From *Eden*, Part One

*by Kara Koether*

Lucy was scribbling on her Moleskine notebook out of frustration again. Writer’s block often led her to etch doodles of various shapes and symbols like stars, feathers, trees, and whatever else crossed her mind into the leather, and it was already covered. Her pen was scratching over some previous drawings when a sudden motion in peripheral vision caught her attention. A young man stood in the corner of her room.

“You rang?” he asked casually. The initial shock and disbelief of a boy appearing out of thin air quickly wore off, and Lucy let out what was possibly the loudest scream she’d ever screamed in her life. He jumped and his hands flew to his ears, his face twisted in displeasure. His eyes widened in fear as he watched her reach for the lamp on her nightstand, and his hand was enclosed around her wrist in a flash as he attempted to stop her from chucking it at his head.

“What the hell are you doing?!” she screamed, quickly smacking his hand away from her wrist and vaulting off of her bed to the opposite side.

“What are you doing?!” he retorted, equally as shocked as she.

“You’re in my room! Who are you? How did you get in here?” she demanded, her voice rising in pitch with each question.

“What do you mean? You just summoned me!” he blurted in confusion, and how could the person who just broke into her apartment possibly be confused about her surprise and displeasure about having a criminal in her home?

“I did no such thing! I don’t even know who you are!”
“I’m the devil! Satan! Lucifer? Seriously, I was in the middle of rereading Dante’s *Inferno* when you summoned me. If you’re trying to pull a prank, it’s not very funny,” he explained, an air of arrogance and irritation in his tone.

“WHAT? NO! I did not summon you!” Lucy screamed, unsure if she should be absolutely terrified or angry from his intrusion.

“Obviously *someone* did, otherwise I wouldn’t be here. You’re the only one in the room, so you can see why I would suspect it was you,” he retorted.

“Oh really? Do you see a pentagram painted on the floor anywhere? Any candles burning? I did not summon you. And I would *greatly* appreciate it if you’d leave now,” Lucy said bravely, mustering what courage she had. She doubted defying the devil was something that happened frequently, and if it did, she was confident that it didn’t end well.

“That’s not how you summon the devil. That’s demon stuff,” he stated, as if were a well-known fact. Lucy rolled her eyes and crossed her arms over her chest.

“Well how exactly do you think I summoned you?”

“You have to draw a certain symbol. Not many people know it.” His eyes drifted to the Moleskine notebook that was haphazardly tossed to the foot of her bed and he picked it up to examine the cover. “Yep, there it is.” He held it out for Lucy to see. His finger pointed to the markings that were a mixture of an old star with some scribbles that she had just added over the top of it. It didn’t look like anything special. It wasn’t even part of the main sketch she had been scratching into the leather.

“Oh, my god,” she groaned, dropping her face into her palms.
“So you seriously didn’t mean to summon me?” the boy asked, dropping the notebook onto her bed.

“No, I didn’t. Trust me,” Lucy assured him.

“Alright, then. This has been a massive waste of my time,” he sighed exasperatedly, turning on his heel and disappearing into thin air. Lucy blinked disbelievingly at the empty space where he was standing less than a second ago before pinching herself on the wrist in case she was dreaming.

“You know what? No. You summoned me, you might as well make a deal,” he said, reappearing as quickly as he’d gone, eliciting a surprised squeak from Lucy.

“I don’t want to make a deal with the devil,” she stammered, any previous courage gone now that there was real agitation clear on his face. She didn’t want her room to catch on fire or anything if she pissed him off.

“Oh, relax. It’s not a big deal.” Lucy snorted at that. “What do you do?” He looked around her room, his eyes dancing over the laptop on the desk, the full bookshelf, and the journal on the bed. “You’re a writer, aren’t you?” Lucy nodded.

“You wouldn’t be the first aspiring author I’ve ever dealt with. Stephen King, R.L. Stine, E.L. James,” he listed as he took a seat on the foot of Lucy’s bed.

“E.L. James?” Lucy repeated incredulously.

“You’d be surprised what that woman agreed to so her erotic mess would sell. I didn’t anticipate her getting a movie deal out of it when we made the deal. That was a surprise, even for
me. And that’s saying something,” he chuckled, and Lucy ventured to sit on her bed at what she hoped was a safe distance from him.

“I’m not that surprised, actually. I always suspected foul play was involved.”

“Thanks for that,” he said, rolling his green eyes. It was then that Lucy realized how unexpected all of this was. Aside from the whole accidentally summoning the devil thing. He didn’t come in a cloud of smoke or a burst of flame. It wasn’t what she’d thought it would be like at all. He wasn’t what she thought he’d be. There were no horns on his head or hooves on his feet. He didn’t have a tail or forked tongue or a red pitchfork. He was just a boy. An astonishingly beautiful boy, in fact, with a head of curly brown hair, sparkly green eyes, and dimples.

“So you’re the devil,” she said, more to herself than him. He nodded in response, studying her as she studied him.

