



Deviled Eggs (One Handed Holidays: Crossed Swords Edition #4)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: Well, this is just awful.

Horrendous, really.

And now its time that I, The Archangel Micah, take control of the situation.

The humans have taken matters into their own hands, and now Easter is an absolute disaster. There is a giant rabbit, rainbow baskets, chicken eggs, and no one seems to be able to tell me whether or not the children are terrified or excited. But not to worry. Now that Im aware of the problem, I have assembled the Heavenly Council to fix it. Well appoint our own Easter Bunny and regain control of this catastrophe.

Its all going to plan until the irritating, gray-skinned demon waltzes in, with his lazy smile and taunting grin. Xalreth thinks hes the right one for the job. He believes he has what it takes to handle such an important position, but hes about to learn whos in charge around here.

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Micah

“Attention! Attention! Everyone, eyes on me.” My gavel strikes the podium with a sharp rap, the loud bang vibrating through the polished surface as the murmuring conversations fade. The light catches the flecks of gold in the marble, and I smile to myself as bright sparkles of color splash in reflections across the room.

An exquisite tool fit for the hand wielding it.

Wood is far too ordinary for an Archangel of my status, after all. No, those tiny wooden hammers are intended for common mortal judges and other human peasants.

Not me.

A satisfied smirk tugs on my lips as I flip my hair over my shoulder, its sheen nearly as powerful as that of the gavel. There’s a shift in the air as everyone’s attention focuses on me, an instinctual awareness tingling over my skin. It’s a trait Archangels developed millennia ago—an intuition that helped my kind avoid detection in the face of danger. We can sense not only that someone is watching us, but also the emotions that color their observation.

It's a handy way to determine friend from foe, no doubt, although the constant stimulation does get old.

Over time, though, we have less of a need to rely on it, and its intensity has faded. Instead of a warning, it’s a dull pain as I sense where their eyes land on my body. The jealousy and irritation they direct towards me are like sunburn, blistering on my skin

as I take a moment to get used to the sensation. Right now, it's the good sort of pain—the kind of anger people direct at those they can never aspire to be.

Envy is the highest form of flattery, after all.

Azrael advised me to wear a shirt today, because 'that is what people do,' apparently. I'm kicking myself for listening to his advice. The fabric is restrictive against my chest, and I'm half tempted to rip it off and feel those eyes move lower as they appreciate my body.

It is not arrogance to acknowledge my flawless form and perfect proportions, merely simple truth. I was created in this image. Perfection is the only thing I've ever known.

“Some of you may wonder why I've gathered you here today...”

“Actually, all of us wonder that because, like always, you were incredibly cryptic with the summons.” Irritation washes over me as my eyes narrow at Damien, who is sprawled across Niklaus's lap. He's a picture of blatant disrespect, using my time to posture like a common whore.

“Why are you even here?” I ask with a sneer, gesturing at the languid way he lounges. “You are no longer important.”

“Micah.” The warning is laced with a threat as it escapes Niklaus—more commonly known as The Santa—from behind Damien. My eyes move to his, challenging him to say more while we are in my realm. Here, and almost everywhere else in this universe, my power reigns supreme. He'd be a fool to challenge me.

“Well, he isn't,” I argue as his brows flick up just the smallest amount. He's new to his position, stern and stony-faced. Until now, my interactions with him have been limited, but in those brief encounters, he has struck me as the type of man who

doesn't tolerate much.

Well, he'll tolerate me, and he'll do it without the attitude.

I am the head of the Heavenly Council, which makes me his boss.

"Everyone else at this table has an appointed title," I remind him in a tone that leaves no room for argument. My chronically short patience is tested as his jaw tenses, but he smartly keeps his comments to himself. "You are The Santa, Azrael is The Cupid..." Azrael's fingers flutter in an awkward wave as he smiles nervously, and Niklaus offers a brief, reassuring smile before his face once again hardens into a scowl directed at me. "Beatrice is The Tooth Fairy, Cecil is Father Time..." My attention moves to the ancient man, whose eyes are closed and mouth is sagged open.

A spot of drool hangs from his lips, and I retch.

"Ugh, so fucking gross. Is he even alive? Can someone check, please ? Ew." My hands jerk back as I cringe, although he's a good fifteen feet away from me. Azrael and Niklaus jump up to make sure he's okay, while Damien stares at him with the same horrified expression as me.

"Huh? What? I'm awake," Cecil grumbles, but I spray hand sanitizer on my palms and rub just in case.

"That is revolting ," I mutter as I glance over his wrinkles, smoothing the tight skin around my eyes with my fingertips. "Where was I before that absolute travesty of an interruption... oh, right. Rosemary is Mother Earth, and finally, we have Drekoth, The Lu... ci... fer..." My voice trails off as I stare at the empty chair. " Where is The Lucifer?!"

"Oh, puh- lease ." Damien twists the hair of Niklaus's beard between his fingers as

the giant man purrs. “As if The Lucifer has ever been on time for a meeting in the history of forever.”

“Must you fornicate in front of everyone?” I snap, and he shoots me a sly, smug smirk and somehow sinks deeper onto Niklaus’s lap. “It is unbecoming.”

“ You are unbecoming.” A deep, amused voice booms from the hallway, and my glare swivels towards the newcomer. The man that stands there is enormous, even for a demon, and his towering frame takes up the entire doorway. Wrecking ball muscles bunch under skin the color of a dark gray storm cloud. Razor-sharp teeth form a predatory grin that makes me reflexively pull away.

He’s been here before with Damien, though I’ve never paid him any mind.

“I beg your pardon, demon .” My own blunt teeth flash back at him in a threatening snarl, although they aren’t where my danger lies. No, my power is my inner store of celestial magic—a deep, coiling serpent that strikes on my command.

He can flash that mouthful of knives as much as he wants. I could smite him to ashes before he ever gets close enough to bite.

“Xalreth.” His voice drips with saccharine sarcasm, and a flare of annoyance hits me as he drops into a mocking bow.

“Bless you,” I say with an equally sweet tone, and Damien snorts a loud laugh that he doesn’t even try to hide.

“Classic,” he mutters, as the gray demon purses his lips.

“My name is Xalreth, and I am here to announce The Lucifer’s arrival.” In my many years of existence, I’ve never seen anyone look less enthusiastic than he does as he

gestures his hand towards the door like a game show host. His face is completely dry and his eyes are dull, while the tick in his jaw tells me his temper is being tested.

And it's no wonder, really, considering who he works for.

Damien gasps dramatically. "That bitch! Stealing my ideas..."

A blue-skinned incubus saunters in like he's in the middle of a beauty pageant, wearing a practiced smile as he waves a cupped hand at everyone. There's a rhythmic tap-tap-tap as his clawed feet echo against the polished floor.

"Drekoth, how nice of you to join the rest of us." A threat lies in my tone as he flashes me a dazzling row of teeth, oblivious to my anger.

How this airhead ever rose to power is beyond me. Damien may have been an annoying little shit for most of his rule, but behind his innocent doe eyes is a brilliant mind that's always scheming. Then he did something idiotic and fell in love, and passed the power to his second in command without another thought of how it might affect me .

"Oh, I do hope you weren't waiting for me." He bats his lashes as he flips his long black hair, and my lip twitches in the start of a snarl as his shiny raven locks land perfectly behind his shoulder.

I know this incu-bitch isn't trying to out-diva me at my own meeting.

"Don't worry, we definitely weren't," I insist with a hair flip of my own. His jealousy spreads across my skin like wildfire as my opalescent strands catch the light just right, and I revel in the smoldering of his anger that hides beneath it. My hands land on my hips as I jut them to one side, flashing him a catty smile.

“Oh, I’m so glad to hear that,” he responds, nodding so intensely that his dark locks flop in front of his shoulders. His head whips to both sides as he tosses his hair again, this time with so much effort, his neck pops. “I would hate to be an inconvenience. Get it? Because I’m an incubus?” He laughs at his own terrible joke as everyone in the room stares at him.

Fuck this shit.

How dare he come in here and steal my spotlight?

My gavel drops to the ground with a boom, and every eye falls back on me. “Oh, whoops,” I gasp with a hand over my mouth, never taking my eyes off Drekoth as I bend over and grab it. I snap back to standing, throwing my hair in a graceful, shimmering arc over my head. “So silly of me.”

“What in the diva-loving fuck is happening here? Is anyone else seeing this shit?” Xalreth demands, and my eyes flick to his as they narrow.

Drekoth pops his knuckles and rolls his shoulders, but the dark demon grabs him by the scruff of his neck and forces him into his chair. “No. Absolutely not. I am not paid enough for this.” Silence rings through the space, the only sound the obnoxious scraping of metal legs as Xalreth shoves Drekoth’s seat against the table.

“This is amazing... I’m so fucking glad I came,” Damien whispers.

“That makes one of us,” Niklaus grunts back, but I ignore them as I run my palms over my hair and down the front of my shirt, making sure everything is in place as I collect myself.

“Now that everyone has arrived,” I say with one more pointed glare at the sulking incubus, “we can get started. As I was saying before, you’re probably all wondering

why I've asked you to join me. It has been decades since we were together in the same room." My gaze moves between their bored faces. Most of them sit slumped in their chairs, eyes glazed over. Azrael is the sole exception as he sits ramrod straight, his hands clasped as he leans forward in his eagerness to learn.

"The recent shift in power for the position of The Cupid required us to refresh our knowledge on human perspectives. Humanity has gone through major transformations in the time Seraphiel held the role. While we were studying holiday lore, we came across some troubling news."

"We did?" Azrael whispers, his eyes growing wider as he stares, enrapt.

"There is a holiday the humans celebrate... one where they have taken it upon themselves to create their own magical figure."

I wait for their outrage, but the room is silent. My brows furrow as I glance between their faces, becoming increasingly annoyed by their lack of response. "Don't you get it? They have invented an imaginary being." I pause for dramatic effect until they start to shift uncomfortably.

"Are you going to tell us what it is, or do we need to guess?" Xalreth says, and I shoot him another glare.

"Is it Bigfoot again?" Damien asks, eyes alight.

"No—"

"It's Slenderman, isn't it?! Did they invent a Slenderman holiday? Slenderday?! I want to take part! Nik, can we?!"

I scoff, glaring at the curly-haired menace. "For the love of God, Damien, they have

not created a Slenderman holiday. They are celebrating The Easter Bunny!”

Silence falls, and I give them a moment to absorb the severity of the news. “Okay...” Niklaus finally says, pinching the bridge of his nose with a loud sigh. “I’m struggling to see what the big deal is.”

My hands fly out in exasperation, looking among the group for support and finding none. “The big deal is that without an actual representative in place, their imaginations have been allowed to go wild. There’s no rhyme or reason to their logic. There’s a giant rabbit that lays eggs for reasons I cannot decipher. Do they not realize that rabbits can’t lay eggs? Where are these eggs coming from, and why are they hiding them in each other’s yards?”

“Further,” I continue, glaring at Cecil as he yawns again, “they create idols for these make-believe figures out of chocolate and eat them in some sort of strange sacrificial ritual.”

“Sacrifices?” Azrael and Damien blurt at the same time, although their expressions are quite different. Azrael looks horrified, whereas Damien appears... dare I say, excited?

“They have their children devouring the likeness of this supposed Easter Bunny.”

“That’s metal as fuck,” Xalreth says from the back of the room, and when I glare at him, he only holds his hand up in a strange symbol with his pointer finger and pinkie raised.

“My point is that humans, without the proper guidance, will warp this figurehead into something shameful.”

“What’s the harm in it, Micah? I mean, they think I’m a jolly man with a belly,”

Niklaus says, and Damien gets a smug smile on his face as he drags his palm over Niklaus's stomach.

"Hands above the table," I warn with a glare, but his smirk only digs deeper into his cheeks.

Beatrice timidly holds her hand up in the air, and I groan inwardly as I nod in her direction. "They believe I'm a tiny little pixie." Her squeaky voice is so quiet it barely even reaches me.

"That is correct, and supports the exact point I'm trying to make. They come up with their own images, and they don't care that you're a real... er, person. If left unchecked, they probably would've spun stories about the horrid wench that visits in the middle of the night and rips their teeth from their gums."

Her mouth drops open in horror. "I would never—"

"Yes, yes, we know that, but we've covered this in the past. Humans are idiots. They need help deciphering what is real and what is make-believe."

"While I hear what you're saying, Micah... how does that benefit us?" Drekoth traces his fingertip across the table and doodles what looks like a pair of breasts in the sheen. After he draws two nipples in the center, he glances back up at me with a lazy grin. "The Easter Bunny isn't real. Why do we care what the humans think?"

"If we don't have control of the narrative, they can make each one of us look bad. But for once in your life, you are correct, Drekoth." He doesn't know whether to preen from the praise or scowl at the insult, so he just pouts instead. "The Easter Bunny wasn't real... until now."

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Xalreth

I will not murder The Lucifer...

I will not MURDER The Lucifer...

Have you ever hated someone so much that you had a wet dream about their untimely demise? God, what I wouldn't give to snap the leg off one of these chairs and stab him through the heart. Might not kill him, but fuck if it wouldn't be a good time.

My teeth grind until they ache as I stare at the back of Drekoth's perfectly coifed head. Twenty inches of silky black hair fall in a curtain down his shoulders, not a single strand out of place. Exactly twenty inches.

And how, precisely, do I know it's exactly twenty inches long? That answer is actually quite simple. I know how long it is because every God-forsaken morning, he forces me to measure it and trim the edges. Then I have to measure it again, just to be on the safe side.

Why?

Because he must be 'perfect for his adoring fans,' which somehow means they might realize if his precious locks are a centimeter too long. He is convinced—and these are his words, definitely not mine—that if it isn't perfect, it distracts from his 'dreamy orange eyes.'

Gag me with a spoon.

The real reason is because he is a royal pain in my ass.

“Speak plainly, Micah,” Drekoth sniffs, fluttering his hand in front of his mouth to stifle a yawn. “There are those of us in the room that might not pick up on your hidden meanings from all this melodramatic droning.”

Attempting to center myself with a deep breath, my gaze finds Damien’s. He rolls his eyes, nodding his head towards Drekoth before miming a jerk-off motion in the air. My temper subsides and I roll my eyes in agreement, and his smile softens into something he doesn’t show many people.

Behind his sassy exterior, he’s a good guy, and I miss my old friend.

It’s a reminder of the days when my position filled me with pride. When I felt like I was making a difference in this life, even if it was a bit unorthodox. When Damien was The Lucifer, we were tackling social issues and finding ways to improve life in Hell. And, sure, not all of his schemes worked out as expected. I’m pretty sure that curse cloud is still roaming the east side, but rumor suggests it’s weakening. Regardless, Damien cared deeply about demonkind as a whole, even if he hid it behind all that sass.

Drekoth is another story. Hell, he’s a whole other book, written in a language no one else can read. He’s perfectly happy letting things continue in the status quo, and is only concerned with himself.

And his big-ticket items?

Turning me into a glorified hairdresser and hook-up coordinator.

That's not a euphemism for anything other than exactly what it sounds like. As an incubus, Drekoth requires sexual energy to keep his stores filled. I would never fault

or judge him for that.

No, what I fault him for is making me organize his buffet. Every Saturday night, I have to stand in Hellraiser's Tavern with a fucking clipboard labelled 'Drekoth's Naughty Nation Sign-Up Station' and schedule his hook-up appointments for the week. Not only do I make a fool of myself as I plan my boss's sex life in a little black book, but I'm expected to answer questions about his performance as well.

"How long does he last?" Pop some popcorn. It'll be ready by the time you leave.

"How big is his cock?" Obscenely large and yet, he somehow still cannot find the G spot or the prostate. Honestly, that takes skill.

"Is he a dirty talker?" If you like weird baby talk, incoherent babbling, and a tendency to shout his own name as he climaxes, then yes.

"What's his signature move?" There's this thing he does, where he moves his hips as fast as he can. Inhumanly fast. I call it 'the jackhammer,' and it's possible you'll get traumatic brain injury once he's done. If you're lucky, it'll help you forget this mess ever happened.

Micah brings me back to the present when he emits a low, menacing growl from his fancy little podium, and when I glance up, I'm startled by the intensity of his lilac eyes. An ethereal light shines from inside them, like miniature lightning strikes dancing in their depths.

"Apologies, Drekoth. I forget your mind doesn't work as quickly as the rest of us in this room." I snort a laugh as he arches a perfectly sculpted brow. His eye twitches ever so slightly, and you know this bitch is about to blow. The Archangel has a famous temper, and everyone knows it doesn't take much to make him explode. A vein throbs in his neck, thudding against the smooth porcelain skin.

The edge of my tongue drags across the pointed tips of my teeth, wondering what that vein would feel like fluttering under my lips. I bet I could bite him and smell his fear.

Bet I could make it thump even faster.

Ugh , what the fuck? Too long coordinating someone else's sex life has turned my own into nothing more than a fossilized memory, and now I'm sitting here fantasizing over one of the most annoying men in existence. Micah is almost as much of a pompous asshole as Drekoth, though he is easier on the eyes.

Micah is... hmm, how to explain him.

He's like a seven-foot-tall sparkly stick up your ass, only prettier. High cheekbones, hot body, and shimmering white hair that flows down his back. Hair that would look really fucking nice wrapped around my hand while I mounted him from behind.

And dear sweet baby Jesus in a manger, you know that ass is tight.

My gaze drags over the defined lines of his face, stopping to stare at the pout of his lips as he fights a sneer. A quick, nearly imperceptible flicker of his eyes shows he's aware of my attention, but they snap back to Drekoth in an instant.

The archangel tosses his shoulders back and stares down his nose, seeming to grow even larger. It's rare I run into someone bigger than me, but Micah towers over me by a good six inches. His shirt fights against his bulging chest muscles, and holy fuck, I should not be getting hard at this.

Fucking Christ on a cracker, now I'm having to shift my hands to conceal the half-chub that's demanding attention. I curse under my breath that there are no empty seats as I push on my dick, silently telling it to calm the fuck down.

“Would you like to run the show, Drekoth?” Micah asks, his voice turning deeper as he challenges The Lucifer.

“At least he’d make it quick,” I mutter. “Probably a minute or less, if I had to wager.” Damien snorts again as I realize the room is silent, and now everyone is staring at me.

Well, everyone except Drekoth, whose cheeks burn a deep blue as he fumes at the table. Something tells me I’m going to regret that later.

After the world’s longest silence, Micah finally continues. “The humans have already concocted this travesty of a mythical being, and without guidance, who knows what it could mutate into? It’s time we take control over the narrative. We need to make an official position for The Easter Bunny.”

“You’re joking.” Niklaus’s brows almost meet in the middle of his forehead.

“Does this look like my joking face?” Micah snaps.

“Oh, yes, that’s exactly what it looks like,” I say with a sarcastic smile. “Especially if your joking face is the same as your constipated face.” He glares at me until I drop my eyes to the ground, biting back a grin.

Micah’s hand flourishes as a series of images pop up behind him, projected by some unseen heavenly power. “These are depictions of The Easter Bunny, taken from a popular human news website called Reddit, which I hear is very reliable. As you can see, they are quite disturbing.”

A horrifying slideshow of enormous, grotesque rabbits flashes across the wall. Giant heads and unblinking eyes, painted faces and fake teeth, and fuzzy costumes that look more like pajamas with ears sewn on the hood. In every single image, screaming children sit on their laps and fight to escape.

“Dear God,” Azrael mutters, rightfully horrified.

“Indeed,” Micah says solemnly, displaying a picture of a child biting the head off a chocolate bunny. Brown smears cover his face as he stares through the camera, straight into our souls. The next image shows a different child, holding what appears to be a marshmallow baby chick. She pulls on it from either end, stretching the neck until it’s nothing but skinny strands that are barely hanging on. She beheads the thing like she’s a descendant of Henry VIII, all while smiling.

“That’s fucking brutal .” I can’t pull my eyes away from the tiny child’s malicious grin.

Micah nods again. “They call them ‘Peeps,’ and my research indicates they are named after the cries they make in the final moments before their death.” A collective shiver runs through the room.

A thought hits me, and I scrunch my face as I shake my head. “Why is a giant rabbit laying chicken eggs?”

“Not only is he laying them, but he’s leaving them in yards for children to collect.” For what might be the first time in history, Micah holds everyone’s attention. “None of this makes any sense, and it’s why we need to step in.”

“Okay, pretend for just a moment this isn’t absolute insanity... we all have jobs to do.” Niklaus hesitates when he glances at Cecil, but he doesn’t say anything. No one really knows what Father Time does, but he’s been around so long we’ve all learned to roll with it. “It sounds like you’re creating work for the hell of it. What exactly do you expect this position to do?”

“At the beginning, nothing.” Eyebrows around the table raise. “Understanding the humans’ creation must be the priority. It will take a lot of observation and research.

Only once we understand what they expect from this creature will we be ready to proceed.”

“Ohhh.... kay....” I drawl as his purple eyes land on mine. “Easter Bunny project, step one is spywork. Wasn’t where I saw that going, but alright. Then what?”

“ Then ,” he huffs with another toss of that pearly white hair, “we wait until the humans have accepted The Easter Bunny as a fixture in their belief system. Then we can flip the script and use it to influence humanity. Just like The Santa encourages children to be good, and The Lucifer motivates moral behavior from adults.”

“You just pulled that out of your ass, didn’t you?” Micah’s lip lifts in the slightest snarl as he glares at me, drumming his fingers on the podium. “You called this meeting and dragged all of us here because you were bored and needed some attention.”

“Drekoth, get your dog under control,” he growls through clenched teeth.

“If anyone’s the dog, it’s you, angel boy.” A bolt of pure rage flashes in his eyes as he flexes his fists, and a thrill shoots up my spine as I smirk. My arms cross over my chest as I lean against the wall, never breaking our stare-off.

“Well, I, uh... I think you b-both have good points,” The Cupid says, and flinches when I glare at him. “We don’t have to decide everything regarding the position yet, because it will take years before the humans forget they made this up.”

“Yes, Azrael, that is correct.” Micah tilts his nose so high he’ll drown if it rains. “And it is not a year-round job. Whoever fills the role will primarily be needed between February to April, and the rest of their time will be their own.”

Although the Christmas season has passed, The Santa stays busy year-round getting

ready for the upcoming holiday. The Cupid is in high demand with Valentine's Day approaching, and The Tooth Fairy never rests. My eyes move to Cecil, who yawns and runs his fingers through his long gray beard. Still don't know what that fucker does, but I'll just leave him alone.

Sliding my tongue across my teeth again, I glance at Drekoth. There's a compact mirror in his hand, and he purses his lips at his reflection as he fluffs his hair. I have a strong urge to chop that beloved hair off his head and shove it down his throat. Bind him in magical handcuffs and toss him into a forgotten corner of Hell until everyone forgets his name. Nothing would change, because he doesn't do a damn thing anyway. It would just spare me from watching his incompetence.

Drekoth snaps his mirror closed with a sharp click, like he does a hundred times a day, and the sound severs the final strands of my sanity. It chops my common sense right in half as I realize I will do anything—absolutely fucking anything—to never hear that sound again.

"I'll do it," I hear myself saying, and once again, every eye turns to stare at me. Even Damien is speechless, which is a feat in and of itself.

"I'm sorry... I'm not sure I follow," Micah says, tilting his head as he drags his fingers along the edges of his obnoxious gavel. It's like he's about to protest to something and wants to make sure he knows what he's arguing against first. "You'll do what?"

Again, I glance around the circle, and the shock is still clear on everyone's expression. Annoyance flares as I narrow my eyes, gesturing at their dumb, staring faces. "You need someone to fill the position, and I'm the only one present that doesn't currently have restrictive obligations."

"Who will trim my hair?" Drekoth wails in a whisper.

“How about I chop your head right off your fucking neck, and then neither of us has to worry about that?” I snap, and his blood orange eyes widen. I take a deep breath, shaking my head as I turn back to Micah.

“Yes, they might be busy, but you are...” The Archangel twists his face into a disgusted grimace and waves his hand, sweeping it up and down as he gestures at all of me. Just gestures at the entire thing with a sneer. “You are not special.”

“Oh, fuck you, Micah.” His nostrils flare as his temper rages, but I’ve never been one to back down. “Special? You think you’re fucking special? No one else is jumping out of their seats to help you with this asinine project.”

“How dare you speak to me that way?” The lights flicker overhead as his power glides over my skin, and I fight a shiver. What’s meant to be intimidating prickles over my skin, caressing my body as it drifts over my arms and torso.

I lean forward, flashing him my most sarcastic smirk. “Why don’t you move that little party trick lower? If you’re going to put the effort in, at least I can get a happy ending out of it.”

“Must you be so indecent?” Micah growls and his gaze drops to my crotch, where my traitorous cock has started to chub up again. A giant smile rips across my face as a blush tints his cheeks, but he quickly darts his eyes away.

Fuck, is he shy ?!

Why is that so fucking hot?

I bite back a groan and shift to cover the evidence of my current situation. “Yeah, it’s just part of the whole package, ya know?”

“No, demon , I don’t know, nor do I want to know anything about your... package.”

Goddamn, he’s pretty when he’s flustered. He’s blushing deeper now, sputtering on his words. “If you say so.” I lean against the doorframe with a grin as his eyes flash. “So, you don’t want me, then?”

“ Want you? This council does not want nor need your assistance, Xalreth.” His eyes narrow as they sweep the room. Half the occupants stare at the table and try to disappear into the woodwork, while the other half watches our argument with rapt attention. A bowl of popcorn appears in Damien’s lap when he snaps his fingers, a manic grin in place as he pops a piece into his mouth.

Pissed-off purple eyes meet mine as I push off the doorframe and take a step closer. “Doesn’t need me, huh? Yeah, I guess you’re right, with so many people fighting to come to your defense. All these volunteers fighting to accept a bullshit job you just invented.” There’s a mocking tone to my voice that makes his eyes flash even brighter, and they turn positively murderous when I begin to slow clap. “Great show of support. Is it everything you thought it would be?”

I watch the cogs in his head click into place as the realization hits him—I’m his best option.

Possibly his only one.

“Maybe I spoke in haste—” he starts, and it sounds like every word is being shoved out of his throat in his reluctance.

“Nah, I changed my mind. It sounded like a way to get a break from dipshit over here,” I say as I gesture toward Drekoth, “but if it means I have to interact with you anymore, I’ll pass.”

“You cannot pass ,” he argues, gripping his gavel again as though he can make some grand proclamation that forces me to do whatever he wants. “You already offered yourself for the position, and I consider those words binding.”

“What’s that? I can’t say no?” My brow raises as I flash him a threatening smile full of teeth. When he shakes his head, a quiet laugh rolls from my mouth. “Watch me.”

And with that, I turn and walk from the room.

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:26 am

Micah

Awareness scrapes over my skin, the attention from the others dragging angry ditches over my arms and face. Harsher than they were earlier in the meeting, their opinions are a familiar sting. It's something I've learned to ignore over time, but for reasons I don't understand, right now my defenses are down.

Every condescending thought is a scratch against my consciousness.

The constant scrutiny that comes with my position can be a burden, but my skills and experience are what qualify me for this role. It isn't my fault I'm their superior.

It's who I was made to be.

Normally, I'm unbothered by what they think of me. For millennia, I've endured the curse of experiencing their opinions, whether I want them or not. Over time, it has become nothing more than background noise—a low thrum of energy that's almost meditative.

But something about Xalreth feels different.

In our past interactions, he's come across as mild, if disinterested. His attention has always been less severe than the others, but not anymore. The glare he tossed me before he walked out was more of a stab than a graze, like he'd jabbed a knife into my gut with that careless shrug.

And to have the nerve to walk away from me.

From me.

“We will continue this meeting at another time,” I seethe as I stare at the door. The demon slammed it closed so hard I’m pretty sure I caught the wind from it. “Be on the lookout for my summons.”

More attention brands into me, confusion and curiosity mixing with the annoyance, but I ignore it and charge after him. The door crashes against the wall with a bang as I barrel through, and I spot Xalreth’s giant frame nearing the end of the hallway where the exterior door waits. He doesn’t rush, though, even knowing I’m behind him. He fucking strolls , lazy and laid-back as my blood boils.

“You will stop right there,” I growl after him, and a condescending chuckle rolls over his shoulder.

“Will I?” His pace never changes as I move faster, despite the fact that I’m gaining on him by the second. He doesn’t spare a backward glance as he reaches the door and pushes through. Soft sunlight shines into the hallway, the haze of the Heavenly realm keeping it from ever becoming too bright, and I snarl again as I chase him outside.

“Do not walk away from me, demon .” I’m close now, only a few strides between us as he whirls to face me, and I snap my wings out to keep from barreling into him.

He’s enormous, even by demonic standards, although as an Archangel I have a height advantage over him. He tilts his chin up in challenge, and he doesn’t budge as his chest bumps into mine. Unnervingly solid black eyes stare at me, but I refuse to be the one to back down.

“I have a name.” His voice is calm as can be, so deep it rumbles and vibrates between us where we touch.

“I’m aware.”

“Use it.”

“Excuse me?” We’re locked in this ridiculous standoff as I take a long breath to compose myself, catching his scent of smoke and amber. His eyes are the only part of him that moves, drifting over my face as though he’s searching for signs of my discomfort.

He inches even closer, his chest pressed against mine as he continues to stare me down. “If you want my attention, you will use my name.”

“And if I neither want nor care about your attention?”

“You’re the one who chased me, Micah. If you have nothing to say, then walk away.” Another smirk pulls onto his lips, and I realize he’s called my bluff.

Again .

Seconds pass as we stare at each other, and he seems content to stand there all day and test my patience. A few more calming breaths fight their way into my lungs before I grit my teeth. “Xalreth—”

“There it is.” His head tilts to one side as that smirk pulls deeper. “You do know how to listen, don’t you? Say it again, with less attitude this time.”

