

Adelina stared at Thayer waiting for him to tell his side of the story, but Thayer was hoping that she wouldn't make him tell it. He hated telling this story for so many reasons which was why no one in his realm was allowed to ask about it, about how he fell from Grace and lost to his own brother at becoming one of the Seven Knights of Heaven.

He looked at Adelina. He saw so many emotions in her eyes that he couldn't even pick one out to focus on. He knew he couldn't say no to her, so instead Thayer pulled up a seat beside her and started his tale from where it all began.

“To my sons, may all the blood, sweat, and tears shed in those grueling training missions earn you both a spot as a Knight.” Their father shouted. Everyone cheered and raised their glass, cheering on the Rein brothers. Both William and Thayer looked at each other and clinked their drinks together before chugging every last drop. They both wanted to become Knights so badly their entire bodies ached.

It's not often new Knights are chosen, and to have to choose three at once is unheard of. It happens about once every three hundred years; everyone knew this was a huge deal. To become a Knight was like becoming a king. Knights were created to protect Heaven and the great creation of mankind against malicious forces. They have been around for a very long time. William and Thayer grew up learning about them, and ever since they were kids they knew they wanted to be apart of the Knights.

The only bad thing is that there are only three spots open first Knight, third Knight, and Seventh Knight. There are three spots but twenty-three angels had made it through recruitment which meant that twenty of them were not getting spots. William and Thayer knew those weren't good odds, but they've been up against worse. It seemed to bother Thayer more so than William. William was younger, but he has proven to everyone that he can handle himself and stand his own ground. A small part of Thayer was worried that William wouldn't get a spot and he would. If that were the case Thayer had already told himself that he would step down. It didn't matter if it was first, third, or seventh Knight he wasn't going to become one without his brother. The more those thoughts made their way into Thayer's mind the harder he tried to keep them out.

Tomorrow was the day the new Knights were going to be chosen, and it couldn't come faster William thought. He was constantly looking over towards his brother who looked so calm, and collected like this life changing decision wasn't about to be made. He tried not thinking about what would happen to tomorrow; he tried not thinking about his brother getting a spot and not him. Even if that did happen he would still be happy for him, after all they both worked so hard for this. At the beginning of training, William had told himself to aim for Third and Seventh Knight because there was no way he could become first Knight. At least not over every other angel there who were much bigger and stronger than him in his opinion.

All of heaven will be listening tomorrow for the names of their new protectors, and both William and Thayer hoped that one of those names would be theirs.

When William woke up Thayer was already gone. It was too early to already be heading to the ceremony, but his uniform was gone along with the silver cross necklace his brother always wears. All the recruits were to make their way to the sacred garden before dawn so maybe Thayer just wanted a head start, but William tried to not let it bother him. His brother didn't even wake him.

But when he arrived at the Garden, he could not find his brother anywhere.

It wasn't until the garden space was almost filled with angels that William finally found his brother in the back row of the recruits. He tried to get Thayer's attention but couldn't.

Thayer was too busy staring at all of heaven's grace to focus on the soldiers surrounding him at the moment. He had never wanted something so badly in his life. As he stood there he could imagine the highest-ranking angels, the Arch's, calling out his name to take his place as a Knight, first Knight.

His daydream was interrupted by the sound of one of the Arch's beginning the ceremony. "Angels, we are gathered here today in our sacred garden to announce to all of heaven the three newest protectors of our home and of our Father's greatest creation. These twenty-three angels standing before you underwent serve training in conditions all of us cannot imagine. They have all survived their assigned missions and are now patiently waiting to take a seat among the other Knights. Only three will be selected to fill the three open seats, but," the Arch turns towards the twenty-three soldiers, "this training tested all of you and pushed you to your breaking point. That in and off itself should be enough for you. You are standing before your fellow soldiers a better warrior and for that we are all very grateful."

William and Thayer gave a little nod to each other for good luck. This was the moment all of heaven was waiting for.

"The following three angels are chosen to fight alongside the Knights. Hale Eldersen, you are chosen as Seventh Knight." Cheering and clapping clouded Thayer's ears as he strained to hear the next name be called. "Marcellus Penwood, you are chosen as Third Knight." William was gripping his hands together behind his back, his heart ready to beat out of his chest with anticipation. "And lastly, William Rein, you are chosen as First Knight."

Thayer moved to take a step back, but he couldn't. His heart was in his throat and everything was silent, and he didn't know what to do. He didn't know how this was possible. His little brother was First Knight and he got nothing. He tried to keep the anger at bay because he wanted to be happy for his brother, but something dark and cold settle beneath his skin.

William on the other hand, could hear everything. He could hear all of Heaven cheering for him. He was First Knight. He did it; he beat out twenty-two angels for this position, and all of them were deserving of it as well. Every angel was chanting his name. He was eventually lifted by his fellow soldiers in congratulations, but through all the noise and chaos he could not find his brother.

He figured his brother would be happy for him even though he himself did not become a Knight. And as hard as he tried, William couldn't help but let it bother him. He just became one of the highest-ranking positions in all of Heaven and he doesn't even have the support of his own brother.

But it wasn't until later that night that Thayer finally decided to return home to "join" in on all the celebration.

As soon as he walked through the door, his entire family went silent. He looked around to find empty glasses and empty plates everywhere except for the dinnerware set in front of his seat.

