

# Pheonix Reborn

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*To family and friends, who, without, I'd be a mess;  
and to Hugo, who I'll never get to read this to, but  
inspired me to keep writing when time were dry.*

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# 1 Prologue

*Cruel laughter.*

*11:55 P.M.*

*Pain. So much pain.*

The rain pours down upon the world, chilling everything it touches to a temperature well below zero, as the Death Angel is paraded through Minsya, home of the long forgotten. The place where Time has no effect. The families of spirits that live in the town huddle inside the ancient, rotting homes lining the street to get out of the dreadful weather, though there are enough holes in the roofs that it's just as damp indoors as out, encouraging the ever present mold and mildew to thrive. The Forest of the Dead reaches towards the sky like clawed skeletal fingers, the limbs of the bare trees weighed down with the Crows Of Judgment, their beady red eyes taking in the decaying scenery.

*Tears down her face.*

*My blood stained chest.*

*11:56.*

The Death Angel wears nothing but his molten, blood red chains, that hiss and crackle as the freezing rain touches the heated metal. His body is covered in filth and his huge, black wings are miss-

ing feathers in large patches, showing splotches of skin that look as if they belong on a corpse. He walks slowly, his head bowed in lost hope and pain, as his guards of bone lead him through the city square to the Hall of Discarded Dreams. Relic of such dreams lay scattered throughout the forsaken town; broken toys, college diplomas, ripped and charred, pictures of happy times, defiled with crude drawings and scribbles. The Angel Court will judge him here for his crimes.

As the doomed angelic being climbs up the steps of the crumbling Greek-style building, he freezes in place and lifts his head to the sky, howling like a rabid wolf, his beautiful sapphire blue eyes filled with his wounded heart. His guards snap around and surge onto him. Within seconds, the lost angel is on his scuffed knees, silent, his wings spread out behind him like beautiful black fire. The guards grip his wings tightly, pulling harshly to keep him in line. A small whimper escapes his scratched throat.

11:57.

*Darkness.*

*Can hear screaming.*

With a final sharp tug of the Death Angel's wing, a guard ensures his compliance and forces his unwilling captive to stand. One by one, the

guards let go of his feathered limbs and resume their positions around the dirty angel boy. As the disconsolate creature and his captors reach the huge, rusted double iron doors, they swing open to reveal a massive hall lined with ghostly figured soldiers. The soldiers remain motionless like they are made of grey, translucent stone. Cracking balconies ring the great hall and the room is topped with a dull copper dome. The Angel Court is nowhere to be seen, though their nearing presence is tangible in the air.

In the middle of the room are short chains attached to tarnished silver cuffs carved with thousands of tiny runes. The group walks towards them and the angel is yet again forced to his knees. The lead skeleton guard clamps the cuffs around his wrists and releases the red chains with a guttural moan. They fall to the floor and sink through the spider-webbed marble. He then takes a place among the rest of the guards in line behind the Death Angel.

*Knife in chest.*

*Hurts, but going numb.*

*11:58.*

Without warning, the room shudders and groans. A blinding flash fills the room and dust and debris rains down from the ceiling as a loud crack echoes

throughout. When the dust clears, the Angel Court stands on the second level balcony on the far wall, opposite the doors.

*Arms around me.*

*11:59.*

*Ripped away.*

Three rows of high ranking angelic beings with wings tucked loosely into their backs speak with one booming voice, “ Alex Michelson, You have been brought before the Angel Court to be Judged. The crimes of which you have been accused are here by the following:

Consorting with a mortal without orders, 2nd Degree

Disobeying direct orders involving said mortal, 1st Degree

And finally, by far the most severe under this section of Angel Law, you have been accused of falling,” the voice says the last word disgustedly, “for the mortal. 4th Degree!”

At the mere mention of the mortal, the accused angel’s eyes light up, and continue to grow brighter with each accusation. The Angel Court continues, “As such, we will try you based on your memories. If you reject the mental search, we will have no choice but to believe the accusations, and to punish you accordingly. Will you accept the mind search

as a chance to redeem yourself, or the punishment of the rightly accused?"

*So alone.*

*So cold.*

*5...4...3...2...1*

The angel in chains growls and spits in the direction of the Court. In a hoarse voice he calls out, "I have done no wrong by falling for the mortal! So, as to your mind invasion, I say kiss my—"

"Noted," The voice calls out over the profane word, "You, before the Angel Court, have admitted to the accusations. Therefore, you are to receive the consequences of your crimes. The Angel Court has pre-decided your fate, if your faults were to be proven.

Alex Michelson, 1st rank Death Angel, you are hereby sentenced to an eternity as a Phoenix, as well as the mortal you are so taken with. This is final. Court adjourned."

