

WHERE MONSTERS

HIDE



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STORY ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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WHERE MONSTERS HIDE

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PROLOGUE

The skies are ripped open by a mere FINGERNAIL of THE OMNI ONE and with a disquieting thud the disobedient ones are expelled - for there is no other judgment that can be for those who stand in defiance of THE OMNI ONE. HE had DECREED that LIFE was to be HIS PROVIDENCE and HIS alone. With childlike innocence Five angels dared to imitate HIS WORKS. Their creations were abominations and the seeds of all that would plague mankind.

The angel Elohim looks at the world of man and knows that they are of low spirit, so she offers them a message of hope, "I know that your hearts are heavy for you have seen much pain and injustice in this world in which we live, but there is hope. Look upon me doubters and smile. I am Elohim, First of the Twelve- Most Loyal of the Seven. HE who is MOST HIGH has sent me to you with a message of deliverance. Free your hearts of fear. Listen not to prognosticators of doom. THE OMNI ONE did not create any whose end shall be that of pain and suffering. Cling not to Earthly things, but do not fill the coffers of false shepherds with that which you have toiled so hard to earn. There is only one SHEPHRD and HE requires no tariff for you to pass over into PARIDISIO - that place of wonderment beyond even the heavens.

Yes, there shall be trials and tribulations for without them you can not become the REFLECTION OF HIS IMAGE. But know that these tests are transitory in nature and shall pass in the blinking of an eye. PARIDISIO, on the other hand-with an eternal life full of incredulous wonders - is the only non-ending state of being.

PROLOGUE (Continued)

This is why THE OMNI ONE did open the skies for a second time and why HE sent me. I was instructed to teach. That one day you and the fallen ones will return to HIM and a land of eternal GRACE, *PARIDISIO*.

HARKEN!!! It shall come sooner than any heart might dare to dream," this is the angel - Elohim's message to mankind.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 1 PURPOSE

Time is an illusion. There is no true beginning, for all things that exist - always have. There is no true ending, for all things that exist - always shall be. Yet before the creation of this illusion - before what man calls the beginning of all things only one BEING existed. HE existed in a place best defined as NOTHING. This place, this NOTHING - is and was a seemingly empty void that mostly resembled a pool of black murky ink. In this void HE, the OMNI ONE - THE FATHER of All that exists seems alone. In this illusion of solitude HE understands that who HE is and what HE is - HIS ESSENCE is fading. The reason being ... HE exists, but HIS existence is without reason or purpose to feed his WILL to continue to exist.

The nature of purpose is that of a two-sided coin, creative or destructive. Choose to create and creation builds upon itself and your LIFE FORCE is fed forever. Choose destruction, and eventually it will leave naught but your ashes. HE knows that if HE is to continue there is no choice HE must CREATE.

HE envisions the WHOLE of CREATION, a thing so grand and so all-encompassing that HE decides to first MAKE helpmates. Out of HIS THOUGHTS HE brings forth these helpmates. Twelve helpmates, for including him that makes Thirteen who exist and Thirteen is a mystical number--its nature being that of power. The twelve shall be HIS craftsmen.

These creatures have been called many things by many of the cultures of humankind; Watchers, Angels, Spirits and such, they have been called. To gaze

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upon them is to be enchanted.

In their infancy they are all most like twelve hopeful children. Their Voices cry out in unison, "What task for me, FATHER, what task?" The angels wait patiently for the tools and the tasks that their CREATOR shall give to them.

Like the FATHER that he is HE watches them. HE knows each of their shortcomings and their strengths. When the time is right HE gives to the Twelve the very fabrics of all things that will exist; matter, energy, time, space and thought - then they are assigned their duties of creation.

The first two angels, Bimbo and Karren are given the fabric of matter. The two are honored to be first to receive their task. They giggle with delight as their all so busy hands weave this fabric into the substance of all things - the planets, the moons, asteroids, comets, and even the waters. In the center of each of the systems of matter which they have created, these two angels place a rock - these rocks will soon be called stars. All things revolve around these stars. Once finished their laughter stops. They look pensively toward the OMNI ONE wondering how they have done. Reservation turns to smiles for they see that HE gazes with pride at their job - well done.

A second two angels are then selected. Tinsel and Erotis are given the fabric of energy. One can see the fabric crackling between their fingers. Their eyes twinkle with joy. From this cloth they knit the sparkle of light. The two then infuse that sparkle

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into the stars and its reflection into the moons.