Another breath pushes from my nose, and I force as much calm into my tone as I can muster. “Xalreth—”

“Look at you, being such a good boy,” he murmurs, and something in my brain goes fuzzy, tingling at the words. My tongue darts out between my lips as I suck in a sharp

inhale. His brows lift by a nearly indiscernible amount as he searches my face, and it's as though I'm stripped naked for his inspection. "Oh, well now... this is fascinating, isn't it?" I force a swallow, my tongue suddenly too thick for my mouth.

"Were you serious about your offer?" The words stumble a little as they work their way out, but I maintain most of my composure. I need to regain control of this conversation and steer it back to the matter at hand. This is strictly business.

"Well, I was," he drawls, as composed as ever. "But now I'm thinking that if we are ever going to work together, you owe me an apology."

"An apology?!"

"Yes, and a good one, at that. I expect an apology for the way you spoke to me. Just because you're a big, important Archangel doesn't mean you're allowed to talk down to others."

"Don't be ridiculous. I'll speak to you, and anyone else for that matter, any way I want." Some of my sense returns as I pull away, and faster than I can even track, his hand grips my throat and holds me in place. Those black eyes peruse my face as I hold completely still, my heart thudding in my neck underneath his palm.

"Apologize."

My tongue flicks out again, and he tracks the motion with open curiosity. "And if I don't?"

A huffing laugh rolls from his mouth as he tightens his grip, just enough to make my breath wheeze as I draw it into my lungs. "I think you want to."

"I assure you, I don't," I breathe. We both know I could get away from him with the

blink of an eye.

So why am I allowing him to manhandle me like this?

He leans closer, his lips ghosting my skin as he puts them against my ear. “Good boys know when to apologize. You are a good boy, aren’t you Micah?” A sound leaves my throat that I’ve never made before, a low, soft whimper that makes him chuckle. “Maybe you should be on your knees for it.”

Another shiver rolls through my limbs, goosebumps lifting on my skin as his breath blows across the shell of my ear. He waits for a few seconds before he laughs again. “Go on, angel. Kneel for me. We both know you want to.”

“No, I don’t.”

“Come on,” he teases, playfully nipping at the hinge of my jaw. “You’d be so pretty at my feet, wouldn’t you?”

Tingling pleasure pulses through my limbs, a sparking heat building in my core as my cock hardens, pressing against my pants. Logic fights with pure, primal need as I imagine the way he could pin me down and cover me with his weight. I remember the way his cock flexed when we were inside, and the heat of his gaze as it slid over my body.

He sent those filthy thoughts my direction without even knowing I could feel them. They told me he wouldn’t be poised and proper like my usual partners. No, he’d be messy and passionate. He’d leave me raw and filthy.

Xalreth pulls me closer, slotting his leg between mine, and another of those pitiful sounds leaves me at the friction. A warm rush of pre-cum leaks inside my boxer briefs, and it’s like he knows how he’s affecting me as he smirks. “Go on,” he taunts,

eyes never leaving mine. “Dirty those knees for me.”

I shouldn’t want this.

Shouldn’t be desperate for him to defile me.

Shouldn’t...

My body betrays me as my knee bends, a ragged exhale escaping my lips as I drop to the ground at his feet. Another of those pitiful whines slips free as I stare straight ahead at the outline of his hard cock pushing against his pants.

Breaths saw from my lungs as I tilt my head up to look at him, and he still has that maddening smirk on his face. He reaches down, stroking my lips with this thumb until I open for him. He slips between them and presses on my tongue. Spit pools inside my mouth as I wait, not moving a muscle.

“See? I knew you’d be pretty down there. What an obedient little angel.” His thumb pushes deeper until it makes me gag. “Go ahead, then.” He pulls it back, spreading the spit over my lips. “Apologize.”

My brain tells me I should be furious... tells me to get up and force him to the ground. Take back control of the situation, and let the dirt stain the knees of his pants as he looks up at me from his spot underneath me. Make him beg and grovel for my forgiveness.

But that isn’t what happens.

“I was disrespectful,” I hear myself say, and as his smile spreads, it feels right. Pleasing him makes my whole body go staticky as he rubs over my lips again, tugging them until they separate.

“That was a good start, but I think there’s more to be said, isn’t there?”

He waits with an iron will that tells he won’t move until he gets what he wants. My heart lodges in my throat, and my voice comes out husky. “It was rude of me to speak to you that way and I shouldn’t have done it.”

“Are you sorry?”

“Yes,” I whisper.

He lets out a happy hum, dirtying me further by wiping his slick thumb over my cheekbone. “That’s more like it. Now, you chased me out here for a reason, Micah. Did you have something to ask me?”

I force a swallow and nod. “Would you be willing to help me?”

“I could be convinced,” he murmurs, slipping his thumb between my lips again. “Suck.”

Obediently, I curl my tongue around his thumb and draw it deeper into my mouth, moaning as he thrusts it in and out. “You enjoy being told what to do, don’t you?” My eyes land on his, and I shudder as I nod.

I’ve never been in such a position before.

In the past, I have always been in control... always been the one to call the shots, to make the decisions. It’s what everyone expects of an Archangel. They want to be pinned down and tossed around—submit to my desires and surrender their free will.

But what about me?

What if I'm the one that wants to let go?

The notion of giving up all this precious control sends a rush of adrenaline through my brain, a warm buzz slithering under my skin.

"Who would've thought the mighty Micah gets off on submitting? Bet you'd love it if I replaced my thumb with my cock, wouldn't you?" My pupils dilate as I reach down and palm my erection, and the friction makes my eyes roll up in my head.

He pulls away, leaving a strand of spit on my lip as he clicks his tongue at me. "Did I tell you to touch yourself?"

My hand falls limp at my side as I push out a shaky breath, staring up at him. "You really do know how to listen, after all." He slips his thumb back into my mouth as relief floods my system, and I suck harder, fighting to keep my hands by my sides. He thrusts deeper, pressing on my tongue as I draw my cheeks hollow.

"So pretty," he murmurs as his other hand brushes over my cheek. "Do you think you've earned my cock?" I nod as a line of spit leaks from the corner of my mouth, soaking my chin and dripping onto my shirt. "That excites you, doesn't it? The thought of me fucking your face?"

A moan slips loose, louder this time, and I thrust my head forward until I gag on his thumb. "You're a little slut, aren't you?" My head bobs again in agreement, and he lets out a deep chuckle as he pulls his hand free, pinching my lower lip and tugging. "I want you to say it."

"I... I..." My hesitation causes him to arch a brow, and he takes a half step back. "No, wait," I beg, reaching for him when I remember I'm not supposed to touch. My hands fall to my sides as he stands there, smirking expectantly. "I-I want your cock," I finally whisper, and he rewards me by closing that miniscule distance that had me

desperate.

“Say it louder, and tell me what I want to hear.”

“I... I want your cock in my mouth. I’m a slut, and I want to... want to suck you.”
My dick aches, throbbing in the restriction of my pants as I fight the urge to touch myself. My hips give an involuntary shift forward as my face burns.

“You want me to defile you, pretty angel?”

“Please?” I ask, lifting my eyes to his as my hips snap forward again.

“Now, that wasn’t so hard, was it? Is my little slut humping the air because he’s not allowed to touch?”

“Yes,” I grunt as I do it again, the seam of my pants offering the tiniest relief to this tightness that coils inside me. He grips his dick through his jeans, and I whine as he slides his palm along his length.

“Do you think you deserve this?”

“Please?” My gaze meets his as I thrust, moaning louder. “Please, Xalreth.”

“There it is. That’s what I was waiting for... my name sounds so pretty on your lips.”
He unzips his pants and pulls his cock through the opening, and it’s the same dark gray as his skin, long and thick. After a few languid strokes, a bead of pre-cum builds in his slit, and it takes all of my self-control not to lick it away.

“What do you think you’ve earned, Micah? Have you earned a taste, or are you only allowed to watch?”

“Please let me taste,” I whine, my balls drawing tight as my cock grows its own pulse, and my hips are thrusting forward in a rhythm now.

“You’re a needy thing, aren’t you?” He swipes the clear bead with his thumb and offers it to me, and I moan as I suck on it, letting him coat my tongue. “That’s all you get, though.”

“No,” I plead, gripping his calves as I try to force him closer. He lets out a warning growl as I stare up his body, glaring at me even as he strokes himself. “Give me more... I need more.”

“You’re about to hump my leg like the fucking dog you are, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” I gasp as I scoot against him, and he doesn’t push me away as I straddle his leg. “Can I?”

“Fuck, you’re sweet,” he chuckles, brushing my hair from my face. “Go ahead, Micah. Take it.”

The moment my cock brushes his leg, I throw my head back in a moan and move my hips faster, thrusting against him. “Cock hungry little bitch, rutting me like you’re in heat.”

“I am,” I whine as my eyes close, the coiling pressure in my lower body building into sparks that crackle through my spine. The friction of my cock dragging along his leg has my breath blowing out in panting breaths. “Please, Xalreth, tell me.”

“Tell you what?” Another rush of pre-cum soaks into my boxer briefs as I watch him jerk himself, his eyes locked on mine as I rut against him.

“What I... what I am.”

Another low, satisfied rumble of a laugh leaves him as he moves his hand faster along his cock, a clear thread hanging from his slit. “You want to hear it, huh?”

“ Please. ”

He waits until I look at him before he reaches down with his free hand, carding his fingers through my hair and fisting as he holds my cheek against his thigh. “Take what you need, Micah. Show me what a good fucking boy you are.”

Desperate sounds spill from my throat, my mouth hanging open as a breath-stealing rush of pleasure causes wet warmth to flood into my pants. My cock pulses and my entire body trembles as I come, my release filling my boxer briefs until it slides down my thigh. Gasps and moans are the only sound aside from the creak of fabric, and I rub myself on him until I’m sensitive and raw. Even as it jolts my nerves and makes my teeth clench with overstimulation, I thrust against him.

Xalreth purrs above me, jerking himself at a faster pace now, his hips thrusting into his fist. “Show me the mess you made.”

I sit back on my feet and show him my cock, still hard and pushing against the dampness on my crotch. The wet path spreads, seeping along my thigh. “Greedy thing. That wasn’t enough to satisfy you, was it?”

“No,” I whimper, my hips rolling again as I watch him shuttling his fist along his cock. “Give me your cum, Xalreth,” I beg, nearly out of my mind as I drop onto my hands and knees, thrusting my hips.

“Thinking about me fucking you from behind, are you? Wanting to feel me stretch that tight hole open? God, I bet you make the best fucking noises.” My only answer is a moan as I tilt my face up towards him. “I love you on your knees for me,” he mutters, then grunts as the first stripe of cum shoots across my skin. Splashes paint

my cheeks and forehead, and droplets wet my nose and lips. The warmth dripping down my face makes my body rebel, and I whine again as my cock kicks in my pants.

“Fuck, I’m coming again,” I gasp as the pulsing pleasure explodes through my body. Sheer bliss thuds through my muscles, compressing and releasing—wringing them out until it’s almost painful. Thick, white fluid seeps through the fabric of my pants, dripping to form a small puddle beneath me.

Xalreth takes a few deep breaths as his fingers drag over my face, rubbing his cum into my skin. Reality crashes through my lust-filled haze, and crippling embarrassment burns my body.

Anyone could have seen us here.

Anyone from the meeting could’ve stepped outside and watched as I defiled myself.

“You look so pretty painted in me,” he murmurs, and I jerk away as my cheeks burn. I sit on my haunches until I realize he can see the wetness on my pants, and I scramble to my feet, turning my back to him as I attempt to salvage a shred of my dignity.

“Micah?” God above, he actually sounds concerned, and I can’t handle it. A slow, mean smirk spreads across my face, a coldness in my eyes as I glance his way.

“That was sufficient to convince you, then?” The haughty edge to my tone makes him frown. “You’ll take the position?”

“Yes,” he says slowly, and I feel his attention on me now more than ever, raking over my limbs in a phantom touch so intense it should leave scars behind. “Micah, that was—”

“That was necessary to come to an agreement, and nothing more.”

His scoff is angry, disbelieving, as he takes a step closer, and I turn to face him with my chin held high. “Yeah?” He reaches up and swipes his fingers across my cheek, collecting his cum and smearing it over my lips as I snarl and push him back. “Do you drop to your knees for every deal you make? Come in your pants whenever you need to negotiate?” A furious laugh blows from his nose as he shakes his head. “Guess you are just a slut, after all.”

My palms slam into his shoulders as I shove him against the wall, pinning him there as I hover over him. “This never happened.”

“Don’t worry.” He has the audacity to wink at me as though he isn’t seconds away from being wiped from existence. “Secret’s safe with me. And speaking of... we need a safe word next time.”

“There will not be a next time,” I seethe, the words fighting through my clenched teeth.

“Yeah, okay. Keep telling yourself that.” He reaches between us and cups my cock through my soaked pants, giving it a squeeze as I force myself not to react. “Go home and choke yourself, then, and let me know if it feels as good as my hands around your neck.” He pushes me away and struts towards the door. Not even bothering to spare me a glance, he shouts back, “Call me when we need to discuss specifics.”

And with that, he disappears inside and I fall against the wall, trying to make sense of what happened.

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Xalreth

It takes longer than I expect for Micah to reach out, and his request for a meeting is brief and absurdly formal. I can almost see him sneering as he wrote it, his pinkie stuck out like some sort of Heavenly prince. It seems three days was his limit.

Three days that I spent chaffing my own dick, jerking myself every chance I can find a few free minutes. Three days of fucking my fist until my balls ache from the strain.

Three days of trying to purge him from my system.

Fuck him and his pompous, pretentious ways. Fuck his arrogance and his holier-than-thou attitude. I don't need it.

He wants to pretend he didn't melt at the opportunity to get on his knees for me. That's fine. If he wants to live in his world of denial, then I'll make damn sure it doesn't happen again.

But if he thinks I'm going to run away and hide just because he's uncomfortable with his little sub awakening, he has another thing coming. Head high, I strut into the meeting room to find Micah standing at his podium, shirt off and pants so tight they might as well be painted on.

My cock gives an excited twitch and I growl to myself, drawing his attention. His eyes hold their same level of stoniness, not a sign of anything else. No excitement, or regret, or even embarrassment that I saw him at his most vulnerable.

Nothing .

Anger makes a mad dash through my veins, but I force myself into a similar state of indifference. “Please tell me you will not be standing up there lecturing me. I thought this was a discussion, not a sermon.”

“All my notes are up here,” he argues, and I snort a laugh.

“Keep your high ground then, buddy. I hope the advantage up there gives you what you need.”

His lip twitches as he glares at me, and I love that I’ve made him so unsure. After a long stretch of silence, he gathers his papers in a flurry of movement before carrying them over and slamming them down in front of me. A loud crack rings out as his hand slams onto the messy stack, and the impact vibrates through the table. I raise my eyes to his with a bored arch of my brow as he leans in, his teeth bared.

“Happy?”

“Very happy, thank you,” I say sweetly. “It’s so nice of you to bring yourself down to my level. That must’ve been terribly hard for you, being as important as you are.” I flash my own razor-sharp smile at him. His cheeks flush as the muscle in his jaw ticks, growing even more furious at my lack of reaction. I drop into my seat and lean back, crossing my arms as I nod at the papers. “What’s all this?”

“Research.”

“Thank you so much for that enlightening information,” I mutter, taking the stack of papers and jogging them until they’re in a neat pile. “Have you figured out why the humans even invented such a bizarre character? Because we aren’t debating that, right? We’re admitting this is weird as hell?”

He's cautious as he takes a seat opposite me, wary as though I might attack him at any moment. "From what I can tell, it holds a similar purpose as The Santa, and encourages children to behave for a reward."

My brows furrow as I gesture at the sketch of a basket full of colorful eggs. "That's the secret to curing human's tendencies for bad behavior? Giving the children eggs?"

"Apparently," Micah murmurs, and when I glance up, he's chewing on his pen, sliding it between his lips as he concentrates. Momentarily distracted, I watch the tip of his tongue flick over the pen, then he freezes as his gaze snaps up and my eyes move to his. "Is there a problem?"

"Of course not," I answer with a smile, returning my focus to the paperwork. Determined to stay on task, I gesture towards a series of notes he's written in his precise, flourished handwriting. "What is this list?"

"Variations of your uniform. We need to do some test runs to see which one has the best response."

"Excuse me, what? Uniform?" My eyes snap back up to his as he arches that brow again.

"Yes? If you are going to become The Easter Bunny, we cannot have you prancing around looking like this, can we?" He gestures at me, and my composure slips as my lip pulls up in a snarl.

"We've returned to this, then? Schoolyard insults of my appearance?"

He scoffs, and his fingers squeeze into a fist as his chest rises and falls in a long, controlled breath. "That is not what I am doing. It's a simple fact that if the humans expect a rabbit, I cannot throw a demon at them and believe it will be enough."

Logic tells me he's right, but a stubborn part of me wants to keep fighting. Wants to provoke him once more and watch as his cheeks redden—rile him up until a flustered softness overcomes him. I fight the urge for the sake of my sanity, though, and only offer him a snarky smile. “And you believe you're the most qualified to style me?”

“Of course.”

I hum a contrite, unconvinced sound. “If you say so.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing, nothing.” I hold my hands up with my palms facing him. He glares for a long time, and I wait until he nods and looks away to say, “It's just that... fashion advice from a man that slathers himself in oil before he leaves home? Not what I'd call the best choice, but what do I know?”

That spark of electricity behind his eyes flashes for a moment as his lips pull into an irritated sneer. “I do not slather myself in anything.”

Hook, line, and sinker.

“Oh, on the contrary, Micah, ” I say as a victorious smile spreads across my mouth. “You slathered yourself in front of me just days ago. I have vivid memories of it.” He takes a long, shaky inhale before pushing it out of his nose, and excitement burns in my gut as I brace myself for the fight.

But he returns his attention to the papers on the table. “I've chosen a few options we can test. Once we see how the humans react to them, we can make better decisions.”

Wait...

That's it ?

That's all I get?

Where's the snapping temper and screaming match? The crawling across the table and trying to choke me before I pin him to the ground? The fucking sweet, delirious moans as I dry-hump his ass until he begs me to come all over his back?

As I'm fuming in confused horniness, he glances up with that condescendingly sharp eyebrow. "Did you need something?"

"Nothing at all," I insist, and I don't miss the way he smirks as I fume at the table, acting as if he doesn't exist. The longer we sit here in silence, the more uncomfortable it gets. Neither of us is willing to break this stalemate, and instead we're both pretending to be busy even though I finished reading his notes minutes ago.

The longest sections of text discuss the origins of Easter—which, might I add, are remarkably incorrect. This whole 'He is Risen' thing got taken entirely too far when Jesus crawled his way out of a three-day bender.

It's like the old game of telephone, and a perfect example of how gossip gets twisted as it spreads from one person to the next. An innocent comment about how you've been dead to the world all weekend suddenly turns into a resurrection. That cluster of groupies that always chased him around caught wind of it, and they repeated everything he'd ever said as gospel.

How it spiraled into something involving giant rabbits and chicken eggs is beyond me.

"How much time have you spent with humans?" Micah finally asks, and I silently

celebrate the fact that he cracked first. I glance up to find his eyes darting across the papers. It doesn't take a genius to realize he's faking, though. I've already read everything twice, and he wrote the fucking things. He doesn't need to read them again—he just refuses to admit his attention is on me instead of the notes.

“I haven't spent much time with humanity aside from the tortured souls in Hell.”

His eyes flick up to mine for a brief second, and I swear a slight pink hue builds on his cheekbones. “Tortured souls? Do you get off on making them suffer? Tying them up and prodding at them when you're bored?”

I scoff, and he looks at me again. “Way to show your judgmental side, asshole. If you must know, I'm only ever around the souls for administrative purposes. Someone has to ensure everyone's accounted for and that their identification is up to date. There's a lot more to Hell than eternal damnation, but I'm pretty sure you already know that.” He nods as he stares at the papers once more, trying to appear disinterested when his original question registers in my mind. “You are awfully curious about my ability to tie a good knot, Micah.”

“Just making conversation.” He doesn't bother looking up, and I grin as I scoot my chair closer until my knee bumps his.

“Thinking about me tying you up? Are you wondering how it would feel to be open and exposed to me with no means to fight back?”

“Of course not,” he snaps, but he squirms in his seat. If he were to stand up right now, there's no doubt in my mind that his thick cock would be perfectly outlined in those ridiculously tight pants.

“God, what a pretty fucking picture it paints. Do you want to know how I'd do it?”

“No.” He shifts again, and I’m dying to see what he’s hiding from me. Desperate to drop to my knees and crawl to him under the table... lick the pre-cum from his pants. But that’s not what needs to happen.

If anyone is going to be on their knees, it’ll be him.

“Sure about that?” I slip my shoe off and drag my foot along the inside of his calf. His eyes go wide as his entire body jolts, his guard dropping as he fumbles and sends his notes raining down in a chaotic spread of papers.

“What the fuck are you doing?”

“Who, me?” I ask, maintaining an air of innocence as I inch higher, and he scowls even as he spreads his knees. A shaky breath pushes from his nose as I rest my foot over his crotch and tease. His hips jerk as he whimpers, just like I knew he would.

“You’re awfully hard for someone who claims to be repulsed by the thought of being tied up,” I say conversationally as I rub along his cock. “I think you want to be bound and helpless, don’t you?”

“No,” he grits out, even as his eyes close and lips separate, his face tilting towards the ceiling.

“You are dying to be at my mercy, with all your precious control taken away. Ropeburn on your wrists and fire in your veins as you fought, but you’d love every fucking second of it, wouldn’t you? I know I would. The thought of dark leather against that pale skin... you would be so pretty. You’d be a goddamned work of art.” I rub my foot against him harder, and he grips the ends of the table as he gives a rough thrust forward.

“Would you be my muse, Micah?” His head jerks in a nod, like he’s fighting himself

not to do it. “Do you want to be my good boy again?”

The moan that slips free is loud and unrestrained as one of his hands falls to my foot, holding it in place as his hips roll faster. “Tell me your safe word.”

His eyes snap open, some of the haze clearing. “Wha-what?”

“If this is going to happen the way you want it to happen,” I give him a pointed glance as his cheeks flush deeper, “there have to be ground rules. I would never be so careless as to take away your control without giving you a way to reclaim it. What’s your safe word?”

He stays quiet as his mind spins, and I start to pull my foot back. He releases a pitiful whine and grabs my ankle, and I raise a brow as I glare. “If you can’t find the courage to have this conversation with me, then we aren’t doing this.”

The uncertainty vanishes from his eyes as that fire ignites behind them. “Do not speak to me in that condescending way.”

“No? You only want me to tell you how pathetic you are when we’re fucking?”

“How dare you—”

A harsh, annoyed scoff rips from my throat as I shove backwards. My ankle burns as I wrench it free from his grasp, and I stand and lean over the table. “See something you like, Micah?” I ask as his eyes fall on my cock then slowly rise to mine. “Let’s get one thing straight. In your world, you might be a bigwig, important Archangel, but in mine? You’re just a shiny whore who’s desperate to be used. Admit it... you want to spend so much time on your knees that they’re red and calloused.”

His nostrils flare as his pupils dilate, and I can’t tell if it’s from anger or arousal.

Probably both.

“You fantasize about it, don't you? Having a scratchy throat when you call your next big meeting because I've fucked it raw.” My fingers circle his neck and he lifts his chin, giving me room. “You want to wear a collar around this gorgeous fucking neck so I can leash you whenever I want. Use you in any way I desire.”

My hand drifts lower, fingertips grazing his chest before I pinch at his nipple and draw a hiss from between his lips. “You're desperate to be marked, aren't you? Painted in my cum, inside and out. Covered in bruises and bite marks from where you've allowed me free use of your body. Fight it until you're blue in the face, Micah, but you want to submit.”

He remains stubbornly silent, his eyes blazing with defiance. Looks like it's going to be a few more days of beating off like a teenager who just figured out how his dick works, after all.

“Alright then.” I force calm into my voice as I sink into the chair again, and he's surprised as he watches me. Guarded. “Let's review these notes so I can go home.”

“But—” Micah starts, and my eyes dart up to his, daring him to argue as he trails off.

“Oh, trust me, I'm listening. Do you have anything to add to this conversation?”

Conflict brews on his face as his eyes dart between mine, his lips slightly parted, until he seems to deflate with a sigh and shakes his head. His uncertainty causes a flicker of something uncomfortable in the pit of my stomach—something that feels an awful lot like regret.

Until he opens his mouth again, and then all I feel is annoyance.

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Micah

“What is the point of this again?”

I pinch the bridge of my nose as I try to summon patience. “For the last time, this is a big part of their celebration, and we need to have a better understanding why.” Xalreth stares off into the distance with his head resting on his fist, not bothering to answer me as my tolerance wears thin. “Come on, we’re running out of time, and you can’t be seen like this amongst the humans.”

“There you go again, insinuating I’m ugly,” he mutters.

My eyes slide across his thick, muscled frame, then zero in on the details of his face. Thick, dark lashes surround those enormous black eyes, and his brow ridge is prominent. Unlike most demons, he has no horns or tail, and instead of hair, a series of thin, blackwork tattoos cover his head. The bridge of his nose is wider than what a human might consider normal, and his square jaw protrudes just enough to make his dark lips form a pout when he isn’t smiling.

Though he’s usually smiling, and I can’t figure out why.

He’s not classically beautiful, but Xalreth’s unusual features are striking. Angels have been conditioned to find the symmetry and delicate lines of our own kind attractive, but I prefer the unique angles of his face to that of my brethren. He caught my eye the very first time we met, though I never gave it much thought.

Not until now.

“Have you looked in a mirror lately? Of course you aren’t ugly, you fucking imbecile. It has nothing to do with my opinions about your appearance, and everything to do with the fact that humans are not accustomed to seeing a giant, gray-skinned demon with solid black eyes.”

He tilts his head at me as he climbs from his seat, and his hips roll as he saunters in my direction. “Sounds like you think I’m hot,” he teases, poking me with his pointer finger and dragging it down my stomach.

“That is what you took away from the conversation?”

“What can I say? Demons are suckers for compliments. Actually...” His fingertip slides lower, following the dips in my abdomen as I fight not to react. “Fine, I’ll agree to taking this little field trip with you on one condition.” He keeps tracing lower until he’s sliding that suggestive finger along the top of my pants.

“Are you going to say it, or shall we sit here for hours while I guess?”

“Feisty today,” he murmurs, and hooks his fingers through my waistband, giving it a small yank. “Give me one compliment and I’ll go with you, no complaints.” When I raise my brow, he chuckles. “Okay, fine, minimal complaints. But it has to be genuine, not some passive-aggressive bullshit or something generic that belongs in a performance review.”

“Feeling insecure, Xalreth?”

“Not at all,” he says easily, still grazing those fingertips along my lower abdomen. It’s oddly intimate. “Just want to hear you say it.”

“You’re indecent,” I say, glancing down to watch his hands exploring my body.

“You’re dodging the question.” I shouldn’t entertain his childish demands, but the past few days have been rougher than I’d like to admit. It seems like no one is happy right now. Meetings are turning into warzones, and every word that comes out of my mouth is met with an argument. Sometimes it’s spoken aloud, but the other times it just slices through me as they let their mind do the shouting.

It’s exhausting, and my defenses are battered from shielding myself from it all.

And then I arrived in Hell to transport Xalreth, and his smile was genuine and his attention was soothing. It was like being dropped into a warm bath after hours spent in the cold, and for the first time in days, I found myself relaxing as he took my arm and we teleported to our workspace in the Heavenly realm.

We’re still fighting—God knows we probably always will. Xalreth loves to dig his heels in and be catastrophically stubborn. We argue, but I can begrudgingly admit the sharp banter between us is the closest thing I’ve had to a civil conversation in days.

How pathetic is that?

I give a low, thoughtful hum before I say, “You aren’t horrible to look at, as far as demons go.”

He laughs in surprise, and I have to bite back a smile as he shakes his head. “Not going to cut it, angel boy. Try again.”

“Your face is tolerable.”

“Clock’s ticking.” He levels me with a sharp glare, but there’s playfulness behind it. “And if I have to waste an entire day standing here waiting, I will.” I reach for him, but I hesitate as I remember how he commanded me not to touch him last time. When our eyes meet, he gives a single nod of his head. My palm lands on the swell of his

pecs as the muscles twitch and tense under my hand.

“Your size,” I blurt out, and he doesn’t hide his surprise. “I... like how big you are.” My voice is barely above a whisper as my hand explores. “No one is bigger than me, ever , and I’ve never felt small like I do when I’m beside you. Your body is sculpted... so much thicker than mine, but you still move with such grace.”

When my eyes find his again, there’s a curious expression in them—one that’s almost tender. I rip my hand away while heat burns my skin, waiting for him to mock me for my honest admission.

Waiting for the consequences of letting him in, even just for that tiny moment.

“I love your neck,” he murmurs, and I suck in a sharp inhale, lifting my chin as he gets closer. “How it feels under my hands...” A soft brush of his lips presses against the column of my throat. “The way I imagine it would thump under my tongue when your heart is racing.”

“You’ve thought about that?”

Another quiet laugh blows from his nose, and his fingers curl around the waist of my pants as he jerks me forward with a playful yank, forcing our bodies flush. “What do you think, angel?” His lips make another feather-light pass over my skin as I fight back a moan.

My entire body is on fire, burning alive, and I can’t even form words as he releases me and takes a step backward. “Alright then,” he purrs as a filthy smile crosses his lips. “A deal’s a deal. Let’s get this show on the road.” It takes a few moments for the clouds in my mind to settle as I remember we’re here for a reason. I clear my throat, fighting to stave off my body’s reaction to his touch.

“Glamour first,” I remind him, my heart still pounding as I try to regain my composure. My magic disguises us to appear human, although there’s nothing to be done about our size. We’re going into this knowing we will attract attention.

My wings vanish as I dismiss them, leaving me with a foreign sense of vulnerability. Wings are a status symbol in the Angel community, and their span correlates with status. The larger the wings, the more powerful the being. Keeping mine exposed is a power play—one that forces others to recognize my authority without ever speaking to them.

