

Chapter Two

In the cemetery of Winmont, Jeff had a brilliant idea. The evening had started out like many others. Despite the chill in the air, a group of people, all in their early twenties, doing what they did on most nights—listening to loud music, drinking beer, and making their own fun. What else was there to do in a peaceful town so small it wasn't on any road map. They knew that no one would bother them here. Most of the townspeople were already in bed. They did this all just for thrills.

Jeff stood up and staggered over to the other side of the campfire. "I've got a fantastic idea."

"What would that be?" one of them asked.

"Let's perform a ritual!" Jeff said with a wide grin.

His suggestion was met with silence from some and laughter from others.

"Yeah." Agreed one of the drunken guys, "Lets conjure up another case of beer!"

"Yeah! Let's go!" someone yelled in agreement.

Another guy, Tom, stood up. "I don't think that's such a good idea. What if something really bad happens?"

"Nothing is going to happen, everything will be fine." Jeff said, and paused to watch everyone's reaction, but most were oblivious to his idea. He took a puff on his joint and piped up, "Let's put it to a vote. All those in favor of a sex ritual, raise your hands."

That got everyone's attention, or seemed to. It didn't take long for people to get on his bandwagon and start to gather their things. And why wouldn't they? As far as these revelers thought, Jeff was a cool guy.

As great as most everyone thought Jeff was, they had no idea that he knew much more about rituals than he cared to discuss. He was highly intelligent and very occult-smart. He had basically memorized every spell from the Book of Shadows. But he had not always so swayed to the black arts. There had been a time when he had been skeptical about such things, but all that changed a year ago when on one fatal night he had been abducted and blindfolded by some out-of-towners. That fatal night he witnessed firsthand just how sadistic a true ritual sacrifice was. That night changed him forever.

After that night he had become obsessed with the craft. Over a short period, Jeff's knowledge of the arcane grew until he was secretly ordained into the same cult that abducted him. By rights, he should have stayed clear of these heretics, but he didn't. He was too filled with lust for power.

Although he knew much of the darkness, he still was naïve when it came to the fullness of what the knowledge and power could do. He didn't care. Tonight was the night to perform his bloody deed and scare the others out of their minds. The one person he wanted to scare the most was Tom. Tom had

stolen Karen, and this was Jeff's night for revenge.

Jeff had everything planned in his mind. While he performed the ritual of blessings, he would pass around the ritual drink, which would be spiked with Ecstasy, and during the climax of the ritual, he would pull out his handgun, point it at Tom, and give the son of a bitch right one hell of a scare he wouldn't soon forget by shooting him in the leg. The others would not know what had happened. They would be so damn high that they probably wouldn't give a shit anyway. To them, it would appear that the single gunshot was a hallucination. Jeff planned to take Karen away to somewhere remote, bind her, gag her, brainwash her and then have his way with her over and over again until he had his fill.

Neither Tom nor Karen would ever know what hit them, and no one would ever suspect that Jeff wanted them both to suffer.

"So where are we going, Jeff?" Tom asked, as he got in the back seat of Jeff's car.

"A special place. It's somewhere I like to go to be alone and think," replied Jeff, then started the car and drove off.

They drove down the highway some distance, until Jeff slowed down near a narrow dirt road that led deep into the forest. The forest was large, and although the area had some interesting scenery for passing tourists, the Clearing was a place that remained hidden from the outside world. It was a distance to walk, but by car, it would take no more than ten minutes to reach their final destination.

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As gullible as Tom seemed, he was not a fool. He knew that Jeff had had it in for him ever since he started dating Karen, and because of this, he watched what Jeff said and did around him. He knew Jeff was the type of person who lost his temper very easily and more often than not, his bursts of anger were more violent in nature than mere words. For a long time there had been rivalry between Jeff and Tom, and most of it was because of Karen. Both men loved and wanted her, and but only one could be with her. She knew that they both loved her, and sometimes she would use that to her advantage.

The rivalry began a few weeks after Tom and Karen had started dating. In one of Jeff's bursts of anger he slashed the tires on Tom's 56 Chevy. That car was Tom's pride and joy. And why wouldn't it be? He had spent 6 months of his life restoring the classic car to its former glory, and Jeff destroyed that in a moment of jealous rage. But Tom got his own back by beating Jeff to the point where he put him in the hospital.

A short time later, the cars stopped at the entrance of a large clearing. As they got out of the car, Tom gazed around slowly, taking in the sight of this strange place. Around the edge of the clearing, torches were lit, and in the middle, there was a large stone slab, and various other stone relics were engraved in the dirt ground. This place resembled a temple of sorts of an ancient civilization.

Strange, Tom thought. Almost Druidic in nature.

The first thing Tom found peculiar was the torches. Why were they already lit? As strange as it seemed, the others weren't the least bit curious. The others got out and continued their revelry. Tom had lost his thirst for beer though. He just stood in front of the car and stared back down the long dark track that led them there.

Throughout the forest, the sounds of music and laughter filled the air. Tom watched as everyone partied like there was no tomorrow. He watched as his friends drank, smoked pot, and danced. Everyone was quite festive. Everyone except Jeff, who seemed very focused on preparing for his ritual.

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Jeff was oblivious to what everyone was doing. He was intent on making this scheme go off without any problems. He went over to the trunk of his car, and pulled out a black sports bag. It had the equipment he would need. Inside was his book of spells, small bottles of incense oils, herbs, charms, a chunk of charcoal, his ritual dagger, drugs, a chalice, and of course, his hand gun. With the charcoal, he marked the ritual symbols on the stone slab, and with a nearby branch, he marked other symbols on the ground.

A few minutes later, after he had prepared his bag of tricks, he was ready. He got everyone's attention and asked them to stand in the ritual circle. He watched as everyone came and stood in the circle, and some, more than others, swayed and looked like they were ready to pass out. . . . But still they drank.

He looked at each one of them, only for a moment, and noticed their faces well. He noticed how nervous Tom looked. He liked that. But he didn't like seeing Tom holding Karen's hand firmly.

Jeff began reciting the prayer of the dead, and then went into speaking in tongues. As he continued, he pointed at Tom. "Stand in the triangle symbol that points toward the east."

"Why?" Tom asked.

"The ritual won't work unless there is a positive force to counteract with the negative energy I am summoning," he answered.

"No!" Tom said, his voice firm.

Jeff flared his nostrils and clenched his jaw, yet hid his anger. "Come on, Tom, just trust me. Nothing will go wrong. You have my word."

It took some coaxing from Karen and the others, but hesitantly, Tom went over to the symbol and stood in

its center. Jeff said nothing, but on the inside, he was laughing.

I've got you now, he thought. Jeff focused his attention back on the ritual book. As he continued to recite the verses, he handed the chalice of wine to one of the others, and one by one they drank until Karen drank from the chalice then passed it to Tom. He was the last to drink. He was hesitant, but drank anyway then tossed the chalice to the ground.

This was the moment Jeff had been waiting for, and he was overwhelmed with delight. Jeff wanted to finish Tom off. Just one damn shot and it would all be over. He was sure no one knew of his intentions or even suspected that he had a gun. It was well concealed in the velvet cloth, which was on the raised slab, right next to Jeff's right hand.

Jeff looked at his friends as he spoke, and he could see that the drug taking effect. Now the time was right to do Tom in, but he also felt compelled to finish reading the spell. As he read the last sentence of the incantation, he could feel his whole body begin to change. A blue and red aura surrounded his body, then his skin became deathly pale, and he felt his eyes darken. Jeff could see right into Tom's soul, and what he saw was fear.

Not wanting to stick around, Tom stumbled over to Karen, grabbed her by the hand and started to flee. The others started to stagger away, but their efforts were in vain. The drug had taken hold, and one by one they passed out until only Tom and Karen remained.

