apostasy

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by darkmillennium

Summary

Michael's already got a failed life behind him and a hell-bound future in front of him, alright? He doesn't need a *demon*, of all things, constantly following him around.

The demon doesn't seem to care.

Notes

crosspost from my ao3 with some very minor edits! you ever look at an old work of yours and realized you used one word wayyyyyy too much HAHA

See the end of the work for more notes

“Howdy, stranger.”

Michael pauses briefly in the middle of cleaning his machete before resuming, folding and refolding the fabric to properly soak up every droplet of blood. This was his best vampire-hunting weapon, after all, and he wasn’t going to see it stained by the pathetic excuse of a corpse lying headless at his feet.

His shoes, on the other hand, probably weren’t so lucky. Warm liquid squishes between his toes, and he’d wince if he still had the capacity to do so. Instead, he just keeps looking down, keeps his shoulders squared, pays no mind to the mocking accent echoing behind him in the empty warehouse.

“C’mon, don’t be like that. Not a fan of cowboys?”

“Your impressions are terrible,” Michael says, finally letting his blade fall down along with his hand to his side and turning to meet the owner of the voice.

Adam grins, shark-like as always, and Michael’s gaze idly traces the familiar curve of it with the same ever-present curiosity that shamefully burns at the back of his throat. He wonders what it would look like, if there were no demon attached to it; if it would be bright or gleaming instead of sharp and cutting. There’s something about the face that makes Michael think it used to belong to someone kind—instead, though, there’s something inhuman that rests there, painted with needle-like strokes across the surface of a body that looked younger than Michael himself. Early twenties, if Michael had to guess. Maybe even just twenty.

But the hunter knows that Adam’s much older than that.

The demon in question’s hands are in his pockets as he looks around, eyeing the bloody trail of bodies with an amused eyebrow cocked in question.

“Well, *someone’s* grumpy. At least I didn’t find you passed out in the middle of the woods again.”

“You wouldn’t have found me at *all* if you’d stop *coming,”* Michael snaps, lip curling as the bloodied cloth crumples quickly in his fist.

“Ah, yeah, but then you’d be dead. That was a nasty little Wendigo you were up against, remember? And I’m pretty sure you don’t want to end up in Hell a few years early. You’ve still got time. Though, I gotta say, what you’re doing with it is…” Adam lazily toes a head with his shoe, watching as it rolls away from his foot. “Interesting. Most people would be partying. Celebrating what little life they have left. Cocaine, orgies, you know the drill. But...here you are.”

“Haven’t you got anything better to do than follow me around?” Michael refuses to talk about the Wendigo incident. He owes him nothing. There’s an exorcism on the tip of his tongue, like always.

“Hm. Not really. Besides,” the demon smiles, tauntingly innocent. “You like when I follow you around.”

“Fuck off.” Michael walks forward, walks around him, and squares his jaw as he thinks of the red footprints he’s probably leaving behind.

What would his father think? Him, standing here, consorting with something as vile as a *demon.* He should’ve exorcised him a long time ago.

But if he’s going to start with the *should haves,* he’d probably do best to start with the demon deal.

“No can do, buckaroo.” When Michael whips around to glare at him, Adam holds up his hands in surrender.

“Alright, alright, no more Wild West.”

He can hear footsteps following lackadaisically behind him as he makes his way out to his car, and he almost wants to turn and see just how good his aim is with his throwing arm; see if a blade would be able to cause any pain to a demon if he stuck it through his *eye.* Instead, he silently pulls the trunk open with an unnecessary amount of force and slams it shut the same way after he’s thrown both weapon and rag in.

Adam, unsurprisingly, has chosen to make himself comfortable in the shotgun seat. Michael pointedly doesn’t think about who used to sit there and instead just files into the driver’s seat, starting the car and pulling off in one quick, fluid motion. He’s hardly even aware of his hands at the wheel.

Adam drums his fingers on the car door, splaying out over the old leather like someone who's done it a thousand times before.

