

Chapter 1

“Something’s wrong,” I said. *Story of my life.*

Warrick used the sleeve of his brown leather jacket to rub away the dust from the warehouse window. “You’re right. It shouldn’t be taking him this long.” He looked over at me, bright green eyes illuminated from the moonlight shining outside.

“Do you think something happened to him?” he asked.

I stared through the murky glass and put my hands on my hips. My thumb ran up and down the hilt of the hatchet attached to my waist.

“Maybe,” I answered truthfully. “Seph knows the risks better than us. He also knows we can’t find him if he’s in trouble.”

Warrick hesitated, then said, “Dro could.”

I shot him a dark glance. Yes, my adopted sister could find our resident Seraphim warrior by using supernatural skills that continued to confuse, amaze, and terrify me. But I wasn’t going to ask her to do that. Not even for Sephiel. It was too dangerous, especially now.

“We can’t keep waiting for him,” I said, turning away from the window.

I walked deeper into the crumbling warehouse, my scuffed combat boots splashing in thin puddles of God knew what. Steel support beams were scattered through the metal building. The large windows on the rusted walls were cracked and grimy. There was a dirty, multi-paned skylight over our heads and decaying concrete under our feet. It wasn’t the best place to hide, but we assumed it would be temporary since Sephiel said he was coming back soon.

So much for that plan.

I made my way to the four door truck Sephiel stole for us before he left. I looked in the truck bed, where my little sister was asleep with her boyfriend.

Max and Dro were snuggled close together underneath a sleeping bag. Max looked younger than most eighteen year olds with a mop of curly black hair and a sweet, boyish face. A stubbly, black goatee was growing around his mouth. It was the only thing that kept him from looking like he belonged in a teen-pop band.

The contrast of Dro lying next to Max was jarring. His skin was a dull gold like my own, but Dro was as pale as a person could be without being called a ghost. Her skin was milk-white and smooth, stretched over a shapely body and an angelic face. Snow-white hair spilled around the top of her head, her ice-blue eyes closed in sleep.

I looked at Max’s arm as it was draped over my sister’s ribs, keeping her close to him. Even though his arm, the sleeping bag, and her clothes were blocking it, I knew exactly where her scar was. The raw, gaping wound that had poured blood when her rib was torn from her body, making my little sister scream with more pain than any living person should have.

My heart felt heavy even as I shook off the memory. It had been two months since that night. Two months since the Gates of Heaven and Hell were opened. Two months since Lucifer had risen and found his child.

My brain taunted me with the phrase “time flies,” and I told that bitch to go fuck herself.

Dro shifted, moaning softly. I tensed, waiting to see what she would do. She always got nervous about sleeping beside Max. It was impossible to predict when Dro would have a nightmare. They were horrendous for her, and deadly for us. The only consolation we had was that Max was gifted too. He was a psychic whose foresight increased by touch. If he sensed a nightmare coming, he would warn us. After that... Well, our survival would depend on how fast we could run.

I watched her pinch her pale eyebrows together, as if she was in pain. I didn’t know what my sister was dreaming, wasn’t sure if I would ever know. She didn’t like to talk about the things she saw in her sleep, not even to me. It couldn’t be anything good, and there was no way for me to take her nightmares

away.

“Constance?” Warrick’s gentle, deep voice came from behind me.

I turned sharply, facing the tall, incredibly handsome demon slayer. His thick brown hair was a tired, wavy mess on his head. His goatee was now becoming a beard. Sincere green eyes fixed on my dark brown ones. Just looking at him made my heart rate speed up. He seemed to know I was off my game, something that didn’t happen often. The readiness to help me burned in his eyes. He was waiting for me to tell him what to do.

The gesture was kind, but pointless. There was nothing Warrick could do to help me with Dro. I was beginning to think there was nothing any of us could do.

I could have lied and said I was fine, or that I wanted to be alone, but there was no point to that, either. I hadn’t slept in almost two days. I was too damn exhausted to try faking otherwise.