But now, with their weight missing from my back, I’m off balance.

My magic surges, a tingling wave that shifts my opalescent skin to a sun-kissed tan and my white hair to a bright golden blonde. The harsher angles of my face soften until I appear as human as possible, despite my size. A faint hint of vanilla and sandalwood fills the air as the magic works, and Xalreth takes a deep inhale as I step closer.

“Your magic smells like you,” he mutters as I place a hand on his shoulder, preparing to apply his disguise. He curls into me, pressing his nose into my neck. “So good... so sweet.”

“Oh, um... thank you,” I whisper, cringing at how formal I sound as he chuckles. This playful, affectionate side of him is new, and I don’t know how to handle it. A spark flares in my gut at the heat of his skin against mine, and I focus on applying his glamour so I don’t get stuck in my head. My magic makes quick work of his appearance, brightening his gray skin to a rich brown. His solid black eyes morph into their human counterparts, with bright whites and mahogany irises. Even his teeth appear straight, no longer the razored points he loves to use with his meaningless threats.

When I pull my hand away, he walks to the mirror and stares at his reflection, running his fingers over his cheekbones and the bridge of his nose that's more defined with the glamour. "That's crazy. I can feel that my bone structure hasn't changed if I concentrate, but my brain is telling me it has." He opens his mouth and pokes a tooth, a bead of blood on his fingertip despite them appearing mundane and flat. "So fucking weird."

Thankful for the distraction, I remove a sage green sweater from a hanger and pull it over my head, instantly hating the scratch of the material against my skin. "Dear God, do they really wear such atrocious fabrics?"

"Afraid so," he says as he dons his own shirt. "In a particularly cruel corner of Hell, they're forced to endure days of wearing coarse, scratchy wool without an undershirt."

"Ghastly," I mutter, and a grin spreads over his mouth. It's strange seeing him this way, and I find I miss the points of his teeth and smokey hue of his skin. "Are you ready?"

He loops his arm through mine, and startles as I subconsciously place my hand over his. There's a curious glint in his eye as he cocks his head, and I force myself not to look at him and acknowledge the fact that I'm touching him again.

Willingly, and beyond what's necessary.

Before either of us can overthink it, I teleport us to our next destination.

The hallway is a nightmare of shuffling feet and murmuring voices where no one is walking fast enough. A thick, cloying smell of unwashed bodies hangs in a dense cloud of... what is it that humans call it? Funk. It is funky in here, so much so that my eyes sting.

People stare as we walk through the crowd, and I peer inside the glass doorways and floor-to-ceiling windows that line the walls. “What sort of place is this again?” Xalreth asks, sneering at a human man who examines him too closely. The man yelps and quickly looks away from Xalreth’s self-satisfied smirk.

“A mall ,” I answer with a sniff, wrinkling my nose. “It’s quite common, is it not?”

“God, you’re such a snob,” he snorts with a derisive puff of air.

I give his shoulder a shove, just hard enough to throw him off balance. “Is that not the case? You have someone’s grandmother selling pretzels across from where a teenage girl is trying to encourage children to let her punch holes in their ears.”

He wrinkles his nose as he stares at the giant cookies arranged in a glass display. “It is strange that even with all this food, it smells like sweat and piss.”

“See? Don’t act like you’re not looking down on them, too.”

Humans part out of our way as we approach our first stop, and I grab his elbow to steer him towards it. A young blonde woman does a double take as we walk in, a flicker of surprise in her expression as she scans our large frames. “H-Hi, can I help you?”

“Yes, we have inquiries about... chocolate.”

“Well,” she says, a nervous giggle escaping her lips before she clears her throat, and her hand sweeps across the shelves. “It’s safe to say you’ve come to the right place. What questions do you have?”

“Could you explain the lore of chocolate and how it ties to Easter?”

Her brows snap together, and she scratches her nose. “Oh, uh, well... there are so many types of eggs... different sizes and fillings. Dark, milk, and white, hollow or solid. And, of course, chocolate bunnies.”

Xalreth hesitates for a moment before he shakes his head. “And huma—” He stops abruptly and clears his throat at my glare. “People enjoy this? These chocolate eggs?”

“Well, yes.” She has a light, tinkling laugh, but Xalreth looks unconvinced.

“It just sounds... weird.”

“Weird?”

“Disgusting, even. I mean, it’s not only me that thinks that, right? It can’t be. The crunchy shell and runny egg yolk leaking out of the chocolate? That doesn’t sound appetizing in the least. It sounds downright fucking disgusting and makes me want to gag just imagining it.”

“ Oh ,” she says, her eyes round. “Well, um, they aren’t, uh, runny...”

“The eggs are cooked first? Ugh, that’s worse, somehow.” His skin takes on a slight green hue as he holds a fist up to his mouth, and I have to agree. Hard-boiled eggs dipped in sugar sounds revolting.

The blond shakes her head, staring at Xalreth. Her expression is so bewildered that I discretely check to make sure his glamour hasn’t failed. But the handsome lines of his human face are intact, even if he looks queasy.

“That isn’t... no,” she finally says, crossing her arms. “They’re just shaped like eggs. Pure chocolate, or filled with something... caramel, for example, or peanut butter.”

“Fascinating,” I say, glancing over the displays. “I assume the same is true for the bunnies?”

This time, she doesn’t even blink as she stares at me. “You’re... I’m sorry, are you asking whether they put actual rabbits inside chocolate bunnies?”

My brow lifts defensively at her tone. “I’m not implying they aren’t cooked first.”

“Is this a joke? Am I being punked? Are you guys from one of those prank pages? Ugh, I am so not dressed to go viral.” Her head whips around as though she’s searching for something or someone. Xalreth and I meet eyes, and he gives a tiny shrug.

She hinted at being viral, so perhaps she’s sick. I take a casual step away from her while she’s distracted. Archangels might be immune to human illnesses, but it doesn’t mean I want to be face to face with one. “I assure you, we are merely curious. This is not... a punk .”

She stutters for a few more seconds before she gathers her wits, taking a sharp breath and forcing a smile back onto her face. “If a chocolate is shaped like an object, that object isn’t included as an ingredient. It’s simply for appearances. A Christmas tree chocolate, for example, would not be made with pine.”

“ But a candy cane shaped one includes peppermint,” Xalreth argues, and I cross my arm and nod in his defense.

“This is a good point.” He flashes me a brief smile that I return.

She looks flustered as she scoffs, and both of us focus on her once more. “Well, okay, yes, that is true...”

“Or oranges,” I add, picking up a golden-wrapped chocolate shaped like an orange cut into slices.

“Fine, that is also correct, but—”

“Thought so,” Xalreth mutters with a satisfied smirk, then leans forward until he’s uncomfortably close to her, lowering his voice. “And when does the Bunny come for his deliveries?”

Her eyes dart between us as she takes a small step back. “Excuse me?”

“Come on,” he prods, flashing her a giant, conspiratorial smile. “You can tell us. When does the Easter Bunny pick up his chocolate? Or do you deliver it?”

Her mouth opens and closes a few times as she glances over her shoulder, towards the door. “Um, well, the parents—”

“Ah ha!” I shout, and she jumps clear off the ground as she clutches her heart. “The parents are pretending to be the bunny!” Understanding washes over me as the pieces fall into place, answers clicking together in my mind. I nod, tapping my chin with my pointer finger. “Of course they do... I should’ve expected as much after their Santa impersonations. You’re telling me the adults do not believe in the existence of this Easter Bunny?”

“... No.” She stretches the word out as she takes another step backward, and I can sense the unease drifting from her as I turn towards Xalreth. “We do not need to be concerned with luring the parents with this chocolate, just the children.”

“I’m sorry, what ?!” she sputters, but I ignore her.

“What ages are children most likely to believe in the Easter Bunny?” I ask, and her

eyes go wide, darting between me and Xalreth with a look of dawning fear.

“Pr-probably under ten? I-I don’t really know.”

I nod thoughtfully as I glance around the shop and wave my hand towards the vibrant display of colorful baskets. “Bright colors make sense for their simple minds. Tell me, what are the best sort of chocolates to tempt young children?”

“I’m... I’m sorry?”

“Not in a creepy way,” Xalreth interjects, shaking his hands in front of him as though the giant things could reassure this nervous human.

“No, we are not creeps.” I offer her a reassuring smile, channeling my magic into it and hoping it will calm her. “We are only trying to find the best way to convince the kids he is the Easter Bunny.” I gesture at Xalreth, who agrees with an overenthusiastic nod.

“That way, we can make them do whatever we want.”

Another thought strikes me as I twist back to her. “Do you have any of these Peeps I keep hearing about?” I ask, but she’s already sprinting away.

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Xalreth

Half an hour later, I don't know which of us is more furious. I shove through the mall's exterior door into the cool evening, not sparing a glance behind me to see if Micah follows. I'm so angry my hands tremble at my sides. Just hours ago, we had a moment, and I admitted to him that I'm obsessed with his neck. His pretty, long neck, with its defined Adam's apple and suckable skin.

And now?

Now I'm aching to wrap my hands around it for a very different reason. One that includes blue lips and asphyxiation, and ends with the disposal of a body.

Archangels can't be killed? Bet, motherfucker. Watch me.

Security guards rushed into the store only moments after the woman ran off, responding to a silent alarm she triggered before fleeing. It would've been a fantastic time to teleport home, but no.

Oh, no.

Because Micah knows best—because Micah won't fucking listen to anyone but himself—we did not, in fact, go home. He insisted we were too exposed and couldn't afford to take the risk. So instead of leaving like normal, rational beings would, he allowed us to be humiliated.

“Any time something strange happens, they always blame it on aliens,” he muttered

as we were cuffed and led back through those smelly hallways by pudgy men half our size. “And if enough of them believe in those, we’ll have to create more positions to manage the rumors.”

“ That is what you’re worried about right now? More of your asinine positions? For the love of God, just shut the fuck up before I come over there. Because if I get my hands on you right now, I’m gonna shake you up like a champagne bottle and then pop your fucking cork!” My temper earned me more rough handling by the man leading me away, and if I wasn’t so angry, it would’ve made me laugh. The guards were blissfully unaware I could easily rip out of their bindings and end their pathetic lives.

Humans.

Such a weak species.

We were taken into a tiny, windowless room and had to listen to the officers drone on and on about how we are predators. It was a statement that both of us smiled at, puffing out our chests in pride until we understood the context of the conversation.

“You would dare accuse me of such atrocities?” Micah roared, the purple light behind his eyes flaring through his glamour. “I am an Angel!”

“Of course you are, buddy,” the graying man had snorted, “and I guard the pearly gates on the weekends for extra cash.” It was what finally broke Micah’s patience. A potent blast of his angelic magic coated every human in the room, wiping the officers’ memories and removing the cuffs from our wrists. He left a kernel of a falsehood in their minds in case the woman from the chocolate shop wanted an update. If asked, they will only remember sending us to the police department for further investigation.

“Well, that was fun,” I deadpan as we step out into the setting sun. “Such a grand idea you had. A real fucking winner.”

“You can stop,” he snaps as we walk into an alley between buildings. Shadowy and secluded, it’s the perfect place to teleport away from this mess.

“No, no, by all means, you deserve to hear this. The fucking crown prince of the Heavens, the untouchable Micah, and this was your best idea. There’s no way you took even a few minutes to consider how this would go.”

“That is enough!” he roars, and whirls to shove me. My back thuds against the wall as he grabs my shirt, balling the material in his fist while his teeth are bared like a wild animal.

“Oh, no... it’s not enough. It isn’t nearly enough. I could sit here and complain all night—”

“And I’m sure you will,” he interrupts, but I talk over him.

“—and it still wouldn’t give me ample time to communicate just how much of a shitshow this entire thing is. My God, this is pathetic.”

“You know what, Xalreth? If you’re so unhappy, you can always go back to Drekoth.” His fists clench in the material of my shirt, and the coarse texture grates at my nerves. It makes me want to rip it off, but I won’t give him the satisfaction of seeing me lose my temper.

“Maybe I will.”

“Great,” he growls, and I don’t think he realizes what he’s done as he yanks me closer. His glamour flickers as his angelic features try to emerge—purple flashes in

his eyes and his skin pales. “Return to managing his sex life if that’s the limit of your talents. Do what you do best, then, and tuck tail while you run.” A mean smirk crosses his lips as he leans in. “I hear you had to clean up his ‘accidents’ when he couldn’t even make it inside his partner. Seems fitting.”

“Oh, you’re one to talk, aren’t you?” I snap, and shame burns on his cheeks as he shoves me again, his lips pulled back in a snarl. “Didn’t last long enough to take your pants off, did you?” The storm in his eyes is dulled by the embarrassed flush burning on his face. When he doesn’t respond, one side of my lips ticks up in a smirk as my gaze falls to his neck, watching as his vein pounds.

“Have you been screaming my name into your pillow since that day? Left your clothes on as you fucked your bed, just so you could be reminded of what it felt like as you came all over yourself? How many pairs of pants did you defile in your desperation?”

“Don’t flatter yourself,” he grits out, and I blow out an irritated laugh and lean closer, ghosting my lips over the pulse point in his neck.

“You wanted to touch, didn’t you? Desperate to touch yourself, but you remembered I told you not to. Have you had to excuse yourself from a meeting because you got hard thinking about how I called you my good boy? Had to bite into your hand in the bathroom to keep your slutty moans from slipping free?” My mouth lands on his neck, and he lifts his chin with a groan as I lick over his skin. His vein pulses beneath my tongue as I lap at his throat, closing my lips around him and giving a gentle suck.

I kiss my way up to his ear, and my voice is huskier than before when I speak again. “How many times a day do you have to fight not to lose control?”

His forearm slams onto the wall as he pulls back to hover over me, his hair curtaining us both. “What’s wrong, Micah?” I mutter, reaching between us and tiptoeing my

fingers up his chest until I'm tracing over the soft flesh of his separated lips. "Cat got your tongue?"

"Covenant," he whispers, and I lift my brow in question. His tongue slips between his lips twice before he swallows. "My safe word. It's Covenant."

A surprised inhale fills my lungs as a wild, fluttering exhilaration builds in my stomach. "So you have lost control, then?"

"Every fucking hour of the day," he murmurs, his gaze dancing around my face and landing on my mouth as his tongue darts out again. "You're making me crazy."

I nod, giving him the smallest concession as his breath blows over my skin. "We're doing this, then?"

"I don't know what we're doing," he admits as those purple eyes land on mine, vulnerable in a way I've never seen from him. "But I want more. Need more. I can't fucking concentrate because I can't stop thinking about you . "

"Mmm... you want to be good for me?" He releases a quiet moan as his eyes close and his hips shift against me. "Maybe you deserve a reward, after all."

He gasps as I spin us, his head and shoulders thumping against the wall as I grip his pants and jerk his body flush against mine. "That's it, angel. Let me see what's been happening inside your mind. Show me how much you want it." His hips roll, the motion fluid as water as he grinds against me. I grab the hem of his sweater and push it higher, watching the mesmerizing flex of his abs as he moves. The muscles tighten and tense, dancing under his skin in a way that makes me want to feel them under my tongue.

"So pretty." I shove his waistband down by a few inches, exposing the thick root of

his cock as his moan slips loose. The needy noise echoes in this shadowed space, bouncing between the walls, and only gets louder as my hand slides down the front of his pants.

He shoves the heel of his palm into his mouth to muffle his cries as I wrap my fingers around his cock. Micah's a big guy, right? Makes sense his dick would be big, too. But holy fucking shit, I was not prepared for the angelic anaconda tucked into his pants. He's long and thick, and my mouth waters as I slide my hand along his length. When I reach the head, there's a dampness that spreads to my skin.

"Fucking hell, Micah, you'd tear someone in half with this. Let me guess... you normally do the fucking? I bet you're always a top, aren't you?"

Another desperate moan is muffled by his palm as he nods frantically, and I release a dark chuckle. "You know that's not how it works with me, right?" He nods again, then whines as I pull my hand away. His gaze is glassy and unfocused—fucking intoxicated—and he tracks me as I lean close and put my mouth against his ear.

"Has anyone ever fucked you, angel?" I pop his button and undo his zipper, and his head thrashes back and forth as I work his pants around his thighs. "Have you been saving that hole for me?"

"Y-yeah," he whimpers, and I chuckle as I drag my lips along his jaw.

"Good... that's really good," I say with a final nip to his chin, loving the way he moans louder as I sink to my knees. I grasp him at the base, marveling at what might be the biggest cock I've ever seen. A sudden flare of jealousy hits at the thought of someone else feeling it inside them. The ugly sensation coils in my stomach, picturing some other anonymous man on their knees for him, choking on what belongs to me.

Another pitiful sound leaves him as I squeeze harder and snarl up at him. “This is mine now. Do you understand?” He nods again, his normally perfect hair disheveled as he watches me. “It’s mine, and I’m the only one allowed to look at it. Next time I see it, I want it locked away so no one else can lay their filthy eyes on it.”

His eyes grow wide, and I raise a brow in challenge. “That’s right, pretty boy. This beautiful giant cock needs to be caged, so you won’t be tempted to fuck someone other than me.”

“I won’t fuck anyone else, I swear,” he murmurs, but I shake my head as I give him a long stroke. He huffs a soft moan as his head falls back against the wall.

“Of course you won’t, because after you’re caged, you’ll give me the key. I’ll be the only one who can unlock you. No one else gets to look at you, touch you... fuck, no one else is allowed to even think about you. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” he whimpers, and I press a kiss to the tip of his cock as he shivers.

“Alright, sweet thing. Tell me what you’re going to do.”

“I-I’m going to... put myself in a cage for you.”

“Good boy,” I purr as I take the head in my mouth and give a gentle suck, and his hands claw at the brick behind us as he jerks forward. “And why are you doing that?”

He opens his mouth, those stunning purple eyes unfocused as he gives the tiniest shake to his head. “I...”

“Because it’s my cock.” There’s a warning in my tone as he meets my gaze, nodding again.

“Because it’s your cock, Xalreth.”

“That’s right, angel, it’s mine. And I decide when this cock comes out to play, not you.” My lips wrap around him and his hand slaps against his mouth, his head falling onto the wall as he muffles his moans. I take my time, sliding my mouth with deliberate, sloppy passes as my palms rest on his thighs. He’s so big, only half of him fits in my mouth, and I have to be extra careful of my teeth.

His muscles tremble and tense under my hands, and his hips spasm as he tries to hold himself still. A strand of spit webs between us as I pull away. “God, you’re already about to come, aren’t you?”

“I’m... I’m sorry, I...” His words are lost in his whine as I flick my tongue over his slit.

“Have you always been this easy, Micah? So eager to spill yourself the first time someone touches you?”

“No, it’s just... just you that does this to me. Why do you make me feel like this?” The last part comes out as a whisper, and it causes something to squeeze inside my chest. Something burning and wild that’s desperate to grow, but I choke it down and force it to stay contained inside the bars of my heart.

Instead, I focus on what’s in front of me, letting my eyes roam up his beautiful body. “Spread your legs.” I give his muscular thigh a tap, and he fights the pants around his knees as he strains to open wider. My fingers dip into my mouth, slicked with spit as I pull them out and guide them between his legs. Another pitiful whimper rolls from Micah’s throat as I draw the head of his cock in my mouth and trace my wet finger against his entrance.

Even with me being the one on my knees, he’s completely submissive. He leans

against the wall as he claws at the blocks, his body trembling while he tries to hold still. Wide, rapt eyes follow my every movement as I press my fingertip against his hole.

My tongue circles over his head, clearing away the beads of pre-cum that have formed as I find how tight he is. He's desperate as he whispers my name, his hips giving the tiniest thrust as he loses control. I rub a slow circle around his rim, pressing my finger against it as I take more of his cock.

"Oh, God, you're going to make me come," he groans as I draw my cheeks in and suck. He presses the back of his head into the wall as his spine arcs, his shimmering white hair tumbling against the blocks as his lips separate in the most beautiful moan.

My finger slips into his tight hole, and it's all he can handle. He calls out before he clamps his palm over his mouth, whining as the first of his cum shoots onto my tongue. He whimpers and babbles nonsense as he bites into his hand, his cock jerking against my lips as more cum slides down my throat. I thrust in and out of his pulsing hole, and I realize I'm moaning along with him as he fucks himself on my finger.

I've never been so turned on in my life.

The urge to swallow him down and keep sucking until he's hard again is strong—to keep him here all night and force him to come until there's nothing left inside him.

But it isn't the time or place for that.

Soon, a little voice inside me promises.

The ring of my lips glides along his length until he hisses and tries to pull away. When I release him, he sags in relief against the wall with a content sigh. My mouth is full of him and my cock is straining under my pants as I climb to my feet.

His eyes are hooded as they land on mine, and he reaches out to brush his knuckles over my cheekbone. The touch is so intimate it causes my heart to leap inside my chest. He licks his lips as I grip his neck and guide him to his knees.

He falls, willingly.

Stares up at me and waits.

My thumb tugs on his chin until his lips part, and I lean closer as my mouth opens. Spit and cum slide from my tongue into his waiting mouth, a few creamy droplets dotting his face and wetting his lips. I swipe up a stray drop and offer it to him, humming my approval as he licks it from my thumb.

“Hands behind your back and don’t move.” There isn’t a moment’s hesitation as he obeys, and I groan at the sight of him.

Wrecked on his knees, just for me.

“Open for me, angel.” I take a moment to trace the shape of his lips before I undo my pants and pull my cock out, guiding it to his waiting mouth. “Do you want to be used, Micah?”

“Please?” he whispers, looking like a goddamned dream as he begs, peppered in cum. Bulging muscles with millennia of strength... untapped power that could wipe me from existence if he chose. But instead, he kneels there, docile as he waits for whatever I’m willing to give him.

He waits and obeys.

“You are exquisite. Do you know that?” I murmur as I drag my thumb over his lip, hooking his teeth and tugging. “Open wider, angel.” When I’m sure his jaw aches and

I'm satisfied with his effort, I slide my cock between his lips. A low groan tumbles from my throat as I slam my palm against the wall, pitching forward as my other hand weaves into his hair. The sight of my cock disappearing into those plump lips almost sends me over the edge.

I push further until I bump the back of his throat, and he constricts around me as he coughs. The soft scrape of my nails against his scalp makes him shiver as I soothe him. "You can take it. Relax and let me in." He whimpers, and I give him a minute to settle, playing with his hair as I wait. Once he stops gagging, I work myself deeper until his nose is pressed into my groin.

"Look at how good you are." I tug on his hair, forcing his watery eyes to mine. "How good you take me. Are you ready for more?" He gives a jerky nod, and I don't waste any time. His eyes widen as I thrust forward, spit exploding from the corners of his mouth as he coughs.

"Fuck, that's amazing," I grunt as I move faster, building a rhythm that joins his chorus of choking and gagging. Tears fall in earnest now, coursing rivers down the sharp, beautiful angles of his face. Everything is slick and sloppy as saliva flows down his chin and drips onto his shirt, a wet spot spreading across the material.

He's a statue, perfectly immobile and obedient as my hips move faster, the only sounds the smacking, wet friction of skin on skin and his muffled gags. My head tilts towards the sky as tension coils deep inside my gut, swirling and fighting to break free. It's a divine torment as chaotic pressure boils under my skin, begging me to let go.

And as much as I'd love to hold on, I'm desperate to fly.

The sound of his muffled moan severs the last of my willpower, and my release crashes through my body. My hips lock and my grip tightens in his hair to the point it

must be painful, and I call out in a throaty shout. Pure electric pleasure explodes through my veins, all the way to my toes as relief crests in dizzying waves.

I withdraw just enough to watch the pulses of my cock as I spill into his mouth, and his eyes roll up into his head as his hips jerk forward. “Swallow all of it, angel,” I murmur as I push his hair from his face, watching the bob of his throat. My thumb swipes over his Adam’s apple as it dips, and I grunt softly at the rapid thump of his pulse. He licks and sucks until I heave a content sigh and pull back.

Micah’s cheeks are flushed deep red and his lips are swollen and slick, spit still dripping down his chin. His cock rests against his thigh and a thick stream of white rolls down his bare leg, pooling where the fabric of his pants binds them together at his knees. “Did you come again?”

“Yeah,” he admits shyly, and my dick gives a rebound flex at the rasp of his voice.

I did that to him.

Me.

“You are goddamned perfect, aren’t you? So ready to get on your knees until you’re ruined.” He nods, looking pleased as I reach down and help him to his feet. “Only for me, though. No one else gets to see you like this anymore. Do you understand?”

“Yeah, I do,” he whispers, and his gaze locks on mine as something inside me cracks open and lets him in. He feels it, too.

I can read it in his eyes.

Heavy-lidded, he rests a palm on my cheek and swoops down to kiss me. And in that split second, I realize how much I want him to. Desperately .

But that's not what this is, and it's something I can't allow.

Panicked, I twist my head so his kiss lands near my ear, and I hear his disappointed whine. That grip tightens in my chest, vise-like and constricting further at the sound. I take a deep breath as I try to sort through my minefield of thoughts, forcing a smirk onto my lips.

"Don't pout, angel." I turn to face him, silently trying to figure out why my heart feels like it's splitting in half. He watches me with wary eyes as I help him right his clothing. I pull his pants up and fasten them, and I keep my grip on his shirt once he's presentable again. "Now, do you remember what I told you to do?"

"Yeah," he whispers, though his defenses are back in place and I can see that he wants to run.

"Good." I absently smooth his sweater, letting my hands rub across his defined chest. "There's something we need to add to my instructions."

"Oh," he says, sounding surprised and equally hesitant. "What, uh... what do you want me to do?"

My fingers drag along his face, wiping away the last remnants of the mess that coats his shimmering skin. It hits me that our glamour has faded.

I wonder at what point the real us emerged.

"You need to work that tight hole open every night, and I want you in a bigger plug every day."

"You want me caged and plugged?" he asks, a fraction of his attitude returning. Somehow, he seamlessly reverts to indignant and haughty after he just came hands

free from me fucking his mouth.

“That’s right,” I purr, fisting his sweater and pulling him closer. My lips ghost across his jawline before giving him a gentle bite that makes him gasp. “Next time I see you, I want you ready for me.”

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:26 am

Micah

Three days is my limit, it would seem.

It has developed into a cycle. A carousel of emotions that won't stop long enough for me to climb off, so I'm stuck spinning in circles. Over and over, round and fucking round until I'm dizzy with it. It's a routine I'm unable to break—a habitual pattern of ridiculous actions that lead me back to the same outcome, no matter how much I convince myself that this time will be different.

That's the definition of insanity, is it not?

I'd believe I'm going insane. Would believe he's made me that way.

Self-loathing occupies most of the first day. It's relentless... an internal war as I try to understand why I continue to succumb to these physical urges. As an Archangel, discipline is my specialty. It is my purpose. I never struggled with self-control before now... before him.

And there's no reason I can't stop. I will stop, I promise myself in another fruitless oath. It's a lie I let myself believe until the following morning.

But then I wake up, and I remember.

The second day is filled with fantasies of the friction and heat of his skin on mine, and how, for the first time in ages, my mind was gloriously silent. The worries, the responsibilities... the fear that hides inside my head was squashed. It didn't

disappear—it can't—but it created room for something else and let me feel like I could breathe, if just for those isolated moments.

The day is spent wondering if it's my imagination. If the softness in his eyes was an illusion, or if it's possible he's feeling this, too. It's failed distractions and forced busywork. Unhealthy obsessions and irrational anger, and trying to forget.

Then there's the third day.

The day I break.

The one where I reach out and ask to see him again.

I'm a glutton for punishment, it would seem. A fan of getting kicked in the heart as many times as the useless organ can take it, coloring it in self-inflicted bruises because I keep replaying the sting of his rejection. I was a lovesick fool, lost in the heat of the moment—sucked into the chemistry that was a charged explosive around us. Needed his mouth on mine as much as I needed oxygen in my lungs.

I didn't expect him to pull away as I guided his lips towards mine. Didn't expect the crippling embarrassment to knock my legs right out from underneath me as my kiss landed on his cheek.

Didn't expect it to hurt.

He might enjoy the physical release of our time together, but that's where it stops. To him, I'm nothing more than a convenient conquest, and I'd do well to remember that.

Arms crossed, I wait outside Xalreth's building, avoiding the gaze of the many demons that walk past. Whenever I come here to collect him, it's an overload to the senses as they stare. Open curiosity and suspicion cover me like a dense fog, poking

and prodding with its wispy little fingers. And while it can become overwhelming, it's surprisingly less judgmental than the emotions thrown my way in the Heavenly realm. Hellions have always been more accepting, though, even if none of the Angels are willing to voice that admission out loud.

I sense Xalreth's presence before I see him—a tingling wave of awareness that ripples across my body. My eyes move to the glass doors of his building as he pushes through into the warm afternoon. Even at midday, the realm's sky is dim. It leaves ample shadows behind in its red glow, but the effect isn't as dreary as it sounds.

Hell is actually quite lovely when viewed through the right lens.

There's a saunter to Xalreth's steps as he walks closer, and the light reflects off the dips of his muscles as though it were crafted just for him. His attention drags over my skin like fingernails on my scalp. Intrigue and temptation backed with a penchant for sin.

I'm barely able to suppress a shudder.

"Did you miss me?" A cocky grin stretches across his face, revealing a flash of sharp, white teeth.

I lift a brow as I give him a sideways glance. "Hardly," I say as I brush my fingers over my sweater, distracting myself so I don't have to look at him.

"Are you sure about that?" His hand loops through the crook of my arm, and I try to ignore the way my pulse speeds up at the touch.

"Don't flatter yourself by thinking you've even crossed my mind," I snap, whipping my head to glare at him and immediately regretting my decision. To those that don't know him, Xalreth's solid black eyes can be disturbing. They're cold and

emotionless—nature's defense mechanism.

But in the warm glow, they sparkle like polished obsidian and reflect the light with an unexpected depth. They communicate emotions I'm unable to decipher, speaking a language not meant for me.

