

Angel Gry

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Second Edition Printing

Cover Concept by Michael Marcus

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ISBN 0-9840818-1-X

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Publisher's information:
Hamtramck Idea Men, P.O. Box 12097,
Hamtramck, Michigan 48212
<http://idea-men.us>



Angel Cry

Table of Contents

One: Darkness Comes --	3
Two: Fallen Sanctuary --	9
Three: Dogma --	18
Four: Power Within --	27
Five: Apocalyptic Hell --	32
Six: A New Friendship --	44
Seven: Out on the Town --	52
Eight: Confession --	60
Nine: The Test of Battle --	72
Ten: Damon's Past --	84
Eleven: An Old Friend --	97
Twelve: My Secret --	102
Thirteen: The Ritual --	108
Fourteen: Mother's Journal --	111
Fifteen: Fighting Through Lies --	123
Sixteen: Finding Truth --	136
Seventeen: Nephilim --	152
Eighteen: My Father's Legacy --	158
Nineteen: Aria --	167
Twenty: The Gateway --	186
Twenty-One: Hell Is Revealed --	198
Twenty-Two: Eternal Battle --	216
Twenty-Three: True Understanding --	227
References --	232

Chapter One: Darkness Comes

It is said that everyone is put on this Earth for a purpose. I didn't believe that I had a reason to live. I wondered if I should exist. From a young age, others discouraged me from living. At times, it seemed as though others feared me. I never understood why, until I learned who I was.

"Hope! Come on!" I still hear my friends calling to me. Memories flood my mind of the past. I keep following my friends higher and higher up the hill, through the trees. I am so young, just ten years old. They lure me up there, pretending to be my friends. They tell me there is this cool view of the town at the drop off point. I believe they are my friends; I trust them. I stand on the ledge, seeing the colors of dusk sky, orange fading into red. It is so beautiful. As I gaze at the sight, I feel lighter. I'm not standing on solid ground anymore--someone just pushed me. As I fall, I hear laughter above and scornful words,

"Die, Witch!"

The voices started to blur together and I heard a single voice speaking. I looked up from the table. I couldn't believe it! I fell asleep in class! When I looked at the clock, it was approaching nine-thirty. Class was almost over. The professor still droned on. Would this class ever end? In the next long moment, he finally stopped babbling and class was over.

Walking outside in the cool night air, I felt better. It was so hot in that classroom. The only sounds around were the whistling wind and some college frat boys talking about getting wasted after class.

"Yeah man, I'm getting messed up tonight!" I heard one guy shout to no one in particular. Somehow, I felt lost in this world. Everyone else went to parties and got drunk. I turned twenty a few months ago so I couldn't drink legally. But that didn't stop others who were not the legal age yet. Some people have been drinking since they were fourteen. It was hard to blame them. There was nothing much to do in a town like Fallen Ridge but get drunk.

I felt tired as I walked past the rectangular fountain standing in the middle of the campus. There were a few others walking towards the same direction. The parking structure was straight ahead and I wanted to be in my warm bed. It was strange, I wanted to sleep, but there were some who were just waking up at this time. As I moved on I felt the wind pick up. I kept moving, not caring about anything but getting to my car.

“Hope!” the voice called.

I turned around, but didn’t see anyone. Maybe I imagined it. I started walking.

“Hope!” the voice was more dramatic.

I jumped around at the voice. I didn’t see anyone. As I turned back, I felt someone touch my shoulder. I gasped pushing the hand away. A woman stood there. Her dark red hair was half done in tiny braids; one long strain of hair covered part of her face. Other than her hair, I noticed she was really tall, much taller than me or anyone else I knew. I felt pierced by her vibrant aqua colored eyes.

“I found you finally!” she exploded.

“Do I know you?” I asked trying to recall her face.

“Not yet. I am Aria,” she introduced herself. “I am so happy I found you, you have no idea how long I’ve been searching for you!” she went on. Her eagerness was a bit too much. I just stood there staring at her, not sure how to respond.

“I want to help you find your path,” she said.

I had no idea what she meant. “I don’t understand,” I admitted.

“You feel different from others, like you don’t belong,” she kept talking.

Now she started to scare me.

“You are a timid person, unsure of yourself,” she said. Now she was just staring at me. “You have very stunning eyes,” she remarked. “They’re silver.” I didn’t expect the compliment. My light colored eyes were a contrast with my dark hair. I thought I looked strange to other people.

“Uh...thank you,” I responded not knowing what else to say.

“Come with me. You will understand everything,” she said with a definite tone.

Go with her? I didn’t know who she was. And she wasn’t giving me any reason to trust her. She acted like she knew me, but I knew I’d never seen her before. I just needed to go home.

“I’m sorry, I have to go,” I said quickly and began walking away.

“Don’t make this hard, Hope!” she yelled angrily.

I didn’t turn back. My feet moved faster and now I began to feel dizzy. Something flashed through my mind. The visions were so fast. I saw people in pain. They were in some desolate place with horrifying creatures everywhere. I heard terrible moans of pain and suffering. Why was I seeing this? I felt sick. My vision blurred.

“Stop!” I screamed out. I heard the echo of my own voice.

Everything was still now. Aria was gone and I was left alone. The warm air was now a very chilling breeze. I thought I saw my breath. Something was wrong. The campus looked different. The whole atmosphere felt dead. The trees were covered in full leaf a moment ago, now they were bare as if it were winter. I hurried to the parking lot. I saw it up ahead. As I approached, flames suddenly shot up from the ground to the sky high above me! Was I just seeing things? There was no way around this obstacle.

“What’s going on?!?” I cried out. No one was around to hear me. Would that woman know what’s happening. She seemed to know enough about me. I had to find her. That woman, Aria. I felt that she was the only one that could answer my questions.

I ran towards the fountain spaced in the center of the four academic buildings of the campus. I noticed that the fountain wasn’t working. The inside of the pool was cracked; a big crack split down the center of the cement.