*Silence.*

*Darkness.*

*Nothing.*

With that final phrase, there is a blinding light and the Court is gone. The angel is left sobbing, alone with his guards once more.

## 2 Chapter One

I wake up to bright sunlight streaming through the half window near the unfinished ceiling. I groan involuntarily and roll over to face the painted concrete wall, trying to get a few more minutes of sleep before my crazy mom bursts in with all her perky happy birthday terror. I was not a morning person under any circumstance, at least not until my shower.

A quick succession of knocks on my door signals that it's too late and a high, clear sing-song voice comes from the other side of the door, "Up, up, up! Honey, it's time for your special birthday breakfast! Get ready and get out!" I mumble incoherently, irritated, and throw a pillow at the door over my shoulder. I know it'll hit its mark. Even thrown half-heartedly, the soft object still makes the old door rattle in the frame. The lumpy white thing falls to the floor with a flump and I hear a tsking noise from my mom on the other side of the door. I wait until I hear her steps up the stairs before I move.

Mumbling rude things about inconsiderate mothers, I flop onto my back and kick off my blue and green stripped sheets. As much as I want to, it's no use staying in bed, seeing as I know she'll be back

in five minutes to check that I'm in the shower. Curse my mother's perkiness, my mind moans at me sleepily, and her insistence that I be up at 8 'o clock A.M. on weekends.

I sit up and swing my legs over the edge of the bed, shivering as my happily warm feet touch the cold, stone basement floor. I stand up stiffly, stretching my arms above my head until I hear my shoulders give a satisfying pop, almost touching the ceiling. Dropping my arms, I sigh, and head into my adjacent bathroom. I turn on the shower and strip as it heats up. Glancing in the silver framed mirror, I catch sight of the long, V-shaped scar on my back. Technically it's a birthmark, but it has always looked like a scar to me, the skin slightly raised and an angry shade of pink. I gaze at it a second longer before I look away and get in the shower. No time to sit and stare at my reflection before breakfast.

I'm out in exactly four minutes and thirty-eight seconds and that's only because I took a moment to let them water run over my back and enjoy the feeling. Once I'm dried, I get dressed in my usual outfit; short-sleeve hoodie –usually green or black- tossed on over a plain long-sleeve shirt –usually white- and a pair of cargo pants and some converse –usually green or black-. Same

general outfit I'd been wearing since I was twelve, with the size differences of course.

I attempt to run a comb through my longer, unruly hair and then head upstairs to the recently updated kitchen. My mom stands at the stainless-steel stove flipping pancakes on the griddle pan, while my dad sits in the paneled breakfast nook on his work computer, reviewing something for a board meeting before he leaves. I yawn and Mom tells me, in her annoyingly perky way, that I need to go to bed earlier. Dad nods in agreement, probably because if he doesn't he will end up on the couch. Our version of good morning. I smile a little at our usual family routine.

Mason comes over and sniffs my foot, the puppy's way of telling me I smell good, I'm sure. I bend over and scratch behind the white huskie's ears. He growls his cute, little puppy growl and turns his head to nip my fingers, squinting his ice blue eyes at my hand. "Hey, buddy, chillax, I'm just petting you," I tell him softly. He barks at me and runs off into the living room.

Mom finishes the first batch of pancakes as I walk over to the breakfast nook and sets them out on the table with my favorite toppings; chocolate chips, whipped cream, syrup, and a container of maraschino cherries. Not exactly the healthiest

breakfast but then pancakes never really are. I thank her and pile three onto my plate, then complete them with chocolate chips and syrup, and top it off with a spritz of whipped cream and exactly three cherries. I sigh happily, sit across from my father, and dig in.

About half way through my third pancake, I realize both my parents are looking at me, have been for the last pancake and a half. Dad from his spot across the table and my mother from where she leans against the counter by the stove. I swallow noisily and say politely, “Can I help you with something?” Dad just looks down at his plate, remaining silent, and Mom shakes her head, looking nostalgic.

“Oh, honey, I’m just so proud of you, all grown up. Your 17 now. I just can’t believe it. I mean, it seems like just yesterday I was tying your shoes and your father was teaching you to ride a bike. Seriously, boo-boo’s and potties, Barney and Elmo, crayons and glue sticks... Now, you’ve got a job, you drive, you’re about to graduate next year, and you have a girlfriend. It’s just so-“ Mom breaks off as her eyes fill with happy tears and she flaps a hand in front of her face as if to dry away the wetness. She rushes over and squeezes me into a big hug. I’m just about to say something to force

her off of me when the doorbell rings.