And he has, Michael thinks, tightening his grip on the wheel, *and you let him. What kind of hunter are you?*

The amount of times he's asked himself that question in the last four years is probably equal in number to the amount of times he's wanted to murder every vampire on the planet. Which is a lot.

He was his father's best soldier. He was the *good son.* And now he's…here.

Two years into the biggest mistake of his life.

Two more to go.

Adam had somehow found him at the end of year one, when Michael had been so drunk that he couldn't see straight, and had taken great pleasure in mocking him in the alley he’d stumbled out in from dusk till dawn—all the way up until he returned to sobriety. Michael hadn't known he was a demon, then; he'd just thought that he'd been some asshole.

Turns out, he wasn’t wrong.

Partially.

For starters—he was an asshole, all right. An asshole with black eyes and enough rough edges to sand a tree into sawdust. It wasn't until Michael had finally gone to throw a hungover punch and found himself trapped in midair, with a gaze made of a starless night in lieu of the blue sky at dawn staring back at him, that he'd realized—*oh, fuck, this is a demon. Oh, God, I'm going to die.*

And then the demon had smirked and winked and *vanished* right before his eyes.

And then…

At first, Michael had just tried to forget that it had ever happened in the first place, much to his own chagrin. He should know better. He'd been *taught* better.

But what was the point in worrying about it when he knew he was going to die?

...Except the demon *kept coming back.*

"Who are you?!" he'd shouted, the useless gun hanging limp in his hand. Wasn't it enough that he'd sold his fucking soul? Why was he being followed? "What do you want from me?"

The demon smiled. It was sickening. "Oh, didn't I introduce myself? Adam, nice to meetcha! And, uh…" he'd shrugged, hands jammed in his pockets. "Nothing, believe it or not."

Their eyes had met, Adam's head cocking to the side like he was contemplating a challenge. "I just think you're funny."

It wasn't long before it turned into a game of cat and mouse—except Michael wasn't sure who was the cat and who was the mouse, anymore Sometimes Adam would find him, like he'd done now, taunting him with sarcastic little jeers and dry retorts that Michael would fire back until the demon left. Other times, the hunter would thrust the keys into the ignition with more force than he should've been using and *drive,* eyes peeled for the familiar form standing idly on the side of the road. Waiting. Or he'd frequent bars like he had been for the year beforehand—not to drink, but to seek out blond hair and smug eyes.

Sometimes, he'd even find him.

"Whose body are you wearing?" Michael had asked, once. "Who's in there with you?"

Adam had smirked, beer bottle lax in his hand. Michael wasn't drinking. He'd cut himself off from it completely after the whole alley incident, and besides—he couldn't track down a demon when he couldn't see straight.

"Mine, believe it or not. Demons used to be human, y'know. I figured out a few tricks or two after I popped back out of Hell, managed to fix this hot piece of ass right back up from dust and bones."

"And didn't you also say that demons couldn't remember what being human was like?"

The demon shrugged, the perfect picture of innocence. "They can't. Not most of them. But I'm a little smarter than the average grunt."

"Ri-ight."

"What? Do you know how many people are sitting around with their thumbs up their asses down there? 'Cause it's a lot."

Michael didn't know why he let this keep *happening.* Maybe because he was fucked, one way or another. Maybe because he didn't think he could stand to see the cold, empty disappointment that he knows would be reflected in his Father's eyes, the incredulous anger in Raphael's, the wide-eyed desperation in Gabriel's.

He was already fucked. He might as well make it worse, even if it wasn't through cocaine and orgies.

...All this for Lucifer. All this *because* of Lucifer. All this because Michael couldn't stand to see the child he'd raised grinning darkly up at him with deadly, pointed teeth.

And he'd damned himself just to fix it.

Except Lucifer had went and gotten himself turned again, drunk on power and thirsty for blood, and there was nothing Michael could do but sit back and stare dumbly as the realization hit him—he'd sold himself away for nothing.

Nothing.

And then the disgraced running, and then the drinking, and then...*Adam.*

Who Michael realizes has been running his mouth for the last...however long it'd been.

