

## Saints and Sinners

### Chapter 13

The world shifted.

Nothing changed exactly. It was still shades of blacks and whites and greys. The darkness was still deep and dark, shadows still somehow *fuller* than when he wasn't using the Black Ring. And yet, there *was* a shift.

Sources of light – the light above the dining table, a small indicator light on the wall, the digital watch on the wrist of Drake's mother – all of them glowed a little brighter.

Darkness and light vied for Jack's attention. Dazzling lights and deep, haunting shadows.

And there, across the table from him, *she* appeared.

Damien's opposite.

The immortal spirit of the White Ring.

Back when Damien had first told Jack about her, the demon had described her as 'angelic'. On a whim, Jack had come up with a name for the otherwise nameless immortal.

Angela.

The creature standing across from Jack now fit her description perfectly.

Skin as pale as moonlight, pure white hair gracefully flowing down her shoulders and back. Her eyes were ethereal blue, glowing softly in an otherwise colourless world. Full lips, plump and soft. And a small, cute nose.

She was wearing a white, silk dress. Thin straps on her shoulders, tight around her lean waist, ending just below her knees. It was an elegant dress, thin and fine - fabric stretched around the body of a goddess. Huge breasts, a round butt, and yet still somehow slender beyond reason. An hourglass figure taken to its most extreme.

What's more – the woman had *wings*. Two furled, feathered wings on her back. Feathers as pure white as her hair.

This woman – Angela – was the female form taken to perfection.

Divinity. Pure and simple.

As he gaped at her, took in her beauty and her amazing curves, she regarded him. Stared at him through glowing blue eyes.

"Hello Jack," she said at last – voice soft and kind.

"Angela," Jack gulped, mouth suddenly feeling very dry.

"Angela?" The immortal smiled. "Yes, I suppose that's as fitting a name as any. I've certainly been called worse."

The goddess let out a quiet, musical giggle.

Jack shook himself, forced his eyes away from the beauty.

"You know why my sister came here today?" He asked, eyes finding themselves on a frozen Drake Damilio. "You know what she was planning on doing?"

"I have my suspicions," Angela gave a slight shrug.

It was the final piece of the puzzle. That one comment from the beautiful immortal. It was the last bit of knowledge Jack had been missing.

His idea snapped into place. A fully-formed plan.

"You can't read minds," Jack stated, returning his gaze to Angela.

The angel raised an amused eyebrow at Jack, flicked her gaze over to where Damien stood – silently smirking – then back to Jack. She regarded Jack for a moment, head tilted to one side, opened her mouth to speak.

"I can," Angela said, voice delicate and beautiful. "I simply choose not to."

Across the room, Damien chuckled.

"The true nature of a person is not in their thoughts," Angela continued, ignoring her counterpart, "but in their actions. A person might plan and plot to commit evil acts. But, when the time comes, whether they'll actually commit to them and do those evil deeds is

another matter altogether. Some of the kindest, most compassionate people in the world are those with the darkest thoughts. It's not about what you *think* about doing, Jack. It's what you actually *do* that makes you who you are."

"Yeah, yeah," Jack muttered, ideas and thoughts bouncing around inside his skull too fast to catch. "Got it."

Angela pursed her lips, stared at Jack with such kindness and caring that, for the briefest of moments, he almost felt like those blue eyes would overwhelm him – crush him with their raw, unrestrained empathy.

"We're here," Angela said, putting a hand over her chest, "to judge the heart and souls of men. Not their thoughts. You, Jack, have the ability to—"

"I get it," Jack grunted, raising a hand to silence the immortal.

He turned his attention back to Drake Damilio; lifted a hand and placed it on the asshole's shoulder. The glowing aura around Drake didn't resist his touch, didn't sting him or reject him. Above Drake's head, a black cloud formed.

Jack didn't reach up for it. Didn't *need* to any more.

He focused. Willed Drake's mind to bend to him.

The cloud above Drake's head vanished. Almost instantly, a new cloud appeared. In it, Jack knew, would be Drake's knowledge and memories of Devyn visiting today. From planning it to picking her up to her sitting down at the table with him.

With a single thought, that cloud popped.

The memories and knowledge erased forever.

Jack pulled his hand away, walked around the table and erased Devyn's presence from the minds of everyone else in Drake's family. Each person he touched grew darker, an unnatural shadow passing over them. All save Drake, whose body became split between darkness and light – one half bright, the other shadowed.

When he was done, Jack knelt down next to his sister's chair.

He placed a gentle hand on hers, watched as a black cloud appeared above her head.

*Show me everything related to the White Ring.*

The original cloud vanished, a new black cloud taking its place.

