

14. Sarah C.

The Throne of Angels

There is only war. There is only ever war. A war without a beginning or end. Each side hoped to conquer the other, but the result was bloodshed. That was always the result. More tallies scratched onto a wall. More graves dug only to be trampled over in the next battle that would last a hundred years.”

“Lady Zina!” a voice intruded on my thoughts.

“*What is it?*” I said, speaking directly in my messenger’s mind.

“The Demons have breached the border,” he said, bowing his head low but keeping his ash-streaked wings spread. “You are needed at the battlefield. “

Without responding, I turned, facing the wall lined with sharpened lux blades. Buckling a longsword to my belt, I adjusted my armor slightly, then stepped out of the brightly lit tent. Narrowing my eyes against the pristine sky, I unfolded my wings from where they had been tucked against my back, launching myself into the air.

This was seems pointless now, I thought as I flew over desolate landscapes where scuffles had occurred. Withered plants and charred stumps were the only beings that greeted me on my lone flight. *We have been fighting for so long that no one even remembers what we have been fighting for. Not even the Demons recall what their purpose had been.*

The haze in the distance grew darker as I neared, thousands of wings beating in sync and calling out to me. Hundreds upon thousands of soldiers were waiting for my command.

And only a mile away, another army waited. An army of Demons.

Though there were too many to count, my eyes still found him across the dark plain where the light and shadows met. His eyes were still darkened with agony, his hateful gaze burning into mine.

Calmly staring back, I spoke one word in the mind of ever Archangel present.

“*Commence.*”

With a deafening roar, the two armies collided in a swirl of blades and wings. Almost instantly, Angels and Demons began to fall, their bodies twisting and turning, falling into the endless abyss.

Emotion had long fled me in the millions of years that I had lived. Watching my med fall under fierce oppression stirred nothing in my heart, if I even had one at this point. Yet I held no regret for doing what is right. What I believed was right.

I flew above them all, only wanting to cross swords with one Demon. When I met his gaze, he was the one who made me feel something other than this bleak emptiness that I felt. Or rather didn't feel. I

I saw him rise over his soldiers and face me, his body relaxed as he beat his wings in time with mine.

"It's been a long time Zina," he said in my mind with a crooked grin that reflected his personality.

Something fluttered in my chest, but I only looked at his eyes and retorted. *"It's been a millennium since we last fought, Nox."*

"Ah yes, but I see that we both remember it well."

The reply sent a shiver up my spine which I fought down and drew my sword.

"We both know what we're here for. Stop stalling."

"As," Nox said, grasping his sword and bringing it down in an arc that I easily deflected. "You," he continued, punctuating each word with a swing. *"Wish."*

Seeing an opening, I struck, managing to graze his cheek.

We both flew backwards quickly, breathing hard. Nox touched the cut, staring at the blood on his fingers. The tension in the air didn't wipe the smirk off from his face as he stared at my face.

"You've gotten stronger," he almost said with admiration.

"No thanks to you," I responded coldly, but couldn't deny the faint trickle of pleasure streaming in. *"It's time to end this, don't you think?"*

"Yes," Nox replied with relish. *"It's high time."*

Our blades clashed once more, and I snuck a glance at his wings.

The transformation had begun centuries ago yet feathers still clung to his monstrous wings. Before he had Turned, he had been Seraphim, and had been called by the name Daniel. He had been the best of us, the greatest next to our creator.

But even good left along for too long can turn evil.

"Haven't shed your feathers yet, Daniel?" I questioned ruthlessly and without mercy, dodging and overhead strike.

With a fierce snarl, Nox caught me in a sword lock, pressing his blade against mine in a fury. *"Don't call me that. Daniel is dead."*

"Not to me," I murmured.

Nox heard and glared, uncertainty flickering in his eyes.

For a split second he let his guard down. And that's when I moved in, running my blade right through him without a second thought, piercing his heart.

Exactly how I had been taught.

He fell, shock twisting his expression, his hand gripping my wrist and pulling me down from the sky with him.

What was this tightness that I felt in my chest, this ache in my heart? What had he done to me?

I knelt by his side as the battle raged all around, still holding on to his cold hand.

"Zina," Nox said, smiling sadly though blood dribbled down his chin. *"Zina, I'm so sorry. Tell Him... tell Him that I'm sorry."*

"I understand," I said, surprised to find tears running down my face.

Nox took one last breath, his eyes fixed on mine even as they glazed over. *"Zina. You know that I –"* He reached toward me, trying to finish, but his face went slack.

I closed his eyes, turning my face to the sky as it began to weep. The emotions that had surged forth were already drawing back like the tide as I stood, commanding my troops to halt. I flew ahead of them as we made our way back, forcing my feelings back.

Because I had a war to fight.

And was all that I would ever know.