

dead on air

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dead on air

by [beebeebuzie](#)

Summary

“Because that is not Alastor,” Lucifer says slowly, pointing at the Radio Demon.

The fallen seraphim’s eyes flick away from the dangerous smile.

“That is.”

is it night yet?

Chapter Notes

Alastor is my favorite character which means i need to kill him

i wrote this during a major writing block so if it's strange i am so sorry

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There is something wrong with Alastor.

Not that he will ever share that, of course. His reappearance had been grandiose and sweeping, a sudden jump into a sentimental moment to reaffirm himself as the Radio Demon.

Untouchable. Unshakable.

It is a testament to Alastor's skill that the hug Charlie had slung across his chest had elicited no reaction. It had to have hurt.

It still has to hurt. The shadow has lingered over Alastor's shoulder enough times while he sews snapped threads back together to see the full extent of the wound, and while the shadow may not have a physical body he is more than aware of what *pain* is. Alastor is sure to be feeling a tremendous amount of it.

But still...that is no reason to doubt. The shadow does not doubt ~~anymore~~. Alastor is flawless when it comes to keeping himself above water; a great comfort to the shadow, considering the danger they are in. Alastor has snapped at the shadow more than once in the days following the battle, but he still cannot help but follow along unless dismissed, ready to sweep them both away at a moment's notice from prying eyes.

Or angelic blades, potentially hidden. No matter how innocent one appears, there is no such thing as *innocent* down here in Hell. Everyone who lays eyes on Alastor is a *threat*.

The new Hotel is *vibrant*, a shining beacon of tackiness, an eye-catching display of the Morningstar's power, and it has seen no end to the steady flow of interested demons. The shadow hears their reasonings as he lingers behind Alastor, petty and shallow, ranging from *I wanted to see how the fuck you beat off Exorcists* to *King Lucifer, can I have your autograph?*

Hilarious. It seems Alastor is the only one with any sort of self-awareness in this mob, even if the lack of those desiring redemption is forming a cloud over Charlie's endless sunny day.

Perhaps there would be cause for concern over Alastor's...*condition*, milling around so many new demons, but the real staff had taken precautions against the swell. The top floor is locked

to staff only (and Angel Dust, apparently), ensuring a safe haven.

Even if said “haven” is not safe enough.

Nowhere is safe enough. Not with the holy fire burning under Alastor’s chest.

Not that the shadow will ever admit he’s worried. And it’s *senseless* to be worried in the first place, all things considered. This is *Alastor*. A puny little injury from Heaven’s chosen dog will do nothing to change that.

But Alastor is slinking through the halls again, his shadow following.

It isn’t like they have a choice but to keep to the corners, creeping through the Hotel late at night. Even if Alastor will be right as rain the moment his chest heals, that does not solve the problem of it not healing *now*.

There is a well-stocked library in the topmost floor of the Hotel, one of the few *good* contributions His Royal Majesty had actually done, and there’s an equally stocked medical ward on the other side.

Alastor’s nights have been a coin toss between which one he decides to go to, but going to at least one has been non-negotiable. He does not *need* to sleep, but the shadow worries about strain on an already stressed body.

If the wound takes Alastor, then—

There is no point in thinking about it. The shadow clearly has not learned his lesson about *fussing*, and he is more the fool for it.

It seems Alastor is heading towards the library. Last night’s attempt in the medical ward hadn’t done anything, so it’s back to research. Supposedly the only official records of angelic power being removed without an extended regeneration period were due to Lucifer himself siphoning it out, but that is out of the question, and despite Alastor ~~most likely~~ *decidedly* being capable of recovering from such an extreme degree of regeneration, it would take far too long.

Ah. Speak of the Devil—ponder his capabilities for healing, whatever—and he shall appear.

He’s in the parlor as Alastor steps into it on his way to the library, peering at a chunk of peeling wallpaper.

“How is this already peeling,” Lucifer mutters as Alastor glances at him. “We just built this last week—who’s there?”

Alastor, who had every intention of simply *walking*, turns to look at Lucifer. The shadow cocks his head, waiting expectantly.

“Why, I am Alastor,” Alastor says, “or did you forget my name again? It’s really unbecoming of someone as prestigious as yourself to have a memory so short—” he taps a hand against

his mouth mockingly at the last word. “My *apologies*,” he says, “I forgot how *touchy* you are with that word.”

Lucifer fumbles for words, only succeeding in making a series of frustrated sounds before throwing his hands up in the air. “We—oh *come on*, are we really starting this already? It’s...” he glances around for a clock, and then flips his hands. “...late,” he finishes lamely. “Too late for whatever you want.”

“It’s merely eleven thirty-seven at night, Your Royal Highness,” Alastor says, shaking a summoned pocket watch at Lucifer. “One should always have the time to be *functional*, hm?”

“Ha ha,” Lucifer deadpans. “That really does hurt when I’ve been spending all day checking up on repairs, and, oh wait,” he says, tapping his chin mockingly, “isn’t that supposed to be *your* job? While you’re off in the shadows like some creepy alley cat, *I’m* working.” Lucifer sweeps his arms out wide, leaning forward slightly in a mocking almost-bow. “Along with everyone else that isn’t *you*.”

“Oh, I’m *sure* you’re so appreciated,” Alastor draws. “Stepping in to do the easy part, after *we* all spent six months doing the *actual* work. Tell me, where were *you* when the old hotel’s wall was being blown up every other week and our beloved Charlie needed assistance? Wallowing in your castle, waiting for her to ask you to be the hero?”

The shadow laughs soundlessly behind Alastor, and Lucifer puffs up like an angry sparrow.

“Okay, listen here,” Lucifer snaps, advancing towards Alastor like Alastor *doesn’t* have a solid foot of height on him. “I don’t care *how* big you think you are, or how funny, or whatever. *I* am around now, so there’s no fucking use left for *you*, so keep your mouth *shut* before I—“

He jabs his finger into Alastor’s chest for emphasis, and his expression immediately changes.

“What the fuck?”

Alastor’s grin curls dangerously, exposing gums, and the shadow moves closer. All the shadow can think is *danger danger danger*.

Because the only actual angel in this place has just realized something is off, and that Alastor is lacking some of his power.

Alastor steps back in one smooth motion, and Lucifer is left with his finger pointing at nothing. “Why the interruption?” Alastor goads, voice even—there isn’t even a hiccup in the amount of static. “What were you saying about there being no use for me? Why—“

“Shut up,” Lucifer says.

Danger danger danger danger danger

He advances again, eyes locked on Alastor’s chest, and when Alastor goes to take another step back Lucifer’s hand shoots out and clamps down onto Alastor’s wrist.

DANGER DANGER DANGER DANGER

There's a small but sharp burst of static, and Alastor's smile is now a threat.

"Let go."

"You should be dead," Lucifer says in awe, ignoring the bared teeth in front of him.

The shadow slips in closer to Alastor. All he has to do is grab him and they will be gone, away from this monumental threat that is hiding his fangs behind confusion that someone more foolish would think *genuine*.

"Is that a *threat*, *Your Majesty*?" Alastor hisses.

"You—don't play dumb, I can *feel* the energy in—how in the fuck are you *not dead*?" Lucifer says, focusing so much on the injury he is blissfully ignorant, and the shadow creeps his hand onto Alastor's upper arm, ready to—

Lucifer's other hand slams forward like a snake's strike, clamping down on the shadow's wrist, and if he could make a sound he'd *hiss*. He bares jagged teeth at the seraphim, making it as obvious as he can.

LET GO.

Lucifer does not let go. He's staring at the shadow, still with that damned look of confusion, but it lasts only a second before his face shifts. It flicks through confusion, to dawning understanding, to *denial*, before landing smack dab onto something that can only be described as *horror*.

"You don't have a soul," he says, voice drifting into the air like a feather. The shadow pulls himself up and looms, trying to look as intimidating as possible in the face of such... *accusations*.

The shadow would like to think that the horrified expression on Lucifer's face is due to intimidation, but even as foolish as he is, the shadow still isn't *that* stupid.

Lucifer starts to speak. "When the *fuck* did you m—"

"Dad?"

Lucifer twists his neck to look over his shoulder at Charlie, standing in the entryway to the room.

They're still in the parlor. Of course. The shadow shrinks back to his normal size and grits his teeth, trying to pry Lucifer's hand away.

"Charlie?" Lucifer says, completely ignoring the shadow's increasingly frantic attempts to *get the seraphim off of him*. "Did we—I'm sorry, we woke you up talking, didn't we?"

“No,” Charlie says, rubbing one of her eyes. “I was going to go to the kitchen to get something, but—are you and Alastor fighting? What’s going on?”

“We were having a minor disagreement,” Alastor says, and Lucifer turns towards him in disbelief.

“What—*disagreement*?” Lucifer echos, disbelieving. “No—absolutely fucking *not*, this is bigger than that.”

“Dad?” Charlie says again, stepping even closer. If the shadow had a heart, it’d be racing. “What are you talking about?”

Lucifer glances at her again. The shadow can still see his profile—he’s mouthing things, evidently trying to figure out how to say whatever *nonsense* he’s come up with, before he turns back to Alastor.

Lucifer has them ensnared in a trap, and he’s sinking his teeth in, clearly eager to get rid of this threat. The shadow is tense, eyes skittering to find an escape route, *any* escape route—

“Alastor—he was gone at first, right?” Lucifer flicks his eyes up and down Alastor, who is unmoving. “But he was supposed to do something, right?”

Charlie blinks. “Um—he was supposed to deal with Adam, but something went wrong? He’s fine now, so I didn’t...Alastor?”

She turns her attention to the man currently in Lucifer’s clutches. “Why is that important right now? Are you—did Dad need to know something?”

Alastor opens his mouth to respond, but he doesn’t get the chance to.

“Yeah, okay—fighting with Adam? He didn’t come back from that unscathed,” Lucifer says, giving the physical arm that’s clasped in his hand a shake, still ignoring both Alastor *and* the shadow. “Judging from the amount of—there’s—I think Adam...he nearly tore him in two. I didn’t feel it until now, but he should’ve *died*.”

“*What?*” Charlie means to rush forward, but Lucifer unfurls his great wings, blocking her from coming closer. His tail emerges alongside, visibly lashing in agitation. “What—Dad, what do you *mean* he should’ve died?”

The shadow narrows his eyes at her open concern before turning his attention back to the hand around his wrist, keeping an eye on Alastor’s profile for any cues. If he can just wriggle free...

“He got injured,” Lucifer says, “and it should’ve been—it *is*—too much damage for a demonic body. I mean, sure, maybe if he was an *angel*, he would’ve survived it if he saw a healer, or something, but from what I’m sensing it went *deep*. Way too deep. His soul—he should’ve been chopped in half, and if he hadn’t been, he should’ve been *burned*. Like radiation.”

He glances back at Charlie, and the shadow flicks his gaze back up to see that she's staring at her father with wide eyes. "That—" she chokes and clamps her hands over her mouth for a moment, taking a steady breath before lowering them.

Lucifer lets go of Alastor for all of a quarter of a second before his tail whips forward, coiling around Alastor's wrist, anchoring him just as firmly as before.

"That—that's—how is he *alive*? If you're sensing it then he's still hurt, no one healed him—Alastor, I'm so glad you're still with us," she says, "but—you don't have healing powers—*how?*"

"In order to have survived," Lucifer says, "his soul needed to have not been touched by the angelic power. At all."

He shakes his newly freed hand, and the shadow narrows his eyes as Alastor's grin widens, the faint buzz of static rising.

"Dad," Charlie says, "what are you saying? Are—he doesn't have his soul? Did he make a deal? How did he survive—please, just *tell me*."

"Charlie, dearest, I believe your father is out of touch with his subjects," Alastor interjects. His voice is hoarse, and the shadow freezes, looking up. "I won't deny that Adam got a lucky hit in during our duel, but really, it's simple," he continues. "I survived—"

"Because that is not Alastor," Lucifer says slowly, pointing at the Radio Demon.

The fallen seraphim's eyes flick away from the dangerous smile.

"That is."

He's pointing at the shadow, who stares back with an uncomprehending expression.

Chapter End Notes

we get a little silly with it

sun-drown place

Chapter Summary

All the king's horses and all the king's men aren't necessary to put Alastor back together again.

Just the King.

So long as he knows what he's doing, of course.

Chapter Notes

we get even sillier with it

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“What?”

Charlie and Alastor speak in unison. If the shadow could talk, he would've said the same thing, but all he can do is stare blankly at the finger being directed at him. The rising buzz of static fades to almost nothing in Alastor's confusion.

“You heard me,” Lucifer says. “That shadow thing?”

“That's Alastor.”

“Charlie,” Alastor says, “I do believe your father has misplaced his priorities as far as injuries go.” He leans towards Lucifer, looming ominously. “He has clearly hit his head and begun descending into madness.”

Lucifer doesn't flinch as he stares up at the Radio Demon. “Big talk from someone who's going to die from angelic poison,” he snaps. “If you hadn't—“

“You'd like that, wouldn't you?” Alastor snarls.

“*Alastor*,” Charlie says, but it's futile. Lucifer is spreading false ideas about Alastor, not to mention *literally* trapping him in place, so of course, Alastor is responding with as much vitriol as he can to get Lucifer *off him*.

“You'd *like* to finally have me out from under this roof, hmm? Poor, pathetic little king, so *afraid* of one little demon that he is scrabbling for ways I could be defeated?”

“*Alastor!*” Charlie shouts, but the only one who spares her a glance is the shadow.

Charlie’s ideas tend to lean towards delusional, but she is far too smart to *interfere*.

Alastor is the real authority here, as far as the shadow is concerned, and he will do what it takes to ensure his safety.

Lucifer dithers, spitting out half formed words in a ridiculous attempt to regain composure. “You—I am—That’s not—“

“Oh? Am I wrong?” Alastor’s eyes are dials. “That whole song and dance to show off your superiority to me when we first met, your disdain towards my presence after I reemerged, your oh so *obvious* attempts to push me out—all of those were nothing?”

“That’s not fucking *relevant*,” Lucifer says, and Alastor leans in even closer, static returning to buzz loudly.

“Is it not?” There’s ominous stitches at the corners of his mouth now. “Or is it a showing of the *depths* you will sink to in order to try and regain some favor with your darling daughter?”

Lucifer’s unoccupied hand comes up to shove Alastor’s face back, and he narrowly misses Alastor’s teeth snapping at his fingers. “This isn’t me making shit up—I can—there’s even a way for me to actually *prove it*, asshole.”

The shadow’s eyes go blurry.

He jerks, the only thing keeping him in place is Lucifer’s ironclad grip still on his wrist, but it does nothing to keep the room from spinning as the shadow feels *power* surging from where the seraphim’s hand is in contact.