There had to be people somewhere on this campus. I last saw people in class. I ran as fast as I could back the classroom. Through the front door of the building and up the stairs to the second floor, my book bag weighed on my shoulders. Dim light filled the hallway with flickering florescent lights. Everyone had left. The classroom door was locked and dark. I felt panic leave me a little when I saw light flowing out from my professor’s office. The office floor was cluttered with papers. And folders. Not the most organized man. At first, I was relieved to see him sitting at his desk. I sighed, feeling some tension leave my body.

“Mr. Takoto, I’m glad you’re still here!” There was no response. Maybe he didn’t hear me. I moved towards his desk chair.

“Mr. Takoto? Are you all right?” I peered around the chair. When I saw his face, I stumbled back in horror. No. This wasn’t real, it couldn’t be! His face! His hands! Every part of his skin was severely burned. *What happened? This can’t be real! It has to be some kind of bad dream, right?* I tried to make some sense of the situation, but I couldn’t. I tried to run, but instead stumbled blindly out of the room. I felt dazed, the hallway swayed in front of me. I ran down the hall towards the bathrooms. Maybe someone was in there. Inside the ladies’ room, I found the floor cluttered with paper towels. I turned the handle on one of the sinks expecting fresh water to emerge from the faucet. But nothing came out. My face felt so hot, I wanted to splash cold water on myself. At that point I looked up at the mirror. It was red, like blood. The message was scrawled out.

Where is your god now?

It was bad enough that it looked like blood, but I always thought the word God should be capitalized and in this message, it was not. There might have been a reason why the g wasn’t capitalized, but right now I didn’t care! I was going crazy! I felt so sick and there was no relief for this ailment.

I left the bathroom and saw the men’s bathroom across the hall. Under any normal circumstances, I would not think of entering, but right now I was desperate to find a living person. I entered slowly.

“Hello?” I called out.

I was afraid to check the mirrors, but my eyes looked at them anyways. Nothing was written on these mirrors. The place was a mess just like the other bathroom. One of the stalls was closed. I knocked on the door. Maybe someone would answer. But no one did. Suddenly, I heard a clunk as if something hit the stall door. The door fell right off the hinges and would have fallen onto my feet if I didn’t quickly jump back. The occupant in the stall collapsed onto the floor. From where I stood, I could see he was dead. I wanted to scream, but couldn’t. Only a slight gasp came out. Who did all of this? Why? Maybe Aria?

Once again I ran down the hallway. My mind raced about the happening events. Why is everyone dead?! I was sweating now. Driven only by adrenaline, I ran down the hallway. As I ran, a shadowy figure walked through the doors to the stairwell. Who was that? I was anxious to find out and also a little afraid.

At the end of the hall was an open door that was closed the first time I passed it. A steel pipe leaned against a shelf. I may have lost my mind, but in this alternate reality things were not right. I had to defend myself from whatever killed my instructor and that other guy. Taking the pipe, I headed towards the stairs. I practically tripped, my mind working faster than my feet.

Outside, there were still no signs of life. I adjusted my book bag on my shoulders before making my way back towards the fountain. This time there was something on the border of the fountain... blood. It covered a metal plate implanted into the brick rim. It hurt my head to look at it. I felt like I was in such a daze; it felt so unreal. My muscles felt so tired and I wanted to rest, but I knew I couldn't. I moved forward and bumped something with my foot. I looked down to see someone laying prone. Instinctively, I bent down to see what was wrong. It looked like a girl; her dark hair covered her face. She was dead too. I nudged her shoulder just to make sure. She didn't respond. I pushed over her body and sighed with disheartenment. Her skin was burnt just like my professor's. How many would I find this way? At that moment, my question was answered as an eerie light showed many more bodies laying head to toe in a line. They were all the same; burnt skin. The stream of corpses circled the fountain. The girl's hair fell away from her face. Her face was burnt and scarred; her eyes stared blankly into the sky. I couldn't stand this! I didn't want to see it anymore! I tried to ignore the presence of the ugly, bloated corpse to see the gold plate stuck in the brick. The blood dripped off into the cracks of the fountain. There were words carved into the plate.

*Enter a different world,
A place that reveals another reality,
God becomes the Devil;
The Devil becomes God.*

Something moved. I became paralyzed, not able to take my eyes off the red substance now filling the fountain pool. It came up out of the crevice and filled all of the cracks in the fountain pool. The entire pool filled up with crimson blood. Now I felt terribly sick. Why? Why was this happening to me?!

More bodies filled the interior of the fountain. I think my mind had said, 'too much' and shut down. All I saw was blackness for a moment. Then light flashed my way. One single stream of light led from the fountain to an old castle. The campus was gone. There was nowhere to go, but to a new destination I was not ready to see.

Chapter Two: Fallen Sanctuary

So now that I'd completely lost my mind, I headed towards the castle that just appeared out of nowhere. Up the swerving path ahead was the entrance of this forbidding fortress. It was not one of those traditional castles with a drawbridge and a moat circling it. The fortress was built in stone; the doors were decorated with Celtic décor. Looking up at the sky, there was just one big dark cloud looming over the place. Life did not exist here. No green leaves or green grass existed at all. The door had a knocker, and I might have used it if I wasn't concerned about awakening the content within this place. I still held the metal pipe I found earlier in one hand, and pulled the heavy door with the other. The weight of the door was too much for one arm. I thought that I could get away with putting the pipe on the ground for a moment, so I did. It was so quiet that the sound of the pipe hitting the pavement was loud enough to startle me. Then, I took off my backpack, giving relief to my shoulders. I looked up at the gigantic door. As I pulled on the door with two hands with all my arm strength, I heard footsteps behind me. I turned in time to see someone staggering towards me. It was a man, moaning as if in pain.

"Are you all right?" I asked as I ran up to him. He lifted his head and I saw the burnt skin on his face. He suddenly flung his arms at me. I kept moving back until I backed into the door. I had no idea what to do, but I realized I had that pipe. Picking it up, I raised it above my head ready to strike the abomination.

