

CHAPTER 3: INNER DEMONS

Xavion stumbled back when Malach caught his wrist. "What the hell do you think you're doing?" the demon hissed, immediately shoving Malach away from him.

The angel didn't know what to say. It was like his body moved on its own, carrying him right toward Xavion who didn't look like he was enjoying the company very much.

Xavion scowled when he didn't receive any response. "Hello? Are you fucking deaf?"

"Who was that guy?" Malach asked in an accusatory tone, looking around for the stranger but not finding him anywhere.

Xavion's cheeks heated up a bit, knowing that Malach must've seen the kiss, but tried to cover it up with more anger. "What's it to you?" he snarled.

Malach paused. He really didn't have any reason to come over. The two of them weren't lovers—they weren't even friends. What right did the angel have to tell Xavion what he could and couldn't do? The answer was none, and he knew that, but that didn't change his body's automatic response.

"You can't do that," Malach said dumbly, as if the command made complete sense. He knew it didn't.

Xavion scooed. "Excuse me? I don't remember asking for permission." The angel bit his tongue. He knew he was in the wrong. His sudden silence seemed to piss Xavion even more.

"I'm not one of your stupid little minions! I don't give a damn what you think," the demon spat, fists curling up into balls at his sides. He was overly upset, but anyone, especially Malach, trying to tell him what to do was just asking for trouble.

"Calm down," Malach whispered as eyes started to draw toward them. They were the two most well-known people in school, students were always breathing down their necks. But when they were together, which didn't happen often, it was brutal.

Fume practically blew out of Xavion's ears. He tried to regulate his breathing and stay collected the way he'd been practicing to avoid outbursts just like these. Muttering nasty insults under his breath, he furiously turned around to storm out of the cafeteria.

"Wait, I'm not done," Malach interrupted his dramatic exit, accidentally grasping Xavion's shoulder too roughly out of panic. The demon stumbled into the table in front of them from Malach's touch. Snickers echoed around the room and rage surged through Xavion like never before.

It was a sincere accident on Malach's part. He never wanted to intentionally hurt anyone and all he was trying to do was talk to the stubborn demon. Though Xavion wasn't aware of this, nor would he care even if he did. All he cared about was the embarrassment pounding in his gut and the desire to knock out Malach's shiny white teeth.

"Oh shit!" Cyfrin choked, rushing to Xavion's side. "Dude, just wait a —"

In a split second, Xavion had Malach on the ground, each strike determined to do as much damage as possible. Malach didn't want to fight him. The last thing he wanted was to hurt the fuming boy, but with the crowd of riled up students chanting around them, he couldn't lose. Not in front of so many people. Not when he had to keep his reputation as the golden boy.

Malach shielded his face with his left forearm, using his right to grab Xavion's waist and flip them over. Surprised, the demon stilled when Malach hovered over him. Their eyes were locked for a moment where they became hyperaware of how close they were. Each of Malach's knees rested beside Xavion's thighs while the angel trapped his wrists above his head, pinned to the dirty cafeteria floor.

Malach's breathing hitched in his throat as he took note of all of the demon's features he hadn't ever seen up close before. His hair looked much softer, the color somewhere in between a deep brown and black. Most supernatural creatures had yellow eyes, but Xavion's always seemed to be pitch black. Anyone else would've found it terrifying but Malach couldn't look away.

Xavion, on the other hand, took the moment to bang his head against Malach's with as much force possible.

They were both met with blinding pain as their brains rattled inside their skulls. Xavion, having time to prepare for the attack, recovered much quicker. He didn't waste a second before punching Malach square in the jaw.

There was a loud popping sound, and it hurt like a bitch, but the feeling quickly went away because of their mutual healing powers. No matter how hard they fought it was pointless in the end. They'd both come out unharmed. This was proven true as his jaw naturally set back into place like there hadn't been any injury to begin with.

"There," Malach huffed, looking down at Xavion who was still glaring at him. "Are you satisfied now?"

"Fuck you," the demon barked, not even a little bit satisfied. He barely caused any damage at all.

"Move!" the principal, Mrs. Sapphire shouted, trying to weave between the crowd that formed around the two boys.

"Ah shit," Xavion whispered as he saw her coming. Malach could feel the fear pouring off him like tidal waves.

He wasn't sure why Xavion would be so scared, considering Mrs. Sapphire was only a medium ranking angel, but the fear was obvious. He was tempted to ask Xav if he was okay, but knew it was a ridiculous thing to say at such a time.

"Up!" she shouted at both of them, the crowd of students scrambling away from the crime scene. "What do you have to say for yourselves?"

Malach quickly stood and brushed himself off, feeling slightly ashamed for causing trouble, but nothing major. The two boys awkwardly stared down at the feet as they waited to be scolded.

"What is the meaning of this?!" she shouted, eyes trained on Xavion.