He’s dizzy with it. The room is spinning and too bright, and he can see the way Charlie and Lucifer are *glowing*—

The room is back to normal, like nothing happened. The shadow whips his head around to stare at Lucifer, no longer blindingly bright, but who has an expression the shadow can’t figure out.

“I fail to see how momentarily impeding my vision proves anything,” Alastor snaps, and the shadow can see that he’s back to his normal form. No stitches or dials in sight; even the static has been reduced to almost nothing again.

It affected him too?

“I wasn’t proving it to *you*,” Lucifer says. “I checked your—“

“Oh, do *share*, Your Highness, what excuse you are concocting for that little trick of yours.”

“You would already know, *Al*, if you hadn’t *interrupted*—“

“Dad,” Charlie says, “you still haven’t explained *what is going on*.”

Lucifer falters, and Alastor angles his ears forward expectantly. His eyes flick towards the shadow in the ensuing pause, and the meaning is clear.

Do not interrupt.

The shadow obediently moves away from Lucifer, shifting in as close to Alastor as he can without pulling against Lucifer's grip.

"You know..." Lucifer pauses. "Sometimes people reanimate dead bodies?"

"What?" Charlie says, for the thousandth time.

Lucifer shakes Alastor's wrist from where his tail is still wrapped around it, and Alastor growls.

"You would be *wise* to *let*—"

"That's what's happening here," Lucifer says, thoroughly ignoring the man he is currently holding captive. "His body? Empty shell. *Someone* kicked his soul out."

"*What?*" Charlie is aghast, and the shadow would roll his eyes at her consistent naivety, as if she hasn't grown up in *Hell*; it's like she's never heard of the idea that people can *lie*. "Who—why—who could do—"

"*Nobody*," Alastor says, "because it did not happen."

"Prove it," Lucifer says. "That woman—Whimsy—"

"Mimzy," Charlie corrects faintly.

"Mimzy," Lucifer echoes, "how did you meet her?"

Alastor's ears twitch, twisting sideways the slightest bit. "We first encountered each other in a bar in the nineties," he says easily. "There. Is that good enough for you?"

"You've known each other since the nineteenth century? That's quite a while," Lucifer says. "You act outdated enough for it."

"The *nineteen* nineties, you simpleton," Alastor says, voice icy with barely contained vitriol. "I had not died yet in the *eighteen* nineties."

"You—no, I'm not asking about when you met *again* in Hell," Lucifer fires back, "I'm asking how you met her in *general*. She said you knew her when you were both alive, how did *that* happen?"

Alastor's ears twist back further, before smoothly standing back upright. He opens his mouth, then closes it, curling his lip to expose his gums.

"Don't have a reply? Of course you don't. Because they're not *your* memories, jackass." Lucifer shakes the shadow's arm this time. "They're *his*."

“You—“ Charlie tries, but Alastor talks first.

“I have been alive for over a century,” he says. “And I do not lie. You will forgive me if I cannot remember events from over *ninety* years ago and for not *lying* about recalling them.”

“Boo hoo,” Lucifer says, “I remember when I met everyone important in *my* life—“

“Ah yes,” Alastor returns, “because that is *such* a long and illustrious list, isn’t it?”

Lucifer opens his mouth to retort, but Charlie speaks first.

“All along...” Charlie says, “someone was just...controlling him?”

Lucifer stands there—stupidly, with his mouth agape—for a moment before his expression darkens. “My guess is sh—that whoever did this—I’ve seen this once. Just once. It didn’t end well, but from what I saw? The body was given orders to act like nothing had happened.” Lucifer shakes Alastor’s arm again, prompting another audible growl. “And I’d like to say he’s under some serious orders to *not* let his soul *back*, but I don’t think that she—that *whoever* did this realizes it can be undone.”

“You can fix it?” Charlie asks quietly.

Lucifer flicks his eyes up and down Alastor. “I...think so,” he says.

“And you’re going to try, right?”

Lucifer blinks before turning to Charlie. “Char—“

“If—“ Charlie says at the same time. She stops, but Lucifer nods at her to continue, and she takes a deep breath. “If he’s really trapped, and it—I know he might leave, and never come back once—but that—“

She takes another breath. “It- it isn’t his choice to be here, and everything about the Hotel... everything I’m working for is...I want that to be *his choice*. He shouldn’t—I don’t—he shouldn’t be *forced* to be here. You—“ She swallows. “You’ll help him, right?”

Lucifer turns back to Alastor, hesitating. “I think...I owe it to him to at least try,” he says.

“Wonderful,” Alastor drawls. “You will *try* to fulfill whatever story you have made up in your head. Will you let me go now?”

Lucifer turns to look at the shadow, lingering over Alastor’s shoulder, and he tilts his head. Another pulse of power, weaker this time, and the shadow blinks through the ensuing wave of dizziness.

“Charlie,” Lucifer says, “I’m going to need your help for this.”

Charlie immediately straightens. “Whatever you need.”

She really *is* full of potential. A fountain of untapped magic, ready to be steered.

“You know how to put up magic-blocking wards, right? Angelic ones?”

Charlie tilts her head, but nods. “Yeah,” she says, “Not to the level of Alastor’s shield, but I can do it over small areas? If that works? Are you going to block out the power of who did this?”

Lucifer turns towards the hallway and begins walking, dragging Alastor and his shadow behind him. “Small areas work,” he says, “I just need one of the rooms, and no. this—I’m going to be doing a lot of complicated stuff, at once, and I need you to go ahead and make sure—the issue isn’t *other* magic getting *in*, it’s making sure none of *my* magic gets *out*.” He flaps his free hand. “Demonic souls are tricky, uh...something something, my power radiating?”

Charlie nods again. “I’ll be waiting for you,” she promises, and then she darts further down the hall, towards the rooms.

“Well!” Alastor says cheerily, clapping his hands together and ignoring the way Lucifer is yanked off balance due to his tail still wrapped around Alastor’s arm, “I must say, that was *quite* a story you spun. Beautiful work, you truly had her fooled! And to think, I didn’t believe you had it in you to lie to your own daughter like that.”

Lucifer glares daggers at Alastor, and the shadow coils up around Alastor’s shoulders. Really, Lucifer is so *easy* to play around with, and the shadow had learned decades ago Alastor is unquestionably the best at what he does.

“Are you—“ Lucifer throws his hand up. “*Why* am I still arguing with you?”

Alastor laughs, an ingenuine sound. “Why *are* you talking to me?” He steps aside and gestures to his shadow with a flourish. “Why not talk to what you are so *insistent* is the real me, instead?”

The shadow stares at Alastor, panic spiking through him. What does Alastor want from him? What is he expecting him to do?

His shadow *can’t tell*.

It’s Lucifer that rescues him, which is something the shadow never thought would happen. The seraphim makes a *hmm* sound, deep in his throat, before his expression steadies. “I will,” Lucifer says, like it’s the simplest thing in the world.

“But he needs to get his body back first.”

And with that, he turns back around and starts down the hall again.

“Very funny,” Alastor says, but Lucifer ignores him.

“I would advise you to stop dragging me along with this stupid charade,” Alastor says, only for it to land on deaf ears.

Alastor walks along for a few more steps, before stopping and planting his feet firmly on the ground.

Which does nothing. He's promptly yanked forward by Lucifer's stubborn refusal to stop moving. The shadow reaches out to steady him, but only earns a wounded glare in response as Alastor reorients himself just fine.

"Stop, or I will make you," Alastor says.

No response.

"Hm!" Alastor's grin, presently small and annoyed, swiftly turns *wicked*. "Don't say I didn't warn you."

His far longer legs catch up to Lucifer with ease, and then he's grabbing the side of Lucifer's face, giving Lucifer no time to react before Alastor shoves his head aside and clamps his teeth onto Lucifer's neck.

Lucifer's entire body *jerks*, an odd movement that sets the shadow on edge, before the tail that is *still* wrapped around Alastor's wrist arcs, whipping to one side in a powerful motion that takes Alastor's arm with it and sends Alastor crashing onto the floor.

Alastor isn't down for long. He's back to his feet within a second and surging at Lucifer again, and the shadow lets out a soundless yelp as Lucifer twists him around, shielding him with his body as his wings flare to block Alastor's next attack.

Red claws sink into feathers, and Alastor *yanks*, but nothing happens. None of them are even pulled loose, staying as unruffled as always.

"I'm a fucking *seraphim*," Lucifer says, glaring at Alastor over his wings, "why the *hell* did you think attacking me would *work*?"

The shadow lashes out at Lucifer, but his claws have the same lack of effect that Alastor's do. He bites down on a coat sleeve, but the fabric doesn't even tear.

Lucifer smacks Alastor's face with his wings and, in the ensuing moment of clear disorientation, snatches Alastor's wrist with his free arm, letting his tail unwind.

Alastor steps backwards, red eyes dangerously angry, but Lucifer is steadfast, making his way stubbornly down the hall again. The shadow can hear his tail smacking against the wall from where it's lashing in agitation.

"I can't believe you're fighting me this hard on getting your body back," Lucifer says, yanking Alastor off balance when he tries to pull away again. "What the hell did she *do* to get you so convinced that it's a bad thing?"

"*Nothing!*" Alastor surges forward again, but another solid smack from Lucifer's wings sends him to the floor. "Nobody did anything, because *nothing happened*, you incorrigible fool!"

"I know what I felt," Lucifer says, voice hard as steel. "You'll see soon enough."

He...says that to the shadow, not to Alastor.

The shadow doesn't know what to make of that.

Alastor's hackles rise, shoulders tensing as he gets back to his feet again, but before he can say anything Charlie's darting towards them.

"Okay!" she says, effectively—even if temporarily—dissolving the tension. "I had to pick a room far from everyone else, just in case, but it's all set up for—uh—whatever you need to do."

Alastor rolls his eyes, but Lucifer just smiles at his daughter. "Lead the way," he says.

It's too little time before Charlie's holding a door open for them. The shadow tilts his head at the room inside.

It's just a hotel room. Bed, door leading to what's probably a bathroom, standard furniture.

Strangely unassuming.

"Don't shut the door until I tell you to," Lucifer says as he takes Alastor and his shadow inside. Alastor pauses for half a moment, wavering on the doorway, before ultimately stepping inside.

They're in the center before Lucifer glances back at Charlie.

"Okay," Lucifer says, "I'll meet you in the parlor in...a bit."

She waves at him. "Good luck, Dad," she calls.

"I won't need it," he promises, and then she's clicking the door shut and Lucifer finally, *finally*, loosens his grip on the other two.

They waste no time. The shadow is immediately at the window, while Alastor goes to the door.

The window is no use. The shadow taps a claw against it, but even he can't phase through—the wards Charlie set up are ironclad.

The shadow turns back towards the room when he hears rattling, only to see Alastor at the door with his ears pinned back.

Nothing, then.

They're animals in a cage.

Alastor turns towards Lucifer.

"Let me go."

Lucifer's busy rolling up his sleeves, wings and tail still out. He doesn't even bother looking at Alastor as he says, "No."

Blatant disrespect. The shadow would bite him again, if it wouldn't be pointless. Perhaps he should do it anyway, or would Alastor view it as a blow to his pride?

Would the shadow be doing everything in his power to help Alastor, or would he be treating him like a damsel in distress?

It's a lethal moment of indecision. Lucifer's hand comes down on the shadow's shoulder, and then he's tugging him closer to where Alastor stands, fuming.

"Look," Lucifer says, "I know who did this to you—"

"You know *nothing*," Alastor spits.

"I said I've only seen this once before," Lucifer says, voice tight. "So I know who has this power."

"Let me go."

"*No*." He's almost close enough to touch Alastor, but Alastor smoothly sidesteps him and paces to the center of the room.

"I will reiterate, my good man," Alastor says. "Let me go, before I make you."

"Ha ha, very threatening," Lucifer deadpans. "You know, I get that you don't remember things because you're not actually Alastor, but I'd think you'd remember *five minutes ago*." He lifts one hand to wave mockingly at Alastor. "Hello? Seraphim? Angelic invulnerability? Does that ring any bells?"

"I can still make it a deeply unpleasant experience, *Your Majesty*," Alastor says.

"I don't know why you're fighting me on this," Lucifer says, exasperated. "Don't you *want* out of your deal? I don't know if she's been watching through your eyes, and that's why you're so defensive about—"

"I haven't the foggiest idea what you are talking about," Alastor says, voice sharp as a knife.

"The last time this happened, the guy's body was used as a spying machine," Lucifer explains. As if that's the missing piece of this entire equation. "And when he didn't have any more use, it ended bad—I'm *trying* to save you."

"You are doing nothing but overfilling your ego with your tales of grandeur," Alastor says.

"I—" Lucifer pinches between his eyes. "I keep forgetting to not argue with you. Fuck, she's good at her job."

"Surrendering so easily, Your Highness?" Alastor mocks, but Lucifer ignores him. Again.

Instead, Lucifer snaps his fingers rapidly for a moment, muttering to himself, before coming to a decision. “Okay,” he says, “at the very minimum, I’m healing that chest wound of yours.”

He arches an eyebrow at Alastor, who has visibly stiffened. “Any objections?” Lucifer says.

Alastor growls low in his throat, but he’s done his research. He’s *tried* the alternative routes, all of which ended in failure.

Some of which made it *worse*, the angelic power nestled in his ribs rebounding against the demonic attempts to be rid of it.

When it comes to the hand that feeds, it’s best to bite after the food is given.

Alastor moves slowly, carefully. His hands unclasp the buttons on his jacket, then waistcoat, then shirt, exposing a patch of deer fur splayed over his chest and, far more pressingly, exposing the still-glowing injury slicing through it.

The shadow’s lip curls. Perhaps he’s the one who inherited deer instincts, as opposed to Alastor, because every time that glow is exposed—in the medical bay, here, it doesn’t matter—he is filled with the restless, relentless urge to *run*.

“Thank you,” Lucifer says, and it’s far too genuine. He gestures towards the bed. “Okay,” he continues, “lie down.”

“No,” Alastor says.

Lucifer’s expression goes stormy. “Excuse me?”

“You will heal me,” Alastor says, “with us standing, facing each other.” He flips his hand between the two of them. “And then you will go your merry little way, and we will forget all this...nonsense.”

Lucifer drags his free hand down his face. “No, I promised Char—“ He cuts himself off, taking what is clearly a steadying breath. “Okay,” he says, “I—let’s try that again. Lie down. *Please*.”

Alastor gives a short and fake laugh. “I will not,” he says. “Since you so desperately want to *save me*, I will allow it, but on *my* terms.”