"We have a job to do, so let's get moving," I say, my frustration coming out in my clipped tone, and he stares at me for a long second before he nods.

My magic washes over us, masking us with our human disguises. "Did you do as I asked?" He speaks as casually as if we're discussing the weather, and it causes my cheeks to flush and a scoff to escape my lips.

"I don't have the slightest idea what you're referencing." My pulse ramps up another few notches as he chuckles, squeezing my biceps.

"Oh, come on, Micah... you didn't like my gift?" My face and neck burn as I recall the package that arrived at my doorstep. Wrapped up in a sleek black box and tied with a blood-red bow were a metal cage and a series of increasingly large plugs. Nestled in a bed of red velvet, he'd simply signed his name with an X.

The presentation was almost elegant.

I clear my throat as I fight the urge to pull at my shirt, not wanting to let him see me fidget. "If you're expecting gratitude, you'll be sorely disappointed."

"I picked it out special just for you."

"That would mean you were thinking of someone other than yourself, Xalreth, which is a preposterous notion we all know better than to expect."

He's silent for a moment before a quiet laugh huffs from the back of his throat. "We're pretending nothing happened, then?" When I don't respond, his snort of laughter turns irritated. "Right. Okay then, carry on."

Disappointment settles heavy in my stomach, but I scold myself for my foolishness and focus on our destination. The world fades into a misty obscurity, then brightens as we emerge beneath the shade of trees, surrounded by green. Xalreth glances around curiously. "Where are we?"

"A park." I take a step away, needing to put distance between our bodies as his eyes burn into me. The silence stretches for an eternity until his grip on my arm loosens, and his hand finally falls to his side with a quiet thud.

"Thank you for sharing such amazing detail, Micah. Absolutely top-tier storytelling. It makes so much sense now that you've explained what we're doing here."

"You didn't ask what we are doing, just where we are."

"Fucking A." He pinches the bridge of his nose as he blows out a heavy breath. "Okay, then. What are we doing in a park?"

"We're observing." I gesture towards the path as I start to walk, and he grumbles as he catches up to my side. "After our last... mishap..."

"More like catastrophe," he mutters, and I shoot him a glare that makes him smirk.

"... I thought it would be a good idea to watch humans for a while before we make our next move. Note their behaviors... see if we can understand their actions better. We have plenty of time before Easter, and it's been decades since I mingled with humanity."

“Let me get this straight... you pulled me away from a Hell’s Kitchen marathon to people-watch?”

My irritation flares at his blasé boredom, and I grit my teeth as I try to control my tone. “Is there a problem, Xalreth? If so, I’ll gladly return you home so you can spend the day in front of your television. Just don’t be shocked when I replace you.”

“Like you could replace me,” he snorts under his breath.

The cool air fills my lungs as I draw in a deep, calming inhale, knowing my composure will agitate him more than any outburst. He wants me to lose my temper—wants me to fight until the gunpowder ignites and we turn explosive once more. “Do you really believe I have no other options?”

My barb hits him right where I want it to, and he goes preternaturally still beside me. I twist to glance at him in question, trying not to show my satisfaction. “Options?” he growls, inching closer. “I’m going to need you to explain exactly what you mean by that.”

“Surely you didn’t think you were my only choice? You’re merely the easiest one.” My smile is cruel as his nostrils flare, and I let my eyes flit over his face. “Did you think this was more, Xalreth? You are nothing but a convenience.”

I’m not sure when the conversation shifted from his professional position to this high-stakes game we’re playing, but both of us sneer at the other as he pulls me closer. “You think you could replace me? Do you really believe anyone else could give you what I can?”

Twisted satisfaction curls in my stomach from his reaction, but I only lift my shoulder with a nonchalant shrug. “There’s no shortage of bodies willing to warm my bed. Bodies that don’t pull away and become cold the moment they get off.”

Recognition flashes in his eyes as they shift between mine, irritation warring with something softer in his expression. I scoff and turn to keep walking when he grabs my wrist and stops me.

“Micah...” He tugs on me again, but I don’t turn around. There’s a moment’s hesitation before he gives my arm a gentle tug. “Did I hurt your feelings?”

“Hurt my feelings? I can’t say I know what you mean.” He grips me tighter and yanks, forcing me to face him.

“The other night, when I...” He trails off, and for the first time, he appears uncertain.

Anger burns at my skin as the sting of rejection slices through me once more, and my voice comes out abrupt. “Finish your thoughts, Xalreth. The other night when you what ?”

His head tilts, and his gaze drops to my lips. “When I didn’t kiss you.”

“Don’t be ridiculous.” I rip my arm away and resume walking, his eyes scorching over my body before he takes a few long strides to catch up once more.

“If I did hurt your feelings—”

“Let’s not discuss feelings as though I am a child who requires your approval or your affection.”

“Well, don’t you?” he asks, and against my better judgment, I look at him.

“Don’t I what?”

“Require affection.”

The ache in my chest spreads, gripping me with its icy fingers as I give him my back once more. “A foolish concern. I’ve lived my entire life without it. What makes you think I’d suddenly start needing it now? I’d need to have feelings in order for you to hurt them.”

“You have feelings. You might try to hide them from the world, but you aren’t as successful as you’d like to believe.” His soft tone is like a hand around my neck as I shake my head, unable to voice an answer. He hesitates, but I don’t meet his eyes again. “Alright, I’ll drop it, but if I did hurt you... I’m sorry. It wasn’t my intention.”

“Wasn’t it?” I snap, tempted to disappear and leave him stranded here while I cool down. A lifetime of refusing to expose myself to others makes me want to flee, but that would give him the upper hand, and I can’t have that. “Considering what we had just done, what other explanation is there for the way you turned away in disgust?”

“Micah—”

“It’s fine, Xalreth, and I do not wish to discuss it further. Drop it.”

“Micah, that wasn’t disgust. It was—”

I spin around in a whirlwind of fury, and he hesitates, a flicker of uncertainty in his eyes. Faint purple reflects off his human face, and my composure is close to snapping as my voice takes on its deeper, angelic timbre. “Do not give me your pity. I do not want it.”

He stares for a long time. An ember ignites in my chest as I hold my breath, waiting for a few words to convince me this isn’t pity. That it’s something more, or at least it might try to be.

But hopes and wishes are the playthings of weaker men, and I do not indulge in such

fantasies.

His expression hardens, and as he nods, that sparkling ember is extinguished. The hope is caustic as it dies inside me, and I turn away before he can see just how it burns. Silence is heavy between us as we walk, though I sense his attention on me. I stay a step ahead of him as we enter a large clearing, not yet ready to face him.

The warmer than usual day has drawn out families, and some walk around the path while others sit back and watch their children on the playground. The kids dash about, shrieking and laughing, chasing each other and shouting nonsense. Despite the noise, I find a small smile gracing my lips from their joy.

One tumbles to the ground and squeals in laughter, while his mother dashes over to check on him. She isn't even halfway there before he pops up and sprints off again, blades of grass kicking up under his feet as he runs. A soft laugh leaves me as I watch in quiet fascination.

"I bet you were wild like that as a child," I muse, gesturing at the rambunctious boy as he tackles another into the grass. His mom simply shakes her head, watching with a fond smile.

Xalreth steps forward until we're side by side, and I can see his broad grin from the corner of my eye. "Yeah, I was. If there was ever a demon that could qualify for sainthood, it would be my mother. There were four of us, and I was the oldest with three younger sisters. You'd assume with those odds they would've talked me into dressing up as a princess or playing dolls, but it went the other way. I recruited them as my little terrorist minions."

I glance over at him to find a giant, nostalgic smile lifting his cheeks. He's handsome as a human, but what I wouldn't give to see that smile in his actual skin.

He drags his hand over his mouth, continuing with a laugh. “One day, we found a feral hellcat outside and decided it would be our pet. We brought it in the house, and it went fucking crazy. By the time Mom made it home, the furniture was shredded, all four of us were bleeding, and three of her children were crying.”

A quiet chuckle leaves me as I imagine it. “I take it you were the stoic one?”

“Fuck no,” he laughs, “I was bawling with two of my sisters while the youngest, Nyxar, threw the rest of us under the bus.”

We both grin as we squint against the sun, absently watching the human children as they play. “What about you?” Xalreth asks.

“What about me?”

“Were you a mischievous child, or were you always the serious one?”

My smile fades as a heavy silence settles between us, bringing with it an awkwardness I’m unaccustomed to as I clear my throat. “I’m an Archangel, Xalreth. I was created, not born.”

His jaw slackens and his eyes are wide as he stares, and I turn away, unable to bear the scrutiny. “You don’t have... parents?”

“No. We were formed to serve the Heavens. My first memories are the day of my creation, though they’ve become fuzzy with time. A group of eight of us were willed into existence and given our assignments. I suppose they’re the closest thing to siblings I’ll ever have, but we aren’t close. There is mutual respect between us, but no love. Not the kind you have with your sisters.”

“That’s... terrible.”

I shrug, staring into the trees with unseeing eyes as the breeze blows through my hair. “It’s the only life I’ve known.”

“You’ve been working since the day you were born?” I nod, crossing my arms over my chest as the urge to shiver tickles my spine. “When have you ever been given the chance to be happy, Micah?”

The soft words hit my heart like a knife, the truth of them causing my jaw to clench as I try not to dwell on it. It’s quiet between us for a long stretch before I find my voice. “Happiness comes in singular moments for me, Xalreth. There are times I feel happy... hours or days when things are light, and the weight of my responsibilities aren’t so heavy.”

“What about the rest of the time?”

The chilly air causes my eyes to sting. “It’s the only life I’ve known,” I repeat, my voice thick. His knuckles bump into mine, and then he takes my hand, weaving our fingers together. I shouldn’t let him.

But I do.

“You deserve more than that, angel.”

Foreign emotions clog my throat as I force myself to swallow past them. “It isn’t a matter of what one deserves. This is the life I was created for, and there’s no point in fixating on silly dreams that can never come true.” He tugs on my hand, twisting me to face him. When his eyes drop to my lips, I know where his mind has gone.

I know what he’s about to do as his other hand reaches around the back of my neck and guides me forward.

And I want it.

God, I want it, and that's why I can't have it.

"Don't," I whisper in a plea, just before his lips find mine. "Don't pity me. Don't..." Using the last bit of self-control I have left, I put space between us as his wary eyes follow mine. "Don't give me crumbs of your affection because you believe I'm so hungry for it that I will allow you to pretend."

"This isn't pretending, Micah."

"Maybe not, but it isn't real, either. Do not insult my intelligence by leading me on with counterfeit promises. People don't like me. They don't enjoy my company, Xalreth, and they don't want me around. That includes you , and I have already suffered too much humiliation by your hands. I will not put myself in a position to be rejected again . "

Guilt grows heavy on his face as he shakes his head. "It's not that they don't like you..."

"Please," I snort with a scornful laugh. "No one has ever made any attempt to hide their feelings about me. You think I don't hear them mocking me behind my back? That I cannot feel that hatred clawing at my skin?"

"What do you mean, feel it?" he asks, and I clench my teeth. "Micah, come on. Talk to me. What you mean by that?"

"Archangel sense emotions. We understand intent. How do you think it feels when every horrid thought carves its way into your skin, regardless of whether you want it? Whether you asked for it or not?" An unamused laugh punches loose as I shake my head. "All that hatred, shoved down your throat every minute you are awake."

“I... didn’t know.”

“Few do,” I say, dismissing him by waving my hand as I try to fight the tightness in my throat.

Xalreth’s lips pull tight, and it’s telling that he can’t meet my eyes. “I didn’t realize it bothers you when they talk.”

“You didn’t realize that ridiculing me would hurt? While I might be old, I am not invincible. Don’t insult either of us by playing dumb.”

He shifts uncomfortably between his feet, and the satisfaction that I once found in his discomfort is missing. In its place is the need to calm him... to tell him it doesn’t matter. To not worry about me, because no one ever does. “Things are different now,” he finally says. “I didn’t know you then.”

“You don’t know me now, either.”

“But I want to.”

My chest grows tight at the whispered confession, and I heave a tired sigh as I risk a glance in his direction. “Nobody wants to know me, Xalreth. They have to tolerate me. That is the Archangel’s curse.”

“Is that why you’re so closed off? Why you make yourself so hard to talk to?” I avert my gaze, not answering the question, but I suppose my silence is enough. “By pushing everyone away, you’re shielding yourself from hurt. Can’t lose what you never have, after all.” He leans closer, and I catch a whiff of his smoky amber scent on the wind. “Isn’t it exhausting, Micah? Aren’t you tired of carrying all that weight alone?”

I am tired , I think.

Exhausted .

But instead of letting that confession cross my lips, I do my duty and stay silent. Sunlight warms my face as I close my eyes, and I take a minute to stitch up all those seams that he just ripped apart. When I open my eyes again, I'm put together once more. Cool and collected, with those cracks in my armor mended, at least for the moment.

“We have a mission to accomplish,” I say quietly. “Can we keep this professional?”

“Is that what you want?”

No.

“Yes. It's how it has to be.” He reaches over, his pinkie tracing a line along mine, but I don't return the touch. A charged silence follows, a suffocating tension that compresses us both. He shoves his hands in his pockets, and we both stand there with the unsaid words cutting our tongues as we hold them in.

It's how it has to be.

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:26 am

Xalreth

The outfit hanging in front of me is monstrous.

“You’re sure this is right?” I yell through the door for what has to be the tenth time as I stare at the shiny black material, and like always, Micah takes his fucking time responding.

Three must be his magic number, because once again, I waited through three days of silence after our trip to the human park. I’d foolishly thought our relationship had shifted there.

He was opening up to me, and I was letting him. We were sharing something intimate—a glimpse inside each other that felt significant until he shut it down. Things became painfully cordial after that. Our attention was on the humans and their interactions, but neither of us was truly engaged.

My mind was locked in that moment when my arms were wrapped around his neck, sharing his air. Stuck obsessing over his warm, sugary scent and wondering if his lips tasted just as sweet. I was busy wanting more while he pretended I didn’t exist beside him.

He ignored me, and I was fuming by the time he dropped me off outside my building. But before I could open my mouth to unleash my fury, let him know exactly what I thought about him shutting me out... he was gone.

Poofed away without so much as a goodbye.

He acted as though nothing happened between us, pretending something didn't change that night.

Everything changed.

Everything, and that pisses me off even more.

The last three days have been excruciating, trapped in this cycle of wanting to bend him over and put him in his place while also wanting to... to...

God, I can't even fucking say it.

Spend time with him.

Comfort him.

Know him.

By the time his impersonal, artificially polite summons arrived, my anger had raged into an inferno. I was breathing fire and ready to burn him, but he collected me with that same impassive, stony face, and it cracked something inside me.

Instead of fighting him, I just came along for the ride.

Hid inside this room.

“ Fuck !” My temper sparks as I kick the chair, sending it screeching across the floor. “What is wrong with me?!” I grab a pile of papers and fling them into the air, watching as they flutter peacefully, then swipe my arm over the tabletop as pens and folders go flying. I seethe to myself, stomping around the room looking for more opportunities for destruction when Micah's irritated scoff rolls through the door.

“I have read and reread the research you sent me on the act of ‘egging’, Xalreth, and every one of the articles agrees this is the right time of day and the proper attire to wear. The ears were an obvious necessity.”

“Obvious,” I groan, dragging my palms over my face. “Nothing about this is obvious, unless we’re counting obviously moronic .”

“I heard that,” he grumbles, and I roll my eyes up into my skull until they burn, silently mimicking him.

What the actual fuck have I gotten myself into?

A sane man would have abandoned this ridiculousness the moment it became clear Micah had no tangible plan. I saw the impending disaster, realized this was nothing more than an excuse for him to inflate his self-importance, and still didn’t walk away from this harebrained scheme.

A sane man would’ve put distance between the two of us as soon as I started catching feelings. It’s pitiful that, despite how angry I’ve been with him, I jumped at the chance to come the split second he asked to see me. All those muttered conversations dissolved into the wind—those one-sided arguments in the privacy of my house, when I told him I didn’t want him... where I gave him explicit instructions on where to shove this position.

Poof.

Gone, the very moment he beckoned.

Hell, if I had a shred of self-respect, I would’ve never volunteered at all. Although, time away from Drekoth is doing me some good... even if I’ve swapped one arrogant asshole for another.

“Are you done primping or do you need a few more minutes to fix your hair?” He chuckles like anything he said was remotely funny, and the sound grates on my nerves as I stomp to the door.

“That’s rich, coming from a man who needs an entire afternoon to blow dry.” He stands right outside the door as I whip it open, and the force causes the pearly strands of his hair to flutter. He’s fucking stunning. Pressed black slacks cover his legs while a black sweater hugs his broad chest. The plain outfit makes his face the focus, every beautiful line on perfect display.

His eyes widen as they take a long, leisurely stroll down my frame, and I realize I’m only wearing my boxer briefs. For the first time today, his composure slips as his throat bobs in a swallow. Let him look. He had his chance.

“If you’re done drooling, can we get moving?”

That’s all it takes. His mouth clamps shut, the muscles in his jaw tighten, and his eyes narrow into icy slits as his defenses rise. All those walls that had been broken down by our open conversation at the park are rebuilt and reinforced, stronger than before. What was a wooden fence around his heart might as well be a stone fortress.

Now that I’ve experienced what openness feels like with him, the silence weighs heavier. My warped, sunshine fantasies screech to a halt as he sneers at me. “I could leave you to do this yourself.”

“Do it, then. That’s fine by me.” It’s a bluff and he knows it, because without him, I’m stuck right here. Certain demons are gifted with the power to create portals, but not me. Drekoth remains stubbornly silent on my petition for a personal portalist during these months. His tantrum over having to train a new hair stylist is clearly overriding my actual needs, and I’m not about to beg him.

“Great. I’ll drop you off and you can find your own way back to Hell.”

“Fantastic,” I counter with a sarcastic smile, but it falters as he takes a step closer and crowds me. “What are you doing?” His brow lifts as he hooks my waist and tugs me against him. I barely suppress my gasp at the spark that passes between us, and I certainly don’t revel at the feel of his muscular thigh pressing between my legs.

“In case you’ve forgotten, we must be touching to teleport.”

“First, I’m not even dressed yet.” My chin tilts up, my eyes narrowed as my body presses against his, and the smile he flashes me is victorious. “And second, you could’ve just taken my hand.”

“Hold your hand?” he asks, full of condescension. “How terribly common.”

The pit of my stomach drops at the way he’s speaking to me, and I push against his chest as I fight to get away from his hold. “What the hell? Fuck you, Micah.”

My heart pounds as he leans closer, chuckling as he puts his lips against my ear. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

“Stop posturing,” I growl, shoving at his body again, and when I can’t force any space between us, I snatch his chin. My fingernails dig into his skin as I hold him there, both our eyes blazing. “You and I both know your place, don’t we? On your back underneath me…” He licks his lips, his pupils blown as my fingers flex tighter. “Or would you rather be on your knees? This alphahole bullshit isn’t convincing either one of us.”

He grabs my wrists and spins me, and I grunt as he shoves the front of my body against the wall. With a roar that shakes the ground, I struggle against Micah’s grip, but despite my insistence otherwise, his power is undeniable. His strength is a force

of nature, and I can't budge him. Warm breath blows across the back of my neck as he pins me with his weight.

"You think you have all the answers, don't you?" he murmurs, nipping at my ear. "It's a shame you can't behave for your superiors."

Blinding fury makes my pulse flash in the corners of my vision. "Oh, I know you aren't talking about yourself. Get off me." My elbow catches him in the gut, and he grunts as I free myself from his grip. A furious lightning storm rages in his eyes as he whirls, a palpable static charge lifting the hair on my arms.

Micah lunges forward, a violent blast of power slamming into me, and despite my instincts screaming at me to retreat, I stand my ground as his face stops inches from mine. His breaths are hot against my skin as his purple lightning flashes in warning. "Watch yourself," he hisses through his teeth.

"I could bring you to the floor right now if I wanted to... make you submit," I taunt, and his nostrils flare as the vein in his neck throbs in a rapid beat. "One word from me, and you'll be down, bruising those pretty knees."

"You think so highly of yourself, but you are nothing ."

"Nothing, am I? If I'm nothing, why are you always crawling back? Why do you keep begging me to give you what you need?"

"Need," he snarls. "Don't flatter yourself by thinking I need you. I can get that anywhere. Easily ." His gasp hitches in a strangled sound as my fingers wrap around his neck, fueled by rage.

"Have you been with someone else?" The words come out in a low growl, and his pupils dilate until they swallow the color in his eyes. They're wild as I squeeze

tighter, his breath struggling in his throat as fury scorches through my veins. My inner demon emerges, a faint red glow reflecting off his pale skin as my voice deepens. “Answer my question, Micah. Have you allowed someone else to touch you?”

“No,” he grunts before he shoves me back. I crash against the table, my hands slamming onto the surface to prevent me from falling to the ground.

“Do not forget your place,” he sneers, the raw power emanating from him pressing on me, constricting my breath and pinning me in place. “This is business, and you have a job to do. Get dressed so we can do it.”

“You’re just fucking scared,” I say, a condescending laugh rattling in my chest. He bares his teeth, and his power buckles my knees until I can barely remain standing. “Terrified little angel, afraid to be honest with himself. Too frightened to admit that something is happening here.”

A flicker of uncertainty crosses his expression as his hold on me loosens. “Fuck you, Xalreth. We spend one civil evening together and you presume to have me figured out? You know nothing about me.”

I storm over, weaving my fingers through his hair and steering his face to mine. My tongue slips between my lips and his eyes drop to track the movement. I inch closer until it would take only the tiniest nudge to close the distance. He wants it as much as I do. His instincts are screaming at him so loudly I can almost hear their cries, telling him to stop being stubborn and take what he wants.

What we both want.

But all of Heaven and Hell couldn’t find two souls more stubborn than ours.

Neither of us moves as we share the same air. Anticipation grows thicker until it's a tangible thing, crawling over my skin and urging me to take.

But he needs to be the first to break.

I force myself to wait, as we both draw in this charged air. After what feels like an eternity, his lips separate and move to catch mine.

I dodge his kiss at the last second, and his eyes are furious as they snap to mine. "I know plenty. And this denial? This big man, alpha energy you're projecting right now? It's a fucking lie, and that's on you." I tear myself away from him, waving my finger between us. "All of this is on you. I put myself out there and you turned me down. Remember that the next time you want to wallow in self-pity. You were the one who rejected me, not the other way around." His eyes are full of fire as I spin and storm towards the door.

"You rejected me first! You don't get to pin this on me!" he bellows at my retreating back, but I don't turn around to face him. "If you walk away from me—"

"Then what? Thought this was just business?"

I glance over my shoulder and find him furious, skin flaming red and veins prominent. "It is."

"Then you'll have no problem keeping this relationship strictly professional, will you?"

"No, I won't," he grits.

"Fine." I give him a fluttering wave as I head into the other room to change.

“Fine!” he shouts, right as I slam the door behind me. My chest heaves as my breaths form a ragged, painful rhythm, and I lean against the door as my eyes squeeze shut. My fists clench so hard my nails dig into my flesh, a couple of them breaking the skin until it bleeds.

Sheer stubborn pride is the only thing that prevents me from leaving and never returning. Micah doesn’t speak as I join him in the hallway, though his lips tick up in the tiniest smirk as he eyeballs my outfit.

“Not a word, angel.” I glare at him as I take his offered arm.

“Wouldn’t dream of it, demon.” His pretentious smile makes my blood boil all over again, but before I can respond, he whips us away.

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:26 am

Micah

“In pursuit of a suspect on foot heading northbound on Magnolia Lane!” The human police officer wheezes into his radio as his feet smack against the ground. He doesn’t look like he was built for a foot chase. Sweat pours down his forehead and his round apple cheeks are splotchy and red. He grips his belt, yanking his pants higher over his portly stomach.

“ Copy that,” a tinny voice crackles through the speaker. “ Can you provide a physical description? ”

“Fucker’s huge... six-foot-eight, if I had to guess. Ripped as fuck, probably pushing three hundred pounds.” His breath saws from his lungs as he grabs his belt again. “He’s... he’s wearing a bodysuit... a leather one, BDSM-style... and a rabbit mask.”

There’s a momentary shocked silence that’s only filled with the thudding of feet on the ground, and the insistent squeak, squeak, squeak of Xalreth’s outfit as he sprints. Overhead, I hover with my fist shoved against my mouth as I watch in pure joy.

“ Can you repeat that? ”

The officer’s voice is broken and breathy as he tries and fails to keep up with the giant demon. “There is... a giant fucking man... wearing a skin-tight leather bodysuit... and a goddamned rabbit mask. He was approached after... we received a call about someone... aggressively egging houses.”

“ Okay, wow, copy that... has suspect been engaged?”

More leathery squeaks fill the air as Xalreth curses under his breath, the muscles of his ass positively popping as he sprints. His Armageddon-level fury feels like it might scorch the entire earth, but it seems premature to jump in and save him after our fight.

I might've been being an asshole, but he was being one, too. Reluctant as I am to admit it, he's hurt me more than once. If you take a swipe at a predator, don't be surprised when it extends its claws. Sure, we had a moment at the park, but it doesn't detract from the years I've sat in silence and listened as they mocked me.

Maybe it's petty to watch him suffer, but he needs to swallow some of his pride and ask for help. Until he does, I'm just enjoying the show.

The armpits of the officer's uniform are darkening as he huffs like a steam train. "Tried to... talk to him... but he kept screaming... 'I am The Easter Bunny.' "

"I am the motherfucking Easter Bunny!" Xalreth bellows back. "Micah! Micah, I'm going to fucking kill you!"

"Suspect delusional... possible second personality or schizophrenic episode... threatening bodily harm..."

Xalreth shouts in his native tongue as he runs faster, and there's a loud riiiiip as his suit splits right up the back seam. His smoky gray, muscle-bound ass is exposed for the world to see, and I can't help my bark of laughter. More curses slip free as he reaches behind him, trying to stretch the defeated material to cover himself while not losing momentum.

A kinder man might choose this as the time to interfere and pull him from the chase.

I am not a kinder man.

“ Micah !” Sirens wail around us as he bellows, blue and red lights bouncing off the brick homes lining the street. They shine off his patent, skin-tight suit, reflecting every bulge on his body.

And his teeth.

His razored mouthful of teeth that are bared like a hunted beast that's ready to strike at its hunter.

He gives up on holding the failing suit as he pumps his arms to run faster. The seams unzipper themselves in a domino effect, more and more of his gray skin becoming exposed as the material separates down the insides of his legs.

“ MICAH ! So help me God, I will rip you apart limb by limb and throw you into the pits of Hell, and then I will torture you every single day. I’m going to fucking destroy you! ” His voice turns into a demonic rasp, guttural and harsh like rocks grinding together, and it shakes me down to my bones.

I choke on another laugh as I dive in front of him, slamming into the ground. His eyes are wide, moonlight and emergency lights gleaming off the onyx depths as I swoop him into my arms and return us to the meeting room where we started tonight.

Heavy breaths puff from his nostrils, the profound silence deafening. Before I can react, he roars and puts every ounce of his bulk into shoving me.

The suddenness of it all takes me completely off guard, and I’m thrown off balance, sending chairs sprawling as I fall. My arms pinwheel, but there’s nothing solid to catch. I crash onto my back with a grunt, my wings splayed beneath me.

Xalreth’s footsteps seem to shake the entire earth as he stomps over, his eyes glowing a deep shade of crimson. I’ve only seen hints of his fury before now, but he’s done

hiding it as he flings another chair aside. Drywall gives way and leaves a giant, gaping hole as the metal leg punches through.

The catlike gracefulness of his pounce surprises me. He tackles me, straddling me and pressing me into the ground. My hands are pinned above my head as he hovers over me, teeth bared as he leans closer. “What the fuck was that, Micah?”

“That!? That was your stubbornness, Xalreth. What was I supposed to do? You kept insisting that ‘ You had it handled, ’ even after I told you I didn’t think that was the right kind of egging! You never fucking listen!”

“It was on Wikipedia!” The corded tendons in his neck draw tight as his face flushes a deep red.

“Why the fuck were you throwing them so hard? You broke three fucking windows! Three! ”

“Fuck you!” My eyes get wide as he grabs my shoulders and shakes the shit out of me, my head thumping against the ground. “This is all your fault! Why the hell did I ever agree to work with such an idiot? ”

“Don’t blame me because you’re too stubborn to admit that you have no idea how to perform human research!”

“I’m stubborn?” he roars. “ I’m stubborn!? You are too proud to own up to what you want, Micah! The one who needs all that control!” He gestures at his destroyed bodysuit before he shakes me again. “ You’re the moron who dressed me in a sex outfit! What the fuck ?! Did the zippers on the ass and crotch not give you any fucking idea that this was maybe the wrong move?!”

“Don’t pin this all on me! You still put it on, you goddamned halfwit!” His shoulders

flex as he reaches forward, undoubtedly about to choke me when there's another loud rip. The seams along the arms of his suit rupture, the black patent leather peeling off his skin like a demented, rotten banana.

He freezes, hands only millimeters from my neck, and both of us stare as the outfit slowly slides down his body, until his chest is exposed and the material is pooled around his waist.

A belly laugh erupts from deep inside me, one like I haven't experienced in years, and Xalreth's gaze moves to my face with an unreadable expression. I can't stop, though, laughing until my eyes crinkle and tears well in the corners.

Then Xalreth starts laughing, too.

"Did... did you see him trying to catch you?" I manage to ask, gasping for breath and swiping under my eyes to wipe away the falling teardrops. "He almost fell and I swear he would've rolled all the way down that hill."

"I heard you laughing, you dick," he chuckles, resting his palms on my chest. "As soon as that cold air hit my ass, you howled like a fucking werewolf."

My cheeks ache with the stretch of my smile as my torso bounces with a few final rogue laughs. "I think we can both agree that tonight was an epic failure."