“We should get moving,” I muttered. “Seph will have to find us on his own.”

I turned and slapped my hand against the edge of the truck bed to wake up the kids. My sister shifted and started stretching, blinking her icy blue eyes open. Max groaned and turned his head closer to Dro, burying his golden face in her shoulder and pulling her closer.

“Good dream,” he mumbled. “Go away.”

I hit the side of the truck bed again. “Too bad. I can’t drive the truck with you sleeping in the back.”

Dro’s eyes found mine. She pushed herself up onto her elbows, white hair falling down her back. She was sixteen, but looked older every day since her injury. I tried not to notice, but I couldn’t fool my little sister. She could read me like a book and knew when something was bothering me.

“Con? What’s wrong?”

She also knew I wouldn’t tell her what was on my mind until we were alone.

“Seph isn’t back yet. We need to leave.”

My sister’s eyes widened. “He said he was just going on a scouting mission,” she said worriedly, sitting up.

“I know. But something must have delayed him.”

I didn’t tell her that Sephiel might have been tracked down, maybe even killed. Dro wasn’t a naive girl. She was smart enough to understand the possibility that he was dead. Sephiel was a soldier of the Heavenly Host, but he was in a human vessel, and humans could be destroyed all too easily.

“He’ll find us, Dro,” I offered to make her feel better. “If we don’t hear from him soon, you can connect to him.”

She looked at me nervously and bit her lower lip. Dro’s powers had been growing ever since Lucifer used her as a conduit to open the Gates of Heaven and Hell. The strength of her powers had nearly doubled, and it was easier for her to sense any demons or angels nearby.

After all, Dro was a mix of both.

But the catch was that while she could sense them, they could sense her. We hadn’t had any problems with angels yet, but the threat of Lucifer turning up out of the blue was a constant terror we were forced to live with. It was part of the reason I hadn’t slept in nearly two days.

“Come on,” I pressed. “We need to go.”

The kids started sliding out of the truck. Max played the gentleman and offered Dro his hand to help her down. She smiled at him, but as soon as her feet touched the cement, she gasped and clutched the truck bed.

“Dro? What is it?” I asked, stepping forward.

She was breathing heavily, placing one hand over her heart. Max gripped her other hand. She couldn’t focus, so he used his gifts to read her. Dro lifted her head to meet my eyes. She looked terrified. Max turned his head to mine and his expression matched hers.

“Demons,” he breathed.

Shit.

My hand went to the hatchet on my hip. Warrick took his sawed-off shotgun from the inner lining

of his jacket. "How many?" I asked.

"Four."

"What kind?"

"Two Reds and two Shredders."

"Shit," Warrick cursed under his breath, voicing my thoughts.

"Get the truck started. We'll hold them off."

Max darted from Dro's side, running for the truck cab. Dro took a step closer to me.

"I can help," she offered.

I looked at my little sister. A half angel, half demon girl who had heightened senses, could heal almost any injury, use telepathy, and create hellfire blasts as hot as the sun.

Dro had more power than I could comprehend. But she couldn't control it.

"No," I told her. "Warrick and I have this. You stay safe."

Dro narrowed her eyes to show her irritation. "Seph isn't here, Con. You need as much help as you can get. I know how to fight."

Of course she did. I taught her myself. But being a big sister came before her desire to play hero.

"Look, if we get pinned down, you get our backs. But I'm not having you directly in the fight, Dro. Not since you're the exact thing they want."

That gave my sister pause. A flash of terror went through her eyes. Demons had been chasing her for years. They wouldn't give up until she was in their clutches, and there had been some damn close calls. Not that I was going to give the bastards any more chances.

A high-pitch screech sounded just outside the warehouse and made me spin around. I tightened my grip on the hatchet. Warrick finished loading his sawed-off shotgun and snapped it closed. His expression was completely calm and blank of fear. He wouldn't be a very good demon slayer if he were afraid of demons.

"They're almost here," he stated, casually walking to the middle of the empty building.