“Why the fuck do you—everyone always have to throw a big hullabaloo about everything,” Lucifer says. “Do you want out of your deal or not?”

Alastor looms over Lucifer, eyes glowing. “That is no issue of yours,” he says. “Especially since you are going the delusional route about it.”

Lucifer looks up with an expression that is *far* too nonchalant. “What was it you said earlier? Uh...right. Don’t say I didn’t warn you,” he says, and then two of his clones grab Alastor’s shoulders from where they’ve suddenly appeared from behind him.

Alastor jerks his body, eyes going wide, but it's too late—his arms are pulled behind him as he's walked over to the bed. The shadow gives a silent cry, reaching out, but Lucifer himself grabs both of the shadow's wrists and clasps them together, holding them effortlessly in one of his hands.

A snap of his fingers, and a set of shimmering golden ropes falls into a clone's expectant palms.

“Belphegor taught me how to deal with unruly patients,” Lucifer says. “Do you know how many princes or whatever she has to deal with? Uppity assholes, refusing rest and healing when they'll fucking *die* without it.”

The ropes are tied around Alastor's wrists, effectively pinning him to the bed, the bright glow visible on his exposed chest pulsing with the close proximity of pure angelic power. Lucifer's clones are dismissed with another snap of his fingers as he looms in.

“Ring a goddamn bell, *Radio Demon*?”

“If I had less manners, I'd spit in your face,” Alastor says.

“Are—am I supposed to thank you,” Lucifer says, voice flat, and Alastor doesn't bother giving him a reply. Lucifer sighs, before rolling his shoulders back, flicking his wings into a more settled position.

It looks entirely too much like he's bracing himself.

“This is going to hurt,” Lucifer says, and Alastor hisses.

“You're going to enjoy that part, aren't you?” he says, and Lucifer looks aghast.

“Absolutely fucking *not*,” he retorts, “but I can't sedate you for this, so—“

He takes a deep breath, and lifts up the arm that's still holding the shadow.

“There's four things, at minimum, I need to do,” Lucifer mutters to himself. “All at once.”

His other hand splays itself over Alastor's chest, and he takes another breath.

“Let's make this a one take wonder,” he says,

and everything begins to glow

~~Alastor the shadow his body his soul he~~

screams

He's plummeting.

There is empty darkness, yawning open around him, trying to devour him whole

he closes his eyes, and nothing changes

he can't tell if he's dead, again

or if it matters

maybe it's all the same.

the shadow Alastor he

can't tell

.....

...

“Mama!”

He's rushing through the doorway, a snake winding around one forearm, looking around curiously.

“Look what I caught!”

His father is at work, and the kitchen is full of light.

“Who is this?” Mama coos, holding out her hand for the snake to investigate. “You picked him up outside of town?”

“I'm getting really good at catching them,” ~~Alastor the shadow~~ he brags. “I'll be able to bring you bigger ones!”

Mama ruffles his hair. “Only if you let them back out right after,” she says, tone taking a sterner edge. “Where you found them, you hear? We don't disrupt the wilds for longer than a moment.”

He's looking up at her, and her eyes are warm and full of love. “Of course, Mama,” ~~he~~

Alastor promises.

There is a hand, tanned by the afternoon sun, wrapping bandages around his arm.

“They’re quick,” a voice says. “There ain’t no shame in gettin’ caught by one.”

Who are you?

“It wasn’t venomous?” That’s his voice. Isn’t it?

Why can’t I remember?

“No, it wasn’t,” the voice soothes, “there ain’t a thing you gotta be worryin’ about.”

Who are you?

Where are we?

Why can’t I remember you?

He is still falling.

There’s a hand in his hand and Mama is looking at him with her face full of light

why can’t i remember

She’s mouthing words to him. They’re important

why can’t i remember you what were you telling me what were you saying

They’re important, he has to remember them, he leans in, but still there’s no sound

what are you trying to tell me

Mama’s eyes are sliding shut but he can’t let go of her hand

where are you

There’s a man in a bar *who are you i know you’re important* and he’s bleeding *what happened*
~~he Alastor~~ the shadow turns away *i can’t remember* there’s a man on the ground *you are*
familiar and Mama is standing over him *what did i do* there’s a trolley coming down the
street *am i going somewhere* and there’s a woman on it waving to him *i know you*

He ~~The shadow~~ Alastor turns away.

He is still falling.

There is a woman he recognizes, standing over him, and Alastor's his body feels heavy
what did i do

“You need to learn,” she says, “that I do not tolerate *disobedience*.”

What did I do

Her hand is on his ear, lifting his head off the floor, and the world is spinning

please stop

“I have long since tired of your little rebellious act.”

it hurts please stop

“There's only one way” *stop it* “to deal with you” *stop it stop it* she's reaching towards him
STOP IT STOP IT and then he is blind *STOP IT PLEASE STOP IT* with pain *STOP*

Alastor is staring up at his own body as it strangles him long thin fingers wrapped around a shadowy neck and his voice is saying something he cannot remember but it was *important* and it *hurts* he's been a shadow for only a few weeks he didn't know it could *still hurt stop it stop it*

Alastor is trying to

Alastor is trying

Alastor is

.

who are you?

There are hands reaching towards him haloed in a brilliant light and Alastor stretches his hand up

Alastor reaches up

Alastor is so

close

He is falling, and he cannot remember where he is, and he needs to—

Needs to—

What was he thinking about?

. - . . - -

. . . .

.

. - . .

. - . .

...He can't remember.

He's awake.

He very, very much does *not* want to be awake. His body isn't listening to him; everything is heavy, a pressure settling in from every square inch of the world.

Exhausting. The shadow can't remember the last time he was summoned from wherever he went when Alastor did not have use for him, but he remembers the sensation of "waking up", and it had never felt like this.

He'd seen visions, this time. Is that what dreaming is like? He furrows his brow, trying to cling to his dreams—they'd been *important*, he can *tell*, even if he's not sure how, but they're slipping through his fingers like watercolors left out in the rain.

His ear twitches against the pillow as the last of the dreams fade, and—

His ear?

His eyes snap open, and he can see—

He sees—

He's looking at Alastor's arm, clad in Alastor's jacket, wearing Alastor's gloves, stretched out in front of him, and when the shadow tries to move *his* hand, it's *Alastor's* hand that moves.

He lifts his arm. Stares at it, feels the way his eyes go wide.

The shadow is in Alastor's body.

This is all wrong.

Chapter End Notes

does anyone wanna go to dennys later

coyote trap

Chapter Summary

The shadow can't remember his dreams, before he woke up.

They'd been important, but remembering isn't the focus now.

Alastor is gone, and it's all Lucifer's fault.

(Lucifer is not aware of this.)

Chapter Notes

idk if it was obvious but just in case my writing style didn't get it across; i want the em dash carnally. thanks

im still in a writing block???? maybe. definitely possibly so this is kind of underedited so if it doesn't make sense dont worry about it. hope this helps

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wrong, wrong wrong wrong, all wrong all wrong, wrong wrong wrong *wrong wrong wrong*

Everything is *wrong*. The shadow hadn't realized what having more senses would be like, and now they're all hitting him at once.

The clothes. His hair, matting against the sheets, the sheets themselves, the *smell*, thick and cloying and hitting him in ways that he can't even describe. He can't imagine how he would even begin.

The floor, the walls, the canopy around the bed, the empty vase in the corner, the light out the window, all of it, *everything*, so visually sharp in this body in a way it never was when he was looking as a shadow. He can't keep his ears still—they're twitching in every direction, catching the slightest of sounds he didn't even know *existed*, flicking this way and that, trying to capture every single minute detail surrounding him.

He rips the monocle off his face, the red glass doing nothing but making his head hurt, eyes warring between the colored tint and regular vision. He flings it without caring, and he doesn't *think* it breaks, but even if it did—

He'd fix it. Somehow. When everything isn't a flood of sights bright as neon and sounds crowding in from everywhere and *smells* trying to *drown him*.

He smacks his hands over his nose, trying to blockade the rush of information, but the texturing of the gloves—

He's scrabbling to rip them off in a second because they're too much, too much, they smelled like *something* he couldn't describe and they're pressing down on his hands and he's ripped them off within seconds and thrown them across the room but it doesn't *help*, he can still hear everything and smell everything—

The shadow digs his claws into his ears, pulling them low, uncaring that he's damaging Alastor's body and he's likely going to be *furios* when he returns (because he can't be gone he can't he can't he *can't*), but the the sleeve of Alastor's coat scrapes against his cheek and he's rushing to get rid of that too, thankful it's already unbuttoned because he *knows* the penalty of damaging that. He knows it.

It doesn't keep him from balling it up as tightly as he can and flinging it to the floor with as much force as he can muster, though.

Is it his coat now? Are these his hands? He knows he has a heart now, because it's *pounding*, a roaring in his ears that drowns everything else out.

The shadow, now in Alastor's body, goes to curl up tightly, but he's made aware of his shoes —

Alastor's shoes. They don't fit his hooves anymore, they're *different* now, what the *hell* happened when Lucifer was doing whatever he did? Did his body change?

Is Alastor going to understand, or will he be angry?

He's ripping off the shoes in a second, staring at elongated feet and new dewclaws that weren't there before, and then he's hurling said shoes to the side with the same virtrol as he did everything else.

It makes a satisfying *thunk* against the wall, louder than he expected, and he's thrown the other shoe by the time a flash of white catches his eye.

Lucifer, in all his feathery glory, is getting up off the floor. Judging from the stray feathers on the couch, he'd fallen off it. Mostly likely from being startled when the shadow threw the shoes at the wall.

The shadow, now in Alastor's body, is distantly aware of the way his body language is changing, lip peeling back to expose yellow teeth and shoulders pulling up, tension coiling through him.

His heart *races*, his breathing is far too shallow, instincts pulling at him in every which way—he doesn't know what Lucifer wants now that Alastor is missing, and he isn't sure if he wants to find out.

Lucifer is oblivious. “Oh shit,” he’s muttering to himself, seemingly unaware of the horrid changes he’s caused or of the tension. “Don’t know when I fell asle—oh *shit*.”

Ah, he’s caught sight of the shadow, now in Alastor’s body, watching him. Unwavering.

“...Hey,” Lucifer says when the shadow is silent. Frankly, he’s surprised he can hear Lucifer at all over the roaring of his heartbeat in his ears.

“Uh,” Lucifer says, “I’m—it’s weird to see you not smiling—fuck—that’s not the point,” he says, muttering that last part to himself. He clears his throat. “So, uh...you’re awake!”

He rolls back and forth on his feet for a moment, watching the shadow for only a few seconds before glancing around the room. He tilts his head briefly at the crumpled heap of Alastor’s coat on the floor before he slowly exhales and looks back at the shadow. “I’m sure you’re wondering about how—what happened—everything went well!”

Words begin tumbling out of him, the King of Hell stumbling over himself to try and fill the silence in lieu of the shadow, clasp his hands together. “Your wound’s all closed, I got the magic out, your deal’s broken, your soul is back in your body—everything is good! And I triple checked! And uh, I think there were some physical changes, like your antlers are bigger now? But- but they’re not *that* much bigger and there shouldn’t be anything major that’s, uh, *new new*, it’s just a bit of angelic magic being finicky, so your animal traits are a bit more prominent, and I *think* it’s permanent but should nothing to worry about, aaaaand sooo... uh...”

Lucifer gives the shadow feeble jazz hands, in a laughably weak attempt at bravado. He falters when the shadow just keeps staring.

“...How are you feeling?”

Under Lucifer’s watchful gaze, the shadow, now in Alastor’s body, opens his mouth and then closes it, his snarl falling in favor of what the shadow is sure is an expression that’s nothing short of baffled.

Talking. *Talking*. Lucifer wants him to talk. The shadow can’t even begin to fathom how he’s supposed to do that—his tongue feels unwieldy, his teeth too sharp and jagged, the weight of Lucifer watching him pressing down on him to the point where if the shadow were still intangible, he would’ve melted away by now.

He wishes he *could* do that now. Alastor could do it, with or without the shadow’s help, but here, in a physical body, the shadow doesn’t know *how*. Alastor’s abilities had been innumerable and unquestionable, how is the shadow supposed to do *anything* he could do?

Including talk the way Alastor could?

“Look,” Lucifer says when the shadow still says nothing, “I- I know you’ve been through a lot, and you’re probably hurting a bit, but this—things are going to get better.”

The shadow's eyes flick between Lucifer's, and he has the dawning realization that Lucifer's expression is something much, much worse than frustration at the lack of response.

It's pity. *Pity*.

Lucifer is pitying him.

Lucifer, of all the souls in Hell, is *pitying him*.

How...dare he. How *dare* he, how goddamned *dare* he.

It's like Lucifer flipped a switch. Alastor kept his injury hidden for a reason—to *avoid* this, to avoid being seen as *pitiabile*.

To avoid the simpering gazes, the idea that he was *weak*.

It's a wretched and terrible thing, the shadow knows, to be pitied, like some wounded animal. He can't remember the first few years after Alastor had first summoned him, but the shadow knows that he had been so *naive*, making the mistake of "rescuing" Alastor more than once out of pity, and Alastor had made sure to hammer the lesson into the shadow's head eons ago.

It didn't matter how afraid for him the shadow had been. Being smart is one thing; being pitied is another. To be *pitied* is to be *beneath* someone. And Alastor had been beneath *no one*.

And here Lucifer is, doing it so casually. The shadow's confusion and uncertainty is swept aside for *rage*.

Lucifer turns to the side, rubbing the back of his neck. Perfect.

He's not looking as the shadow, now in Alastor's body, slowly rebalances so he's sitting on his haunches.

"Look," he's saying, "this is a big change, I get it. I don't know how long you were stuck like that, but adjusting can be hard, and—"

The shadow lunges at him, letting out a guttural shriek that's dragged straight from the depths of his throat.

Lucifer lets out a startled yelp and flings himself gracelessly to the side, and the shadow feels the faint sensation of Lucifer's primaries just barely scraping against his cheek before he's colliding headfirst into the couch Lucifer had woken up on.

Pain *explodes* through him. The shadow fruitlessly blinks away stars, jerking his body upright, before squeezing his eyes shut against the way the room immediately begins to spin.

"What the *fuck*," Lucifer says from behind him, and the shadow shakes his head, trying to clear it, trying to focus on the task at hand. "Look, you *just* got your body back *and* that looked like it hurt, you—"

The shadow, now in Alastor's body, twists himself around and springs at Lucifer again.

