Chapter 146 The Angel

I spent five hours in my mind space, getting a crash course in angelics.  When I returned to my body, just five minutes had passed, and I felt more prepared for a possible confrontation.  It depended on the strength of the angelics core. My mind constructs seemed to think I could fight him but professed they were referencing books and did not have actual experience. Even Nashima was somewhat confident.

I needed to handle this in a manner to not risk anyone.  They were not going to let me go in alone.  The only threat was the angelic.  I made my decision, “Mary, call Rose and tell her to meet you at the fire tower at the summit. She can walk up the dirt fire tower road.”  Mary took her phone out and dialed the number Rose had called her from.

“Hi, Rose!  I am up at the fire tower…No, I can not come down to meet you.  I saw the men with you.  Can you come up here alone so we can talk?… No, Rose.  I am going to leave.   I don’t know what you got yourself into, but I can not be part of it.” There was a long response from Rose, and finally, Mary nodded. “Great, come alone, Rose.”  Mary ended the call and looked at everyone.

“She said she would come alone to meet me,” Mary disclosed.

“Okay, Mary, let’s go.” I transformed into my incubus form and grabbed a surprised Mary as I flew up the backside of the mountain to the fire tower. I wanted to get there first.

As we flew, I told Mary, “If there is any danger, head down the backside of the mountain on the hiking trail.”  When we landed at the top, I returned to my human form.  The fire tower road would take Rose thirty or forty minutes to climb.

Mary looked at me, “So that was your demon form?  Not that scary.”

“I got lucky.  Some demons are less human in appearance.”  It felt odd to ask, but I did, “Mary, we have not talked much.  Are you doing okay?”

Mary sat on a stone bench under the tower, “Yeah.  I am looking forward to college.  I love my parents, but they are a bit controlling.  After this and what I now know, I do not feel as close to the church.”  Mary rushed on, “I still believe in the values they teach.  My moral code will always be based on my Sunday school lessons.”

There was silence for a while before Mary asked, “How did it go with your sister?”

I knew that even though Mary rarely got to hang out at the cabin anymore, they still talked at school and on the phone.  With Rose gone, my group was her only real friends. It was not a secret in the house that I visited Paige in Tennessee.  “It was a success.  She is upper tier one now and can learn the magic she craves.”

Mary chewed on the inside of her cheek. She asked, “Did you do…or was it like with Vida.”  I did not know she knew about the symbian that Vida used, but I guess there were few secrets—they really did talk amongst themselves a lot.

I hesitated for a moment before revealing, “I actually transformed into a succubus.  I could not bring myself to have sex with my sister, but the process is much more effective with skin contact during arousal. It was a compromise,” I admitted. Or I had been tricked into it. I was not really sure based on the sequence of events.

Mary’s eyes widened as I had not told anyone that I had used a female demon form yet, “You can transform into a female demon?…wow!”  She broke eye contact and looked away down the dirt road leading down the mountain.  She asked, “Would you still raise my core if I asked?  Could you do it like your sister’s?”  She did not make eye contact and spoke very softly as if she feared someone might overhear the longing in her voice.

I really did not want to make it a habit of transforming into my succubus form.  The truth was I felt in less control, and my body was just different. It felt different, responded differently, and truthfully felt more like I was a passenger.  “Yes. We could do it that way,”  my affirmative response was a knee-jerk response to please others.

Mary did not respond, and we could see Rose approaching up the road.  Mary stood, “I want to do that then,” she affirmed.

“Okay,” I started, moving toward Rose and holding Mary back.  A text message hit my phone.  It was from Bedelia and confirmed that Rose was alone.  “Mary, stay here.  I just wanted to warn you now.  In my succubus form, my tail has a mind of its own.”  I ignored Mary’s confused expression and went to meet Rose.

Rose looked unrecognizable.  She wore a black spandex suit under loose clothes.  She had lost a lot of weight and had long, lean muscles.  Her chest looked more boyish than the full breasts I remembered. Her face was gaunt, and her eyes looked a little hollow and…vacant.  I knew immediately her mind had been supplanted as Aurora’s had.  “Rose, how are you doing?” I said, smiling.

“Mary said she would be here alone, but your presence is not unexpected,” she said mechanically.

“Rose!” Mary yelled behind me, “Are you okay?” Mary was fidgeting at seeing her best friend.

Rose looked at her friend, and I looked into her eyes and used my soothing voice and charming eyes on her.  “Rose, why don’t you come and sit down and talk with your friends for a while.”  Rose resisted, but my improved voice and stronger, seductive eyes overcame her defenses. She came and sat on the rock with Mary while I stood in front of them.