Just as Jeff had anticipated, neither Tom and Karen passed out as they had been the last ones to drink from the chalice, but what they did drink was enough for them to feel woozy.

"What the hell are you doing, Jeff!" Tom slurred.

"You know exactly what I am doing, you son of a bitch," Jeff yelled. With that, he took out the gun and stepped toward them.

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Tom's vision may have been nothing more than a blur, but he could make out the distinct shape of the gun Jeff was holding. With what strength he had, he tried to run but he couldn't. All he could do was stagger aimlessly in circles.

Karen staggered over to Jeff and tried to fight for her man by yelling and hitting and trying to scratch Jeff's eyes out, but her efforts were in vain. With one swift move, Jeff punched her in her face, and she fell unconscious to the ground. He sneered at her and continued toward Tom.

“You’re gonna kill me because of her?” Tom yelled, his voice cracking with fear. “Killing me over a woman is not the answer!”

“Au contraire!” Jeff said. “I am not gonna kill you because of her. I am gonna kill you for what you did to me.”

“What did I ever do to you?”

“You stole my life you bastard! You went behind my back and fucked my woman while I worked my ass off at the fucking mill.”

“Jeff, we never meant for anything to happen,” Tom said, trying to reason him.

“But it did,” Jeff yelled. “And it’s too late for apologies.” He paused for a moment, his breathing coming hard and fast. “For fuck’s sake, you were supposed to be my best fucking friend. And look what you did to me!”

Tom was silent. He knew that there was nothing he could do. He swallowed dryly and waited for Jeff to squeeze that trigger.

“Get it over with for fuck’s sake,” Tom muttered. “I am not afraid to die.”

“You’re not afraid to die!” He mocked with a sadistic smirk. “Take one last look at her, asshole. Tonight you sleep in hell.” Pointing the gun at Tom’s head, he added, “This is the way it has to be”, he snarled. “Goodbye *old friend*.”

Tom took one last look toward Karen, who was unconscious on the ground. If only he could tell her one last time that he loved her. But instead all he had time to think was, “I love—”

A single gunshot echoed throughout that place and Tom’s lifeless body collapsed to the ground.

Jeff looked at Tom’s dead body and looked at the smoldering gun in his hand.

“Oh fuck what have I done?” He cried out in panic, as he went and stood over Tom’s body, and stared at his first kill. For someone who had planned this for weeks and as much delight as he thought he would get out of it, he felt anything but victorious.

“How the hell could I miss!” He argued with himself, “It was meant to scare him not damn well kill him!”

Oh fuck, he thought. He realized that he was now a murderer. What was he going to do? He sure as hell could not recite some spell and raise the son of a bitch from the dead. Nor could he simply sweep this under the carpet and hope to God that no one discovered his secret. He was in deep shit, and he knew it. Now, he wondered if anyone beyond the clearing had heard the gun shot.

He knew there was a campground nearby somewhere. Was anyone there this time of year? Shit, that

was something he forgot to check. As perfect as his plan seemed, he was now realizing that there were things that he had overlooked.

And that was not all. Sooner or later, his friends—all seven of them—were bound to wake up. How would he explain what had happened? He could not just tell them that Tom went to take a leak and never returned. He knew that Karen and all her friends would tell the cops, and then a fucking search party would scour this place until he was found. Sure, he could bury his kill, but what if the dogs found the corpse? Oh shit, he was in deep.

He started to pace like a caged animal. He was desperate to find a way out of this shit he got himself into. Irrational ideas came to mind, and in his panic, all he could think was, *No witnesses*. Sure, he could kill the rest of them, but what the hell would he do with the bodies? What about Karen? Sure he had intended to kill her, but seeing what he had already done to Tom, he did not think that he could go through with the rest of his warped plan.

“No witnesses,” he finally muttered. He knew that if he allowed the others to live, one of them would turn him in, and he was adamant that he was not going to jail. Shit, he now wished that he hadn’t brought the gun.

It was only meant to scare him. He tried to reason within himself. *The prick provoked me, so he got what was coming to him,* another sinister part of his inner self retorted.

With the latter thought in mind, he began to execute the others. He did his deed swiftly and carefully. He planned to make it look like a gang execution. The only thing he had in his mind as he carried out his deed was the thought of Tom having sex with Karen. That alone drove him with enough rage to carry out his deed without question or remorse. Two he shot, and the others he stabbed in the chest and face with the ritual dagger. He did other things, too, to make it look like some kind of satanic killings. One person, he cut off his head and disemboweled him. To one of the girls, he tore off her clothes, shoved the dagger inside her vagina, and dissected her like a lab rat. The others he mutilated and cut into pieces, and what was left, he burned in the bonfire. The place was a fucking bloodbath. He had killed everyone except Karen and thought that he was in the clear.

She woke up screaming. He turned to see her standing before him and looking around at the blood that now covered the ground.

“Jeffery?” she whimpered.

“Karen . . .”

“Why?” she cried.

Jeff shook his head. “Why what?”

He stared at her, and as much as he tried, he knew he could not hide that look of guilt in his eyes, nor could he hide the evidence of blood that covered his clothes.

“You bastard. You killed them! Why the fuck did you have to kill them?”

He had no answers to give her. But he knew that if he allowed her to walk away, she would tell the cops.

“I had to,” was the only thing he said as he started to walk slowly toward her. “I did it for us.”

“For us?” she screamed. “There is no us! There never was an us! I loved him, goddamn it!”

He stopped and glared at her. As much guilt as he felt for committing mass murder, there was something about Karen that he did not like. And that was the thought of her with another man. Especially Tom.

“You were meant to be with me!” he yelled, pointing at her.

“I never loved you, Jeff! And I never will!”

That cut him deeply. He swallowed dryly and forced back the tears from his eyes. He wanted to show his emotions but he didn't. Instead of crying like the heartbroken jealous coward he was, his anger rose up inside him and fueled his state of delusion all the more. With that, all he could do was pull out his gun and point it at her.

“If I can't have you, bitch, then no one will!” he yelled as he prepared to kill her.

She cowered from him and begged him not to kill her, but her words fell on deaf ears. He wanted a way out of this situation, and rather than stick to the original plan, he decided to execute the bitch, to make it appear as though she had planned the whole thing while he fled that shithole of a town and started a new life in a place no one knew him.

He stepped over to her and hit her in the mouth with the butt of his pistol. She fell to the ground and looked up at him fearfully.

“As I told Tom before I killed his ass, tonight you sleep in hell,” he said as he took aim at her face.

Before he could fire, a bright green orb appeared and flew around them rapidly. Both of them watched the strange light as it slowed and hovered above them. Jeff's only concern up until that point was the thought of being caught. It was obvious what Karen feared. She feared him, and she feared death even more. She knew death was something she was not prepared for. Her soul was far from ready. Jeff stepped away from her and watched the light with a mixture of fear and curiosity. It circled them a few times then shot off into the forest at the far side of the clearing, disappearing as it entered the trees.

Speechless, he looked at Karen for a few moments before he blurted out, “You see, even the paranormal bends to my will.”

“You're delusional.”

He never heard her. He looked toward the forest then demanded, "Come back, I order you to come back!"

As if obedient to his command, the light rushed back to the clearing and stopped, hovering a few feet away from him. He could feel an energy emitting from it, and as if by some revelation, he knew what he had to do. He immediately went and grabbed Karen by the hair and dragged her over to the raised slab. She tried to break free but she couldn't. He was too strong, but not by his own strength.

At once, the light buzzed around frantically, then drifted toward Karen. She screamed, quickly covering her face with her hands. It stopped just inches from her face and hovered there, as though it was measuring her up, or maybe trying to peer into her frantic soul. She removed her hands, and looked at the light.