It doesn't *matter* if it hurt doesn't he *know* who the shadow *is* who the shadow answers to one little fall is *nothing* the shadow has been through *so much worse* Lucifer needs to stop *fucking PITYING HIM*—

Lucifer dodges the second tackling attempt, wings flaring out to maintain his balance. The shadow lands in a heap on the floor, body burning with some sort of emotion he can't figure out, and he can see Lucifer's tail beginning to lash with frustration as he circles around.

“What do you have against help?” he says, tone thick with disbelief. “I get you're probably confused, but I really have no idea what you think is going to happen if you *attack*—“

Shut up shut up stop pretending like you don't know what you did Alastor is missing because of you do you not realize what you've DONE—

The shadow lets out another guttural shriek and launches himself at Lucifer a third time—

And promptly smashes his antlers into the wooden door.

Lucifer had dodged again, because of course he had, and the shadow tries to move his head, alarm flaring in him, but his antlers hold firm.

“Oh boy,” Lucifer says from somewhere behind him, but the shadow ignores the statement. He braces his hooves against the floor and tries to yank his head back again, but all that does is cause an awful scraping noise to ring out and pain to crawl through his scalp. He can't help the small, frustrated whine he makes, and he's pretty sure the burning feeling in his chest and face is *humiliation*.

“I *told you* your antlers were bigger, and what did you do?” There's quiet footsteps, and then Lucifer's in the shadow's vision, surprisingly visible despite the way his head is stuck. “Here,” he says, but when his hand brushes against the shadow's hair his entire body jolts, flinching away from the seraphim.

The whine becomes a growl, loud and dangerous, and Lucifer yanks his hand back.

“Well, excuse me for not wanting you to get *whiplash* when you put a crick in your neck trying to get your antlers free—“ Lucifer pinches the bridge of his nose and takes a deep breath.

The shadow, in the pause, tries unsuccessfully to rip his antlers out again, but the wood still refuses to budge. He grits his teeth, the burning of embarrassment crawling through him like snakes.

Damn him. Damn all of this for happening.

“Okay,” Lucifer says, this time with a gentler tone. The shadow eyes him again. “I'm not going to hurt you,” he continues, “I'm just—I promise, I'm here to help, if you'll give me a chance to prove it.”

And ~~Alastor~~ the shadow blinks as a memory stirs within him.

I promise I'm here to help, if you'll give me a chance to prove it.

He ~~The shadow~~ Alastor said the exact same words to an unhappy horse, hands reaching up to trace down the animal's snout.

The horse had gotten tangled in a harness, trapped and scared, and it had been ~~him~~ Alastor that soothed her enough for her to be cut free.

He can't—

What?

He can't figure it *out*, how did he *remember* that—he isn't Alastor, but that had been a living horse, not one from Hell, he—

I promise I'm here to help.

~~Alastor~~ The shadow doesn't realize he's stopped struggling, lost in his head, until he feels Lucifer's hand carefully cup his jaw.

The shadow should bite him.

The shadow should show how much of a *mistake* it is for Lucifer to treat him like some common *animal*, like he isn't the shadow of *Alastor*, of all people, and even if Alastor is missing his presence is still *very much felt*.

He should not do what he actually does, which is let the tension bleed out of him at how *gentle* Lucifer is being.

His touch is warm against the shadow's jaw, and even though he's applying pressure now—and his other hand is on the shadow's antlers, shifting his head loose—all the shadow can think about is how he wants more. More of this.

There's an instinct somewhere in the back of his mind, shouting at him, enraged he's letting his guard down, but the shadow doesn't *care* right now—

Lucifer withdraws his hand far too soon, and the shadow realizes that his head is now free.

Lucifer opens his mouth but awareness *slams* into the shadow, and he finds himself frantically backing away until his back hits the foot of the bed, chest heaving. Too much, too much, it's all too much, he cups his hand against his cheek where he can feel the echo of Lucifer's touch and his vision is *swimming* with the memory he still can't understand and his antlers ache his head is throbbing there is sound outside the window his ears swivel to catch his chest is tight he can feel himself winding up like a spring but there is no relief to be had he cannot stop any of this there is nothing he can do

“Alright,” Lucifer says, “you just—wait here, for a bit.”

The shadow immediately shifts his posture to sit upright, back against the footboard of the bed, legs no longer sloppily settled.

Lucifer looks startled, but the shadow had been given an order. Panic can wait; the confusing mess that comes with having a body can *wait*.

It's not an order from Alastor, but it's *something*.

"...Okay," Lucifer says. "I'll, uh...be right back."

The shadow watches him go, and he ignores the way his chest feels too tight to breathe.

If there was ever an award ceremony for things in Lucifer's life, he's pretty sure the events of this night would be a gold medal sweep for *Most Confusing Day In Existence*.

Frankly, Lucifer isn't sure what he was expecting when Alastor got his body back, but the demon speedrunning every emotion on the spectrum was *not* on the list.

Gratitude? Maybe, if he was nicer than the..."idealized" image of him was.

(Lucifer skirts away from the name of who caused all this. Nope. Not going there.)

(That's something he can think of *later*, when he isn't walking down the hallway to go see his *daughter*. The person who needs her dad? And not some guy having a breakdown?)

(Breakdowns are private hours *only*, thank you very much. The way they had been before, actually, but now he's got a schedule and people *looking* at him and how is a king supposed to act *anyway* Lilith was the one who—)

(Not the point.)

So. Gratitude? On the table. Confusion? Probably, the rush of freedom Alastor had to have been feeling could be *dizzying*, Lucifer imagines.

But *rage*?

It wasn't even in the realm of his predictions. Because, fuck, Lucifer was so *careful* shredding the deal. Alastor gets his freedom, retains all his powers, stays *totally intact*, and his response was to act like...

That.

Lucifer shakes his head, feeling his wings resettle behind him.

Maybe he got too swept up in Charlie's fanatic energy about sinners. He loves her, every aspect about her, and by his Father above she has done *so much more* than he ever could've *dreamed* of, but—

Lucifer pinches the spot between his eyes, guilt boiling up within him. He really...should *not* be thinking this way about *either* of them.

Yes, okay, maybe Charlie takes a little too much shit from other demons for his liking, and *yes*, maybe, *just maybe*, he's set his fair share of old broken furniture on fire to take his temper out on something that *isn't* prospective hotel guests, but she is still, without a doubt, the *greatest thing* that has ever *happened* to the *entire* realm of Hell. He could pass the sentiment into law, if he wanted to. Maybe he should, actually, make sure everyone treats her with the respect she has a billion times over *earned*.

And really, it was Charlie that kept Lucifer from obliterating Alastor. Alastor, who probably *wasn't* as much as a dick as he seemed, because it hadn't been *him* at *all*.

Until it *had* been him, and his first response was to start attacking Lucifer.

Lucifer had been all for letting Alastor stay stuck in that door until he learned his lesson about manners and saying *thank you* before he'd thought, *What would Charlie do?*

Which he'd been thinking the entire night. Which was a line of thinking that forced him to *actually* sit down for a moment and *not* go crashing forward and doing the first thing that came to mind.

Which was the only reason why he'd even been willing to admit he owed Alastor to try in the first place.

Because, sure, it wasn't *him* that did it, but even if he was just a shallow version of himself, an actor in a play he didn't write, he still went so *far* in protecting Charlie. He took that hit to his chest protecting Charlie, the cannibal colony came to her aid because of *him*, Lucifer had seen the shield Alastor had put up on the news—

Lucifer pretty sure all that counts as Alastor going *above and beyond* his pay grade.

And even outside of that, Lucifer...can't bring himself to regret snapping the leash on Alastor.

He'd *tried* to not look into the memory bleed when he'd been working. He'd stamped down the temptation to peek into who Alastor was, but souls were so *tricky*, and he had to make sure Alastor's soul went back into his body *right*, that nothing was lost or wouldn't be intact and—

And it's a lot harder to block out noise than it is to just look away.

And—

Fuck, in some of those memories Alastor had *screamed* like almost nothing Lucifer had heard before.

Alastor's memories had felt hazy from time, so the sound had been faint, sure, just an echo of the actual sound, but it was still *haunting*.

(And Lucifer knows who did that but he's still not thinking about that yet)

Even if it was *really* easy to immediately remember why, exactly, Alastor is a *sinner* in *Hell* only...minutes afterwards? Hours?

Lucifer settles for "however long he'd fallen asleep for" afterwards. "Whenever Alastor had started attacking him in a blind rage" afterwards.

So, he has complicated feelings about sinners. One sinner specifically. Sue him.

He straightens his back as he enters the parlor, where Charlie is waiting for him as promised. She's on the couch, nervously braiding her hair, but she immediately jumps to her feet as he enters, standing ramrod straight.

Something about that prickles at Lucifer's mind, but he can devote the energy to that later.

One thing at a time.

"Hi!" Charlie says, giving him a not-subtle-at-all inspection. "So, um...it's just you, and you were in there for a couple hours—how—did it go okay?"

He has his answer for how long he was asleep for. Sort of? Putting Alastor's soul back in could've taken hours on its own.

Souls are...not fun to mess with. They're so *delicate*, and easy to burn, and Lucifer hasn't made deals in several thousands of years because of just how weird the whole *intangible* business was, and that is coming from a *seraphim*. He doesn't understand sinners' obsessions with them at all—

Again. Not the point.

"It went well!" Lucifer reassures. Announces, more like. "He's all stitched up, soul back where it should be—Alastor is officially in one piece! Not particularly happy about it, but he is!"

Charlie's face visibly falls.

"Not happy?" She echoes. "Dad, did you—"

"*No!*" Lucifer waves his arms frantically, cutting her off in a manner that is definitely *rude* but he does *not* want her thinking he attacked one of her friends behind her back. "No, no no, I was very nice, I *promise*," he stresses, and the memory of looping *what would Charlie do* flashes in his head.

Yeah, he absolutely was as nice as he could be, considering the circumstances.

"I just...uh..." He swallows and looks away, rolling back and forth on his heels nervously. "I think his instincts got mixed up, somewhere, because his first line of action was to try and attack me?"

“*He did what?*” Charlie takes a couple steps towards him, eyes wide, doing another inspection that is far less subtle than the last. “He didn’t—he can’t hurt you, right?”

Lucifer clasps his hands together and smiles up at her in what he hopes is reassuring. Is it reassuring? He’s been practicing in the mirror before meeting with *anyone*, since before the Hotel it’d been a while since he’d seen anyone, but considering rubber ducks don’t give advice and almost everyone who sees him runs in terror he can’t tell if he’s good and his *mind is getting off fucking topic again*.

“Nope,” he says, “he can’t, and I didn’t hurt him either—I kinda...left him to calm down. Which he hopefully has!”

He worries his tongue between his teeth for a moment. Charlie should *not* see Alastor right now, he decides, because despite her concern—“I just don’t get why he was so upset,” Lucifer admits. “He’s not trapped anymore, he isn’t hurt anymore, and there’s definitely an adjustment period necessary, but...”

He gives the smallest of sighs, and Charlie makes a considering sound.

“I, um,” she hedges, “think you’re forgetting something major.”

Lucifer stares openly. Charlie gives him a smile that’s somewhere between sympathetic and worried before lifting her hands and flapping them like wings.

And ohhhh shit, Lucifer *did* forget about that.

He never folded them back into himself, and as far as Alastor is concerned Lucifer only ever pulls them out when he’s trying to *intimidate* someone, and Lucifer had enhanced Alastor’s deer traits so it’s not impossible to think Alastor woke up to what could *definitely* be read as a threat display—

He feels *guilty*. He really needs to practice *interacting with people* and not keep putting it off, for fucks *sake*, Lucifer.

He smacks his forehead as he finally wills his wings and tail away. “*Fuck*,” he says, “I—*ugh*, I can’t *believe* I didn’t think about that.”

“It’s okay!” Charlie reassures. “You had a lot on your mind, and he did too, probably.”

“There’s one question answered,” Lucifer mutters, not really paying attention to her. It doesn’t answer the multitude of other things that he’s pretty sure are going on with Alastor, but at least *why wasn’t he happy* is solved.

Kind of solved.

Charlie tilts her head, and the movement drags Lucifer back into the present to actually *focus* on her. “One question?”

Lucifer waves his hands weakly. “He didn’t talk,” he says, “at all. He kind of shrieked? But you know the guy, he never shuts up, I don’t get why he wouldn’t be *talking*.”

“How long was he a shadow?”

Lucifer blinks at the question, openly surprised, and he can feel the phantom sensation of his wings fluttering. His hand swipes at his back for a moment—no, they did *not* come back out—before he answers. “I’m not sure?” he says. “It, uh, I didn’t—there wasn’t a clear answer? But it’s been a long time. The magic was set into him *really* firmly, his soul felt weird from it... Everything just had this—“ Lucifer flutters his hands near his head, “—quality to it. You know? Memories, soul itself, all that.”

“You said he needs to adjust,” Charlie says tentatively. “Maybe since he’s been like that for so long he’s...not sure about talking?”

Well, now Lucifer just feels like a fucking idiot.

How in the *hell* he hadn’t realized that—is Alastor even aware he can talk now? Is he aware of what he can do?

Lucifer thinks of the way Alastor had lunged at him, the awkward angles, the way he’d collided with the couch and the door, and he realizes *oh Alastor expected to just phase through didn’t he*.

Lucifer is an *experienced* shapeshifter. He’s used to the split-second weightlessness of it, the way his center of gravity changes from one thing to another, but he’s been to enough of Charlie’s...*lessons* with prospective guests to pick up on some of her lessons, one of which was *empathy*.

He’s trying, okay? Not his fault most sinners are assholes—

Lucifer shakes his head, realizes that he’s been standing there zoning out for far too long, and fishes for his original train of thought.

Empathy. Relatability. Okay, yes, Lucifer is experienced with shapeshifting, but he feels like a fish out of water when it comes to other things; interacting with people *immediately* comes to mind, God is that an *adjustment*, so if he just...takes *that* feeling and slaps it onto the experience of having a *new body*—

Yeah, okay, he gets it now.

“You’re right,” he finally says, and Charlie perks up. “But...what now, we have to be patient with him? How long until he *does* start talking? What are we telling everyone about it?”

Charlie steeple her fingers in front of her face, brow furrowing. “...I don’t like the thought of him wandering out of the Hotel,” she admits. “If he’s not talking—he didn’t ask for anything to write, even? He didn’t summon it?”

Lucifer shakes his head, and this time does not interrupt her or dismiss her, fucking *hell* Lucifer.

“It doesn’t make sense,” Charlie says. “I—does he not remember how to write, or something?”

“Does who not remember what now?”

To Lucifer’s credit, his horns do *not* come out.

Unfortunately, to his discredit, his wings do, and he’s smacked Charlie into a protective feathery burrito before his brain catches up to his body and he registers that the voice asked a question, asked an *innocent* question, and that said voice belonged to Charlie’s *partner* who had just seen the King of Hell attempt to tackle Charlie to the ground.