I glanced at him, then turned back to Dro and gave her a final, pleading look. "Please, little sister. Stay safe for me."

She frowned. She never liked standing back and watching me fight. I was a plain, simple human. Dro had seen me bleed and nearly die more times than she could count. She told me that she hated herself for being weak, and not being strong like me.

I told her that she shouldn't have to be.

Dro backed away to the truck where Max was standing. He wasn't a fighter, and he had the smarts to keep very far away when the demons made their unwelcome entrances. I turned away from them and walked to Warrick. The demon slayer was rigid, his eyes hard and trying to be everywhere at once.

"There's not a lot of cover out here," he said without looking at me.

I unhooked the hatchet from my belt and spun it in my hands, slipping a silver knife out from my lucky jacket. "Yeah, well, it's not like we have a lot of—"

Glass shattered on our left. The first demon had jumped through the window.

It was a Red, a hybrid *eurynomos* and *oni* demon if you wanted to be technical with your demonology. I called them Reds because their bodies were the color of blood. They were six-foot tall, humanoid monsters with smooth, poreless skin, hooked black claws, and oily chunks of hair. Their ears were pointed like a bat's, their fangs were razor sharp, and their almond shaped eyes were completely black from lid to lid.

The Red twisted its head in our direction, hissing once before it charged toward me with inhuman speed. I hefted my knife and threw it at the demon. It slammed into the speedy creature's shoulder. The Red shrieked as the angel-blessed silver weapon sank into its flesh. But it didn't stop running. More glass shattered on my right, followed by a loud *boom* from Warrick's shotgun. I didn't have to worry about him. This was his job. He knew how to take care of himself.

The Red swiped its claws at my face. I leaped to the side, tucking and rolling. The Red reached

around its stomach to grab my hair. I spun on my knee and sliced at the monster's arm. Black blood sprayed out of the wound and onto my face. It burned against my skin, but I'd been covered in demon gore so many times that I could almost numb the pain.

Screeching in fury, the Red lunged for me. I rolled away and shot to my feet. I jumped and spun a kick to its head, knocking it onto the ground. Even before it was finished landing, I was driving my hatchet into the monster's face.

It bucked and howled as the blade split its cheek in half. More demon blood coated my hand and arm as I hammered the blade down. This new hatchet was more powerful than my last one. It was blessed by Sephiel, coated in silver, and cleaned in salted holy water. It didn't take nearly as many hits to kill a demon now. It wasn't my father's hatchet, but it got the job done.

After one more strike, the demon's skin began to blacken and crumble inward as it turned to ash. I grimaced at the acidic smell of sulfur from the dead demon's remains. *One down, three to go—*

Instinct tugged at my brain and said there was movement behind me. I kicked back and felt my foot connect with something. For a second, I thought I'd kicked a pale concrete wall. Then I looked up, and up, into the snarling face of a Shredder demon.

Oh, shit.

It raised its claws over my leg. I yanked my foot back before the gigantic creature could slice it off. I stepped back to look at the beast taking up every inch of my vision. The monster was triple my weight and almost two feet taller than me. Its skin was pale and covered in long, bumpy scars. Greasy, shoulder-length hair hung from its head in thick, black strings. The Shredder had a blocky face and milk-white eyes that made it look blind. Its teeth were nasty and sharp behind its thick lips, but that wasn't going to be what it tried to kill me with. The foot long, solid bone claws at the end of its fingers were made for that.

The demon didn't hesitate to slash at me again. I weaved from side to side, only barely escaping the Shredder's claws. It pressed on, determined to cut me in half. I was quick, but I was human. I was already feeling weary from the fight with Red and all the sleep I denied myself.

And there were still at least two more demons to kill.

The Shredder shoved its claws toward my gut. I twisted away at the last second, but I didn't get as far as I wanted. My stomach brushed across the demon's thick, mutilated arm. The smell of sulfur and sour rot almost choked me. I tried to cut it with my hatchet, but the Shredder yanked its arm away. Before I could react, its elbow slammed into the side of my head.