“Like what you see?” He smiled, and now she could see it: the malice hidden beneath the charisma. His lips curled into a smirk.

“I was expecting someone a bit scarier is all,” Lucy said honestly.

“Everyone does,” he sighed. “People forget that I was an angel once. But, moving on, what can I do for you?” His eyes quickly reverted from nostalgic to their previous impishness.

“I don’t want you to do anything for me,” Lucy repeated.

“Oh, come on. I’m Lucifer. I can make you a millionaire. Billionaire, even. Fame and fortune. I know you want it. You wouldn’t stress-doodle on your leather-bound notebook if you
weren’t trying to come up with an attention-holding book that would interest people,” he said.
And he had a point.

“Here’s a proposition,” she began. “I won’t accidentally summon you and waste your
time again if you go back to Hell. Or wherever you were just now.”

“Sorry sweetheart, no can do. You summoned me, I’m obligated to propose a deal to
you.”

“Am I obligated to accept?”

“I mean, it’s only polite.”

“What does the devil care about politeness?”

“Wow, that was a bit harsh, don’t you think? I’m not a heathen. I wasn’t raised in barn.
My family are perfect angels,” he said bitterly, pursing his lips.

“Sorry. It’s just—“

“—Yeah, yeah, I know. So what’s it gonna be? Fame? Fortune? Both?”

“What’re you going to do to me?”

“Well, in exchange for granting you what you want, I’ll be taking something from you in
. . . how does twenty five years sound? Normally it wouldn’t be quite that long, but given that
this deal was an honest mistake, I’ll give you some leeway. Also, I like your spunk,” he said as
the corner of his mouth quirked up.

“What are you going to take? My firstborn child?” He laughed at this, and Lucy was a
little offended at his reaction to a perfectly reasonable question, even though his laugh was one
of the nicest sounds she’d ever heard.
“No. You won’t even notice it missing,” he assured her. She thought hard for a while, picking at her nail polish as she examined the boy’s handsome face. Sure he was the devil and sure he had quite a negative reputation, but he did seem to be trustworthy. What was she thinking? He was the King of Hell. But she didn’t have any other option. She extended her hand and he took it with a gracious smile, and she couldn’t help but shiver as his warm touch left a tingling sensation of electricity running through her.

He went by Adam. At least that’s what he told Lucy. He couldn’t exactly introduce himself as Lucifer anymore. His name had acquired such a negative connotation with people those days that he didn’t even answer to it anymore. He appreciated the irony in being called Adam instead. The irony of her name wasn’t lost on him, either.

After he’d disappeared, she’d continued working on the poetry book that she had been trying to put the finishing touches on. She forwarded it to her agent who had sent it to a number of publishers. Lucy didn’t know what to expect now that she’d made a deal with the devil. But she definitely wasn’t expecting to receive the number of publishing deals that came back within the month. Her agent was just as surprised as she, perhaps even more so. Not long after, she was receiving royalty checks in the triple digits. She’d become a household name, a *New York Times* Bestseller practically overnight, and critics scarcely had a negative opinion. Even the harshest tongues were quieted by the apparent brilliance of the words she’d written. The success had driven her to start writing a fiction novel and write down any ideas that came to her.
Lucy was drinking coffee from a thermos as she sat on a rock by some rapids in Colorado while on vacation from her new loft home in the city that never sleeps when Adam reappeared for the first time since making the deal with her.

“Enjoying your time off?”

There he was, perched on a slick rock in the middle of the river, white water rushing all around him, his curly hair blowing in the cold wind.

Lucy nearly spilled her coffee she was so startled. “Yeah, but be careful. You could fall in. And I’m not helping you out of there.” Adam laughed at her, and in the blink of an eye he was seated in the grass next to her rock.

“How’s this?” She visibly relaxed and he chuckled to himself again. “You know I wouldn’t have been hurt. I’m the devil, remember?”

“How could I forget? You just popped back into my life,” she asked, sarcasm dripping from her lips.

“Touché,” he said. She bit back a smile. “What’s with the coffee?”

“It tastes good,” she shrugged.

“It increases your stress hormones, screws with your blood sugar, it’s addictive, it’s bad for your teeth, and it’s associated with heartburn and indigestion,” he said, distaste evident in his tone. “And it smells,” he added, crinkling his nose.

“That’s funny, you disapproving of it. Since when has Satan been such a health nut?” Lucy laughed, pouring the remainder of her coffee out onto the grass for show. He smiled.

“Not a health nut. I just support making good decisions.”
“Oh, really? That’s even funnier.”

“I don’t support people being evil, you know. That’s something you humans came up with on your own,” he explained, seemingly offended.

“Well then what exactly do you consider what you do? Making deals with people like you do?”

“I just . . . Show them what they’re capable of. Actually, that’s not true. Show them what I’m capable of, is more accurate. I can give them what they want most. But everyone’s scared of an eternity in hell. It’s not all that bad, really.”