His instincts are *muddled*, fuck. Seeing some asshole trying to beat the shit out of his daughter will *do that*, but it doesn’t stop the way heat crawls up his neck at the decidedly undignified and probably ridiculous reaction.

(And there’s another stab of guilt, because Alastor had been in that fight too and oh hey, there’s another reason why he reacted the way he did to Lucifer.)

Way to go.

“Vaggie?” Charlie says as Lucifer untangles himself and puts his wings away. *Again*. Charlie heads over to Vaggie immediately, checking her over. “Why are you up? You didn’t have a bad dream, did you?”

“I woke up to use the bathroom and I noticed you gone,” Vaggie says, passively letting Charlie check her, “so I came to find you, but, you and your dad...who were you talking about? What’s going on?”

Charlie glances over at Lucifer, who is just as lost.

He shouldn’t lie to Charlie’s girlfriend. But also parading Alastor’s business means that he would *remain* upset, sequestered in his room, and that seems counterproductive to everything they’re working towards.

“...Charlie?” Vaggie says after a pause. “Who were you talking about?”

“Alastor,” Charlie immediately blurts. Oops.

Lucifer freezes, and he can’t read the look on Charlie’s face very well but he knows there’s *guilt* in there.

She doesn’t want to lie to Vaggie any more than Lucifer did, responding on impulse in the face of Vaggie’s uncertainty. Understandable.

Vaggie jumps a little, pushing Charlie away to scrutinize her face better. “*Alastor* forgot how to write?”

Wait, hold on. Lucifer is an inventor, a designer, and if he is struck with inspiration he knows better than to let it go, and Vaggie’s words—

“Yep!” he swoops in, seizing the lightning bolt of an idea, because wait this could actually work. “Or at least, we think so? Char and I got a remote call from him earlier. A ping? One of

the radios went off, giving a distress code, SOS type deal, and when we went to go investigate we found Alastor with his memories—“ Lucifer lifts his hands to his ears and mimes an explosion with them, “—gone. Blank slate.”

He may not *want* to lie to Vaggie, but circumstances and what not, and honestly this is more of a half truth, right?

Vaggie’s eye is huge. “He’s *what?*”

“Oh, don’t worry, we dealt with the guy who did it!” Lucifer says, and he slings his arm around Charlie’s shoulder to give her a bit of probably desperately needed support. “I’m not still King around here for nothing, you know? We’re just kinda, uh, letting Alastor come back to himself on his own. It’ll take a while, but he’s nice and tucked away up on the top floor in the Hotel here, soooo...”

His eyes flick to Charlie for help, and she gives a *seriously* pained look before taking a deep breath.

“Yes!” she says, with too much enthusiasm. She takes another deep breath, and her voice is steadier as she continues. “We, uh, think that’s what happened, at least? He isn’t talking, and he wasn’t writing down things either, so we kind of just...um...”

Charlie doesn’t know what actually happened, she’s just going off Lucifer’s half of an explanation, so details are up to him. He nods. “Yep,” he says again, “guy’s suuuper out of it. We just...have to support him as he gets his memories back.”

Vaggie groans quietly to herself, rubbing her eye. “I guess,” she says, and Charlie steps away from Lucifer to take her hands in her own.

“I know you don’t particularly trust him,” she says, “but remember what I told you when he first showed up. We’re here to help *anyone*. Okay?” She squeezes Vaggie’s hands in her own, and some of the tension melts from Vaggie’s shoulders.

“Right,” she says softly. “But, babe, how are we gonna keep him *alive* while he gets back?”

“Dad just said it,” Charlie reminds her, turning back to Lucifer. “We’ll keep him up here until he’s all better.”

Considering who did this to Alastor, this is best case scenario.

It isn’t *just* other demons that are the threat. Lucifer still is *not* letting himself think too in depth about Alastor’s whole deal (spiraling *later*, thank you very much), but he knows his dealmaker is going to feel it *break*.

Lucifer can keep everyone nice and protected here, *not* have one of Charlie’s closest friends get blown up (nevermind his personal feelings on the matter), *and* see who Alastor *actually* is.

And the memory wipe half-truth is one Alastor can easily play into. Either he recovers fast, and goes with the coverup, or he recovers slow, and everyone has enough of an idea about

his...*situation* to not question it.

“Right,” Lucifer says, “Charlie’s right, and we’ll tell everyone the details later. For now, I’ll go check on him.”

Way to go, Lucifer, that was totally the smoothest exit he could’ve done and *not* a terrible escape to tell Alastor about the plan that very much involves *him*.

At least neither of them question him on it. Charlie gives Lucifer a little wave as he leaves. He can hear their voices behind him as he heads down the hall, but he’s not paying attention.

He’s going to *help*. And he’s not going to completely and utterly freak Alastor out this time.

He can do it. He can do this *right*.

The shadow has not moved from where he’d been sitting, and he’d had no plans to by the time someone knocks on the door.

He doesn’t respond, simply turning to look, and when creaks it open a second later the shadow can see Lucifer looking in. The shadow’s ears twitch, but he doesn’t move, still sitting patiently.

“Hi,” Lucifer says. He steps into the room fully, quietly shutting the door behind him. “Still just—you didn’t have to stay there like that, you know?”

The shadow’s ears flick back for a moment, before righting again.

Lucifer had told him what to do, so he’d done it. Is it more complicated to Lucifer?

Everything is still so unfathomably *wrong*—Lucifer is not Alastor, and the chances of Alastor being displeased the shadow caved so easily are very possible, but perhaps he’ll be lenient, knowing the shadow never lost his obedience.

He can’t figure it out. Alastor had always been so *unpredictable*, but the one thing the shadow knew for *certain* was he liked to be listened to. Heard.

And the shadow *knows* Lucifer isn’t Alastor, but his order had been *something*.

He’d felt a little less lost, even if the crawling feeling under his skin had done nothing but intensify during the time Lucifer had been gone, threatening to strangle him to death.

“Okay,” Lucifer says in the ensuing quiet, “do you have any suggestions as to what you want to do next?”

The shadow, now in Alastor’s body, stares blankly at him.

Lucifer lets the silence sit for an uncomfortable while, before puffing out his cheeks and letting out a very long, very slow breath. “Alrighty,” he says, “you’re probably wondering

what I left for, yes?”

The shadow just keeps staring.

“So!” Lucifer says. “We were wondering what to do while you’re, uh...recovering. You’ve got a lot of enemies, y’know?”

This time, the shadow nods, and Lucifer seems bolstered by the response.

Alastor’s enemies are the shadow’s enemies too, of course. No doubts there.

“So for now, uh...we’re just telling everyone working at the Hotel that something happened and you got your memories wiped. Pretty straightforward, doesn’t lead to many questions except for ‘who did it’ and honestly considering the entirety of everyone on the top floor of this building was fighting against Heaven, something something angel magic something something retribution...yeah, you get the gist.”

The shadow...cannot wholeheartedly say he does, but he approves of the idea of hiding the details of Alastor’s current disappearance, so he mulls it over for a moment before nodding again.

Lucifer gesticulates wordlessly for a moment, clearly trying to think. “I...we? Charlie and I, uh, think it’s best for you to stay in the Hotel. You can stay in here, in this room, Charlie was kind of sad you didn’t come out with me to say hi but we’re *not* going to drag you out, and you’re allowed to—you should stick to the top floor for now. Until you’re back to yourself, but up on the top floor you can go about how you want, if you’d like.”

The shadow feels...insulted.

He isn’t the smartest, but he’s not so unintelligent to so blatantly fall for a trick statement like that. Lucifer needs to try harder if he’s going to catch him off guard.

The message between the lines is clear. *Do not leave this room.*

Somewhere, in the back of his mind, a voice is whispering.

“You can do that, if you’d like,” ghosts through his head, half of a memory from *somewhere*.

He...can’t remember what had happened after that had been said, but he remembers the *feeling*, the twisting upset in his gut, and the aftermath is clear; doing what he *wanted* had ended badly. Of course it had. He should’ve seen that trick coming from miles away.

But he sees this one. He simply nods.

“Okay,” Lucifer says. “That’s all clear, so, I’ll, just...”

He glances towards the door, then back at the shadow, now in Alastor’s body, until he makes a decision.

Gold dust shimmers in between his hands, coalescing, and then he's holding out a book to the shadow.

He stares at the yellow duck on the cover as Lucifer speaks up. "And if you think of anything," he says, "like—talking is probably weird right now, right? If you need anything, just write it down and come find someone. We're—"

He clears his throat. "This Hotel is here to help anyone," he says "and that's...you."

The shadow, now in Alastor's body, continues staring at what's clearly a journal for a solid ten seconds before hesitantly taking it in his hands.

He runs his thumb over the cover, trying to figure out the words to describe what it feels like, but his mind is blank.

"Okay," Lucifer says above him. The shadow doesn't look up. "I'll, just, be going then."

The shadow doesn't look back up. He can hear the door close, but he still can't bring himself to move.

Why did Lucifer give him this?

He talked like it was the shadow's, but he's losing this body whenever Alastor's back. He won't be able to interact, and he can't write down anything anyway, he can't keep secrets and he knows the cost of causing trouble why did Lucifer—

The shadow, now in Alastor's body, blinks against the way his eyes are blurring, only to focus on just how horribly his hands are shaking, still clasped around the journal.

This is all wrong. That's all he's known since he woke up like this—wrong, wrong wrong *wrong*.

He doesn't know what to do.

He can't breathe, which is so unfathomably *stupid*, this isn't one of his frequent punishments, there is *nothing* restricting his throat, why can't he just *breathe*?

The shadow brings the book to his chest as he curls up as tightly as he can, trying desperately to get enough air, gasping for it.

Wrong, wrong wrong wrong, all *fucking wrong*, it's all wrong, he isn't even supposed to *exist* without Alastor and now he's supposed to just sit here in this room until he's called for but he might never be called for his worth is expired—

He's scrambling for a reason as to why Lucifer would free him like this, but there's just panic barreling through his mind and his body, drowning him, overwhelming all of his other senses.

He can't run. He can't hide. His mind is blank, other than an instinct looping.

The shadow doesn't know why he's still here.

He can't figure it out.

He can't tell.

Chapter End Notes

"are you making up excuses to give alastor more deer features" no more questions. go back to bed

"why is this chapter twice as long as the other two" i thought i told you to go back to bed

"why'd this take so long to post" playing pressure on roblox dot com. why aren't you in bed

and a show

Chapter Summary

Angel Dust makes dinner.

Chapter Notes

did you guys know i write this on my phone

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Angel Dust knows creepy.

Well, hopping off his high horse for a moment, it really is not like he's *unique* in that aspect. Anyone who's anyone who still has half a brain about themselves doesn't spend as much time as he has in Hell *without* knowing creepy.

Add in his job and Angel is pretty fucking versed in the subject. He doesn't keep the fan letters anymore, but he sure as shit knows they're still pouring in.

Which means that Alastor? Was a bonafide *threat* with how much he gave Angel the heebie-jeebies.

Yeah yeah, it wasn't the *typical* brand Angel dealt with, pandered to, whatever, but he still made the fur on the back of Angel's neck rise. For a deer, Alastor was the fucking *opposite* of a prey animal, eyes tracking everyone's movement like he was about to pounce.

Add in the smile, and that's an equation for whatever the hell Alastor is. As much as Angel likes to joke, he still thinks about how he'd described Alastor to Mimzy.

A big creepy mystery.

But that was before he suddenly shut himself away to who-knows-where.

And to be completely honest? Angel isn't creeped out by his disappearance so much as he is...*worried*. He's *worried*. For the first day or so, it felt more like Alastor was waiting in the shadows, but afterwards? There's no distinct buzzing of the static that had followed Alastor and made the fur on Angel rise. There's no music drifting through the halls, when Angel tries twisting the knob of the radio he gets jack shit—

There's *nothing*.

Lucifer had *vaguely* explained it. *Lucifer* had shown up at lunch, given some erratic as hell explanation, and then left before anyone could ask him any fucking questions.

Not that the questions they had asked, hours later when they'd cornered him, had *helped*.

“What the fuck do you *mean* Alastor had his memories wiped?” Angel had snapped, leaning over the doorway with Husk next to him.

Lucifer had been rushing to a meeting with Charlie he'd already been five minutes late to, if her pacing was anything to go by, but they needed *answers* to whatever goddamn threat was lingering around to take out the fucking *Radio Demon*.

Angel might not have been big on politics before, but living in this Hotel means he learned quick about what he *needs* to pay attention to, and the biggest guy in the yard is definitely one of them.

There'd been three of them—Lucifer, Alastor, and Vaggie, in that order, and one is simply *gone*.

Angel and Husk knew that they needed to get *someone* to fucking *talk*.

Lucifer, who had forgotten he could teleport or something, had waved his hands, as if that cleared any part of this up. “Just gone,” he'd said, a little too loudly. “Out of there. For now, at least! They're coming back!”

“Who did that?” Husk had said, wings raising slightly in agitation. “Do we have another fight we gotta start preparing for?”

“Nope!” Lucifer had said. He'd smacked his hand on where his bicep would be, if he had any sort of muscle to speak of. “I got him first try, so we're in the clear!”

Husk's tail had lashed for all of half a second, before settling down. He'd glanced up at Angel and bit his tongue, but Angel had had no such qualms.

“Look,” Angel had said, stepping forward and taking note of the way Lucifer's eyes skittered away, “I appreciate you helpin' us with all this, but there's something you ain't telling us, and if someone could get the upper hand on *Alastor* of all people, they're a threat we need to know.”

“Not if they tried to dance with the Devil himself,” Lucifer had chirped, “and they did, with two left feet!”

He'd slipped through the doorway, taking advantage of Angel's sidestep, and flashing through before anyone could stop him. Angel hears Charlie's worried tone for all of half a second before Husk closes the door.

Husk and Angel had exchanged a look. A look that meant *regroup later, investigate where you can, settle down for now*.

So, Angel had investigated.

Searching for Alastor had turned up jack shit.

Asking for Alastor had gotten them either the same confusion they had, more weird answers (in Lucifer's case), or frantic excuses (in Charlie's).

And then Angel had stepped up to do whatever the hell needed to be done in Alastor's absence and investigating had been put on hold, because one of the times he'd tried to ask Charlie she'd fucking *cried*.

And Angel had comforted her, because *fuck* she tries so goddamn hard and maybe he's getting soft or whatever but this Hotel is *his home now*, maybe he has his opinions on Charlie but she's his *friend*, and somewhere in her crying she'd gotten it through to Angel that Alastor's disappearance means there's so much more *work* when it comes to all the new people hanging around the place and somewhere *else* in there Angel had agreed to help.

