

Prologue

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Signs

December 31st 1994, New York General Hospital, New York City, 11:56 pm.

The heart monitor machine beeped out a long, none stop warning. "She's crashing!" A brown haired nurse shouted. Chaos broke out in the room. Heart Paddles were pulled forward and charged, ready for use. "Stop!" A loud booming, female voice ordered. "The baby is our main concern. There is nothing we can do for the mother. She's already gone." The medical staff in the room all gazed sombrely at the woman laying motionless on the blood stained sheets. "Tricia, the scalpel please. Lori be ready, the baby's almost out." Spoke the booming voice again. They rallied to their positions. Outside. In the impenetrable darkness broken only by the light of the moon. On the roof of the building directly opposite. Convened a group of men. They watched through the hospital room's only window intently as the baby was delivered. It was a small thing that made no sound or movement. They saw a nurse wrap it up in a blanket and rush it to an incubator at the back of the room and began to unclog it's airways with what looked like a small filter.

The tallest man in the group turned away, and gazed instead at the moon. One by one the others slowly joined him. "So The Thrones were right. The child has been born." A man spoke. He was broad and had a round face. He was dressed all in black like he was attending a funeral. "There is no time." The tallest man said, still gazing at the moon. He sighed then turned to face his companions. His face was blank, his voice flat. Dead. "We have to make a decision now, while we have the chance." His statement was meet by a chorus of voices. He couldn't make out one distinct word from the rest, through the din. "Silence!" He commanded. His hands curling into fists. "How long do you think it will be before they come for the child? We have to act now to ensure that they never get their hands on it." He paused and looked around him at anxious faces.

"We hide the child some-place safe, until a meeting can be scheduled and a decision made as what to do with it." The broad man with the rounded face said. This was met by sounds of approval. But the tallest man shook his head vigorously. "We have to end the child. Now!" He heard a gasp, and a blonde haired women, whose features looked almost perfect said to him. "This child should be protected Michael. It's still an innocent." The tall man whom she had called Michael stared at her with obvious dislike. He barged through the group and came to a stop just inches away from her. The woman didn't back down but stood her ground. "This 'innocent'" Michael spat out the word, like it was hard for him to even harbour it in his mouth. "Will end the world. How many innocents will die then? We sacrifice one for the greater many." The rest in the group nodded their head in agreement. "You don't know that for sure. No-one can. Not even The Thrones!" The woman snapped. She turned to face her peers. "This child never asked for this. The child may resist temptation and devote it's life to goodness. If we damn at least one innocent soul to hell then we are no better than Lucifer." The group looked at her shocked. It had been a long time since they had heard that name out-loud.

Michael knew that she had said it to shock them into thinking her way. Suddenly a great gust of wind blew nearly knocking some of the group to the ground. Michael rooted himself

to the concrete roof, turning his back to shield himself from the worst of it.

"A decision has all ready been made." The voice that had spoken had a magical edge to it. The gust died down. Michael turned and saw Castillo standing in front of them. He radiated power. His shockingly white wings were tucked behind his firm, strong body. Michael saw them sparkle with gold in the light. "What are you doing here? This is a matter for the council." His voice was gruff but Castillo seemed to take no offence, instead he smiled. "Our father had spoken on this matter himself. The child is to be protected at all times and at all costs." Michael shook his head, looking away so that Castillo wouldn't have the satisfaction of seeing the anger blaze like a fire in his eyes. "And what if we fail, and Lucifer claims her?" He flung at Castillo.

"Michael. It is not our place to question Father's decision. It's our place to see that his will is carried out to the latter. Do you understand?" Michael nodded reluctantly.

"Leave us." Castillo said. The others in the group, spanned their wings and were quickly out of sight. Castillo walked to Michael and put a hand on his shoulder. "The child will be spirited away to a remote town somewhere in America. Where, with the guidance of a devoted family it will grow and develop. It will be educated in our beliefs. Risen to be good."

"Let me guess, the devoted family will be Angels."

"Naturally."

"We shouldn't be throwing all our resources into this one child Castillo!"

"The child will be appointed a Guardian to watch over it. With some luck Lucifer will never know of the child's location. And if he does we'll move it."

Michael shrugged off his hand and turned to him, a pleading look in his eyes. "This child is Lucifer's one salvation. He will tear the world apart to find it. And if I know my brother he won't stop till he succeeds."

"Then you must place your faith in our Father Michael. He knows what he's doing."

Michael glanced back at the window. The child and it's dead mother were gone. The room had been cleaned to an inch of it's life, everywhere metal gleamed at him. He knew that humans would never have been so efficient or quick. This had been the work of heaven. Michael knew that he should listen to Castillo, but he knew Lucifer. Letting this child live will be the ruin of them all. He looked skywards and saw a strange star collimation burning like a flame. He knew what it meant and so did Lucifer. Hell's time had come.

Chapter One

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The 1st Cut

September 10th 2012, Cherry Falls, Washington.

Holly Adams pushed open the porch door.

Outside the rain pelleted off the tarmac. She pulled on her pale pink hat, pressed play on her I-pod then stepped out into the wet, crisp air. Holly loved the rain. She knew that she was alone in that respect. She loved the way it made everything sparkle.

“Hey you!” A girl with shaggy blonde, shoulder length hair, and sharp facial features shouted at her from across the street. Holly pulled out her earphones and wrapped them around her music player, putting both into her left coat pocket. “You know what I was just thinking?” The girl said as she joined Holly. “Friday we should have a back-to-school party. What do you think?” Holly shook her head in amusement. “Jo you have a party for everything.”

“So? There's nothing wrong with partying.”

“She having another one already? I swear Jo, your parents must hate you!” A boy joined in their conversation. He walked behind them. Jo turned around still walking and stuck out her tongue at him. He rolled his eyes at her. “Just for that Ricky Anderson your not invited.”

