

CHAPTER 17: PLANS

Xavion was immediately hit with the fiery hot air of Hell. He had landed directly outside Lucifer's castle, each section thousands of feet tall and pointed at the tops that were in need of refurbishment. A rickety pathway to the front door circled around the entrance. The sky was a dark red color with minimal light illuminating his way. If it weren't for the flaming pits of fire along the pillars leading to the doors, not much would've been visible.

His childhood caretaker and Lucifer's assistant, Qaarinah, was stood on top of the steps, awaiting Xavion's arrival. She bowed to him the second he approached, a common greeting for him in Hell on account of his high status.

Her hair was long and black, twisted into a thick braid down her spine. She had grey eyes that looked gentle yet worn down from decades of seeing unimaginable acts. Xav didn't even want to think about the gruesome punishments Lucifer must've committed to or in front of her. The ones he'd seen himself were beyond disturbing, and he was around way less.

"No need for formalities, Qaarinah," he said as he held out a hand, signaling her to stop. "It's a pleasure to see you again. It's been some time."

It'd only been minutes and his overly formal way of speaking had returned the same way it always did in Hell. Lucifer ingrained it into him from a young age, making it a habit whenever he visited or came in contact of any other high-ranking demon.

"Indeed it is, Sire. Would you like to come inside? The maids have cleaned your room and prepared a meal for you," she told him as she moved to hold open the door and gestured for Xavion to enter.

The demon nodded in approval, forcing himself to step inside. He couldn't refrain from peeking around every corner to locate Lucifer. It wasn't like Xavion wanted to see him, he just needed to mentally prepare as much as possible. There was also the fact that he was terrified egging him on further.

"Looking for your father?" Qaarinah questioned as she shut the door behind them. They stood in a spacious room with a few couches and insignificant items laying about.

"Yes and no," Xav answered, biting his tongue at the term father. It was a sore spot for him. He wasn't sure whether he hated the word or merely yearned for it to be a reality. Both possibilities were downright pitiful.

Qaarinah nodded in understanding. "He's in the middle of a meeting right now. He was planning to greet you with me but it ran a bit late."

Xavion didn't speak, just bummed. He knew she was lying but only because of Lucifer's orders to do so. The man was probably busy in bed with a couple men and women or simply didn't care enough to see him right away. Either way, the brunette would keep his mouth shut. It wasn't like he could do much else anyway.

"I'll be in my room for now. You're dismissed," he quietly spoke, walking toward the stairs in long strides before she could stop him. Xavion ascended the tall stairway, grumbling under his breath. He wasn't surprised, but it still hurt nonetheless.

Just as he was about to reach the top step, he almost stumbled back and fell when Lucifer suddenly teleported in front of him.

The man stood nearly seven feet tall, his hair dark and disheveled. A look akin to a smile was upon his face but appeared too condescending to be real, though that was to be expected. His jaw adorned a light beard that accentuated his defined features.

"Forgetting to say hello?" the devil asked, quirked a brow at his son who was taken aback by his unforeseen presence.

"I wasn't aware you'd arrived already," Xav admitted sheepishly, glancing at Qaarinah who was watching them from the bottom of the staircase, equally as surprised by Lucifer's attendance.

He rolled back the sleeve of his black suit to check his watch. "Right on time," he said as he pointed at the expensive chunk of metal. Xavion's eyes followed the movement and was surprised to see that Lucifer was telling the truth.

"Oh," he answered stupidly.

Lucifer snorted before taking a step down so that he and the brunette were on the same stair. Xavion went to move out of the way but froze when he was instead welcomed forward by his father's arms enveloping him in a hug.

"It's a pleasure to see you again, son. Not often do we get to spend quality time together." The devil patted his back a few times and pulled away to see Xavion's wide eyes matched with parted lips.

The demon watched with deaf ears as his father spoke to Qaarinah. He couldn't remember the last time Lucifer had ever taken the initiative to hug him before. His heart thumped in his chest, attention diverting to the conversation again once his name was heard.

"Qaarinah, tell the servants to put a hold on dinner. I have something planned with Xavion first," he firmly told her before declining down the staircase with Xav following behind in a hurry.

She quickly nodded. "Yes, Master. When shall I have them prepare your meal instead?"

"Once we return from our walk," the devil confirmed, exchanging a few more important details with her.

"Our walk?" Xavion questioned, confused and worried at the same time. They'd never had one of these walks before.

Lucifer proceeded forward and Xavion had no choice but to scurry after him as the man spoke. "Yes, a walk. I thought the two of us could use these days together to our advantage. Tomorrow we could go to town for dinner if you'd like."

"You... want to go to a restaurant with me?" Xav looked at the devil but didn't receive any answer from his expression. He didn't understand why Lucifer was being so kind all of a sudden. Visits were never like this. Never.

The entrance doors burst open with a slight motion of Lucifer's wrist. Once again the brunette was met with the heated air as they leisurely traveled across the front pathway.

"Why wouldn't I?" the devil asked as if the question was idiotic. "You used to enjoy the one near the enchantress' shop, didn't you? That's a suitable option."

Xavion listened to his father's small talk, focusing on putting one foot in front of the other rather than responding. He didn't know what to say. He wasn't used to Lucifer being so... so normal. It was almost frightening. At least he usually knew what to expect. With this, he had no clue what the man was going to do or say next.

"What do you think of that, Xavion?" Lucifer asked, pulling the demon from his thoughts.

"That sounds fine," he passively replied. He kept his head slightly bowed while his gaze trailed over the withering plants surrounding the gates. "Whatever you desire is fine."

Lucifer sighed and stopped Xavion from moving forward with a hand on his shoulder. Xav's arm tingled where he'd been touched, but he wasn't sure whether it was more comforting or unsettling.

"Xavion. Look at me."

His gut twisted, but he hesitantly met Lucifer's stare. He resisted the urge to look away as his father tried to decipher his thoughts from his expression. Xavion was surprised he didn't use magic to read his mind like he usually did whenever he was in trouble. This time, Lucifer seemed to be doing it the same way any mortal would.

"Tell me, son. Tell me what you're thinking." For once, Lucifer wasn't demanding an answer. He was requesting one.

Xav swallowed the tight knot in his throat. He didn't let his eyes falter as they remained on his father. "I don't understand why you're doing this."

The devil's eyebrows furrowed, though he didn't seem upset by the confession, merely intrigued. "Did I not previously explain?"

"You did," Xavion nodded, "but... never mind."

He went silent and it quickly became awkward. The brunette tugged on the collar of his shirt as Lucifer tried to read his son's mind, eventually giving up with a sigh of defeat. Something that didn't happen often.

The two approached a small bench at the end of the pathway. It was solid and deteriorated but the devil took a seat, patting the available space beside him. "Take a seat, son."

Xavion timidly sat down. He glanced at his father who was looking at him with something he couldn't identify.

Lucifer cleared his throat. "Why don't you tell me about school instead? Are you performing adequately?"

"It's going well," the demon answered, not wanting to get into specifics.

"Come to think of it, I haven't seen your powers in action in a very long time," he pointed out, filling his son with dread. "I'm curious to see how you've progressed. You're a very powerful creature, Xavion."

The demon was tempted to laugh. He didn't feel very powerful, though he knew he did possess a great amount of it. Unlocking that power and harnessing it was where the issue came in.

Lucifer raised his brows expectantly at him when he received no response. "What do you say?" he asked, leaning back in his seat.

"Care to tell me a spell or two?"



A/N

Who's your favorite author?