Xavion didn't say a word. He began to shake a little but didn't dare speak, knowing his voice would tremble and break. It wasn't that he feared Mrs. Sapphire herself. He feared what she would do—call Lucifer. Xavion already knew what torture he'd been in for, embarrassing their reputation like that.

"Well?" she shouted, impatiently tapping her foot and not taking her gaze off the terrified demon.

Malach noticed Xavion flinching at her tone and a frown tugged at the end of his lips. He didn't like that the principal immediately assumed it was Xavion's fault. Both of them had done wrong in the situation. It wasn't fair to blame him, especially when she didn't even know the story yet.

"I'll see you in my office," she said to Xavion with a scowl.

He didn't waste another moment, walking to the room he knew all too well with his head hanging low. Malach's lips parted as he watched Xavion exit. His chest hurt.

"You may return to class." Mrs. Sapphire slightly nodded to Malach as she gestured toward the door.

"What?" He blinked at her, utterly confused. "You're not going to ask what happened?"

She sighed as she offered the young angel a weak smile. "I know you wouldn't cause any trouble, sweetie. You're a good kid."

"And Xavion isn't?" he responded, feeling oddly defensive.

Her brows twisted together in confusion but she brushed it off. "You must get back to class. You've already missed half the period and I have to talk to Xavion regarding his behavior."

Frustration built up in Malach's core. He didn't understand why she would automatically excuse his actions but hold Xavion accountable for them. Suddenly he started to understand why the demon had looked so upset moments before. He knew. He knew this would happen.

Because it's happened before.

"It's my fault," he blurted out. "I started the fight, he was just defending himself. Please don't get him in trouble for my mistake."

Xavion stood behind the exit, eavesdropping on their conversation. He had wanted to see if Malach would get in any trouble. Mrs. Sapphire's reaction was exactly what he'd been expecting, but he didn't think Malach would protest. Why would he do that? Did he not care about his father being called? Would he not have any consequences at home for it?

"Now Malach—" Mrs. Sapphire started.

"I'm being honest. I started it," he insisted. "Whatever punishment you were going to give him, give to me instead. He doesn't deserve it."

Xavion's heart hammered in his chest as he listened in on their conversation. He doubted the principal would take Malach's words seriously, but the fact that he even tried at all was baffling.

"Well, I guess just this once I can let it slide," she hesitantly agreed, shocking Xavion even more than he already was.

He quickly ducked behind a plant as she left the cafeteria, staring at Malach who was picking up his backpack. He was still trying to figure out what would make Malach do such a thing. Xavion hadn't exactly ever showed him any kindness before.

The angel walked out of the cafeteria, startled when he saw Haven waiting for him at the doors.

"Uh, hey," he hesitantly greeted her as he adjusted his backpack, not sure what she wanted from him.

"I heard what you were saying to Mrs. Sapphire, you know." She gave him a shy smile while playing with the tips of her dark hair. "It was really kind of you to take the blame like that. I don't think most people would."

Malach bit the inside of his cheek, trying not to blush. He didn't know anyone else was listening to his chat with the principal. "Yeah, I guess so," he answered plainly with a shrug.

"Why did you, anyway?" she questioned curiously.

Malach wanted to tell her that it wasn't any of her business, or that he could do whatever he pleased, but hesitated instead. Why did he do that?

"I was just wondering, since he's so..." she trailed off, trying to find a nice way to phrase her sentence.

"Since he's so what?" Malach's expression hardened, his voice coming out a little harsher than intended.

Haven shrugged her feet together as she let out an awkward laugh. "You know what I mean."

He shook his head. "I don't."

Xavion watched, holding his breath as he waited for her to finish. He already knew what she was going to say. He knew all too well.

Everyone sighed, not knowing how to say it nicely. "He's a freak, Mal. Havenybody knows it. So why would you take the blame for him? For Lucifer's son?"

The urge to cry crawled up Xavion's throat. He wasn't sure why it hurt knowing that Malach wouldn't defend him. If the roles were reversed, Xavion would only shit on Malach more. They weren't friends. They were enemies. Why would it matter what the angel thought of him?

Not being able to bear the thought of Malach saying horrible things about him, Xavion quietly left his hiding spot. He'd had enough for one day.

He was aware of how hypocritical he was being, but it didn't lessen the sting. If anything, he felt worse than he did when the principal began scolding them. At least then he understood what was going to happen. He didn't understand his feelings toward the angel at all.

"Don't call him that," Malach snapped at her before he could stop himself. "I mean—I just...I don't know why I did it, okay? It just felt right. I couldn't let him get in trouble."

Haven shrugged. "Freak or not, it was a kind thing to do. No wonder you're so special. Just another reason you're going to be such a great ruler some day!"

Her words fed into his ego, the same way all the other compliments did, though he felt good for a different reason than usual. Not because he felt good about himself, but because he knew Xavion wouldn't have to suffer as much. After seeing his initial reaction to Mrs. Sapphire, Malach couldn't even imagine what other demons Xav must've been struggling with.

Literally.