"—but, of course, then she tried to kill *me,* and I'm pretty sure that'd be bad for my nonexistent health—"

Adam, as he'd come to realize, was odd. Still a demon, still foul, still something that Michael should've exorcised a long time ago, but…*odd.*

Demons were rare. Michael could count on three fingers the amount of demons that the Shurleys had encountered over the years, and they were dangerous and unpredictable and *cruel.* Only people stupid enough to make deals would ever come face-to-face to them and live to tell the tale.

Until they were torn to shreds when their time was up, that is.

Michael knew of experienced hunters being squashed to death like bugs under their feet, and the thought had made him shudder, once upon a time, when he was young and foolish and hadn't handed his soul in the form of a desperate kiss to a red-eyed woman in a blue jacket that wasn't doing her colored hair any favors.

But Adam was a demon. Adam made fun of him. Adam mocked him for stumbling through the streets and seemed to have no apparent connection to Hell and always turned up at the *stupidest* times. Like now.

Michael had questioned him, once. Who he was working for, if he was just some errant pet of whatever ruler Hell had; it wasn't like Michael knew how it worked.

It's the closest Adam's ever gotten to seeming like a proper demon, his eyes going dark and his voice growing flat in a way that had made the hunter's fight-or-flight instincts beg to kick in; he'd held them back only by the barest of threads.

"Don't you dare*—" Adam had started, knuckles white and teeth grinding together, "I have* never *been* anything *of theirs, and I never* will *be. Understand?"*

Michael had dropped it.

He wonders if he's still in some sort of drawn-out shock from Lucifer's betrayal, if it's why he allows something so unnatural to draw so close to him, to worm his way into his life, his car, *under* him—

Enough.

He's not exactly in a position to deny the company. Especially when said *company* keeps turning up no matter what he does, for reasons unknown to him.

"You should take a left here," Adam says, jerking Michael out of his thoughts, and Michael scowls at his own two hands when they automatically go for the turn signal.

He turns left.

"Why?"

"Seemed like the quickest way to lead a poor soul into the middle of nowhere," he replies, the smile on his face broad and cutting. Sure enough, when Michael looks around, he finds himself in—the middle of nowhere. Of course. Nothing around but fields for miles. He scowls at him.

Adam beams in response.

"Yeah? What happens next, you skin me alive and make a damn coat out of me?" Michael grumbles, eyeing his fuel tank suspiciously. He was pretty sure he hadn't had that much when he'd went into the warehouse.

"Whoa there, big boy. Didn't know you were into that sort of thing."

"Shut your mouth, you *abomination.*"

"Y'know, I gotta hand it to you—*love* your vocabulary range, man. Gun-slinger one second and then—*bam!*—one of those men in suits with sticks up their asses. What were they called

again?" Adam seems to be talking to himself, brow furrowed as he thinks, and Michael sends him a strange look.

Men in suits? He'd have to look into that one.

"Whatever. Anyway! Your manhunt seems to be going good. Caught sight of that little brother of yours, yet?"

"It's not a *manhunt."* Michael snaps.

"Ah, yeah," Adam says, tone going from annoyingly lighthearted to annoyingly *deadpan* faster than the hunter can blink. "You, tracking down and murdering every vamp nest you can get your hands on has absolutely *nothing* to do with the fact that your brother's one of 'em. Convincing."

Michael says nothing, staring straight head at the illumination of his headlights on the road. Out of his peripheral, he sees Adam roll his eyes.

"You're funny, but you're no *fun* sometimes," he complains. Michael rolls his own eyes.

"Then why don't you *leave?"*

Michael doesn't know what he'd do if Adam left permanently. For all that his presence inspired ignominy—both in the hunter's gut and in the expressions of his family if they ever found out—Adam was...familiar. Reliable, even if he was a dick.

He can't remember the last time someone was familiar to him outside of his brothers. He doesn't want to think about what that says about him.