"wWhy?" It tried to form words. "wWhyiS thiS h-HappenING?! Don'T UnDerSTanD! H-Help m-MeEE!" It spoke grabbing its head, still staggering about.

Was this thing a person? I had to force myself to look at this creature. I remembered seeing him before, sitting in a chair with his head hung down. I couldn't believe it. My professor from the university now stood in front of me as this undead figure.

"Mr. Takoto? You are stuck in this nightmare too!"

He came at me, his hands grabbed my neck, he started to choke me. I pulled his hands off of me. He was actually very weak. I took the pipe and just started swinging. I hit the side of his head several times. Each time, he flinched. But he kept coming at

me no matter how many times I struck him. He stopped moving and I stopped swinging. His expression changed. His eyes dropped down as if he was sad. He moaned loudly and I had to cover my ears from the painful sound. I wanted to do something to end his suffering. I struck him again and again until he fell. Not only was the skin on his face burnt, but the skin on his arms too. All of his skin was burnt, I bet. Who or what burned him? Part of me wanted to know and part of me was afraid to know.

I had to get away from here. The doors were ahead of me. I put down the pipe and pulled with all my effort. The door opened just enough for me to squeeze through. There was a faint light illuminating the room from the lit torches on the walls. My eyes adjusted so that I could see. Around the atrium were statues of knights in armor. A staircase was ahead of me, red velvet carpeting covered the steps. Halfway up the stairs I realized I forgot my bag... and the pipe! I hurried back down to the front door. It wouldn't open. A large wood plank bolted the doors. How did this get here? I studied the piece of wood for a moment. I know I'm not the strongest person, but I thought I at least could move this stupid thing! It wouldn't budge. In frustration, I kicked the door, creating a thunderous 'boom' echoing through the hallway. The sound was startling. I looked around feeling nervous that someone or something might have heard me.

I finally decided that I was better off without the excess weight anyways. I returned to the stairs. To the right led nowhere so I turned left once I reached the top. I walked into an old style kitchen. The largest pot I've ever seen sat in the center of the room. It was large enough that me and several other people could fit in it. Curiosity overwhelmed me. I had to see if anything was in that pot. The smell was repulsive. It made my stomach sink. I couldn't identify what the stuff in there was. It almost looked liked cooked flesh. No! Not going to think about that!

I left that room and continued down the hallway. Another stairway stood at the end, this one was a black metal staircase that spiraled up to the next floor. Moving upwards, I soon reached the top where there was an enormous timber door. I pushed down on the brass handle. On the other side was a library, shelves upon shelves of books lined the walls. My attention was drawn to the back wall where two fancy twin swords hung on a gold plaque. I

had this overwhelming urge to take them. I was not a thief, but these blades just called to me. The blades were curved in an S-shape. The silver hilts gleamed and each hilt had a decorative wing attached to it. Whether they were wings of a large bird or maybe of a mystical beast like a dragon, I couldn't say. They might even be wings from an angel. It didn't take me long to grab the swords and hold them in my hands. I felt strong just holding them. I started to walk back to the door. Suddenly, the weapons were torn away from my grip by some unknown force. They floated in front of me. My eyes became entranced by them floating there.

Suddenly, they flew at me. I had no time to react. The long blades struck the palms of my hands! I don't remember crying out in pain or anything. When I looked at my hand, the blades pierced the skin all the way through! Then I heard a crisp voice speak.

"The chosen is found."

I looked at the swords stuck in my hands. I was able to pull them out. Don't ask me how! Then the blood faded into my skin and the punctures themselves were healed! I didn't know what just happened, but I was still alive and that was good enough!

After that horrendous incident, a book fell out of the bookshelf next to me. *Now what?* I wondered. I picked it up. The book had a hard, leather bound cover. When I opened it, something fell out. I heard a clinking sound as something metal hit the floor. I looked down to see a key. Picking it up, I studied its unique shape and design. It looked like an old fashioned key used to unlock broom closets or something of that nature. The book was more of an interest to me right now. There were words scribbled out on the first page.

We were made beautiful. We were given great power. He made us bow to lesser beings. He will pay! God will pay! So, we stood against God. We were powerful. But God threw us down to Earth to suffer with the wretched mankind.

That was it. There was nothing else written. Something bothered me about this passage. It sounded like the passage talked about the angels that fought against God and fell from heaven. It seemed as if one of the fallen angels did write this. That was impossible!

An angelic being wouldn't write this and then put it in this library. My head would start to hurt as I figured this one out. What was even stranger was that this was the only thing I was able to read in English. All the other book titles were written in a foreign language.

There was nothing else in this room. As I turned to leave, shrill laughter came from behind me. Three women appeared by the plaque. I looked down at the swords I recently stole

I knew I shouldn't have taken them!

These were some interesting women. They wore Gothic style dresses, black with red trimming. Their long white hair flowed down their backs. From a distance they might appear beautiful, but they were definitely monsters. Their mouths showed pointed teeth, and their deep reddish eyes gleamed. They reminded me of vampires. I didn't know how to use these swords, but I was going to have to learn quickly.

One of the fiends rushed at me from the side. I instinctively pushed her away, causing her to fall into the bookshelf. I suddenly became strong. I couldn't lift that piece of wood off that barred the front door, but I could suddenly fight supernatural beings. Suddenly, another one attacked with a frontal assault. She swiped with her long claws. I swung down and stabbed her with one blade. It was stuck in her arm and she screeched in pain. As I pulled the sword out of her, there wasn't any blood, the blade glowed red. By her response, I must have hurt her.

My body acted on its own as I stabbed her in the chest. In the next moment, she turned to dust. I spun around, stabbing another one turning her to dust too. Now I had one left. The last one dove at me from behind. As she grabbed me, I somehow threw her over my shoulder. She landed on the floor and I finished her with one fatal stab wound. That was so weird. I acted as though I fought with these weapons my whole life! What was even weirder was the weapons themselves disappeared.

"Hold on! I need you!" I cried out. But the swords didn't return.