Stars exploded behind my eyes. I felt like I'd been hit with a brick. I landed hard on the ground, rolling to catch my fall. The Shredder stabbed down with its claws, forcing me to wrench my body to the side so I didn't get skewered. I swung around in a crouch, drawing another silver knife from inside my jacket so I was doubly armed. I got to my feet and backed up, my head still pounding from the hit. My sight was semi-blurred, which made dodging and ducking the Shredder's claws much more of a challenge.

Then I backed up too far. My spine hit a metal beam. I panicked for half a second, giving the Shredder a chance to swing its claws at my face. I ducked and twisted behind the post. Metal screeched as the bony claws sliced across it. I took cover behind the post and hurled my silver throwing knife into the Shredder's eye.

Its head rocked back and it roared in fury. One of its hands went for the weapon. It curled its hand around the blessed weapon, bellowing its rage as the silver burned it. I could hear flesh sizzling, but at least it was distracted. I kept away from its good eye, hoping it wouldn't be able to sense me before I found a way to kill it. I'd faced this kind of demon before, but the fight hadn't gone well for me that time.

Holding my hatchet tightly, I crept behind the Shredder and slashed the blade along its heavily scarred back. The Shredder cringed and stumbled forward a step, still gripping my knife. It screamed when it ripped my knife from its eye, then swung its arms back at me. The claws narrowly missed my chest, but I still kept away from its good eye. I darted around its back and lashed out again, the hatchet blade catching it in the back of the knee.

Thick, oily blood splattered onto my jeans and combat boots. The demon didn't buckle like I hoped. Instead, it twisted sharply, and finally saw me with its uninjured eye. Its lips peeled back in a nasty snarl, and I knew I was in trouble.

The Shredder charged at me with more speed than something its size should have. I barely had time to dive out of the way, and even then I felt the tip of its claw scratch along my leg. I winced and bit back a cry as I collapsed onto my side. It felt like being lacerated by a rake, and this was a damn *graze*. I twisted as the Shredder swiped for my head. I laid flat on my back, watching the claws sweep inches from my face.

I tried to roll out from under the demon, but it grabbed my shoulder and pinned me in place with its hand. Sharp bones poked up into my cheek, blood oozing out of the wounds. All I could smell was rotten eggs and sour body odor. It raised its other clawed hand, ready to tear off my face. It kneeled down and completely trapped me under its weight. The air whooshed out of my stomach, making it impossible to worm free. The monster was panting over my head, suffocating me with breath that smelled like a corpse. I tried to think, but I knew I wouldn't be able to figure out a counter attack before it killed me.

The Shredder suddenly jerked and reared back, turning its head away from me and roaring at whatever had struck it.

That was the only opening I needed.

I sliced my hatchet across its throat, black blood pouring onto my chest and burning me. The sharp, putrid smell of sulfur from the monster made me gag. Holding my breath so I wouldn't puke, I raised the hatchet again and slammed it into the Shredder's face. I hacked at the monster a couple more times until it finally started crumbling into dark ash.

I squeezed my eyes shut and covered my face with the sleeve of my lucky jacket, hoping I wouldn't breathe in a dead-demon-dust. The ash coated the entire front of its body. Once it finished dissolving, I risked opening my eyes.

Dro was standing a couple feet away from me, the silver knife in her hand slicked with demon blood. I wasn't surprised she saved my life—again—but she'd taken a risk when I told her not to. Sometimes I worried that she was taking after me a bit too much.

I wiped away some more of the demon ash, then pushed myself up and looked at her with sharp eyes. "Didn't I say something about staying out of the fight?"

"You did," Dro said, handing my knife back. Wickedness crossed through her eyes. "But you're not the only one who can kill a demon."

I gave her an exasperated look as I dusted myself down, then turned my head to where Warrick had finished fighting the second Red.

Demon blood stained his leather jacket and jeans, but he was in one piece. He didn't even have a mark on him. He shouldered his sawed-off shotgun, eyeing me up and down. He looked mischievous and dangerously attractive.