“Oh no, whatever will I do!” He mocked.

Jo and Ricky had been Holly's best friends since like forever. It always bothered Holly how none of them could remember how they had first met.

“So Holly feel any different?” Jo asked her.

Holly just tossed her a confused glance.

“About being a senior, you know, we-like rule the school now.” Jo said with a glint in her eye.

Holly laughed. “Your not going to be mean to the newbies. Are you?”

“Of course. It's a senior's hard earned right.”

“Your nasty Jo.” Ricky chimed in.

Jo turned and slapped him on the arm, “Not as nasty as you Anderson.”

Holly tuned out. They always acted this way. She had always thought that they would have made a great couple.

They turned the corner and Cherry Falls High School loomed in front of them.

It was a pretty, red brick, four storey building. The town's founders had planted big oak trees next to the entrance which provided great cover from the summer sun. And protected from the hail and wind in the winter. At the steepest central tower of the school which overlooked the entrance, hung a large stone clock that after a couple hundred years still kept perfect time.

As they crossed the street towards the building. Holly heard a squealing of tyres and loud black metal music, as a Black Ford pick up truck came flying along the road towards them. Holly called out and grabbed hold of her friends arms and dragged them to safety. The pick up came to a stop at the school and out jumped a large youth. He had a skinhead and was as big as a body builder. Andy Black. The baddest guy in Cherry Falls. A few years back Andy had tried to rob a bank in nearby Green-fields. He had bungled it and the cops had caught him trying to escape on a pink peddle bike. Not the brightest light bulb, but still

dangerous. He had gone to a juvenile felicity for a while and had come back even meaner.

“Hey dick features!” Jo shouted at him. Ricky grabbed her arm and tried to shush her but Jo pushed him away. Jo Watson was the only kid in town that wasn't afraid of Andy Black. Andy turned in their direction. His face was covered in scars and tattoos. “We're trying to walk here!” Andy showed them his middle finger and carried on up to school like nothing had happened. “What a dick!” Jo muttered.

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The first day of their final year started out as boring as any other day there. Andy Black nearly running them over had been the highlight of the day. Classes were dull and uninteresting. Teachers droned on about finals and how if they wanted to graduate, they would have to work harder than ever.

Holly found her brain fried and had a headache the size of Grand Canyon by the time the diner bell went.

If she wanted that crap all she had to do was go home. Her parents had also given her the future speech. All Holly wanted to do was crawl up somewhere quiet and peaceful for a few minutes. But all hope of that vanished when Jo caught sight of her and pulled her to where she and Ricky had been sitting, under an Elm tree, eating lunch.

The sun had finally chased away the grey rain clouds that had been hanging over Cherry Falls for days. Jo lay on her back looking up at the sky. “Wow.” She said. “That was bleak.”

“I wouldn't say that.” Ricky broke in. “I thought it was quite enlightening.”

Jo looked at him and said. “There's not a word for what's wrong with you, is there?”

Ricky beamed at her. “You love me really.”

“In your dreams sunshine.” She looked back up at the sky.

Holly was leaning against the trunk of the elm watching people pass by, eating her lunch.

“I'd have to agree with Jo. That was the worst two hours of my life.”

“You know what's wrong with you two?” Ricky said. They both looked at him and said, “no.”

“You have no vision for the future.”

Holly groaned, “here he goes again. I'm gonna get my stuff for art out my locker.”

“I'll join you.” Jo said, getting up.

When they looked back Ricky was still talking unaware that they had gone. Jo laughed.

“What a freak.” She said.

On their way to the locker, Holly suddenly got a weird feeling in the pit of her stomach. She stopped dead. Jo had walked on a few steps before she noticed that Holly had stopped. She looked back. “What's up?”

Holly shook her head gently, “nothing,” she mumbled. It started to spread through her stomach and travelled upwards. Icy fingers seemed to press against her chest, as if trying to hold her back from going any further. Holly took a few deep breaths and shut her eyes when she opened them again the feeling had passed. She exhaled deeply. This wasn't the first time that it had happened. All her life Holly had been plagued by this... weird feeling.

One time she had felt it minutes before she had fallen out of a tree in the backyard.

Another time it had occurred was when their next door neighbour had backed out of his drive without looking, driving over Holly's left foot. The feeling had always seemed to announce imminent danger. But she had never felt it that strong before.

“Hey Holly!” Jo was in her face, clicking her fingers. Holly stepped backwards. “I'm

fine...really.” Jo gave her a puzzled look, concern growing in her hazel eyes. Holly not

wanting to discuss the matter any further went to her locker and opened it. She tensed

when she heard Jo come to a stop beside her. She hoped that Jo was going to let it go.

Instead she heard Jo gasp, Holly glanced sideways at her and saw that something had

grabbed her attention. Looking over her shoulder she followed Jo's gaze and Holly's eyes

come to a stop on a boy.

Straight away Holly felt something tug at her insides. The boy was walking down the corridor. He was thin and much taller than Holly or Jo. Which wasn't hard as Jo was only 5 foot 2 and Holly 5 foot 4. He had dark hair which fell in an amazingly sexy way past his ears. Holly felt mesmerized as she looked into his round, dark coloured eyes. He had very pale skin that was infused with pink tones, giving him a healthy glow. He was wearing a black hoodie which looked baggy on him and dark ripped jeans. He looked good enough to eat. As he walked by them he glanced their way, and Holly thought she'd seen a brief smile play at the corners of his lush red lips.

"Oh my god!" Jo cried out when he had passed. "Who is that guy? He's well hot. Smoking hot actually!" Holly tore her eyes away from the now distant figure and shut her locker.

"Come on we're gonna be late."

"Who cares? Did you not see him?"