Now that the women were gone, I could take a closer look at the plaque they came out of. There was a small hole in the middle of the plaque. It might be a key hole, I had a key. Inserting the key and turning it made the wall move to reveal a spiraling staircase leading downward. It seemed endless. Lanterns lined the walls,

lighting the way down. I moved on until I reached the bottom. Another large door stood in front of me. Through it was a room with many odd devices. One metal device looked like it framed a body; spikes came out from all sides. I knew what it was called, an Iron Maiden, used in medieval times. From where I stood, I saw pieces of flesh hanging from the spikes. There was blood too and it didn't look dry! I had to get out of here!

Hooks hung from the walls covered in blood, as were knives and other instruments on the tables. Three tables stood parallel to each other. I refused to imagine their use. The scent of death surrounded me.

On the center table was a piece of paper. The sketch marks of a pen made an effort to form words.

Fallen Angels... Offspring... Nephilim.

My head hurt too much to try and figure it out. There was no other way out except the way I came. I turned to the stairs, just as bars slammed down to block my path. The deafening sound of the bars crashing was followed by a deadly silence. I suddenly was a captive here!

Looking around the room, I noticed a hole in the far wall, under the table. I didn't think twice about using it. I ran over and starting crawling through the dark hole. I didn't know where it would lead, but it had to be better than this room. I wasn't claustrophobic so the cramped space didn't bother me. It was completely dark in this small tunnel. Finally, I climbed out into yet another room. This looked like a storage room. It was just an ordinary room; nothing looked out of the ordinary here. There were many large chests, but I couldn't open any of them. After trying a few, I gave up and turned towards a door.

I was in another long hallway. I didn't get too far down it when I heard more high pitched laughter. More of those vampire women were charging at me from the other end of the hall. As I wished for those swords, my hands held them again. I wasn't going to complain. These things felt attached to me somehow. One strike after another, each opponent became dust. The sound of the screeches these inhuman beings made were embedded into my mind.

I struck down the last one and silence returned. The air was so thick that I started having problems breathing. The environment was getting more intense. I hurried down the end of the hallway where a gigantic room stood before me. I've never seen anything like this before. The door was open a sliver just wide enough for me to pass. This room was hideous. The interior was stone; there were no windows. Actually there weren't any windows in this whole place. The room was so big that I couldn't see to the other side, it looked dreary like a dungeon or something. These enormous tables were spread throughout the room. When I took a closer look, they appeared to be beds, huge metal beds. Reason I knew that was because an outside frame went around the perimeter and a tarp covered it. The legs were metal spikes stuck in the concrete floor. These beds were so large, who slept in them? I didn't want to see those creatures.

Continuing on, I came to a room with big chandeliers hanging on the ceiling in a straight line. Jewels were encrusted into the gold chains. The chandelier glistened even though there wasn't any light coming into the room. I guess they glistened off the light of the torches. This room was a complete contrast to the rest of this place. The white marble floor was so elegant and the silver and gold statues of angels lining the walls gave the place a peaceful feeling. I came to another stairway. How many floors did this place have? These steps were covered in blue velvet carpeting.

Yet another door stood before me. This one had to be the easiest door I opened. Its weight seemed like a feather compared to the heavy doors I pulled open. Now I stood in a small circular room. Nothing was in here. Did I do this for nothing? I was so tired, and annoyed by all of this! I turned back to the door just in time for it to shut and lock me inside! I pulled on the wooden knob, making no headway in opening it.

Suddenly, I felt a presence behind me. A voice spoke, sounding as if it came from my own mind.

"All will pay for their sins!"

I turned to see someone covered in a long white cloak. A radiant glow emanated from the figure. I couldn't see his face. He held a long staff. The ceiling opened showing the thick clouds. I heard thunder, and lightning struck the top of the staff. It glowed now as he held it above his head. Then, I heard the words repeated from my dream.

"Die, Witch!" I heard the voices combined. There was another ear piercing sound. Something struck the cloaked figure. The lightning shot past me, hitting the wall. The cloak fell to the floor empty and lifeless.

"What happened?" I asked aloud.

A figure dropped down to the floor. Someone else now stood in front of me. I stared at a young man, tall and somewhat muscular. His white hair fell into his bluish-green eyes. He wore common clothes, a black t-shirt with jeans. His hand held a pair of smoking hand guns. He eyed me suspiciously. Finally he spoke,

"Having problems?" he asked as casually as you would say 'hi' to a friend.

"Where did you come from?" I looked down at the empty cloak. "Did you do that?" I asked even though the answer was blatantly obvious.

"Yeah," he answered, proudly showing his weapons of mass destruction. "Don't ask me how I know how to use these things; they just sort of came alive," he said.

"You dropped down from the ceiling?" I asked. He nodded.

"How did you get up there?" I asked even if it sounded like a dumb question.

"I climbed up to the ceiling's support beams from some boxes on the floor. After running into some weird creatures, I thought I should give myself a better advantage by watching from up there. I guess you never know what you're going to find in a place like this," he said with a slight smile.

"What boxes?" I asked. There was nothing in this room. He turned to look and then back a time. His lips pressed together in an expression of being puzzled.

"Well, they were in here earlier. Um...oh, I'm Damon by the way," he introduced himself.

“Uh, hi... my name is Hope,” I said feeling awkward. Being in this place didn’t help with good introductions. “So, how do we get out of here?” I asked.

He went to open the door, ignoring my question. I thought the door was still locked, but it obviously wasn’t. He started walking and I raced to keep up with him. I followed him down the stairs, wondering if he was intentionally ignoring me. Suddenly, the place shook like an earthquake. We both fell off balance and I had an embarrassing encounter as I fell on top of him!

“Oh, are you all right?” Damon asked.

“Uh, yeah,” I answered standing back up, regaining my composure.

“Don’t know what that was,” he admitted.

He began walking again and I followed closely. Did he know where was he going? We walked through the room of chandeliers, and continued down the hallway. He walked so fast.