"Did you have fun?"

I shrugged, the last of the demon ash flying off me like dirty snow. "I don't know about you, but that seemed a little too easy and too quick."

Warrick raised his eyebrows at me, thinking I was insane. Maybe I was. Who the hell knew anymore?

Realization suddenly hit me. "Max said there were four. Where's the other Shredder?"

Just as I said it, something exploded out from the skylight in the ceiling and dropped heavily onto the truck's hood. Max, who had been waiting outside the truck's cab, jerked back as fast as he could. The Shredder's weight had the back end of the truck rearing up once before slamming onto the ground again. The demon turned its head to the right, seeing my friend. It jumped off the hood, landing only feet from him. He backed up because there was nothing else for him to do. He didn't have any weapons. He couldn't fight. He was the perfect target.

"*Max!*" Dro screamed.

She raced for him, Warrick and me racing behind her. Even though my leg howled in pain every time I put pressure on it, I was faster than my sister. I flipped my knife in the air and hurled it at the Shredder.

My aim was off because I was running, but the blade still sank into its shoulder. Not that it stopped the demon from raising its claws and slashing into Max.

My heart skipped a beat when I saw blood spraying out from his chest. He screamed as he fell to the ground. The Shredder raised its claws again, ready to drive them into Max's back. We were almost in front of him. I stopped to find my aim, arched my arm, and threw my hatchet at the demon.

This time, I found my mark. The hatchet went straight into the Shredder's chest. It howled and stepped back, forgetting about Max. Dro and I grabbed his arms and started pulling him out of range. I looked up to see that the Shredder was still alive. It yanked both my knife and hatchet from its torso, roaring against the smoke coming from its burning hands. The demon dropped the weapons and swung its claws at us. Dro wasn't paying attention, so I threw an arm over her back and pushed her down with me. The claws sailed over our heads by about an inch, moving our hair with it. There was a loud *boom* from my left followed by another thunderous howl. Warrick had shot the demon full of rock salt.

Dro and I continued to dragging Max to safety. He was still breathing, but it was raspy and shallow. Three heavy slashes were cut along his chest to his ribs. The whiteness of his shirt made the appearance of the dark red blood on him even more terrifying. It stuck to the wounds, which were much worse than mine. Dro was on the brink of tears.

I left her with Max, unable to focus on the severity of his wounds right now. Dro would heal him, and he would live. Hopefully.

Drawing the last two knives from inside my black jacket, I gritted my teeth and took off for the Shredder. Warrick had its complete attention. It hacked and slashed its claws wildly, forcing the demon slayer to move back. One swipe knocked the shotgun from Warrick's hands, but he never missed a stride. He reached into his leather jacket and brought out a combat knife. The demon swung for him, making Warrick duck as low as he could. In one fluid movement, he stabbed the Shredder in the arm. Its sharp, coughing bark echoed off the walls.

Warrick went right to his next move. He lunged forward, stabbing the Shredder in the ribs. The knife was stuck deep in the monster's thick side, and Warrick had to grip the knife hilt with both hands to yank it down against the Shredder's ribs. His moves were perfect, but he had gotten too close to an angry monster. The Shredder growled sharply and kicked Warrick in the chest. The force of the hit sent the demon slayer was back five feet, slamming him into one of the support beams. His head cracked sharply against the metal. He crumpled and landed face first on the hard concrete, then was still.

The Shredder took a step toward him, at the same time I made my move. I jumped up, my good foot hitting the side of the truck. The angle was a bit awkward, but I had more leverage to push off and land on the Shredder's back. I buried my knives deep into the demon's shoulder blades, trying to make the cuts as damaging as possible.

Black blood squirted out of the wounds as I dragged them through the Shredder's tough skin. My hands were covered in the burning, sickly smelling blood. I was hanging onto them so tightly I could feel the plastic hilts biting my palms. My face was pressed against the demon's back so it couldn't grab me, and my cheek was rubbing against the coarse Shredder hide. The smell was so bad my eyes started watering. I tugged on the blades. I squeezed my eyes shut and turned my head away as more blood splashed onto me.

