

A
REDEMPTION OF
WINGS

BONUS EPILOGUE

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LUCIFER COVERED HIS eyes, protecting them from the blinding flash of light as he ran through it. Not fast enough. When his vision cleared, the one being he thought he could trust was gone. The next time he saw Shax, he'd kill that traitorous motherfucker.

He yanked on his hand, setting the broken bones now the fight was over. Who knew a simple angel could beat the piss out of him? It had been too long since he'd had a real challenge. He would not let it happen again.

Glancing around the throne room, Lucifer seethed and plotted his revenge. It would be slow, it would be sweet, and above all else, it would be bloody. His gaze struck Michael, still unconscious after the thorough drubbing Shax had doled out. A cruel smile pulled back his lips as he stalked over to his brother.

“Get up, you piece of shit!” He kicked Michael squarely in the ribs, sending him flying across the room.

Michael hit the far wall with a satisfying crack, leaving fractures in the stone. The former archangel groaned and stumbled to his feet, black ichor dribbling out of the nearly healed stump where his hand should be. His eyes widened as they lit upon Lucifer, then red washed over his face and he charged.

Lucifer felt the wild grin form, almost as if his lips had a mind of their own. This, this was what he craved. Violence, brutal rage, and unabashed hatred.

Michael hit him full force. Lucifer took a page out of the angel's book and opened his wings, slowing them before reaching the other side of the throne room. He brought up his knee into Michael's stomach, forcing the air from his lungs.

Entangling his fingers in his brother's hair, almost like a lover, Lucifer yanked Michael's head back with a laugh that shook the rafters.

"Oh, brother, Heaven and Earth have made you weak. Look at you, stuck here with me, short one hand. How will you find pleasure now?"

He flung Michael to the side, great clumps of blond hair in his hands. He dropped the strands and prowled toward his newest demon. Michael lumbered to his feet, more ichor oozing from his scalp. Lucifer waited, just out of reach.

Michael started swinging wildly, his blows merely glancing off Lucifer's body. The Prince of Hell felt nothing. Not pain, not rage, not even malevolent joy at this fight. Emptiness filled him, so vast as to swallow up the spark of his soul God had left, all the better to torment him.

Standing before him was family—the only family ever to descend into the bowels of Pandemonium. Admittedly, it had not been Michael's choice, but he was here now.

Lucifer swung a fist like a missile and, once more, Michael flew across the room. After all, the Prince's power came from Hell, and they were at the heart of it. With the mantle of archangel stripped from him, Michael was now a mere demon. No one had more power here than Lucifer, not even his brother.

This time, Michael stayed down, blinking the black blood out of his dazed eyes.

“Where would Aeshma go?” Lucifer asked.

“Why would I know?”

They were the first words Michael had uttered since he tried to claim Kheone, that bitch of an angel. What made her special enough to turn his best assassin and cause an archangel to lose his power? It didn’t matter—she was beyond his reach for the moment. One day, there would be a reckoning.

“You’ve been her pet. Surely, you’d know where she’d slink off to instead of defending her prince.”

Michael spat a goblet of black goo onto the floor. It hissed and sparked, leaving an even more foul stench in the air.

“I am no one’s pet.”

“Could have fooled me.”

A growl like a volcano about to erupt reverberated in the throne room. Michael rose slowly from the ground, bracing himself against the wall with his remaining hand. He took one step, then another, before collapsing to the floor.

Lucifer approached and looked down at his brother. He may no longer be an archangel, but no other demon could have survived what Michael did. Weeks of torture, months of being Aeshma’s pet, and two battles back-to-back, first against the angels and then against Lucifer.

Michael tried to rise, pushing up with his arms. He finally seemed to notice he was missing an appendage. He held the stump up to examine the healed flesh. Grief and anger warred on his face. Good. Lucifer could use those emotions to his ends.

He shoved Michael down with a foot to his back.

“I’m thinking, brother mine. Stay, like a good pet.”

Michael groaned but stopped struggling.

Lucifer's favorite assassin had just defected. He'd lost face with his court. The fucking bitch Aeshma had vanished. He needed a win. He needed an ally.

"If I let you up, will you try to kill me, or will you listen to reason?"

It was a risk—Michael was often the most unreasonable of all the archangels. So tied to his role as God's general that he never considered the gray areas. His only rival in that respect was Raphael, but even that prick occasionally bent the rules.

"I am listening," Michael wheezed.

Lucifer let up and strode for his throne. Michael coughed and braced his back against the wall, cradling his injured arm against his chest.

Paying his brother little heed, Lucifer opened the small chest standing on an ornate table next to the throne. He pulled out one of the thirty tarnished silver coins nestled in the velvet lining. The bones of the throne creaked, almost screamed, as he sat upon them. He flipped the coin in the air and caught it.

"It appears I have need of a new assassin. And it appears you have need of a purpose besides being a fuck toy. We were brothers once. Perhaps we could be allies now."

Michael wiped the black ichor from his face and scowled at Lucifer. "My choices are to be used by you to secure your throne, or to be fucked by Aeshma?"

His brother had always been quick on the uptake. Lucifer reached into the shadows of the throne and pulled an obsidian blade from its sheath. Whatever color was left in Michael's face disappeared.

"There's a third choice, but it would be a waste to kill someone as skilled as you."

Glancing between the blade and Lucifer's face, Michael's eyes hardened, and he sat up straighter.

“What will you have me do?”

Lucifer slid the dagger back to where it belonged and held the coin to his lips. He whispered a name, then flipped the coin across the room.

Michael snatched it out of the air and shivered as the magic bond settled into his bones. Once accepted, it was nigh impossible to break. Only one demon had ever managed it, and he'd just departed in a blaze of Heavenly glory.

“Find Aeshma, bring her here. Alive is highly preferable, but dead will suffice.”

Slowly rising, like a giant sea serpent out of the deeps, Michael somehow sucked all the air out of the room. Bloody, battered, and filled with rage, he bent his head just the tiniest amount. Lucifer suppressed his smirk. This would be hard for Michael, bending his will to Lucifer's desires. How fun!

“Yes, my prince.” But he didn't move.

“Well, what are you waiting for? Be a good boy and go fetch.”

Michael stormed out with as much subtlety as a tornado on the Kansas prairie. As the door boomed shut behind him, Lucifer chuckled. With Michael at his side, he might finally have what he needed to bring Heaven to its knees.

It was good to be king.