"Because I don't want to," the demon's head raises, a triumphant little motion that vexes Michael to no end. "And you don't want me to. I saw the way you were peeking around that gas station earlier."

"You were there?"

"I'm your one-of-a-kind stalker, of course I was there."

Michael throws his hands up, landing them with a *thump* back down on the steering wheel. Adam throws back his head and laughs, a sound that had somehow grown just as recognizable as the hum of the engine.

They pass a few signs. Michael doesn't bother to look at them.

"Alright—you're *really* boring today. Come on. I haven't even heard you threaten to crash the car!"

"What's your point?"

Michael sighs in annoyance when he catches sight of the gleam of Adam's teeth, the way that the car begins to slow and shudder and groan, and he doesn't even have time to move before

Adam’s suddenly launching himself from the shotgun seat to Michael’s lap, straddling him in such a way that every single inch of flesh on his upper body is being pressed down upon.

The hunter curses in at least four different languages as he attempts to navigate the car to the side of the road. Adam is warm, and if Michael were any sort of poet he'd think that it might be a milder version of hellfire that radiates from his skin.

“I think we can spice things up a bit, don’t you?”

“Could you at least let me pull over, first?!”

“We’ll see,” Adam grins, briefly sitting back just enough to cross his arms across his chest in complacent victory as Michael cranes his neck to peer around him, awkwardly maneuvering his hands on the steering wheel until he’s finally able to pull it all the way over as the car finally gives out on him.

God, he hates demons and their stupid, unnecessary, *ridiculous* powers.

“You better fix this,” he grouses, and Adam laughs again, staring down at him with an unyielding blue gaze that just makes Michael wonder—again—what it might’ve looked like without the monstrous glint to it, without all the serrated points and guarded unearthliness.

He can almost picture it, too; if Adam hadn’t been lying about this body once being his own, back when he was human, then Michael could practically *see* where his smile would’ve evened out into something sweeter, the happier glint that could’ve danced across his gaze, the place where his eyes would’ve crinkled up if he’d laughed.

If someone were to ask him which Adam he would’ve preferred, the hunter doesn’t know if he’d have an answer.

“Or what?” the demon replies, winding his arms lazily around Michael’s neck. Michael cocks an eyebrow, doing his best to come off as wholly unamused, trying his best to cut the beating of his heart down like it’s an animal to put out of its misery.

“*Exorcizamus te, omnis immundus spiri —*”

And then Adam’s lips are quickly crushing against his, swallowing down the rest of the incantation with his tongue just like Michael knew he would. A callused hand comes up to tangle tightly in his hair, matching the dark energy of the bruising kiss, and Michael—

Well, he thinks he should be downright *ashamed* of how immediate his reaction is, how quickly his hands slip up under the demon’s shirt, how unabashedly drawn-out his low groans become when Adam grinds down on him or how his breath leaves his lungs when their clothes are haphazardly thrown into the backseat and Adam finally, *finally* sinks home.

He *really* thinks that some guilt or remorse or *something* might be in order. The foolish boy he’d been—the one who’d prayed at the bedside of motel rooms, in the adrenaline-filled moments before a hunt, even in this very *seat* with his forehead pressed against the top edge of the steering wheel—would be *weeping* if he saw the person he’d grown up to be.

Instead, though, he finds a corrupted sense of peace in the familiarity of Adam—his guttural curses, his warm breath, his preternatural stamina, the way his back arches and bows, the smell of sulfur hanging heavy around them like an intoxicating cloud. There's a pit opening up beneath his heart and his mind, swallowing him whole, ripping him away from his status as his father's son; he can't even bring himself to struggle against its pull as Adam's teeth grazes his flesh, just enough pressure behind it to give it a kick.

There's blood, cooling and drying, still clinging to his soles, the fabric of his shoes, his *skin.*

Two more years.

"Why are you the way that you are?"

Adam appraises him, looking him up and down, and Michael has to fight not to stare at anything except his face.

"What can I say? I'm expensive merchandise, I know."

The hunter rolls his eyes, sending a exasperated look Adam's way. "Oh, fuck off. You know what I mean."