Needless to say, the Shredder wasn't appreciating my piggyback ride. It stabbed its claws over its shoulders, nearly embedding them in my skull even when I ducked. It twisted back and forth violently, not caring that my legs flopped around and smashed into its side, thighs, and back. I hung on as tightly as I could, but my blood-slick hands were starting to slip from the knives.

One sharp twist finally hurled me off the demon's back. I slammed into the truck's windshield, glass cracking against my spine. I shook off the dizziness in my head as the Shredder turned around,

stabbing at me with both of its claws. I rolled just as its bony talons punched through the glass next to me. I felt the windshield sink behind me, and rotated my body until I fell off the hood of the truck.

I landed hard on my side and I turned onto my back. I was about to get up when the Shredder pounced onto the truck's hood. Metal squealed as it bent under the huge monster. Its lips peeled back in a snarl as it stared at me with enraged, pale eyes. It held its claws out on either side of its massive body, ready to pounce for the final kill.

My heart bounced in my ribcage as I scrambled for an idea. I was out of weapons. No one was around to help me. When that demon jumped on me, it was going to slice me to ribbons.

Just as I was thinking about how quickly I could move before the Shredder caught me, a blast of white light filled my vision. I threw my arm over my eyes while the temperature in the room ratcheted up fifteen degrees in a single second. The heat was like standing in front of a furnace. I scrambled to my feet. Once my head cleared, I turned around, and saw that the truck was on fire.

Blinding white flames wrapped around the vehicle like they were coming from a flamethrower. There were four shotgun-like pops as the tires exploded. The demon was consumed by the blaze. I couldn't see the shape of the Shredder any more, but I could still smell rotting, burning demon flesh. I could hear it screaming.

I followed the direction of the flames, and saw Dro standing with her hands outstretched in front of her. Her pale, angelic face was pinched in concentration. Two streams of hellfire blazed out from her palms.

I stared, trying to understand what I was seeing. Dro had never been able to use hellfire like this. It only happened when she was dreaming. She would scream in her sleep and burst into flames that wouldn't hurt her, but would destroy anything around her. She had never been able to control it before.

But now she was.

Max was standing behind Dro. His shirt was still torn and bloody, and he looked a little pale, but I couldn't see any wounds on his chest. He was staring at my little sister with the same emotions I was feeling. Shock, wonder, and fear.

Ear-shattering explosions made me duck and cover my head. I whirled around, seeing the enflamed truck lift five feet off the ground before dropping with a loud crash. I dragged my eyes more to the left, and I saw a smaller, burning white heap. *At least the Shredder's taken care of,* I thought grimly.

The sudden explosion broke Dro's concentration. She exhaled in a tight gasp, abruptly ending the hellfire. Her eyes fluttered closed and she swayed. Max rushed to catch her, wincing as he lowered her onto the ground. I ran over and dropped by their side.

"Dro! Dro!" I called, gripping her shoulders.

Her skin was scorching, but Max and I didn't care. I shook her gently, but urgently.

"Come on, little sister, wake up!"

Dro sucked in a deep breath and blinked at the ceiling. Her eyes unfocused as she turned her head in the direction of my voice. She looked at me with concern.

"Are you okay?" she asked in a rushed breath.

I sat back on my heels, relaxing my sore muscles and trying to smile. "Yeah, Dro. I'm fine. Covered in dirt and demon blood, as usual."

My sister didn't smile back. Max helped her sit up, brushing some snow-white hair off her forehead. "Pretty girl, you're crazy."

She leaned against him, letting him pull her into a hug. Max kissed the side of her head and held her close. Then he looked at me with confused eyes. I shook my head at him. If anyone was going to ask Dro about what she'd done, it was going to be me. Dro pushed away from Max and looked at me again.

"You're hurt," she said, seeing my face and my leg.