Also, lying beneath the sparkle, the two angels have hidden pulsars, protons, electrons, potential and kinetic forces that move and influence all forms of matter. Then, just as quickly as they had began their task is done. Again with pride the OMNI ONE gazes upon his helpmates and a task well done.

Thirdly, three angels Dina, Pratt and Boleyn are given the fabric of space. These craftsmen hands seemed like hammers with which they structured a framework for all other fabrics - the realm in which all things of matter are limited, and the same to be true of the affects of energy. All so quickly their work is completed that they look at the OMNI ONE with doubt in their eyes. Their doubt is unnecessary for the OMNI ONE is equally as proud of the job which they have done and done well.

The fourth task also requires the works of three angels - Coulier, Damien and Sokrant. These three are confused for they are given a wispy fabric, time. At first they hesitate for they are not sure what is being asked of them. Then a LIGHT shone upon them. Their eyes light up and they begin to work with the seemingly flimsy fabric. It was most like holding smoke between one's fingers, but with it they create the illusion of a beginning and an end to all things. Without this illusion the great purpose of Life can not be realized, so even though it is only an illusion their task is much needed and much appreciated by the OMNI ONE.

Now, lastly - two angels remain, Elohim-the most

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loyal and Kamar-most beloved. They are given the last assignment, the most arduous of task. They are given the shimmering, opaque fabric of thought. This fabric is the essence of the OMNI ONE. It has no limits, can alter its own nature and the nature of all else that exist. It is chaos and control, both creative and destructive; and this fabric must be reined in by all for PARIDISIO to reach its full fruition. So much power the two do hold yet do not truly understand. Though their efforts can only be seen by the OMNI ONE, HE does see and they have wielded it well, so their task is done and the OMNI ONE is pleased.

There is a joyous celebration among the heavens once all the cloths of existence have been woven into their finished products. As the angels sing , dance and rejoice they also watch and bear witness as the OMNI ONE gives a name to each thing as HE will have them be called.

Like a FATHER HE looks down at all that HE is now responsible for and like a FATHER though HE loves them all, HE favors one system most over all others- the system of SOL- and one planet most over all others - the planet EARTH. There should be no wonder that this system, this planet would be center stage for HIS ETERNAL PLAN.

LIFE is the plane of BEING with PURPOSE. The OMNI ONE has reserved the creation of LIFE as HIS DOMAIN. As HE looks down upon all of the waters of the Earth and the great expanse above-- which HE has named sky, HE SPEAKS, and LIFE springs forth in abundance. All forms of fish and creatures great and small does

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spring forth from the sea and there are many of each kind. Birds and winged creatures fill the sky and there are again many of each kind.

HIS blessing HE places upon them. HE SPEAKS, "... may your numbers be many and your generations the number of the stars."

The OMNI ONE looks down at the barren land. Once more HE SPEAKS, and the earth brings forth creatures two-legged and four and some even more, creatures who walk and things which crawl. HE brings forth every sort of fruit and plant to yield seeds for food, but HE has saved his most important works for last. With a BREATH from HIS right nostril then a second from HIS left HE did BREATHE LIFE and THOUGHT into two clumps of clay, which he held in each HAND and calls them MAN and WOMAN or both - HUMAN. "THESE ARE GOOD THINGS THAT I HAVE MADE. AND OH SOO GRAND A PURPOSE DOES LIE AHEAD FOR YOU."

Man and Woman are given dominion over all things upon the Earth, in its skies and in its waters. This is the beginning of humankind's tests, that they may be forged to a higher purpose.

The BEING which once had naught to feed his WILL now bursts with exuberance. HIS PURPOSE has been realized.

Despite all that has been accomplished there is a rumbling in the heavens. The handsome and most beloved of angels - Kamar- sees what the OMNI ONE has created and much like a spoiled child his heart is filled with envy.

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There are four angels who hold Kamar in high esteem, much like an older brother. The four are Damien, Tinsel, Erotis and Coulier. The vain Kamar stands before his four siblings and points downward toward the earth then with a sweeping motion of his wings he directs their attention to all else that does exist. " We toiled with all our might and spirit to make the frame work for all that lives, but the ONE we call FATHER withholds the grandest of task for himself." With an arched brow his sister - Erotis does asks, "What grand task?" A wicked smirk curls Kamar's lips as he answers, "Life! Can't you see how vibrant and filled with colors is the very nature of Life!" Coulier waves his hand at his brother dismissively. "The universe is filled with much to enjoy. Why bother ourselves with that which is not our privy," Coulier ponders aloud. "But it can be if we choose it to be," Kamar suggests some authority the others had never believed possible. Shaking his head force-ably Damian answers in a shaky and frightened voice, "You will get us all in trouble." Smiling with a brashness born of mischief Kamar assures them, "What trouble can their be for us if we convince our siblings to join us in our venture. Surely FATHER will not punish us all." Spawn of games and frivolity Erotis answers, "It could be fun. Keeping it secret will be the first of what I shall call GAMES." The five nod their heads in agreement, not fully understanding the consequences of their disobedience.

