**Chapter 1**

There is a brief moment when you first wake where you have no memories. An idyllic blank slate. A blissful emptiness. But it doesn’t last long. You remember exactly who you are and all the terrible things you’ve gone through. Like in my case…

Dying.

Being brought back from death.

Being kidnapped.

Watching the guy you love kill someone to keep you safe.

Or realizing you can’t have the one thing you want most.

*Him*.

In every way possible. In the most intimate way possible. Because if you do, you will fulfill some ungodly binding triforce that, as far as anyone knows, has never been done before.

Welcome to a day in the life of Angel Morgan.

God, my life was a clusterfuck. It never lacked for excitement—that was for sure—which some people might thrive on. I wasn’t one of those thrill seekers. Nope. I was a simple girl, with simple dreams and simple ideas, living in simple Spring Valley, Illinois.

What did I want from life?

Well for starters, how about for once, I don’t have to be scared out of my wits? I don’t have to constantly feel like my life is being threatened. I want to live in a world without evil.

God, I sounded like such a whiner.

What I really wanted was…

Love. Safety. Chase.

Who didn’t want those?

The damnedest thing was, I never imagined in a million, gazillion years that I would find love in the smallest of ho-dunk towns, or that I would fall hopelessly in love with someone not quite human—a half-demon nonetheless.

Chase Winters was made of stuff that was written in books—seen in movies—not quite real. He was a different breed of hotness. He skated a fine line between good and bad, constantly having to suppress the demon that lived inside him. I think I loved him more because of it.

And he was mine.

Well, almost all mine.

There was just this one teeny, tiny thing we’d been avoiding, or more like Chase had been avoiding. We didn’t talk about it, but it was there, in the room with us, always on the back of our minds. At least on my mind, and I assumed on his. He was a guy after all. They are supposed to think about it 25-8, right?

*It*.

*Sex*.

Just the idea of *it* stole my breath; the third part that would bind us together in crazy ways that I didn’t understand. The only thing I was sure of was it had something to do with our bodies. And that was kind of hot and alluring. It was also frightening. He might be resisting the temptation, but we both knew in the end, it couldn’t be helped. There was an undeniable attraction between us, pushing us together by forces I could barely comprehend. This whole “being bound to someone” took some getting used to, and I still didn’t fully understand how it worked, but it made me feel fuzzy inside.

I wasn’t really even sure how I felt about this whole binding triforce stuff. Was it something I should want? Was it going to change me? Mutate my DNA more than it already had? Each time we bound ourselves deeper, I became less human and more…I didn’t know what, but regardless the wheels had already been set in motion. There was no stopping, only prolonging.

Soul—check.

Heart—check.

Body—to be determined.

Trust me, it wasn’t without effort or want on my part. I pretty much attacked Chase every chance I got. He suddenly had the willpower of a saint. Go figure. He was the one who was half-demon, yet I was the one having all the impure thoughts.

Like now.

He was in my kitchen making a snack and all I could think about was licking his abs. It was as if my hormones had been amped up after the whole heartbond thingy. I found myself thinking about him at the most inappropriate times. I was on the verge of ravishing him.

Ugh. Such a problem to have.

If only that was our only obstacle.

The last few days since the unfortunate demise of Eric, Emma’s dad, Chase had spent every waking moment (and some not so waking moments) at my house. I knew that Travis and Chase were having a hard time being under the same roof. My heart felt for Chase, knowing how important and protective he was of his family, but Travis was in a dark place. That, for a half-demon was a place you didn’t want to be, nor be around.

Half-demons took anger to a whole different level—a different planet really.

Glancing over the back of the couch, I laid my chin on my hands and tried not to drool. I was helpless. He looked like the poster boy for a Calvin Klein ad—dark hair, ripped abs, intriguing silver eyes, and an ego fit for a rock star. What he could do for a pair of jeans was sinful and dangerous for my heart.

The beep, beep of the game behind me regained my attention as I submersed myself in the world of Skyrim. I couldn’t tell you the number of hours I had invested in this game. It was probably not something I should go around boasting about, but I totally killed at this game. I wanted to impress Chase with my gaming skills.

He was utterly unaffected. If anything, he bitched and complained more than a girl on the rag when I turned on the Xbox. I honestly think he was jealous of the little black box with the neon green X. If he was given the opportunity, I didn’t doubt that he would smash it to smithereens—he was into the whole Hulk smash.

There was one thing that had definitely not changed. Chase could still push my buttons like no one else in this hemisphere. He excelled at it.

“Angel.” He nudged me with his shoulder.

“Hmm,” I mindlessly replied, eyes glued to the TV.

“I’m bored.”

“Go jump off a bridge.”

He snorted. “Let’s go out. I need some air.”

My fingers tapped, tapped away on the controller. “You know where the door is.” Yeah, I could be such a shitty girlfriend, but he caught me right in the middle of an important battle. You can’t do that to a girl. It was like gamer code.

His fingers brushed the back of my neck, and I had to bite my lip as he successfully destroyed my concentration. “I was thinking like a date. You know, me and you, maybe some dinner that isn’t frozen from your fridge.”

He missed my mom’s cooking. So did I. She had been picking up extra shifts at the station for the holidays, which meant I had been fending for myself. Chase was not impressed with my cooking skills, and I couldn’t blame him. The chef gene had sadly skipped a generation.

I tried not to be swayed by the lazy circles he was tracing on my neck. “No dice,” I mumbled, angling my neck away from his skilled fingers. “I’m almost at the end of this mission.”

I barely had time to register that he was no longer touching me when the TV screen promptly went black. I blinked, stunned, before I became the queen of bitchiness. “What the flippin’ hell, Chase! I am going to kill you and then serve you to the hounds for dinner.” I jumped to my feet, breathing fire just like the dragon I had been about to slay. I guess I would just slay a different kind of dragon.

