

THE FALLEN

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PART ONE

The Fall

Chapter 1

The young man stared into the eyes of his aggressor, wondering why it was that he was always picked on. They never got anything out of it, Gau had nothing they were interested in and he never reacted to the taunting and pushing.

Today though he could see they were going to push him too far. He could see the bitterness in his assailant's eyes, the anger that had always before been hidden today was on the surface.

He prepared himself.

His aggressor pushed him again, the spectators suddenly seeing what Gau already knew was coming, seeing that the aggressor would swing next. One of them stepped forward, intent on catching the swinging fist.

He managed to stop the aggressor just before the fist would have connected. Gau smiled, still staring into his aggressor's eyes.

"Leave him man, it's not worth it." The spectator whispered loud enough for Gau to hear. The aggressor shook free and swung again. Gau swayed backwards, just out of reach then elbowed his assailant in the sternum as he swayed forward again.

The man dropped breathlessly to his hands and knees, the spectator stepping back in surprise.

"Good day." Gau said quietly as he walked around the man and continued on to his destination. He hoped he'd never have to deal with that again.

Alexa folded in her wings, ruffling the feathers to get them to sit neatly. What this creature was saying made some sense, there was no way anything evil could get into Eden. Nothing evil had set foot here since the time of Adam and Eve.

And yet still she felt like she should not trust this creature, this monitor on two legs. She did not recognise it as a creature of the garden and the fact that it seemed to be vocalising rather than communicating in any way recognisable for the lizard it seemed to be based on.

"Where did you come from?" She enquired inquisitively. The monitor seemed to shrug, its scales making a soft rustling sound. She noticed that the ones that changed their position seemed to change colour in the light.

"I woke up here, I don't remember before." It seemed to say. Its mouth did not move, nor did any other part of it suggest that it had spoken however Alexa was still sure she

was hearing it rather than interpreting as was usual with the creatures of Eden. She considered her options for a moment, knowing that with her suspicions she should probably go to the Arch-Angel.

If this creature was an alien to the Eden though, she shouldn't let it out of her sight.

"Come with me." She commanded, turning and leading the creature towards the Arch-Angel. It was the only way.

The beautiful Archangel Sariel stared at the creature, as curious as Alexa was about him. He had watched Eden for long enough to know that this creature was not of the land. As with Alexa though, he knew that it was not possible for those without divine power to enter the realm.

He stepped close to the creature, between it and Alexa, then started to circle it, watching as the scales reflected the light differently, constantly changing colour.

Alexa felt a frisson of terror sweep over it but suppressed it. She was in the company of one of the most powerful beings in existence, nothing could go wrong.

The monitor allowed the inspection, standing still for the most part. It was only as the Archangel turned away that Alexa saw the shiver pass through its scales. In that moment of rapid movement she thought she saw its form change but dismissed it as being a product of her fear.

"Although I do not doubt that you are here for a reason, I can not believe that you are a part of the realm." Sariel intoned, his voice rich and deep. The monitor shivered again and this time Alexa was sure of what she saw. She took a step forward but it was too late.

The lizard form shivered one more time then grew instantly to twice its size, the scales disappearing and revealing a more leathery skin, crimson in hue.

It moved quicker than she thought possible, its still toothless maw snapping closed around the neck of the Arch-Angel. With a snap of his wings, Sariel pushed the creature away and turned towards it, a sword of light appearing in his hand.

He moved with deft speed, slashing at the creature's throat while moving forward, his wings providing a forward thrust as he moved. The creature dodged under the blade and snapped its mouth around the Archangel's left hand.

Sariel pulled the creature forward and slashed down onto its tail, severing it completely with a hiss. The creature released his hand, roaring in pain, then darting around the Archangel and snapping at his left shoulder.

The Archangel followed its movement easily and slashed at it as it snapped, the blade of the sword cutting cleanly through the crimson skin on either side of the maw.

The creature did not pause, instead slashing at Sariel with vicious intensity with its claws. They sank deep into the Archangel's chest leaving four gashes running diagonally across it.