"Do I?"

He's insufferable. Michael can't stand him. Lucifer had once called him the greatest asshole known to mankind, but he thinks that the greatest asshole known to demonkind has *to be the fucker sitting across from him right now.*

"You clearly hate the rest of Hell. You apparently never go down there. You crawl here from whatever corner of the world you like to rot away in—" Adam laughs, at that. His laugh has always been the one thing Michael could never picture sounding human. "—and for what? I've never even see you try to rip someone's head off."

Adam cocks his head. "Do you wanna? 'Cause we're in a diner," he gestures around—slowly, leisurely. "And it's pretty damn full. I'm sure there's gotta be someone in here whose head you wouldn't mind a game of soccer with."

"Try it and I'll exorcise you."

"Ooo, you'll exorcise *me. I'm so scared."*

And Michael gets no answer to his question, unsurprisingly. But he sees something flicker in the depths of Adam's eyes like far-off minnows in a tiny stream when the demon's eyes land on a mother, by herself, feeding her daughter with a little spoon in a high chair; he files it away in the back of his mind for later. Maybe he'll need it someday.

Or maybe he'll lay in the backseat of his car, trying to sleep, and helplessly watch as that same flicker plays over and over again in the recesses of his brain. And he'll let it.

Everything burns.

The last thing he remembers on Earth was the cold of the forest, where he'd driven himself as he sensed his time rapidly approaching. He didn't want his body to be ripped apart by hellhounds in public, after all.

He hadn't sent anything to anyone. Not to his Father, not to any of his brothers.

It wasn't like they'd known about the deal in the first place. Maybe they would think he died on a hunt, like he was *supposed* to,

But now, everything burns. Everything *twists* and *scorches* and he chokes on a mixture of his own blood and the relentless, toxic atmosphere of Hell as someone laughs over him, carving irregularly into his ragged excuse for a body with enough agonizing slowness to make Michael start screaming again.

The laughter gets worse.

He's spent so long like this, hooks digging into his sizzling flesh and screaming until he feels his own throat being ripped out. Sometimes—between the hot flashes of psychological torment and the dull carving of his skin—his mind flashes back; back to Lucifer and Raphael and Gabriel and arguments in the car that ended in laughter and bathroom breaks at sketchy-looking gas stations at three in the morning and the books that would pile up on Raphael's side of the car, the McDonald's wrappers that would do the same on Gabriel's.

Sometimes, his mind even flashes back to Adam, the way he'd kick his feet up on Michael's hotel room's table like he belonged there, the way he'd momentarily flash his eyes to black just to watch Michael tense up in anticipation before his lips curled up into a mischievous smile, always catching the knife that the hunter would sometimes throw in his direction—and then mock-pouting when Michael had eventually gotten used to it and stopped.

"C'mon. C'mo-on, I thought the big bad hunter was gonna figure out a way to kill me!"

Michael hmph-ed, turning away to focus back on the coffee machine. It was too early for this. "One of these days."

A snort from behind him is almost enough to make the barest hint of a smirk tug at his own lips. Almost.

He wonders if it really is too late to grab a knife and chuck it for all he's worth.

Blearily, through a pain-filled haze, he thinks that Adam's black eyes were different than the ones he'd seen here. The ones here were cold and feral and sadistic. Adam's were...well, they certainly weren't *kind*, but there was *emotion* behind them.

Most of the time.

He misses him, he realizes. He misses a demon that he'd known for three years.

Father, If Michael had real vocal cords, they would've given out by now as his mind begins to unravel at the seams amidst the sea of agony. *If you could only see me now. I was once your soldier, remember? I was once your son, wasn't I. Who am I now? Who have I been, these past three years?*

He doesn't know anymore. Maybe he never knew anything at all. Maybe each and every moment of his life, everything he'd ever *done,* was for nothing.

Michael had *tried*. He'd tried *so hard.*

But here he was, one way or another.

He's so lost in his own mind that he doesn't realize that the pain has stopped.