"Hmm... I don't know if I'd call it a complete failure..." He's still smiling as he plants a palm on the ground beside my ear and leans forward, dragging a thick finger over my bottom lip. "I don't think I've ever seen you actually smile before, and I'm positive I've never heard you laugh."

"Yeah, well, don't get used to it." I try to force a scowl back on my face, but there's no genuine heat behind it.

“Why not?” he whispers, and he pushes harder on my lower lip, dragging it until I’m forced to open for him. His thumb slides between my lips, and his bottomless eyes never blink as he sinks it deeper into my mouth. I open wider, feeling his attention on every surface of my body as he presses on my tongue, then pulls his hand away. “Would it be so awful to relax every once in a while? When you put aside all that arrogance, you’re not half bad.”

“Xal,” I warn, and his gaze leisurely peruses my mouth before his eyes move to meet mine. My heart slams against my ribs as I fight these complicated feelings that have taken such deep root in my stomach. My fingers betray me as I reach forward, dragging my fingertips over the striking, severe lines of his face.

They hold me completely transfixed.

It’s unheard of—blasphemous, almost—for an angel and a demon to be together.

Forbidden.

“You know I like hearing you say my name,” he murmurs, still moving closer and closer, hovering so near that his breath blows across my face. “I might like it even more when you shorten it.”

“Why’s that?” He nuzzles against my fingers as he lifts his shoulder in a lazy shrug.

“Easier to get out when I’m otherwise blowing your mind.”

“Don’t flatter yourself,” I say, but it comes out as a breathy whisper. I glance away, another laugh slipping loose and betraying my nerves. When I meet his eyes again, there’s conflict brewing on his face.

“Why do you do that? Push me away?”

I open my mouth to answer, then close it again as I shake my head and choose my words carefully. “If I’m not fighting with you, it’s so simple to fall into... this. Whatever this is. It’s too easy to want what I can’t have. I am an Archangel. One with endless expectations that I cannot just cast aside for something as frivolous as a crush.”

“You saying you have a crush on me, Micah?”

Heat rises in my face as I peek up at his grin, usually sharp and teasing, but now softer, almost tender. “Even if I have... feelings for you, it doesn’t matter.”

“What if I want it to matter?”

“You hate me,” I murmur as I try to look away, but he grips my chin and stops me.

“I think we both know that isn’t true, angel.” He holds onto me, his black eyes roaming my face as his brows scrunch.

“What is it?” I ask, and his mouth opens and closes a few times before he clamps it shut again with a small shake of his head. My levity fades as I catch the conflict in his face. The way he looks at me is almost pained. “Xal, what—”

“Fuck it,” he whispers, and drops his entire body, his substantial weight pressing into my chest as he slams his lips onto mine.

At my considerable age, I’ve been kissed by dozens... hundreds of people, and never once has the world stopped. Never before has my body jolted like it has been hit with an electric shock, so intense that my spine lifts from the ground.

Never have I felt I might die from the need that courses through me.

Every bit of tension melts away as I whimper, kissing him back with just as much enthusiasm. It's unrefined, a far cry from the practiced, polite kisses I'm accustomed to—this one is rough, urgent, and a little painful. Licking and sucking over my lips, he takes control of my mouth, and the last thread of my restraint snaps.

My hips drive up into him as I claw at the back of his neck, fingernails digging into his skin as I try to tug him closer. He fights me, even as I chase his lips. My nails dig in and rake over his flesh, uncaring if he bleeds if it'll just keep him close. I realize my eyes have closed, and I open them as he reaches to pry my hands from his neck.

The world stops in a confusing mad rush as I watch him pull away from my touch.

I won't survive another rejection—I already know it. "Xal?" I whisper, dread and confusion making my voice weak.

"Micah?" His head tilts as he takes in my panic. Comprehension dawns on his face, and he pins my wrists to the ground and inches closer. "Oh, angel," he whispers, pressing a barely-there kiss to my lips before he sits tall. "Micah, you know better than to take over. That's why I stopped. Your job is to sit back and listen, because I'm in charge now." My lip pushes out in a pout at the distance he's created, but he only chuckles and drags a hand down my face to swipe at it. "What's off the table?"

"What?" I ask, forcing myself to concentrate.

"Well, I already know you like being used, and you get off on being called names... cock slut... good boy ." My body moves without my permission, grinding up into him as he pushes his weight down to hold me against the ground.

"What about choking?" he asks, and my eyes close as my face flushes, embarrassment burning under my skin as I nod. "Restraining?" Another nod, and he chuckles softly as I crack my eyes open by a sliver and peek at his massive form on

top of me.

Xalreth might not be as tall as me, but he likely outweighs me with the bulging expanse of strength beneath his smokey gray skin. His shoulders are broad and his chest is a solid wall of muscle that dwarfs mine, despite my size. His weight pressing down on my abdomen, stealing the edge of my breath, should make me tense, but instead, I find myself relaxing.

Trapped underneath this hulking, giant demon, I feel like it's okay to not be 'on' all the time.

Like maybe I can let go, if just for a few minutes.

"So what don't you like?" he asks, and his palms drop to my chest in a move that sends sparks across my skin. I force my breath to steady as I prepare for the conversation. Archangels are some of the oldest beings in existence, and our ties to the Heavens mean that, historically, we have always been expected to be pure and in control.

Never falling victim to the whims of sexual desires.

Never chasing pleasure.

Certainly never submitting.

"I... well, I..." Xalreth is patient as he sits there, fingertips spinning tiny circles on my pecs as he waits. "There's not much that I wouldn't let you do to me," I finally admit, but there's no judgment on his face as I push out a sigh. "But I... I don't want to make any decisions... I don't want any control."

"You want me to make them for you, then? Take your choice away?" I nod, relieved

that he understands what I need. “And if you fight me, that’s part of the game?”

More of that shame tries to build in my gut, but I shove it aside. “Yes.”

He gives me a stern glare and waits until he’s sure my attention is on him. “You will use the safe word if you ever don’t like something? Anything at all?”

“Yes, I swear,” I agree without hesitation. A flip is switched inside him as the hint of softness on his face vanishes. It’s replaced by hard edges as he leans in again, every inch the predator as he presses his weight into me.

“Alright then, angel. Let’s play.”

Xalreth

“Put your wings away.”

Though he tries to hide it, Micah’s excitement is written in the subtle details—the crinkling of his eyes, a slight upturn of his lips. They’re barely perceptible under his practiced mask of composure, but it would seem I’ve been paying more attention than I’d like to admit.

That excitement melts away, replaced by a nervous apprehension. His purple eyes cloud with a raw, unfamiliar vulnerability I imagine he doesn’t allow many to see. “What?”

I reach down and drag my fingers through the downy feathers of his wings. They’re enormous, pushing fifteen feet when extended, but even when he draws them close, they are bulky. It has to be an inconvenience, but aside from the times we’ve been glamoured, I’ve never seen him without them.

“Put them away.”

He subconsciously flexes them in a ripple that cascades through the pure white. “Why?”

My brow lifts at his uncertainty. “Why do you always have them out?”

He diverts his gaze as he chews on his bottom lip. “In the Angel community, wings are a declaration of power. By keeping mine out...”

“You show them who’s the boss,” I finish for him, and he gives a sheepish shrug. “Well...” I lean closer and press my lips to the hinge of his jaw, and he shudders underneath me. “You’re not the boss here, are you?” I kiss a path up his jawline until I reach his ear, and he shivers as I nip at the lobe. “I have plans for you, angel, and they might get in my way. Now, be a good boy and put them away.”

A heavy breath saws from his nose as he nods, and his eyes close as they disappear. Without them, he feels so much smaller beneath me.

Softer.

Fragile, almost. Breakable, despite his powerful body.

“Let’s find a more comfortable spot, shall we? Take us to my home.”

“Your home? I can’t be spotted gallivanting around Hell, I—”

“Micah.” It’s all I say, just his name, but his jaw clenches shut and his eyes flicker closed as he inhales deeply, a tremor running through his shoulders. “Don’t be a brat by making me ask a second time.”

He must be more flustered than I realize, because he doesn’t even stand before the tingling of his magic surrounds us. The world fades, and humid air blankets us as the darker landscape of Hell appears. A deep chuckle rumbles from my throat as I press my lips to his jaw again, and his head twists as he catches my mouth.

“Didn’t take you for an exhibitionist,” I murmur against his needy kiss, “but there’s not much I won’t try.” His eyes shoot open as he pushes me away with a violent shove. I land hard on my back with a thud, and a few surprised gasps ring from the onlookers.

Micah has never been inside my home before, so he teleported us outside my building. It's a busy market square, and where we normally meet.

Only this time, we were making out like a couple of horny teenagers on the ground.

It's late enough in the evening for the streetlights to be on, and they cast a warm glow on the cobblestone streets. But this is Hell, and it never sleeps. People mill about, and the foot traffic has stopped to stare.

Micah's angular face twists in panic, while his already pale skin becomes almost ghostly white. He scrambles to his feet, and his wide eyes sweep over the demons that have gathered, staring at us. I jump off the ground and bolt over, snatching his wrist before he can disappear.

He's a cornered animal as I back him against the stone of the building. "They don't know who you are," I whisper in his ear, but he shakes his head as he tries to wrestle from my grip. I use every bit of my strength holding him in place, my muscles screaming in protest. "Listen to me, Micah. Clear that pretty head for me, okay? They don't recognize you, because your wings are not out, and you're wearing... different... clothes..."

Reality slams into me in an instant as I trade his panic for my own. I stare in horror at the shredded leather bodysuit in tatters on my body. The seams are only intact around my ankles. A few stray threads cling desperately at my hips, threatening to unravel completely.

Everything is exposed.

Everything .

My ass, legs, and chest are naked for the world to see. If it wasn't for the top half of

the suit hanging down like a loincloth, my cock would be on display, too. Still in shock, my wide eyes move up to Micah's.

And this motherfucker laughs.

For the second time tonight, peals of laughter roll from deep in his belly, only this time they're hysterical. Arms hugging his stomach, he pitches forward as he howls. He laughs so hard he has to take a gasping breath in, and the noises only draw more eyes to us.

"Come on," I snap as I grab his arm and yank him after me. His manic, unrestrained laughter follows as I push through the glass doors of the lobby.

My doorman, Dyzan, lazily flips through a book as he spares me a glance. "Good evening, Mr. Xal... wow , what the fuck happened to you?" He does a double take, and I bare my teeth at him with a growl. Shrinking back in his seat, he cowers even as his eyes sweep over my body, and I continue to lead Micah through the building. The elevator is waiting at the ground level, and I drag him inside.

Agitated, I whirl to face him, but my annoyance sputters out when I find his gorgeous, radiant smile. Over the years, Micah and I have been in the same room plenty of times. Normally, it's when I'm standing idly by or taking notes for The Lucifer, but he's always been stony faced and serious.

Who knew the angel with the resting bitch face and razor blade tongue had a smile capable of eclipsing a thousand suns?

Crinkled with laughter, his eyes catch mine and something fundamental in my gut twists as I find it hard to breathe. My chest constricts and I fight for air, while my pulse dances in a dizzying rhythm under my ribs.

All because the most annoying Archangel on the planet is smiling at me.

Fuck, this is bad .

“Find this funny, do you?” Attempting to keep my cover from being blown, I lace my voice with malice, but his smile only widens. Two adorable dimples appear on his cheeks, and they seal my fate.

I know I’m doomed.

He wipes at the joyful tears in his eyes as he chuckles. “I didn’t think about us being exposed like that. Please don’t be upset with me, Xal. It wasn’t intentional.”

“You’re making it very hard for me to be mad at you,” I say as I step closer, pinning him against the side of the elevator.

“So don’t be mad.”

“You make it sound so simple.”

“Should I apologize?” There’s a light, teasing edge to his tone that makes me chuckle.

“I can think of a few ways you can make amends.” He’s still smiling as he closes the distance, and I don’t stop him this time as he finds my mouth. Our lips move together seamlessly, and he allows me to stay in control even as he kisses me back. His lips part, inviting me inside as I find his tongue with mine.

My hands land on his hips, and he lets out the most glorious whine as I tease my fingers inward. I reach his cock right as the elevator dings, and the firm metal under my grip makes me lift my eyes to his in surprise.

“You’re caged?” Micah bites his lip and reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a small silver key that he pushes into my palm. The elevator doors slide open and his gaze drifts to the demons waiting to enter, but I stay put even as they gawk. I refuse to move until he finally answers me with a shy nod.

I’m already busting out of a leather bodysuit. How much worse could it get?

“Don’t look at them, look at me.” His eyes flick over my shoulder, then lock back on mine. “Your attention belongs on me, angel, okay? No one else.”

“Yeah, alright,” he whispers, and I can’t contain my smile.

“God, I can’t wait to ruin you,” I murmur as I tap his cage and press a kiss to his jaw. That delicious flush deepens on his cheeks as I take his hand and lead him into the hallway, and he groans as a few giggles and catcalls follow us. As soon as we’re inside my condo, I pin him against the closed door. His eyes are half-lidded as he stares at me, his lips just barely parted.

“Hang your halo at the door, angel. You’re in my version of Heaven now, and you won’t need it here.” His tongue flicks out to wet his lips, and I take my time, allowing my eyes to roam over his nervous figure.

“You’re exquisite.” My fingers trace along the column of his throat. He lifts his chin, and my thumb rests over his Adam’s apple, feeling it bob as he swallows. “There needs to be a collar on this pretty neck. Then I could put a leash on you any time I want, lead you around like the slut you are. Would you enjoy that?”

“Yeah.” He draws in a tiny gasp as I squeeze tighter, my thumb pushing into his windpipe.

“I’ll have you all locked up, won’t I? Your neck...” I begin at his throat and slowly,

deliberately, trace my fingers down his torso. They dip into every hard contour of his muscles, relishing the warmth of his skin as he writhes in response. “Your cock...” He bucks his hips as I palm his caged dick, pressing on the metal bars beneath his pants. “How long have you been wearing this?”

“Since you sent it to me.” A thrill runs up my spine at his gravelly confession, so intense it almost causes me to shiver. The cage was only half the package, though, and I wonder what else he’s been doing in secret.

“That makes me so very happy, angel,” I murmur as I slide my hands around his ass, finding the metal base of the plug snug between his cheeks. “You’ve been stretching, huh? Been attending all those important meetings while prepping yourself for me?”

His eyes close and his head thunks back against the door, nodding frantically as I push on the base. My cock gives an insistent throb at the thought, and I grab at the hem of his sweater and wrestle it over his head. As soon as his hands are free, his palms land on my cheeks and his mouth finds mine. Our bare chests meet as I lean into him, wedging my leg between his knees and smiling against his lips as he moans.

Kissing Micah is unlike anything I’ve ever experienced. It’s more than lips and tongues—he kisses me with his entire body, and I kiss him back with mine. I can’t get enough. Even in control, I’m a slave to him and starving for more.

I need to take until he has nothing left to give.

We break apart when we both need air, heavy breaths panting between us as I nip at his bottom lip. “Are you sure you’re ready to do this?”

He nods, pressing another kiss to my lips. “I... I want to turn it all off, Xal. Please... I want you to possess me. Own me.”

I take a moment to really look into the amethyst depths of his eyes, searching for any signs of insecurity. His pupils are blown, his long, fair lashes fluttering, but there's no uncertainty hiding there. "Alright, angel. Pants off, on the bed, ass in the air."

We walk into my bedroom, where he hesitates as he unbuttons his pants, nervously glancing at me with his fingers on his zipper. I lift a brow at his pause. "Not getting shy on me now, are you? Afraid to let me see that giant cock tucked away in its little cage?"

"No, it's not that..."

"Then take them off, Micah."

He swallows again, his defined cheekbones positively neon red as he unzips his black pants. As he works them lower on his hips, the unexpected sight of what's underneath makes my blood tingle as my inner demon purrs.

"What do we have here?" I murmur as I palm my cock, unable to help it as my hips flex. "Did you dress up for me?"

White lace peeks out from beneath his slacks, forming the band of a garter belt that hugs his trim waist. The tiniest roll pushes over the top as he bends over, and I'm dying to drop to my knees and slide my tongue along that exquisite stretch of skin. His pants inch down further, exposing a lacy thong with his caged cock trapped underneath. When he finally lets his slacks fall to the ground, I hear a low growl rumble from my throat, out of my control. Lace-topped sheer stockings hug his thighs, clipped to his garter belt with satin ribbon.

It's the most incredible paradox—the delicate, innocent fabric sitting against the dips and curves of his powerful physique, molded to it as though it's painted on. He's a masterpiece, a living painting, and the perfect canvas for each brushstroke.

Every single detail is flawless.

His porcelain, shimmering skin shining from behind the lace. The wispy white hairs on his legs that push through the weave of the fabric. The roll of his muscles underneath, and his nervous shifting as he steps out of his clothing.

“Jesus Christ, are you trying to kill me?”

His eyes hit the floor, and those long lashes rest on his skin as he flushes even deeper, the pink spreading down his neck. “Do you like it?”

“Did you do this for me?” He glances at me through his lashes as he nods, and that annoying ache in my chest spreads to a fucking wildfire as I fight to control myself. “No one else has ever seen you in this?”

“Only you.”

“Were you wearing this the last time we saw each other? At the park?”

“Yeah,” he admits, chewing on his bottom lip as he tries to glance away, but I grip his chin and force his eyes to stay on mine. “I... I wanted to look pretty for you.”

The words pierce me straight in the heart, and I tug him forward to leave a soft kiss on his lips. “Get on the bed, angel, and let me appreciate this.” Alabaster skin and white-woven hair contrast beautifully against my black comforter, and the mattress dips as I kneel at his feet. His abdomen muscles flex as he lifts his head, that roll of skin bulging over the top of the elastic again.

“Fucking perfect,” I mutter as I drag my fingertips up the stockings. “Funny enough, white is slowly becoming my favorite color.”

His eyes are hooded as they watch me explore, his stomach lifting with his heavy breaths. The sweetest moan tumbles from his throat as I drop my lips to the inside of his calf, kissing a line up his leg. Long fingers grip the comforter as his spine arches, his legs spreading further in anticipation.

By the time I reach his thigh, he's trembling, and I withdraw to grin at him as he writhes. "Lift your knees and show me." His powerful legs pull up and apart, displaying the base of a crystal-studded plug. "This is the biggest one?"

"Y-Yeah," he whispers.

"How many times did you get off while you worked those in?"

"None."

"Don't lie to me, angel. We both know how easily you get overwhelmed." I wrestle the remains of the bodysuit off until I'm standing naked, gripping my cock as I watch his ass flex, trying to pull the plug deeper.

"I didn't... I haven't, not since..." He trails off, and his eyes flicker between the art on the walls and the items on the dresser, looking everywhere but at me.

"Since the alley?" Micah nods, still refusing to meet my gaze. "You haven't come since you had my cock in your mouth?"

"No," he whispers, his fingers fisting in the sheets as I climb between his legs, running my palms along his thighs. He gasps as I drop my head, and his hips roll as I slide his panties aside, licking between the wires of his cage and pushing on his plug.

"Bet you're fucking desperate, aren't you?"

“Please, Xal,” he whimpers as I wrap my lips around the cage and suck. “Please fuck me. I need it.”

“Not yet, angel.” He whines and reaches for me as I climb off the bed and walk to a nightstand. Open curiosity covers his face as I pull out a handful of black nylon straps.

“What’s that?”

“Oh, this?” My tone is conversational as I dig deeper. “This is a harness, and this,” I say as I show him a large silicone dildo, “is what I’m attaching to it.”

“Why?”

“Why?” I chuckle, glancing at his wide eyes as I attach the fake cock and toss everything on the mattress beside him before returning to the drawer. “Because we’re going to play a little game.” Micah’s eyes flare as he watches me pull out a set of restraints, and I do a double take as I take him in.

I thought I was prepared for this, but nothing could’ve prepared me for Micah sprawled out on my bed. Finger-tousled hair and flushed cheeks, white lace and pure, unadulterated need.

He’s mind-blowingly beautiful.

Another squeeze constricts my chest as I grab his wrist and place a kiss on his pulse point before wrapping the leather around it and securing the buckle.

“You’re allowed to keep one hand out for now,” I say as I walk to the foot of the bed and secure his ankles, attaching his limbs to the posts while leaving him some length to move. His gaze never leaves me, and I toss the fourth restraint aside for later.

He swallows hard as he nods at my hands. “Do I get to know what that is?”

I grin as I straighten the black straps. “This is your cock.”

“My... my what?” His brows scrunch as I work the harness around his waist and between his legs, until the pale pink silicone dick juts up from his hips, mere inches above his cage.

“Your cock,” I repeat, dragging my fingers along his cage. “Since this one is mine, it only felt right to give you one, too.” He frowns as I kneel between his knees and lean forward, letting a thread of my spit drip onto the dildo.

“Stroke your cock, Micah.”

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Micah

“Wh-what?” Xalreth’s smile stretches as he spits a second time, nodding at my free arm. “Stroke your cock.”

My eyes shift from my hand to the dildo, then back to his face. My hesitation causes a shift in his expression, and his eyes become stern in their silent challenge. He watches my every move as I wrap my fingers around it, spreading his spit as my hand moves up and down. Phantom tingles run along my cock, a ghost of a touch that has me shivering.

“That’s a good boy,” he murmurs as I bite at my lip, stroking faster as my hips give an involuntary shift. It’s a complete mind fuck. My dick is locked away, unable to get hard, but the sensations are real. They’re intoxicating. Every shuttle of my hand along the dildo winds that coil inside me just a little tighter.

My hole squeezes around the plug and a moan slips free, out of my control. My hips lift, flexing off the bed as I thrust.

God, I feel it all.

I feel fucking everything.

Usually, the buzz from having someone’s attention on me is a low tingle, but everything about Xalreth’s watchful gaze is different. It’s held under white hot flame before it burns over my skin. Scorching, blistering heat that carves into my body until it feels like it should scar. It’s ownership and complete possession.

A brand, marking me as his.

“Fuck, you’re leaking like a slut right now, soaking those pretty panties.” He swipes at my cock through my thong and comes away with slick fingers. My entire body pulses with need, contained from the days I spent fucking myself with these plugs and refusing to let myself come.

I’d kneel on my bed, thrusting the plug against my hole until my body pulled it in. Then I’d slip it out and moan at the sting before sinking it back in again. In and out, I fucked myself with it until I was on the verge of coming, and I’d force myself to stop.

Some fucked up logic in my brain told me that if I gave into the sensations, I had to admit I wanted him. Over and over, I tried to convince myself I didn’t want to see him while taking time out of each morning and evening to stretch myself for him.

Denial isn’t a great look, even on an Archangel.

Six days of edging myself have me desperate, my balls so tight they’ve drawn up against my body. I’m already on a hair trigger, and its safety hasn’t been switched on in days.

I won’t last.

He spits on the dildo again, and I jerk faster with the added slickness. My ass flexes around the plug with every thrust off the mattress. A dull, rhythmic thumping hammers in my lower body, and I whine with each thrust as the pressure feels like it will split my skin apart at the seams.

“Please?” I whimper, begging even though I have no idea what I’m asking for... no idea what I need.

But he does.

“Want me to suck your cock?”

“Oh, God, please ,” I repeat, my other hand and legs all fighting against the restraints. I flex around the plug as his hands land on my thighs, and that simple touch sparks in tiny explosions where our skin meets. “Fuck, please, Xal.”

He pins me to the bed, my hips shifting mindlessly as I try to thrust. A low growl rumbles from his throat as he slips his fingers under the edge of my garter belt. “You know I like it when you call me that, don’t you?”

His hand replaces mine on the dildo, squeezing around the base as he leans in. Those dark eyes flip to my light ones as he licks up the entire length, then surrounds it with his lips. He sinks down and loosens his grip on my thighs, allowing me to thrust into his mouth.

“Oh, shit,” I whine as his cheeks draw in and spit drips down the shaft. My muscles coil into a desperate knot, and his name bursts from me as I drive my hips off the bed, bucking with the force of it. Everything inside me draws tight. Impossibly tight... so tight I can’t hold on any longer.

A crippling release rushes through me and pounds so violently it makes my toes curl and my legs jerk against the restraints. My entire body pulses as I come, my ass flexing around the plug as cum soaks the lace of my thong. It leaks from my panties, running down my skin and pooling on the bed beneath me.

He pulls off the dildo, his lips shiny with spit. His eyes dart across my face, where my mouth still hangs open as I catch my breath. “Fuck, look at your pretty, overwhelmed face. I bet that felt so good, didn’t it? Letting go when you’re always wound so tight?” Dropping lower, he places a kiss on the tip of my cock and chuckles when my

body jolts from the contact. There's a quiet click as he pops the cap off a marker I hadn't noticed until now, and the felt tip drags along the exposed skin of my left thigh as he draws a line.

"What are you doing?" I finally manage to ask as I float down from my high.

A low, dark chuckle rumbles in his chest before he leans down, his lips brushing against the mark he just made on my skin. "We have to keep track of how many times you come tonight." He climbs off the bed and restrains my last hand, so I'm fully spread out and secured to the posts. The mattress dips as he settles between my knees once more. "You don't have a problem with that, do you?"

"No," I say before he's even done speaking, shaking my head to emphasize the point as he grins at me. My heart skips a full beat inside my chest at the relaxed, easy way he smiles. It's only for me, I realize. All mine. No one else gets to see him like this. I try to reach for him, only to get caught by my restraints as I stare at him, pleading.

When this started, it was just to scratch an itch, but this feels like more. It's significant, and the undertones of his attention tell me he realizes it, too.

"I'm going to fuck you now, sweet angel," he purrs as he traces his fingers around the base of the plug. He pushes it into me a few times before he begins to tug, and the flare stretches me as he watches with wild eyes. The moment it pops free, I'm so fucking empty.

"Fill me up," I beg, jerking against the restraints in my desperation to be full again.

A teasing smile curves across his mouth. "You want the plug back in?"

"No, I want you," I whine. "Give me what I need, please?"

“Impatient, are we?” He leans over me, his erection brushing against my skin as he ghosts his lips over mine. “Never had a cock in that tight hole and you’re already begging for it. Are you a high maintenance slut?”

“Yes,” I whisper, chasing his lips, and he breathes a laugh as he relents and presses his mouth to mine. A quiet, satisfied sigh blows from my nose as we kiss, and it’s slow and sensual even as he grinds into me. “Please, Xal? Please don’t let me be empty. I don’t want to be empty anymore.”

The words come out as a plea, and he stares into my eyes as though he hears their hidden meaning. I swallow, raw and exposed as his attention scrapes over my skin, circling my face before settling on my lips again. “Okay, angel.” He kisses me sweetly before he grabs the lube from the night table, then loosens the bindings on my ankles.

“I can’t let you go yet, but you’ll need room to move. Now spread those legs like a good whore.” He slicks his cock as I obey, and my abs strain as I crane my head to watch. Another squirt of lube lands on his fingers as he circles my rim. I bite back a moan as he inspects me. “You’ve done an excellent job prepping yourself for me. Nice and loose for my cock, aren’t you?” He lines us up, and I fight the bindings as I try to wrap my legs around him and force him closer.

“Yes, now give it to me.”

“Such a spoiled Angel, always getting what he wants. You’ll have to learn some patience, won’t you?”

“No,” I say as I shake my head, and he lets out a hearty laugh.

“Brat,” he mutters affectionately as he presses a palm to my chest and thrusts. My spine arcs off the bed, and my lips fall open in a shout. Even with the increasing sizes

of the plugs I've used to prepare for this moment, the stretch of his thick cock sets me on fire.

He stills, giving me time to adjust. "Is that what you were begging for?" He pulls back and drives forward, further this time as he forces my body to accept him. Sensations rush through my limbs like lightning as my arms tug on the restraints.

"Fuck ," I whimper.

"That's right. That's what you wanted, isn't it? To be fucked senseless?"

Pain and pleasure battle for dominance, and my mind goes blissfully quiet as I nod. A peaceful hum rings in my ears as Xalreth thrusts again and jars my body so hard the back of my head digs into the mattress. My eyes close as I get lost in it—the slick slide of his cock and the stretch of my muscles to accept him, the soft grunts that escape his throat with every thrust, and the drag of his palms over my abdomen.

His hand lands on my throat as my eyes flutter open, my lids heavy as he smirks. "You're so pretty underneath me." His thumb traces along my jawline before lifting to my lips and dragging across them. "You really do need a collar. Something on your neck to show the world you belong to me."

"Would you claim me?" The words come out in gasps as he bottoms out inside me.

"That's what you want? To be claimed?" The hand around my neck lifts me off the bed, my hair pooling on the mattress beneath me. "I'll claim you, beautiful. I'll permanently cage that cock so no one else comes anywhere close to it." He presses an urgent kiss to my lips as he withdraws and snaps his hips forward so hard I call out against his mouth. "Chain that perfect neck so I never lose my grip on you."

My eyes roll back into my head, fisting the sheets at the pleasure that ricochets

through my body. “I will carve my fucking name across your chest until it scars, Micah. Bite every inch of your skin until it’s so thoroughly marked, no one will ever dare to even look at you again.”

A sharp pain explodes as he nips my lip, his teeth piercing my skin. The coppery tang of blood hits my taste buds as he grins and licks at the small cut, then takes my mouth and swipes his tongue over mine.

His hips move faster, fucking me in a rhythm now as I relax, relishing his control. Dark skin and black eyes are all I see, my senses invaded by his smokey, rich scent. The heat and friction of his body are hypnotizing, and I gladly surrender. His tongue thrusts into my mouth as he squeezes my neck harder.

“What are you doing to me?” he growls as he rips away from our kiss. “I want to steal the air from your fucking lungs so that you need mine to breathe. You want that, pretty angel? To not be able to breathe unless I do it for you?”

I nod as my vision clouds, a gasp of, “Please?” making it from my restricted windpipe as Xalreth groans.

“Why are you so goddamned perfect?” The bedframe slams into the wall and his tendons draw tight, his teeth bared as I relax my hold on the sheets, fully submitting to him. “That’s it... I’m the only one who can give you what you need.”