Saying the past few days had been a mess is a fucking understatement.

Angel is ruminating on this as he's slumped over the bar in the goddamn *sanctuary* the top floor is.

How Alastor had managed to handle everyone, he has absolutely zero clue. Probably helped that he wasn't working two jobs, the way Angel was, even if he'd managed to cut his hours back in the studio.

Probably helped that Alastor could handle this on his own, and was capable of defending the Hotel alone. Probably helped he *wasn't* dealing with his own absence, *and* since he'd been there Lucifer hadn't been trying to step up, either freaking everyone out or just making everything painfully thick with tension.

Angel had *barely* managed to rope some people into answering why the *fuck* they were willing to show up to the Radio Demon's Hotel if they were this scared of Lucifer, and he'd gotten some sort of half answers about *exorcists* and *if Lucifer is here that means it's dangerous and serious* or some other shit Angel hadn't been paying attention to.

He'd tried half-heartedly to get them to come back in before giving up. *Words* weren't his strong suit. *Actions* were, actions he can't do here. Maybe he should practice talking to people without flirting. Maybe he should drag Lucifer along with whatever lessons Angel takes, because Lucifer being bad at this had been funny when it was just, what, seven people he was trying to talk to? Not so funny when it was *dozens of strangers*.

Angel runs his hands through his hair from where his head is pressed against the mercifully cool wood of the bar.

Husk isn't here yet, so there's no drink. Just Angel, swimming in his own thoughts of the past four days.

Lucifer had said that Alastor was just... somewhere up on the top floor, same as all of them, but even though there's so few up here he can count the residents on two hands it's still a *maze* of rooms, and Alastor wasn't in his tower at all.

Maybe Angel should just take Lucifer at face value, but the King of Hell had been acting so goddamn cagey about all of this that he can't help but distrust him. Not like Alastor would've won any popularity contests where Lucifer is involved, and nothing he or Charlie had said had alleviated the worry Angel was feeling.

And when he'd gone to investigate, the door to Alastor's room had been *unlocked*, and Angel had snooped inside for as long as the prickling feeling at the back of his neck had let him before borderline sprinting out.

Maybe he's fucking *dead*.

Angel doesn't like the pang that jolts through him at the thought. He flashes back to the *relief* he'd felt, sudden and harsh at Alastor's reappearance, the sudden realization that at some point he'd started thinking of Alastor as his friend, and that fuck, he'd *missed* him.

Creepy or not, somehow he'd wiggled his way into Angel's heart.

Angel groans in his throat at the cheesy thought. Charlie's been rubbing off on him, sure, he'll admit it, but more than he'd like if he's thinking in terms of "hearts" and "friendship" and shit like that.

And oh thank God, Husk is finally here, and Angel can banish all thoughts of—

"Fuck him," Husk hisses as he takes a seat next to Angel, resting his chin on the cool wood next to the spider. "Fuck him for whatever trouble he got into. Fuck him for whatever happened to where all his shit got dumped onto the rest of us."

Angel lifts his head off the bar just enough to groan again, with his mouth this time. "Busy day?"

Angel is never up here before Husk is, and even though he'd retired to the bar hours ago *he* is still fucking *exhausted*. He's got a wild guess that *busy day* is an understatement.

"Some fuckass news reporters this time," Husk grunts. He leans over to raid his own bar, pulling out a bottle of what looks like wine before uncapping it. "Every few days they try," he adds before interrupting himself by chugging.

"...And today was the first day they tried after Alastor went missing?" Angel guesses.

Husk slams the bottle back down onto the bar. "They're all handpicked by Vox to be the most annoying possible fuckers to be hired for the job, I swear to God," he snaps. "Lucifer tried to be nice, oh he damn well tried, but..." Husk waves his claws in a *you get the idea* manner.

"Ain't it late as hell for any tupa interviews, anyways?" Angel makes a grab for the bottle, and Husk passes it over without complaint.

"Ambush," is all he says, and Angel makes an agreeing noise from where he's taking his own swig.

Seems fitting. Angel's been working for the Vee's for decades, he knows their schtick.

Angel passes the bottle to Husk and he lets the conversation fall, but it's not awkward. It'd stopped being awkward months ago.

It's a reprieve from everything as they sit in an amicable silence.

And it's...*nice*.

He doesn't know how long they stay there, but he knows it's far too soon before Husk is polishing off the bottle and settling it lightly on the countertop. He reaches up, gently patting Angel on the shoulder, before sliding off the stool.

"Love to keep getting crazy," he says, earning a laugh from Angel, "but since my boss clearly doesn't have any intention of showing back up I probably gotta at least *try* sleeping to prep for whatever horseshit that'll happen tomorrow."

"Ya think he's dead?" Angel says, half as a joke, and Husk snorts.

"No," he says, "he's still around. I can tell. But if he *is* dead, and our deal lied or somethin', then I'll apologize to the casket."

He gives Angel a two-fingered salute. "Sleep soon," he tells Angel, and Angel gives him the same salute back.

Drinking solo isn't half as nice as drinking with Husk, so Angel doesn't sit there long. He tilts a glass back and forth, thinking a bit, before deciding to just call it a night. He puts it back—not like he used the damn thing, and he's wearing his gloves, so there's no fingerprints to get uppity about—and gets up to go, heading towards the hallway leading to everyone's rooms.

He's just rounded the corner when he hears Charlie enter the parlor, voice almost the angriest he's ever heard it.

Which is fucking saying something.

"—*just said that*, I heard you the first time—"

"I mean it," Lucifer says, and Angel freezes in place, pressing against the wall to listen better. "Charlie, I wouldn't be repeating myself if it wasn't *important*, you can't go sneaking off like that, he's dangerous right now—"

"And that's time number three," Charlie says, exasperated. "Look, I know what you said, but he's my *friend*, he's been isolating for days, I'm *worried*."

"I know you are," Lucifer says, voice going soft, "and I- I know it's hard to wait, but he clearly—he wants to be left alone, Char, and he—I don't want him lashing out at you. You just want to help him, you- you don't deserve that."

Charlie sighs, and Angel can hear the way the fight drains from her as she does. "...I'm sorry for leaving you to deal with the reporters," she says after a pause.

“Hey, don’t sweat it,” Lucifer says. “I’ve been getting, like, thirty calls a day asking for interviews, this was bound to happen, right?”

Charlie sighs again. “I know, but still,” she says, “I—it was mean of me to go sneaking off like that. It’s not like it did anything, he’s still got the door locked...”

Angel can hear the shifting of cushions. One of them must’ve sat down. “I just don’t know what to do,” Charlie says.

“I know, sweetie,” Lucifer says. “Just—he’ll come out when he’s ready. Okay? And if he’s mean to you again, I’ll *step in*.”

Charlie huffs a laugh—Lucifer must’ve struck a pose to try and cheer her up. “Thank you, Dad,” she says.

“Anytime,” Lucifer says. “Hey, you—is there anything you want to watch? Do you still like those storybook movies from when you were little?”

“How could I not?” Charlie says. “But I don’t know. I...it’s late, and I should probably sleep so I can get an early start tomorrow, and I don’t think we even have them here, do we?”

“You forget who you’re talking to,” Lucifer says. “Hellooo, anything in Hell, at my fingertips? And—in all seriousness—look. I know it’s been a...day, for both of us, but—all work and no play, you know? This’ll help.”

There’s quiet, and then Charlie goes, “You...you have a point.”

Angel glances down at the hall leading to the rooms, thinking, and then turns away as he makes up his mind.

He doesn’t need to listen anymore. At least now he knows the truth. Half of it. Whatever, it’s enough.

Alastor is alive, *somewhere* in the Hotel, and refusing any type of interaction, even from Charlie.

Under other circumstances, Angel would be content to let him stay back. He isn’t breathing down everyone’s necks, Husk isn’t getting dragged around, there’s no weird static lingering in the background, but Alastor fading into the background is causing nothing but *trouble*, even for *Husk*.

And Angel doesn’t like the thought of Alastor acting so out of character. Hiding somewhere, refusing to talk to anyone. Like he’s fucking *scared*.

Fuck, Angel *wants* to do something. And he’s got a good idea of what will actually *work*.

To give Charlie and Lucifer some credit, he can’t say he’s surprised they hadn’t figured out the solution. He ruminates as his feet take him to the kitchen on autopilot, and he’s come to a decision before he even reaches where he’s going.

Yeah. Angel isn't as much of a dumb broad as he acts, and he's betting he knows how to get Alastor talking again—a little peace offering, and a face that isn't going to be trying to pry him open. And if he's as skittish as Lucifer is making him out to be, then the added boost of making sure there *isn't* an enormous crowd waiting for him when he finally comes out of his room is decidedly for the best.

Angel pushes open the door of the kitchen, still thinking. He decidedly doesn't *blame* Charlie or Lucifer for not realizing. For one thing, they aren't sinners—he knows they probably feel hunger, sure, but not to the level of those that were once up on Earth. He figures it's muscle memory. Instinct. Whatever.

For another, they didn't grow up like he did. They don't know the *importance* of the simplest of comforts.

Angel flicks on the kitchen lights, and he sets about making Alastor something to eat.

The shadow has decided, after days of careful consideration, that he hates everything.

He hates the smells that swirl through the air, so different and clashing and *changing* that it makes his head spin trying to keep up. He can't sort them out—he can't even *describe* them, how is he supposed to make *sense* of it?

He hates his tail, which is obnoxiously long for a deer's tail, more than long enough for him to keep sitting on it by accident, sending pain spiking through him and causing him to constantly have to readjust. He hates the way he can feel the fur on it rising when he's upset and he hates the way he can't seem to control it at all, a bright flag showcasing what he's feeling under every circumstance.

He hates the scratching feeling in his throat, digging its claws all the way down to his stomach. He'd discovered that water soothes it, but he hates that he keeps having to drag himself over to the sink faucet just to alleviate the awful scraping sensation of whatever this feeling is.

He hates the odd growling sound that rings out at random times, a sound he's only heard from Alastor on the hunt. He hates the way he can never find the source, only determining that it's close by, and he hates the way he can't figure out what it *means* or if Alastor is coming back.

He hates his hair, which has decided to take advantage of the current lack of care Alastor had undoubtedly put into it previously and go completely untamed, tangling around his ears and getting caught in his antlers. He hates the way his claws keep getting stuck in it, and he hates the way it keeps falling into his eyes.

He hates his *fur*, which chafes against his clothing and itches terribly as a result. He hates that it's all over his body, leaving him uncomfortable no matter what position he takes, and he hates that there's nothing he can do about it. He would've undressed, but he's already wearing far less than Alastor ever did, and the shadow doesn't intend on doing anything as drastic as *undressing* before Alastor returns.

He hates how weak and shaky he feels. He hates the way fatigue has settled into this body, he hates the way it drags him down at its own whims, he *hates* that he keeps waking up without ever realizing he's fallen asleep.

He hates the terrifying flashes that his sleep insists on giving him.

He hates the panic that drives him into wakefulness, he hates the lingering *fear* that clings to him long after he's woken up, he hates that he can't figure out what the flashes *mean* and he hates that he can't figure out why on Earth he's so affected by them.

But the thing he thinks he hates most of all is the fact that Lucifer had clearly botched the healing job.

His stomach keeps *hurting*, and he has enough experience with pain even as just a shadow that he guesses this is what the angelic power had felt like—an awful lingering gnawing ache, digging teeth into his insides, demanding he pay attention. Curling up barely alleviates it. Falling asleep means he doesn't feel it for a while, but he hates the way he never decides to fall asleep, and so he doesn't even consider it an option.

He hates the intensity of it, the all-consuming feeling, like something is chewing open all of his organs. He hates how it continually cleans out his mind, except for a desire to find out a way to make it stop.

He hates that, even with how well-versed in pain he is, *this* pain, as mild as it is in comparison to some of the pains he's felt, is so utterly overwhelming. He hates that it's impossible to ignore, and he hates that there's nothing he can do about it.

He hates all of this. And it's Lucifer's fault, and maybe the shadow should go yell at him. He still hasn't figured out how he's supposed to *talk*, everything feels so *strange* even after days of being in this body, but he can make his upset clear in other ways.

He will not panic.

Humiliation burns through him and he grabs his ears as he flashes back to when he *did* panic, days ago when Charlie had first tried to check up on him.

She will never know of the terror that had slammed into him when she'd knocked and tentatively called out, "Alastor?" but *he will*.

The shadow keeps ruminating on his reaction, which had been to lunge forward, scrabbling to lock the door, and then hiding under the bed until she'd walked away. And proceeding to stay down there for several hours, to the point where he'd fallen asleep and only realized when he'd woken up from the sensation of claws digging into his skin and bright red and blonde hair and someone screaming—

His grip on his ears turns *painful*, and he whines.

He's not supposed to leave this room, but maybe he should.

Charlie has tried to coax him out of this room more than once. She'd last stopped by only a few minutes ago, and the shadow had managed to not hide under the bed this time, but he'd still stayed completely frozen and silent until she'd left. Lucifer hadn't *directly* told him to stay in this room, but the shadow knows how to read between the lines, and in *that* sense, Lucifer had been very clear.

But the shadow hates being stuck in here. He hates how little he knows of everything, and he hates that there are *answers* just outside, answers that he isn't allowed access to, and while he *knows* what happens if he begins to act rebellious the past four days have done far more than he expected to convince him to disobey.

His body helpfully chooses this time to send another pang of that insufferable aching pain through him, and the shadow's mind is made up.

He is going to find Lucifer, and he is going to make him *fix this*, whatever *this* means.

He is not going to panic.

He is not going to get so far as to open the door, think about *disobeying*, and then go to hide underneath the bed.

He is going to *do something*.

He climbs to his feet, and oh, there's another thing he hates, learning how to walk had been *beyond* frustrating, the amount of times he'd stumbled and fallen over when trying to get used to these new hooves simply more kindling on the pile.

He doesn't let himself get lost in it opens the door.

The shadow stares out at the hallway for a very, very long moment.

Lucifer could've set it up so the shadow is killed the moment he goes through. Maybe the shadow would simply get bounced back into the room, unable to push through enchantments that were impenetrable and absolute.

He lifts a hand and waves it out the doorway. Nothing happens. Nothing happens when he leans his head out and looks back and forth down the hall either.

Still nothing happens when he is seized with a reckless impulse and steps outside the room completely.

He stares at the door for a very long moment.

No magical traps. No bindings. All pain he's feeling is the same as before—just that ache in his stomach.

...Interesting.