“It’s just Maggie, Mom!” I call as she speeds out of the kitchen to get the door. I hear the door open and muffled greetings, then my mother walks back into the kitchen with my girlfriend, Maggie, looking cute with her cold, rosy cheeks and her favorite pink Bunny Munny hat on. Mom winks at me and drags my father out of the kitchen to supposedly go get my present ready, though I think she’s full of processed baloney.

I smile at Maggie and give her a hug and a quick peck on the cheek. I pull out a chair for her and plate her up two of the smallest pancakes with syrup. She grins at me and digs around in her extra-large purse, finally pulling out a small rectangular package. Maggie smiles a bit more sheepishly and hands the package to me. I take it, making sure to brush my hand against hers as I do. She blushes even more just not from the cold.

“I’ve been saving up for it. It’s why I didn’t get you that great of a present for two years. Took me a while but I finally got it just in time for your seventeenth birthday, the perfect time,” she says awkwardly and I stare at her. We’d only been dating for eight months, and before that we’d been best friends since we were seven. She’d been planning on getting me whatever this is for two

years? Longer then we've been dating?

I smile at her, a bit awkwardly now myself, and open the present carefully as she starts eating her pancakes. Inside the box in an envelope sealed with the seal of my top choice college. I about drop the box in surprise. Gingerly, I take out the envelope and break the seal with my thumbnail. The envelope contains four pages printed on thick, yellowy official looking paper.

The first is topped with:

1

*\*Dear Mr. McAllister,\**

*We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted into our Summer Arts Program for two semesters...*

The first one is an acceptance letter. For me to take two semesters of summer classes at Kellan University for the Arts on scholarship. The second page is my pre-paid dorm assignments. The third is the packing list, and the fourth and final page is my acceptance into the school's Japanese Animation Club.

I gape at the envelope, my mouth moving but no sounds coming out. "Oh my god, Maggie! How did you do this?" I practically squeal like a seven year old girl. I hug her hard and give her a big kiss.

“I don’t understand. How in the world did you get this?”

Maggie just shakes her head and smiles, looking very pleased. “It’s not important. This is my gift to you for the next two years, though, so don’t go expecting anything for a while.” I nod enthusiastically. I hug her again and again, thanking her each time. I read the papers over again in disbelief.

Then I realize something, though Maggie beats me to saying it. “It’s in a week, meaning I won’t see for two and a half months. I think it’ll be worth it so you can get the skills you need, but I will definitely miss you.” I don’t know what to say. “Thank you” just isn’t enough. I probably look very similar to some deep sea fish, opening and closing my mouth and staring at the pages in my hand. She hugs me one last time and kisses me on the cheek. “Well, now that I know my boyfriend isn’t going to explode, I really must be off. You better pack soon. Bye, Mickey.” I manage to say bye before she leaves the kitchen, then suddenly remember I should probably walk her out. I rush into the living room just in time to open the door for her and wave good bye as she gets in her pick-up and drives away.

Mom comes up behind me and taps me on the shoulder. “You ready for our presents now, honey?”

It's all ready." I nod and turn around, still stunned about the first gift I'd been given. I follow Mom through the living room and into the kitchen to find seven wrapped gifts on the kitchen table. Mom motions for me to sit down and finish eating. I nod. "Now, these are only half of your presents. The other half your father is getting right now, but go ahead and open these ones while you eat." I nod again and stuff a big bite of pancake into my mouth as I reach for my first present. Mom picks up Maggie's half-finished plate and cleans it up in the sink.

I unwrap the first one to find three brand new sketch books, the second one contains a box of colored pencils, the third has six new drawing pencils, and the fourth presents a manga drawing guide. I'm already grinning at this point, knowing how my parents and Maggie had planned this, but my smile grows bigger at the next gifts. The fifth holds my very own JAC sweatshirt, t-shirt, and pin, the sixth carries a used drawing tablet , and finally, the seventh just happens to have the program for the tablet. Then dad walks in.

"Ta-da! Here you are, son, your last gift of the day. Well, from us anyways. Sorry it isn't wrapped. Your mother didn't have time to wrap this one and you know I'm terrible with that sort of thing."

He set's down a very plain looking cardboard box. I raise an eyebrow. He just tousles my hair and gestures for me to open it. I open the box to find a fancy looking laptop and all the cords and accessories. I grin wildly.

“You did not.”

“I did.”

“Tell me I’m hallucinating.”

“You’re not.”

Dad put his hand on my shoulder and squeezes. He grins and nods towards the box. “Brand new. Has all the gadgets and gizmos you could ever want.” I snort. Only my dad could pull off the phrase “gadgets and gizmos”. I grin at my dad and walk over and hug my mom.

“Thanks guys. Really. Now before I play with my new gifts, I better go pack.” I say. Mom nods, smiling proudly, and dad pats me on the back. I head down to my room.