"Yes I saw him, he was very nice. Now class!"

"Nice? Or you blind he was stunning!"

Holly rolled her eyes and walked away with Jo following still telling her how absolutely perfect the guy had been.

Holly was well aware how drop dead gorgeous that guy had been. She just didn't like what looking at that boy had done to her insides. She had had boyfriends before, but the heat that had seemed to radiate off the boy's body as he had walked past them played havoc with Holly's heart strings. She had never felt like that before about a boy and it scared her.

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"Dominic Prince!"

Holly jumped at the sudden closeness of the voice behind her. Jo perched on the wooden chair beside her. Grinning like a loon. The other students in the library looked at Jo through narrow eyes. She returned their glares, "Oh sod off!" She tossed at them. They went back to their books.

Holly had always loved libraries. Especially the one at school. It was so big it had an whole wing devoted to it. They stored a lot of religious and rare books in the restricted section, that was always kept under lock and key. Holly didn't come here to read or study though. It was so peaceful and quiet here. And she loved to draw the beautiful oaks that were just visible through the library's top to bottom east facing window. She had just stretched out on two wooden chairs and had started to draw when Jo came bursting in.

A little annoyed that she couldn't catch a break, even after school had let out for the day she glared at Jo and said in a hushed tone, "What?" Jo looked at her, disbelief on her face.

"The name of the Rock God from heaven, that passed us in the corridor at lunch! Have you forgotten him all-ready?"

Holly hadn't forgotten.

She had been thinking of him all afternoon. But her reaction to him still unnerved her.

"He's just moved here from New York or somewhere. I'm gonna invite him to my party Friday night."

"Um...that's nice." Holly responded without really listening. Trying to focus on drawing the oaks. She didn't know why but drawing always calmed her. Jo grabbed the pad that was rested on Holly's lap and threw it on the wooden floor. "Shhh!" A blonde haired boy at the next table over hissed, giving them a sharp glare.

"Jo for god sake!" Holly cursed her as quietly as she could before retrieving her pad. "Your turning into a complete bore Holly Adams." Jo pouted. Holly slumped down again in her chair she put the pad in her bag. "I'm sorry, it's just all this talk of what are you going to do after school stuff is just getting to me." Jo moved her chair closer. "Yeah, I've been getting that speech too, like a thousand times. That's why it's important to let our hair down every now and again. While we can." Holly smiled at her friend. She always knew how to put Holly at ease. "So this guy...You like him?" Holly asked trying to lighten the conversation.

"Oh my god yes!" Jo said quickly. "What's not to like? Did you see how fit he was. I bet he could lift me up with one arm." Holly couldn't help but laugh at her friend's enthusiasm. Jo came even closer and whispered, "bet he's a right rampant bunny in the sack." Holly nearly fell off her chair. "Jo!" She said a bit too loud. Which earned her another glare from the blonde haired guy.

"What?" Jo said defensively. "I've made up my mind that I don't want to be a virgin when I start college. And he's the one I want to lose it to."

Holly was a little shocked. Her parents were very religious and believed that a girl should keep herself for her wedding night, Holly hadn't really thought about it, she had never come across a guy that had made her want to give herself to him completely. At least not yet. Jo's parents on the other hand only attended church for Christmas mass.

"You don't even know him Jo. He could be a right jerk!"

"Who cares! With a body like that he could be the meanest jock on earth and I would still have his babies."

Holly gave her friend a curious look, "your serious about this aren't you?" Jo nodded, "will you help me?"

Holly gave a little start, "what do you want my help for?" Jo shrugged her shoulders, "guys well...like you. Your really pretty." Holly rolled her eyes. "So are you. Just be yourself...you'll have him wrapped around your little finger in no time." Jo studied her friend. After knowing her for like ever, it still confused her why Holly couldn't see what everyone else saw. Holly was a beauty. With her long, dark hair that was just the right side of wavy. Her deep blue eyes and full, red lips. Pale unblemished skin that looked like porcelain. And the fact that she wasn't so up herself about it. In fact Holly didn't seem to notice why all the boys stared and all the girls glared, when she walked past. While Jo on the other hand had never even owned a hair straightener and detested skirts with a passion. Boys didn't really notice her. At least not when Holly was around. But Jo never begrudged her friend. Holly was the sweetest, most kind girl she knew.

Holly heard Jo's breath catch and her eyes looked right through Holly. She turned to see what Jo had seen but Jo held her in place. "Jo...What is it?"

"Dominic Prince has just walked in!" Jo nearly shouted with panic. Holly smiled at her and pried her friend's tight fingers from her arm. "Jo just remember what I said, be yourself." Jo looked horrified. "What do I say?"

"Try introducing yourself." Jo nodded but still hadn't made any movement to get up. Holly pulled her up and pushed her towards where Dominic was standing. "You'll be fine." Jo walked, looking back once at Holly.

Holly tried not to look at him. Jo seemed really keen on this guy. Holly didn't want to do anything to jeopardize their friendship. So if she didn't look then she wouldn't feel anything. Holly grabbed her pad from her bag and tried to take her mind off of what Jo was saying to him, by drawing the Oaks. After a few seconds she gave up. Her mind just wouldn't stick to the trees, Holly had to know. She sat in the opposite chair, the one Jo had just vacated.

They were standing just a few feet from the library entrance. Jo was looking up at him, laughing. Her body seemed to edge closer to his of it's own accord. He was saying something to her. He had a smile on his face which made Holly's whole body ache with desire. Why did he do this to her? Suddenly they both looked her way and she felt herself blush. She looked away quickly, embarrassed that they had caught her watching.

"Holly this is Dominic Prince." Holly's head snapped up. She hadn't even heard them approach. Holly found herself looking up into his eyes. He was very close. Closer than he needed to be. She could look in his eyes forever. It almost felt like she was drowning in them. "Hi." He said to her. Holly realized she was being rude. "Oh...sorry. Hi I'm Holly Adams."