There's...a commotion? Somewhere nearby. Maybe it's right above him, actually—everything sounds like he's underwater, so he thinks he can be forgiven for his lack of perception. He can't open his eyes, either.

...Actually, he just doesn't want to.

Then, something—some*one*—is *grabbing* him, and there's a disorienting moment where Michael feels like he's in a box and whoever's on the outside is shaking him around with all their might, bones on the verge of shattering with the amount of pressure against his body.

Rough hands, Michael dimly thinks with what little coherency he has.

These weren't the same hands that carried the blade, the ones that tore and tugged and left him mutilated and ruined in a million different ways. These hands...he'd felt them on his chest, his back, his—

Adam's hands, he startles, and he thinks that he might've shifted a bit at the realization because the person who's carrying him— *Adam?* he hopes, he *prays* —hisses out a few strangled words in a deep, gruff voice, so undeniably nonhuman that Michael can barely make them out.

"*Stop fucking moving!* "

As it turns out, it isn't too hard to comply—they're suddenly breaching some bright surface, bright enough to burn as white-hot as the pain, and whatever consciousness that makes him up winks out like a light.

When he wakes up, he's alone on the forest floor.

He's..where he was. Where he'd driven.

He raises his hands, turns them over and over in shock.

There's no blood. No dirt. None of the gaping wounds that the hellhounds had left when they'd shredded him to pieces.

He's...whole.

Michael doesn't know how long he sits there, well and truly shell-shocked. He doesn't even know when he gets up and starts walking.

He *does* know the moment that he sees his car, the world slamming into focus as he staggers towards it, reaching out to touch the hood with a reverence he didn't think he possessed. It's just the same as he'd left it, with one notable difference—the keys, sitting patiently in the front seat, just *waiting* for him to grab them.

That was...odd. He'd pocketed them before he died.

Whatever.

Michael reaches through the open window and grabs them, stuffing them away in his jacket before yanking open the door to the back and climbing in.

Before anything else, he thinks he's entitled to a nap.

"What's it like? Hell?"

"..."

"Adam," he tried again. He wanted an answer.

"Dank. Hot, depending on which part you're in. Smells like rotting meat. Everyone's always screaming about something or other." There's a pause, and then— "It fucking sucks."

Michael attempted not to snort. "Obviously."

"Hey, you asked."

"Is that why you left? 'Cause it...sucks?"

He feels himself being studied, keeps his eyes firmly on the road in front of him.

Adam sighed, then, a noise Michael had never heard from him before. He hadn't thought demons were capable of sounding so melancholic. "That's part of it."

"...And the other part?"

Apparently, that melancholy only lasted a certain amount of time, because he saw Adam's face darken with something that he couldn't quite make out with his gaze still peering out the window. "I didn't come here to talk about my tragic backstory," he snarls, and now Michael was the one who wanted to sigh.

"It's a wonder you can talk about something other than how damn badly you want to be fucked," The hunter snapped back, easing them both into familiar territory, and tension bled out of Adam's shoulders as he plastered on a another knife-like grin in return.

Two more months.

He almost wants to track down Raphael and Gabriel.

He'd left them with Father. Michael had finally, *finally* managed to get in contact with him, had proposed that they team up for a particularly nasty, unusually large pack of werewolves that had been terrorizing and picking apart an entire town in Nevada. They'd finished it up, walking away with enough open wounds to fill a hospital's blood bank but victorious all the same, and Michael had—slipped away. In the dead of night. He'd taken extra caution not to alert his father with the rumble of the car's engine starting up outside the motel, creeping out of the parking lot long before dawn broke out over the sky.

It was why he'd been so alone for that entire first year, too—he'd taken measures to avoid hunters' bars and other places that he thought people might look for him, if his father had even decided to reach out to others to help search for him.

Raphael might've, if nothing else.

It's been so long since Michael's seen them, *either* of them. He doesn't even know if he'd recognize them anymore. Four years. Four years and however long he'd spent down there, in Hell. He still doesn't know how long it's been; hasn't bothered to check any dates on newspapers or peer at any TVs through street windows.