“Hey! Hold on!” I shouted after him. He didn’t seem to hear me. I started running to keep up. As I ran, I saw a light shining ahead where Damon was. It grew, engulfing him and soon, me.

“Damon, where are you?” I called. He didn’t respond.

No! I don’t want to be alone again!

“Damon!” I yelled as loud as I could.

The light faded. I saw the night sky above and trees covered with their usual green leaves, and a fountain with running water. Did I black out? The trees and grass were filled with life, and the fountain was running again like usual, reflecting multiple colors from the lights in the pool. I found myself on the ground. Getting up, I quickly looked around. Now I was really confused. I was back on campus; everything looked normal. Maybe I dreamed everything? Even stranger, my book bag was on the ground beside me. I just needed to go home, I decided. I ran to the parking structure where my car was parked. My car sat alone in the corner, on the third floor. I took the keys out of the front pocket of my bag. Unlocking the car, I quickly got in and started it. The clock read 11:55; class got out at approximately 9:30. I slept for over two hours!

What caused me to fall asleep on the ground? I thought about that woman I met after class. Was that real or part of the dream? What about the other things I saw? I was too tired to contemplate everything right now. I drove out of the parking structure and away from campus. I headed home with the windows down to keep me awake with the moving wind.

Chapter Three: Dogma

I felt so exhausted when I awoke. I was glad that I woke up in my bed. As I got up, my head felt heavy. I waited a moment for the feeling to pass. Dragging myself out of bed, I searched my closet for an outfit to wear.

“Knock. Knock,” I heard a familiar voice. My mother stood in the doorway.

“Do you mind? At least let me get dressed first!” I reprimanded.

“Oh, okay,” she said timidly. “I’ll be downstairs.”

Where did that come from? That wasn’t how I usually greeted my mother. Maybe I should apologize to her. But first, I threw on a light blue tank top and black shorts, a nice summer outfit.

I walked into the kitchen to see my mom sitting at the table drinking tea, not coffee. The teas bag sat next to her cup on a napkin. Odd, she usually drank coffee. My sister was the one who drank tea.

“Hi, um, I’m sorry about being rude,” I said. “I had a strange night...”

I wondered if I should tell her what happened.

“It’s all right. You have a right to want privacy. You are a grown woman,” she replied

I nodded. It was weird when she referred to me as a grown woman. I didn’t feel like one.

“So, what was so strange about last night?” she asked.

She had to ask.

“Um, the class... was strange. Strange discussion,” I told her.

“Really?” she asked.

At that moment, my sister Charsi entered the room. For once, I was happy she interrupted a conversation with our mom. She bounced in with her cute pink tank top and matching shorts. Part of her blond hair was put up in tiny ponytails held back by white butterfly barrettes. She appeared like a young school girl, but somehow carried off this look with maturity.

“Mom! I need to go clothes shopping! School starts in a week and I have nothing to wear!” she cried out overdramatically.

Thank you Miss Drama Queen.

“Charisi, you have a bunch of cute outfits,” Mom reminded her.

Charsi rolled eyes, “Those were from last year. I can’t wear the same clothes I did last year,” she said in a pushy manner.

“Fine, we can go this afternoon,” Mom agreed.

Charsi let out a sigh, “Thank you!” She said the words, but she didn’t sound thankful.

After some breakfast I returned to my room. I lifted my book bag on the bed. It felt really heavy. It sounded like something in there was metal clanking together. Unzipping the bag I saw the cause. To my absolute shock, I found two swords! My mind flashed back these same blades piercing my skin when I stood in that castle’s library. But that was just a dream, right? And I never put these things in my bag in the first place! I took them out. As I looked at the blades, I noticed something. The blades were much longer in the other world. The blades were shorter now, like short swords. I thought of showing them to my mom, but something told me not to. Telling others that I got transported into a different world sounded preposterous, but, what about the people I found dead on campus? If the news reported that many people died at the university, that would prove it happened.

I ran to the stairs, practically tripping down the steps and stumbled into the kitchen.

“Mom! Do we have a newspaper? Anything about my campus closing?” I asked desperately.

She still sat at the table with Charsi.

“What? Why do you need to know that? You don’t have class today,” Mom replied with some irritation in her voice.

“Yes, I know, but I thought I heard about something happening and I just wanted to check,” I said.

“I already read the newspaper,” Charsi stated crudely. “There’s nothing in there about your college.”

Her emphasis on the words ‘your college’ sounded as if she mocked it. Well, we can’t all be destined to go to the big named universities.

“Thank you Charsi,” I answered, not hiding the sarcasm in my voice.

“Hope? You look flushed. Is something wrong?” My mom asked.

I wished I could talk to her about this, but I didn’t want Charsi around.

“Oh, no. Nothing at all.” I don’t believe it was a lie, I just wasn’t telling her anything right now.

Tuesday came around again. I was the first student in the class to arrive. My eyes widened when I saw my instructor, unharmed, sitting at his desk.

“Mr. Takoto?” I asked.

He looked up at me. “Oh, hello, um...” he trailed off.

“Hope Eden,” I said, helping him remember my name.

“Right. Do you need something?” he asked.

I stayed quiet for a moment, thinking about how I could ask him about last week? Before I said anything he asked a question.

“Have you picked a topic for your term paper?”

I kept thinking about that dream. I couldn’t get the dark cultic images out of my head. Maybe if I researched a topic like Satanism and the Occult, I could learn about the things I saw in that dream.

“Well, I am interested in the uh...darker religions, like the Occult. How it came to be? I thought about researching if for my term paper.” I said this as if I was unsure.

His expression of interest told me I came up with something good.

“Do you think you can find enough information on the topic? I want real facts,” he explained.

“Yes, of course.” I wondered if the library had books on the subject matter.

“Have you written out a thesis yet?” he inquired.

“No, I haven’t...?” I raised my voice at the end like a question.

He gave me a dubious look. “Have you at least written a thesis statement?” he asked more crudely.

He already told the class the difference between a thesis statement and a written out thesis. Now I had to quickly come up with a sentence that clearly defined the objective of my essay.