"See, bitch!" he said, his tone haughty and smug. "I control even the elements."

His statement could never have been more wrong. As soon as he spoke those words, the light drifted back a foot or two, hovered on the ground, and transformed into what it really was.

Jeff gasped at the sight of the creature. "What are you?" he asked, his voice cracking in fear. The creature never spoke at first. It just stared at him with mild curiosity. "That which once was and what shall be again," the daemon answered. "I am Lutancix."

A smirk broke on Jeff's face and with a renewed self-delusional confidence he said, "I brought you forth, daemon, so obey my commands."

"You fool!" Lutancix laughed. "You have no fucking idea the forces you are dealing with. Your kind thinks that they have power over us because you can recite some little verse." It moved toward him. "You don't seem to understand that it is our kind that allows you to invoke us to begin with. And now, that which was started millennia ago shall be finished."

Jeff suddenly felt sick to his stomach and knew that he had to get out there. But he was too damn afraid to do anything, let alone flee.

Death was coming, and he was desperately trying to figure out a way to strike a bargain with the daemon to save his life. He wasn't ready for death. And he sure as hell didn't want to go to hell for what he had done. But what could he do?

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Lutancix lunged at him and knocked him to the ground swiftly and jumped on his chest. The daemon

stood on his chest and glared into his eyes, then grabbed him harshly by the face. Lutancix glanced over at Karen, and seeing the terror in her eyes, he broke Jeff's neck in one swift move. Then, as though in a mad frenzy, he tore the heart out from Jeff's body and devoured it madly. Karen screamed in terror.

Lutancix knew what he was doing and why. Jeff would rise again to serve in his master's army. But he dreaded the One. He knew that one young man was a likely candidate, but there were others. What was important right now was that there was a young woman still alive.

"What are you going to do with me?" she cried out.

The daemon stepped toward her. She backed away, fear written across her face as she waited for the inevitable. Lutancix raised his clawlike hand and pointed it at her, ready to strike.

Just as he was about to kill her, a loud, powerful voice bellowed from all around them. "Leave her. She lives for now."

Lutancix knew this voice as his master and he obeyed immediately. "You live to see another day, girlie," he snarled.

Transforming back into a ball of light, he shot off into the forest, vanishing as fast as he had first appeared.

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Karen cried hysterically and staggered to her feet. She had to get out of there, and as distraught as she was. She ran as fast as she could in no certain direction, just anywhere but this clearing.

As she ran blindly through the forest, echoes of what sounded like an ancient lore came to her mind. *With three passings of the moon, these people shall rise, and they shall purge the land, until the time comes when that which once was, will rise once more.*

The torches flickered and went out until there was only silence in that clearing.

It had begun.

Chapter Three

Alex ran out into the parking lot and yelled, "Drake!"

Drake glanced behind him, but didn't stop walking toward his car, where Usher was already waiting. Opening his car door, he heard his name again. Slamming the door, he turned around and leaned against the car door. Alex ran up to him.

"You again? What do you want?" Drake asked, clearly annoyed.

Alex caught his breath. "I don't know why, but I found out about Jamiesonn!"

"You obviously have a death wish, kid, or you are just too darn persistent for your own good. Didn't you hear anything I said in there tonight?"

"I heard you, but I have a feeling that just won't rest until I come face to face with him."

Drake stared at him. His expression said it all. He thought Alex was out of his mind.

"If I can't go with you, then at least let me borrow your report, so I can investigate this for myself," Alex pleaded.

Drake was silent as he measured up the young man. He glanced toward some people in the distance then looked back at Alex and said, "Look, kid, I'm sure you have the best intentions in mind, or maybe your curiosity needs to be satisfied, but to be honest, if anything happened to you I don't want to be held accountable."

Alex sighed and felt that he was getting nowhere really fast, but still, he needed to know. He took a step back and began to open his mouth to speak, then stopped when he saw Usher emerge from the passenger side of the car and walk around toward them.

"Kid, don't you realize just how powerful Jamiesonn is?"

"From what I heard earlier I have a good idea," Alex said. "But I still need to find out."

Drake rubbed his chin and exchanged glances with Usher, who nodded at Drake.

"Okay, kid," Drake said after a few moments. "I'll give you what I have. But if you are smart like I think you are, you will heed my advice. If you decide to face Jamiesonn, then you'll have to do it alone. There is no way in the world I'm going back there to face what terrors he has in store for anyone who takes it upon themselves to be fool hearty. Jamiesonn doesn't know the meaning of mercy. The only thing he does is breed contempt for and in everything and anyone who comes near him. Bargaining, pleading or begging doesn't work with this type of supernatural."

"I don't intend to bargain. Not my style," said Alex.

Drake shook his head. "Don't let the delusion of what you see in the movies cloud your intelligence kid. Style or not, Jamiesonn knows what you're going to do before you do. He knows who his enemies are,

and he will use anyone close to you to destroy you. This thing is far more powerful than you could ever imagine.”

“Then how does one fight this damn thing?”

“If I knew that kid we wouldn’t be here now discussing this. When I first came face to face with him, I thought that it would be an open-and-shut case, but I was wrong. This thing has a habit of toying with his victims, before going in for the kill. When I tried to eliminate him, it was only then that I discovered what supernatural power he had, and in my efforts to lay this thing to rest, Jamiesonn almost destroyed me.”

“What happened?” Alex asked. “If this thing is that powerful, why are you still breathing?”

“I don’t know, kid. Maybe he thought it wasn’t necessary to kill me. Perhaps he wanted me to warn others of his power. I don’t know,” Drake answered. He was silent again for a moment. “When I was on the floor of that shack, he stood over me and could have killed me right then, but he didn’t. He just walked away and ordered me to leave and never return. For that brief instant, I sensed something about him. It was as though with all the contempt and hatred he has, there is still something human about him.”

“Unbelievable,” Alex said.

Drake gave a smug laugh. “It was then that he used his power on me, and I was thrown a good thirty feet out of his domain. After that, I immediately left, and I haven’t been back. That was a week ago. Before I left Gympie, I found out a bit more history on Jamiesonn from a local mystic. Anyway, I won’t go on, as whatever you need to know is in the report. Also, there are some old newspaper reports that you will find interesting.” He opened the car door, grabbed a folder from the dashboard, and handed it to Alex.

“Remember that you will only have one chance to lay this beast to rest, and if you truly decide to go through with this, I won’t have any part of it. Just one last word of advice, if things get out of hand, get away from that place, as fast as you can! Not that it would do you much good.”

“Why not?”

“As I just said kid, Jamiesonn knows who his enemies are. He knows who seeks him. Hell, he probably knows that we’re talking about him right now,” Drake replied.

Alex felt his throat tighten. “That’s good to know.”

Drake smiled, patted Alex’s shoulder, and wished him luck. Alex thanked him, then stepped back as Drake and Usher got into the car.

“See ya around, kid,” Drake said. “Remember I want that report back, so my cell number is inside the folder.” With that, they pulled away.

Alex got into his car a few minutes later and drove back to his apartment, which was situated on the south side of Brisbane City. The apartment was nothing too elaborate, but at least it was a roof over his head. He had lived in the apartment on the ninth floor ever since the death of his parents. They were an upper-middle class family, and with the inheritance he received, he knew that he could start a new life. This, he felt, was the only way to do it. So much grief and pain had happened in his life already. He poured a glass

of juice and lay down on his leather couch, staring up at the white-glossed ceiling. Tracing streak patterns in the paint with his eyes, he let his mind wander and reflected on the events of that night. After some time, he got up and grabbed the report from the kitchen. He went into his study and examined the newspaper clippings one by one, then turned to the report.