Lucy laughed, “‘Not that bad.’ That’s good stuff.”

“I’m serious,” he muttered angrily.

“Okay, then explain the whole temptation thing with Adam and Eve.”

“What the Bible doesn’t tell you is that Eve was an extremely smart woman. Wiser than Adam. Deserving of more than she was given. She just had so much potential to do great things. I informed her of the knowledge that she could gain from eating the fruit, and she decided to eat it on her own. When it came down to it, Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed me. And then God sided with the word of his precious mortal creation over mine. So I was forced to slither here from Eden, no better than those two.” Adam’s voice grew quiet, his eyes dropped to the grass. He sounded almost sad. Betrayed.

Lucy almost felt sympathetic for him, but she was scared to try to get him to talk about it. She knew deep down that he wouldn’t anyway. Before she thought of something to say, he was already changing the subject.
“I’m a busy man, Lucy. I’ve just been summoned again, and I’m afraid that I have to cut our positively wonderful conversation short. Be seeing you.” And he was gone.

Lucy was graced with Adam’s presence nearly every single day after the day at the river. Although she was not always particularly glad to see him, considering that it seemed like he tried to appear at the most inconvenient time possible, be it when she was getting dressed, in the shower, or deep in concentration while working on her next book. However, there were also many days when his check-ins actually turned out to be pleasant company.

Adam had fallen asleep on Lucy’s bed while watching her type away at her laptop when she got the witty idea to pull a prank on him. She grabbed a Sharpie out of her desk drawer and got to work decorating his face. She originally intended to draw the classic devil horns on his forehead and a unibrow and goatee for the final touch, but was struck by an even better idea.

When Adam woke up a while later and she was still typing, she couldn’t contain her fit of laughter when he sat up and looked her in the face.

“What?” he asked, his brow knitting in confusion. Lucy couldn’t stop laughing enough to form a coherent answer, so she just pointed at his face. He jumped to his feet and ran to the mirror on the wall before turning to shoot her a completely deadpan expression, a clear indicator that he was not amused by her antics.
“Really? ‘Have you heard about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?’ That’s as original as you can get?” He asked, cracking a smile despite himself. Lucy continued to cackle on her bed, kicking her feet and wiping tears from the corners of her eyes.

“You gotta admit, that was pretty good,” she laughed.

“I’ll give you credit. I actually can’t decide if I’m proud or annoyed,” Adam admitted, disappearing into her bathroom. Lucy grinned to herself and refocused her attention to her work. A few moments later she was interrupted.

“Permanent marker? Seriously?”

Lucy was rinsing the suds from her shampoo out of her hair when an unexpected voice nearly caused her to fall over in the shower.

“How is my favorite soul doing on this beautiful evening?”

“Experiencing her very first heart attack. You might just be getting me early,” Lucy groaned, her heart pounding against her ribcage. Adam laughed and when she poked her head around the shower curtain, he was perched on the water tank of the toilet with his feet on the lid, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands, grinning from ear to ear and dimples on full display.

“What exactly is in store for me? You know, after my twenty-five years are up? Will I die?”

“No.”
“What then?”

“You will die on your own accord. Be it before or after those twenty-five years, there’s no telling. But when you do, you’ll be coming with me. To Hell,” Adam explained, getting up to hand Lucy a towel over the curtain when the water shut off.

“What’s it like down there?”

“Like I said before, it’s not that bad. There isn’t lava and scalding temperatures or stalactites and fire. It’s dismal. Not much color. Concrete walls and drab views. The food’s equivalent of a high school cafeteria’s and the mattresses are kind of lumpy. It used to be way worse.”

“So Satan has some compassion for the poor souls that are doomed to spend eternity damned with him?” Lucy laughed and stepped out of the shower wrapped in the towel. Adam grinned.

“I keep the demons on tight leashes. They’re not allowed to torture anyone and they’re not allowed to harm anyone on Earth. Unless they break a contract, that is. But that’s a different story.”

“What about me?”

“What about you?”

“Where will I stay? Is my space all set up for me and waiting already?”

“No, you’re unfortunately one of the few who made a deal with me. You’re special. You’re gonna burn. Forever.” Lucy gasped and punched him lightly on the shoulder. Adam cackled.
“I’m just kidding. I would never let you burn. I was hoping you would want to stay with me, in my throne room. It’s much nicer than the rest of Hell. There is hot water, the food is about as good as it is here on Earth, and the mattresses are more comfortable. But the landscape is pretty barren and the view is kind of depressing,” Adam rushed nervously.

“I can’t believe that I could stay with you,” Lucy murmured. “I always thought that after I die . . . I don’t know. Something awful would happen.”

“Lucy, you are the single most important soul under my care right now. I would never force you to suffer.” He frowned and disappeared, just like that. Lucy was left wondering if it was something she said or if he’d gotten summoned somewhere else.