“Um, Satanism and the Occult have had a dramatic effect on the beliefs of the American population throughout history,” I squeezed out.

“Okay, that is not specific enough, too general. Anyone can come up with that,” he put down my attempt to conjure up a well put together sentence. “You can come by my office during my hours to discuss it further. Right now, I need to start class,” he said.

I gave a light nod before turning to find a seat. I usually sat in the second row.

“Oh, and no falling asleep in my class tonight. It’s going to be a good discussion,” he said without looking at me.

I can’t believe he remembered that! I wanted to talk to him about what happened last week, but I knew I couldn’t. For some reason I saw all of those things, and somehow, this world was separate from the other world I saw.

My thoughts drifted throughout class. Professor Takoto lectured on about Pagan beliefs, focusing on the role of women in the faith. The pagans worshipped many different gods and goddesses. The topic shifted from the Pagan to the Roman Catholic Church.

“So, on that note, I’m going to be shifting gears to the next part of the discussion. What do we think about when we speak of the Roman Catholic Church?” ‘Shifting gears’ is what our instructor called it.

“It represents power,” the guy next to me answered. “No one wanted to question its integrity. I read about it trying to assimilate everyone into its beliefs, especially Christian,” he added.

There was a deadly silence in the room after he spoke.

“So, you’re saying that the Roman Catholic Church, who are Christians themselves, hunted other Christians?” Professor Takoto asked.

There were some rude snickers from the rest of the class.

“I’m sorry to disrupt your theory, but the church led the Crusades to hunt down the Pagans. This is how Christianity spread to other lands,” the professor explained.

“Wait, I don’t understand,” the young man next to me continued. He pushed a strand of his auburn hair away from his face. “You’re saying that these Pagans were the only target of the church, but I heard a different story.”

“Oh really? What is the story you know?” Professor Takoto questioned.

“There was a book I read that explained that the Roman Catholics went after everyone, including Christians,” my classmate explained.

“Uh, I have not heard that. What is the name of this book you read from?” The professor asked him.

The young man looked a little downtrodden.

“I don’t remember its name. But the Romans were the ones who crucified Jesus, so because he was Christian, I thought...”

“Actually, Jesus was a Jew,” Takoto corrected.

“But didn’t Christianity begin with Jesus?” he asked.

The instructor pulled his thoughts together for a moment.

“Jesus himself was a Jew. Christianity was not really formed until years after his death. It is really up to one’s beliefs to say if he was more than a Jew.”

“But he wasn’t. He was proclaimed as god by his disciples. He died on the cross for humanity’s sins, right?” My classmate struggled with the question.

“Hold on!” Someone from the back yelled. “You can’t just claim Jesus was God and that he died on a cross for humanity’s sins!”

The whole class turned to a girl with bright red hair, looked dyed, wearing a low cut tight fitting black top.

“Care to explain, Cheryl?” Takoto asked her.

“In the first place, most of the Jews did not see Jesus as God. They had their own beliefs. The ones who might have followed a prophet like Jesus were looking for other beliefs to suit them better. Whether or not they saw Jesus as god was their choice. People saw a man who supposedly healed people? Well doctors heal people, why aren’t they referred to as God?” she asked.

“So? What’s your point?” the guy next to me asked, raising an eyebrow.

“My point,” Cheryl answered hotly, “is that people called him God when he may have been just a man,” she said bitterly.

“But Jesus did more than heal people.” The voice that intervened was mine. Did I want to get into this discussion? I should have just stayed quiet, but I couldn’t.

“He restored the faith of people. He showed people things they never saw before. He drove demons out of people; he miraculously healed those with leprosy, which no doctor could cure. He gave people hope and stood for peace,” I tried to inform.

“You don’t know what really happened. You weren’t there. Besides, you’re claiming the will of one man, not the will of an entire religion!” That girl Cheryl sounded so offended. She would not drop the conversation and for some reason, neither could I. I felt strong about my beliefs.

“Jesus asked for the church to represent peace and life.”

Why did I keep talking?

“Well obviously the church didn’t listen!” she countered. “The early Roman Catholic Church saw it fitting to break this ‘rule’ and kill every Pagan they found!” she exploded.

“Which brings me to ask this next question,” the professor intervened. “I am interested in receiving some feedback. When did Paganism end and Christianity begin?” he asked formally.

“Paganism never ended,” Cheryl spoke powerfully. “There are Pagans out there today; here in the United States. But it is so sad that they have to live in fear. And because of the beliefs I chose, people look at me like some kind of witch. If I lived in those times, I would have been burned like all of those other innocent people because I follow the Wiccan faith,” she said forcefully. I couldn’t believe she said all of that. I felt bad suddenly. I didn’t mean to be judgmental. She didn’t stop there.

“People can be prejudice if they want to, it won’t stop those people from believing in something that is real to them. Not even a church can stop them,” she said.

“I guess not,” I shyly answered. “Some churches don’t preach the real gospel. What the Roman Church did was wrong,” I decided.

“It is not about who is right or wrong,” Professor Takoto stated firmly. “This is a class on discussing the similarities and differences of religion and its effects on society. Let’s keep that in mind before we start a war.”

Tonight, class let out early. He let us out at 9:15. He told the class that we deserved to get out early because he held us over too long last week, but I really wondered if that was the real reason. I began to gather my things when Professor Takoto walked over to me.

“I think it is very interesting that a Christian such as yourself is interested in the Occult,” he said offhandedly.

“Why do you say I’m a Christian?” I asked.

“Because you made a big fuss over proving your point, proclaiming Jesus as God,” he said.

“Oh, it’s just that I don’t want others to get the wrong impression about Christians. I’m not sure about everything the church did in the past, but there are Christians who believe in loving each other,” I tried to save face.

Professor Takoto tightened his expression; he was making me nervous.

