my genes.”

“What am I going to do?” Kevin asks, sounding like a lost little boy. “I think I need to lie down.”

“No time,” Aim interjects decisively. “We’re already one down for the mission. Have

your panic attack later.”

“Two,” Nephithar speaks for the first time since Aim arrived. “Syriniana should stay with the succubus.”

“He’s right,” his consort sighs. “If anyone followed you back last night, I won’t let her be caught here alone.”

“That’s not what I meant,” Nephithar says through gritted teeth, then eyes his son, obviously willing him to stay home too and possibly take away the need for him to join now that the possibility of someone following here is on his mind.

“Oh, we’re going, Dad,” Mike says confidently. “These people were gonna exterminate my kind like rats.”

The old demon sighs, rubbing a hand across his rugged features. “Very well,” he concedes.

“Mike,” Lana calls out to her friend curiously. “How many brothers and sisters do you have?”

“Ah, none,” the young mortal replies.

I see Nephithar’s hand twitch before he puts it on Syrin’s shoulder and gently squeezes.

“We’re not quite as fertile as our friend here.” The angel gently smiles at my cousin. “But we had numerous miscarriages through the millennia.” She smiles wryly but with an obvious edge of pain. “I guess it was our fate to wait for modern medicine’s assistance.”

“Oh. I’m sorry,” Lana murmurs.

“It’s okay, Lan,” Mike says breezily. “I’m here now and kept them more than busy over the years.”

“That’s the truth,” Nephithar grumbles, the atmosphere relaxing again as everyone else chuckles.

I poke Naamah. “Congrats, Cuz. You know,” I drawl, “Sariel is a strong name. Pretty androgynous too. It can go for boys and girls. Much like its owner.” I smirk at my grinning cousin. By the look on Kevy’s face, Sariel’s gonna be a no-go. Oh, well.

“Congratulations, Lupula,” Aim says with a lopsided smile, calling her a little she-wolf in Latin. “But we need to get this show on the road if we have any hopes of catching Andras red-handed.”

Naamah purses her lips, grabs Kevin’s face, and brings it in for a peck. “Hurry back to me, pet,” she says in a sultry voice. “We need to discuss baby room décor.”

“Yes, Mistress,” Kevin replies, still in a daze. When snickers sound around the table, he realizes what he said out loud and turns tomato red.

“Do you have a vehicle?” Aim asks Nephithar, changing the subject, which I’m sure Kevy is grateful for.

“Does my dad have a vehicle, he asks.” Mike stands up and stretches, the T-shirt he’s wearing lifting up with the movement and exposing a swath of smooth skin over a lightly toned tummy. I stifle the urge to lick my lips – that old demon would probably rip my balls off if he caught me eyeballing his cute little twink of a son.

“He has several muscle cars and choppers if you prefer bikes,” Mike continues,

already walking toward the door. “I’m gonna get dressed into something that covers a bit more skin than my pajamas.”

Aim nods to himself as he takes us all in. “So that makes... seven of us.”

Page 72

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“A magical number,” Lana singsongs. Aim ignores her.

“We’ll take a car and a bike, then. If that’s okay, Neph?”

I lift my eyebrows at the casual nickname but keep my mouth shut. I’ll stir some shit up later when time’s not a-ticking.

The burly demon crosses his arms. “I’ll take a Harley and you and Mike are driving the Mustang and Dodge, no one else.”

“Thanks for the vote of confidence,” Aim says with a smirk.

“I wouldn’t go that far,” Nephithar grumbles. He turns to his consort. “Do you truly believe someone might have followed them?”

“I would’ve sensed anyone nearby,” Lana chimes in.

“She’s right,” I say. “Her Celestial-meter is freakishly strong.”

The demon blows air out of his nose, then turns on his heels before stalking off. Hopefully to put some tight armor on. Or maybe he fights topless like the barbarian he is.

What?My heart got taken, not my corneas.

Syrin walks over to my cousin. “Come on, Naamah, let’s talk in the garden.”

Naamah jumps up and clasps her hands. “Wonderful!” she says, following the angel to the French doors in the family room, leaving her lover behind. “Do you read? How do you feel about smut?”

I shake my head – my cousin is gonna have that angel reading taboo books in no time.

I look at Father’s main squeeze. “I know you want to join them, Lana, but go put on your leathers instead. If you get a scratch Ash is gonna lock me in the dungeons again.”

Lana sighs dramatically, then pushes herself back from the table. “Jess, you still got your armor?” She skeptically eyes our girl’s powder-blue T-shirt with a cartoon of a baby seal on the front.

“Yes, ma’am,” Jess replies. “Cleaned it and everything.”

The tall redhead raises an eyebrow. “Of what?” she asks, then quickly adds: “You know what, I don’t want to know.”

“No, you don’t,” I say with a chuckle.

Once the girls leave, I eye a still-stunned Kevin. I snap a finger in front of his face. “Hey, Kevy. Need me to help you change clothes?”

That successfully gets the mortal’s attention (and me a disdainful look) and he follows after his teammates. Just me and my angel now. I give him my best sultry look.

“What about you?” I ask. “Want me to help you put your armor on?”

Ithuriel blushes, then stands up and smooths the front of his sweatshirt, ironing out

invisible wrinkles. “I’m afraid that would defeat the purpose of us hurrying,” he murmurs.

When he almost reaches the door, he turns and hesitates for a second before speaking again. “But perhaps you can help me take it off after?”

Chapter 35 – Ithuriel

These contraptions that humans call cars are death cages on four wheels. And the way they drive them? As if they’re not half a second away from prematurely ending their fragile mortal existence.

“I can hear your teeth grinding back there, angel,” the demon Aim speaks from behind the wheel. “I’m not even going above the speed limit here.”

Sariel, occupying the front passenger seat with his arm hanging out the open window, turns back to laugh at me. Sitting beside me in the back, Jessica glares at the boys before leaning against me.

“Ignore them. They’re not the ones in a car for the first time ever.”

I kiss the top of our human’s head and wink at Sariel, who’s still observing us. His lips spread into a wide grin at the sight of my insouciance.

“Are we there yet?” Jessica sighs impatiently after another five minutes. “I hate being in the back, it always makes me nauseous.”

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“You should’ve told me that, poppet,” Sar growls.

“Either way, we’re there in a minute,” Aim interjects. “Try not to puke on Neph’s upholstery or he’ll castrate us.”

Snorting, I embrace Jess and caress her arm with long, soothing sweeps. She can throw up wherever she wants to. I’ll hold her hair.

Despite being a nefarious, ancient demon, Aim was speaking the truth and the commercial docks come into view not long after. We park a distance away from the warehouse we stalked, next to the other two death traps that brought our little cadre to the location.

Mike, Kevin, and Lana lean against the other car, while Nephithar stands next to his unsafe-looking, obscenely loud two-wheeled vehicle with his arms crossed. He’s wearing leather trousers and a tight black cotton shirt, looking much like Sariel, who is back to his leather bottoms and vest. They both have charcoal black hair and tanned skin stretched over defined muscle, though the demon is bigger and burlier.

The rest of our entourage is wearing leather armor as well, though only Lana’s is ornate in any way, decorated as it is by glowing gems. I squint at her. She feels much more like an archdemon again and I guess they are to blame, burning with hellfire as they are.

I am the only one in plate armor and as the Mediterranean late-spring sun reflects off the metal, I wish I had brought something lighter with me. When I think about commissioning something appropriate from Heaven’s armorsmiths, I remember I will

no longer be welcome to do so. My heart sinks to the bottom of my plated boots.

Sariel takes my gloved hand into his, capturing my attention. “What has you so pensive?” he asks. “Strategizing our approach?”

I clear my throat. If only clearing my heart of its heaviness would be as simple. “I was thinking of acquiring a set of leather armor.”

“Oh, that’s easy.” He grins at me, his teeth looking especially white in the sun. Even his black eyes seem brighter in this light. “I’ll get you as many as you want as soon as we get home.”

