

CHAPTER 9: A BIT BEHIND

The sealant disappeared from his clothes with a simple snap of his fingers, though that didn't make Lucifer any less irritated than he already was. It was silent as the paint sloshed back into the bucket, Xavion standing still like a scared puppy with its tail tucked between its legs.

Anyone in his predicament would. The devil stood nearly seven feet tall with tremendous horns protruding from his hairline. Never mind his terrifying appearance, just his presence was enough to make a mortal shrivel up in fear.

"Have you nothing to say?" Lucifer scooed when Xavion averted his gaze to the ground. "Look me in the eyes when I speak!" he demanded, irritated from being ignored.

The demon hesitantly glanced up to reach his father's eyes. He couldn't help but wince when he noticed the red swirling within them. That only happened when Lucifer was very, very angry. Xavion cleared his throat, embarrassed that Malach was watching them. He didn't want to look weak in front of the blonde.

"I received a call about your the incident you caused. Behaving so emotional will get you nowhere," Lucifer spat bitterly at Xavion who didn't speak.

"I know. It won't happen again, I'm sorry," the demon said so ly.

Malach's brows furrowed as he witnessed how timid Xavion was acting. He hadn't ever seen anything like it before. Not from Xav.

"I am aware it won't, because you do not want to find out what will happen if it does," Lucifer threatened. "I will not be humiliated by your foolish behavior anymore."

Xavion nodded. "I understand," he whispered as his gaze once again dropped.

The devil rolled his eyes with a snort. "A disappointment is all you are. You've been one from the start."

The demon wasn't quite sure what Lucifer meant by that, but he was too focused on breathing to merely think. He wouldn't allow himself to cry. He couldn't.

"How could you say that about your own son?" Malach questioned, bewildered. Yahweh would never treat him as such.

Xavion's stomach sank, heavy with dread. "Malach," he hissed under his breath, "Don't."

For the first time since he arrived, Lucifer's attention turned toward Malach. He eyed the boy up and down before his face curled up into a look of disgust.

"You're associating yourself with angels now?" he rudely asked Xavion like Malach wasn't even in the room. "As if you were not already disappointing enough, you go around spending time with these oblivious pests—and him nonetheless!"

"It was my punishment. I wouldn't by choice," Xavion grumbled, still feeling bitter about the situation.

Malach frowned as his chest felt tight from the rejection. For so long he had been wishing Xavion would show any emotion other than anger, though now he was regretting it. The demon had transformed into a completely different person. He wasn't himself.

Spewing hatred toward Lucifer was so tempting. Not only because the man was targeting Xavion, but Malach instinctually didn't like him either. It was natural for certain species not to like others but this was to an abnormal degree. The angel had never come across that issue with Xavion, which was quite odd considering the circumstances.

"You've made your point, now leave him be," Malach demanded. Xavion was taken aback by the pure power and confidence in the angel's voice, wishing he himself had the same courage.

Lucifer only smirked before vanishing and reappearing a few feet in front of Malach in an instant. "Are you ordering me around, angel?"

"You heard me." Malach took a step forward of his own and felt his senses tingling, the urge to shift forms nearly painful. It always happened whenever a shifter felt the need to fight and protect.

The devil laughed wickedly. "At least one of you became strong. Though I suppose I received the defective one."

"Don't call him that," Malach snarled viciously. Xavion jumped back an inch just from hearing the frightening sound.

Lucifer rolled his eyes before glancing at Xavion once more. "The next time I see you, it better not be result of another burst of your emotions again. Having such a weak child is embarrassing enough."

Malach's fists curled up but the man disappeared before he could do anything. The tingling sensation on his skin faded away. At least it did until he turned to look at Xav and how fearful he appeared. Then he wanted nothing more than to hug the demon and cradle him in his wings until Xavion felt safe again.

The brunette's mouth opened and closed as he tried to figure out what to say. His worst enemy had just seen him so vulnerable.

"It's okay," the angel murmured in a whisper as he tilted his head, "You don't have to say anything, Xav."

"It's fine. I'm fine," Xavion waved it off. "But you didn't have to do that, you know."

"Of course I did," Malach replied with a frown. The room around them was nearly empty though it began to feel a little tight from how close they were. Xavion didn't seem to notice. Malach was fixated on it. "I couldn't just let him say those things to you. It wouldn't be right."

The demon paused. "So... you only did that because you thought it was the right thing to do?"

For some reason, his question sounded meek and defeated. Xav really was full of surprises.

"Well, that wasn't the only reason."

Xavion perked up. "Then what else was?"

Malach's throat felt dry as Xav looked at him so intensely. Kissing the demon was tempting behind words. It wouldn't be hard. He could if he wanted to—they were so close. He just wasn't sure if Xavion would be okay with it. The two of them were barely making any progress as it was and a kiss could cause the demon to resist even more at er.

The angel gently cupped Xavion's face, feeling the skin heat up. "Xav," he murmured so ly, "Can I kiss you?"

Xavion stared deeply into his eyes. Whenever they were close, his mind turned into mush and he froze. He could feel Malach's body heat warming his own body and it made him shiver. He liked it.

"You want to... wait—what the fuck!" Xavion choked as he roughly shoved Malach away from him. "No you can't kiss me! What the fuck is wrong with you?!"

The angel stumbled backward from being shoved. He broke out of their moment of passion that had blinded him. His jaw turned slack before blushing hard from the rejection as Xavion yelled. He wasn't expecting him to deny the kiss.

"I don't even like you as a friend! Yet you think I'd want to do... that!" the demon spluttered in disbelief. He was blushing just as much as Malach, if not harder. "And as if I would do that with you! I have standards a-and I um... I don't date ugly guys!"

He was completely making up bullshit and both of them knew it. Xavion had a long list of insults he could call Malach, but ugly wasn't one on the list. The demon was just ranting out of shock and embarrassment. Mainly because he actually did want Mal to kiss him.

"I'm sorry, I don't know why I said that," Malach apologized, seeming awkward and guilty. It was a good thing he asked for permission, he supposed.

"Neither do I!" Xavion shouted too loudly before flinching at the sound of his own voice. He was overreacting and he knew it.

It was tense and uncomfortable between them as they stood still. Malach's lips itched to touch Xavion's but the demon was determined to feign disgust.

"You should just go. I can finish the rest of the room on my own," Malach muttered.

Hearing the request, Xavion's mouth opened in protest but nothing came out. He didn't want to leave, but didn't want to stay either. Maybe he didn't know what he wanted.

"Fine by me," the demon said monotonously. It almost hurt for him to walk away, but he did it anyway.

Malach stared at Xav as he le , sighing. The angel knew he felt it too. The attraction. It went far past physical, there was an invisible magnet between them that he couldn't pull away. They both had the same desire—they had to.

Even if Xav was a bit further behind than him.