He quietly slips the door shut. Ears twitching every which way, he turns to look down the hall.

The topmost floor of the new Hotel had been constructed to be somewhat of a replica of the old Hotel's layout. Changes happened, of course, due to the fact that the topmost floor is mostly restricted to one level, but it's still simple enough to make his way to the lobby.

Even if the way to the lobby is the only route he's sure of.

At least his walking is improving the further he gets. The top floor is *big*, the hallway long, and he finds he's able to walk without cautiously keeping to the wall the further he gets.

Perhaps this'll help. If he's standing steady when he's confronting Lucifer, he'll be taken more seriously.

Even if Lucifer is more likely to be in his own tower, but the shadow has no idea how to get there at all, so. Lobby first, and if he isn't there, the shadow will try to find him.

Or try later.

He hadn't anticipated leaving the room to be so *overwhelming*, though. The closer he gets to the lobby, the more new things press on his senses, even the ones he'd had before. He can hear the humming of lights along the halls, the occasional insect buzzing as it takes flight, and more things he doubts he can name from sound alone.

And *smell*. He knows his body has a deer's sense of smell, but he hadn't realize what it meant until he was experiencing it himself. There's *so many smells*, all of them warring for his attention. Some are far more prominent than the others, some bite at his nose and make it sting, some are *awful*—all of it mingling together into a war that he can't figure out how other people live with.

But as he gets closer to the lobby, one smell starts to stand out, and despite himself, the shadow finds it very, *very* alluring.

He hasn't even reached the lobby by the time it's nearly overwhelming everything else and he can't help but stop walking. He tilts his head back, inhaling deeply, ears twitching as he tries to figure out what, exactly, that smell is.

Nothing *sounds* out of the ordinary. He indulges in one more deep breath before dropping his head and pressing forward. If he remembers right, this continues along straight ahead, but it also branches off into a short, second hallway that opens up into the parlor.

Lucifer is likely in the parlor, but as the shadow keeps going, confronting Lucifer is starting to dull in priority. He's almost overwhelmed by how *good* the smell is, how it's so thick in the air it's almost tangible, and by the time he realizes he's reached the parlor he finds himself completely and utterly torn.

He's at the fork in the road. If he continues along this hallway, he'll reach the source of that smell, but as he turns he sees that right in front of him is Lucifer, asleep on the couch with Charlie as some drivel plays on the television screen.

The shadow *should* go straight to Lucifer. This is how he'll get Alastor back, this is how he'll get his question *answered*, it's what he'd set out to do in the first damned place.

...But Lucifer might kill him, and then he'll never learn the source of the smell.

The shadow, now in Alastor's body, takes one hesitant step towards Lucifer. Curiosity does not matter. His own wants and feelings do not *matter*. There are more important things to do than get himself killed like a cat.

Even if the smell is so *alluring*.

His ears twist, rotating back and forth, and he turns to look down the hall.

He's not entirely sure why he is hesitating. If it wasn't for the smell, he wouldn't be at all, but it's cloying the air, muddying his mind and staying his hand. If he didn't have so many *senses* now, he never would've known.

But he *does* know, and every part of him wants to *investigate*. More than it wants to speak to Lucifer.

It's...just a minor detour. No one ever has to know. And it may be important, and there's some instinct in him that is *insistent* the smell *is* more important, and if anything it might help him learn how to deal with these extra senses—

He's just making up excuses to be cowardly.

The realization hits him like a strike to the face. He doesn't *want* to face the consequences of disobedience, Lucifer's intent to keep the shadow in his room as long as possible ringing in his ears, and while he knows he *has* to face them, he—

It's childish. It's simple. He wants to put Lucifer's wrath off as long as possible.

It's a temptation that...he cannot resist.

The shadow turns to continue down the hall.

He will confront Lucifer tonight—he will he *will*—but that means he needs to get as much done now.

He's faced with one more moment of indecision—at one point he can distinctly hear that same odd growl that's been haunting him, and the shadow freezes in place, heart hammering, because what if Alastor is watching and he's enraged at the shadow for refusing to act, for being a *coward*—but it isn't enough to stop him, and soon he's standing in front of a door.

The smell is strongest here. The shadow wraps one hand around the knob, hesitating, and then slowly pushes it open.

Angel Dust is inside. Angel is standing over the stove, but he had just been turning around—to pick something up from the various items strewn on the counter, to leave, the shadow doesn't know what—and their eyes lock.

“Al?” Angel says, and the shadow feels panic bolt through him like lightning, and his hand on the knob tightens as he goes to—

“Wait, wait wait *stop*,” Angel says, and the shadow obediently freezes.

Angel’s expression changes to something the shadow can’t read before he gestures invitingly.

“Come in,” Angel says encouragingly. “You lookin’ for something?”

The shadow stares at him for another moment before turning towards the kitchen itself.

He hasn’t been in here yet. At all. He goes to take a step in as per Angel’s order, but his hoof slides against the tiled floor and he nearly falls backwards, clinging to the doorknob to keep himself from crashing onto the floor.

His face burns as he steadies himself on the carpet in the hall. Humiliating and awful and leaving his room was a bad idea, he should go *now* before he tarnishes Alastor’s image any further than he already has—

“Not used to walking offa carpet?” Angel suggests, cutting through the shadow’s thoughts, and his ears go flat.

“Hey, I get it,” Angel says. “Lucifer told us a bit—you’re learnin’ a lot right now, right?”

The shadow covers his mouth with one hand, and he means to look away, but his eyes catch on a steaming pot on the stove.

The items strewn everywhere...*ingredients*. The shadow’s curiosity is starting to overcome everything else, and Angel did tell him to come in, so...

He tries again, taking another, much steadier step into the room.

And another. Planting his hooves carefully, instead of relying on the carpet to keep himself steady, means he’s able to let go of the door without issue.

“What’re you in here for?” Angel prompts him, and the shadow glances up at him from where he’d been watching his hooves.

Why does everyone keep expecting him to *talk*? He’s a shadow. He is not supposed to *talk*.

And anyways, if he says the honest truth, it’d just sound ridiculous. How is he supposed to say something as simple as a *smell* brought him here?

Angel’s leaning on the counter, and speaking of the smell, he thinks it’s coming from the pot on the stove.

The shadow is hypnotized.

He is—

It's familiar.

~~Alastor~~ the shadow knows this smell, he knows the sauce in the stove, he can almost taste it—

He's stepping forward, and he thinks Angel says something, but he ignores it.

He shouldn't ignore it—

He's leaning over the pot, staring down into it. It smells familiar, but something is off, something is *missing*—

And then he isn't in the Hotel at all.

He's in a different kitchen, yellowed from the late day sun, and the smell of food is thick in the air, mouthwateringly strong. A woman—*his mother* is stirring sauce, making it by hand. He dearly wants to ask when dinner will be ready, but she's scolded him for being too impatient before, so he's keeping his mouth shut.

She's talking to him.

"Alastor," his mother is telling him, "you're listening, right? This is important."

They've been here a while; he's zoned out, but he grounds himself now. He nods, eyes on her hands, as she carefully spills something strong smelling into the pot.

"Everyone's got a secret ingredient," she says, "and others might turn their noses up at it, but you shouldn't do that. Food is important. It's a bit of home, and it's a sign of goodwill if someone's sharing their secrets with you like this."

She hands him the tin that she'd been holding, folding her strong hands over his small ones, and he cradles it carefully, holding it like it's gold.

"You know how new our neighbors are," she says. "It took them a lot of courage to share this with us. Things like this are like sharing a part of a soul. Be careful with it, always."

He's opening his mouth to reply—

He blinks, and then he's standing in front of the stove, staring down at his hands on the countertop.

Alastor's hands. His hands. *His* hands.

They were always his hands. How—

How could he have forgotten?

The image of his mother—*his mother*—folding her hands over his own is still swimming in his mind, and it's a memory. *His memory*.

It's his. Alastor's. *His*.

He's lost in thought as he turns to the spice cabinet, because the smell is just slightly off and he knows how to fix it.

He's got it in his hands, and it's the correct one, he's *certain* of it, he *remembers it*.

He's stepping towards the pot when Angel speaks. "The fuck—"

Alastor flinches, so slightly, at his tone, but he's too lost in thought to react further. Angel must have noticed anyway, because he tries again.

"What are you doing?" Angel's voice is considerably kinder, nowhere near as defensive, and he steps closer, looking down at what Alastor has clutched in his hands. "Is somethin' up?"

Alastor swallows. The memory is still swirling in his head, half of him here, the other half in a kitchen with afternoon light and a woman's voice that was his favorite song.

"Mother's," he says, voice feather delicate. It's the first thing he's said, he himself, it's the first thing *Alastor* has said in—

How long? How long has it been?

There's no radio filter. There's no pitch of wild carelessness rolling in the background, no manic glee, it's not his body's voice, it's *his voice*.

He—

"Huh?"

Alastor turns to Angel, and after a moment holds up the spice still held in his claws. "Mother's recipe."

"Oh shit," Angel says, "you remember your ma?"

He can't remember her face.

Alastor—

All he can think of are her hands, and her voice, and he can't remember her face, or what she liked to wear, or

What was her name?

His chest is tight. Alastor's chest is tight. *His chest* is constricting him.

Angel is looming over him, why is he so damned *tall*, and Alastor backs away from him only for his hip to bump into the kitchen island and his hooves to slip out from under him again and he grabs onto the countertop and everything is close, everything is closing in, he is paralyzed and imprisoned and so *trapped*—

“Al?” Angel says, reaching out for him, and Alastor *stumbles*, tripping over himself in his desperation to get away, ears as low as they can go—

He can’t remember. He can’t remember anything. He can’t remember anything at all.

He can’t look at Angel, so he turns away, and he—

~~The shadow~~ Alastor is so damned, goddamned, so unquestionably and endlessly *afraid*.

“I—“ he starts, but his throat closes up, and he knows how to speak, he knows it, he *remembers it*, he—

“I will—“ His breathing is ragged. Everything is too close, too close, closing in on him, and he needs to go he needs to *run*

“I will be right back,” Alastor finally says, and he bolts.

He left the door open.

Angel, still reeling from what just happened, blinks at the empty space he’d left behind.

He feels pretty fucking stupid for believing Alastor hadn’t lost his memories. Considering just how lost in every aspect the guy had seemed?

Hair a tangled mess, walking like it’s his first day having hooves, face so openly terrified Angel’s surprised it took him this long to run away.

And Angel can’t stop thinking about the way Alastor had immediately followed Angel’s orders. He can’t get rid of the look etched into his face when he did so, still so present in Angel’s mind.

Alastor losing his memories feels like the tip of the entire fucking iceberg, frankly. Fuck, Angel had been fighting the instinct to call him Smiles the entire time, because Alastor *hadn’t been* smiling.

Angel clicks his tongue quietly to himself and steps back towards the stove. Alastor had dropped the spice on the kitchen island when he’d freaked out and Angel picks it up, turning it over in his hands, examining it.

He hadn’t been expecting to trigger a memory, but despite Alastor freaking out Angel thinks he can safely say that holy *shit* that went way better than he’d expected, and he can also say he definitely feels bad for getting defensive so fast.

And adding what Alastor’s mom used was not a bad choice. Sure, it’s different than what he’s used to, and his family would probably kill him from deviating from the recipe he’s always made, but eh.

It’s not *them* he’s making this food for.

If Lucifer notices him, Alastor doesn't hear it. He doesn't care.

He's not running, but it's close enough, and he'd run if he wasn't simply too uncertain of his own hooves, breathing awful and ragged.

He doesn't remember.

He's in his new room before he realizes it, and he collapses onto the bed, heaving breaths in an attempt to keep from choking.

He can't remember. He can't remember. He can't remember.

He's trying, he's *trying*, but it's a sea of unfathomable blankness, unyielding and endless. He tries to think of what happened before he was with his mother—did he come home from school? Was he always going to help?

But nothing.

He can't even recall how old he'd been, he doesn't know if he ever met the people who gave her the recipe—

An unhappy sound wrestles its way out his throat as he curls up into himself, laying on his side, tucking himself in as small as he can go. He should remember. He should. He should he should he *should*.

His ribs are constricting him, pressing down as he desperately tries to get air.

He can't remember.

What was her *name*?

It's all empty.

Even when he considers his words—*his body's* words, they weren't his words, *when were they his words*—

Even when he considers his body's words about how long ago it had been, even when he tries to turn his focus to things that were *recent*, surely there's something there for him—

Empty.

Alastor can feel the way his tail is curled in, a surefire sign of the magnitude of *upset* roaring through him, but he keeps *trying*.

He has to. He has to, he wants to remember, he can remember, he *wants to*—

Behind his eyelids, one of his dreams springs up.

His hands, on the floor, blond hair, and *screaming*—

He opens his eyes for the briefest of moments, but everything is so much, everything in front of him drenched in reds and golds and vibrancy that he had never seen until *days ago*, and it's a horrible idea but he squeezes his eyes back shut.

That—it'd been his voice screaming. He shakes his head, but *now* it's clinging to him, *now* he remembers *something*, and it's his own damned voice *wailing* like it was all he could do.

And then Alastor is not sure he *wants* to remember.

He has to (does he want to) he has to remember (what did he forget) he *needs to remember* (maybe he needs to keep it forgotten) he's—

~~The shadow~~ Alastor opens his eyes.

He keeps them open.

He will not be dragged down by this, he will *not*, the colors of the world are swimming in front of him but he knows who he is, he *knows it*, he just has to *remember*—

He's sitting up within a second, lurching forward as a sudden idea splits through him.

His hands, horribly shaky and uncoordinated, scrabble for the book he'd shoved into the nightstand drawer, the pen that had been clipped to the cover.

He seizes it like a lifeline, the dark book with the yellow duck on the cover, and he opens it to the first page with the pen—

His first attempt is an unreadable scrawl.

Alastor stares down at it. Stares down at his hand, poised over the page. It looks more like a seismograph's reading that it does anything resembling *handwriting*.

Trying his other hand gets him the same result.

~~The shadow~~ Alastor tightens his grip, breathing against the panic trying to strangle him. *Ruin* him.

He knows how to do this. There's no familiarity in his hands, but he has done this before. He knows he has.

It's stilted, and awkward, and it's not the neat cursive he's produced—*his body* has produced—but slowly, he manages to write it down.

My name is Alastor.

It's sloppy. The technique is laughable and childish.

It's very, very effective at calming him down.

He reads it once, twice, three times, five times, over and over until his heart isn't racing and his hands aren't shaking as much.

He'd never put his gloves back on, which means he can feel the paper under his hands. He'd felt the pen pressing against the paper, he can smell the distinct new book smell—all of *his* senses are *here*.