My mouth automatically returns his smile. “Alright,” I say. With another squeeze of my hand, Sariel turns to approach the rest of our group. I may not be able to clear the heaviness from my heart on my own, but Sariel and Jessica seem to be more than successful at doing so.

“Divide and conquer?” Sariel asks Aim and Nephithar once we’re all within hearing distance.

The red-eyed demon nods. “I’ll go with my son,” he says, unnecessarily. “We’ll enter from the south side.”

“Kevin and I will join you,” Lana adds decisively.

“That leaves us four approaching from the North,” Aim finishes the short planning conversation. “Remember, we need at least one of them alive, but we should minimize the casualties anyway, for the Council’s sake.”

I reel back. “We will not kill any humans!” I’m here to prevent a slaughter, not execute it.

“These fuckers are evil, Itha,” Sarel growls. “I’m not saying we’ll be decapitating unarmed Cambions, but if one of them has a gun aimed Jess’ way, I’m ending them.”

I close my eyes and pray for calm. I did not consider the humans being a threat, but, naturally, he did. They managed to kill Armaros last year, after all.

“Do you want to stay behind?” our human asks quietly. I’m taken aback at her consideration but still shake my head.

“No,” I say, my voice allowing no argument. I will not let them head into danger without me to protect them. Waiting here will not appease my conscience.

“Let’s get going then,” the Cambion, Kevin, speaks up for the first time. “I want to get Naamah back to Hell, where it’s safe.”

Lana bends over laughing and slaps her thighs. “The things impending fatherhood makes you say,” she squeaks, gasping for air.

“Don’t pretend like you don’t want to get back to your hot Cheeto of a husband, Lana,” Jessica teases next.

“Are we quite done fooling around?” Nephithar grumbles. “I want to get my son out of here and go home to my wife too.”

Aim shakes his head. “The things love does to people, it’s not to be believed.”

???

As we stalk through the dimly lit warehouse, we notice signs of recent activity everywhere; scattered papers, overturned furniture, even some ominous drops of blood. No Cambions to capture, though. Either they’re on the other side of the

building or we have indeed come too late.

Just then, loud cracks sound from nearby. We stop and look at each other.

“Gunfire,” Aim says.

“Should we go to them?” I ask a moment before silence reigns again.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

Sariel shakes his head. “They can take care of themselves. Let’s go.”

Dust motes dance in the air as we turn a corner made by shipping containers, Sariel and Aim taking the lead, Jessica in the middle, and me last, defending them from behind. When they come to a sudden stop, I know something isn’t right.

I realize the reason for the standstill when I lay my eyes on Andras, a smirk on his face as he stands on a shipping container, clearly ready and waiting for us.

“All alone, Andras?” Aim asks casually, his hands free of weapons.

The demon lord above us, his leathery wings out, the claw-like hooks at their tips twitching, merely lifts one arm. As he does, his Cambion underlings appear from the shadows, guns in hand and menacing expressions on their faces.

“Too much of a pussy to face us yourself?” Sariel asks Andras in his signature drawl. “You throw mortal idiots with toys at us instead?”

“Show them what we do with infidels,” Andras tells his underlings in French. The clicking of their weapons echoes in the cavernous structure. I push Jessica behind me, calling out and spreading my wings to shield her more fragile body.

“Motherfuck!” Sariel yells as gunshots fill the air. Bullets ping off the shipping containers around us and I begin to worry some might ricochet into our Nephilim, so I wrap myself around her, holding her head to my chest. For a moment, I let the memory of me saving her from that demon during our first day in Hell suffuse my thoughts. She was a stranger then and now she is my heart.

Aim's stifled gasp follows a gust of wind. I lift my head in time to see him fly past as if shot out from a cannon, then crash into the wall on the far side. He slumps down, immobile. That was Andras' power, picking off the greatest threat from afar.

"Itha," Jess mumbles into my chest. I let her lift her head up. "I'll hide behind a container, go help Sariel."

When I reluctantly look behind me, I see Sariel incapacitating the remaining Cambions and breaking their weapons while dodging Andras' projectiles of wind, water, and fire. Thankfully, it's not hellfire, but it only takes one misstep for him to be thrown out of the battlefield like Aim was.

I look back at my human. "Do not come out until Nepthithar and the rest join us." When she nods hastily, I gently take hold of her shoulders and give her a shake. "I mean it. If we falter, run to our vehicles."

"I will. Promise."

After pushing her around the corner, I join the other piece of me in battle. The handful of Cambions are dispatched easily enough. I take a glancing blow to the neck, just above the protection of my armor, but the few drops of blood are nothing compared to the blooms of silver on Sariel's exposed body. Every few seconds, a bullet is expelled from his flesh, hitting the ground with a plinking sound.

Sariel throws a human in Jessica's direction and I already take half a step toward them when a male grunt sounds out and combat boots peek through the corner, the thug obviously incapacitated and belly up.

I share a grin with the fallen angel.

"That's our girl," he says.

Two more of Andras' minions charge in, these equipped with knives. I break the arms of the first, leaving him in a heap on the ground, the other joining him after Sariel chokes him unconscious.

The demon lord finally descends, two vicious-looking sickles in hand.

"Thank you for taking out the trash," he says with a sneer, rotating his wrists so the half-moon weapons cut through the air with a whistling sound.

"We've only just begun," I assure him as I palm my greatsword, falling into a combat-ready stance.

Shadows dance across the rusted beams as Andras lunges, his twin sickles hissing through the air. I meet him head-on, my sword clashing against both weapons at once, the impact sending sparks flying.

"Still the Council's loyal hound?" Andras mocks, teeth flashing behind our blades.

"Better a hound than a traitor," I respond, pushing the demon back.

I see Sariel circling us from the periphery of my vision, his battle axe spinning in his grip, his dark grin so at odds with the tension crackling in the air. He lunges, the double blades of his weapon flashing toward Andras' ribs. The demon pivots, catching the blade with one sickle, the other slicing through Sariel's leather vest. Alarmed, I take a step back to assess the damage but find no blood. When I look back at the demon, I see he noted my concern with a raised brow.

"I liked this vest," Sariel growls, eyeing the hole in the garment.

"Come now, Fallen," Andras laughs, eyes glinting. "Don't pretend you're not enjoying this."

“I’ll enjoy it more when you’re bleeding at my feet, traitor.”

For a moment we work in tandem, keeping Andras at bay, though he moves like liquid shadow, anticipating our strikes, twisting between them like it’s merely a game.

Suddenly, he stops playing and one of his weapons strikes out, locking my greatsword and giving him free reign to slash the other across my ribs. As the stinging pain registers, Andras wastes no time to kick Sarel in the stomach, knocking him to the ground. A moment later he’s bringing me down as well, a hand wrapped around my throat.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Too soft,” he murmurs, increasing pressure.

Jessica’s sobs register, as does the pounding of her footsteps coming closer. I want to yell at her to stay back like she promised, but the vile creature above me doesn’t allow me the leeway to speak.

The demon grins and disappears. A moment later, Jessica’s scream is heard from above, from atop the same shipping container Andras manipulated the fight from. In a fluid motion, he drags her to a catwalk, holding her over it with one arm as she kicks and struggles.

I try to lurch up, but a coughing fit causes me to expel blood. The demon’s weapon must have punctured my lungs. Sariel is already on his feet though, staring at the scene above, hand clenched at his side, his axe trembling in the other.

“Now, Fallen...” Andras’ smirk sharpens as Sariel freezes. He lowers Jessica until she grasps the catwalk’s railing and backs off. “What will it be? The girl... or me?”

The muscles in Sariel’s jaw twitch as his eyes flick between Jessica, her fingers slipping, and Andras, already disappearing into the shadows.

“Sariel...” I groan from the floor.

“Fuck.”

My love bursts into motion, transporting himself up to Jessica and grabbing her wrist just as her fingers slip. He pulls her up and her weight crashes against him, sending

them both on their knees. She sobs into his neck as he wraps his arms around her in comfort.

Andras' laughter cuts off as I drop my head back down to the ground, waiting to heal enough to move.

He's gone.