“I really want to avoid the ‘I believe’ and ‘you believe’ comments. You need to understand that we are looking at religion and spirituality as a whole. It does not matter what our own beliefs are. I grew up in Japan as a Buddhist and I did not have much say in the matter. Maybe you had a similar experience growing up as a Christian. But the point of this class is to put religious differences aside and discuss as a class the effects of different religious practices in our society.”

I nodded feeling defeated. There was not much else to say. When I turned to leave, the thoughts about last week came to my mind again. I just had to ask.

“Um, Mr. Takoto...” He turned to me; he always looked so stern. Maybe that was how they act in Japan. “I wondered if...” How could I phrase this without sounding crazy? “I went to your office last week after class, and I saw your office was open, but you...”

He gave me with a questionable look. “My office was open?” he asked, then shook his head. “No, no, I left the building right after class. I did not go back to my office. I had some errands to run before going home. The usual ten minutes I spend in the office after class were gone. It wasn’t me that opened my office,” he said with puzzlement.

His words struck me hard. Something was definitely wrong. I didn’t see my professor that night. All logic in my mind told me that what I saw last week was not real. But what didn’t follow the logic was the fact I still had those swords.

“But I apologize,” he continued. “Usually, I don’t hold class over that long,” he assured me.

What else could I say? He would think it was ludicrous if I told him how I found him that night.

“Alright then, thanks for helping me with my paper,” I said.

He nodded. “Have a good night,” he said.

Outside, the cool air blew. I suddenly felt an awkward presence around me. I ran, holding my bag tightly. I kept running. I practically ran over a guy walking with that girl from class who argued with me.

“Watch it!” he yelled. I slightly turned to see the girl glare at me. Why didn’t Mr. Takoto talk to her? She didn’t have to act the way she did!

As I approached my car, someone tapped me on the shoulder. I instinctively went into a defensive mode as I twirled around. I relaxed when I saw it was the guy who sat next to me in class. He looked to be around my age.

“Hey, I’m sorry about what I said in class. I didn’t mean to start anything. I was just curious,” he said with an apologetic expression. I didn’t expect this.

“Oh, it’s fine. But I wondered why the professor didn’t say anything to that girl though,” I wondered.

“Probably because of the way she was acting. He was most likely afraid to say anything to her. Did you see how she acted? That was so uncalled for,” the guy drastically stated.

“Well, I guess I didn’t have to keep talking,” I said.

“You were just standing up for your beliefs,” he said.

“Are you Christian?” I asked him.

He shook his head. “No. But I am interested in the religion; I’m interested in all religions. That’s why I took this class, to learn how all religions came to be and are connected. That’s why I asked when Christianity began from a historical point of view. Maybe I should have made myself clearer,” he said. He kept his eyes on me. I tried to focus on him while he spoke. I didn’t want to be rude, but I felt so uneasy. It was this campus, I think. I may never feel safe here again!

“I should go,” I said hesitantly. “Nice talking to you,” I said as I opened the door to my car.

“I’m Tristan by the way,” he said.

“I’m Hope,” I replied. When I looked at him, I noticed that he had these bright emerald eyes.

“Nice to meet you, see ya in class,” he said giving a slight wave before turning away.

“Yeah, you too,” I answered. That didn’t quite make sense.

Where was my mind? I watched him walk over to a red truck.

When I got into my car, I felt safer. I stared the car and drove out of the parking lot. Nothing strange happened tonight. But something strange happened last week. As I drove down the road, a thought came to me. It was that boy I met in the dream, (or

whatever it was.) I remembered his name. Damon. Then that thought was replaced by a more disturbing one. I thought about the discussion in class. Why are so many people against Christians? If a person is Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or any other religion, people are kind to them and don't want to offend them. Why is it different for Christians? No one seems to care if Christians are offended! Is our religion stranger than any other? So we believe Jesus is the son of god who died for our sins. Buddhists and Hindus pray to statues. Pagans worship the Earth. Muslims believe in Allah as their god and Jew believe in Jehovah as their God. What about worshipping Jesus as God is such a questionable belief? I wonder, am I a bad person for choosing to be Christian?

Chapter Four: Power Within

Motivating myself to write this paper was not as hard as I thought. I guess Occult is widely discussed in literature. I worked hard to find references to the Occult. There were books on the religion Satanism. It was weird to me seeing it referred to as a religion. Apparently there actually is a Satanic Bible written and a Church of Satan constructed in the 60's. There was this man named Aleister Crowley, born in 1876 who was a well known Satanist. He received the name, 'black magician.' I found a lot of information on both Satanism and the Occult. In some ways they were connected and others they were not. Much of the literary material seemed to be people stating their opinions on the subject and about religion and spirituality in general. I still used it for my paper anyways. I asked my teacher questions during the process of writing my paper. This paper was practically half our final grade.

When I received the paper after being graded, I saw a B+ at the top. My final grade for the class was an A-. I didn't think I would get any A's in college! My other class, Creative Writing was a solid A. My sister is usually nosy about my grades, but this time I was proud to show her. However, she turned her nose up.

"So, you got two A's; you only took two classes. I always get A's in my classes and I take six every semester. Besides, one of them is an A-, not an A," she said and turned prancing away. She never could just be happy for me. Charsi intended on finishing her high school career in perfection. She planned on taking some college courses to show on her portfolio as a candidate for Harvard or whatever pristine university that will accept her.

Fall semester began, I started off with twelve credit hours. One class I took, 'The Great Arts of the Centuries,' was a class of studying great artists and their works from the twelfth through the nineteenth century. I was doubtful I could get all A's while taking twelve credit hours. All my spare time got replaced by studying. The distractions took my mind away from the adventure I had a month ago. Those weapons I found stayed in an empty shoe box under my bed.

On September 21st, the first official day of fall, I attended a trip with my art class to the Museum of Artistic History, (didn't take long to come up with that name, did it?) It wasn't that big of a place; it wasn't that impressive. I went with a small group of five people in a van. Vera was the name of the woman who owned the vehicle. Vera told us she had such a big vehicle to transport her four kids, and a Siberian Husky. Everyone in the group talked and laughed, even me.