Although his stature is erect and tall more like a lowly rat does Kamar creep through the great halls of Heaven. Behind him most resembling the snake in their motions slither the four who have chosen to be

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his lackeys the angels; Damien, Coulier, Tinsel and Erotis.

The five, led by Kamar, have arranged to meet in secret with their brethren angels. They say it is to discuss a matter of grave importance. The angel - Elohim, most loyal to the OMNI ONE, does wonder what talks should they be having without the MOST HIGH, but decides to withhold her judgment.

In one of the many great halls the twelve angels are assembled. The envious Kamar bellows, "Why are angels not allowed to create life? Did we not toil over all else that exists. If FATHER is most generous of spirit, why does HE save the most glorious of tasks for HIMSELF?" With the patience of a mother it is Elohim who quietly answers Kamar, "... and who are you to question HIS will? Did you give HIM life or is your very existence a gift from the MOST HIGH?" The other angels save the five nod their heads for they agree with the loyal one's words.

Still Kamar and his stooges are not to be dissuaded. In hopes of impressing or intimidating the other angels Kamar spreads the great expanse of his wings and his voice booms out, "... and for life we thank HIM, but what has HE done for us lately? What of glory?!!!"

Instead of being impressed or intimidated the older sister Elohim's spirit is at first dimmed by the treachery of Kamar. Gathering herself Elohim's voice, which in the past has been so often soft and soothing, is now raspy and filled with discord, "If HE means for it to be then glory a thousandfold what

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you speak of shall be ours in time. If not, HIS Will Be Done."

The cowardly Kamar realizes that he has not swayed any of the other seven to his way of thinking, thanks to Elohim. Weighing his options he does not like the idea of his five against the seven and the OMNI ONE so the villain decides sleuth must be their answer.

What Kamar and the others have yet to learn is that nothing happens that is not within the PLAN and PURPOSE of the OMNI ONE. Like tempered steel must endure much to become strong the OMNI ONE will allow tests which will forge both angel and humankind for PARIDISIO - that great plane beyond even Heaven. Even Kamar's disobedience is merely the first of these tests.

Whispers cloak the conspiracy among Kamar, Damien, Coulier, Tinsel and Erotics - the five rebellious angels. Solemnly Kamar declares, "It was of the Earth that the OMNI ONE did form the creature Human, that HE gave dominion over all other creatures there. It is also of the Earth we shall form our creations." The others still think this a trivial game so they laugh with glee. Not even Kamar truly understands his motivation. He is the son rebelling against the FATHER and taking what the FATHER will not freely give, never asking or wondering why he has been refused.

The five believe that they have stolen away from the heavens undetected. They gather in a hidden cavern on Earth in an attempt to shroud their treacherous

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act. First to try his hand at creating life is Kamar

The wicked being holds a handful of clay - the base element of LIFE -in his right hand and does breathe from his right nostril into the clay. As he should have expected nothing good comes from this act of rebellion. The demon - Vampire is born. This demon is named So'ei by the angel Kamar. Although it is human in appearance there the resemblance ends. The creature shies away from the sunlight, for sunlight is death to it, and this one can only be nourished by the drinking of blood, any creature's blood.

The other angels see this monster yet still foolishly they forge ahead.

Seeking only to be titillated by this forbidden act and finding joy in what she thinks of only as a game the lovely Erotis is the next angel to act. Like Kamar before her she takes a handful of the clay into the palm of her hand and breathes, this time from her left nostril, into the clay that she holds. The demon metamorphite - a changeling - is born. It can take most any form and speak with most any voice - save that of an angel or the MOST HIGH. His true form is so liken unto a deformed man-lizard with claws as sharp as razors. Over the eons that follow the first of its kind shall go by many names.

Only childlike naivety can excuse the angels still not being dissuaded from their course of action? Yet and still, in hopes of pleasing Kamar the angel Sinsel hesitantly places her mouth over her handful of clay then breathes. From this act the demon Draillum rises up. Few of humankind will ever know

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the name it chooses for itself - Tisk - the first Draillum. Swiftly this demon shall taunt, injure and kill. Few will ever get a good look at him before they die. The Draillum is solid in appearance, but made mostly of some amber colored liquid, which will evaporate when the heart is severed from the whole.

