***Happy***

They always spoke in whispers as I walked by.

*Monster. One-winged freak.*

I was born an abnormality, an angel who only had one wing. As a child, I noticed early on that I was different. The others avoided me, wouldn’t even speak if I went up to talk with them.

*Monster. Freak.*

I look up to the sky and see all the vast emptiness surround me. Envelop me whole and keep me company. Would the sky ever answer me? Could it ever answer me and my wistful dreams?

I draw my sword carefully and stare at the etchings. Smooth to my touch, but deadly sharp. I wave my heavy sword and picture the blood that would spill at such a strike. Warm at first, but so cold towards the end. It was funny, how all the blood would turn dark black when time passed. It was as though it was inevitable that all life must end with death.

“Tobias!” I can hear my last victim’s scream of fear and rage at being defeated by a one-winged freak like me. “You’ll never belong anywhere, you worthless…” But before he could finish his last insult, I lunge forward and feel his heart impale upon my blade.

“Freak.” I finish his words softly and wonder what Kat would say if she could see me. One of the few people who could see me and treat me like an equal, Kat whose disapproving stare always had filled me with a strange sense of comfort. As crazy as it sounded, I could tell she cared. Just like I could tell Josh cared each day, even when my path towards redemption was lined with nothing but darkness and death.

“I’ve never seen an angel kill before.” A soft voice behind me startles me and I jump up to see a fox girl watching me. A lupide? Out here in the dark depths of the Abyss?

“Stand back.” I brandish my sword cautiously, but I can’t feel any malice from this fox girl as her bright blue eyes stared clearly back into mine. “What would a lupide be doing here?”

“The same thing a one-winged angel would be doing out here.” The fox girl shook her head and her ears flopped mournfully towards the shadows “Becoming more and more lost.”

“I’m not lost; I know exactly where I’m going.” Despite my initial apprehension, I felt myself lowering my sword and guard.

“I didn’t mean being lost by direction.” The fox girl walked closer, curiously. With each step, her long tail swayed back and forth “What’s your name?”

“Tobias. Yours?”

“Faye.” She extended her hand and for a reason that still escapes me today, I took it. It was soft and warm, so much that I felt regret at staining it with the blood of my fallen foe. “Faye Moonfallow.”

“Well Faye, you sure are friendly to the first angel you’ve seen kill someone.” Despite my harsh words, I don’t let go of her hand.

“I saw the whole battle.” She stares down at his fallen body “When he attacked you and called you a freak. When you fought back and gave him more than a few chances to escape. It hurts, doesn’t it?”

“What?” I look down at my body and smile “He didn’t land a single hit on me.”

“I meant being the only one who’s different.” Faye smiled softly, but the smile didn’t reach her eyes “I used to wear a hat to hide my ears. But the nearby kids would still tear it off and make fun of me being a lupide.”

“I used to wear a coat to hide my wings.” I sheath my sword and laugh “Didn’t work, even with so many humans around.”

“You know what I hate?” Faye walked next to me and sat down “Big crowds of them, where you think you should fit in. Big crowds where you want to escape into, just so you supposedly belong. But instead of being part of that group, you just fade away. You stand there and it’s like you don’t even exist. It’s so…”

“Lonely.” I completed her sentence and have to let go of that warm hand. The air was growing cold and already, I could hear the friends of my fallen foe drawing closer. “Faye, it’s not going to be safe here. Especially not with this…”

She nodded and already I could see her beckon me closer to the shadows. “Are you coming with me?”

It’d be wiser to say no. I know that, I should leave her and go back to Kat and Josh. Back to my old life and back to my old plan of finding the angel wing I so desperately need. But for one night, only one night, I felt my legs follow Faye. Faye Moonfallow, a fox girl with a very pretty smile.

We didn’t speak much that night. We didn’t need to, really. For one night, I was with someone just like me. But…someone who didn’t have the plan that I was about to follow. Someone who would never hurt another innocent the way I knew that I was going to.

“Tobias…what are you going to do tomorrow?” Faye stopped in her tracks and stared at the sky. The darkness was fading away and all I could do was wish for the shadows to hide my face from her probing eyes.

“The same thing I always do.” I can’t tell her about the plan, even if she was one of the few people I knew who saw me as more than just a one-winged freak. Her bright eyes would fill with disgust, surely they would. “What about you Faye?”

“I’m leaving for the Space Sector Academy.” Her eyes stared forward, bright and determined “One day, I’ll be an officer with the Katajion Defense Force and make my Dad proud.”

Those eyes that stared forward, so pure…I felt envious. This good-hearted fox girl wasn’t like me, not in the slightest bit. I stared at my coarse hands and saw the dried blood underneath my fingernails. How many people fell to my hands? How many dying screams did I hear?

“Tobias?” As these thoughts consume me, I can hear Faye’s voice in the background. Before I can look up, I feel the softest pair of lips press against my forehead. “Be happy.”

“Huh?” I dumbly pressed my fingers against my forehead and stared back at the pure-hearted fox girl who smiled through tears “Why are you crying Faye?”

“Because…” Even as she smiled, I saw tears drip down her face “You seem so sad Tobias. You deserve to be happy, remember that.”

She was gone so quickly that the words I meant to stutter never fell from my lips. Instead, I stared at the space that she stood and wondered why she sounded so sad. Why was she even in the Abyss in the first place and why her kiss felt so warm?

My hands were still bloodied and I felt a growing certainty they would bathe in blood again. Yet, this warmth that lingered in my fingers, this certainty that things would turn out all right…

“You too Faye.” I look up at the sky and whisper my own hope for a friend whose journey through this crazy world would run in parallel with mine “You deserve to be happy too.”

*All characters belong to The Chief (Komi) and IDHAS. Thanks for a great cast!*