As much as he wanted to know about Jamiesonn, another part of him really didn't. In a way, he already knew the outcome for this entity, but he didn't know how or why. Changes in his life had happened so rapidly over the last couple of months. It seemed he was developing a strong sense of knowledge and insight. This scared him at times. Now more than ever he felt sure about the future, mostly about his own.

But still as certain as he felt about his future, the visions remained. In some, he saw images of a man-beast, which ravaged the world and made nations crumble under a fist of bronze. But what scared Alex most were his visions of himself in the midst of the future war. Each time he had that vision he could see clearly that it was himself standing in the midst of the conflict of nations. To his left were the souls of humanity, while on the right stood the great oppressor. Alex had always felt that he was destined to do something great with his life, but didn't know for sure what that calling was, apart from those visions.

While he read the report, one passage caught his eye. Jamiesonn was far more powerful than Drake had first realized.

Long before I set out on this investigation, Jamiesonn knew my intentions of destroying him. The night before I started his investigations, Jamiesonn's spirit visited me, warning me not to venture to his domain. If I continued this course of action, I was told that I would not live to see the morning. At first, I thought the visitation was nothing more than a dream, but my assumptions were terribly wrong. When I arrived at his shack, Jamiesonn manifested before me, and unleashed his attack. It was a force I had never encountered before. Parts of my body felt as though they were being eaten by worms. I found myself helpless against this extreme might. My knowledge was no use against Jamiesonn. I could not understand why this creature had not killed me. He ordered me to leave, telling me to warn The One that he was coming, and before I could get up, I was thrown like a rag doll. . . . With all of his power, even Jamiesonn has to have some weakness. . . . But who is The One he told me to warn? Was he referring to the Jewish Messiah or Dalai Lama or someone else? And why did he tell me and not someone else? What connection do I have to this . . . One?

The report went on to say that Drake could never go through something as traumatic as that experience again. He knew that if he were to ever go near that place again, he would not make it out alive. Drake knew that Jamiesonn had to be destroyed. The report went on to say that if Jamiesonn were to possess

the One, he would be brought into this world. Drake sensed strongly that things would soon come to a point, in which, the One would arise and strike down Jamiesonn.

Alex sat back in his chair and closed the folder. There was something strange about this moment, much like déjà vu. He had seen this moment in a dream. He was about to open the folder again when he had the sudden feeling of being watched. The night was humid, but he felt bitterly cold. He jumped out of his chair and looked around the room. To the natural senses there was nothing out of the ordinary, but something was there.

He walked out of his study, into the lounge room, and sat down. No sooner had he sat down when a mist started to form. He froze, his muscles seizing his bones like iron bands. He was afraid, really afraid. He felt a coldness come over him and his blood seemed to drain from his face. He was pale, almost had a deathly appearance about him. He sat, watched captivated, as the mist floated around the room slowly, and then stopped near the glass sliding door which lead out to the balcony. Not a few seconds later, the apparition formed into a man and glared at Alex. Alex stood slowly and started to back toward the wall. He wanted to run and get as far away as he could. As terrified as he was, he found that he was unable to do anything but stand there with his back to the wall.

The eyes of his intruder burned with black coals of hate, and he never spoke. Yet, words were not needed. The man's hatred for Alex was obvious. He glared at Alex for some moments then stepped toward Alex, walked through the coffee table, and measured him up.

Alex could do nothing but stand there frozen. *Flee!* he thought. *Get outta here before the shit hits the fan!* He couldn't. He had nowhere to go.

In the blink of an eye, the intruder's appearance changed, and now, standing before him was a beast with the torso and legs of a lion and two grotesque serpent heads.

The serpent looked at Alex, then looked away and began to spit fire all around the room. Rooted to the spot, Alex watched as the room was set ablaze.

"Nooo!" Alex screamed as his apartment erupted into flames. Fire raged out of control all around him, but he remained unscathed. Not even a hair on his head had been singed. Yet, he could certainly feel the intense heat.

He fell to his knees, covered his eyes, and wept. He wept for the loss of his belongings, for his own life. His safety did not last because, within seconds, the flames engulfed his body and he was set ablaze.

For some seconds, the flames burned and tortured every part of his body. He fell back on his knees and screamed in agony . . . and then it was over. . . .

Silence. A deadly silence.

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Breathing. The sound of his own breathing is the next thing Alex heard, and he slowly lowered his trembling hands and gazed up at his intruder who had transformed back into a man.

Shocked, he slowly looked around the room. Everything was as it was before. Nothing had been burned. The whole thing was a damn illusion.

He found a moment to sigh with relief, but that was short-lived as immediately the intruder walked over to him and lifted him clear off the ground in one swoop.

“If you enter my domain, thou shalt certainly face the death I have shown thee.”

“Why?” Alex whispered.

Jamiesonn leaned in close to him and again warned, “If thou come, then thou shalt die!”

Alex never spoke. Overcome by the stench of rotting flesh that emanated from this man’s mouth, he was too scared to say anything else. The intruder released his grip and let Alex fall on his knees. He took a step back and stood there for a moment, then turned around and vanished.

Trembling Alex sat on the floor and ran his fingers through his hair. Staring around the room, he had no idea what to make of his encounter. He was too much in shock to do anything sensible.

He sat there for some time, trying to come to terms with his experience. When he finally came to some form of sensibility, he staggered to his feet, went to the kitchen cabinet, and pulled out one of the bottles of chardonnay. After opening the bottle, he took a long pause. He knew he shouldn’t drink again, but he had to. The experience was too much for him to settle for a glass of water or Pepsi. He sniffed the contents of the bottle and closed his eyes and savored that smell.

It’s been a long time old friend, he thought then took a long drink.

He knew that this was wrong, but the logical had no place in his mind right now. Normally he saved the wine for cooking and for when he had a date over for dinner, but not tonight. Tonight was the night for drinking.

As he tasted the sweetness of the wine, a glimmer out of the corner of his eye caught his attention. Before he took another drink, he lowered the bottle and looked back toward the lounge. There was

something in there, and all he could think was, *Not again.*

He sat the bottle down on the bench and crept slowly back toward the lounge. He glanced around the corner of the hall into the lounge and saw nothing. He fully expected to see his intruder but didn't. There was nothing there. He sighed with real relief and leaned back against the wall. He wiped the remnants of sweat from his face, then went into his study, and sat at his desk. For some time he sat there staring at the folder that Drake had given him, and while he sat, there it occurred to him who his intruder was.

"Jamiesonn," he muttered as he leaned forward, opened the folder, and began shifting through the notes he read earlier about Drake's own experience. Again he read what Drake had written about his own encounter and what he recounted was almost the same as the experience Alex went through.

"He knows just as Drake warned me."

As he read more, he thought about what Jamiesonn had said and he knew very well that Jamiesonn's power seemed to know no bounds. He also sensed strongly that some people had to sacrifice and risk their lives in this . . . crusade.

He was faced with a choice—heeding Jamiesonn's warning and steering clear like a coward, of quitting this investigation before he began or facing whatever else may be thrown at him.

It didn't take long for him to come to a decision, and that was to see this through to the end. He knew he needed advice on what he should do, so he picked up the phone and called Drake's cell phone.

Alex wasted no time with filling him in with the details on what happened.

"Are you sure about this, Alex? Are you sure this happened?" Drake asked.

"Of course I am. I wouldn't make this up," Alex retorted.

"Okay, if what you say is true, then this thing knows your intentions. From now on, he will be watching you. If he warned you not to go near his domain, don't," Drake said.

"What? Are you crazy?" Alex exclaimed. "There is more to Jamiesonn than what meets the eye, and I need to find out what that is."

"Then it's your funeral, kid," Drake answered. "From the way I see it, you have one of two choices. The first thing you could do is probe more into this entity and perhaps die from your efforts. Second, you could forget about the whole thing and find something else to occupy your time."

"So you're saying I should just give up?"

