

## CHAPTER 37: A LIE

Earlier...

Cyfrin slurped up the last bit of now cold soup, sitting on the edge of his bed with a game controller in hand. There was a knock at the door but he was too focused on the video game he was playing to pay much attention.

"It's open!" he shouted, eyes trained on the wall mounted television.

Zisa slammed the door shut behind her as she walked in, arms crossed with a fed up expression across her face. She stared at Cyfrin for a moment as his fingers scrambled around the controller, desperately trying to shoot a character.

"Fuck, shit, ass!" he yelled at the screen, not even acknowledging her.

Zisa watched him for a few moments, agitation growing stronger as he ignored her presence. His character was getting its ass handed to him by the other player.

Groaning, Zisa snatched the controller from him.

"Hey!" he whined, reaching to snatch it back but she smacked him away.

Without a word, she aimed the gun for a fraction of a second before killing the opponent in one shot. Cy watched in awe as the game ended and his character won first place.

"Can you pay attention to me now?" She tossed the controller back and plopped down on Xavion's bed. "Malach has not let me alone for more than ten minutes the entire fucking day."

"I've been trying to beat this level for hours! How did you just win in one shot?" Cy exclaimed while pointing at the TV like she had some secret tip he didn't know about, effectively ignoring everything she had just said.

"It's called talent. You wouldn't understand," she replied without skipping a beat. "Now tell me where the hell Xav is so that he and Malach fix their relationship and I don't have to deal with their bullshit any longer than I've already had to today."

Cy averted his gaze. "Uh, you probably don't want to bother him right now."

"I don't give a damn if he's angry and locked away somewhere pouting like a baby. My brain will explode if my phone goes offline again from Malach's endless messages." She held up her phone to show twenty unopened texts from the angel. "So just tell me where he is. I can handle him when he's mad."

Cyfrin shook his head. "That's not why you don't want to bother him."

"Then what is it?" she asked.

"He's in Hell," he began, unsure how to break the news that Xav was actually on a suicide mission.

Zisa stood up, headed for the door. "So what? Then I'll find him in Hell."

"Wait!" Cy shouted, grabbing her arm. "He's not just visiting. He... he went there to kill Lucifer."

Zisa's face fell. "Please tell me you're joking."

"I'm not joking." Cyfrin scratched the back of his neck awkwardly. Cy let go of her arm, face reddening as he realized how close they were and took a step back. "It's sort of my fault."

Her expression morphed from worried to pissed in an instant. "You did not encourage him to kill Lucifer!"

"Well I didn't encourage him to do it - it was my idea," he said, trying to make it better but only made Zisa look angrier. "Okay, maybe that doesn't help."

"You're unbelievable," she groaned. "How long ago did he leave?"

He shrugged. "About an hour maybe."

Zisa began to pace and rub her face in frustration. "Lucifer is going to fucking kill him, if he's not dead already! Even if we go there to help it won't matter. He'll just kill us too."

"I don't think Lucifer would kill Xav just yet. He needs him for the war."

Zisa stopped in her tracks. "The war? What war?"

"You've got a lot to catch up on," he whistled. "Ask Mal to explain everything. I've got one more level to do."

Before he could pick up the controller, Zisa threw it across the room. "First of all, you are not going to sit here and play video games while Xav's being murdered by his own dad. We need to go find Malach. He's the only one who has a chance of helping."

"But—"

"I don't give a damn about your game! Put your shoes on and let's go," Zisa snapped as she tossed his sneakers at him. "You're the one who caused this mess in the first place. We wouldn't even have to be doing this if it weren't for your lack of brain cells."

Cyfrin slipped each shoe on with a pout. "I have plenty of brain cells, and they say you're mean."

She rolled her eyes. "If you're not out the door within the next ten seconds and Xav is still alive the next time we see him, I'll tell him about the time you went bra shopping with me and how it took you half an hour to figure out how to undo a clasp."

"It had like four different hook parts! How was I supposed to know?" Cy cried out in defense, rushing to tie his laces and get outside anyway.

After texting Malach to meet in the library, the two hurried there. It only took them four minutes to get there but the angel was already leaning against the door and waiting for them.

"What an idiot," Zisa murmured, not willing to admit she found Malach's eagerness slightly endearing.

"An idiot in love," Cy whispered to her before waving enthusiastically at Mal.

"Is Xav—"

"Not here," Zisa cut him off before he could go on another spiel about missing his boyfriend. "That's actually why we came to talk to you."

Malach's usual grin faltered. "Where is he then? Is he okay? He hasn't responded to me all day or last night."

Zisa let out a breath, clapping Cyfrin on the back. "This moron here thought it'd be a good idea to tell Xavion to go to Hell and kill Lucifer," she explained as Malach's face dropped. "And I'm sure we're both well aware he has no chance of killing his dad. Even if he was strong enough to, I don't think he has the guts."

"Well Lucifer's technically not his dad," Cy cut in, not paying attention to Malach who became overwhelmed with fear.

Zisa blinked at him. "What?"

Cy waved it off. "Lot to catch up on, Z."

Malach interrupted their side conversation, grabbing Cyfrin's shoulders. "Xav is in Hell right now all alone? He tried to kill Lucifer all on his own?" he asked like he was waiting for Cy to pretend it was a joke.

Malach searched Cyfrin's eyes for a non-verbal answer, tearing up when the demon guiltily averted his gaze. A choked noise escaped Mal's lips as he took a step back and felt his chest tighten. Fear like he's never experienced in his entire life consumed him.

Whenever there was a threat, he was confident that he could beat or overcome whatever the issue was. And he knew that if he couldn't by himself, he had people in his life like Yahweh to help guide him through it or assist him. But if Xav was in Hell, that was it. Only demon skin is thick enough to endure the fiery depths of Hell. Malach would burn to a crisp in seconds.

"You guys have to go there and save him," Mal said suddenly, wiping his tears away. "I can't go but you two can. I need you to save Xav for me."

Cyfrin took a step back at the idea. "No offense, but I've failed like four classes this semester already. I have absolutely no shot against Lucifer himself."

"As much as I hate to agree with this fool, I don't stand a chance either," Zisa admitted. "Not against Lucifer."

Malach sat down in one of the chairs, resting his head in his hands as he tried to compose himself. Cyfrin and Zisa awkwardly stood in front of him. Neither of them knew how to comfort the upset angel.

Demons tended to handle emotional issues on their own terms. This was foreign to them.

Cyfrin hesitantly rubbed his back when Mal let out a snifle. "Uhh... there, there. I'm sure Xavion is just fine."

That was a lie and they all knew it, but held onto the hope anyway.



A/N

Since starting this book I've gone through three breakups, had two surgeries, got COVID, moved houses, made all new friends, and became Editor-in-CHIEF of my school paper. I was also 15 at the

beginning of this book.