Chapter 36 – Lana

We try to be as quiet as possible as we skulk through the smaller, office-like sections of the warehouse. I sense dozens of Cambions in the vicinity and the extra demonic signature on the other side points to Andras being here as well. I hope the other team won't have too much trouble with him. Jess should be fine with an ancient demon lord like Aim and two angels. Right?

As soon as the worry comes, it's forced to the side – some of the Cambions I sense decide it's a good idea to ambush us. Nephithar sighs like they're naughty kids who stepped between him on his couch and the sitcom on the TV.

When the familiar sound of guns cocking enters my awareness, I take a breath to shout out a warning. Kevin beats me to it though.

“Guns!” he yells, ducking behind the corner and pulling me back with him.

With a growl, Nephithar charges, mowing down the first row of mortals like a juggernaut, disarming them and knocking them against the wall. When one bounces off with the sound of a broken neck, I wince. That is not going to go over well when we face the Council.

It doesn't take long for the Cambions to notice that their bullets are ineffectual

against the demon and they scatter with the sound of hurried receding footsteps and backward glances filled with panic.

“How did they even think they could win against us?” Mike asks, slapping his dad’s back, having to lift his arm comically high to do so.

I smirk at my once-daily companion. “They didn’t expect to come face to face with Lucy’s offspring, that’s for sure,” I say with a grin on my lips.

“This one’s dead as a doornail,” Kevin says. The male he’s looking down at is lying with his head at an unnatural angle and eyes open.

“Oops,” Nephithar says without a hint of inflection and I snort a laugh. When the boys cut me a sharp look I put a hand over my mouth. God, I’ve been hanging around Ash for too long.

“They were shooting at you,” I defend my callousness. “You two are vulnerable to bullets, especially Mike, he hasn’t been to a Celestial realm yet.”

“Nor will he.” Nephithar’s voice is as dark as pitch.

I bite my lip and choose my words carefully. “You can’t be sure how he’ll age if he doesn’t. You might outlive him.”

The muscles in Nephithar’s jaw twitch as his fists clench. This is clearly something he’s thought about.

“Hold up,” Mike says. “What do you mean ‘you two are vulnerable to bullets’? What about you?”

My eyes pop open at the question and I gape for a second. How do I say this in a way

that he'll understand?

“Isoldmysoulto my husband and now I have superpowers,” I rush out in one breath, tighten my ponytail, and continue down the hallway to a pair of unconscious Cambions.

“Are you insane?” Mike asks, each word louder than the last.

Page 76

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I take out the zip ties I borrowed from Syrin's kitchen and restrain the passed-out mortals' hands and feet. "It's not like Lucifer gave us a choice," I murmur. I can feel my face heating up. Why am I letting his judgment get to me? He wasn't there, he doesn't know what it's like to be told to choose between your soul and your heart.

"That's not—"

"Enough, Son," Nephithar intervenes. I turn to see him giving me a knowing look. "She never had the choice."

I bite my lip. "Ash thinks he's planning something. Something to do with archdemon and mortal couples... maybe children."

The demon's eyes widen.

"What?" I take a step closer. "What do you know?"

He hesitates. "There is a prophecy," he says slowly.

"What kind of prophecy?" I ask, growling with impatience.

The demon shakes his head, his red eyes narrowed in apology. "Ask Syrin when we're back, she'll know it better than me as she likely transcribed it eons ago. Her mind's a vast archive of knowledge. Mine's mostly preoccupied with thoughts of making love to her."

"Ew, Dad!"

The burly demon shoots a shit-eating grin at Mike, then continues down the makeshift hallway. I let Kevin pass and fall into step with my other best friend.

“Are you mad at me?” I ask, chewing on the inside of my cheeks.

Mike blows out a gust of air before wrapping an arm around my waist. He pulls me along after the other males. “Dad’s right, I have no idea what I’m talking about and should’ve counted to five before I opened my cocksucking mouth.”

Nephithar groans from ahead and Mike’s eyes get that evil twinkle I know so well. Payback’s a bitch, I guess.

Before I can open my mouth, gunfire sounds from the other side of the warehouse, an endless rat-tat-tat of bullets being expelled from weapons.

“We need to hurry,” I gasp, shaking Mike off and picking up my pace. As we burst through the iron door at the end of the office area, the space opens up. There’s an old, likely defunct forklift to our right, and in front of us are endless rows of incredibly tall shelves.

“The gunfire isn't coming from here,” Kevin says, turning in circles to take in every shadowed corner.

“Let’s move, then.” Nephithar’s words spur us back into action. We pass row after row, their far sides fading into darkness, but we don’t seem to be any closer to the source of the sounds of battle.

I must’ve grown complacent to what I sense in my surroundings or just that worried about my friends, because the next thing I know, we’re surrounded by more Cambions. And this time there’s nowhere to hide.

Chaos engulfs us as we all spring into motion. Nephithar throws himself at the nearest Cambion, grabbing his arm and pushing it up just as the mortal squeezes the trigger of his gun. Instinctively, I duck, then use the move to barrel into another enemy's midsection. As I bring the pudgy man to the ground and start whaling on him, I briefly wonder where all the women are. Surely their families aren't all boys? This seems like a question Simone would be able to answer. If we ever got to talk to her again.

Once the scumbag under me is well and truly passed out, I blow a loose strand of hair from my sweaty face. In front of me, Mike spins to dodge a blow, ending the rotation with a roundhouse kick. He did not learn that in our self-defense class when we met. With that big demon as a dad, he must've known how to fight since he was in diapers. So what was he doing in that class? I'm going to have to ask him later.

I get up in time to catch Kevin in my arms, then push him back at his two opponents. We're grossly outnumbered and I feel like we stepped on a beehive. I wish I could use my hellfire, but... I still can't aim with it. I don't want to hurt my friends.

What happens next transpires too fast for my brain to grasp. One moment I'm looking for my next target, the next I hear Mike screaming my name. He barrels into me with a thud and we both drop like a sack of potatoes, the smaller male on top of me.

"What the heck was that, douche canoe?" I grumble, pushing at his shoulders, but get no response. "Mike?"

"Michael!" Nephithar roars.

With shaking limbs, I roll until Mike's lying on the floor and pat him down. "What's wrong, buddy?" I ask, trying to find the source of his paleness. When I notice the pool of blood spreading underneath him, I feel my face pale as well. I turn him over until I'm faced with his wet back, a hole in his plain leather armor. "Fuck, no, no,

no,” I whine, reaching for one of my daggers with a trembling hand.

Kevin’s knees hit the ground next to us. “What do you need?” he asks with an earnest voice.

“Watch our backs!” I hiss, grabbing the collar of Mike’s top and using my blade to cut it down the middle.

“It’s almost over,” Kevin says and reaches over to help me clear the wound. Once the hole is visible and I see dark red blood seeping out, my heart clenches. That’s a bullet hole and it’s clearly still inside him. Or it would’ve been inside of me.

In the sudden silence, I look up to see Nephithar frozen in horror, looking down at his bleeding son. Tears well in my eyes and I angrily brush them off with the back of my hand. He’s not dead. He can’t die. We’ve only just reunited.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I take a shaky breath and gently place my hands over the hole in my friend's body. I can feel his warmth against my sweaty palms. I haven't healed anything more than a scrape in months. Still, focusing on the ether in Mike's blood is second nature. First, I stem the worst of the bleeding, sealing off the torn vessels causing the blood loss. He's already lost enough. But I need to make sure I leave enough circulation to keep the flesh alive.

Careful. Careful, Lana.

"We need to get him to Syriniana." That's Mike's Father.

"Let Lana do her thing, she's good at this." And that's Kevin.

I hear their conversation as if from a great distance, not letting the emotions in their voices penetrate into my awareness as I focus on Mike's flesh, manipulating it into pushing the offending object out. I feel every sharp, bent, and broken edge of the bullet, misshapen from the high-velocity impact against Mike's lean body.

The projectile scratches my friend's flesh as it reverses the path it took and nears the surface, fresh blood sprouting in its wake. I hear Nephithar's alarm, but – again – don't let it rattle me. I close those new lacerations and continue directing Mike's body into expelling the bullet. Resistance stops once it leaves the enclosure of its target's body and I distantly hear the plinking sound of it falling to the warehouse's dirty floor.