A cloud that contained every single memory and thought and feeling Devyn's mind contained involving the White Ring and its powers. Everything she'd done with it, used it for. All her knowledge and understanding. Her plans, ideas, everything she wanted to use the power for. All of it.

And, at a wordless command from Jack, the cloud burst apart – evaporated to nothingness.

Another few moments, and his sister's memories of coming here to Drake's home were gone too. When time unfroze, Devyn would have no idea she'd ever been here and no idea that the White Ring even existed, let alone that she'd once possessed it.

Silently, Jack reached under his sister, lifted her out of her chair.

She was light – surprisingly so.

Perhaps it had something to do with time being frozen, or maybe it was a perk of wearing one or both Rings. But carrying his sister out of the Damilio's mansion was as simple and effortless as carrying a doll would have been.

When time unfroze, the Damilio family would find an extra, half-eaten plate of food at their dining table. That'd probably confuse them, but they'd have no idea where it came from. Not a single clue.

Jack turned his attention forward, putting all thoughts of Drake and his asshole family behind him.

"You could have done much worse," the angelic voice spoke. "You want to hurt Drake, you *think* about it. And yet, when you had the opportunity to, you walked away. You came

home.”

“Is she always this preachy?” Jack asked, eyes flicking to the shadows in the corner of his sister's bedroom.

“Pretty much,” Damien chuckled from the darkness.

Jack stood over his sister's bed, eyes on her unmoving body.

He'd positioned her so that she was laying down, still wearing the clothes she'd been in at Drake's place. Eyes still open, staring at nothing. Frozen in time.

“Why'd you have to be so stupid?” Jack sighed. “You should have given me more time. Let me experiment more before trying this.”

As he reached down, fingers moving towards his sister's head, Angela spoke up – voice filled with divine empathy.

“You can still choose,” she told him. “You don't need to alter her mind any further. She's your sister, she-”

Jack plucked a single hair from Devyn's head, took a step back.

When he turned to look at the angel, he saw confusion written all over her perfect features. Pursed lips and raised eyebrows and an aura of hesitancy.

Not once, in all his encounters with Damien, had he seen the demon wearing that sort of expression.

“Admit it,” Jack smirked at her. “You want to know what I'm planning.”

Slowly, Angela shook her head.

“The only thing that matters,” she said softly, “is what you *do*. You're a better man than you think, Jack. You can *be* a better man. A good man. All you have to do is-”

“Where,” Jack interrupted, turning away from Angela, “would be the fun in *that*?”

Both immortals followed Jack as he left Devyn's bedroom, returned to his own. Hesitancy in Angela's expression, amusement in Damien's. He let them both inside his room, closed the door shut behind them. The immortals drifted to opposite corners of the bedroom – as far away from the other as they could get.

“The clouds,” Jack said to himself, climbing down onto his knees beside his empty bed. “They're a guide. A visual representation of how the powers work. Branching, interconnected. They're there to make things easier. But they're crutches.”

Back when he'd broken Drake's body, Devyn had needed to look up human anatomy, bone structures – needed that knowledge to repair him. And yet, just a short while later, she'd been able to heal a hospital full of children – all with different diseases and ailments – without needed to research at all.

She was quicker than Jack. She'd understood faster.

He was smarter overall, but she'd worked it out first.

“I don't need to touch the clouds,” Jack stated, holding the single strand of Devyn's hair over his bed. “I don't need to see them at all.”

The Rings granted power. Raw, unfocused, godly power. Jack didn't need to dance about, tugging strings and chasing clouds. All he really needed to do was direct the power where he wanted it to go, *will* it to do as he desired.

He focused on the strand of hair.

A strand of hair that held the blueprints – everything he needed to make a replica of his sister. Just like Damien had told him; the story of a man who'd created a copy of himself from a single hair – a decoy to trick his rival.

He felt the power of the White Ring like a warm glow inside himself, a caressing light. It was the brightness of a sunny day, sunbathing on a beach under a gentle breeze.

The pitch-black shroud around Jack's body gave way, and a new cloak of blindingly bright white took its place – coating half of Jack's body, split right down the middle.

His heart gave a single lurch before returning to its frozen state.

And there, inside the hair, he felt it.

An invisible cloud. An intersect. A tiny part of a much larger whole.

The hair was damaged; missing its root on one end, cut off on the other. But it contained the information for remaking both ends. And, at Jack's wordless command, it did just that.

The hair grew longer, mended itself.

And, for the first time in his life, Jack saw the complexity of it – just how many parts made up a single hair, and just how many other parts connected to it. Pockets of skin and scalp, the bulb the hair grew in and the gland that fed it, the muscles and blood vessels and all of it.