"I'm only giving you my opinion," refuted Drake. "But if you're adamant ongoing, then I suggest you take someone along when you go there."

"Who should that be?"

"He's a member of our society, and from what I hear, he has had similar investigations."

"So, has this person faced something with the destructive power of Jamiesonn?"

"That is something you'll have to find out for yourself, as I don't know much about him. What I do know is

that he is good at what he does.”

Alex sighed wearily then asked for the man’s number. Drake left the phone for a moment, and returned with the number.

“His name is Wang Dwuing.”

What kind of name is Wang Dwuing? Alex felt like saying but didn’t. He tried to end the conversation. “I’ll give him a call.”

“If you decide to go to Jamiesonn’s domain, remember that he is no ordinary daemon. He will use your fear as his weapon, and overcome you. If you feel that fear will overwhelm you, the best thing to do is run—run for your life. Losing concentration for only a second will give him a chance to launch a full-out attack on you. This means you will end up just like the others he has killed,” Drake warned.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Alex said and then hung up.

Alex stared at the phone number. He felt hesitant to call, but it had to be done. There were many questions to be answered and little time. After a few minutes, he picked up the phone. He had only dialed the first three numbers, when there was a loud, high-pitched wail from the receiver. Alex dropped the phone and covered his ears with his hands. Steadily, the wailing turned into a shriek. Alex could feel his eardrums pounding, on the verge of bursting.

He could feel warm liquid trickling between his fingers and dripped onto the floor. He looked at his hands and then at the floor. *Blood!*

“For the love of shit!” he yelled.

His nerves were being shredded, and tendrils of pain tore through his guts. It was unbearable, and he tried everything to unplug the phone.

The shrieking got louder, and again, he covered his ears and stumbled back from the phone.

Everything fell silent once again.

Alex’s chest heaved, and he could still hear a ringing in his ears. He pulled his hands from his ears and examined them again. No blood, no pain. Just another illusion.

“I must be going out of my fucking mind,” he said to himself as he regained his composure and then picked up the phone and started to dial the number again. As he dialed the number a black mist drifted into the room from behind him and manifested into a hideous daemon.

Sensing he was being watched, he stopped dialing and turned slowly to see a short, almost florescent

green daemon standing near him, staring at him in almost curiosity.

“Here we go again,” Alex whispered to himself as he swallowed dryly. He had really had enough of today and wished for nothing more than to be out of this place.

“As you wish, mortal,” the daemon spoke, knowing his thoughts.

Instantly, Alex was thrown out into the hall with great force. He slowly rose to his feet and felt a lump rising on the back of his head. Staring down the hall, he saw nothing and could only hear his heart beating and his deep breathing. He had no idea who this entity was, but he had had enough of the games he was being put through. Summoning what courage he had, he went back toward the study.

Every fiber of his being was on total alert and fully expected this entity to take him by surprise, but that wasn't the case. When Alex entered the room, he found the daemon had vanished. But the phone was destroyed. Fed up with all this, he wondered if there was going to be any more surprises in store for him. He certainly hoped not. He was not sure, but he had the feeling that the entity that had done this was not Jamiesonn. That begged the question—what creature would do this, and why? This part of his life he couldn't ignore, and he had to find out what was behind all this destruction.

Hoping this was all over, he decided to go out. When he grabbed the doorknob, it was incredibly hot. Pain rocketed through him. He bolted to the sink and ran cold water over his hand. It gave him some relief, but not enough, and it was some time before the throbbing ceased. Alex then went to the medicine cabinet and doctored his hand.

Time passed slowly, and all was silent. Alex sat staring at the blank television and cradling his injured hand in his lap. Boredom set in. He wanted to leave but decided his best bet was to turn on the television. He picked up the remote, pressed the power button, and watched in disbelief as the television exploded.

Alex stared at the television, disbelieving what he was seeing.

He couldn't believe how bad this day had turned out. All he could do was sit there, remote in hand, and look at what was left of his television smolder and smoke.

He coughed and shook his head in disbelief. “This has gone far enough.”

“I haven't even started yet, mortal,” echoed a voice through his apartment.

Alex jumped to his feet and spun about, scanning the room. There were no signs of his visitors, but he knew it was there, watching and waiting. Cautiously, he walked to the window and suddenly broke out in a cold sweat. He trembled with anxiety, knowing that something bad was upon him. A sinister laugh echoed down the corridor. He looked down the darkened hall and began to walk slowly forward.

Suddenly, an unseen force struck him from behind. Alex flew through the window. Bad as his reflexes were, he managed to grab the windowsill. Pain rippled through his injured hand. He let go and dangled by the other for a moment, then finally hoisted himself through the window.

Just as he flopped onto the floor, that same hideous daemon appeared. Alex crawled away, trembling from head to foot as his throat tightened with fear, leaving him speechless. It stared at Alex, a look of pure evil on its distorted face.

“Just what the hell are you?” Alex asked, his voice hoarse.

“That which once was and what shall be again,” the daemon hissed.

“What?” Alex managed to mutter.

“Don’t concern yourself with things which hold no relevance to your purpose, boy. In time, you will come to realize that the one who sent me is your true master, not the other who came to you earlier this night.”

“Piss off!” Alex threatened, finally finding his voice.

The daemon stared at him and seemed surprised at his tone, but that was brief. A moment later, it leaped over to him, harshly grabbing his face. “Don’t test Lutancix, mortal, or the master will cast you into the place of eternal torment.”

Lutancix sneered at him, and smirked before it let go of him and leaped through the broken window. Alex got to his feet, looked outside, and saw that it had vanished without a trace.

It had been a long night, and all Alex wanted was to sleep, or hide. In his condition, though, this was not to be. He went back to the kitchen, grabbed the bottle of wine, and sat on the kitchen floor. He sat on the floor and stared at that bottle of wine, and he knew that there was no going back.

The vow he made, the pledge he gave, seemed to almost haunt him as he sat there. He felt the urge to drink more, just this one bottle, but he felt guilty of what he wanted to do. But with everything that had happened he felt that this drink, this one bottle, would give him the release he desperately needed right now.

“Just one,” he muttered. “Just this one and everything will be okay.” He put the bottle up to his mouth and closed his eyes.

He smelled that all too familiar smell of chardonnay, and it had a pleasant aroma. He sighed with pleasure as he took another sip, then mouthfuls. Now, he started to feel a little more relaxed, and there was no more guilt. He had taken that step back into the land of booze.

He drank slowly and reflected on the events of the night. Once he finished that bottle, he wanted another,

but he couldn't be bothered drinking anymore. He was too pissed off to drink. Frustrated, he took a shower then crawled into bed. He was willing to bet this whole thing had happened because he had gotten the report from Drake. He had a good idea of what Jamiesonn was about, but the other daemon left him clueless.

What had Lutancix meant by the one who sent him was his true master? As much as Alex didn't want to think about it, he couldn't help himself as it plagued him. Many questions ran through his mind, and he probed their depths for a logical explanation. But, there was none.

Alex knew he needed to find out more about Jamiesonn before he went to his domain. He wanted to know what Lutancix was after, but not tonight. He would think about that in the morning when his head was clear.

Alex turned on his side, closed his eyes, and eventually fell asleep.

Chapter Four

The dream Alex had that night was unsettling.

In his dream, he was standing ten yards from a set of steps, leading to an old dilapidated shack. He remembered looking up at the moon, admiring its elegance and splendor. Then he looked toward a nearby valley, some distance away and noticed how the moonlight shined down on the town there.

As he stood taking in the beauty around him, he noticed that no light shone on the shack. Alex felt the presence of something sinister all around him. He started to back away, wanting to get as far from this place as he could. As much as he wanted to leave, his gut told him he had to stay.

