*Once upon a time on Earth, there lived two humans that grew up as neighbors. One human grew up in a strict family devoted to their version of religion, while the other grew up in a broken home filled with drugs and shouting. Eventually, the humans grew up based on their environments—one into a rebellious punk and the other an upstanding Christian. Nevertheless, the two humans came to rely on each other, if not for a taste of fun or a taste of unspoiled food and home life, then to have somebody their age to talk to.*

*One day, their friendship grew into something more. While one household could care less about who the punk ended up with, the other was outraged. This one time to the point where the upstanding Christian made a choice between family and the love of his life; he chose wisely in the end.*

*Unfortunately, fate was not on their side. Ten years into their loving relationship, a terrible car accident placed the wayward Christian into a comatose state. His previously disowned family swooped in like vultures at the last minute, taking advantage of state laws and the lack of legal protections for gay couples to take control. They assumed guardianship over the black sheep of the lost family member, using legal loopholes and even threats of violence to keep the comatose man’s lover away from the hospital until eventually, it was like their relationship never even existed.*

*The punk fell into a deep depression that spiraled damagingly out of control. Drugs, alcohol, crime and other impulsive acts of self-destructive behavior Led to him dying a lonely death. He was sure he could never see his love ever again…*

*Until recently, when the upstanding Christian died too and ascended to Heaven.*

Zephaniah had never ventured so deep into Hell. Not even during the yearly Extermination, which he seldom participated in unless ordered by the higher ups. When he did reluctantly travel down to join his fellow angels in managing Hell’s overpopulation, he’d only stuck to Pentagram City. Never the sins below, where his beloved likely resided.

Zephaniah’s canine ears twitched beneath his cloak, and his tail curled/uncurled with each step down the desolate streets of Greed. Littered sidewalks upon littered sidewalks, with bright signs advertising gambling or get-rich-quick schemes. At the farthest end of one boulevard, a neon-lit building promoted NFTs and another boasted about stealing from artists with ‘A.I. Art Generators’. Sitting between the two decrepit structures stood a brick apartment complex. On the third floor in 2B lived a long-time resident, a hellhound. Once human too.

Without batting an eye, Zephaniah swiftly ascended the staircases and stopped before the locked door. He hesitated to knock, wondering if any of Greed’s citizens suspected his disguise.

He heaved another sigh though. If they did, everyone would have cowered in fear at the sight of him. Maybe they were. Whatever the case, after the events of the previous week and the death of Adam, Zephaniah finally found the courage. He knocked three times in rapid succession. Nobody answered, so he did it again.

Behind the wooden barrier, angry steps came closer. “Drakus, I told you I’m not interested in another of your fuckin’ orgies!”

The door swung open. A tall, familiar hellhound answered with an annoyed growl. He wore torn denim jeans, a dark shirt barely obscuring his gray fur-covered muscles underneath and possessed a pair of piercing auburn eyes that would scare the bejesus out of any angel.

Those same beautiful yellow eyes formed into a glare. “Who the fuck are you?”

“Floyd?” Zephaniah lowered his cloak.

At the same time, Floyd’s eyes widened, and a snarl began to form. “You’re a—”

The angel had expected such an initial reaction. However, he was prepared. As swift as his wings could go, Zephaniah lunged at Floyd and pushed him back inside his apartment, slamming the door closed and placing a strong hand over his handsome muzzle, keeping it shut. The hellhound tried to snarl and bite at first, but the strength in the angel’s grip around his muzzle somehow prevented him from resisting. Mostly, he was scared and confused as to why it gave him a sorrowful expression.

The angel looked like your typical kind, albeit resembling a German shepherd with golden fur and massive yet compact wings that receded behind his back. The halo above his head glowed like a crown and yet the angel didn’t wear it with pride or confidence.

“Floyd, it’s me…do you recognize me?”

The grip around the hellhound’s shut muzzle lessened. However, he didn’t take advantage of it. He didn’t run away or charge with a surprise attack. Instead, Floyd found himself remembering that soft yet firm voice. He stood examining the facial structure of the angel’s canine features. And finally, his eyes widened upon remembering when he last saw those beautiful blue eyes. Same ones that he fell in love with back on Earth.

“Zeph?” Floyd quavered in shock. Whatever anger or annoyance or fear he felt in the previous few minutes disappeared into mist. His aggressive stance slackened from hopeful disbelief. “Zeph, is…is that really you?”

Tears formed in the corners of the angel’s eyes. “Yes!”

“But-But why are you here? If you’re an Angel, then…”

“I did go up there,” Zephaniah nodded. “But it isn’t Heaven if you can’t be there. And I know what you’re gonna say, that I shouldn’t throw my own safety and security away just to be with you, but when did that stop us from doing it before?”

Silence filled the brimstone air between them.

The Angel and Hellhound held each other close.

“I went off the deep end after they took you from me,” Floyd whimpered into his shoulder, “I went back on the drugs, the random hookups, and kept self-destructing myself until it landed me here…Zeph, I am so sorry…”

“Don’t be,” Zephaniah cleared his throat, placing his paw on the other canine’s cheek. “We’re here now. I’m never going to leave you ever again…I promise.”

Their muzzles connected into a powerful kiss. Two distant and yet connected souls burned incredibly bright as lips met, and they pressed their yearning bodies against each other. Zephaniah clutched the hellhound’s broad shoulders and Floyd grasped his angelic mate’s flanks, pulling him closer until their chests met. Until their covered bulges kissed. Until their tails trashed and rogues entwined.

Tearing up, Floyd whispered a centimeter away from those heavenly lips, “I love you more than life itself…it hurts.”

“I love you too…more than Heaven itself,” Zephaniah replied, panting and happier than he could ever be. “And I never want to leave you ever again, Floyd. I cannot stay here as an angel, but with your help…I want to stay. If I am going to become Fallen, I want to do it in your arms. So please, do me.”

Silence, followed by low chuckling. “That was so fucking corny, Zeph,” the hellhound muttered, then shut down any pouting from the Angel by giving him a loving, devoted lick. “I was gonna go to work soon but fuck it. You’re the only thing that matters right now.”

“Oh, Floyd!”

The two otherworldly beings stripped down together. Additional articles of clothing littered the floor more than usual, until two masses of sugar and flash collided together onto the nearby bed. Taboo lust and requited love bloomed with each hard kiss traded, as well as every minute they feverishly explored their foreign forms. The two males had made plenty of love as humans back on earth. Though never as anthropomorphic canines shaped by the contexts of their deaths. It was all new and exciting.

Suddenly, Zephaniah felt something happen.

“What is it?” Floyd asked, only for them to hear an item hit the bed.

Zephaniah turned around atop the bed. He picked up the strange circular ring, and examined the cracked chunk taken from one side. A broken halo. His halo. And surrounding their bed, rotting feathers littered the floor.

“I should clean that up,” Zephaniah chuckled.

“We can do that,” Floyd smirked as he guided the fallen Angel into a kiss, “in the morning.”