Sariel gritted his teeth and attacked with renewed vigour, sending forth a blurred series of slashes at the creature. As each slash landed a hiss accompanied it and Alexa

saw dark welts forming wherever the blade touched.

The creature staggered backwards, its arms going limp. As it took one more step away from the Archangel, Sariel slashed once more across the creature's throat, severing the head.

Sariel and Alexa stared at the creature as it fell to the floor. Within moments it began to disintegrate, becoming a fine mist that floated away on a non-existent breeze.

The Archangel was breathing deeply and Alexa could hear that he was having difficulty with each breath.

"Shall I go and fetch Raphael?" she enquired quietly, almost trying not to be heard. She felt powerless and worse, she felt responsible for the terrible injuries she was currently staring at. Sariel turned to her and seemed to be trying to recognise her.

He opened his mouth as if to speak but then closed it again, his brow furrowing in puzzlement. Alexa stood staring at the Archangel, not able to move, unable to comprehend the symptoms that he appeared to be displaying. The Archangels had always seemed perfect, powerful, infallible.

And yet here stood Sariel, unable to recognise her, unable to speak. She shivered as dread crept up her spine.

Sariel's mouth curled into a snarl a moment before he dropped his blade, his hand going to the gashes in his chest and trying to clutch at them. The snarl turned to a grimace as he dropped to his knees and bowed his head, obviously in pain.

Alexa saw the bite on the back of the Archangel's neck, red and practically glowing with heat. Infection did not exist in the realm of the divines but Alexa had spent time around humans once and she recognised the signs.

She ran for help.

By the time Alexa had gotten back to Sariel with Raphael and Raguel Sariel was already lying prone on his back, his right hand still on his chest, the left swollen and red as the back of his neck had been, his throat red and inflamed now as well.

His breaths came slow and shallow and Alexa knew in that moment that it was too late. Nothing Raphael could do could save Sariel. Raguel turned to her and gestured for her to follow him.

She obeyed without hesitation, knowing what was coming. She had had no choice, but she had still failed and so punishment was something that was inevitable. Alexa followed the Archangel a little way into Eden before he turned to her.

"I imagine you're shaken up by this?" he asked of her. She nodded, not trusting herself to speak without giving away her expectations. Raguel looked back towards the glow that told them Raphael was attempting to heal his comrade.

"If Sariel dies..." he trailed off, apparently troubled by the continuation of the thought. Turning back to her he continued, "Banishment to the realm of humans shall be your punishment. You will not be sent as you are but split. The side of you that could have saved Sariel will be one, allowed to learn to be stronger. The side that led to this

mess shall be the other, allowed to learn to trust her instincts.”

Alexa stared at the Archangel, not fully understanding what he meant. He put a hand on her shoulder, comforting despite the judgement he had just passed down.

“I am truly sorry.” He said as pain ripped through her.

Samantha screamed out in pain as she woke up, feeling a deep burning sensation between her shoulder blades and her spine. She looked around at the room that she had woken up in, her breathing heavy. Her eyes took a long time to adjust to the darkened atmosphere.

She could smell something foul in the room with her but could not identify it immediately. It was only after a moment that memory began to come back to her about the dream she had been having. A dream of Eden and Archangels and a demon.

The foul smell resolved itself and she identified it as alcohol and cigarette smoke. The combination meant trouble since the cigarettes were likely not pure, and the fact that she could smell it meant that he was in the room somewhere.

Slowly she climbed out of the bed, glad that she had slept in her clothes, and moved towards the door, careful of the lumps on the floor, any of which could be him.

She made it out without accidentally tripping over him. She had had enough, it was time to leave this place, to leave the pain that he constantly inflicted on her. She made her way to the front door.

Samantha put her hand around the door knob and slowly turned it, only pulling on the door when she heard the latch clear the strike plate.

“Where are you going, slut?” his voice whispered right behind her. She became aware of the smell again too late.

As he grabbed her arm so tightly it hurt she screamed.