Suddenly, he heard a voice behind him. He spun around but saw no one. The voice again came from behind him, but he knew that if he turned, there would be nothing there. It was soft, indistinguishable, and sounded muffled. He felt drawn toward the door, and so he made his way to the shack. Alex had to know what lay beyond that door.

As he reached the first of the four rotting steps, a grotesque disfigured imp of an entity appeared in front of him. He jumped back into the surrounding dead grass. "You are not him for whom I have come." Alex stated. "Make way!"

The entity snarled.

Alex set his shoulders straight and stepped forward. "I said, make way!"

"Or else?" the entity mocked.

"Don't try my patience. If you do, you'll find yourself in the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth," Alex shot back.

The entity snarled and crouched down slightly. Alex knew what was about to happen, and he stepped up on the narrow veranda, determined to show no fear.

He could see the entity prepare to strike, but then its attention was drawn to something else. Alex felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand straight up. Something was manifesting behind him, and with that, the entity in front of him vanished. Alex didn't turn around; he didn't have to. He knew who was standing behind him.

"I see you met my guardian." He heard Jamiesonn say from behind him.

"I thought you'd never show your cowardly face," Alex said, without turning around.

“And I told you not to come here. You must have a hard time remembering things,” Jamiesonn replied.

“You knew that I had to come,” Alex said, still facing away from him. Yet, he turned his head ever so slightly, so he could watch Jamiesonn out of the corner of his eye.

Jamiesonn smirked evilly, placed his hands behind his back, and walked around in front of Alex. For a moment, Alex surmised that his adversary looked like a distinguished gentlemen. In silence, they stood there facing each other with only a couple feet between them. Alex gazed into those cold, dark eyes, and both men took measure of the other.

“I knew you would come, Alex, but now I must kill you for your defiance.”

“Don’t think for a minute that will be as easy as you think.”

“That a fact?” Jamiesonn said, his tone mocking.

Alex nodded.

“We shall see about that,” Jamiesonn said with a smirk, turned and walked inside the shack.

Alex knew he had to go in, and he didn’t hesitate. Never before had he seen this place, but there was something very familiar to him. He shook off that feeling as he entered. It was pitch black, He’d be lucky to see his hand in front of his face. He knew his chances of survival were slim, but this had to be done.

Bam! The door slammed shut behind him. Silence filled the room and darkness enveloped him. He looked around slowly hoping his eyes would adjust to the darkness. A sudden chill howled through the air. Alex froze. His natural sight was unable to pierce the darkness, but he knew the enemy was there, watching, waiting.

Jamiesonn let out a vile hideous laugh. Alex was unable to tell what direction it came from. He felt like the laughter was all around him, closing in. He heaved a sigh of frustration and walked blindly ahead. He felt lost and empty and wondered why he was here to begin with.

Suddenly, there was a bright flash of light, which blinded him momentarily and before he knew what happened, he felt a powerful force drag him inside the light.

He opened his eyes and saw that he was drifting in a cloudlike void, and for a while, all he could see was the bright red light. In seconds, it was gone, and Alex knew exactly where he was. Jamiesonn’s kingdom. In the distance, he could see a halo of white light. He perceived this was the doorway to the next life. Alex looked back, trying to see where he had entered, but saw nothing. The one thing that Alex could see was Jamiesonn, who was soaring toward him. He reached Alex and grabbed his neck, choking the life from him.

“I told you, that you would die if you came here!” Jamiesonn said.

“Let go of me,” Alex demanded, gasping for breath as he tried to break Jamiesonn’s grip.

With a mighty heave, Jamiesonn hurled Alex through the air. He was moving at what seemed to be an incredible speed. Try as he might, he was unable to alter his direction. He was headed toward the white light and could do nothing to stop it. He closed his eyes and screamed in agony as his skin started to burn from the intense heat of the light.

His body started to burst into flames and the last thing he heard was the sound of Jamiesonn’s laughter.

* * * *

Alex awoke suddenly and sat bolt upright in bed. He turned to the mirror. His face was pale, and his body soaked in sweat, and blood was trickling from his nose. He wiped the blood from his nose with a trembling hand, and for several seconds, he thought he was still in that awful place. It took a few minutes to get his breathing under control and to accept that he was safe and sound. He was grateful it had only been a dream. Glancing at his clock, he saw it was a little after four.

He knew that he had to go see the investigator, Wang that Drake had told him about, but there was someone else he needed to see first. His old friend Phillip, who was a priest at a small church not far from his apartment. He was hardly concerned about the time of the morning as Phillip was not one who slept through the night.

He motivated himself to get up and go see Phillip. Alex had a hard time getting out of bed. All he could think of were the events of the previous night, and what that dream might have symbolized.

As much as he tried to figure it out, the more confusing it became, which annoyed him. Not only was this whole situation plaguing his mind, but he now had two entities to also deal with—Lutancix and Jamiesonn.

First, he took a shower, then got dressed, and had a cup of coffee then set off to go see Phillip.

* * * *

As Phillip sat at the table preparing his sermon, he was suddenly distracted by a noise coming from his bedroom. At first he ignored it, thinking it was just the wind, but this sound was different than the normal creaking he would hear in the early hours of the morning, in his old cottage.

He stopped what he was doing long enough to glance over towards the bedroom, then ignoring that noise, he focused his attention back to the sermon on Romans 10.

Again a strange creaking noise emanated from the bedroom, louder this time. He stopped writing his notes about the Apostle Paul and glanced back at the bedroom again.

“Is someone there?” He called out.

No verbal answer came. Just the repeated sound of creaking.

Phillip put the pen down and stood up and turned towards the bedroom. As he stared towards the bedroom he felt his pulse quickening and his heart begin to beat faster. He was afraid. Afraid of who was in there. He glanced around quickly, and the only thing he had close by to defend himself was a wooden cross that was hung on the wall behind him.

Phillip quietly pulled the cross down from the wall and walked as silently as he could towards the bedroom.

Again that sound of strange creaking emanated from that room.

“Hail Mary full of grace.” He whispered as he approached the doorway and peered inside the dark bedroom. At first glance he didn’t see anything out the ordinary, but there was something there.

Breathing. He could hear shallow breathing from his bedroom.

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph.” He whispered as he closed his eyes tight and clutched his cross. He turned and stood in the doorway and stared towards the window.

There. In the light of the window, he could see a silhouette of someone. Phillip fumbled for the light switch on the wall.

CLICK! Nothing. The light failed to work. He switched it again. Nothing.

“Who are you?” He asked, fear evident in his tone. “Don’t you know this is a house of God!”

The intruder never spoke. Just stood there and breathed shallowly.

Phillip couldn’t see the eyes of his intruder, but he knew that it was staring right at him. He could feel those eyes glaring, penetrating him. There was something about this intruder. Something evil.

“Get out of here or I’ll call the police!” Phillip ordered as he turned to make a dash for the phone.

SCREECHING! A loud ear-piercing screech filled his cottage and before he could do anything, he was thrown against the wall with force.

Phillip lay on the floor and looked up to see a man standing before him. His eyes were dark, black and his

face was pale.

“In the name of the Lord!” Was all he could shout before the intruder pointed at him and instantly Phillip was lifted in the air and thrust against the wall.

“What do you want?”

The intruder looked at him, glared, and said nothing. It was as though he was measuring up this priest. “Soul.” The intruder finally spoke in a dark tone.

Phillip closed his eyes and began to silently pray. He didn’t manage to pray for long as his intruder glided over to him and grabbed him with force by the throat.

“A man has come this hour to ask you for help.” The intruder warned, “If you help him you shall die, and no God will save you...priest.”

With that the intruder let him go and drifted back away as Phillip fell on his knees and coughed hard, struggling for breath.

“I’m a man of the cloth. I do the Lord’s will.” He retorted.