"I know. Jo here told me."

Jo let out a big cheesy grin when Holly looked at her.

"It's nice to meet you." He said. Holly felt her throat dry up and the words fly out of her head. What was wrong with her? Suddenly she felt that weird feeling return in the pit of her stomach, like she had had at lunch. But it hit her with such force that she barrelled over in pain, crying out.

"Holly!" She heard Jo call out. Holly grabbed the edge of the library table. It had never hurt her before. It had changed from icy fingers holding her back to a sharp stabbing pain in the pit of her stomach. God it hurt!

Suddenly she felt, strong arms around her. Steadying her. Dominic. "Just relax," he whispered in to her ear. His tempting lips only inches away. Almost at once the pain subsided. How had he done that? Holly gazed at him, confusion and awe in her eyes. He gazed back at her, but his eyes were hard and unreadable. His arms were still around her. Holding her tightly as if they never wanted to let go.

"Holly dear, are you okay?" The school's librarian, an elderly warm woman. Miss Wilson walked towards them, and pushed past Jo who was glaring at Holly. She forcibly got in between Holly and Dominic forcing him to break his hold. Holly though she had saw for the briefest of moments anger flash in his eyes. "Dear me you've gone as white as that wall." Miss Wilson said. "Come on follow me, I'll phone your parents." Holly was too tired and dazed at what had just happened with Dominic to argue. "Jo I think it's time that you and your...friend." Miss Wilson glared at Dominic with such evident disdain that she didn't try to hide. "Should be running along home now. It'll be getting dark soon." Miss Wilson steered Holly past them and into her office on the other side of the library. From her seat Holly saw Dominic hold the library door open for Jo, before he passed through it himself he looked straight at Holly, She could have sworn that his face had darkened for a second, but it could have just been the light in the library. He winked at her then left.

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"Mum, I'm fine, really."

Holly's mother stopped fusing with the bed sheets and put a soft, warm hand on Holly's forehead. "You're not fine Holly! You still look as white as a ghost." She took her hand away and muttered to herself, "maybe your coming down with something." She looked at Holly. "I'm calling Dr Windsor."

Holly leaned for her mother's hand and gripped it tight. "No mum! Really I'm fine. Just a bit tired." Her mother sat down on the bed, a smile spreading across her face. "Honey, I know me and your father have been putting a lot of pressure on you lately. But we just want the best for you." Holly smiled back. "I know mum." Her mother kissed her on the cheek. "You should get some rest. We'll be just downstairs if you need anything."

"Thanks."

Her mother walked over to the bedroom door and stopped, half turning back to Holly. She opened her mouth then closed it again. She had a distant look in her pale, grey eyes.

"Goodnight Holly." She whispered sadly before leaving.

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Holly snapped awake.

Her heart was thumping in her chest. A thin film of sweat covered her body and the bed sheets. It took her a moment to remember that she was in her own bedroom. She couldn't remember what had woken her but knew instinctively by the frightened well of dread in the pit of her stomach, that she had had another one: nightmare. She had been getting a lot of them lately. But what bugged her most about them was that upon waking she could never recall what they had been about. The only way she knew she had one was the jolting awake in a cold sweat.

From downstairs she heard something smash. Then raised voices wafted up from below.

Holly frowned. Was her parents arguing? In all of her seventeen years Holly had never once heard her parents fight. Not even a raised word. She looked at the clock on her bedside table. 10.33 pm. Her parents were always in bed by ten.

She tossed back the covers and snatched up her dressing gown. Lightly she crept downstairs. A light was shining through the bottom of the kitchen door. Holly crept up to the closed door and listened.

"Did she say anything?" Her father's voice said.

"Did you not just hear me Jeff! Miss Wilson swore it was him!" Her mother sounded scared.

"Yes well, Miss Wilson is older than my bloody Buick. We can't just take her word as gospel."

"She still has her wits. Why won't you listen. Holly's been getting the nightmares. She turns eighteen in a few months! This isn't all coincidence!"

"Fine," she heard her father sigh. "What do you want to do?"

"We should call them. They'll know what to do."

"Do we have to?"

"Jeff! This is our daughter's life we're talking about it. Do you really want to take the chance?"

"I'll make the call."

Holly heard a chair scrape against the kitchen tiled floor and ran back up the stairs. She leaned against her bedroom door panting. What the hell were they talking about.

Something about a him and her life in danger? Holly thought about calling Jo. She really needed to talk to someone about this. But she remembered the look Jo had given her before Miss Wilson had ushered her away. She was upset about Dominic. About where his hands had been. And Holly really couldn't blame her. She did feel an irresistible tugging towards him. She threw herself on her bed and sighed. How had her life gotten so complicated?

Chapter Two

§

Concerning Heaven

“Why have you brought me here?”

Castillo stood in the Adams back yard. He was dressed in a blue, pin-striped suit which accentuated his dark skin. His eyes seemed to flow with life.

Jeff Stevenson cowered behind his wife. Who greeted Castillo warmly. “My apologies for bothering you but we have news.” She said.

Castillo regarded the woman with curious eyes. How could one forsake who they were and still be happy? Margaret Adams had fell for love. Leaving behind her family. Her father. Many of the Angels refused to mingle with these...traitors. But Castillo knew that there was a purpose to everything. That was the wonder of his Father. He was a master of creation. Never leaving anything to chance.

“Then pray do tell Margaret.” Castillo smiled and waited patiently. His arms folded in front of him.

Margaret looked unsure for a second then Castillo saw realization break out on her pretty face. Angels didn't like to be cooped up inside. They loved the fresh air, the blue of the sky, the gust of the wind. That's why all Angel business was discussed about either in heaven itself or in the open.