William stood up from his seat at the end of the table. "Where were you?"

Thayer shook his head while looking at the food that was left on his plate. "Out."

William wanted to say something about how Thayer still had his uniform on from earlier but didn't. Instead he said, "Should I expect a congratulations from you or no?"

"Congratulations, little brother." Thayer finally looked up from his plate to meet his brother's hard stare.

"No," William said. "I want you to say it like you mean it."

"You're not twelve, William. I don't have to mean it."

William slammed his fist on the table, shaking the glasses and spilling the remaining contents inside them. Thayer wasn't affected or seemed to care about his brother's little outburst at all. "But don't you mean it? Aren't you happy for me, Thayer?"

Thayer didn't say anything right away. He could see his brother shaking all the way from the other side of the room, but he chose to ignore it. He wanted to be happy for his brother, but something inside of him wouldn't let him do that.

"No, William, I am not happy for you."

William didn't know what to do or how to react, but he already knew that his face had said it all. He reached for his chair to stable himself as his Thayer has physically punched him.

"Then why did you come back!" William screamed.

"I came to ask you to turn down the position."

William took a step back confused. "You want me to give up First Knight?" Thayer nodded, and William started to laugh. "You're kidding me, right?"

He looked towards his brother to find him completely and utterly serious. There was no hint of a smile on Thayer's face.

He had enough of this. He couldn't believe what these words were actually coming from his brother. His own blood. Thayer may be older, and he may be faster, but he would have never

asked him to do this. Even if their situation was reversed he still would not ask Thayer to turn down the position. “The Arch’s picked me as First Knight because *I* was the strongest angel out of all of us. *I* was chosen to protect Heaven and Earth because *I* am stronger.” William pauses to look at the stranger across from him. “Get out.”

Thayer made his way to the door without an argument and without any snarky comeback. With his hand on the door knob he turned to his brother and said, “We are brothers, William, we are supposed to stay together.”

“No, you wanted me to give up the best thing that has ever happened to me all because you can’t except the fact that you weren’t good enough to become a Knight.”

“My entire reason for living is to serve Heaven! There is no better way to do that than to become a Knight.”

William shook his head in disbelief. “I said get out.”

“Fine. If I can’t be First Knight then I will go somewhere else.”

William looked at Thayer with desperation in his eyes. “Don’t do it, Thayer. It’s not worth it.”

“I’m a soldier, William I was created to fight, and if I can’t fight alongside the greatest warriors of Heaven then I guess I’ll have to fight against them.” Thayer now had everyone’s attention.

“What does that mean?” but William already knew what it meant. Thayer didn’t become a Knight so now he wanted to become a Prince...one of the Seven Princes of Hell.

The Princes were evil in nature and did not care for the fate of humanity at all; they were the complete opposite of everything a Knight was supposed to be. They were the complete opposite of Thayer.

“Thayer, no, do not do this. You’ll end up regretting—”

“No, I don’t think I will.” He said interrupting his brother. “Now, if you’ll excuse me I have some business to attend to.” He slammed the door so hard the whole house shook.

That was the last time William ever saw his brother...at least that was the last time he saw him as an angel.

Years later the brothers ran into each other.

William was still First Knight, but Thayer was now the First Prince of Hell.

He later learned that Thayer had Fallen that night after he left him. He was stripped of his wings and sent down to Earth, outcasted from Heaven and forbidden to return. He was told that Thayer eventually found his way into the Underworld, where he worked his way up the ranks, and trained even harder to become the First Prince of Hell. He was more determined, and as William thought to himself, he was cold, heartless, emotionless. He was not the brother he had

known his for entire existence. He knew his brother was devastated by not becoming a Knight, but he never thought Thayer would give up everything he had ever known to become a Prince.

Not only was he devastated he was also angry. His brother let jealousy come between them, and now they will never be on the same side again; they will always be fighting against one another. But as unfair as Thayer made the situation, William tried his best to not let it bother him, and as days turned into years, he could almost forget that he even had a brother.

Thayer and Adelina sat in silence.

He had been done telling the story for some time, but there was so much left unsaid that Adelina felt nervous, even afraid to bring it up.

“Do you still think about your brother?” she finally asked.

Thayer shook his head. “Anytime I think about him, I think about his betrayal.”

“Thayer...”

“Stop.” He said interrupting her train of thought. “You don’t understand, and you won’t understand. This is why I don’t tell the story anymore.”

He got up from his chair, shoving it back where he found it.

“Maybe if you just talked to him—”

Thayer whipped around only to stop mere centimeters from her face. “I said stop.” Gritting his teeth, he continued. “You can rot in this tower for all I care. Nobody’s going to miss you, not from the pathetic little life you had.” He eyed her up and down. “Just remember who’s in charge around here, I can keep you locked away for as long as I want, it doesn’t matter to me.”

Adelina backed away. She knew talking to him, getting him to open up would be a bad idea. She knew that even after he finished the story, even if she hadn’t of said anything at all that he was still going to be on edge.

Thayer left Adelina’s cell furious. He never tells that story to anyone, not even if they beg for it. Which is why, as he walked back to his room he thought it was strange that she was able to pull it out of him so easily. On the way back to his room he past the little chapel he had added to his castle. He stopped inside and knelt at the altar, and silently sent a prayer up to...well...to anyone that was willing to listen to the same thing he sent every night.