I feel my energy flagging, but there's only the matter of knitting the top layers of muscle and skin together again. I can do that.

“He isn’t breathing!” Nephithar yells, pulling my consciousness out of Mike’s body.

“Shit, Lana, let me turn him over.” Kevin pulls me back and I fall onto my ass, watching helplessly as the two males turn Mike onto his back again. He’s not breathing and his lips are getting a blue tinge.

Fuck, it didn’t hit his lungs, his lungs are fine, it must be blood loss, fuck, fuck, fuck, I don’t know if I have the strength to help his body produce more, I can’t lose my friend because I’m not strong enough, what was the point of selling my soul if I’m. Not. Strong enough!

My ears start ringing, the sound increasing in volume as Kevin tilts Mike’s chin up, listening for a moment before starting chest compressions.

My heart picks up speed like I’m running a sprint. Like I’m running from that golem again. Only no one’s here to save me this time. I’m helpless. I’m useless.

“Lana, his blood needs oxygen. Lana? Lana!”

Chapter 37 – Ithuriel

Syrin sits on a chair next to her son’s empty bed, her head in her hands. I’ve never seen an angel in that pose before, but then, I’ve never seen an angel feeling the emotions of a mother.

I lean my head back against the wall and close my eyes. I cannot remember ever feeling this drained. Jessica retired to the room we share with Sariel, but I refuse to move from this bedside.

“Stop looking like someone died. You’re bumming me out.”

Mike shuffles out of his ensuite bathroom, leaning heavily against his friend, Lana. His body has been through a lot. And Lana doesn't let the mortal out of her sight.

When we met up with the other team in the middle of the warehouse, Kevin was attempting to resuscitate a deathly pale Mike, and Lana was holding his hand, doing her best to help keep the mortal's blood circulating. I wasn't in the best of shapes either, but I rushed in to assist. Together we brought the mortal back to life and his waiting mother.

Syrin smiles now, helping the redhead tuck Mike back into bed. "We're just tired, darling," she says before kissing the top of his nose. Mike's face scrunches up and he opens his mouth to say something, but the rest of our faces turn toward the entrance and I can hear it audibly close with a click of his teeth.

"What is it?" he asks in a whisper.

"An archangel," Lana says just as quietly. I want to tell her there is no need to whisper – Saraqael would have heard her from across the neighborhood.

The door opens soundlessly to a golden male in ornate armor. Saraqael looks as he did the last time I saw him, months ago, when I set out on this adventure, not knowing it would change me forever.

"You found us," Syrin says while I'm still searching for words.

The ancient angel lifts a gilded eyebrow. "We have always known where you are, Syriniana."

The archivist presses a hand against her chest. "Then why has no one come to punish me for leaving?"

“You lost Heaven’s light for a life with a demon from Hell. Is that not punishment enough?” the archangel asks, taking a few steps closer and eyeing Mike with a curious glint in his sunshine-colored eyes. “Is this your issue?”

The young mortal snaps out of the daze the archangel’s appearance put him in and straightens up in bed. “Don’t condescend to my mom, archangel zaddy. We’re doing just fine without Heaven.”

The corner of Saraqael’s lip twitches. “Clearly,” he says, tone flat. “And who will answer for the death of the dozens of Cambions the Council was led to believe needed to be saved?”

“That would be me,” Nephithar says from the doorway. “They attacked us with their dishonorable weapons and very nearly killed my son.” The demon’s growled words raise every hair on my body with their pain and anger.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“If the Council condones that they do so without punishment, then we will not condone the Council’s punishment for defending ourselves.” I speak up for the first time, drawing my mentor’s fathomless gaze.

Saraqael holds my eyes for long moments and I find the strength to not back down, though I feel nearly disrespectful in doing so. I have always deferred to him as my superior, my elder, my better.

“We should talk privately,” he finally says.

“No, I don’t think you should.”

When Sariel’s voice rings out from behind Nephithar, Saraqael closes his shining eyes. “You were not meant to be on this mission, Sariel,” he says. Turning around, he pins my love with a hard stare. “You left to spare him a thousand years ago but had no such consideration now?”

I blink and get to my feet. “You knew? You knew he fell because he had feelings for me?”

The archangel looks over his shoulder. “Naturally. I know everything you feel.”

“And you let him suffer through his fall alone.” That was Jessica, now standing next to Sariel, allowing him to pull her into his side.

“He was no longer my responsibility once he fell. I had to take care of Ithuriel. And thanks to you, I have failed in that. Failed Ithuriel.”

I can feel shame heating the tips of my ears. I expected to have an unpleasant confrontation with Saraqael, but no matter how much I practiced it in my head in the quiet times when Jessica was sleeping, nothing could have prepared me for the look of desolation and disappointment in his eyes.

“Ithuriel’s just fine with us, he doesn’t need you,” Jessica says, her hands clenched into fists.

The ancient archangel shakes his head, his lips twisted into a bitter grimace. “Child,” he chastises. “You heal your own wounds, fill your lacks and insecurities with Ithuriel’s innate goodness, letting his light shine through the many holes in your soul, then think you provide the same for him? What do you have to offer him but an endless lifetime of depravity and corruption?”

Saraqael’s words are like a sword to the gut and the way Jessica’s face blanches twists it in the wound. Sariel’s anger is palpable and he likely only holds himself back because I speak first.

“Enough,” I hiss, stepping to the archangel’s side, cutting off his view. “You claim to know what we are feeling, but you’re so blind to my feelings for Jessica and Sariel.”

“I do not doubt your feelings, Ithuriel,” the male says quietly. “I doubt that they are worthy of them.”

“Look, you scum sucker,” Sariel says, squaring up against the elder angel. Lana gasps and covers her mouth, rushing closer to intercept the charging Fallen. “Get off your fucking high horse, your head’s clearly spinning.”

Saraqael pinches the bridge of his nose and waves the other hand in Lana’s direction. “What have you done with yourself, mortal?”

“There’s absolutely nothing wrong with her.” Mike comes to his friend’s defense, shuffling up to where we stand.

“Get away from him,” Nephithar growls.

“Saraqael won’t hurt him,” Syrin responds firmly.

“Of course I will not harm the child.” Saraqael sounds aghast that they would even consider it.

“I’m not a child,” Mike says, getting in the archangel’s face – or rather chest. Their height difference is significant. “Come down here, daddy, and I’ll prove how much of a man I am.”

My eyes widen at the young human’s flirtation and Sariel bursts out laughing. “I’d pay any amount of pay-per-view to see that,” he chuckles.

Nephithar looks like he’s tempted to cross himself despite being the son of the devil. But Jessica... those are tears in her eyes.

“Saraqael.”

As my mentor and I lock eyes again, I look past the disappointment in them to the fondness he holds for me.

“What you said to Jessica was hurtful and unnecessary. She completes me as much or more as I do her. And she isn’t the only one.” I gesture at Sariel. “You knew he loved me a thousand years ago. Let me love him now.”

The air is knocked out of my lungs as Sariel grabs me by the front of my shirt and slams his mouth against mine. Before I gather my faculties, Jessica pushes the Fallen

away and pulls me down to fuse our mouths in a passionate kiss. I hear Mike loose a wolf whistle. Just as my heart catches up with my body, Jessica lets me go to lick at Sariel's mouth instead.

"Fuck, that's hot," Lana whispers, turning my face red. I cannot believe we just did that in front of my mentor, an archangel.

The three of us are locked in an embrace, forgetting all about the world around us. I see my love reflected in Sariel and Jessica's eyes, their gratitude for my acceptance of them even in the face of Heaven.

Page 79

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

“Psst. Hey, archangel,” Mike whispers to Saraqael and I turn around to see what he’s up to. The golden male squints at the boy. “Wanna see my piercing?” the Nephalem asks with a wiggle of his eyebrows.

Saraqael eyes him up and down. “I do not see any such adornments.”

Mike grins like a fox that found itself alone with a chicken. “Exactly.”