“We think...” her voice faltered for a second. Castillo saw her look to her husband, as if unsure whether to proceed.

Castillo cleared his voice. “I don't have all day Margaret.”

“Yes of course you don't. Holly's in danger.” She said quickly then looked at Castillo searching for a reaction.

He showed none.

“And what are your reasons for thinking this?”

Margaret stepped forward. “One of them has been spotted in town. They have managed to avoid detection. He...made contact with her yesterday.”

“Margaret,” Castillo stepped closer to her. He could hear the fear in her tone. “I have already been notified about the intruder.”

Margaret gasped. “You have? Then what is to be done about it? How did he manage to avoid our gaze and get so close to my daughter?”

“Rest assured. Your daughter is perfectly protected.”

“How can you say that! A DEMON TOUCHED HER!” She shouted at him, unable to keep her temper under control.

“I understand your concern Margaret.” Castillo's tone was calming. “The demon however is unfortunately not just your average run of the mill type. Lucifer has sent his most powerful warrior to claim her. And his strategy is not one that we had considered him taking.”

“What do you mean. Who is he?”

“The demon is Lucifer's very own son.”

Castillo waited for the words to sink in, then carried on. “Well at least one of them.”

Margaret looked stunned. “Well then we have to drive him out. Kill him so he can't blab her whereabouts to his father.”

“Oh I'm afraid that is out the question. You see we cannot risk bringing any attention to our presence here. That is not how we work. You know that. An all out attack on Lucifer's son

would bring unwanted eyes our way. After all we do have...other interests to protect.”

“But...my daughter.” Margaret stammered, not quite believing what she was hearing.

“Is not in any immediate danger. He will not harm her.”

“Are you crazy?”

“Margaret, he does not intend to hurt your daughter because Lucifer will not risk open warfare with us while he is still locked away in his prison. Her being hurt or snatched would not be something we would take lightly. We would burn them to ashes before they could even get near her.”

“I don't understand...” Margaret was close to tears.

“Lucifer's tactic's are much more subtle but just as painful. He intends to seduce her, to bring her over to their side. And he's using his son to do it.”

“But if he succeeds they're be no bringing her back!”

Castillo nodded his head grimly. “We plan to never let it get that far. We have...dispatched an Angel to run some interference. Trust me. She will never be on her own with the demon. The Angel will see to it that she does not fall for him.”

Castillo backed away. “I must go now.”

“When will the Angel arrive? How can we identify him?”

“Margaret it would be best to stay out of his way. He knows what's he's doing.”

Castillo was bathed in bright, yellow light. Margaret ran to him. “When will he get here?” She cried out urgently before Castillo disappeared.

“He's already here.....”

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“Jo!” Holly shouted at the top of her lungs for the fourth time.

Either Jo had her earphones in and couldn't hear her or was pissed at her. Holly knew it was the latter by the speed in which she was walking. Holly ran as fast as she could and grabbed Jo by the arm. Jo whirled around. “What do you want?”

Holly bent over to get her breath back, “You... weren't waiting for me... at the corner. Are you okay?” She huffed, straightening up.

“What do you think? You totally messed up my plans with Dominic. All he could talk about on the way home was you! And what was with all the touching anyway!”

“Jo, I'm sorry about what happened. I never meant to...”

“Feign an illness to grab his attention! Just go away.”

Holly felt her blood begin to boil. “Is that what you think?” Jo spun back around to face her. “That's what happened! You know how much I'm into him. And that doesn't happen very often for me!”

“I would never do anything to hurt you Jo, you've been my best friend since I can remember. I never meant to spoil anything I just felt really...ill for a minute! Is that what you think of me?”

Something in Jo's face softened and she leaned against a huge Oak. “I know you never meant it like that...It's just this guy's really gotten under my skin. I can't even explain it...”

“So...friends again?”

Jo wrapped her up in a tight bear hug. “Always.”

“Group hug!” Ricky threw himself at the two girls.

“Ricky get off!” Jo shouted. She stepped back. “This is a private moment butt-head.”

For a second Ricky actually looked hurt then his lop-sided grin returned, “one day Jo when I'm a millionaire and own a dozen of fancy yachts. Your going to be wanting a private moment with me.” He battered his eyelids and blew her kisses.

“That'll be the day.” Jo muttered. Just beyond them the school bell rang.

“Damn!” Holly cursed out loud.

“What's up Hols?” Ricky was the only one who called her that.

“I was supposed to see Miss Wilson before class. I better go.”

Holly pushed through the entrance doors, leaving Jo and Ricky behind. Her mother had told her that she should thank Miss Wilson for taking care of her until her parents had picked her up. Holly couldn't see the point in it, it wasn't like she had been dying. But after the conversation she had overheard in the kitchen last night between her parents. Holly had questions that needed answering. They had mentioned a 'him'. Miss Wilson had obviously told them who Holly had been with in the library. Maybe Miss Wilson could make sense of it all for her.

The library was eerily quiet as Holly pushed open the wooden door. There wasn't a soul here except for her and Miss Wilson. Miss Wilson was in her office stamping books. Holly could hear the dull thump of the stamper as Miss Wilson brought it down. She looked up at Holly a smile crossing her old wizened face. “Holly dear! How lovely it is to see you looking better. I was very worried.” There was something about the old woman that oozed warmth and friendliness. “Hi. I just wanted to thank you for everything you did yesterday.” Miss Wilson placed a liver-spotted hand on Holly's shoulder and her warm, dull eyes gazed into Holly's. “You're very welcome Holly. You'd better run along now. You're late for class.” She went back to her stamping.

Holly nodded, she hesitated for a moment. Should she bring Dominic up? It seemed that Miss Wilson, who was normally so well-mannered and polite to everyone, was almost...rude to him yesterday. The way she had broke in between them. It was totally unlike her.