I fight for breath as my entire body tingles, tiny zaps of electricity exploding in rapid fire under my skin. My head feels like I’m underwater, outside sounds dulled as the pulsing in my body rushes in my ears. I’m so close, it’s like I’m hovering weightless, waiting for gravity to catch me.

“Give yourself to me. You’re mine now, Micah,” he murmurs, and the sound of my name on his lips throws the world back into motion.

My pleasure erupts, and I fall.

He grunts as I constrict around him, another rush of cum flowing out of my cage and into my thong. A few more thrusts thud against the wall before there's no rhythm at all, only mindless desperation. His hips lock with a snarl, his mouth falling open as he releases my neck. I gasp for air as he comes, his cock jerking inside me as he fills me with his release.

Sweat beads on Xalreth's forehead as he rocks his hips again, an expression of pure bliss on his face as we ride out our pleasure. When he sags against me, his lips find mine in a clumsy kiss that feels significant. The action is completely natural, instinctive even, and the intensity of it causes a sharp, physical pain as my chest cracks right down the middle.

He pulls back and meets my eyes for a long moment. An understanding passes between us, a thousand words that neither of us dare to speak. Another quiet whine leaves my throat as he slides out of me, his cum spilling from my hole. He takes his marker and draws a second line on my left thigh before shifting and drawing one on the right.

"This side is yours," he says, tracing his fingertips over the two marks on my left before moving to the single mark on the right side. "And this one is mine."

"Keeping score?" I tease, my voice raspy. He spreads my legs as far as he can while I'm restrained, nudging my thong aside. More warmth trickles down my skin as he watches his release seep from my hole.

"You bet your ass I am, angel." He scoops up a few fingers of cum and shoves them back inside me. "And just so you know... I always play to win."

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Xalreth

A drowsy warmth surrounds me as I drift between sleep and consciousness. Micah flexes, rocking his hips back in a silent test of whether I'm awake. It was late, into the wee hours of the morning, when I filled him with yet another load. As I went to pull out, he grabbed at my thighs and begged me to stay inside him. Wrung out and exhausted, I'd been more than happy to keep my cock seated in his ass all night.

Doesn't mean I didn't make him beg for it.

He is such a beautiful beggar, after all.

"Mmm," I murmur, pressing a kiss to the back of his neck as my cock perks up.
"Someone still not satisfied?"

He whimpers my name as I graze a gentle bite on his shoulder, and I run my fingers down the front of his body. His gorgeous lacy getup lies in tatters around the room, ripped off by my hands and teeth as the night progressed.

"How many is this, angel? How many marks are on your leg?"

"Six," he moans as he rolls his hips harder.

"That's right, beautiful. And how many are on mine?"

"Hmm... four."

“Seems like the odds are stacked in your favor, doesn’t it?” He releases a breathy little laugh as I drag my fingertips along the defined V in his abs. “Do you know what I call these?” I ask as I nip his shoulder a second time, and he shakes his head as he thrusts back on me. “Cum gutters. And...” My finger travels over the muscles and lower, tracing the openings of his cage as he releases another of his perfect fucking whines. “Any idea why I call them that?”

“Wh... why?”

“Because when I come all over your chest and abs, they’ll make sure it lands where it’s supposed to... right on top of this pretty cock.”

“ Please ,” he whispers, and I grip his hips, thrusting harder and meeting him for every backward push. My lips chart a path across his back, noticing the raised sections of flesh between his shoulder blades for the first time. Faint light pulses underneath the skin, the same purple as his eyes. I press a kiss on one and he stiffens with a moan.

“Oh, that’s fascinating, isn’t it? What do we have here?”

“Wings,” he manages to say as I pull my hand to his shoulder and trace them. Static charge crackles over my fingertips as Micah moans louder.

“Are they sensitive, angel?” His head nods in a frantic rush as he tenses and his muscles grow tight. I’m able to read his body so well that I know he’s close to falling over the edge again. “Has anyone else ever touched you here?”

“No,” he whispers, glancing over his shoulder at me.

“I’m your first?” In the darkness, his eyes glow with a faint purple that reflects off the dark hues of my skin, but it disappears as his eyelids slam closed. He nods, and my

inner demon purrs its satisfaction. “What if I said I want to be your only? That I never want anyone else to see you like this? Would you grant me that?”

“I think I’d give you anything you asked for,” he whispers, so quiet I’m not sure he meant me to hear it.

My heart pinches as I kiss along his spine, and I change direction before we cross a line neither of us could return from. “You’re going to come too fast if I keep touching them.”

“Please, just let me, Xal? Please?” His eyes open, and I lose myself in them as another few pieces of my defenses crumble. “Darling, please?”

Darling. That pinch in my heart turns into a vise at the term of endearment.

“Do you believe you get whatever you want from me by begging?” The words were meant to be playful, but there’s a somberness to my voice as his faint smile flickers in the darkness.

“Please?” he asks again, then whines as my fingertips traces back over the raised skin.

“Why can’t I deny you?” I murmur, more to myself than to him.

“Because you lo—” Whatever he’s about to say is interrupted by a moan as I rub harder over his sensitive wing nub, feeling it roll underneath his skin. His shoulders and arms tremble as I kiss his neck, the raised flesh between his shoulders twitching under my fingers and making his entire body jolt. My heart thunders, thankful that the bomb he was about to put into the universe was disarmed before it could detonate.

If you never speak something aloud, it doesn’t become real. It can still be pretend,

and secret, and it never has to turn into more than you can handle.

More than you can offer.

“Does that feel good, Micah?” Incapable of words, he nods again as his head thunks back onto my shoulder. Sweat beads on his forehead, and his tangled hair is wild around his flushed face. Swollen lips part in a silent gasp. “You’re such a beautiful mess,” I whisper, and I drive my hips forward as I press my thumb onto the root of his wing, putting more pressure on it as I spin in a steady circle. “My beautiful mess. Say it, angel... tell me you’re mine.”

“Yours,” he agrees as he twists his face to mine, and I catch his lips in a fumbling kiss. I find a spot on that sensitive flesh that makes his entire body jolt, and he moans against my mouth as I press harder on it. His mouth rips away from our kiss with a gasp as he compresses around me, his back arching as he trembles.

“Fuck,” I grunt as I drive forward, my whole body seized with the unexpected orgasm. I surround his torso with my arms and hold him against me, waves of pleasure passing between us as his heart pounds beneath my palm.

“Stay inside me,” he begs, shifting his hips as my release slides out of him. We’re both sticky and slick, but neither of us attempts to move. “Let me keep you there... don’t leave.”

“I won’t leave you, angel,” I whisper with another kiss to his shoulder, and he pushes out a relieved sigh as he lets himself relax. Soon, his muscles are twitching as he falls back asleep.

But not me.

No, I’m lying here, staring at the shape of his body and how well it fits against mine.

I'm wide awake, wondering how in the world I got myself into this position.

"Mmm... we gotta get up. We worked up an appetite last night, and I'm hungry," I murmur against the nape of Micah's neck as he pulls in a sleepy breath, stretching his back like a cat. He rolls in my arms to face me as he pouts.

"Why do we have to leave this warm bed? You can have me for breakfast." I chuckle as I push his hair out of his face. The white strands are a wild, tangled mess. Its normally smooth texture is disrupted by knots and stray hairs.

I prefer this version of him.

Mussed hair, pillow crease on his cheek, and what might be a drop of dried drool on the corner of his mouth. The weight of the world hasn't hit him yet, and his sleepy eyes are full of a relaxed happiness that changes his entire appearance.

"As much as I'd love to sustain myself indefinitely on that juicy ass..." I give a slap to his bare cheek that makes him yelp. "... I need some actual food."

"Room service?" he asks hopefully, and I laugh again as I hug him into my chest.

"This isn't the Heavenly realm, Micah, and I'm not important enough to live somewhere with servants at my beck and call. If we want to eat, we have to make it."

"Make it?" He sounds aghast, which only makes me laugh harder. "I like it when you do that," he whispers.

"Do what?" I brush a kiss on his forehead.

"Laugh."

It hits me then—how much I’ve laughed with him since we came back from that disastrous mission. I’m light in a way I haven’t been in years... in as long as I can remember. “Let’s get some breakfast, angel.”

We climb out of bed, and I marvel again at the perfect planes of his body. The early morning sun comes through the window, shining off every defined muscle. He darts into the bathroom and shoots me a mischievous grin as he steals my toothbrush and scrubs his mouth, and I hip check him aside as I steal it back.

“I’m filthy,” he says with a wrinkled nose, once we both brush our teeth.

“Yeah, you are.” I smack his ass again and he jolts, glaring at me as I walk over to start the shower. We climb under the warm water and take turns washing each other. Micah jerks with a squeak and loses his balance as I swipe a soapy hand up his ass crack. A booming blast of a laugh leaves me as I catch him. It earns me a glare, but I promptly wash it away with a long kiss under the spray. After we’re clean, we dry off and I redraw the tally marks on his thighs, placing a kiss over each of them.

Micah’s more relaxed than I’ve ever seen him as I toss him sweatpants and a t-shirt to wear, even if he wrinkles his nose at them. “Say something, I dare you.” I challenge him with a raised brow, but he only shakes his head and grins at me. He pulls them on without complaint, and the beast inside me purrs at seeing him in my clothes. Once we’re both dressed, I sit on the edge of the bed and spread my legs, gesturing to the space between them.

His eyes light up and he obediently sinks onto his knees and drags his palms up my thighs, but I catch his wrists before he makes it to my cock. “As much as I love seeing those perfect lips hard at work, I had something else in mind.”

His brows scrunch as I turn him and guide him to sit on the floor, facing away from me. “What are we doing?”

I pull the hairbrush out and drag it through his long, damp hair, and he hums a contented sound at the sensation. “What’s something no one knows about you?” I ask, and he gets quiet as I brush his hair. When I start to divide it into sections, he twists to glance at me curiously. “Sisters, remember?”

“You’re fixing my hair?”

“Braiding it,” I explain, leaning down to kiss his cheek before steering his head to face forward again. “Now, stop dodging the question.”

He’s quiet for a minute while he thinks. “I’ve always wanted someone to take me dancing,” he finally says, and I say nothing, only continue to weave the sections of hair as I listen. “That’s silly, isn’t it? Such a pointless activity.”

“It’s not pointless if you want to do it.” I keep my voice gentle as he gives a small nod. “Not everything has to serve a purpose, Micah. Sometimes, it’s okay just to have fun.”

“I’m not very good at having fun,” he says, and I hate how sad he sounds.

“I beg to differ. I’m having a great time.”

Even from my position behind him, I can see his cheeks rise in a smile. “Despite my vast age, I haven’t ever had a proper relationship,” he confesses. “No one has ever stuck around, and I never cared enough to chase them when they left. I know I’m hard to deal with, Xal. People don’t voluntarily spend time with me. The fact that you’re even tolerating me—”

“Hey now... don’t put words in my mouth. Who said anything about tolerating you? Last night was incredible.”

“Yes, it was,” he whispers with a sigh. “But you’ll grow tired of me too, Xalreth. I’m not foolish enough to believe otherwise, though I’m afraid...” He trails off, his shoulders drooping.

“You’re afraid...?” I nudge, fingers moving nimbly now as I get closer to the bottom of the braid.

“I’m afraid this one is going to hurt.” Emotions ball in my throat as I fight to get myself under control, tying the end of his hair.

“I won’t—”

“No, just wait,” he interrupts, and I snap my mouth shut. “I don’t want you to lie to me and make me feel better with promises you have no intention of keeping. Just... before you’re done with me... maybe you could take me dancing?” He sounds so small as he says it, and fuck, how my heart breaks at the soft request.

My voice is thick as I say, “Yeah, I can do that.”

He twists and lifts onto his knees, and he looks so young and innocent as he stares at me, wearing my t-shirt that’s a little baggy on him with his hair pulled back in the braid. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to kill the mood.”

“You didn’t.” I smooth his hair and give him my sunniest smile before leaning in and pressing a kiss to his lips. “Why don’t we grab some breakfast? There’s an amazing diner right down the street.”

“Diner food, how common,” he says, and I scoff before I catch the sneaky grin on his face. I reach around to swat his ass once more.

“Come on.” I stand and pull him to his feet. We walk hand-in-hand through the lobby

and along the sidewalk, and I can't remember the last time I've been so happy.

Xalreth

The following week passes in a blur. Every free minute is filled with Micah, and the ease with which we've fallen into this comfortable companionship is terrifying. We have established that neither of us likes to cook, so most evenings we grab dinner together before we fall into bed.

It's every fantasy I've ever had come to life, and they play like a reel through my mind. Ropes binding his hands and ankles behind his back as he knelt submissively. The quiet whines and louder moans that crawled from his throat as I hooked his knees and fucked him face to face. His powerful thighs flexing as he rode me on the couch when I allowed him to remove his cage, and the way his thick cock leaked against my abs until he couldn't contain it anymore. One night, I even had him bent over his podium, with his pants around his ankles and my hand covering his mouth.

His eyes meet mine from behind that same podium, and he flashes me the tiniest hint of a grin. I have to shift in my seat as more of those memories play in my mind.

"Ugh," Damien groans as he plops into the chair beside me. "We went decades without having a single meeting and now Micah insists on calling us here over and fucking over again. Is he that starved for attention?"

Something ugly and visceral contorts inside me, the urge to defend him twisting into a knot in my stomach. I force my expression to remain carefully blank, but inside, I've never felt so guilty. It feels like a betrayal to keep quiet, and an even bigger one to speak up and bring secrets to light that Micah isn't ready to have exposed. "If I didn't know any better, I'd say you didn't want to see me."

Damien makes a show of his irritation, huffing an obnoxious scoff and rolling his whiskey brown eyes up into his head. “All those times you accused me of being the drama queen, and who’s wearing the crown now?”

A soft chuckle forms in my throat as I bump him with my shoulder. “That’s a title no one will ever take from you.”

“Yes, well, you never used it when you announced me.”

“‘All hail The Lucifer, The Queen of Drama’ doesn’t quite have the same ring as the others.”

He tries not to grin and fails, scratching his face to cover his smile. “We had some good times, even if you’re too stubborn to admit it. No, of course I want to see you. It’s him that I have no desire to be around. I’d rather fight my way through a thousand pissed-off demons than have to sit through another meeting with that self-righteous Angel.”

Unbidden, my eyes fall to Micah as he prepares his notes, and the irritation that used to form at his presence is replaced by warm affection. In the past, I’d perceived him as pompous and arrogant, just as Damien does. A sanctimonious, smug man who did whatever he wanted and ignored any advice that didn’t align with his own inflated ego.

But now that I know him, that’s not what I see anymore.

Sure, I recognize the rigid set of his jaw, the unwavering gaze and refusal to bend. The stubbornness that still makes me want to shake sense into him daily. But they’re traits of a man who’s spent millennia with no choice other than to be in absolute control. One who lives by the rule of perfection’s impossible demands, without the freedom that comes from being allowed to fail. It’s a freedom the rest of us take for

granted—the ability to fall, knowing we can pick ourselves up from the wreckage.

Not him.

He's carrying the weight of responsibility that might crush a lesser being, and that's what I see when I look at him now. Someone who tightrope walks every aspect of his life while he tries to balance the tasks he has no choice but to take. Someone ridiculed and hated, no matter those choices.

Someone who desperately craves love and affection, and is afraid that, too, means he is a failure.

Damien continues to speak, oblivious to my inner turmoil. "Hell, and you've been having to spend all this extra time with him. I bet that's fucking torture, isn't it?" He mimes stabbing himself under his fingernail, a huge grin splitting his face as if the action is hilarious.

And I suppose at one time, it would've been.

I give a noncommittal hum and open my mouth to change the subject, but of course, Damien isn't done. "If I had to be in his presence that much, I'd throw myself off a fucking cliff. Actually, I'd still be able to hear his pompous ass voice the whole way down, so scratch that. Just give me an old-fashioned beheading, but do it guillotine style, so I don't have to look at how he lifts his stupid nose into the air."

"Damien," I warn quietly as my temper prickles at the back of my neck.

"I mean, he acts like he's perfect when he is the biggest moron I've ever met. How do you get to be that old and still make a fool of yourself every time you open your mouth? He has to know that no one likes his angelic ass." The room has fallen silent, and when I glance up, Micah stares at the podium, his eyes vacant and jaw tense.

To everyone else, he probably appears to be disengaged and disinterested, but I've seen the depth that lies beneath his armor. Damien's words reached him, but not only that, they hurt him. I recognize the pain on his face, and how he hates himself for allowing it to affect him.

"That's enough," I snap, and Damien's smirk spreads.

"Oh, come on, Xalreth. That arrogant ass doesn't give a damn about any opinion other than his own. Do you think he even has an entire brain in there? Maybe God was still experimenting when he created Micah and messed up on his head. I bet it's like a fucking Picasso in there, all disjointed and abstract. It's the only way to explain why he's so awful—" Damien's words are cut off mid-sentence as I wrap my fingers around his neck, my teeth bared in a snarl, and the sudden pressure makes his eyes bulge.

Chaos erupts as everyone else in the room shouts and snaps to attention. A heavy, tingling magic, like a thousand needles prickling my skin, surrounds me as Niklaus roars and leaps from his chair. But his powers are weakened outside his domain, and I'm able to fight through the pain. He thunders over, charging like a bull, but Damien holds a hand out to stop him.

"Xalreth, release him," Micah says from the front of the room.

"Not until he apologizes." Damien's face is turning a deeper red as his eyes narrow and dart around my face. Only he could be in this position and maintain his bored indifference. He knows he isn't in any real danger—not only is Damien older and more powerful than me, but he's also one of my oldest friends.

"Xal, it's fine—" Micah tries again, but I shake my head as I interrupt.

"No, it isn't."

“ Xal ? He’s calling you... Xal?! Oh... my... fucking... God ... when did this happen?” Damien whispers, so low only I hear him, and I squeeze tighter as my snarl deepens.

“Xalreth, release him.” This time, Micah commands it, and his power pries my fingers back and forces my fist to loosen. Damien continues to stare as we both catch our breath. It’s as though he can read my truth like a book, the words pouring straight from my head. A strong hand squeezes around my biceps and I whirl to face Micah, his eyes careful.

“Come with me.” My gaze flickers back to Damien, and his lips are still curled into that sarcastic, irritating smirk. My temper explodes again, and I’m about to lash out when Micah yanks me back. “ Now .”

“Take a break and get your tempers under control,” he calls over his shoulder as he leads me out of the room like a chastised child. Not sparing a glance at them, he drags me into the space I’ve been using as an office over the past few weeks and slams the door behind us.

“What was that all about?” he hisses, shoving me against the wall and towering over me. He throws his shoulders back, his eyes crackling as his wings flare wide. They almost take up the entire room, twitching in his agitation. Instinct tells me to cower to him, to submit, but I know my angel won’t hurt me.

“He was insulting you!” I hiss back, and his lips pull into a tight frown.

“That doesn’t matter.”

“It matters to me.” His eyes soften as his posture relaxes.

“You can’t let them get to you like this,” he whispers, reaching up to brush his

fingertips over my cheek. “I’m used to it.”

“Well, you shouldn’t be. They don’t even know you.”

“Neither did you, when this started.” My eyes narrow into a scowl as he chuckles, and the lightness of the sound eases a fraction of my stress. “While I appreciate you coming to my rescue, I’m afraid there’s no changing their behavior. People have hated me as long as I can remember. This is nothing new.”

“I don’t hate you,” I whisper, and those heavy lashes flutter as he leans in and brushes his lips over mine.

“I know you don’t, and that’s all that matters. But you shouldn’t pick fights with your friends over me. I’m not worth it.” He presses his mouth to mine right as my heart breaks, realizing he actually believes what he said. To him, those words are absolute truth.

“You are worth it,” I insist, and I interrupt his objection with a nip of my teeth, forcing his lips apart as I kiss him deeper. “Don’t listen to them, okay? Let me prove them wrong.”

He hesitates, and for a second, the thin veil that covers those emotions buried in the deepest, most secret parts of him slips. I see the scars he carries, the emotional weight of his isolated existence.

And I want to take it all away. Protect him from himself.

“I got something for you.” His eyes snap to mine, confusion mixing with his curiosity.

“Why?”

“What do you mean, why ? Has no one ever given you a gift simply because they were thinking about you?”

“No,” he whispers as the last bits of that veil that he clings to are ripped away. A storm of emotions pours out of him. His vulnerability is exposed to me in raw, heartbreaking detail.

“Oh, angel,” I whisper, pulling him in for another long kiss, his unsteady lips shaky against mine.

His sigh breezes over my mouth as he pushes our foreheads together. I reach into my pocket and pull out a square, flat hinged box and press it into his palm. “You asking me to marry you, demon?” he teases, a false bravado to his voice that I don’t call him out on.

“Don’t flatter yourself, angel.”

His lips rise in the slightest grin as he lifts the lid and stares at the delicate golden chains on a bed of white satin. “What is this?”

I take the box from his hands and pull the necklace from inside, undoing the clasp before looping it around his neck. Micah pushes his hair aside, letting me fasten the two sides. I sit back and grin, admiring my work as I trace the shape.

Golden chains weave in an inch-thick band that hugs his neck, and a thin ring hangs from the front. I loop my finger through it and yank him closer, amused at the shock on his face. “Told you I was going to collar you.”

“Won’t it break?”

“The links are Hell-forged, so they’re strong. I could hook you from the ceiling and

they would hold.” My fingers continue to dance over the chains before lifting to stroke along his jaw. “They’ll hold forever.”

“It’s beautiful,” Micah says, eyes locked on mine.

“You deserve beautiful things.” He swallows, the bob of his Adam’s apple making the lights shimmer off the choker, and a small smile spreads over my lips. “I had something made for myself, too.” I pull a singular, skinny golden chain from my shirt, and he huffs a quiet laugh when he sees the key to his cage hanging from the end of it.

“Keeps you from misplacing it,” he teases.

I pull him in for another kiss before tucking it back into my shirt. “It keeps you close to me.” He offers me another shaky smile as I wrap my arms around his middle. “They’re going to come looking for us soon. We have to get back out there.”

“Yeah, okay,” he whispers, softly kissing me once more as he traces his fingers over the chains on his neck. He separates himself from me and smooths his hair, flashing me another gentle smile before his mask slides into place. My heart cracks again as hard lines replace all that sweetness, and I follow him out, avoiding Damien’s eyes like the plague.

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Micah

Xalreth is ignoring me, and I'm pissy.

After a lifetime of feeling unseen, one would think I'd be used to it. But his silence holds a different weight.

Wrapped in a silk robe, I grip the ends of the belt and fidget with them as I stare down at my exposed legs. Bitterness builds in my throat, beyond my control. For two hours, I've lounged in nothing other than this thin material, and Xalreth has paid me no mind. Nose stuck in a pile of papers, he's barely looked my direction. He got up and walked past me a few minutes ago without so much as a glance, shutting himself in the bathroom.

He never goes this long without paying attention to me, and a sinking dread settles in my stomach as I wonder if he's finally done with me.

Please don't let him be done with me.

I recognize I'm in too deep. The way I want him is self-destructive, but I'm doing nothing to fight it. This desperate, drowning pull to be with him, no matter the consequences.

And there will be consequences.

There always are.

“I believe my costume is perfect,” Xalreth announces from his bathroom.

So that’s what’s been more interesting than me. Fucking clothes . Defiantly, I flip my hair over my shoulder even though he can’t see me, staring at the bedspread and trying not to let his distraction bother me. “Oh?” I call back, forcing myself to pay attention to the conversation. “That’s... great.”

“Don’t you want to see it?”

Another quiet sigh leaves me as I cross my arms over my chest, biting my lip as I fight my bad mood. One hand reaches up to trace the edges of the chain around my neck. In the week since he’s given it to me, it’s become a constant comfort—something to ground me when life gets overwhelming.

I realize I never answered him and shake my head to myself. “Yes, of course.”

“Don’t sound so excited,” he mutters, and I force myself to push out of this defeatist attitude that’s weighing me down.

“I’m sorry, of course I want to see it.”

“Hmm, less enthusiastic than what I’d prefer, but I can work with it.” The hinges of the door give the tiniest squeak as he pulls it open, and I can’t help how my jaw drops as he steps into the bedroom. “Well? What do you think?”

Black satin covers his torso, thin boning tucked underneath blood-red strips of material. The corset ends just below his nipples and is fastened so tight that his well-defined pecs bulge over the top.

A tiny pair of leather shorts clings to his body like a second skin, hugging his thick thighs while showing a perfect outline of his cock. Combat boots lace up his shins.

They shouldn't work with the rest of the outfit, but holy fuck, they do.

"Did I make you speechless?" he teases with a playful grin as he pulls something from behind his back, and I choke on a laugh as he puts the rabbit ears on his head.

"I thought we determined the Playboy Bunny wasn't tied to Easter?" He tilts his head, those black eyes assessing me like only he can.

"Something isn't right," he murmurs as he steps in front of me, kneeling so we're eye-to-eye. "You're off."

"I'm fine. Everything is better now." I try to reel him in for a kiss, but he pulls away, unconvinced.

"Which means it wasn't better before." My eyes dart aside, incapable of even the smallest white lie with him. He grabs the edges of my robe, rubbing the delicate material between his fingers. "Tell me what's wrong. You don't get to be this pretty and look so sad. It isn't fair to the rest of us, angel."

My pulse speeds up, and Xalreth doesn't miss it. He leans in and presses a kiss to my neck, and I cave at the gesture. "You've been ignoring me." He opens his mouth to argue, then seems to think twice about it, snapping it closed. "I don't mean... you don't need to..." A frustrated huff leaves me as I take a breath and try again. "My insecurities aren't your responsibility. You haven't done anything wrong, I'm just being needy."

"You're always needy," he says with a soft laugh. "It's one of the things I love about you."

If I thought my pulse was racing before, it's nothing compared to how it thunders in my chest now. But I remind myself that it's only a phrase, and he doesn't mean it

how my reckless brain is trying to interpret it. “I’m sorry,” I mutter, but he catches my chin and doesn’t allow me to look away.

“You’re right. I’ve been distracted today, and I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings. Forgive me?”

“Of course,” I breathe, and his smile is sweet as he guides me in for another kiss. It starts as nothing more than a peck, but I catch him by the neck as he pulls away and our eyes lock. His lips crash back into mine, and he sucks my bottom lip between his before he thrusts his tongue into my mouth. He pushes my shoulders, and I let out a surprised gasp as I fall back on the bed.

He stands before me, running his palms over the satin of his corset. “I think I know something that will cheer you up.”

“And what is that, darling?” I ask with a grin. My smile morphs into an open-mouthed gawk as he turns. “Is that... is that a tail?!” I erupt in a fit of laughter as he shakes his ass at me, the white puff of cotton dancing back and forth. He faces me again as I laugh so hard I snort, and both of us freeze. We stare at each other, wide-eyed, before we laugh even harder.

My cheeks ache from laughing as I let my head fall onto the bed, feeling the dip in the mattress as Xalreth climbs on to join me.

“God, you’re beautiful,” he whispers, and a painful tightness constricts my chest as my smile fades. Hot, emotional tears burn behind my eyes, but not even my embarrassment can make me break his stare as he crawls across the bed to me. “How did I spend all those years in your presence and never notice?”

“All Archangels are beautiful,” I say with a weak attempt at a grin, but he shakes his head as he grabs onto my robe, clutching the silk.

“Yeah, but not like this. Not like you . They don’t make the sun jealous when they smile.” My bottom lip wobbles as he climbs over me, tracing over my lips as I pucker them and catch the pad of his thumb. “I wish you’d smile more, angel.” His lips meet mine in a tender kiss, and I fight to keep my emotions level. “I wish you would be happy.”

“You make me happy,” I whisper, and he pulls back and pushes our foreheads together as his deft fingers work the tie of my robe apart. The material falls aside, and he sits up, letting his eyes rake up my naked body.

“Do you want to be unlocked tonight?”

“No,” I say without hesitation, my fingertips exploring the taut satin that covers his stomach. The gold chain that holds my key hangs freely, and I trace its shape before moving my hand lower. His cock is rock hard, tucked inside that skintight fabric, and I run my finger along its outline, too.

“Own me tonight, Xal.”

“Just tonight?” His brow arches as he hooks my knees and pushes my legs back, resting his hips against my ass. “You belong to me, Micah. I own you every night.”

“So own me. Make me yours.” He takes a deep, shuddering breath as he kisses me, his erection nestled perfectly between my cheeks. If he pushed his shorts aside, he could slip his cock free and fuck me senseless, just like this. The idea is so appealing that I reach down, ready to spear myself on him until I’m crying.

But of course, he has other plans.

He catches my wrist with a scolding click of his tongue. “Get on the floor and on your knees.” My robe billows as I climb off the bed, but since he didn’t tell me to

remove it, I leave it on and kneel on the carpet.

His eyes move to my thighs with a satisfied smile. “How many times have I made you come now?” I glance at the collection of tally marks drawn on my upper legs. Every time I shower and the ink fades, he draws them again.

“Thirty-three,” I say as he walks to the dresser, his thick muscles rolling under his outfit. What should look ridiculous fits him like a dream, accentuating his trim waist and bulky upper body. The laces of the corset are drawn tighter at the bottom but loosen closer to the top, no doubt needing room to fit his expansive chest.

He takes his time, letting me take my fill of watching him, and I feel myself leaking pre-cum as I squirm. Finally, he pulls something out of a tiny bag and returns to where I kneel.

“Thirty-three, huh? That doesn’t give you much opportunity to get this right.” He puts two fingers under my chin and tilts my face to look at him as he twists a long, braided, golden chain around his hands. “If you want on the bed, you have to earn it.”

“Earn it how?”

His fingers trail down to my neck, and there’s a quiet click before he backs up a step and tugs the leash. It pulls on my collar and my palms smack onto the ground as I’m thrown off balance. “Look at you, so pretty crawling for me.” He yanks the chain a second time and I follow, letting him lead me until I’m directly beneath him. My eyes move up his body, memorizing every dip and curve of his muscles as I sit back on my feet.