Nephithar’s hand flies out to hit the boy upside the head.

???

“The Council will not take any testimonials you bring forth with surety after you massacred the very creatures you lobbied to protect.”

Saraqael looks extremely uncomfortable sitting with our motley crew at Syriniana and Nephithar’s dining table. Kevin and Naamah joined us for the conversation, having obviously waited to see the lay of the land once an archangel appeared in the house.

“That wasn’t our fault,” Kevin says now, clenching the succubus’ hand in his lap. In turn, Naamah wraps her tail around his neck like a pet snake.

“They didn’t exactly let us reason with them,” Lana continues. “They were more of the ‘shoot first, ask questions never because thinking hurts’ types,” she says, using her fingers to draw quotation marks in the air.

“Not to mention Andras being there, attacking from a distance like the coward he is,” Aim speaks next, having just returned from reporting to his master, Ashtaroth, to discover the house now holds an archangel.

“I am merely stating that you are not very credible reporters against a lone demon lord wanting to exterminate mortals with Celestial blood,” Saraqael says, then tilts his head to the side. “You did that yourselves.”

“It’s certainly not just one lone demon lord,” Nephithar jumps in. “Andras is sly and has long been known for having a hatred for humankind, but he is not a planner.”

“I brought the few Cambions you left bound, and more importantly alive, to Purgatory so they can testify anyway,” Aim says.

Lana covers her head with her hand. “Meaning they’re now able to use the ether. Just what we needed.”

“They’re not gonna know how if no one teaches them,” Kevin shrugs.

“Yeah?” Lana straightens and slaps her palms onto the tabletop. “You know who’s going to have to teach them? Moi. Think Daniel and Maalik are going to throw away free soldiers just because they’re brainwashed? We weren’t exactly willing those first few weeks either.”

Kevin winces. “Maybe we’ll get lucky and a golem will sit on them.”

“Maybe they’ll learn the error of their ways and switch teams?” Jessica asks hopefully.

“Sweet, naïve baby,” Naamah sighs.

“I don’t see why you need to have this conversation in my home,” Nephithar says. Syrin rolls her eyes at him. “Take it to your Purgatory,” the demon continues despite his wife’s disapproval.

Bau, the dog, walks up to Saraqael on silent paws and pushes her head into his lap, gazing up at him with lovestruck eyes. Mike’s eyes bounce between the dog and the archangel who extends a hand to caress the top of the retriever’s fuzzy head.

“I’m going with them,” the young mortal speaks, drawing Saraqael’s eyes. “I want to help find out who’s involved, who wants us dead.”

“Over my dead body,” his father growls, hitting the table with a fist.

Syrin places a hand on her husband’s. “He’s an adult, my love. If he wants to fight for this cause, we should be proud of him, not hinder it.”

“It’s dangerous,” the old demon says through clenched teeth. I can appreciate his reluctance. I’m about to speak up to say I would protect him when someone beats me to it.

“I will be with him,” Saraqael says.

My mouth drops open. “You will join us in the Underworld?”

My mentor’s ageless eyes turn to me. “I may not agree with your methods of handling this situation, but I too wish to see it disarmed.”

Sariel whistles and leans back on his chair. “Well, I can’t wait to see what comes next.”

Bau noses at Saraqael’s palm, demanding his attention. Once the archangel’s hand

returns to her scruff, her tail thumps against my leg as she wags it in contentment.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

It seems our time in Marseille is coming to an end.

Chapter 38 – Jessica

“Achoo!”

I cover my mouth, then scrunch up my itchy nose. Dust motes swirl around me, mocking me.

“Sariel, this house is...” Itha opens and closes his mouth a few times, clearly at a loss for words.

“Like a frat house,” I supply. “How is your apartment in Marseille so clean and this house so cluttered and dusty?”

The angel in question smirks, though he does seem a bit embarrassed. “I’ve had the same cleaning company on retainer for twenty years there. I threw all the servants out of this house when we lost Armaros.”

I suppress the urge to sneeze again and bury my nose in Sariel’s chest instead. “I’m sorry,” I murmur into it.

My black-haired angel wraps his arms around me just as Ithuriel hugs us from behind. Mmm, I think I had a dream like this once.

“Not your fault, buttercup,” Sariel says into my hair. I can hear him take a deep whiff of my shampoo. “I should have had them come back or borrowed some from Father

before I brought you here.”

We just spent a few days in Purgatory, talking to the prisoners Aim brought Below, and attending Council meetings under its mountains. It didn’t take long for Sarel to have enough of being there, though, and suggested we relocate to Ashtaroth’s home. Naturally, Ithuriel was vehemently against it. That’s how we ended up in Sarel’s Lethe villa before it was completely habitable.

“Alright,” I say, infusing my voice with optimism. I look up at Sarel. “Bring us lots of cleaning supplies, bad boy. And storage boxes!”

The male’s coal-black eyes blink at me with confusion. “You’re gonna clean my house?”

I grin at the sexy troublemaker. “We’re going to clean our home,” I emphasize.

Sarel gives me an irreverent grin. “Right,” he says. “Have I told you I love you recently?”

I narrow my eyes at him. “Actually, I’m not sure you’ve told me you love me.” I look back at Ithuriel. “Either of you. But that’s okay since I know you do.”

Itha’s eyes open to a comical degree. “I cannot believe I never told you how much I love you, dear heart.”

Sarel squeezes me against him. “Well, I suck, and not in a good way.” He kisses the top of my head. “I love you, poppet.”

Sighing, I nuzzle against one of my men while the other kisses my neck. I don’t think I’ve ever been this happy.

When I feel Itha hardening against my ass, I wriggle out of their embrace. “Oh, no, we’re cleaning, not fucking.” The angel blushes and looks at the dusty ground. I almost feel bad for calling him out like that. But still... “I’m not getting naked until this place smells less like teenage boy,” I vow.

???

We’ve been back in Hell for a couple of weeks now and I finally got my men to let me go patrol without them. Sariel especially doesn’t understand the sense of duty I feel in doing the job I was brought to the Underworld for – making sure evil souls don’t multiply so much that they spill over and threaten humans.

See, as the population of humans grows exponentially, so does the number of souls who get sent down to Hell for their eternal punishment. Where too many evil souls exist, they eventually gain shape. It’s not humanoid or completely tangible – more like a cloud of acid rain on steroids. It got so bad a few years ago that these blobs started accidentally entering into rifts and gates and endangering humans. Now, people like me are here to cull the numbers, make sure our loved ones are safe.

“I thought Maalik was going to throw a wobbly when you said you were off to live with your Fallen,” Ethan cackles. His accent has lessened somewhat over the years, but I love when it comes out to play. I laugh now, thinking of our mentor’s faces when I said I’d be moving out like Lana and Kevin did.

“I’m convinced they think our team is cursed,” Liam adds. He’s back in fighting shape and was super sad to have missed out on all the action. I’d have told him that at least he didn’t have to swim in a river of shit but... I rather keep that to myself.

I giggle at the thought of our team being cursed to fall in love with the Underworld’s residents. “Maybe you’re next,” I say and elbow the other Nephilim in the ribs. “Or maybe it’s you, Akira,” I say to our silent companion, a loanee from another team –

we're always a few short these days.

The Japanese man grunts and throws me an irritated look before focusing back on our surroundings.

"I think he likes you," Ethan whisper-shouts. "He never speaks that much to me."

I snort at the joke but try to compose myself and pay more attention to what I'm doing lest I walk straight into a demonic minion's open maw. I have to admit that I'm not entirely focused on this mission – when I'm not gossiping with the boys, whom I missed these months away from Purgatory, I'm thinking of how much I'm missing my own boys. Maybe I need to make them start patrolling with me?

"So, do you think the powers that be will allow us to visit Above every now and again if we're good little boys and girls?" Ethan asks, linking an arm with mine. "It's going on half a decade since I had proper greasy fish and chips."

Page 81

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I smile fondly at him. “I don’t see why not,” I say. “As long as we don’t go flaunting our supernatural status and keep doing our jobs, which, let’s face it, has been a lot easier with Belial out of the way with his mischief-making ways.”