“Rose, what is the Archbishop’s plan?” I asked, pressing my control.

I could feel Rose was still under Arturio’s influence, but she also could not resist my request.  She fought within herself as she spoke, “He wants revenge.  He wants the demon, the mage, and the church leadership to know their folly in underestimating his worth.”  I assumed the mage was Rincewind.

I was going to ask another question, but Rose lunged at me with a dagger.  I easily seized her wrist and grabbed the other wrist before she could try anything else. I spun her around, crossing her arms and pulling her body to me.

“I can’t help her, Mary.  My power can not erase the spell holding her enthralled.  I can fog her mind enough to talk with us, but I can not free her.  We need Rincewind,” I said helplessly, looking at a despondent Mary.

“Still, it was interesting to watch you try,” a man with shaggy light brown hair jumped down from the fire tower, landing softly.  It was the angelic, and Bedelia had not seen him arrive, or she would have warned me. He had a pressure to him that I had not felt since fighting the aboleth.

I was busy restraining Rose, who was trying to break my grip on her wrists.  “You must be Kushiel.  Nice to meet you.  I am Apollyon.” I smiled with a grin, trying to appear friendly.

The angelic laughed, “You are not Apollyon!  Going around assuming a name you know nothing about.” He laughed aloud, “He was a twenty-foot-tall, black-skinned demon with razer teeth and claws that could cut through reality!  You are just a penis demon,” he mocked me.

“We fight with the swords we are given.  I am sorry you are envious of mine,” I retorted with a terrible jab.  His core was upper tier three in my abyssal sight.  I did not sense he was obfuscating his strength at all, so my core was stronger than his.  If Telamus’ device was working, my core would show me as an upper-tier one core—a complete non-threat to him.

The problem was that even though it was upper tier three, it was also extremely dense, like it held more aether than it should be capable of.  “Release Rose.  I can tell you are reinforcing the Inquisitor’s hold on her.”  With my sight, I could see the aetheric threads leading to the angel.

He narrowed his eyes slightly and stepped back to about thirty feet.  I guessed he figured out I was hiding my core’s strength or being cautious.  “At least you are more interesting than you seemed from up there.  Who controls your strings, demon?  Are there any more aboleth spawns on this planet that you are plotting with?”

“Curious you are interested in the aboleth when you could not be bothered to come and assist in its destruction,” I spat.

He was confused for a moment, “Do not try and twist words devil’s pawn. I know you played a role in the aboleth’s manipulations. What higher demon placed you here? I would know before I take your head and return to Zion. I grow weary of this layer.”

“I serve no demon lord. I am here of my own accord and will defend this planet from the angelics who have abandoned it and are trying to cut it from the Source,” I said, reaching a little out on our assumptions. I also hoped to maybe learn something. My opponent just looked confused.

Kushiel walked to his right, “Do not try to confuse the point demon. This is a nursery world. We have protected it for millennia!” There was some anger in his normal, relaxed voice. His hand extended, and a pure white sword materialled that crackled with tiny blue arcs of lightning. “I think I am done talking,” he flashed forward, and I threw Rose out of harm’s way. I did not think he would hesitate to sacrifice her to kill me.

I retreated to summon my two tetsubos. He was faster than me, which was irritating as my core was stronger. He was also an excellent swordsman, he cut through my shield in one swing, my shield belt completely useless. My hand was flying through the air, not attached to my body. “Not cool!” I yelled, and my tetsubo swung, and he easily retreated out of range. Mary had not run away and was hyperventilating as blood gushed from my stump. I picked up my hand while walking Kushiel and attached it.

The overconfident angelic waited minutes while my fingers slowly started working again. He finally said, “I was hoping for better. AT least some type of challenge.”

“Yeah, I have only been a demon for four months. How about you give me a few hundred years to get stronger?” My outward bravado did not match the panic inside me. He could easily take my head. He must have upper-tier three-speed. Although I could upgrade to lower tier four, I was still years away from reaching that level.

“Then you have spent your time unwisely demon,” he considered. “If you are just four months old, you must have been turned. You are not from a Pit World. Who turned you?”

I turned to Mary and Rose. “Release those two. Let them get away down the mountain, and I will tell you,” I said. I was stalling, trying to figure out how to get out of this. I did not see any transit threads in my range.

“Run humans,” Kushiel said, and Rose stumbled from being suddenly released. He looked back at me expectantly.