“You have to add another tally mark to my side.” He must see the smugness on my face, because he gives a dark chuckle and shakes his head. “It’s not going to be that easy. You only have thirty-three chances to get it done.”

“Chances?” I stare up at him in question.

He nods as he takes a step closer, his bulge pressing against my lips through the material of his shorts. I open my mouth, dragging them along his erection as he stares. A low hum rumbles from his throat as he pulls his cock free, gripping it at the base and moving towards my lips. “Your mouth is going to be occupied, angel. If you need to stop, tap my leg twice. Okay?”

“Yeah,” I say as I lick my lips, my body pulsing in anticipation. “Okay.”

“Perfect,” he whispers as he hooks my teeth and tugs, forcing me to open wider. Tightening his grip on the leash, he yanks me towards him and his cock drives into my mouth, all the way to the back of my throat. I gag around him as he holds me there, fighting my reflexes as I cough. Spit webs between us as he withdraws and smirks, but I see the care behind it as he makes sure I’m on board.

“That’s one.” My eyes widen as he jerks me forward again, blocking my windpipe with his cock as my skin flushes deeper. “Two,” he says, and I fight to catch suction on him as he pulls out. Realization hits me as my gaze sweeps back up to his.

“Now you’re getting it,” he murmurs, swiping at the spit leaking from my mouth as he slowly fucks my face. Each thrust inside me is met with the tug of the lead, and I drag my tongue and tighten my lips as the numbers tick away. By the count of sixteen, I’m delirious with need.

Xal’s head tilts with a predatorial grin. He hooks a foot between my legs, tapping my balls with the toe of his boot. A loud moan erupts around his cock as he uses the leash to position me. “Go ahead, dog. Fuck my boot like you’re in heat. We both know you want to.”

My fingers curl into the waist of his shorts, and he shoots me a warning glare. But I

don't tug on him or move his body, don't take any control back, I just hold on. I hold on for dear fucking life as he fucks my mouth, and I thrust against his leg. My eyes close as the sensations overtake me, and I'm hovering, weightless and hazy, as I focus on them.

The slick slide of his cock against my lips and tongue.

The drip of spit over my chin, and the rumble of my groans caught in my throat.

The drag of my body against his boot, and the bump of the cage wires along the laces.

"Twenty-two," he says, voice giving a clear warning, and I whine as I work harder to earn my reward. He flexes his foot, and his toe nudges my plug. "God, you really are a cock slut, aren't you?" He taps me with his boot again, and I nod with my mouth full of him. My fingers clench around the fabric of his shorts as I stare up his frame, thrusting against him.

"Are you about to come just from being used?" I gag as he drives forward, nodding desperately as tears slip down my cheeks. "Time is running out, angel."

My entire body is coiled tight as I grind against him, every thrust bringing me closer. The tension is unbearable. It's delicious, and painful, and begging me to let go. When he reaches thirty-one, I sob as all that built-up pressure releases. White streams of my release shoot from my cage as I come with his cock down my throat. Pulse after pulse dirties his boot, dripping down the leather and laces as my body trembles.

"Thirty-three," he says, and slips out of my mouth as I suck in a loud breath. My lips are slick and swollen, and my jaw aches from the stretch. "You were so close, Micah, but you were too busy humping my leg to get me off, weren't you?"

"Yes." My voice is wrecked and raspy, and he fucking purrs as he presses his foot

against my chest and kicks me onto my back. He stands over me with his cum-slicked boot on my sternum, staring down as he strokes himself.

“Should make you clean it off, shouldn’t I?” My body still pulses with the aftershocks of my release as I stare at his giant hand shuttling over his cock. “Would you enjoy that? Would my filthy angel like to lick my boot?”

“Please,” I whimper, and he throws his head back with a loud moan. Just when I think he’s about to come all over me, he releases himself and removes his foot. He pulls on the leash, and my abs contract as my torso lifts off the ground.

Taking a few backward steps, he keeps tugging until I’m forced onto my hands and knees once more, crawling towards him. “What do you think everyone would do if they knew the big and mighty Micah was wearing sores onto his knees to pleasure me?”

When I’m close enough to stare down at his boot, his hand clamps around the back of my neck. “Go on, angel.” I drop to my elbows with a whimper and lick the leather, lapping up my cum. He releases me as I sit up, showing him my tongue.

“Such a good boy,” he murmurs. “Swallow it for me now.” He watches my throat bob, then leans forward, tipping my chin up as he presses an impossibly soft kiss on my lips. “Perhaps I’ll keep you leashed forever. Never allow you to leave my side again.”

“Does that mean you’ll keep me?” I ask, and he smiles as he crouches in front of me.

“I already told you, didn’t I? You belong to me.” My eyes sting as I nod, blinking to keep the tears at bay. He uncaps his marker and makes a fresh tally on my thigh. “Well, angel, the good news is that you get to count to thirty-four this time.”

He turns and grabs something else from the desktop that I can't see. Gentle fingers curl around my chin and he pops my lips apart, swiping a tube of cherry-flavored balm across them. The tears I'd been fighting spring forward, pooling in my eyes as the tiniest frown pulls on Xalreth's mouth.

Carefully, he coats my lips as a single tear slips free, streaking down my cheek. He swipes a finger over the droplet and then over my glossy mouth, mixing the salt with the artificial cherry flavor. "Someone has to take care of you. I can't be breaking my favorite toy, now can I?"

Xalreth

I didn't make it to thirty-four.

Micah is a fucking drug—how his mouth slacks and his eyes squeeze closed, the cording of the tendons in his neck and all those delicious sounds. The desperate way his muscles flex as he takes his pleasure.

I want to bottle it up, boil it down and inject it straight into my veins.

It was a miracle I didn't blow when he did. The second round, any battered threads holding my discipline in place were severed, and I took . We barely made it into the teens before I'd had enough and poured myself into his throat. That was almost two hours ago, and now we're both covered in sweat and cum.

His hair is tousled and tangled from my hands, falling down his back as he holds onto the headboard. The muscles in his shoulders and back flex every time I thrust into him, and I stare as a bead of sweat drips along his spine.

“Do you have one more in you, angel?” I pant as I jerk on his leash. It forces his head against my shoulder and arches his body in a way that has me thrusting against his prostate. His voice is hoarse as he calls out, raspy from the assault of my cock down his throat and the nonstop moans I've wrenched from him.

My balls ache from the number of orgasms he's coaxed from me tonight, but I can't fucking satisfy this addiction to him. Just one more , I keep telling myself, but that one more has turned into three more, and still, it isn't enough.

His head lolls against me, his eyes locked on mine as I roll my hips. I grip the headboard, my hands on either side of his as my arms cage him. My name leaves him as a whimper and I'd sacrifice my dying breath to hear the desperate way he says it again.

This isn't fucking.

It's intimate and soul-deep, and filled with something that splits my ribcage right open as I try to bury myself even deeper inside him. "Come on, angel," I murmur. "Give me more."

Give me everything.

"Can't," he breathes, his eyes fluttering closed.

"Micah, I own you tonight. You belong to me, so you do what I tell you to. Go on, beautiful, you can do it. Let me have what I want, and I'll let you rest." My lips find his, and even though it's messy and clumsy at this angle, a contented sigh pushes from his nose as our tongues move together. I shift from his mouth and kiss along his neck, and then over the root of his wings. The moment my mouth closes over the raised nub, he moans louder.

"Xal," he gasps as I latch on, letting my teeth graze the sensitive skin. "Xal... fuck, Xal..." His hips roll faster as I press my thumb into the other side and rub, and he sobs as he clenches around me. He comes on an exhausted cry, and I stop holding back.

"Fuck, that's it," I moan. "You're so perfect, coming on my cock every time I ask you to. Such a good fucking boy." Every overwhelming sensation floods me at once, and I'm free-falling as I press him against the headboard. A few more thrusts and I grip the wood so hard my knuckles bleach, bottomed out inside him as the pressure

erupts.

My entire body pulses as I come, drained to the point my release is almost painful. I'm tiptoeing that line between pleasure and pain, riding the high only he can offer.

When the waves subside, my head sags forward, and I kiss a weak trail along his shoulder. I exhale a heavy, contented sigh as I slip out of him. "We need to get you clean," I murmur, and he nods, but neither of us attempts to move. My arms wrap around his torso, one hand landing on his abdomen while the other rests above his heart, feeling the erratic beat underneath my palm.

"I want you," he whispers, so quiet I barely hear it over the thud of my own heart in my ears.

"You've just had me... in a variety of ways," I tease, and he nods with a small laugh. He's distracted, though I don't push him for more.

It takes immense effort to pry myself away from him, stealing one last look at his exhausted form as he slumps against the headboard. He's a work of art, a masterpiece carved from marble, with his long legs tucked underneath him and his back rising with his steady breaths. I've never seen anything more beautiful.

I walk into my bathroom and twist the tap to fill the bathtub, setting the temperature before I return to him. Micah is sprawled out on my bed, eyes closed and hair fanned out in a halo around his head. His body is slick with sweat, and it highlights the natural opalescent sheen to his skin. I could wake up to him right there every morning and never tire of it, I think, and I don't know what terrifies me more—the thought, or that it doesn't scare me like it should.

The key to his cage hangs around my neck, and I take it in my fingers as I sink my knees onto the mattress and lean forward. "What are you doing?" he murmurs, his

heavy eyes fluttering open as I remove the cage and sit it aside. Even soft, he's enormous, and after being locked up for so long, he's extra sensitive.

My fingertips drift up the creases of his thighs, and he squirms under my touch. When my palm drags along the length of his thickening cock, he whines and lifts his hips, rocking against my hand.

“Have you ever been worshipped, Micah? Been the center of someone's devotion?” I take him in my mouth, swirling my tongue around his head before dipping it into his slit.

“No,” he whispers, and my eyes lock with his as I draw him in deeper. “ Fuck, that feels good.” His hips roll tentatively, his cock growing harder as my palms coast over his thighs.

I slide my mouth along his cock as it fills, and it takes no time until he's fully hard. His abdomen muscles flex and his hips lift as he fucks into my mouth. Greedy angel wants to rush, but I pin him to the bed and force him to move at my pace.

One hand fists the sheets, while the other covers his face, as he slowly moves in and out of my mouth. His lips are wide open as a string of the most incredible noises leave his throat.

I refuse to speed up, sucking his cock reverently as I show him what it means to be worshipped. What it's like to be the center of someone's religion—the idol they're glad to kneel before.

My hands caress his legs and hips, cupping and rolling his balls, and I slip a finger inside his hole that's still slick with my release. Every ounce of my focus is dedicated to his pleasure, and I know my angel by now.

He's barely hanging on.

My name becomes a whispered chant as his thrusts get faster, and I double my efforts. His hand slams down and cups the back of my head as he loses himself in the sensations. I wrap my fingers around him and stroke as we pick up speed, and his moans turn into shouts that I'm sure penetrate the walls.

The muscles at the base of his dick throb, and his spine bows off the bed as his whole body stiffens. He cries out as I take him as deep as I can, my lips pulled tight around his cock as it pulses. Hot, thick jets of his release pump into the back of my mouth, and I jerk him and suck until his legs quake and he collapses onto the mattress.

"I need to repent after that."

"It feels like I should throw an amen in there," I tease as I pull off him, and he chuckles along with me.

"That was incredible." A blissed-out smile spreads over his lips, and he's more relaxed than I've ever seen him.

"Come on." I hover over him and unhook the leash, pressing a soft kiss on his mouth. "Let's get you in the bath."

"Don't I need to..." His gaze moves down to my groin, and it breaks my heart that he assumes this is transactional. That I might require payment.

"This was about you," I say, and he knits his eyebrows as another wave of sadness hits me. If he won't listen to my words, I'll have to prove it to him. But as I glance into his vulnerable eyes, I know that's easier said than done.

I scoop him into my arms, grinning when he gasps and gapes at me. "Never been

carried, angel?”

“Well, no,” he sputters, and I laugh.

“Your body just went through a lot, and I have to make sure you take care of yourself.”

“Why?”

If my heart could fall right out of my chest, that question would’ve given it the final shove. “Why should you take care of yourself?” I repeat, and he gives me a timid nod. “Because you belong to me, and I protect what’s mine.” He groans as I place him inside the tub and the hot water envelopes him.

Pushing his hair back, I see the insecurity in his bright eyes as they lock with my dark ones. The disbelief that my words are true. “And because you are important, Micah. Not just to me.”

“Everyone hates me,” he mutters, closing his eyes again as the shimmery locks of his white hair float in the rising water. “Why don’t you?”

Because I love you. The truth of it hits me like a physical blow—a clamp on my chest that compresses until I’m afraid the words might bleed right out of me.

But because I am a coward, I don’t let them find the light of day. Instead, I nudge him to scoot forward, and I climb in behind him as he leans back against my chest. Even with the size of the tub, it’s crowded with both of us, but it doesn’t bother me as I lift my knees to make room.

“They don’t know you like I do,” I finally say, and he sighs as I curl my arms around his chest, pressing a kiss against his hair. “And that’s their loss.”

Xalreth

Micah stands to the side as I change, chewing on his lip as he stares out the window. Tensions have been high between us for the past few days, ever since the night in the tub. The realization of the extent of my feelings left me reeling, and I've been closed off and flighty.

He hasn't commented on my shift in mood. He's simply backed away and given me space to deal with my head. But where he used to shine like the sun when it was just the two of us, now his light has dimmed.

It's my fault, and I hate myself for causing it.

My irritation is with myself, but I can't seem to let go of it. Damien's insistent summons aren't helping. He's reached out at least twice a day since that afternoon at the meeting, even arriving at my apartment unannounced. I've dodged him so far, but it can only last for so long. He'll catch me eventually, and I have no idea what to say to him.

"You're certain we've got the suit right this time?" My tone is snippy, and I'm immediately hit with a punch of guilt at my temper, but I can't stop myself from being short with him. "This isn't some human fetish that we haven't discovered?" Micah hesitates, and I throw my hand against his abdomen. "Tell me you don't have me in yet another human sex suit?"

"There... may have been a few mentions of the concept of 'furries.'"

“What the fuck is a furry , Micah?”

“Well, from what I understand, it’s a mating ritual where humans dress up in... outfits.”

“What kind of outfits?” I ask through gritted teeth, and he flinches as he gestures up and down my body.

“This kind. But I’ve been assured it’s very niche, and this particular outfit is widely recognized as being tied to the Easter Bunny.” I heave a long, loud exhale as I stare down at my costume. It’s a white, furry suit with a pastel pink oval sewn for the stomach, and I rest the oversized head against my hip. I won’t be wearing the head. Instead, I’ll rely on Micah’s magic to illusion me to take on its appearance.

“I cannot believe I ever agreed to this,” I mutter under my breath.

“Oh, stop being a baby,” Micah snaps, rightfully sick of my temper. “Your face is going to be disguised by my glamour. No one will even know it’s you.”

“Why don’t you do it then?”

“Fine! Give me the suit.” He holds his hands out towards me, and I scoff, rolling my eyes as I thrust the giant rabbit head against his chest.

“Like the pretty princess would ever risk being seen in this getup? Please, Micah, you’re far too arrogant for that. No, you’d rather send your fucking errand boy to do the things that you consider to be beneath you.” As soon as the words are out of my mouth, I know I’ve fucked up.

“That’s really your opinion of me? I thought...” A flash of pain crosses his expression before he becomes stony faced again, sneering at me in a way that’s both

familiar and foreign. “Never mind. Come on, errand boy. Let’s move along and get this done, then.”

I hate how he has closed himself off to me, no matter how much I deserve it. The face he’s wearing right now isn’t my Micah—it’s the one he shows everyone else.

“Fuck, Micah—”

“Are we doing this or not?” Demons don’t often feel regret. We are selfish creatures by nature, but as I hear the hurt in his tone and watch him rebuild those walls that I’ve spent weeks demolishing, a crippling wave of it slices through me.

Apprehension lines his face, and he crosses his arms as I step closer. I reach out, holding on to his forearm. “I’m sorry... I’m being an ass.”

“Thanks, I’ve noticed,” he snaps, and jerks out of my grasp.

My eyes squeeze closed as I summon patience. Just because I’m the one to blame for the argument doesn’t change my basal nature. It’s difficult to defy my instincts, but I force myself to remain calm. “That’s fair. I deserve that. Once we’re finished with today’s work, will you let me make it up to you?”

“Make what up to me?”

“This,” I gesture between us. “All of this. How tense I’ve made things the past few days.” His eyes are guarded as they meet mine. “Please, angel.”

“What have I done to ruin us?” The quiet question might as well have been shouted with the way it hurts, and he stares at the wall so hard I’m surprised he doesn’t bore through it.

“You haven’t done anything,” I insist, but he shakes his head.

“Then why have you pushed me away?”

“Because I’m a fool.” I tentatively reach up and tuck his hair behind his ear, and his eyes finally return to mine. I spot the exact moment he caves.

“It is very hard to take you seriously when you’re dressed in that,” he scoffs, but I catch the slight tick to his lips. I offer him an apologetic grimace, taking the small concession he’s offering. “Are you ready, darling?” The rarely used pet name kicks me in the chest again, and I squeeze his arm before releasing him.

“For you to turn me into a giant rabbit? Sure. Ready as I will ever be.” He steps closer, giving me a strained smile as he leans in and presses the tiniest kiss to my lips. Magic tingles across my skin, and his expression twists to mild horror as he stares at me.

“Dear God, it’s ghastly. Straight out of my nightmares.”

“I’m getting an idea for a new torture center in Hell.” I grin as he grips me with pinched fingers, like he’s disgusted to come into contact with my body as he leads me to the mirror. The face that is reflected at me is horrific—a disproportionally giant bunny head with enormous, cartoonish eyes, a pink nose and whiskers, two buck teeth, and fuzzy, floppy ears.

“What the actual fuck is the matter with humans?” I ask and he just shakes his head, a shiver working his spine. “I’m not alone in saying this is batshit crazy, right?”

“Come on, let’s get this over with.”

“You’ll stay with me?”

“I’ll always stay with you, Xal,” he says, before his cheeks flush and his gaze darts away. “What I mean is, of course I’ll be there... for support.” Still dodging my eyes, he hands me the colossal rainbow basket. Colorful eggs fill it to the brim—plastic ones, not real ones.

Believe it or not, we did learn a thing or two from our mishaps.

The basket weighs a ton as I take it from him, and he loops his arm through mine and waits. Once I nod to confirm I’m ready, he pops us into the outskirts of an enormous park. Meet The Easter Bunny is printed on a large banner at the entrance, and I raise a brow at Micah.

He shrugs. “I thought it was a good idea to throw some marketing out into the city to gather a larger crowd.”

“Well, mission fucking accomplished,” I mutter, as I stare at the masses swarming the park. A heavy, grey sky hangs above, but the air is surprisingly warm for early April, and people are strolling about, enjoying the mild weather. “Jesus Christ, I don’t think a demon has ever been in the presence of this many children.”

“Do try not to corrupt them. Watch your mouth and mind your language. You’re on the job, not gallivanting around Hell.”

There’s my pompous prince. I make sure he’s looking at me before I give an obnoxious roll of my eyes. “Alright, boss. Where do you want me?”

Micah leads me towards a pavilion, and kids screech and shriek as they spot me. “The eggs,” he hisses, and I turn to him with my brows drawn.

“What?”

“The eggs! You need to hide the eggs!” As amusing as it is to observe him simultaneously try to scold me and smile at the humans, my annoyance flares.

“They should’ve been hidden already! If I hide them now, they can literally just watch me. It’ll be the worst egg hunt in history, because they’ll know exactly where they are.” He scowls, which means he one hundred percent hadn’t considered that, but is too proud to admit it.

“Fuck,” I groan, dragging my hand over my face. “Okay, new plan. Are there limits to your magic here?”

“Some. What do you need me to do?”

“Can you hide these with your powers?” I gesture towards the basket, and he cocks his head curiously, but nods. “Alright, follow my lead.”

We walk underneath the shadows of the pavilion. For a moment, I consider walking away and just forgetting any of this ever happened, but then I catch Micah’s eyes.

“Goddamn it, I’m so fucked,” I mutter, and I climb on top of a table.

“Attention!” Heads whip in my direction as the white noise of indistinct conversations fades to a dull murmur. “Thank you all for coming to our first official egg hunt. I’d like to take a moment to introduce myself... I am the Easter Bunny!”

Fucking crickets .

The crowd is completely silent, until a guy whispers, “I chased a guy in a BDSM bodysuit a few weeks ago that claimed the same thing,” and the other man beside him chuckles.

“The Easter Bunny isn’t real,” a kid shouts, and I narrow my eyes at the dirt-smudged smirking preteen.

“Yeah!” another snot-nosed child adds, and a chorus of them yells their agreement. My eye twitches at the sound.

Why did I agree to this, again?

“Is that so?” I ask, waiting for the devil spawns to get quiet. “Well, if I’m not real, then how do I do... this ?” I glance at Micah as I snap my fingers, and the eggs disappear from the basket.

Gasps and murmurs ring out from the crowd as I gesture towards the greenery of the park, the flowers just beginning their blooms. “Go on, then. The hunt is on!”

Children scatter and parents eyeball us warily, but soon, we’re alone in the pavilion other than a few loitering under the shade. “That was smart thinking.” Micah crosses his arms, watching the kids run and laugh as they collect the hidden eggs.

“I have my moments.”

“You have more than your moments, Xal,” he says as he reaches for me, but when my eyes meet his, he cringes and pulls away. “Nope... nope, sorry. I cannot look at you without this visceral fear telling me to flee. Coming from an Archangel, that is really saying something.”

Kids run and play as the sun peaks through the clouds, and soon many of them are returning to the picnic area to crack open their finds. Micah has such a look of pride on his face that I can’t bear to remind him that to these people, I am nothing more than another shmuck in a rabbit costume. I’m just one more person pretending to be something I’m not.

“Excuse me, could we get a picture?” a woman asks, and I turn to see her kid standing beside her with chocolate smears on his mouth and a runny nose.

“Ugh—”

“Of course!” Micah shouts over me, and I glare at him before clearing my throat and forcing a smile. Regretting every decision I’ve made in life that brought me to this point, I drop onto a bench and let the snot-nosed child scramble into my lap. To my absolute horror, a line of children forms.

One after another, the squirmy, sweaty little shits climb onto my leg while their parents snap pictures. They coo about how their overgrown sperm are so cute and being so good.

Wish someone would compliment me for eating candy and doing literally nothing.

My cheeks ache from the fake smile plastered across my lips when a young girl approaches with tears running down her face. “He’s scary,” she whines, and for the love of everything good in this universe, I do not want that weeping monstrosity anywhere close to me.

“She doesn’t have to—” I start, but her mother hooks under her arms and plops her into my lap as the child screeches unholy sounds into my ear.

“It’s just a costume,” the woman says in a sugary sweet tone. Despite the banshee-like shrieks and vibrant crimson hue of her child’s terrified face, she snaps photo after photo. Heaven for-fucking-bid her hellspawn’s tantrum deter from her Pinterest board. No better way to show you’re a great mommy than lifelong mental trauma, after all.

Micah steps over with a broad smile. “On the contrary, this is the real Easter Bunny.”

The child's screams climb in volume as I glare at him, and the mother scoffs loudly at both of us.

"Oh, now, now, boys, don't be silly. In our house, we practice truthful parenting. We don't lie to sweet Gracelyn, even about things like holidays." Before I register what she's doing, the lady walks over and grips me by the sides of my face, yanking with all her might. "Look, sweetie, it's just... a... costume ," she grunts as she pulls harder, dragging her fingers along my neck as she searches for a seam.

"Stop that," I growl, yanking my head back, but she holds on as her acrylic nails dig into my neck and make me hiss.

"Just... be still and let me take it off! Why are you... fighting me?"

She tugs once more and the last thread of my patience snaps. "Stupid human, I said stop that ." The demonic distortion of my voice slips free as I bare my teeth, and Micah's eyes get cartoonishly wide as the woman freezes. The child's screaming comes to a sudden halt that leaves the silence roaring in my ears, and every single eye in the park lands on me.

It's quiet for a long stretch before the mother shrieks at the top of her lungs. She snatches her child off my lap, sprinting away as the girl continues to stare at me with a thousand-yard-stare.

"Her therapy sessions are not my fault!" I bellow after the fleeing woman.

"Teeth!" Micah whisper-shouts, rushing to put his hands in front of my mouth. "Your temper broke my fucking glamour!"

It's pandemonium as colorful baskets and eggs fly. The thunder of feet sounds like a stampede as the humans dart every which way, crashing into each other and shouting

as they sprint. More than a few are sobbing as they run, and not just the children.

Micah and I watch the chaos in morbid fascination as they disappear, and soon we're alone, surrounded by the rainbow confetti of Easter remnants.

"So, that happened," I finally say, but Micah is silent beside me. "Do you think it was the head? Because... yeah. I'm pretty sure that was the final straw. Or the voice... probably shouldn't have done that." My attempt to cheer him up fails, because he just crosses his arms and gazes into the distance.

"Hey..." I take a step towards him and grab his hand. "Admittedly, that could've gone better, but on the bright side, we learned an important lesson."

"Yes, we did," Micah finally whispers. Disappointment coats him like oil, oozing down his body as he seems to shrink. The mess disappears with a distracted wave of his hand, and then the world fades around us without warning.

My brows draw as we arrive outside my building. I glance at the foot traffic who've done a double take at us standing here, but my attention is locked on him. Ever since the very first time he came inside with me, he's teleported us straight into my home. Not outside, on the streets.

Our glamour has vanished, but his face isn't right. It's skewed and off-kilter, and wrong. "Micah?"

He drops my hand and takes a step back. "This was a mistake."

The first crack in my heart splinters right down the middle as I stare at his impassive face. "I'm going to need more than that vague answer. What do you mean by that? What's a mistake?"

“This... all of this. Let the humans have their mascots and make-believe idols. It was stupid of me to think I could do this.”

“But—”

“No, Xalreth,” he snarls, backing up one more step when I reach for him, and a hateful laugh rolls from his mouth. “You were right from the start. This was nothing more than a power grab by an Angel who hasn’t been relevant in centuries. Everyone knew it from the very beginning. You all fucking warned me, and I was too stubborn to listen.” Another rough laugh leaves him as he glances up towards the sky. “Pathetic. All this time, they’ve been telling me how worthless I am, and I was so fucking determined to prove them wrong that I didn’t stop to consider they might be right.”

“Don’t say that,” I snap as I lunge for him, but his power pins me in place. “So you had an idea that didn’t pan out? It happens to everyone. Failure doesn’t mean you’re worthless. Are you stubborn? Yes. Bullheaded as fuck, absolutely. But not—”

“Just stop,” he pleads. “Don’t placate me like I’m a child that needs coddling.”

“That’s not what I’m doing. I get it. I understand that you’ve never been allowed to fail—”

“Stop using that word!” he bellows, his eyes glowing with their ethereal power.

“No!” I shout back, struggling against the invisible restraints that hold me in place. “You need to fucking hear it, Micah. You need to accept that you can’t keep living your life with these unrealistic expectations of yourself. Nobody expects you to be perfect.”

“Everybody expects me to be perfect!” The tendons in his neck pull taut as that

storm in his eyes grows more dangerous than I've ever seen it, crackling and swirling. "The first sign of weakness, of a mistake, and they all attack. And I've taken it my whole fucking life, Xal. Over and over, I've taken it..." He stops and takes a few panting breaths in as his shoulders slouch. "I can't take anymore," he finally whispers, his eyes closing as his head droops.

He reaches around the back of his neck with shaky hands. "I cannot be what you need me to be. If I am destined to be a disappointment, I refuse to disappoint you ." That single crack running through my heart spiderwebs and spreads as I watch the gold chain of his choker loosen against his shimmering skin.

"Micah—" My voice cracks and he closes his eyes as he extends his hand, the necklace dangling from it. "You're being rash. Put it back on."

"I don't deserve you," he whispers, and I snarl as he shakes his fist at me, urging me to take it like he can't stand to hold on to it for a second longer. I snatch the chains from him and shove him against the wall.

"That's not your fucking decision to make." A few heads turn our way, and something shifts on Micah's face as he senses their attention. "You don't have the right to tell me how to feel about you. Now, if you need time to deal with this, I will give it to you, but you do not get to walk away from me. Not after everything."

"Why do you even want me, Xal? Where do you see this going between us? God, they all called it... they recognize what I was too afraid to admit. A washed-up, pitiful fucking excuse of an Angel. It's all I am, Xal. Is that all I'm ever going to be?" His eyes are wild as they bore into mine, dilated and storming and goddamned heartbreaking as he fists my shirt. "Tell me what you want from me, please ."

" Angel ," I whisper, and the words are right there.

Right fucking there, on the edge of my lips, slicing at my tongue.

But I hesitate, and that hesitation comes with a cost.

Acceptance settles over his expression, and the tiny smile he offers me splinters what's left of my heart. "It's okay, darling." His hands fall to his side, though the storm in his eyes tells me he's barely holding himself together. His eyes close again as his head thunks against the wall. "It's all going to be okay. I only wish we'd taken the time to dance. Then at least I would've had that to hold onto."

Before I can say a word to stop him, he disappears.

He leaves me, standing there clutching the chains that marked him as mine, and they might as well be an anchor with how they weigh me down. My fist squeezes around the delicate strands as I roar, and I slam it into the stone of the building so hard the skin on my knuckles splits and bleeds.

But I don't stop.

I drive my hand into the wall.

Over and over and fucking over again, until the blood pours into my palm and coats the last piece of Micah I have left.

Micah

“Hold on a goddamned second. Let me make sure I understand precisely what you’re saying.” Niklaus pinches the bridge of his nose and squeezes his eyes shut. “After you’ve called all these meetings and wasted so much of our time... after we told you repeatedly what a shitty idea this was and you refused to listen...now you have decided to pull the plug on the whole thing? Now?! ”

“Yes,” I say, my voice coming out so weak that I have to clear my throat. “The project has been cancelled.” I take a shaky breath to steady myself, but the calmer I appear, the angrier they become. They glare at me as I stare at the top of the podium, their scorn cutting through me like daggers.