“I’m afraid to go up there and find myself not wanting to come back here,” Liam muses.

“They would send the hounds,” Akira says, gracing us with his rarely-heard wisdom.

“Yeah,” Ethan snorts. “The hounds’ names being Maalik, Ramel, Corson...” We all have a good laugh at that.

After a while, I spin and take in our surroundings. We’ve patrolled this area before. Spindly, dead trees surround us and mist swirls around our legs. I know things have calmed down since Belial was apprehended but to not have met a single soul manifestation in hours?

“What is it, Jess?” Liam asks after placing a bracing hand on my shoulder. Of our team, he’s always been the most in tune with our moods.

“I don’t know,” I murmur, rubbing the back of my neck. “Just a weird feeling. It’s so quiet.”

“Too quiet, perhaps,” Akira adds.

Ethan steps in front of me. “Want to call it a day?”

Worrying my bottom lip with my teeth, I hesitate and second-guess myself. Am I just imagining things? Finally, I nod my head, slumping my shoulders.

“Yeah. Let’s go,” I say. “We should be home in... Ethan, watch out!”

Something sails through the air, whistling as it goes, straight for Ethan’s back and me behind him. We both jump to the side, each in our own direction. Ethan’s grunt echoes my own as we hit the ground with a thud, followed by a hissed curse from a usually mild-tempered Liam.

“Fuck, I just got over an injury,” he growls. Looking up, I see that he’s pressing a hand over a bleeding wound on his other biceps.

“What the fudging fudge was that?” Ethan gasps and I crawl over to where the object came to a standstill on the ground.

“It’s a hatchet,” I murmur, inspecting the small axe.

“Where did it come from?” Ethan asks inanely. He gets to his feet and brushes the debris off his leathers.

“Be quiet and arm yourselves,” Akira commands, the voice of reason.

“At least one of them isn’t a complete idiot,” a voice sounds from the trees. I freeze for a moment, then spring into action, unsheathing my scimitar and a dagger to boot, then dropping into a defensive position.

“Who’s there?” Ethan asks, slowly backing up until we’re covering each other’s backs.

A tongue clicks as shadows turn solid and we see we’re surrounded by half a dozen

demons. These are no mindless minions; they could pass for humans if it wasn't for the power emanating from them. We're outgunned.

"This is who the Council chose?" a female demon asks with a mocking lilt. "I don't know about you guys, but I don't feel confident in their decisions."

"No, Sythra," a male demon replies. "They really have lost their touch over the years."

"Are you planning to talk us to death or will you tell us why you're crossing our paths?" Ethan grumbles. I press against him in warning – I don't think it's wise to antagonize these demons with their disregard for the Council so apparent. The motion isn't lost on the female demon. She smirks at me and exchanges a look with her male friend. I really don't like this.

"We aren't planning to talk you to death, no," a third demon says. He's male and chillingly handsome with pale blue eyes and long dark hair, his face narrow and refined. When his eyes lock with mine, I feel frozen on the spot, like a deer in the headlights. "Andras sends his regards," he tells me.

My blood comes to a standstill as pins and needles travel from the top of my scalp all the way down to my toes. Adrenaline floods my veins and my heart starts whooshing in my ears.

"He has a message for you," the demoness purrs. Her blood red hair sways at her waist as she sashays closer with a wide grin.

"What's the message?" I croak, my throat clicking when I attempt to swallow the lump in it.

The handsome demon's lips gently curve into an insincere smile. Before I can blink,

he disappears, reappearing behind Liam, a sword to his neck.

“Oh, goodie, no more talking,” Sythra the demoness says with a wild grin.

Fucked. We’re fucked.

Chapter 39 – Jessica

Iduck and hamstring the demon holding Liam ransom. As he growls from pain and what sounds like a good deal of irritation, Liam pushes the sword away, hissing when the metal cuts through his reinforced leather glove. At least his fingers are still there.

“That was a gamble, Jess,” he hisses, swinging his weapon up to intercept an approaching demon.

“Thank me later,” I yell, pivoting to dodge another hatchet. How many of those do they have on them? I’m not afforded the luxury to dwell on it, however. Soon, the battle is in full swing and I’m busy parrying and thrusting, taking care of my teammates’ backs while avoiding getting something jabbed in mine.

“Jess, get down!” Ethan yells and I follow through without a moment of hesitation. For nearly five years we’ve been fighting together as a unit. A huge mace whistles through the air right where my head was not a breath ago. I push off the ground and slice the mace-wielding demon’s leg, forcing him to one knee. Ethan takes advantage and cuts the demon’s neck, letting him bleed out on the ground.

I don’t stop my momentum, heading for a demon swinging twin daggers. I redirect one of his blades, then use the hilt of my other weapon to knock the other dagger out of the screaming demon’s hand. I turn around in time to see Liam in a deadlock with an opponent. Looking around for inspiration, I see a discarded chain on the ground. I transfer my sword and dagger into one hand to free the other, then, using my affinity for metal, I wrap my ether around it and pull it through the air, into my open hand. I whip it around the neck of Liam’s foe, yanking hard and making him choke. As the

demon grasps for the chain cutting off his airflow, Liam stabs his massive weapon through the enemy's unguarded torso.

Immediately, Liam pivots to side-kick another opponent in the ribs, then grabs a fallen hatchet and hurls it at the demon about to land a blow with Ethan, throwing him off balance. Ethan then buries his blade between the demon's shoulder blades, pushing him into the ground and landing on top of him.

We both notice Akira is overpowered at the same time, facing three foes. I rush for one, sailing into his middle and knocking him to the ground. I press both of my weapons against his throat and push with all my strength, just as Ethan shoulder-checks another demon, then headbutts him before hitting him in the jaw with the pommel of his weapon.

Akira drops into a crouch, swiping out a leg to unbalance the final demon. Once the foe is on the ground, he leaps atop him, jamming a dagger into the demon's eye socket. Ew.

I can't believe we're winning this, though.

When the demon underneath me stops struggling, I stop pressing and lean back. That's when I hear Ethan's gasp. The pale-eyed demon holds him in his arms, almost like a lover would, while the demoness, Sythra observes with a lascivious smile on her painted lips.

At first, I don't see it. Ethan looks scared, the demons look awfully pleased with themselves, and my mind is working a million miles an hour trying to find a way out of this. We always find a way out. But then I see the blood starting to drip out of Ethan's slightly parted mouth. And I see the tip of the demon's weapon protruding out of Ethan's chest, straight through the middle.

“No!” I scream, scrabbling up to my feet.

“Don’t move, doll,” the demoness threatens, pointing at us with her stiletto. “The deal was one, but give me a reason and we’ll take more from you.”

The trio grows blurry as tears gather in my eyes. I need them gone so we can heal Ethan! “What do y–you mean, one?” I stutter, hating the way my lower lip trembles from fear, not for myself, but for one of my brothers. I can see Ethan’s eyes losing focus as they narrow pleadingly at me. I’m trying! “What do you want? Just let him go!” I shriek, not an ounce of cool left in me. I take a step forward, but Akira and Liam each grab one of my arms, holding me back.

“One,” the male demon says softly. “You ruined one of Andras’ plans. My advice?” He lifts an eyebrow, one side of his mouth hiking up. “Don’t get involved again.”

With that, the demon twists the weapon until the blade points up. Ethan coughs and blood bubbles painting the entirety of his chin and neck red.

“Fucking stop!” Liam yells, his hands clenching around my tense muscles.

Sythra giggles, hopping up and down and clapping at our turmoil.

“Please,” I beg with a whine. My sobs shake me so hard that the boys are the only thing keeping me up now.

The demon tilts his head, nuzzling the side of Ethan’s. “It’s too late for that,” he says. He takes half a step back, then, holding Ethan’s shoulder with one hand, he pulls the sword up, eviscerating one of my closest friends.

The sword leaves Ethan’s body with a squelch and his breath rattles, his fingers twitching. Time stands still as I hold his gaze. His lips form my name. The two

demons say something, but I don't hear them over the ringing of my ears.