Vera told me that she was also a Christian. We stood at the entrance of the museum when I told her about the incident from last semester during that discussion on religion. She nodded in agreement with me.

"It is hard to discuss religion when people believe differently. It was unfair for the instructor to blame the argument on you, but I believe it is what Christians need to go through, bear the cross. There are too many that feel Christians are prejudice, but the truth is many other religions are prejudiced against Christians too," she explained.

I nodded in agreement, but it didn't answer my pressing question, why are my beliefs criticized?

Inside the museum, we were instructed to look around and choose three pieces of art to compare and contrast in our essay. Nothing interested me at first. Many of these paintings looked alike, using different shapes subject matter. There was a whole section devoted to Da Vinci--one of his most famous works, the Last Supper, caught my eye. The painting showed Jesus and His Disciples sitting around the table eating bread and drinking wine. Jesus tells the Disciples to eat and drink in remembrance of Him. We discussed this painting in that religion class, no one seemed to mind talking about Jesus then.

"Oh look, Da Vinci's 'Last Supper.' A female voice chimed behind me. I turned to see a girl with black hair, blue streaks, cut short around her ears.

"Hi, my name is Angelica. We're in the same class," she said.

"I'm Hope," I said, giving her short glance.

"Are you thinking of using this painting in your essay?" she asked.

"I don't know yet. I'm still looking around," I answered while looking away.

“I think I’m going to compare oil paintings to water color, something simple. Why make it too hard?” Angelica continued.

I nodded.

“I was interested in some of the ancient artifacts. Like some of Egyptian displays,” I said making a great attempt to actually look at the girl’s face.

“Oh, well I guess I could check that out,” she said.

I was surprised she wanted to come with me since her interests were different than me. I nodded to her and we wandered down the main hallway. We acted as wandering souls, not sure where to go. A few times we stopped to look at the map in the museum’s brochure. It was not much help, all of the paths drawn on this thing made the whole building look like a big maze. We moved down a long, winding hallway, moving along until this big stone head popped out of nowhere. We both jumped back, startled. When we realized what it was, we started laughing. The statue just sat in the middle of the hallway; nothing else was around it. The hallway ended at a door.

“So what do you think we’ll find in here?” I asked turning the doorknob. When I looked over at her, she was gone!

“Angelica?” I called out.

The door opened into a room filled with a variety of statues. I didn’t see her anywhere. I was by myself, alone surrounded by various statues.

Where did she go? I wondered.

I felt a sudden chill. There were statues sculpted in different materials, marble, stone, clay, tin, and even wood. This room led me to another that featured medieval artifacts. This room felt colder than the others I visited. Was there a draft in here? I grew even colder as I stood there. I felt panic take over. I had to get out of here and find people! All at once, I rushed back to the hallway I was in before. No one was around...anywhere. I kept running. It was like I ran down an endless hallway.

“Hope!” Someone called me.

Someone just called me. The voice echoed, sounding as if it came from all sides of the room.

Who called me?

It sounded like a familiar voice. Was it Angelica? I ran down the rest of the hall that curved to the right until it reached a wall. A dead end? That didn't make sense! I just came from here! There was nowhere else to go. I spun around and went back the opposite way. Things passed my view, things began to look different. I felt completely wrapped up in the madness.

Now I stood still, taking in everything around me. Everything looked blurry. The colors of the paintings smeared together. Was something wrong with my vision? Suddenly, I felt a presence behind me. This time I didn't look. I ran. I ran down a hallway I was sure headed towards the exit. But when I looked ahead, I saw another dead end! Somehow, I ended up in the room with the medieval weapons and armor again. Then a voice echoed through the room. It sounded hollow, inhuman, and of no specific gender.

"Ignorant girl! Do you not know your own purpose?!"

The floor shook. I lost my balance falling forward onto my knees. I regained my footing, standing and looking up at the creature that caused the shaking. In front of me was a creature taller than any person I've ever seen. The facial features looked distorted, and on its back were torn, grayish wings. This being resembled an angel, but it wasn't pretty. Its hair was a matted mess of gray locks. Before I could react, it grabbed me and threw me into the wall. I thought that should have killed me, but it felt like someone just bumped me. Looking up at his thing, I would never believe that I could defeat it. I made the feeble attempt to run down the main hall toward the exit. I heard the sound of massive wings as it chased me down the hallway. Three clay pots sat on a shelf. I took one of them and threw it at the creature. Pieces of clay splattered everywhere. My adversary was not even fazed by my attack. It gave out an ear piercing screech which shook the room, making pieces of the ceiling fall onto the beast.

While he was distracted, I quickly made my way towards the main entrance. As I approached the door, I realized that the whole place was silent suddenly. The creature was gone. Where did it go? There was daylight outside and it looked so comforting. As I went for the door, the monster jumped down from the ceiling in front of me. It grabbed me with one hand and held me in the air. It was choking me! *Would I die like this?*

From somewhere within, I felt this strength within me. My mind only triggered one thought,

I WON'T DIE! NOT NOW!

Light exploded around me, then...nothing.

When I woke up, there were all these people crowded around me.

"Is she all right?" I heard a female voice

"Just back up, give her some space," a man said.

Among these people I saw Angelica who looked very concerned. One man, who looked like he worked there, knelt down next to me.

"How do you feel? Are you dizzy or anything?" he asked.

I actually felt fine.

"No, I'm all right," I answered.

"I'll call an ambulance," he said.

"No!" I said a bit too excitedly. "I'm fine, really." He looked unsure so I crawled to my feet and stood without any problems.

"O...okay," he said. He probably was worried that I would sue him or something if he didn't tend to me, but I really felt perfectly able. The crowd began to part. Angelica came over to me.

"Wow, what happened? Did you just black out?" she asked with concern. Vera, who drove the van I rode in earlier, walked over.

"Honey, are you all right?" she asked. Before I answered, she gave me some water in a bottle. "It hasn't been touched, you can have it," Vera offered. I couldn't explain what happened to me. But I knew this nightmare wasn't over.