Holly saw Miss Wilson look at her, her glasses sliding down her nose. “Was there anything else Holly?

Now or never.

“I was just wondering...if you knew the boy I was with yesterday?” Holly asked her.

Sheepishly. Avoiding her stern gaze.

Miss Wilson motioned for her to come closer. “No...” She replied slowly. “But I know the kind Holly. He's no good and you should not be associating yourself with him. He's not fit to wipe your boots.” Holly looked at her in surprise. She was not use to Miss Wilson speaking ill of anyone, never mind being hostile.

Holly felt a sudden, unexplained hate for the librarian rise up inside her. She didn't even know him. How could she say those things. Holly was about to say what she felt when Miss Wilson walked calmly away balancing a stack of books in her arms. Holly wanted to get out of there. Fast. Before she said something she shouldn't.

She was still fuming at Miss Wilson's short mindedness when she slammed her locker door shut and found Dominic's devilishly handsome face inches from hers. Her breath caught in her throat. She hadn't been expecting him to pop out from nowhere. She stepped back in surprise. “Sorry,” he said. “I didn't mean to scare you.” His dark eyes were sweeping over her face. “It's okay.” She told him. Making a conscious effort to put as much space between them as she could, without offending him. She couldn't think when he was this close. All she wondered about was what his lips would feel like against hers. “I was worried about you, after what happened yesterday. Are you okay?” She could almost feel his concern for her. She swallowed hard. “I'm fine. It was nothing. Really.” She shouldn't feel this way about him. It would break Jo's heart to know what was running through Holly's mind right now. Holly felt very...dirty. “I should get going...” She told him quietly. She shouldn't be here. He reached out and took her books from her hands. Their fingers touched for the briefest of moments and Holly felt her heart flutter. Like a wild bird's wings trapped in a cage. A gust of wind blew down the corridor making Holly shiver and the books fly from Dominic's grasp. The gale died down as quickly as it had arrived. Holly looked at him to say what the hell was that, when the look in his eyes made her freeze. They had narrowed and

darkened. He was looking past Holly down the empty corridor with suspicion. The shadow's lurking in the far corners of the corridor seemed to grow, hiding the light that emanated from the lights above their heads.

Holly stood staring at Dominic in shock. The light broke through the shadows, causing them to retreat back to their gloom. But the light seemed to glow brighter than it had a few seconds ago. Holly had to shield her eyes against it.

"Here. Let me help you."

The voice was like nothing Holly had ever heard.

It was like the melody she had loved growing up, that her father had played over and over again. Upbeat but haunting at the same time. Holly looked at Dominic to see if he had heard it too. But he was glaring at something behind her. She turned slowly, almost apprehensively.

He was crouched down in front of her, his strong, but elegant hands scooped up her books from the corridor's cold floor. When he rose up to look at her she thought she had died and gone to heaven.

He was a vision.

Her hungry eyes took him in slowly. A piece at a time. The light from the corridor caught his brown hair, bringing out the natural blonde highlights in it making them gleam.

His face was angelic. Smooth, light brown skin and the softness of his curved lips made his round, bright blue eyes shine as bright as a sapphire against their back drop.

He held out her books to her. "I believe these belong to you."

Holly nodded. Awed at this beautiful stranger. He stepped closer to her pressing her books lightly into her hands and said almost intimately, "you should get to class." He stepped back and looked down at her. Holly's whole body still glowed from how close he had been. Forgetting Dominic's presence Holly slowly started off down the corridor. She turned back remembering Dominic. Her eyes were instantly pulled towards the other boy. Like a magnet he drew her gaze. Dominic stepped in front of him. "I'll catch you up. I need to take a...leek." He shouted to her. Holly nodded then moved on to class.

§

Dominic waited till Holly was out of sight.

He turned back at the stranger and grinned. "Very subtle." He told him clapping his hands in mock applause.

"Leave the girl alone Dom." The stranger said. Still looking down the corridor, in the direction Holly had gone. Dominic's grin vanished. "Think you can make me...Caleb?"

Caleb finally looked at Dominic. His face passive. Not betraying an inch of what was burning inside. Caleb was taller and heavier built than Dominic but he knew exactly what Dominic was capable of. It wasn't the first time that the two had met.

"This town is crawling with Angels Dom, you've never make it past the town limits with her."

Dominic smiled slowly. "I have no intention of leaving your...repulsive town just yet."

"No you just intend to corrupt her. You do know that if you succeed they will kill her."

Dominic shrugged his shoulders dismissively. "That's your problem Williams. You're the one who has to keep her alive and...chaste." He chuckled. "It's been a while since I've had a virgin. Bet she's delicious."

Caleb grabbed Dominic's shoulders and slammed him into the wall of lockers. The metal bended in on itself, groaning under Dominic's weight. "Oh," Dominic laughed seemingly enjoying his self. "Have I hit a nerve?" Caleb let go of him and tried to walk it off. He should never of lost his temper like that. Dominic loved getting a rise out of him.

Dominic snorted, then looked at Caleb with amazement. Like he had just figured something out. "You feel for her." It wasn't a question. It was a fact. Caleb stopped and

glared at him, hate twisting his handsome features. “Leave Dom. Now. Or this will end badly for all of us.”

Chapter Three

§

Heaven V.S. Hell

“Wow!”

Ricky let out a slow whistle. He was sat at one of the wooden picnic tables in the school yard. The sun was shining in Cherry Falls. And everyone was taken advantage of it. Ricky had never seen so many people crowded into the School's tiny yard before.

He was joined at the table by his two best friends. Holly had took advantage of the moment she had with her friends, to tell them about the mysterious conversation her parents had had last night.