My knees hit the ground first, the boys letting me go to rush forward. I don't see Ethan fall because I tip over, my face in the soil nurtured by the demons' blood. But I feel the thud. Feel it all the way to the soul I wish I didn't have.

???

"You have to eat something, child." Daniel's voice is as kind and comforting as always. So why doesn't it penetrate this cloud around me? More than just my blankets, I feel like I'm wrapped in cotton, separate from the outside world.

"And I think your boys are about ready to tear this door down," Maalik adds, his mahogany skin glowing under the candlelight. I find myself transfixed by the sight, the way his warm skin tone complements the yellow-gold of his eyes. One magnificent eyebrow raises. "I know I'm pretty, Jess, but I think your hands are full enough already."

Instead of blushing, which some small part of me is trying to do, trying to say, 'hey, Jess, snap out of it, this isn't helping anyone', I just slide my gaze away and back to the wall. If he doesn't want me to look, then I just won't look. Simple as that. Everything is... simple.

Ethan is gone – simple.

I will never forget the way he looked at me as he died – simple.

I don't deserve to be here when he's not – simple.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

They tried. My boys. Ithuriel held me that first night, here in my old quarters in Abaddon. Sariel vowed to track down the demons and end them in any painful way I wished it to happen. But then I said I wanted to be alone and they'll always give me what I want, my angels.

For four years it was just us; Lana, Kevin, Ethan, Liam, and me. Simone's loss hurt, but now that I know she's alive and reasonably well, I don't remember those feelings anymore. Ethan's not going to magically come back to life. I feel like I should be crying, but my well has run dry.

Daniel sighs and pats my hand. A small part of my awareness processes how he motions for Maalik to leave, how the dark-skinned Fallen clicks his tongue in disappointment. Well, life is disappointing.

The door clicks shut behind them and I hear murmured voices in the hallway.

"No, fuck that." Footsteps. "Poppet, I'm coming in."

Without waiting for an answer, Sariel confidently walks inside like he owns the place. It thins the cotton around my psyche somewhat. Behind him, Itha stands at the open doorway, peeking inside with furrowed brows. I hate seeing him so worried. I hate that they're seeing me like this. Irritation penetrates my shield of numbness.

"Why can't you just let me be miserable in peace?" I burst out.

Sariel gives me a stern look with his black-hole eyes. "You've had three days. You didn't even go to the funeral."

I scoff, hitting the bedspread with a fist. “I was there when he died, I saw the light go out of his eyes. There’s no bigger goodbye than that,” I say bitterly.

The Fallen sits on the chair next to my bed, the one Daniel just vacated. “I was there when Armaros died,” he begins. “He was more than just a friend and he died in my arms,” he corrects himself with a choked voice. “But, trust me, love, not saying goodbye properly... it leads to months of self-destructive bullshit.”

Something twists in my stomach at his words. They just make me unreasonably angry. “So, what?” I ask with derision. “Because I wasn’t fucking Ethan, I don’t get the same latitude you did to mourn the way I want to?”

Sariel grins, though it doesn’t reach his eyes. “Feel free to be a grade-A bitch to me, darling. I’m not going anywhere. And neither is dove-feathers over there.” He tilts his chin at the angel still standing by the door. When my eyes meet his, Itha takes a cautious step forward.

My shoulders slump. I am being a bitch. “I’m sorry,” I murmur, my eyes glued to my blankets. “I’m not good company right now.”

Sariel slaps his thighs and stands up, making me flinch. “Whelp. It’s a good thing two’s a company and three’s a crowd. You’re a great crowd.”

With that nonsense, he pushes me closer to the center of the bed and gets in next to me. I’m still reeling from his presence when the bed dips at the foot and Itha crawls in to settle at my other side.

“What are you doing?” I whisper, my eyes welling up with fresh tears. All my numbness is gone now and I want it back.

“Being with you,” Itha whispers back, the first thing he says since entering the room.

My breaths gradually turn harsher until they're sawing in and out of my laboring chest. Just when I don't think I can handle the pain anymore, the first sob breaks through and Sariel pulls my head onto his chest. I feel Ithuriel's lips on the back of my head, his arms reaching over until I'm cocooned between them, letting the poison out.

Chapter 40 – Sariel

For fifteen hours Itha and I watch Jessica sleep and look at each other in the dark. She woke up from a nightmare once, cried herself back to sleep in our arms. Her sleep is shallow right now. She needed to use the bathroom not long ago and we helped her clean herself up, brush her teeth. I wish I had them with me when I lost Armaros. But if I did, would I have been able to appreciate them like I do now?

Itha's reaches a hand over Jessica to cup my cheek. "What has you so pensive, my love?"

A full-body shudder goes through me at hearing him call me that, my heart singing. At the same time, my cock fills up with blood so fast that, were I human, I'd surely be dizzy.

What did he ask again? Oh, right.

"I was wishing I had you guys in my life last year... earlier than that, too," I admit. Things tend to slide off the tongue easier in the dark.

Itha caresses my face, his light eyes gentle through the shadows. "We're with you now and we always will be," he says softly.

I shake my head and sigh. "You see how easily people are taken from this life."

Itha rises up on one elbow, his hand sliding down to my chest. “We have each other and so many that care.”

“Yeah,” Jess says with a yawn. “You’re stuck with us, hotstuff.”

I flick her nose and smile at the return of her humor. “Are you spying on us, pretending to sleep again?”

Her plump lips stretch into a smile and, despite her eyes still being a bit red and puffy, I’m overcome by the urge to do bad things to that mouth. I never was very good at impulse control, so I lean down and kiss her, conquering her with my tongue. A small moan catches in her throat and she lifts her hands to twine them around my neck. I feel Itha’s hand tease my nipples over my shirt, likely unintentionally, and my dick leaks the first drops of precum into my pants.

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

Growling, I release Jessica's mouth and lean over her to capture my angel's. He releases a small whine and I retreat to see Jessica's hand has made its way to his crotch. I buck as Sariel Jr. gets the same, firm treatment, her hands now working both of us in tandem.

"Don't make us fucking come in our pants, princess," I hiss. "I want to be inside you, feel our boy inside you at the same time."

Jessica moans and releases our cocks to push her pants down. Laughing at her eagerness, I reach between her soft legs, finding her damp and ready for my fingers. I look over my shoulder to her night table and reluctantly pause my efforts to grab her lotion. I chuck it at Itha.

"Get her ass ready for you," I command him before forcing Jess' arms up so I can tear her shirt off. With a purr, I latch onto a rosy nipple, already peaking from being exposed to the air. It hardens further in my mouth and I roll my tongue over it, gently nibbling, before moving to the neglected one, eagerly sucking it.

Jess writhes as Ithuriel lifts one of her legs to get access to her backside. I feel the moment he slips inside, the shudder that goes through her, the catch of her breath. It drives me insane.

"Fuck, hurry," I tell him. "I can't wait anymore."

When I enter her with two fingers, her pussy welcomes them with a clenching of muscles and I feel my angel's fingers working her ass in concert. Abandoning Jess' chest, I grab Itha by the back of the neck and pull his mouth to mine again.

“I fucking love you,” I growl against his lips, pulling the bottom one with my teeth before letting go and moving to Jessica’s face. I lick a tear from her cheek and bring the salty drop to her mouth. “I love both of you so fucking much,” I tell her, grinding my pelvis against her side.

“Take your pants off and fuck me, now,” Jess replies and I can’t help but burst into laughter. Romantic.

Of course, I obey, lowering and kicking my pants away, then ripping off my shirt before helping Itha with his clothes. I turn Jess so she faces me fully, then hitch her leg over my hip. Her little hands brace against my chest as I grab hold of my dick and lead it to Heaven.

“Uh,” we grunt in unison as I bottom out, my balls flush against her pussy. I only allow myself a few thrusts before I back off and let Ithuriel come inside. With my hand on his ass, I guide him to fuck her with shallow thrusts.

“Get in her ass, I want to feel you inside her,” I say, squeezing the root of my cock so I don’t come at the thought.

