

# blown away!

*Even More  
Confessions  
of an  
Angel-in-Training*

S H E L D E L I S L E

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# **dedication**

For my heavenly readers.

# chapter 1

**T**his is the moment I've been waiting for.

So, you'd think I'd be having a good time. *You'd think* being the qualifier.

But, it's incredibly uncomfortable to stand still, frozen and looking like some person during a Time Dilation.

The mostly backless, white robe that they forced me to wear is scratchy, and I just want this whole thing to be over. Still, I've wanted my wings for an eternity, so I can't really whine, can I?

Hope, our Heavenly couturier, has an ever-present tape measure and a clip board to make notes. Her hair is pulled into a tight chignon. She has several pencils, and other scarier looking tools stuck into her bun. She moves behind me and stretches the measure along the span of my shoulders.

"Tsk, tsk. Please stand straight, Grace. An Angel should have perfect posture for her wings to fall in line properly."

Sheesh. Good thing she's never seen my angel walk. She might use one of those *implements* on me. At any rate, this shoulders-back posture falls into the same category, and is actually much harder because at least when you're moving it's easier to fake it. I lift my chin and elongate my neck and pull my shoulders back, while Hope presses against the small of my back.

"Much better. Now, stay like that. You don't want to be off balance during flight."

Little does she realize—I'm used to being off balance. Even so, I hold the pose.

As Hope takes more measurements—the span of my shoulders, the distance between my shoulder blades, shoulders to waist, shoulders to bottom—I survey the incredible number of wings hanging from hooks along the wall. In front of me is a three way mirror with several outlines projected

onto the glass of how the wings may actually look once I've been fitted. One enormous pair catches my eye.

"Will my wings be big?" I ask. I've always admired how magnificent Michael's are. Victor's, too.

"Size is not important," Hope explains. "It's how well they fit you, and how you use them."

*Is she for real?* "That—"

Pop. Whoosh.

"—sounds like some kind of cliché if you ask me."

"What does?" Archangel Michael asks.

I'm absolutely, totally, unconditionally mortified. Somehow I was transported from my wing fitting to Michael's office. I've been here on a few occasions, but never without advance notice. I glance around to see if he's done any redecorating, but no. It's as stark, sterile, and command center-looking as it ever was. Not only am I not properly clothed, which is bad enough, but he has Archangel Gabriel in the office with him. I'm used to embarrassment with Michael, but other Archangels—not so much.

I feel the heat in my face and neck. "I was discussing how my wings would look with Hope."

"Sorry, Grace. I didn't check when I summoned you. Please go back and dress more suitably and then return for a meeting."

"I can finish my wing fitting?" I ask without an ounce of hope. The kind that has nothing to do with my seamstress.

"I'm afraid not. That'll have to be postponed. Please re-schedule your appointment, and give Hope my apologies for the inconvenience."

Wouldn't you know it? I finally get the go-ahead on my wings and something else comes up.

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About ten minutes later, I'm back in Michael's office. Now Raphael has joined the party and there's another Angel I've never met. Her expression catches me off-guard as it fluctuates between beautiful, ancient, stern, angry, youthful, and tranquil. Whatever quality she's supposed to represent, she sure is moody.

"Grace, you already know Gabriel and Raphael. This is Natura, and she could only meet today, which is why I had to ask you to postpone your previous appointment."

“Some people, people who show respect, mind you, call me Mother Nature,” she explains to me, but it’s clear from her current expression that this is meant as scolding for Michael. *Wow*. I never thought I’d see the day.

Michael ignores the dis, and continues with his agenda. “Grace, you became acquainted with Annex on your last Mission.”

Boy, had I! The guy was a Locust. I ended up stuck next to him on a flight, where he revealed his goal to destroy the Angelic Hierarchy. For some reason, I guess because I buck the trends, he’d become fixated on me and wanted me to join him. “Yes,” is all I say.

“He’s very misdirected,” Michael continues.

“Confused. It’s confusion,” Gabriel adds.

“Misdirected! Confused?” Natura snorts. “Let’s talk turkey. He’s a troublemaker and he’s trying to break into The Garden of Eden in order to eat from The Tree of Creation.”

Originally, The Garden of Eden was on Earth, but after the whole apple *incident*, Our Heavenly Papa moved it back to The Wilds and now it’s used as His private lab. I heard the plan is that He’ll move The Garden back to Earth once the humans learn to be better behaved. Although no one, not even Angels, are allowed in, everyone knows the story of the most famous trees—The Tree of Life, The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Nevertheless, there are a lot of trees in The Garden. I wasn’t familiar with the one Mother Nature mentioned.

“What’s the Tree of Creation?”

Mother Nature scowls at Michael. “We don’t have time for a botany lesson on The Garden. They want to control Creation, which as you may have surmised, affects me a great deal.” She’s definitely beyond irritated.

“Calm down, Natura. We’re attempting to address it,” Michael says, urgency in his voice.

She huffs, *Mother Nature*, then takes a deep breath and the lines in her face smooth.

Michael straightens some papers on his desk. “Right. *Mother Nature* is obviously upset about the Locusts, and I’m afraid, Grace, that her anger tends to overflow onto humans. The weather of late has been...volatile. We think you may be able to help.”

“I can completely understand why you’d want him to stop,” I say to Natura in sympathy, “but...I don’t understand what this all has to do with me.” *I don’t have my freakin’ wings yet.*

“We think...” Michael pauses and looks sternly at Natura, who just shrugs like whatever. “All of us think you could convince Annex to stop this crusade.”

*Me? He has to be kidding?* “I don’t even have my wings,” I manage to say.

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“It doesn’t matter,” Michael says.

“Maybe to you. You already have yours.” As soon as this leaves my mouth, I know it’s a mistake. Michael’s wings are quivering and *that* is never a good sign. Gabriel and Raphael look horrified. The only one who is looking at me with interest is Natura, and I can’t quite read her expression.

“Perhaps I judged your choice too quickly,” Natura says softly to Michael. “She certainly has some guts, even if she is a bit dense when it comes to botany.”

*Dense?* Wait a minute--Michael picked me? “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that, but I hardly seem qualified for this Assignment.”

Life is funny sometimes. Not too long ago I would’ve said I was ready to take on anything in pursuit of my wings. But experience brings wisdom, and unfortunately wisdom brings knowledge of your own limitations. My two prior Assignments taught me a lot about my strengths, but I’ve also discovered my shortcomings. I’m pretty sure tackling this project with Annex falls outside my expertise. Way outside.

“For the time being, all we want you to do is to connect with him. Watch closely, see what they’re doing in The Wilds. Let us know if they’ve somehow gotten into the Garden of Eden. That’s all,” Raphael says, as if it’s no biggie.

“So, I’m a spy?” I ask.