He can wait. He can be patient. He will remember. He *will*.

Even if, now that he's no longer panicking, that annoying aching pain is back, digging teeth into his gut, and he wishes he'd never gotten injured because that's why—

"I'm hungry," Alastor says, cutting through his own train of thought, and even though he's alone his ears pin down a moment later at the sheer childishness of the statement, but he cannot deny it.

This pain in his stomach is *hunger*, not residual angelic power. When was the last time his body had eaten? Months ago?

He'd been summoned increasingly rarely since his body had come to the Hotel—he isn't sure.

But at least now he now knows with certainty *why* he was so drawn to the smell of cooking, even to the point of discarding his original goal of confronting Lucifer.

Instinct had driven him forward, and Alastor knows he has an actual chance to ease this awful, painful aching in his stomach.

Unless Angel says no.

But if Angel says no, Alastor will—

Leave, his mind whispers. It'd be a direct order, so he'd obey it.

It doesn't matter that it'd be from Angel, of all people. It's an order, and the shadow was designed to obey orders, and his rebellious streak had long been stamped—

Alastor lets the journal fall into his lap and seizes his ears, whining in his throat.

He is not. The. Fucking. *Shadow*.

He is Alastor. He is *Alastor*. This is *his body*, his soul, he was born, *not designed*, and he is hungry and there is *food* and if Angel says he can't eat he'll

Leave—

He will not *leave*. He—

He's supposed to *obey*, he knows what happens if he doesn't—

Alastor is *freed* from whatever he'd been under, even if he cannot remember it, and Angel isn't a threat to him so if he eats anyways nothing will happen—

Something always happens when he's disobedient—

His stomach pangs with hunger again, and Alastor snatches the journal off his lap and gets up before he can question himself any further.

If Angel says he can't eat, Alastor... he'll just...

He'll figure it out as it happens.

When he reaches the part of the hall that splits off into the parlor, he can see the television is off and both Lucifer and his daughter are gone, and it's only then that he realizes he's still holding the journal in his hands, clutching it like a lifeline.

It gives him pause—why did he bring it?—but there's something comforting about the weight in his hands.

It's reason enough, he supposes, and he pushes it to the back of his mind as he continues to the kitchen.

The door is still open from when he'd ran. Alastor pushes it open and sees Angel sitting at the island, scrolling through his phone, but his focus is immediately caught by the *completed* lasagna sitting on the stove to cool.

Had he really been lying on his bed for that long? Trying to remember anything?

He doesn't know. What he does know is he doesn't care half as much as he should, because in the moment all he can think about is how he really *is* hungry. He could just walk over and take some, but Angel is sitting right there and Alastor can barely even walk properly in here

—
“Oh, hey!” Angel jumps to his feet, drawing Alastor's eyes to him. “You were gone a while. Everything cool? You done freaking out?”

Alastor opens his mouth, then closes it. How does he answer that without embarrassing himself further?

Maybe it isn't even worth eating. He's going to have to sit here with Angel's eyes on him like he's some fragile *child*, and he can always try later—

He's not allowed to take things on his own, is he, it'll get him *punished*—

He's not the shadow there's no one to punish him—

He needs to be *obedient* he knows what happens if he isn't—

“Al?” Angel says, and Alastor is yanked out of his thoughts. He blinks, refocusing, and then finally registers the hand pointed at the journal still in his hands. “What's that for?”

Alastor clears his throat, turning the journal over in his hands, before walking towards the kitchen island and taking a seat. “Lucifer,” he says, voice crackly, and he clears his throat a second time before continuing. “What did he tell you about... what happened, exactly?”

“Not much,” Angel admits. He stops to power off his phone completely and slip it into his pocket before continuing. “You got into a fight, got your memories wiped, our short king took care of whoever did it, said you should stay here until you got your memories back.”

Alastor runs his thumb over the cover of the journal, thinking hard.

If he’s being honest with himself, he doesn’t *hate* the cover story. He supposes it can’t be helped—Lucifer had to make up *something* for Alastor’s absence, and the idea of him having his soul separated—the way things *actually* were—was...

Quite a bit.

“I see,” Alastor says, and he means to talk more, but his throat is clogging up again as he stares down at the journal in his hands.

“Al?” Angel says, and Alastor shakes his head the slightest amount.

He knows how to talk. He *knows* he does. Why is it still so damned *difficult*? Just to *talk*?

He could just say nothing. He could leave Angel with far more questions than answers. He could force himself to talk so he could laugh and assure Angel that while yes, everything is off *now*, it’ll all soon be rectified.

He should do that. Alastor’s body would’ve done it.

Alastor himself... doesn’t want to.

He pinches the cover of the journal between his clawtips, considering, before slowly flipping it over and showing Angel the only filled page.

“Oh *shit*,” Angel says, and Alastor still can’t look him in the eyes.

Stupid. He’s stupid. Alastor is, frankly, a damned *idiot* for coming to the kitchen in the first place.

Why is he showing Angel this? Lucifer had been correct, his body had been puppeted to act like him, and his pride would’ve kept him from doing anything this...

Sentimental? Foolish? *Vulnerable*?

“Lucifer gave you this?” Angel says. Alastor startles at his voice, *again*, internally kicks himself for getting lost in his thoughts so frequently, and finally manages to nod.

“Never considered what memory loss might’ve been like outside of movies,” Angel says. “You were having trouble writing?”

Alastor stares down at the page for a long moment, rereading *My name is Alastor*, pulling the sentence around himself like a cloak.

“...Al?” Angel says, voice quiet.

A growl rings out, and Alastor jumps.

He didn’t make that noise. He’s only heard that type of growl when his body made it while attacking someone, so he knows it’s from him but *he* didn’t growl, so what on Earth...?

“Shit, you really did forget everythin’, didn’t ya?” Angel says, and Alastor stares at him blankly.

“That growling noise? That’s your *stomach*, Al,” Angel informs him, “not someone hunting you, or whatever. You’re *hungry*.”

Heat crawls up Alastor’s neck as he looks away, because—

Yes, that does happen, doesn’t it?

He’s forgotten everything so thoroughly, the realization hammering itself in with every “new” thing he’s experiencing.

“Hey, it’s alright,” Angel reassures, and Alastor’s ears flick towards him. “My questions can wait, and y’know—who knows what kind of freaky-deaky powers angels have? Wiping your memory so thoroughly you forget how to exist? That’s a new one, but I ain’t crossing anything out when it comes to them.”

He’s up on his feet a moment later, and Alastor’s stomach helpfully growls again as Angel sets the lasagna onto the kitchen island. Angel takes full advantage of his four arms as he snaps up one of the plates perpetually stacked nearby and cuts a square from the tray of food in one motion, plopping it on top and promptly holding it out to Alastor.

Who stares at it. Angel is giving him this, just like that?

“This doesn’t have weed in it or anything like that, if you’re worried,” Angel says. “I know we grew up in the same time period, so shit like coke might be small to you, but you ain’t interested in doing that anymore, right?”

“...Correct,” Alastor manages. At the very minimum, he’d never seen his body indulge in such things—alcohol only, and *quality* alcohol at that.

He needs to pay attention, if he’s going to understand who he was. Who he is.

Angel blinks. “Okay, so you know that,” he says, “which is good, but anyways—“

He lifts the plate up a little higher, clearly trying to get Alastor to take it.

“I made this for you in mind,” he informs Alastor. “Lucifer said you were hiding ‘cause you were upset, which makes sense, and I figured—y’know, food might help. Good food, not just

whatever cheap shit I can find out in the city.”

Alastor slowly folds the journal shut, pushes it aside, and then takes the plate in his hands. It smells so much better than just sauce did, and he can feel the way his mouth is watering, and he swipes at his mouth to ensure he isn't *drooling*.

“Here,” Angel says, and he passes Alastor a fork and knife before cutting himself a piece.

Alastor mumbles a quick thank you before taking a bite, too hungry to wait any longer, and he learns three things, in rapid succession.

One—the food Angel had made is not exactly like his mother's—and somewhere in his mind he remembers *hers*, not as prominently as earlier, but it's strong enough to *compare*, he *remembers it*—but even though there's differences, it's still high quality. Borderline incredible. He hadn't realized Angel liked to cook, or that he was this skilled at it, but Alastor is decidedly appreciative.

Two—meat is *delicious*. The texture, the taste, and even what he suspects is the *smell*—all very, *very* good.

Three—he is unquestionably and unfathomably *starving*.

Even when his mind is occupied by hazy memories, it's not enough to stop him this time. The nerves he'd felt earlier, the worry chasing him about *permission* and *rules*—all of it is taking a backseat.

His first taste is careful and slow, unsure of what the result will be, but immediately afterwards he finds himself wolfing down every bite, barely pausing to chew, and he can feel Angel watching him but he can't bring himself to care.

Using silverware is considerably easier than writing, at least, even if he is ravenous enough that he considers devouring everything with just his hands.

But his plate is still emptied all too soon. Alastor stares down at it, stomach growling obnoxiously loud for *more*, and he's about to simply take some when *no permission* flares in his mind and he freezes.

Is he allowed to take? This isn't *his* food, it's Angel's, and Angel has simply been sharing it; perhaps he's reached his limit. Perhaps he doesn't want Alastor to have more—

Angel snaps his fingers in front of Alastor's face, and Alastor's entire body jerks as he launches his fork at him on instinct.

Angel catches it with ease, flips it around, and offers the handle of it to him. “That wasn't on purpose, was it?”

“I...cannot say it was,” Alastor admits, and Angel shrugs.

“Then I ain't hold it against ya,” Angel says. “I should've expected it, honestly, with how lost in thought you were. Just wanted to pull you outta whatever trance you were in, but God

knows everyone's got freaky reflexes. Did you know Vaggie uses that fucking spear of hers as a goddamn *javelin* half the time? Pissed off Nifty at least once by chucking it through the front door."

Alastor can't help the half of a smile that curls across his face at the thought. Oh yes, he can imagine the fit the little terror would've thrown at her precious window getting shattered for the upteenth time.

"Here," Angel says, and he tugs Alastor's plate away to set another piece of lasagna on top. "If you're still hungry, there's plenty."

Alastor hesitates for a beat, but he's salivating at the thought of seconds, so he ultimately takes it from him. "Thank you," he says.

His body, it seems, is *demanding*. Despite the fact that demons cannot starve, they can still very much get *hungry*, and by the time he polishes off his second piece said hunger is still gnawing at him so powerfully Angel doesn't hesitate in handing him more.

Alastor only pauses when Angel sets a glass full of water next to him—he snatches it, gulping it down greedily, but once that's gone he's back to devouring everything on his plate.

He hadn't been keeping count of how much he'd eaten by the time he finally begins to slow down. He's aware it's quite a bit, and that Angel had been eating much slower than he had, but he's still startled when he looks up from what he's decided is his last piece to see the pan is *empty*.

His eyes flick to Angel, who isn't looking at him. He's also focused on the empty pan as he pops his last bite into his mouth.

Angel catches Alastor's gaze and shrugs. "You really were hungry, huh?"

"I..." Alastor is sure that if humiliation is actually as poisonous as it feels, he would've been killed by it by now. As it is, his face is back to burning with embarrassment, but Angel waves him off.

"I said it was for you, didn't I?" he says. "And I'd already figured you hadn't eaten anythin' in a few days."

A few days doesn't warrant how much he'd eaten. *Angel* is unaware that the last thing Alastor's body had eaten was most likely half a deer carcass from months ago, and he'd still simply...allowed him to eat, until he wasn't hungry, without judgment.

Alastor picks up a napkin and carefully wipes his mouth. "...Thank you," he says quietly. He's been saying it quite a bit tonight, but it's sincere, every time.

"Course," Angel says, and he sets another full glass of water in front of Alastor before taking a drink from his own.

During Alastor's entire time of knowing Angel—during almost all of Alastor's entire time as a shadow, honestly—his opinions of other people had been linked to whatever adjectives his

body had tacked onto them.

To Alastor's puppeted body, Angel been vulgar, loud, obnoxious, and someone his body had proclaimed to be worth about as much as a stone to throw through an enemy's window, so as the shadow, Alastor had assumed the same.

To say he'd clearly been wildly incorrect was an understatement.

Angel could've killed him. It would've been *viciously* easy, and would've earned him high scoring points with an absurd amount of the inhabitants of hell.

The Radio Demon, felled by the porn star, toppled off his pedestal. It would've made headlines for years.

And instead, he's doing *this*. Coaxing Alastor into relaxing, giving things without asking anything in return.

And the way he is doing it makes Alastor think Angel isn't just rooting to put someone powerful into a debt to eventually be repaid.

He'd already been changing his preconceived notions about Angel, but the newest impression of his is now firmly set in stone.

And it's this that leads Alastor to do something possibly foolish.

"What do you know about me?"

Angel blinks at the sudden question, but he doesn't question it. "You're powerful," he says, counting each point with one set of hands, "creepy, good at killin', you hate TV, got your memory wiped around four days ago."

Alastor taps his pen against the table. "That's all?" he presses. "Nothing else?"

Angel leans back, pushing his plate forward so he doesn't plant his elbows in the sauce still on it before folding one pair of arms on top of the island. "You ain't say shit about yourself, Al," he says, "*ever*. I don't even know what year you died in."

...Distressing.

Alastor flips the pen between his hands, thinking heavily.

He's already feeling much, *much* better now that he's eaten. His stomach doesn't hurt at all anymore, his head is far clearer, he feels more like he can actually *think*, and he's finding that he hates everything considerably *less* on a full stomach.

Even if some part of him is still trying to overwhelm with the idea of being out of his room, of being *seen* out of his room, but Angel has been treating him so...

Normally.

Not normal for how others treat the Radio Demon, but normal for how *Angel* might treat a friend he wants to help.

Alastor remembers the look on Angel's face when his body had reappeared after getting slashed by Adam.

The fear is there, egging him back to his room, insisting to him that he *cannot be here*, but despite its best attempts, Alastor finds it's...negligible.

For the moment, at least.

And Angel had been showing genuine interest in Alastor's memories, so...

"...If you have any questions for me," he says, "I would appreciate them."

"Oh shit," Angel says, "for real?"

Alastor takes a drink of water as flips the journal open to a blank page, setting his glass down to click his pen. "As you know, I...may not be able to answer them," he reminds Angel, "and I will be writing all of them down, so do not ask anything you are *aware* I'd dislike, but otherwise..."

"Alright," Angel says, and he cracks his knuckles. "Let's see if we can't get you to remember anything else, yeah?"

Chapter End Notes

lasaga

if anyone's curious, i'm writing alastor's natural hair as somewhere between 3a and 3b.
it's a little bit messy. just a little bit

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