It was a single hair, and yet it was mind-numbingly complex. Made up of cells beyond his ability to count or keep track of.

But he didn't need to. The hair knew what it needed.

All Jack had to do was command it.

*Recreate yourself. Make yourself whole.*

It was a slow-going process. But Jack had all the time in the world. Time, as much as mind and body, was his to command.

First came a single hair, then a blob of scalp and skin, then more hairs and more skin. Bone followed – the top of a skull. Out and out it grew, cell by cell, tissue by tissue, limb by limb.

Until finally, it was done.

He stood, took a step back, examined his creation.

A perfect copy of Devyn. Fresher and more flawless than even the original. Her sandy blonde hair was longer than Devyn's shoulder-length cut, reaching down as far as the copy's knees. And this version had no make-up, no unnecessary paints or powders or creams to enhance its natural beauty.

And, of course, it was naked.

The swell of Devyn's perky breasts and her pink nipples, the peach-coloured area between her legs, the overgrowth of pubic hair – he'd have to do something about that later.

It was an empty shell. A body without a mind.

Hollow.

"You're so close, Jack," Angela pleaded softly. "But *this* isn't the way. Creating a replica doll of your sister to relieve yourself with – it's a half-measure. You don't want to hurt or use Devyn, and that's commendable, but this isn't the solution."

Jack turned his eyes on the angel.

"There's something broken inside your mind," she said, voice radiant - filled with the same compassion reflected in her glowing blue eyes. "The lust you have for Devyn, it's not a natural thing. It's the product of something *wrong* in your mind. The same with all that anger you're carrying around, the darkness inside your heart. But you can fix that, Jack. With the Black Ring, you can rid yourself of your unnatural desires and twisted self."

She moved out of her corner, took a step towards Jack.

"The Rings, they're both capable of doing good. They're both capable of *healing*. That's what so many of your predecessors failed to understand. The Black Ring isn't only capable of malice. You can break minds, yes. You can twist and deform them. But you can also *repair* them. Repair *yourself*. You simply need to admit it to yourself."

Jack raised an eyebrow at her as she stopped before him, huge tits just inches away from his chest.

"You are unhinged. Broken. Your mind is not right. The moment you see that, admit it to yourself, you can begin healing. You can look inside yourself with the Black Ring's power, you *need* to search inside yourself. It's the only way you'll see. The only way for you to fix that broken thing inside you and make yourself whole."

"Are you done?" Jack asked.

Angela pursed her lips, said nothing more.

Jack looked over his shoulder at the darkest corner of the room. There, Damien stood. A small smile was on the demon's lips as it nodded its head, red eyes gleaming.

Jack turned back to the angel.

"Just so you know," he said, reaching out both hands. "You talk too much."

By the time she realised – fully understood – what was happening, it was too late. One of Jack's hands touched the angel's shoulder, the other swept through the air above her head and snatched the string of the thought bubble that appeared there.

*Show me everything. The root of who you are.*

As he snatched her whole mind from her angel body, the body itself collapsed – losing shape and substance, turning into a simple ball of light floating in the middle of Jack's bedroom.

Without hesitation, Jack moved to the duplicate of his sister, attached Angela's mind to it – willed it into place.

And it was done.

The immortal spirit of the White Ring, bound to a human vessel. Forced to live as a normal, powerless mortal.

"She's still immortal," Damien's voice echoed behind Jack. "If the body dies, her mind will return to her source – that ball of light. Likewise, if *you* die, or you lose either of your Rings, I'll restore her mind and return it where it belongs. She'll never allow anyone the chance to do something like this again, so don't fuck it up. Show her humanity's true face, Jack."

Jack nodded, crossed his arms, focused.

A moment later, colour returned to the world. Sound and smell and taste, and the feel of his beating heart.

The duplicate of his sister shot up in bed, stared at Jack with wide, horrified eyes.

"What-" Her feminine voice croaked. "What have you done?"

"Exactly what you said, Angela," Jack smiled. "I created a doll to relieve myself with."

Angela flinched back.

It was odd, seeing fear and horror and disbelief and disgust in his sister's eyes. Emotions he'd never seen on her face before, and yet they were the very first set of emotions this clone body had shown him.

"Don't worry," Jack said, watching his new toy closely. "I'll add Devyn to the fun soon. There's nothing I can't do now."

When Angela lunged for him, her hand outstretched and reaching for the White Ring on his finger, Jack was ready for it. He froze time in an instant, chuckled at the frozen angel with the face of his sister.

"Now then," he hummed to himself, grinning wide. "Let's get to work on you, shall we?"