“I don't get it.” Jo said. “Why would they freak out over Dominic? He's so...dreamy.” She looked up into the blue, cloudless sky, and sighed. Ricky tossed a crisp at her that hit her arm she brushed it off giving him a kick under the table. “Oh...Dominic!” Ricky mocked in his best damsel in distress voice. “At least he's not immature.” She told him. Holly wanted them back on topic.

“I'm not even sure that Dominic is the 'him' they were referring to. But who else could it be?”

Jo and Ricky both came up blank. Besides them two, Holly didn't have much of a social life.

“I'd be more worried about who they were calling.” Jo said after a second. Holly hadn't thought about that. Who were they intending to call?

“It's all a bit vague and weird.” Ricky put in.

On seeing the worry on Holly's face they both tried to make light of it.

“Oh cheer up. It's just parents freaking out. It'll pass Holly.” Jo told her while laying a hand on her arm. Holly tried to muster a smile. She looked away from them so that they wouldn't see the doubt in her eyes. Was Jo right? Was she getting worked up over nothing? She saw Dominic emerge from the science building. Her mind flashed back to earlier. When they had been interrupted by that handsome stranger. Holly was glad he had showed up when he had. God knows what would have happened with Dominic if he hadn't. Regardless of the guilt she felt over Jo every time she spoke to Dominic, Holly couldn't deny how attracted she was to him. But that stranger...He had been so...heavenly. The way he had suddenly appeared out of the blue. The way he had talked to her so gently she felt like she knew him. The way he smelled. It all seemed so unreal but painfully familiar that Holly thought she might have dreamt him up.

But no, she hadn't.

Dominic had seen him too.

When she had looked back. She could almost feel the tension between the two of them. She had gotten the feeling that they knew each other.

Holly must have been staring because Jo turned immediately spotted Dominic. “There he is!” She let out a little squeal. Ricky followed her gaze. “Who?” He asked her. “My Dominic of course!” Jo went running over to him.

Ricky turned away and Holly saw the heartbreak in his eyes. “He's...buff.” He said quietly. “Jo never mentioned that he was buff.”

“Why don't you tell Jo the way you feel about her?” Holly asked him. Dragging her eyes away from Dominic. Who looked pretty pissed off about something. He was frowning at Jo. “Because she doesn't feel the same. I know she doesn't. She likes guys like...him.” Ricky threw his thumb in Dominic's direction. It was true that Dominic was gorgeous, and was totally in a different league to Ricky. But Ricky was a sweet, loyal, dependable guy. Who was always around when you needed him. Jo could do a lot worse.

"You put yourself down too much Ricky."

He shook his head. "I know what Jo likes. And I'm not even close to it."

Holly looked back over towards Jo. Who had Dominic by the hand and was part guiding, part dragging him over to their table. Holly felt a stab of envy as she looked at Jo's small hand in his.

"Hey who's that?" Ricky asked her.

Holly looked behind and her heart nearly gave out. The beautiful stranger was walking towards them. He seemed to dazzle in the bright sunshine. Girls stared as he walked past. Holly felt ridiculously jealous of the way their eyes stared at his toned body just a bit too long for her liking.

"Hey guys." Jo reached the table with Dominic but he wasn't looking at them. His eyes were firmly fixed on the stranger sailing towards them.

"So I was...Who is that?" Jo stared at the stranger as he, to Holly's utter amazement, came to a rest at their table. His eyes rested on Dominic for a second his jaw tightening then relaxed. Holly was reeling, she never expected to see him again. His bright eyes came to a rest on her.

Holly felt the green grass of the yard, the solidness of the wooden table she was sitting at grow duller until all she could see was him.

"Hi." He said to her.

"Hi." Holly returned. A bit breathless.

Jo cleared her throat. "Hi. I'm Jo Watson." She said to him. Behind her Dominic's face was like thunder.

"Caleb Williams." He said to Jo politely, then returned his attention to Holly, which seemed to annoy Jo.

"Could you tell me where the gym is?" He asked.

"Well you could try opening your eyes." Dominic piped in before anyone could answer. His head nodded in the direction of the gym, just visible through a group of elms. "It's the huge, white building over there. Sticks out a mile. Gotta be blind not to see it." He's voice was dripping with venom.

The two stared each other down. Pure loathing on their handsome faces. Until Holly couldn't take it any-more. What was their problem?

"I'll show you." She blurted out getting to her feet. Dominic broke his gaze and looked at Holly like he'd just remembered she was there. "I'll see you guys in class." She said quickly. She swung her bag strap over her head then stalked towards the gym, like a woman on a mission. She didn't need to look back to see if Caleb was following. He fell into stride next to her. Matching her perfectly in symmetry.

"This is very kind of you." He said.

Holly could listen to his voice all day. "Your new here, right?"

Holly caught him giving her a sideways glance, she didn't want Caleb to think that she was a busy body. "It's just I've never seen you before. And I think I would have remembered you." She cringed. Did she really just say that! She looked over at him, thinking he would be staring at her with repulsion. But he wasn't. He was actually smiling. "I'll take that as a compliment. Just moved here with my Father."

"Where from?"

"California."

"Ha, the City of Angels." I would love to see it. I've never been pass...." She trailed off. He had stopped walking. When she turned to face him he was staring at her intensely, as if trying to read her. "Something I said?" She asked, eyebrows raised. He immediately recovered. "No." But he still seemed shaken.

"How do you know Dominic?" Holly asked when he had started moving again. She badly wanted to know the deal between them.

"Who?" He asked. His expression neutral.

"That guy back there. He was with me this morning...when we met."

"I don't know him." He said slowly.

Holly wasn't buying it. "You seem to really dislike each other. You don't feel that intensely about someone you don't know." She stopped, they had nearly reached the gym. He swung to face her. She tried to read his expression.