He's just driven, and driven, and driven.

...There's been no sign of Adam, either.

It's been four years, Michael tries to reason. *Four years. It wouldn't do any good to go crawling back when you don't even know who they are anymore, right?*

Something stirs in his gut, something murmured that he doesn't want to listen to— *it's over.* That period in his life is irrevocably and unequivocally...*over.*

Michael *doesn't know what to do.*

He doesn't want to go on another rage-influenced manhunt for Lucifer— *because Adam had been right, it'd been a manhunt with no end because...God, he'd never thought he'd get* out *of Hell* —and he doesn't want to go back to his brothers. He doesn't want to laze around and he...doesn't want to *hunt.* Not now, when hooks and chains and blades still haunt his nightmares so clearly.

He…

He's hungry. He's going to go get food.

Parking his car along the sidewalk of the quaint little town he'd meandered into isn't the problem, though. It's when he goes to cross the street, and his ears register the sound of a vehicle much, *much* too late.

Michael is nothing but a deer caught in headlights when the oncoming truck stares him down, and he has just enough time to be annoyed at the fact that the man at the wheel is staring down at his phone before something *grabs him, rough hands, rough hands* and pressure is squeezing him down, down, down until he blacks out again.

He wakes up in a bed, this time.

There's a few groggy moments where he isn't really sure what's going on or why the pounding in his head is so unbearable before he remembers that he *hadn't slept in a bed in weeks* and he's shooting straight up—headache be *damned* —and looking wildly around to try and get his bearings.

White walls, no markings. He isn't chained. A quick pat-down tells him that he's still got his various knives, his gun, his multiple lockpicks, and his other necessities.

Hands. Adam. Remember.

The truck, the man, the *grabbing.*

Right. Okay.

Michael swings himself up and out of the bed, one hand still ready to draw his gun at a moment's notice as he inches towards the door.

Just as he's about to open it, though, he sees the shadow of a figure under the door and he immediately draws and cocks the firearm when it swings open, pointing it directly in the face of—

Of—

"Put that thing down, twinkletoes. If you get blood all over my wall, it won't be monsters you'll have to worry about."

His arm lowers on an instinct that Michael almost wants to berate himself for.

"Adam?"

"Hell didn't make you blind, did it? Of course it's me," Adam shoulders past him, holding something in his hands, and the burn of sulfur hits Michael's nose. He can't help taking a deeper breath, inhaling the scent with perplexed wonder. The sulfur-smell in Hell had been overwhelming, filling whatever nose he'd had down there until he choked on it, again and again and again.

Adam's was...different. Milder. Less overwhelming and more...Adam.

Fuck, his head is killing him.

Like he can read his mind, Adam shoves something into his hands—and, to Michael's surprise, it's...aspirin. Water and aspirin, the water conveniently thrust into his hands with enough force to make a little of it spill onto his shirt.

He doesn’t complain or question why Adam’s helping him, eagerly gulping down the pills and chugging the water with gusto before wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. “Where are we?”

Adam stares at him for a second, peering at him with narrowed eyes, and then his shoulders slump as he sighs. “My apartment.”

...There’s no way he heard that right. “Your *what?”*

“*Apartment,”* the demon repeats. Michael thinks he seems awfully touchy. “Y’know, where people... *live?* That’s probably a new concept to your brain, I know, but—”

“You’re not a *people, ”* he replies, before he can stop himself, and Adam raises his eyebrows.

“Well, isn’t someone intolerant?” He snatches the glass back from Michael’s hand, turning and walking out of the room, while the hunter in question rolls his eyes and follows him.

“Shut up. Really, what’s going on?”

Adam says nothing until he reaches the kitchen sink, and Michael takes in the space around him—there’s a few decorations, here and there. Little trinkets that look like they’d be in homes of every picket-fence family in America. It’s normal in a way that it shouldn’t be because it’s *Adam,* and Michael doesn’t know what to think of it.