"It's okay," I said. It was almost the truth. "It's not as bad as it—"

Dro was already kneeling in front of me, placing one hand on my face and the other on my leg. Her hands filled with a golden light as she used her magic to heal my wounds. I bit the inside my cheek to

keep from wincing as my injuries were surrounded by an uncomfortable pins and needles feeling. I should have been used to it since Dro had healed me a thousand and one times, but my brain refused to shake the *wrongness* of it all. I looked over her shoulder at Max.

“Go check on Warrick,” I told him. “He took a bad hit to the head.”

Max nodded, got to his feet, and jogged over to the demon slayer. He still hadn’t moved from the floor, so I could only hope that he was unconscious. He’d thrown himself in the line of fire to save Dro, Max, and me. Warrick had been in our group for about three months now, and it was hard for me to imagine him not being with us. It made my life a million times easier knowing I didn’t have to be the only fighter in the group that someone else could take watches, and he was an expert at killing demons.

“I’ll heal him too, Con,” Dro said. A small smile grew on her lips when I looked at her. “I’ll have him looking gorgeous again in no time.”

I frowned, having forgotten that she could read my thoughts and sense my emotions if she wanted to. She very rarely did, though. Dro knew me better than anyone else, and respected that I wanted to keep my thoughts and feelings to myself. If I had something to say, I was going to say it. I didn’t keep secrets from her.

But like all younger siblings, Dro loved to drive me crazy.

“You do that, little sister. I don’t care how he looks.”

She laughed, a sweet, gentle sound that always managed to cheer me up no matter how black my mood was.

“Liar. I’ve seen you sneaking glances at him.”

“Because I don’t want him reaching for his phone to call the cops on me.”

“Uh huh.” The glow left Dro’s hands when she pulled them away from my freshly healed body. “So if I said he was giving you the same kind of looks, you’d say it’s just because he’s thinking about collecting that Marshal’s bounty?”

“Yup.”

Dro smiled and shook her head. “It’s your loss if that’s all you’re thinking about, big sister. Warrick is the perfect man for you.”

I groaned. Our friend was missing, we narrowly survived a demonic attack, there was a burning truck in the background, and my sister was trying to play matchmaker. I didn’t have time or patience for romantic fantasies, no matter how easily Warrick would fit into them. I had serious trust issues in that department, and for good reason. The last relationship I was in ended about as well as a gang war, since my then boyfriend and I had tried to kill each other.

Pushing away bitter memories, I looked at the flaming truck. “We’re gonna need new supplies.”

“I’m sorry.”

I glanced over my shoulder at Dro again. She was holding her upper arm and staring at the ground. She was blaming herself for what happened.

“It’s okay, Dro,” I said. “It was time we got another vehicle anyway. The new one will help us stay under the radar. We can always find more supplies.”

She nodded, but I knew she would sulk for a while. Everything in the tuck was replaceable. A couple small bags of food, some clothes, and sleeping bags. All our weapons were on us or scattered around the warehouse. Walking around was going to be difficult with the world beginning to spin off its top, but if we didn’t have a choice, then we didn’t have a choice. I wasn’t going to blame Dro for anything. The girl had been through enough in her life. She didn’t need unnecessary guilt thrown on her shoulders.

I touched her arm so she would lift her head. I smiled at her. “I know how you like to shop.”

Dro stifled a laugh, then put her arms around my torso and hugged me.

“I’m sorry, Connie. I saw the Shredder hurt Max and Warrick, and then it was going after you, and I just... I had to stop it. I don’t know how it happened.”

I stroked the back of her snowy head. “We’ll figure it out. We’ll meet up with Seph and he’ll tell

us.”

If we're very, very, very lucky.

Even if Sephiel was alive and he made his way back to us, he might not be able to answer our questions about Dro. There was nothing in the world like her, the first successful hybrid of an angel and a demon.

A child directly from Lucifer's blood.

Our knowledge of her was still so limited. Since Hell and Heaven had been set loose, it had only become harder to protect her. I glanced at the burning truck again, and knew it was only going to get worse.