The intruder snarled and glared down at him, “You shall surely die, God-boy!”

Phillip turned and fell back against the wall and watched as the intruder started to approach, then it stopped and vanished.

Phillip remained sat there for some moments, regaining his senses from what happened, then he slowly stood up and walked into the bathroom to wash his face. He didn’t know what to make of what happened but the ordeal left him questioning himself if he was being put to the test by God.

As he washed his face and reflected on his intruder, he heard a car pull up outside. He went into the bedroom and flicked on the light-switch. It worked.

Phillip walked over to the window and peered outside into the dark street. Only the streetlight outside of the adjacent church could make anything visible in this part of the street, and he watched as a young man got out of a car and walked towards the church.

“Oh Lord.” He whispered, “Alex.”

* * * *

It was about five by time he arrived at the church, and it was still dark out. Alex stood before the old church and stared up at the front doors. It had been a long time since he visited this church but still the

old building gave him the creeps. He wasn't sure if it was the aura of the place or just the way it looked. In either case, he felt uneasy being there.

"Alex!" He heard Phillip call from a nearby window.

Alex turned his attention to the cottage that was next to the church and saw Phillip standing in the window.

"What in the Lord's name brings you here so early?"

"Father I need to talk. I need answers." Alex replied

Phillip knew that tone and that look. He looked at Alex for a moment then nodded, "I'll be right out."

* * * *

Phillip left the room and went to enter the church door through the back room, but was met by his intruder. Phillip froze in the hallway and gasped in fright.

"What do you want?" He questioned

"Die." Was the only thing the intruder said in that dark tone.

Phillip stood and stared at the intruder who remained stood in the darkness then faded back through the door. Phillip tried to remain calm. He couldn't allow this haunting to get in the way of what he was called to do. He hurried through the door and into the church and went towards the front door.

"Die." He heard that intruder say again, this time from right behind him.

Phillip turned quickly to see the intruder's dark presence standing right in front of him. He went to scream but his voice was silenced. In an instant, the intruder lifted him off the ground and tossed him to the foot of the large wooden cross that graced the alter.

Phillip looked up to see the foot of the cross dangling above his head.

"I am the way." It mocked as it lunged at him with a screech.

* * * *

Alex had no clue why exactly he was there. But, if someone could give him insight, he hoped that this man of the cloth would know. He hoped anyway.

Five minutes later he heard the sound of the church door being unlocked and that familiar sound of the door creaking as Phillip opened it.

"Oh boy." Alex muttered. He was hesitant, and for good reason.

"Well, you gonna come in or are you waiting for Blessed Mary to invite ya!" Phillip said, with that thick English accent he was well known for.

Alex said nothing. He nodded and walked inside. Even for this time of the morning, the church was well lit, with a few lights on in the back and dozens of prayer candles lit on the later near the podium. Although the outside looked old and gothic in nature, the inside always had that clean look about it. Everything was always in its place, from the stack of leaflets that were neatly stacked on the desk by the front door, to the hymn books neatly arranged in the holders in the pews.

"I must say Alex it has been some time since you have dropped by." Phillip said as he closed the door behind them. He turned to him and continued, "Not like you at all. In fact, the last time you dropped by was –"

"I know. But Father that was a long time ago." Alex interrupted.

"Ah, being formal I see." Phillip said, as he cupped his hands behind his tunic and started to walk with Alex down the aisle towards the podium. "Only time you call me Father is when something is wrong, or you have done something."

"There is something amiss Father. Something that I need your help –"

Phillip grabbed him by the shoulder and said, "Son, maybe you want to do this in confession?"

Alex shook his head.

"Sit then and tell me what's on your mind." Phillip said and motioned for Alex to sit on the pew.

They sat down and Alex glanced around the room. There was a scent of incense in the air, and he could hear orchestral music playing softly in the background.

Peaceful. He thought. As much as he thought that, his body spoke otherwise.

"So what's seems to be the trouble my son."

Alex looked at him and didn't know where to begin. He opened his mouth to speak, but couldn't say a word. His mind was blank.

Phillip frowned and looked concerned.

"I have no idea where to begin Father." Alex finally spoke.

"Alex, you know that whatever you say to me is held in strict confidence."

Alex looked away and stared at the large wooden cross that hung gracefully at the altar. "For some time now I have been going to these meetings." He started.

"The AA I take it."

"No. There is this group that investigates the paranormal. Well, not exactly a group, but these people who investigate alleged hauntings."

"Go on."

"And somewhere Father, I think I may have stirred something I shouldn't have." Alex said his fear evident

in his tone.

“Stirred what?” Phillip asked, “What did you get yourself involved in?”

Alex wasn't thinking clearly. Maybe it was the wine from last night, or the aura of this place. In any case, his words were not coming out as he wanted them to, and he knew it. But still, he needed to get someone else's insight into all this.

“Last night,” He said, “I was visited by a demonic spirit.”

“Alex are you sure?”

Alex looked at him and said firmly, “Oh yeah. The thing destroyed half of my apartment.”

“Before you go on, you already know the standing of the church on demonic activity.”

“So I remember you saying.” Alex said, and sighed. “Sorry, I shouldn't have bothered you with this.” He went on as he got up.

“Alex, wait.” Phillip said, “There is more isn't there.”

Alex nodded.

“Then sit and tell me everything.”

Alex looked around and hesitated before he finally sat down and started to tell Phillip everything about what had happened the night before. He told Phillip about the visitation from the demonic imp and from Jamiesonn. He told him about the nightmare, and he told him about the drinking. Telling him about the drinking was the hardest thing to explain. After all, he had made a vow and now that pledge was broken.

* * * *

When Alex had explained everything, Phillip looked at him in silence. He knew that everything he had heard sounded like it was derived from some horror movie, but he knew Alex a lot better to know that it was fantasy.

“You know that I am bound from getting involved in these matters Alex.” He said.

“I know.” Alex said, as he stood up and shuffled past him to leave. “For what it's worth Phillip, it was good to see you again.”

“It was good to see you Alex.” Phillip said as he stood and walked with him towards the door. “I can't promise you anything, but I will look into a few things for you and call you if I hear anything.” He said as he opened the door.

Alex stood in the doorway and looked outside. It was now close to six, the dawn had just broken and it was raining.

“You take care of yourself Phillip.” He said without looking back at him, and he started to walk down the

stairs.

* * * *

Phillip never answered. He watched Alex walk over to his car then closed and locked the door and turned and stared at the large wooden cross and smirked wickedly.

“You won nothing.” He said with hatred in his tone, and in an instant he changed his appearance to who he really was... Jamiesonn.

Jamiesonn walked over to the podium and looked at the dead body of Phillip which lay bloodied and mutilated on the floor behind the pulpit. He knelt down by the body and dipped two fingers in the pool of warm blood that had formed by Phillips head, and then licked the blood from his fingers.

“Hmmm, a good year.” He remarked, savoring the taste of the priests’ rich blood. “Truly there is life in the blood.” He stood up and again turned to the cross. “This one’s mine!” He snarled, and then vanished in the twinkling of an eye.

* * * *

Alex entered his apartment and looked at the mess from last night. From first glance it looked like he had an out of control party, but if only it was that easy. He tossed his keys on the table and went into the lounge and slumped down on the sofa. He knew that he needed to get in touch with Wang, and no sooner had he planned to call Wang then his cell phone rang.

“Alex. It’s Drake,” the voice on the other end of the phone said.

“Yeah,” Alex answered, his mind distracted by the events from the night before.

“You okay? You don’t sound yourself.”

“Huh? Oh, I’m fine,” he said. “Just dealing with a mess at the moment.”

“I hear you there,” Drake said. “I tried to call your landline before and I kept getting a busy signal so I called Jake and he gave me your cell number. Anyway, to get to the point, I spoke to Wang half an hour ago and he is flying up to Gympie. So if you want to meet the guy you best hightail it to the Smithfield Airfield, as he’ll be leaving in an hour.”