“Go! Mary. Tell everyone not to come up here,” there was no point in anyone else dying. It took them a long moment before they moved. Rose was acting drunk as she regained her sense of self, and Mary helped her down the hiking trail.

I looked at my better, “Just give them a few minutes to get far enough away.”

“I do not care for the mortal’s fate,” the angelic waved unconcerned. “If you try to flee, their lives will be forfeit.”

“Well, I do care about them!” I growled and transformed into my demon form. I kept my obfuscation ball as I transformed, not revealing my lesser tier-four core. Kushiel took a cautious step back. I doubted I could bluff him into thinking I was stronger, so I hid my core rank. At least not after my poor display of fighting skills. At least compared to his.

“Her name is Andromeda. The one who changed me from a human to this!” I flexed, showing my enhanced form. Kushiel was cautious but did not show any fear. I started pushing all my aether through the angelic core Andromeda had put inside of me to combat the vampyres. The angelic energy boiled my blood, but I was hoping it might give Kushiel pause. He lowered his sword, the tip touching the ground.

“Andromeda…” Kushiel was searching his memory or mind space. “A Fallen? Must be for you to have both angelic and demonic powers within you,” he mumbled but did not seem overly impressed.

I nodded, hoping it would buy me more time. “She was betrayed on the Walls of Anephison, her sister perishing because her angelic lord did not fight, forcing her to turn away and embrace a life guided only by her own ambitions as a demon.”

“You overreach with what you think you know, demon,” he said angrily. “Where is she now? If she has no binding to you, is she dead?” Kushiel asked, his sword disappearing. He was trying to appear non-threatening to get more information from me. At least, that is what I was assuming. The longer we talked, the longer I lived. I did not know how I was remaining so calm. I was learning a hard lesson in power differential today. I thought that I would be a match for this angelic, but that was so far from the truth. I was going to have harsh words with my mind space constructs.

“She is out of contact. I plan to go to her. Do you know of Andromeda?” I asked, hopeful to keep him talking.

Kushiel paused as he was thinking, “I do know of her. She has been a thorn in the side of angelics and others on higher layers.” I waited on him as my hand returned most of its strength. He finally turned to me, “Maybe I should take one of her servants to someone who can reward me.” He eyed me up and down like a piece of meat.

I retreated to my mind space. Everyone was in the pedestal room and started talking at once. I screamed, “Give me a fucking solution!”

Lilith came forward. “We can project one of us out. It will only be momentarily, but it should surprise him. That construct will also dissipate permanently as I have not solved the anchoring process yet.” Casper nudged my hand, volunteering.

“What other options?” I asked.

Nashima offered, “Angelics are vain. Just as much as demons. Offer him something. Tell him where Andromeda is as the price for letting you go. He may or may not keep his word. The word of an angelic is about as good as the word of a demon.”

Pandora added, “They might send a whole bunch of angelics to try and find her, making rescuing her impossible.” I nodded to Pandora, acknowledging her thoughts.

“I like the idea. The agelics already control Mercanious, so I assumed they were the ones who captured her. Maybe a different faction?” I theorized. “So, no silver bullet in here for the angelic.” No one had an idea, but Casper seemed to want to volunteer for the projection option. I rubbed his head, knowing it wouldn’t help. Kushiel was just too fast for it to make a difference.

I returned to my body, having only been gone a few seconds. Kushiel seemed to know where I had been and was waiting on me, “I will tell you where Andromeda is.” His eyebrows arched in surprise. “What guarantees do I have that you will let me go?”

“None,” was all he said. Fuck. He was a dick, but he had complete control of the situation.

“She is on Mercanious. They are attempting to sever it from the Source as they will be doing to this planet next,” I said as I believed it, assuming he had some type of truth-revealing ability.

His eyes narrowed, and I waited. He was either thinking or conversing with his own mind space constructs. He finally said, “You can live today, demon. Get stronger so you are a more worthy foe the next time we meet.” Relief flooded me, and my knees went a little weak, but I did not show it outwardly. I was thankful I had not shown him my true core strength, or he might have ended me knowing how much stronger I could become.

Kushiel started to walk, and then massive white feathered wings exploded from his back. He was not headed down the mountain toward the Archbishop but off to where I assumed a transit was located, hurrying to relay what I had told him. I watched him go and turned when he was over three miles away in the sky.

After being beaten down like a little bitch I needed to vent. The angelic seemed unconcerned about his human allies. Rose was safely away, but I think it was time for the puppeteer to meet some true justice. I pulled out my phone and texted everyone. I wrote, **Angleic has been dealt with. I am going after the Archbishop. Last one there is a rotten egg!**