Itha moans softly as he breaches that first tight ring, both him and Jessica breathing through their noses as she bears down and takes him in. I don’t give them a lot of time to adjust – I fucking can’t. I enter her as well, relishing in the way her mouth drops open when my cockhead rubs against her most sensitive areas, the fit so freaking tight.

“That’s it,” I praise them. “That’s my good little girl, taking us both so well,” I growl against Jessica’s lips. Her hands clench, her nails digging into my flesh when I bottom out, both of us now inside our girl to the hilt.

“I’m so full,” Jess whines, her lower lip trembling as she shuts her eyes tightly.

“Yeah, you are,” I tell her.

“You feel so good, dear heart,” Itha whispers in her ears, making her arch back into him. I grunt as the movement massages my shaft.

“We’re gonna fill you up so full of our cum, baby,” I growl. I find Itha’s eyes and start moving slowly, letting her feel every inch of us stretching her. Soon, the angel joins me in my rhythm.

“Yes, yes, fuck me, fuck me,” Jess babbles mindlessly, the heat of her breath warming my neck. I reach for Itha’s hand and take it in my own, our eyes still locked on each other as we fuck our girl, fuck each other through her, our shafts rubbing against each other with only the delicate barrier of Jessica’s sex between us.

“Gonna come with me, baby?” I ask my angel over our girl’s moans. Itha nods jerkily, his face turning harsh as his muscles grow stiffer. I can feel him shaking. The sight of him on the precipice, the sounds Jess is making, it lights a fire in my balls that only coming inside her with him will put out.

“Yeah,” I whisper. “Yeah. Come with me, Itha.”

With our gazes locked, I relish in the moment we both shove in forcefully, our dicks exploding in tandem. At the thought of our cum so thoroughly filling both of Jessica’s channels, my eyes roll to the back of my head and I lose sight of him as my world narrows down to my pulsing cock.

By the time I catch my breath, our Jess is already squirming with impatience. With a grin at her pout, I take my semi-hard dick out of her soaked pussy. Once Itha makes space, I put her on her back, then crawl between her legs to be greeted by the sight of my favorite meal in this realm and any other; my cum mixed with that of my two soulmates. Saliva fills my mouth as I drag my nose from the top of her mound, over

the pussy I marked with my cum, and down to her asshole, wet with Itha's orgasm.

I hear my angel swear as I extend my tongue and collect our mixed juices. I push up and grab the back of his head, pulling him close to share my breakfast with him. Our tongues war for the last drop of our combined flavors as Jess watches, panting.

"Gimme," she says when I look at her. With a smirk, I dip between her legs again, then crawl up to her open mouth, spitting into it before sealing it with my own. By the time the last of our tastes disappears, I'm hard as a rock again. My erection's going to have to wait though – I owe my girl a couple of orgasms.

Back between her luscious thighs, I throw first one, then the other leg over my shoulders and get to work. I suck on her pussy lips, fuck her hole with my tongue, take her clit between my lips and pull. I lick her from asshole to clit, before filling both of her holes with three of my fingers. Hearing sucking sounds, I look up to see Ithuriel's mouth on her heaving breasts.

"Good boy," I say with a grin, watching his beautiful head over the silky skin of her chest as I slowly pump my fingers in and out. He's too far gone to blush at my praise, his cheeks instead hollowing with the suction. Jess arches up and I have to put my free arm over her hips to hold her down.

When I look my fill, I lean down to take her swollen nub into my mouth and pull on it relentlessly. Soon, she's screaming out her orgasm, her cunt clenching over my fingers, her body thrashing under the weight of my arm.

Her moans soon turn into sobs. "Fuck, stop, Sar, I can't take it," she whines. I ignore her and suck harder, bringing her to another shuddering climax.

When I come up for air, I see her face is soaked with tears and can't help but laugh. And, oh, look, our angel's hard again. Perfect. Taking him into my mouth, I suck so

hard that, if he had a soul, it would now be inside me. By the time I release him, he's sobbing.

Page 85

Source Creation Date: July 8, 2025, 6:58 am

I hop out of the bed and reposition Jessica's body, hanging her head off the edge of the mattress, her legs pointing in Itha's direction. He's biting his lip, gently caressing her stomach, looking at me with a question in his eyes. I flash my teeth, grab Jess's head, and slip my cock past her plump lips.

"Fuck her with me," I say softly, the sharpest edge of my lust somewhat blunted.

Eager to please, Ithuriel pulls Jess' lower body onto his lap, splitting her legs on each side of his trim waist. With a firm hold on his beautiful cock, he pushes inside her, joining the three of us again.

One hand on Jess' soft cheek and the other on Itha's lean one, I lean forward, taking his lips while we take our love's body. This is my Heaven.

Jess chokes on my dick and I pull back, laughing.

"Oops."

Epilogue – Ashtaroth

This is the third time in a mere year I find myself in the Burning Pits, and the second time I have no inkling of the whereabouts of my brother.

"No longer here?" I repeat what I just heard.

"No longer here," the Devil confirms. He tilts his ethereally handsome head. "Are we playing a game, Ashtaroth? Who can repeat the same three words more times? You

don't repeat them to your paramour."

I clench my fists at my sides. Am I surprised he knows my Lana has told me that she loves me and I have not returned the sentiment? No. Am I irked that he is bringing it up now? Certainly.

"If he is no longer here, then he must have entered into a soul bargain with the mortal, Simone." I pose my question as a statement but only get a mild smile in return.

My brother, Asmodai, has been a... guest of Sataniel's for nearly two years. Now the Council, an eternal source of vexation, wants proof that he is not involved with Andras, his lieutenant, and the rest of the halfling-murdering scum of the Underworld. Most recently they executed one of my consort's teammates. Moreover, they did so as a threat to one of my son's consorts, another teammate of Lana's. Unacceptable.

"My Lord," I begin, cautiously. "Would you do me the courtesy of disclosing his current location? He is under suspicion once more and this time I cannot conveniently say that he is with you."

While the Council suspected my missing brother of opening and not governing rifts to the human world, he was here, at the tender mercy of our ruler, confined until his pregnant lover, the mortal Simone, accepted to trade her soul in exchange for power, furthering whatever machinations the Dark Prince has.

The Devil smiles. "No, I would not."

Wonderful. I close my eyes for a moment, begging for patience.

"Ashtaroth?"

I open my eyes and am temporarily blinded by the glow of the creature humans call Lucifer, the light bringer. While he is not in an ethereal form, he is not exactly... dampened. "Yes, My Lord?"

"I trust you will ensure my grandson's safety while he remains in Hell?" Sataniel asks mildly, his iridescent eyes open with deceptive innocence.

I can feel the muscle in my left cheek ticking. It does not matter if he sees; he knows exactly what I am thinking. Just as he knows the boy, Michael, entered the Underworld and has been attending Council meetings.

"I will certainly do my best," I say. "He is important to my consort, after all. But I have been told Saraqaël promised his mother to not let the mortal leave his sight. As you can imagine, the archangel insisted they remain in Purgatory, on somewhat neutral ground."

Sataniel's lips stretch into a sharp grin and my body reacts with an involuntary pulse of lust. "Figure it out," he murmurs.

Gritting my teeth, I nod my head once. This meeting has gone in any way but expected and I would love nothing more than to return to my home and my wife in it.

To that end, I bow in farewell. "If that is all?"

"No," he says again, laughter in his angelic voice. "I must talk with the boy's mother about a prophecy."

I lift an eyebrow. "She knows something you do not?"

The shrieking of the damned souls, ever burning in the Pit's hellfire, intensifies to a deafening volume. Perhaps I should have thought twice before posing my question.

“The tablet on which it was written was lost to time and her mind holds more texts than The Library of Alexandria.”

I am surprised he deigned to explain himself. There is a problem, however. “I do not see any possibility in which your son would allow her in your presence,” I say, not blunting my opinion.

Sataniel’s eyes glow brighter. “It’s a good thing my grandson is here then.”

Wonderful. Lana will be thrilled.

I tip my head in acknowledgment once more, then turn to leave the way I entered. I must find my brother.

But first, I need to fuck away the tension in my muscles. I need my little lamb.