“I’ll find it. Thanks.” Alex replied.

“There’s something else I need to tell you.” Drake said, “Do you have your TV on?”

“Ah . . . no I don’t. It’s broken,” Alex said almost weirdly amused.

“That’s some shit. Anyway, to cut a long story short, there was a news report on this morning about a cult like slaying in a place called Winmont. I’ve talked to Wang about it so he can fill you in.”

“Okay sure,” Alex said then hung up. He took another look at the disaster otherwise known as his lounge room, shook his head. He really didn’t feel like going out again, as he had not long got home, and all he wanted to do was rest. But he had to leave.

He had an idea where the airfield was, as he had driven past the turnoff on occasion, and if his memory was correct—which was unlikely—he could make it there in thirty, maybe forty-five minutes if he drove fast enough.

Alex got his keys and left his apartment and got into his car and drove off.

* * * *

His instinct in finding the airfield was right. He arrived in just under forty minutes and as he pulled up, Alex spotted a Chinese man nearby that could only be Wang. He was short, clean-shaven, and had short black hair. His appearance gave the illusion that he was a high rolling executive in the business world, dressed in what seemed to be an Armani suit, polished black shoes, and designer sunglasses. But he wasn't a high roller. But appearance was everything to a guy like Wang.

He got out of the car and called out, "Are you Wang?"

The man stopped short of boarding the Cessna and turned to him. "Who are you?"

"Drake Winters sent me."

"Ah, yes. You must be Manning."

Alex approached and extended his hand to him. "That I am."

"Yeah, I'm Wang, and it's about time you showed up. I was starting to think you wouldn't come," he said, shaking his hand firmly.

Alex glanced around and then decided to get right to the point. "So what's this I hear about a cult murder in Winmont?"

"Keep it down!" Wang snapped, looking around. "I don't want the whole world to know about this, okay? Let's go for a walk."

Alex looked around and seeing the mechanic nearby, he walked with Wang.

"So, what do you want to know?"

"What the hell happened down there?" Alex asked before lighting a cigarette.

Wang adjusted his tie. "Not sure on all the details, but I got a call about seven this morning from Drake, who said there had been a mass murder down there and that I should check it out."

"How many were killed?"

"About six or seven people, but that's not why you're here, Alex."

"You know about Jamiesonn?"

"Yes! If I were you, I'd stay away. That thing is bad news, period."

"So I've been told by several others," Alex said.

"Then you'll quit while you're ahead?"

Alex looked into the distance and then back at Wang. “No. Why should I?”

“Because I don’t think you’re ready!” Wang said, his voice stern. “I know about you from O’Hara. He tends to check out people’s backgrounds when they join the society, but don’t be put off, man, my past has been looked at as well.”

Alex decided to change the subject. “So, what happened down south?”

“Apparently a group of people were partying in a place that was going to be a bomb shelter back in the early fifties. From what I understand, the contractors pulled out because the people who were funding the project disappeared without a trace. So, since then it’s been a graveyard. The locals call it the ‘Canyons,’ and nothing grows there in the Clearing. It is truly a place of death!” Wang said.

“What about the people in the cult murders?”

Wang grew silent and stared at the passing traffic on the distant road. “A group of teenagers went there last night for a party, and things got out of hand. From what Drake said, he talked to the cops down there and apparently there were remains of six people and one of the vics had his face torn off. I suspect there’s more to this than what the police have gotten.”

“Like what?”

“Well, Drake thinks that what happened down there last night is somehow tied to your investigation of Jamiesonn.”

“Really.”

“I feel something big is coming,” Wang said, almost as if staring off into some distant future that would probably never happen.

“Oh yeah? Like what?”

Wang took a deep breath and said with enthusiasm, “He is among us now. The One. I tell you, when he makes himself known, everything will tremble at his ancient name.”

“The Christ you mean?”

“In a way, yes.”

“If you’re referring to the Book of Revelation—”

“Not quite,” Wang interrupted, “What I’m referring is much older than religion.”

“Explain.”

“From what I heard, archaeologists found a previously undiscovered tomb in one of the Mayan temples, and among the artifacts, they discovered an ancient scroll, which is believed to date back to before the writings of Moses.”

“Sounds exciting,” Alex said.

“Yeah it is, and get this,” Wang continued with even more enthusiasm. “The scroll is believed to give the most accurate prophecy of the destruction of the great civilizations in history. The fall of Babel, Persia,

Grecian and Roman Empires were all written on these scrolls, according to experts. It is said that the scroll contains the name of the One. He will come to put an end to the most powerful daemon, which lurks in another dimension. When such a time arises, it is said that this man will possess pure power, but only if he survives the ancient Tests of the Powers from the Elders, whoever they are.”

“Sounds heavy,” Alex said.

“It gets better. The One is believed to be able to physically enter realms and dimensions far beyond our own. The downside to all this glory is, this man is killed before his mission is complete. After a period of three decades, life will be breathed into his body once again, when he will set out to conquer The Evil One. When he destroys The Evil One of Perdition, all is said to be finished. That’s all I know.”

“Finished, meaning the end of the world?” Alex wondered.

“I’m not sure.”

“So who has this scroll?” Alex asked.

Wang shook his head and replied, “That in itself is a mystery. According to other experts the scrolls were lost before it could be revealed to the masses.”

“So how do you know all this then?”

“I read a lot. And legends live on, despite the rumors,” Wang commented. “Besides, the scroll will be found again. It was found once, so it will be found again.”

Alex shrugged. “Well whoever this One is, it sure sounds like a real shithouse of a life for him.”

Wang nodded and kept talking, but Alex’s mind was somewhere else. He stared directly in front of him, and instead of a runway, he saw a sea of blood as thick and as deep as the oceans. Smoke and death filled the air, and on both sides of him were steep rocky cliffs.

This is the place of all those whom have died at the hands of The Evil One! A powerful voice said in Alex’s mind. Your purpose is for another time. Soon all your former ways will give way to the new ways. . . . For this reason solely have I revealed this place of death unto you.

Alex looked back at the unending sea of blood. Seconds later, he snapped back to reality. He felt drained of his strength. Kneeling, he moaned softly in pain, hoping he would regain his strength, but to no avail.

“Alex, what’s wrong?” Wang asked, concerned.

“I-I don’t know. One moment I saw this place of blood, the next I’m like this,” Alex said weakly.

Wang stepped back, his eyes filled with amazement.

Alex watched him. “Why are you looking at me like that?”

“You have the visions too, huh?”

“What are you talking about, Wang?”

“I see visions, too,” Wang said. “Although not as graphic as that.”

Alex glanced at him and his expression said it all. Wang had the look of “Welcome to the geeky-visionary club,” and for a second, he could almost feel some kind of idiot group hug about to happen.

Wang didn't hug him, which relieved Alex. Instead, Wang helped him up to his feet, and they headed to the hanger. All Alex could think of, was what the outcome of his encounter with Jamiesonn would be.

The future. Such uncertainties it holds for those who don't understand the perplexity of what lays beyond that which they can merely see. Those people perish for their lack of vision, a voice whispered in Alex's mind. Alex tried to ignore that thought as, for the moment, he was focused on the cult killings. With all the recent events in his life, everything seemed so chaotic and unclear. Perhaps in time, he could sort it all out.

They arrived back at the hanger, and Alex watched as Wang gave the plane one final inspection, before climbing into the pilot's seat. Alex stood there, staring blankly at nowhere in particular before Wang looked back at him and yelled out, "You coming?"

Alex jumped into the plane, Wang revved the engine, and the plane picked up speed. Racing down the runway, it soon left the ground and headed south.