"Okay we....know each other...in a way." He said, trying to find the words to explain. "It's complicated."

Holly nodded her head and slowly ate up the space between them. There was something about Caleb that made her feel safe, at ease. Her whole body felt relaxed and calm, except her heart. That was anything but calm. Being so close to him made her head dizzy. But in a good way. "Okay. So um the gym's right behind you. Think you can find your way from here. Or would you like me to take you to your locker room?" She winked at him. Was she flirting? Holly didn't know what had gotten into her. She couldn't help herself.

He grinned, "I'm okay for now, but maybe next time..." He winked back at her then vanished into the gym.

The world started to spin under Holly's feet. She felt incredibly hot, she fanned her face with her hand to try and cool herself down. "Oh boy..."

§

"So. Spill it. Where'd you meet him?" Jo asked keeping her voice down.

They were sitting around a square table. The teacher, Miss Mills was busy telling the class about the Tudors or something. Holly hadn't been able to focus on a word since she had took her seat. She was still dreaming about Caleb.

"Hi Dominic." Heather Sutton bent down and whispered to him as she passed to find her table. Heather was the school's head cheerleader and homecoming Queen. All the boys went mad for her and Holly could see why. She was amazingly beautiful, with long, straight blonde hair, and green eyes. Her legs which she always showed off, seemed to stretch on for decades.

Dominic smiled at her. Jo gave her an evil glance and said, "push off tart!" Everyone looked at her sharply. Heather gave a snort then left. Dominic looked at Jo in annoyance. To be fair Holly could understand why. Jo was acting like his girlfriend when things between them were still uncertain. Jo still didn't know if he liked her.

"Well, are you going to tell me?" Jo said to Holly. Not noticing or just plain ignoring the glare Dominic was giving her.

"I just bumped in to him this morning while I was..." Holly stopped herself, realizing what was about to spill out next. She cast an anxious glance at Dominic who was looking at her amused. A small sly smile played on his lips. Jo didn't need to know that she had been, alone, with Dominic when Caleb had magically appeared.

"Getting my stuff from my locker." She finished. Looking down at her opened text book.

"That's why you were so were late to class." Jo exclaimed. Holly felt her cheeks flush. She hated lying to Jo but it was for her own good.

When the bell rang Holly practically sprang out of her seat like a coiled spring. She didn't want to be interrogated by Jo. But it was Dominic that followed her.

"Someone's being naughty." He teased.

"No I'm not. I'm just....keeping to myself." Holly glared at him.

He threw his hands up in front of himself, as if in surrender. "Seriously why didn't you tell her you were with me?" He asked suddenly all business. Holly stopped walking, he grabbed her wrist and dragged her into a classroom doorway. Standing there with his body practically pressed against hers she felt an overwhelming desire to kiss him. To her disappointment he leaned away. Holly saw uncertainty in his dark eyes, he looked at her bewildered. But quickly reverted to his old self. "Unless you've had your head in the clouds

these past days you have to know how much Jo's into you. I mean really into you. I've never seen her this wound up about a guy before. She wouldn't understand. She thinks that you and me..." She trailed off unable to speak the rest. Not wanting to say the rest. She was already imaging his arms wrapped around her. No! She had to stop thinking these things. He looked at her. "Thinks we what?"

Holly's chest was heaving. The pining for him was becoming unbearable. She loved the way his face leaned to one side as he was looking at her...was that desire she saw in his eyes?

"Dominic," she whispered. He was so close now that Holly could feel him breathing hard. His chest rising and falling as quickly as hers. "It's a line we can't cross."

His lips were inches away. "Lines were made to be crossed." He whispered.

Their lips met.

His kiss was soft, tender, amazing. He wrapped an arm around her waist pressing her body into his. Holly knew this shouldn't be happening but she was powerless to stop it. She wanted him. She could try and deny it all she wanted, but she couldn't escape the truth. Caleb! His face flashed through her mind. His eyes as blue as the ocean, the way he had winked at her....She broke away from Dominic. "I'm sorry. I just can't.." She told him, then ran as fast as her legs could carry her.

§

"She's late."

Ricky kicked off his shoes, spreading his legs across the Watson's plush sofa.

"She's always late." Jo reminded him. Putting the bowl of hot popcorn on the wooden table. She checked her watch anxiously. "He should be here by now."

"Who?" Ricky asked.

"Dominic." Jo said. "Oh well we'll just have to start the movie without them." She threw herself down beside Ricky. They watched the opening credits in silence. "You invited Dominic? I didn't know he was part of our crew now." He finally said. She glared at him. Arms crossed, she did not look relaxed. "He's not. But maybe...after..." she trailed off. He didn't push it. "Have you noticed how different Holly's been since school started?" He changed the subject. "It's just her parents stressing her out. They want her to go to Brown you know?"

"Really? Brown?"

Jo nodded. "She'll be fine once finals are out the way."

"I think she just needs to get laid. Iron out the cricks." He grinned.

"Like you would know what getting laid feels like."

"I will one day. It's Holly's birthday in a few month." He said. Grabbing a handful of popcorn.

"I know."

"Let me guess." Ricky arched his eyebrows at her. "Another party." Jo pulled a face at him.

"You really annoy me sometimes."

"It's why I'm on this earth sweetie."

"Don't call me that, pig-boy!" Jo threw a cushion at him. It missed.

"So are you and Dominic together?" He asked casually.

"Not yet. But it's only a matter of time."

"Have you asked him to the party Friday?"

"Jeez..lay off with the twenty questions already. I was planning on asking him tonight. That's if he ever shows."

Jo looked at her watch again. Where were they?

§

Holly sat at the top of the bleachers.

Looking at nothing in particular, even though the football team was out practising. The kiss was still on her mind. How could she have let it happen? Jo was her best friend. She hadn't

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