He stood in the corner grinning like a shithead with the cord swinging from his hand. There was a very good chance that I was going to choke him with that cord. “Game time is up.”

“God, you are like a needy dog, begging for attention.”

“Let’s go. I’m starving.” In a flash, he was standing in front of me.

I never got used to how fast he moved. With me he never put up any pretense of being normal, he was just himself. Secretly, I loved that he didn’t pretend with me. It made what we had more real. “I just bet you are,” I said, unable to hold onto my irritation when he stared down at me with that gleam of trouble in his eyes.

He gave me one of his sexy brow lifts. “Is that an innuendo for something else? ‘Cuz I am totally down for some dessert before the main course.”

Completely betraying my anger, my eyes shifted to his lips. His tongue darted out, and I knew that I had been caught red-handed ogling the jerk, especially when the corner of those lips began to twitch. “Who can turn away dessert?” I retorted. Two could play this game, and Chase and I thrived on dangerous games.

His head dipped as I put my hands on his chest, slowly winding them around his neck. I made sure to brush my body up against his and was rewarded with the spike of gold that appeared in his eyes.

Score one for me.

He nipped at my lips and then grabbed my hand. A devilish grin spread on his face. “Dinner first.”

“Wuss,” I mumbled, pushing my auburn hair out of my face.

He paused at the door, barely giving me time to put on my shoes. “Are you attacking my manhood?”

I rolled my eyes. “As if I could.”

He took me to one of those quiet and quaint Chinese restaurants tucked into a strip mall. The ones where you would never know they were there unless someone told you. I ordered a kitty-cocktail with a red umbrella and a sword spear of cherries. Chase snickered as I sucked off one of the sweet cherries. “Don’t get any ideas,” I warned, eyeing him warily in the dim lighting.

His mystical eyes darkened. “Too late. Carry out?” he asked.

I swung my legs under the table. “Not a chance. You dragged me out here and now I am going to enjoy it. Every. Last. Bite.”

His hand reached across the table, weaving our fingers together. Dinner with Chase was like being on display. He drew all kinds of attention, from leers to sexual invitations. I found it maddening and annoying at the same time. For his sake, I tried to ignore the stares from the table beside ours, the open gawking from our hostess, and the gagging flirtations from the waitress.

“Anyway,” I added. “I thought we were on a no *dessert* diet?”

Thank God it was fairly dark and secluded inside. His eyes began to glow. “Under candlelight and soft Asian music, I’m finding it increasingly hard to remember why we’re not supposed to give in to those urges.”

I swallowed.

*Holy crap*.

I leaned onto my other hand, gazing at him, and suddenly wished we had stayed home instead. “I’m thinking about reconsidering the carryout suggestion if you don’t stop staring at me like that.”

A smirk spread over his lips. “Like what?”

He knew damn well what he was doing, getting me all worked up for nothing. I don’t know what happened to me, but I had sex on the brain morning, noon and night, more specifically sex with Chase. “Let’s just order our food before we set this place in flames with your unstoppable sexual prowess. I don’t want to have to give our waitress a black eye.”

He chuckled, and it hit me straight in the belly. I missed the rich sound of his laugh. The past few days I hadn’t seen much of the arrogant asshole. It appeared he might be making an overdue comeback. The choice he made to end Eric’s life came with a huge sacrifice, one he was still trying to live with. Travis was not so forgiving and might not be any time soon.

“My little hellcat…are you going to threaten every girl that looks my way?”

I forked a heap of white rice. “Not *every* girl. Just the majority of them.”

Shaking his messy dark hair, he smiled. “I love your crazy ass.”

My heart sputtered. “Umm, I think I should be flattered.”

“You would,” he said with a mouthful of sweet and sour chicken.

At least we had the same tastes in food, for the most part. When we had both finished our meals, Chase pulled out a wad of cash and handed it to the server. “Keep the change,” he said and then proceeded to wink at her. Poor girl.

She wiped the drool from her mouth and smiled brightly at him even as I caught a glimpse of fear in her eyes. I might as well not have even been at the table.

So just to make my presence known, I kicked Chase in the shin. Hey, someone had to keep him in line. It is just not fair to unleash all that male hotness.

He scowled at me from across the table. Overall, I’d call it a successful date. No one got strangled, we weren’t attacked by hellhounds, and Chase ate all my leftovers. What more could I ask for?

Maybe a goodnight kiss.

“We should do this again. Soon. I had fun,” I said, feeling like a blimp. Chinese food always made me feel bloated.

Bringing our joined fingers to his lips, he kissed the back of my hand. “As many times as you want, Angel Eyes. You only have to ask.”

I might have walked out of the restaurant with an extraordinarily large grin on my face. He made me that stupidly happy.

We were only a few minutes from home when Chase got a call, and my heart sunk. There goes our almost *normal* night. From the deep lines of worry that creased his forehead and the throbbing vein at his neck, I knew it was not good. At this time of night, it never was.

*Travis*.

My stomach tensed up as I opened up to what Chase was feeling. The emotion-sharing was a work-in-progress.

“It was Lexi,” he said after he’d hung-up, confirming what I had already concluded. “I’ve got to go.” There was a hard edge to his voice as he mentally prepared himself for the worst. No matter how many times I insisted he let me try to help, he refused. Flat out wouldn’t even consider it. Usually I would press him, but I could see how much this hurt, and I didn’t want to add to that pain and guilt I knew he was carrying inside.

I closed my eyes as he punched the car into turbo gear. It had become almost a nightly ritual—Travis flying off the handle.