Victoria woke with her arm throbbing as if she had been grabbed. She could feel the pain of her other heart but could do nothing about it, her blackened wings too conspicuous. She had tried to venture into the city twice but both times her wings had been identified as more than a coat.

She had flown away both times, hoping that somehow the people watching would be dismissed as crazy or otherwise dismiss what they had seen.

So far she had been lucky. She cursed her lack helplessness, not just for herself, but also for her twin Samantha. She moved to the front of the cave in the cliff overlooking the city, the morning lights still on as the sun rose above it. Such a beautiful view, marred by the knowledge of what was right at this moment happening somewhere in it.

She had considered flying down during the night and removing the man from existence but she had not lost all sense of what was right and what was wrong.

Unfortunately killing without provocation like that wasn't even grey enough for her to motivate herself to do it. She sat down, holding her arm and shutting her eyes, trying to take some of the pain from her twin, feeling the blows landing on her shoulders and back as she curled into a ball.

“Please, someone save her.” She pleaded as the tears began.

Gau heard the scream and its sudden end. His blood ran cold even as he started to run towards where he was sure the sound had come from. The abandoned house on the corner had long fascinated him with the dingy residents that he had often seen moving in and out of it.

Now it no longer seemed like a curiosity but rather it looked dark and foreboding. He hesitated a moment at the foot gate, listening, wondering whether he had imagined the cry that had drawn him here.

Another one sounded, a loud sob that confirmed what he had heard initially. He grabbed the top of the gate, stepped up onto the middle crossbar and launched himself over and into the unkempt garden, feeling the strong smell of weeds hitting him as he crushed them.

The narcotic flora was not his concern though as he sprinted towards the door, his backpack tight to his back as always. He could see that the door was slightly ajar. The breeze should have pushed it open all the way but instead he could see it almost shivering.

As he got closer he heard the soft thuds of someone being beaten and his blood boiled. The scream had been female.

He stopped at the door, felt his jaw clench as he forced himself to resist the urge to kick the door open, figuring that the person being beaten was likely behind it.

Instead he knocked and waited as he heard the beating stop. There was a whimper of pain, then the door opened. A man stood there, unshaven and unkempt, the smell of alcohol strong enough for Gau to feel it burning his nostrils.

“What do you want?” the man demanded roughly. Gau considered his options for a moment, then stepped forward and put his hand on the door. The man reacted as he had expected, by reaching forward to push him back out.

Gau grabbed the man’s hand, pulling it forward and down. With his right hand he grabbed behind the man’s neck and quickly dropped to his left knee.

The man’s intoxication showed as he rolled over forward and landed heavily.

Gau stood quickly and moved into the kitchen beyond the door. A girl lay on the floor, her nose bloody, an eye swollen, her bottom lip split. Gau couldn’t help the snarl of anger that escaped him as he looked back to the man who was just now standing up.

Gau stepped towards the man, his fists clenched in anger for the first time in a very long time. It was only the girl’s voice that stopped him.

“Don’t.” She whispered quietly, the word clear despite the clear damage to her face. The man stood and turned towards him.

“Get out and leave here.” He growled. Gau could see his right hand clenched and knew once again what was about to come.

“I’m not leaving without her.” Gau said as an ultimatum, watching the man’s body language. He could see the possessiveness, the violence, the jealousy, the anger and

bitterness, all of this he could see in this man's eyes.

“One more chance.” The man warned.

“If he attacks me, may I defend myself?” Gau enquired of the girl. A muted sob was her only reply. “My statement stands.” He replied to the man. With anger fuelled violence the man charged, feinting with a punch but then sending a kick towards Gau's knee.

Gau dodged sideways, stopping himself from kicking back, instead moving his foot to overextend the man's already extended leg. The man slid into a split beyond what he was capable of and howled in pain. Only then did Gau kick out, catching the man in the chest.

He watched as the man fell backwards, hitting his head on the strike plate on the door frame. The man crumpled into unconsciousness.

He turned to the girl and extended his hand.

“Come with me, I'll keep you safe.” He promised, keeping his voice low. With the slightest of hesitation she took his offered and he helped her to her feet.

They left the house behind.