Their insults carve themselves into my skin.

Pathetic.

Pitiful.

Disgrace.

I’m a mess. My body is exhausted, and my thoughts are in shambles. No matter what I do or how I try to distract myself, the betrayal on Xalreth’s face is branded into my mind. The agony he projected as I left him standing outside his building, making no effort to hide how much I’d hurt him. Mere hours after swearing I’d stay by his side, I broke my promise.

He hates me now, and he has every right.

Each hour has been a battle against the desperate need to return, to fall at his feet and plead for forgiveness. Beg him to take me back in any capacity. I want to... God knows I do. But in the time we've spent together, I've realized a few very important things about the demon.

Despite how hard he works to project his cocky, devil-may-care facade, he isn't selfish. Not like I am—even if he does everything in his power to hide that fact. This fear of failure doesn't cripple him. He doesn't self-sabotage because it's easier to be alone than it is to be afraid.

No, he's a far better man than I am, and if I begged, he'd take me back. He'd take me back for no other reason than he wanted to make me happy again. I'd spend the rest of my life walking on eggshells, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Waiting for him to realize he's better off without me.

"If you had listened to a single other person's input from the beginning, we wouldn't be sitting here now looking like fools," Niklaus continues.

"No one looks like a fool—" I start, but Niklaus interrupts me with a snort.

"Bullshit, Micah. You're standing up there as the textbook definition of one."

My gaze falls to the podium again, searching for the resolve to defend myself against his words, but finding nothing. My will to fight is gone. "Oh, but Micah is so good at looking like a fool," Damien purrs as he strokes Niklaus's beard. I glance up at the same time he does, and we lock eyes as he bares his teeth in a threatening smile. "Aren't you?"

My throat is so tight I have to force my swallow as Drekoth lets out an exasperated scoff. “Does this mean I can have Xalreth back? He’s the only one in Hell that knows how to give a proper haircut.”

“Xalreth’s schedule is no longer my concern.” I fight to keep my face neutral as he gives a pleased hum, no doubt thinking of ways he plans on taking advantage of Xal. My blood boils at the thought of Drekoth getting too close to him, spending all that time with him while treating him like a servant, but I tamp it down and settle for glaring. He flips his hair over his shoulder, lifting a brow as though he’s challenging me to out-diva him.

I don’t have it in me.

Damien’s eyes are alight with something potent, and they’re laser pointed at me. His lips pull into the slightest smirk as he stares me down. “You’re a fucking fool. First class, grade-A goddamned idiot.”

My nostrils flare as my chin lifts, my defenses rising as he continues to give me that maddening smile. “Watch yourself, Damien.”

He pushes himself up from the chair and leans in, palms flat on the table, while smugness practically radiates off him. “Why should I? Is big, bad Micah going to actually do something about it? Or will you just stand up there like the coward you are?”

“Sit down.” I push a touch of power into my voice, but he fights it and continues to leer at me.

“That’s right. Make me sit and put me in my place while you keep pretending to be important. You messed up, do you know that? You trashed something good and you’re too goddamned proud to admit it.”

Azrael's inhaler puffs as another of my shaky inhales tries to calm the peeled-up, frayed edges of my patience. It's clear in the way I annunciate every syllable, because if I so much as raise my voice, I'm going to explode. What's left of this battered body will just erupt, and I'll be reduced to nothing but fragments, too weak to piece themselves back together.

Deep breath.

"The project was a failure. It was an idea that didn't pan out—"

"I wasn't talking about the fucking Easter Bunny nonsense, though I think we can all agree it was one of your dumber ideas. It's impressive, really, considering your asinine schemes we've suffered through in the past."

Father Time speaks up, his dusty voice shocking everyone. "It was almost as stupid as that time you requested extra personnel to catch a leprechaun." Every single person in the room stares at him for a long second before he lifts his shoulder in a lazy shrug.

"Holy shit, I forgot about that," Damien says, choking on a hateful laugh as he shakes his head.

"Wait, leprechauns exist?" Niklaus asks, and Damien nods.

"You're The Santa and you've never heard the story of the leprechauns?" When Niklaus just lifts a brow, Damien huffs a laugh. "Several hundred years ago, two Santas back, I believe, a bunch of elves rebelled—"

"Sounds familiar," Niklaus mutters while Damien grins wider.

"This was a full on rebellion, and they left the North Pole. Decided to live in Ireland and have been causing mischief ever since. Found some way to harness luck, and

Micah wanted to steal it for himself.”

I narrow my eyes as my fingers flex against the surface of the podium. “That was not my intention, and you know that. They are a nuisance, and my goal was to restore order.”

He returns my glare, directing his snarky smirk at me. “Stop trying to change the subject.”

“I didn’t—”

“You fucked up, Micah. You fucked up big time, and you know exactly what I’m referring to.” The blood drains from my face as he glares. Xalreth and Damien have always been close. Surely he wouldn’t betray my confidence by sharing my secrets... would he?

Has he been talking about me? Did they have a good laugh while discussing intimate details about our time together?

Does Damien know of my proclivities?

A cold sweat slicks my skin as the blood returns to my face, crawling up my neck and flushing my cheeks as my heart drums in my ears. Panic grips my throat, a vise around my windpipe, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. Each beat of my pulse blurs my vision, but I can’t look away from his triumphant smile.

“What do you know?” The words come out strained and raspy, forced from my vocal cords because I don’t want to hear the answer.

Damien’s grin turns malicious. “I know that you and Xal—”

The door bursts open, hitting the wall with a loud bang that sends a cloud of dust motes dancing in the sunbeams. Xalreth's fury is a living, breathing thing as he storms into the room. The intensity of his uncontrolled anger steals the air, incinerating it until it's stifling. His eyes burn with that crimson glow that means he's barely restraining his inner demon.

"Thanks for the heads up about this meeting, Damien, but give it a rest and shut your fucking mouth," Xalreth growls as he stalks forward, eyes locked on mine. Hushed whispers murmur from the others in the room, but he ignores them.

Right now, I'm his only prey.

His familiar scent surrounds me as he gets close, stopping only when his nose is inches from mine. My heart leaps into my throat, and his brow lifts as his gaze drops to the thundering vein in my neck. "What's wrong, angel?" A quiet whimper sneaks loose as he takes a deep inhale, inching his lips closer to my ear. "Are you nervous?"

"No... yes. Xal, I—"

"Shut the fuck up," he snaps, and I bite my lip as I force another swallow that chokes me. "You've done enough standing at the podium and preaching, and now it's your turn to fucking listen."

He doesn't even blink, challenging me to object. My hands tremble as I fist them at my sides, waiting for whatever is coming my way. "Pulling the plug on this project, are you? It would've been nice to share that news with your partner."

The deliberate manner in which he says it sends a surge of adrenaline through my veins, but he only sneers. "You don't even know the meaning of that word, do you? Poor, pitiful Archangel, only ever having to be concerned with himself."

“That’s not fair,” I whisper, so faint only he can hear it, but his eyes flare as though I screamed it at him.

“There’s a lot of that going around right now, isn’t there?” He glares at me again, daring me to speak up before he continues. “You finally realized this entire project was a fucking joke, huh? Well, congratulations, Micah, you’ve caught up to the rest of the class. Maybe if you’d learn to listen to someone other than yourself, you would’ve worked that out much faster. But that’s not what Micah does, is it? He’s too goddamned arrogant to consider what anyone else has to say. He only cares about himself.”

The words hit their mark and I flinch. “Please, Xal—”

“Did I say you could talk?” he demands, and I shake my head as he snarls. “You’re so stuck in your fucking head that you can’t admit to yourself when you do something wrong. And I could look past that, because I know why you do it... why it’s important for you to be right. I understand why you push so hard and why you think you have to do everything on your own.” His voice softens as I blink, combatting the burning behind my eyes.

Xalreth inches closer, reaching to weave his fingers through my hair. Surprised murmurs explode from around the room, but my focus is locked on him. “And God fucking help me, I could forgive all of that. Pick up these broken pieces of us and put them back together, and I would do it without so much as a bitter thought. But what I can’t forgive, what I will not tolerate, is you walking away from me. You carved this path of destruction in my life... just waltzed on through, blowing everything up along the way. You were a goddamned tornado, and now you’re trying to leave me in the carnage like it never mattered.”

“Of course it matters,” I whisper, but he silences me with another glare.

“You burrowed your way inside of me, and I’m so fucking pissed that I can’t move on. Do you have any idea how much easier it would be if I could just forget about you?” His lips brush mine and the whispers among the group grow louder. “Is that what you want, angel? Do you want me to forget I was ever in love with you?”

“Oh, what the fuck ?” Damien breathes in shock, but my eyes are on the man in front of me.

“I asked you.” My voice is unsteady as I fight to find the words. “Outside your building, I asked point-blank what you wanted from me, and you had nothing to say. You couldn’t even answer that simple question.”

“Simple,” he huffs with an angry laugh. “Nothing about this is simple. But you’re right—you gave me the opportunity to spell it out for you, and I missed it. There are so many things I should’ve said to you.” The regret in his voice is clear, and the hardened lines of his face grow softer. “And I’m sorry I didn’t. You deserve to hear them.”

His fingers tighten in my hair as he draws me forward and presses our lips together. Nothing else in the world matters except for this moment. It’s all just white noise and distraction. I fist his shirt and try to deepen the kiss, but he breaks us apart with a quiet chuckle.

“Patience, now, eager thing. You asked what I wanted from you, Micah? The answer is everything . To wake up every morning inside you and go to sleep every night with your taste on my tongue. When you’re afraid and feel like the world is crumbling around you, I want to be the one you come to. Your laugh is just as amazing as those beautiful sounds I draw out of you, and I want them all.”

“Aww,” Azrael coos.

“Did they forget we’re here?” Niklaus asks in irritation, and Damien shushes him.

Xalreth pulls something from his pocket, and the glint of gold against his dark skin makes my heart ache with a sharp, physical pain. “I want you , Micah. No secrets, no hiding. I want you to be mine, but only if it’s real this time.”

“It was always real,” I whisper, my voice trembling, and his expression is unreadable as the moment stretches between us. He’s wary as I slide my palms up his chest and grip his shirt, pulling him closer. “You are the only real thing I’ve ever had, darling. Put it on me. Please?”

He’s quiet. So fucking quiet, and his silence cracks a chasm right into the center of my chest. My breath holds in my lungs, until he gives me the tiniest nod. Relief almost brings me to my knees as he reaches around my neck to fasten the collar, and its weight is a comfort against my skin. Once it’s on, he traces his fingers along the chains before he hooks one through the loop and drags me closer. Our noses bump and our lips brush, and we’re breathing the same air.

“Forgive me,” I plead, and he yanks me forward in a rough kiss. All the tension of the past few days—the hate, the self-loathing, the gnawing emptiness inside—it melts away until there’s nothing left but him. His kiss is brutal and punishing, teeth scraping my lips until they bleed, but the pain only fuels my desire for more.

“I need you,” I murmur against his lips. “I’ve always needed you.”

He pulls back and drags his thumb over my swollen lower lip. “So fucking pretty,” he murmurs, almost to himself, before his eyes lift to mine. They’re filled with promises.

Promises of a future—of a life worth living.

But most of all, they’re full of love.

“Everyone out,” he shouts, but they remain seated, openly gawking at the two of us. Xalreth glares over his shoulder and bares his teeth, his voice taking on its guttural, rolling demonic tone. “Did I stutter? Get out! Now! ” They scramble to stand, Damien with a deliriously cheery grin on his face as he reluctantly follows the others from the room.

As soon as the door closes, he drags his hands over my chest. “Finally wearing a shirt in public, I see,” he murmurs as he tears it down the front. “Covering up what belongs to me, are you?”

“Yes,” I admit, but it turns into a hiss as he grabs my cock through my pants.

“You didn’t take it off?” His lips trace a path along my jaw until he’s sucking on my neck, leaving behind a mark that will be visible to the world. My hand lands on the back of his head, holding him there and encouraging him to suck harder. A deep, filthy chuckle rumbles against my skin as he obliges me.

“You have the key.”

Another quiet laugh leaves him as he strokes me with a feather-light touch through the wires of my cage. It’s enough to have me burning alive. “Thought we were done lying to each other, Micah. If you wanted to take it off, there’d be no stopping you. So tell me, angel. Why are you still locked up?”

“Because it’s what you wanted... no one else is supposed to... to touch me.”

“Do you want someone else to touch you?” His hand moves lower, cupping my balls through my pants as my knees spread, giving him room. “Choose your next words very carefully. You may be the forgiving type, Micah, but I’m no angel. I’m not above ending someone’s pitiful life for being the object of your fantasies.”

The threat shouldn't turn me on even more, but my eyes roll back into my head and I moan as he emanates a low growl. "N-no... never. No one else, there's no one else."

"Why not?" He grips my caged dick again, giving me a rough jostle. "Who does this belong to?"

"It's yours... only yours."

His other hand wraps around my throat, caressing his palm up and down the column of my neck. "Say it like you mean it, angel."

"It's your cock, Xal."

"That's fucking right, it is." I gasp as he grabs both sides of my pants and rips. The button flies and clatters against the floor as the material shreds. Snarling, he spins me and shoves me towards the tables, the wooden edge digging into my thighs. In an instant, he's behind me, sliding my pants over my ass until I'm exposed. Rough fingers clutch the sensitive spot where my wings meet my back, and he forces me to bend over. He thrusts against my ass so hard he knocks me forward, my chest sprawling on the tabletop.

"Stay down, angel." His growl is a low warning that makes the blood rush to my face as I try to lift my torso. My heart thrashes against my ribs like a trapped bird, the thrill of the fight sparking a fire in my belly as he wrestles me down. A warm hand clamps to the back of my neck, forcing my cheek against the table as a zipper whirs. "Stay right there with your ass in the air like the good little whore you are."

A moan rips loose as he leans in and spits on my hole, his fingers tightening on my neck as his cock presses against me. "Should fuck you dry for what you did to me," he mumbles as I hear the snick of a bottle cap. "Hurt you like you hurt me."

“Xal, I’m sorry,” I whimper, but he shushes me.

“Don’t worry, pretty angel. You’ll have plenty of time to make it up to me.” There’s an obscene slick noise and cool dampness on my hole as he lubes us both. His hips drive forward, and I call out as he pushes inside me in a single thrust. “ Fuck , you get too tight when I’m not there to keep you open all night.”

My fingers dig into the table’s edge, my knuckles white as he pulls out and thrusts in again. He bottoms out with an obscene slap of skin as I arch my spine, offering myself to him. I want to fall apart by his hands, be torn into pieces and rewritten by his will.

I want to be his, body and soul, in every possible way.

“This is what I have to do to get you to listen, huh? I have to fuck the sense back into you?” The angle hits where it hurts so good, and the impact sends a jolt of pure, exhilarating pleasure through me. Days of pent-up tension coil in my core—scorching and wild, and desperate to break free. Xalreth clutches my wings, using them as leverage as he slams into me.

“Yes,” I gasp, “yes, God, yes—”

“Don’t you even think about coming yet,” he warns as he fucks me harder, jolting my body and causing the table to scoot forward, screeching against the floor in time with his thrusts.

“But... but I... fuck , I need to,” I whimper as his fingers clamp on my wings, hitting those nerves that send pleasure rippling through me like lightning. The sensation spiderwebs across my skin as my pulse thuds all the way to my toes, and I feel every drag of his fingertips over my feathers.

That part of me has always been guarded, never allowing another person to touch me there. Hell, I've never given my back to anyone, much less the vulnerability of my wings. But with him, it's not even a question. It's right.

"Not until you're allowed," he grits out, and I fight my body as I thrash my head in a nod. His movements falter, losing his rhythm as his hips snap against my ass. Skin slaps skin as he releases the most delicious chorus of uncontrolled, desperate sounds.

My name leaves him in a shout as he drives forward and pins me there. Warmth floods inside me as he comes, and it takes every ounce of my self-control not to lose it. When his grip on my wings relaxes, he canopies over me and presses a kiss on my spine as he gives a few languid thrusts of his hips.

"I'm going to pull out now, angel, and I need you to hold all that inside you. Clench for me, okay?" A few drops escape as his cock slips free, and I squeeze my muscles as he drags his palms along my skin.

"You're fucking beautiful, do you know that?" He sinks to his knees, pressing a series of kisses along my thighs and ass. I call out in surprise when his tongue drags a wet stripe over my balls, then travels up between my cheeks. He spreads me and licks across my hole, and I groan as I lose my grip. The warm rush of his release slides out of me, lapped up by his waiting mouth.

A feral growl rumbles from his chest as he spears his tongue into me. A million sensations attack me at once—the squeeze of his fingertips as he spreads me open, the tickle of spit and cum sliding down my skin, and the wet, filthy sounds he makes as he devours me. My core aches, begging for release as I grip the table harder.

"It's too much, Xal... fuck, it's too much." He groans his approval as I grind against his mouth. Over and over, his tongue takes slow, deliberate passes over my hole before he plunges it back inside. My muscles clench tighter, not trying to hold him in

this time, but trying to hold back.

A wicked chuckle vibrates against my skin as he grips my hipbones and stands. His hips snap forward, knocking a strangled shout out of me as he tunnels inside me once more. His fingers tighten as he moves me against him, drawing out until he's barely inside me before slamming back in.

"God, you make the prettiest noises," he purrs as he slaps us together, the wet sound positively obscene.

"Xal," I moan, my whole body being jarred by the force of his thrusts. "Xal, I have to come... I can't... fuck, I can't..." My release slams into me as my muscles tremble, making a mess of my leg and the floor. He grunts and drives forward, his fingers leaving bruises as he fills me a second time.

I sag against the table with a shuddering sigh as his mouth and tongue leisurely drag over my skin, charting a lazy path of kisses. His hips rock, thrusting his release deeper into me as he coats every part of my body in his scent. I whimper when he pulls out, and it's silent as his cum drips into a puddle on the ground beneath me.

He guides me to lie on my back, my wings tucking away as I roll. "Look at you," he murmurs as his eyes rake my skin. My shirt hangs in tatters and my ripped pants pool around my ankles. He leans over me and presses his lips against mine, hooking his arm underneath me. Our kiss is never interrupted as he lifts me to sit on the edge of the table, and he stands between my knees.

"I missed you," I whisper when he pulls back, and his expression gentles as he tucks my hair behind my ear. "Fuck, I'm an idiot, Xal. I never should have left."

"And I never should've let you." He presses another kiss to my lips.

“Did you mean it?”

His dark eyes land on mine and I feel their attention coursing through every vein in my body. “Did I mean what?”

A moment of fear makes me hesitate, but I push through it. “When you said you love me. Did you mean that?”

“Of course I did,” he murmurs, his fingers combing through my hair. “Why would I say it if I didn’t mean it?”

“I’ve... I’ve never...” I swallow as emotion blocks my windpipe, but the words still come out cracked. “No one has ever told me they loved me.”

“Never?” He looks shocked as I shake my head. “How old are you?”

I lift a shoulder in a shrug. “Ancient. I lost count of the years long ago.”

“And you’ve never heard that you are loved?”

“No,” I whisper, and that softness that he only shows with me comes to the surface.

“Then I’ll make up for a lifetime of not hearing it, Micah. I will remind you every day what you’re worth. When you are close to falling over the edge, I’ll be the one to bring you to solid ground. Allow me to help you carry that pressure when it weighs you down. You can do that, can’t you?”

“I can try,” I whisper, voice shaky.

“Let me love you, angel.”

“Only if you’ll let me love you back.”

“You trying to tell me something?” he nudges with a sweet smile, and I nod as I wrap my arms around him and tuck myself into his neck, where his smokey amber scent surrounds me.

“I’m terrified,” I admit, and the weight of his heavy arms surrounding me is a comfort. “Loving you scares the hell out of me. But I do... I love you.”

“Well,” he says, pulling back and tilting my face up to his as his thumb swipes over my lips. “It’s okay to be afraid, as long as you don’t leave again.”

“I won’t, darling.” It’s a promise—an oath—and I carve it into my heart.

“I know you won’t.” Another smile crosses his lips, one that’s not quite as sweet as the one before it. “Because there’s nowhere in Heaven or Hell that you could hide from me now.”

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:26 am

Xalreth

Two months later

My foot kicks beneath me in the stark white lobby, the polished floor reflecting an almost painful brightness. Pretentious motherfuckers. I regret not wearing sunglasses. An Archangel with her wings folded close to her body eyeballs me warily. Her marble desk guards an ornate golden door, and she's obviously uncomfortable with my presence outside this particular office.

The one belonging to Micah's boss.

Yep, you heard that right.

There's a demon sitting outside God's office. Needless to say, everyone else in the expansive space is giving me a wide berth. It's as though I've caught a biblical plague with the way they cram themselves into the furthest corners. They won't even look in my direction, like they'll be smited by holy lightning by acknowledging my presence.

The only one who has dared to approach me is a handsome Angel, with tight red curls that catch the light. His giant green doe eyes crinkle as he gestures at the seat beside me.

"Anyone sitting here?"

"No?" I raise my brow in suspicion as he sinks into the leather chair, dragging his hands down his thighs as he blows out a long exhale.

“First time?”

“Um, yes?” I don’t mean to answer his every question with one of my own, but I’m confused about why he’s talking to me. My resting bitch face must need some work.

“Are you here to see The Big Man, too? Rumor has it he enjoys his threesomes, although I didn’t realize I’d be sharing. That’ll be a hell of a holy trinity, huh?” He eyeballs me appreciatively. “Though I can’t say I mind. A demon... who knew God would be so exotic with his choice of lovers.”

A moment of stunned silence stretches before I finally stammer, “Oh, uh... no,” and I don’t miss how his smile falls. “My boyfriend is in there with him right now. I’m afraid you get to worship his altar all by yourself today.”

“Is your boyfriend an Angel or...” He trails off as he focuses on something beyond me, his eyes growing wide. “Fuck, it’s Micah. He’s the absolute worst . Avoid eye contact and pretend like you don’t see him, and maybe he will just walk past.”

Micah’s face is hard when I glance up, no doubt from hearing the redheaded Angel’s words. His expression softens when he meets my eyes, but I spot the mischief dancing in his gaze. A rush of air hits me as he snaps his wings out wide, stopping directly in front of me. Pure white feathers take up my entire field of vision.

“Are you showing off, angel?” The man beside me stiffens with a hiss, attempting to disappear into his seat. A quiet chuckle shakes my shoulders as I reach up and fist the waist of Micah’s pants, tugging him closer as I stand. “Or are you trying to intimidate me?”

He flashes me a radiant smile as he leans to capture my lips, and I accept his kiss greedily. It took Micah a long time to be comfortable showing affection publicly, so his displays feel incredibly intimate when they happen. I never deny his need for touch, no matter where we are or what we’re doing. He grabs my bottom lip with his

teeth as he pulls back, and I chuckle again.

“Watch yourself, pretty boy.”

“Holy shit, that was hot.” I glance down to find the redhead staring at Micah with a whole different type of interest. “Are you sure you guys aren’t interested in joining us? That would be a night to remember.”

“He’s mine,” I snap, baring my teeth as the Angel gulps, nodding as he drops his gaze submissively to the floor. “And if I so much as catch wind of you whimpering his name when you jerk off in the shower, I will hunt you down.”

“Xal,” Micah scolds, and I turn to raise my brow at him as I hook his collar and tug him closer.

“Do you have something to say about that? Are you asking me to be civil to the guy who wants what belongs to me? I’m not so sure I can manage that.”

“Of course not,” he says with a sweet kiss. “You make the rules.”

“That’s my good boy,” I murmur with a light tap to his cheek, and his pupils dilate, swallowing most of the purple in his irises.

The Angel continues to stare, making a desperate little whine in the back of his throat as he squirms in his chair. “Jesus Christ, I’m not going to need any foreplay after this. And you’re positive you won’t reconsider—”

“No!” we shout in unison.

“I heard that!” An unearthly deep voice booms from behind the gilded door, and everyone in the lobby freezes. “How many times do we have to have this discussion about using my son’s name in vain?”

“Let’s get out of here,” I whisper, and Micah nods as we run towards the exit, shoving each other out of the way and laughing like a bunch of idiots. We push through the door and collapse out into the hallway together, and his fingers lace through mine as he continues to chuckle. Everyone in the corridor stares, wide-eyed shock covering their faces, but we ignore them as we walk past.

Outside, the sun warms my skin as Micah leads me down an isolated path. “So?” I ask when it’s clear he’s not planning on speaking up without being prompted.

“Hmm? So, what?”

“Don’t play coy. What did he say?”

“His exact words?”

“Micah,” I growl, and he laughs again. It’s lighthearted and carefree, traits that were nearly nonexistent in him when we met. The light breeze blows through his hair, and I take a few seconds to admire the gorgeous planes of his face.

His lips pull back in an almost imperceptible smirk, pitting that dimple on his cheek that drives me wild. “Going sappy on me, are you?”

“Never.”

His smile spreads as he laughs, and I can’t help it as I chuckle along with him. “Don’t worry, darling, I won’t tell.” He’s quiet again for a moment as he leads me to the side of the path, leaning on the railing and staring off into the cloud-dusted sky. “He said, and I quote, ‘It’s about time you took a vacation, Micah. Perhaps a few weeks of getting your dick sucked will help morale around here.’”

“He’s such an ass,” I mutter with a laugh.

“He really is.” Still grinning, he twists me to face him, and he leans down to press a kiss onto my lips. “So, what are we going to do with all this free time?”

“I’ve already got a bag packed.”

His brow raises. “What’s in it?”

“Necessities.”

“So... ropes?”

“Yep.”

“Gags?”

“A few.”

Another soft laugh breezes from his lips. “Maybe we should go to my place and pack, too. We might have different ideas of what is deemed essential.”

“Have you given any thought to where you want to spend our vacation?”

He smiles, wrapping an arm around my waist and tucking me into his side. “Anywhere with you is perfect, Xal.”

“Who’s getting sappy now?” I tease, and he places a finger under my chin and tilts my face to his.

“I love you,” he whispers, and I wrap my arms around his neck and pull him closer as his lips move with mine. The taste of him floods my mouth as our tongues roll, hands coasting over skin in a frantic, desperate exploration while our bodies press together so tightly every curve and dip aligns.

When we come up for air, we're both flushed and panting. "Careful, or I'll bend you over and fuck you right here, and we'll never actually make it anywhere."

"Don't tempt me with a good time." He comes back for more and pouts when I pull away.

"Such a sweet angel," I murmur, dragging my thumb over his bottom lip. "And with such a perfect mouth. Regrettably, I must take a raincheck on those plans, because I have to make a pit stop before we leave."

"It can't wait?"

"God, you are stunning when you pout, aren't you?"

"Does that mean you'll give me my way?"

I laugh, weaving our fingers together and tugging him beside me. "Not this time." We walk along the sidewalk, enjoying the mild weather and beautiful scenery of the realm. It's peaceful, although Micah snaps his wings out whenever we come across other Angels. Containing my eye roll is a chore every time.

The occupants of Heaven are still wary in his presence, though they learned early in our relationship not to give him any grief about his demon lover. A lower ranking Angel was almost fried by heavenly fire when he insulted me under his breath. Micah's wrath was only quelled when I asked him to stop, and word spread quickly about the demon who has the mighty Archangel on a leash.

If only they knew.

Ever since, they've steered clear, but no one else has commented. They leave us alone, and that's fine with us both.

Micah's brows furrow as we approach a familiar building, and he glances at me in question just as the door swings open. Beau and Azrael step out into the sun and wave, and as Azrael trips on a rock, Beau snaps his arm out to catch him like it's second nature.

"This is your errand?" Micah asks, confused. "Stopping by Beau's classroom?"

Beau walks over and thumps Micah on the shoulder, giving him a squeeze before Micah rips his arm away impatiently. We all chuckle as Beau rolls his eyes, then turns his attention towards me. "Everything's set."

"I really appreciate your help," I say, reaching over to shake his hand as he gives me a giant smile. The sentiment is sincere, because the large human is impossible not to like. Azrael gives me an excited grin from behind him, bouncing on his feet as though he's unable to stand still.

"What sort of help?" Micah asks, and I only grin as I wave goodbye to Beau and Azrael and lead him towards the building. "Xal, you cannot ignore me just because you don't want to answer."

"Wanna bet?" I mutter, and he huffs a haughty scoff as I pull the door open. It's pitch black when we walk inside—the windows have been blacked out and the lights are off. Micah can't see it yet, but all the furniture has been shoved into closets or along the perimeter of the room.

"What are we..." The words die in his throat as I click a few buttons on the remote control Beau snuck into my palm as we shook hands. Dim lights illuminate, shining on the endless roses that line the room in vases, and the scattering of crimson petals on the ground. Music floats from the speakers in a slow melody.

"What—" He tries again, but his voice cracks and he closes his mouth to take a shuddering inhale. "What is this? What... what did you do?"

I turn to him with a smile, but it falters when I catch the devastation on his face. A single droplet rolls down his cheek as he stares at me, his bottom lip stiff as he tries to control his emotions. “You said you always wanted to go dancing.” I reach to wipe away the tear, my thumb drifting back and forth over his defined cheekbone. “Is this not what you wanted? Did you want—”

My words are cut off as he slams his lips into mine, shaking his head even as he kisses me senseless. “This is perfect,” he whispers against my lips. “This is... everything I’ve ever wanted. You’re everything I’ve ever wanted.”

My palms land on his cheeks, forcing his eyes to stay on mine as I wipe away his tears and smooth his hair back from his face. “I love you, Micah.” I back up a few steps and hold my hand out for his, dipping into a bow when he slips his fingers into my grip. “May I have this dance?”

His eyes close as he nods, drawing me to his chest as we sway to the music. “You may. This one... the next one... and every one after that, darling. I belong to you, always.”

And we dance.