“I saved your ass for the umpteenth time. You’re welcome.”

Adam remains facing the sink, tone leaving no room for argument, but...no. Absolutely not.

“I’m supposed to be in Hell.”

“And now you’re not. Got a problem? I can toss you back in if you want.”

“Why did you save me in the first place? Why did you—” but Adam’s body is tensing like a cornered animal about to lash out, and Michael—

He hates the look of it on him too much to keep going.

He’s tired.

“Why does it feel like shit every time you teleport me?” he gripes, instead, and the demon relaxes, snorting. The sound is so familiar, so unlike the screams of Hell or the silence of the road, that something twinges deep in Michael’s chest.

Adam finally turns around, leaning against the counter with his arms crossed and meeting Michael’s eye with a smirk that he *knows* wasn’t there a few seconds before, even without having seen him. “My brand of going *poof* isn’t the usual brand. Technically, I’m not even supposed to be able to do it. There’s a few kinks I gotta work out. Passengers are tricky, and going in and out of Hell is trickier.”

Right. “If you’re not supposed to be able to do it, how *can* you do it?”

“I’m smart,” Adam says, raising his shoulder and tipping his head in a *what can you do?* motion that makes Michael pull an exasperated face. “Anyone can do anything as long as they know where to get the right information.”

“Mhm,” Michael raises an eyebrow. “Speaking of *information,* where are we?”

“Madison, Wisconsin.”

Madison. Where Michael had been when he’d first keeled over in that godforsaken alleyway.

No wonder Adam had found him—he’d *lived* in the area, and a hunter drunk off their ass had probably been too good of a chance to pass up.

Why did he let you live, though? his brain speaks up. *Why is he different? It’s been years, you should know by now. What are you even doing?*

If he had a penny for every time he'd asked himself that, Michael thinks he'd be a billionaire by now.

There’s a silence, an awkward pause, and then Adam’s glancing at the clock on the microwave.

“Well, would you look at the time? I’ve gotta run. Do me a favor and don’t fuck up my apartment, alright? ‘Cause if you do, I might have to kill you.”

There’s barely enough time for Michael to come up with “Hey, wait a second—” before Adam’s gone, leaving behind the smell of familiar sulfur and an empty kitchen.

Turns out, Adam goes to college.

A demon. Going to college. Because—and Michael quotes—“There’s nothing better to do! Besides, do you know how fun it is to screw with professors?”

God.

He still doesn’t know what to do with himself. He’s mainly just been lounging around Adam’s apartment like a freeloader, and he doesn’t even know why he’s doing *that.*

He’s supposed to be hunting. He’s supposed to be making his father proud.

...But he hasn’t done that in years. And he probably never will again, not with the stain on the once-perfect record that was his life.

Instead, he’s sprawled out on a demon’s couch, watching *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* with the demon in question as sweat dries on his skin from their recent activities. Adam’s lips are still swollen from use when Michael turns to look at him.

“Are you okay?”

Adam whips his head around to stare at him, frowning, and Michael thinks that he *really* needs to stop speaking without thinking. Or doing things without thinking in general. That was the entire reason that he could barely sleep anymore, after all—five months in Hell would do that to you.

If it had felt like more, if Michael felt too old for his skin—well, no one asked, so he wouldn't tell.

But Adam swallows, eyes averting back to the screen, and his face might be made of stone when he mutters a quiet “No,” but there’s something undecipherable swimming in his eyes again, something like the day in that diner where he’d stared at the mother and the girl in the high chair. And then he shifts, his jaw tightening once before going slack again. “You?”

Michael’s eyes widen, his brain short-circuiting for all of a split second before he’s able to come up with a response. “No.”

Adam nods, short and sharp, eyes glued to the screen.

Michael stares at him for a moment longer before copying him, watching the images on the screen without ever really seeing them.

“It’s ‘cause you’re a wimp.”

“At least I’m not a demon.”

“Touché.”

End Notes

thanks for reading! my tumblr is @adammilligan if you'd like to say hello :)

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