Only now do the five angels grumble among themselves. "Why are your creations such horrors?" Damien and Coulier demand, only now having second thoughts. "Maybe Elohim was right ... maybe we should have awaited permission?" Damien whines. Without realizing what he is doing himself an angry Kamar hands begin to glow red and yellow then a beam of light emanates from them and strikes Damien. The frightened follower is the first ever to cry out in anguish, "Aeeii ... ! Please stop!" Damien pleads. The others stare in awe and in fear at Kamar and Damien. "We shall know power or we shall know oblivion!" Kamar establishes their creed.

Rather than suffer more of Kamar's wrath a reluctant Damien imitates Kamar's creative act and breathes from his right nostril into his handful of clay, but he breathes twice instead of only once. All five of the rebellious angels smile in victory for this creation seems the perfect woman, even more beautiful than Elohim, the most loyal. Their victory is short-lived as is their gloating. The reflected light of the sun, via-the moon, peeks through a crack in the cavern wall then lands upon this creation. It is then that Desiree - the Werewolf - grows the hair, the fangs and claws of a beast.

The game no longer holds any joy and little respect

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or fear does Coulier still have for his brethren angel Kamar, so wearing a mask of defeat and in utter disgust and surrender, Coulier does spit upon his lump of clay, "Spatttt ... !" This lump of clay shrinks in dimensions then the skin shrivels up like leather while the fingernails elongate like talons. The last of the five rebellious angels cares not enough to give this beast a name. From the bowels of these five creations shall come all pestilence and disease the world will ever know.

After the last of the beasts is formed the skies of Heaven and Earth darken for the OMNI ONE'S HEART is heavy. HE KNOWS ALL and the five have not, cannot hide from HIM what they have done. Although HE knows in HIS HEART that this is the way it has to be if HIS creations are to learn, still the weight of HIS PLAN burdens HIM.

A voice booms out from the heavens. The five rebellious angels quiver in fear. HE COMMANDS of them- "COME AND BE YE' JUDGED!" Though they try to resist this first command they can not resist. The five in less than the time for the blinking of an eye they appear before HIM and the other angels quaking in fear. They are there that they may hear and know HIS judgment. "You shall live on Earth like humankind, but apart from them, until that day that I deem that you are all ready for PARIDISIO."

A Herculean effort is not enough when Kamar tries to disobey. " I shall not go! I will not be expelled! You do not rule me! I am mightier than you!" Kamar cries out in protest. The rebellious fool's thoughts and body cannot resist the OMNI ONE's first command.

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As HE doth SPEAK, so shall it always be.

The skies tear open up with a roar and the five are expelled onto the earth with a thunderous and indignant plop.

There is sorrow and weeping among six of the seven remaining angels that night. "I love my brethren though foolish they may have been," Sokrant acknowledges. "Their absence makes my heart heavy," he adds. The FIRST of all angels - Elohim, the most loyal - believes the Most High is a benevolent god, so she worries not.

The mood of the other six angels have caused a gray mist to enshroud the great hall where the angels are together. A piercing and blinding light fills the hall. At the center of the light the OMNI ONE appears. HIS mere presence makes the six angel's hearts glad once more. HE SPEAKS, "There is no reason to cry. Your brethren are not lost to you. They have merely taken the first of many steps toward a better understanding of what will be and their road home."

The other angels notice that HIS LIGHT shines brightest of all upon Elohim. To Elohim's surprise, HE does command of her, "You, my precious Elohim, shall go to Earth also, but not as an outcast. You shall go as a teacher. It shall be your task to lead both human and fallen angel back to PARIDISIO."

The humble servant starts to ask how can she do this thing when she knows not the way herself, but Elohim has faith that if the OMNI ONE asks a thing of her

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then HE has already given her the gifts that she needs to accomplish her task.

Now the skies open once more, but it rolls gently back with a whisper rather than a roar. Elohim passes gently through the clouds then floats downward and softly lands upon the Earth. As she looks upon the beauty of this planet and all that live here she smiles for Elohim knows that she has been given a task of great importance in the scheme of ALL things.



The other six angels look upon the MOST HIGH and cry out in confusion, " ... and FATHER what shall we do? What is our next task ?" And HE answers, "There is

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much work for us to do. WE will prepare a place beyond this one fit for untold legions of perfect beings. That for now is OUR task."

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 2 - SAFA AND LEOF

The story of humankind - both good and bad - begins with the only two constantly obedient humans to ever know LIFE, Safa and Leof. The man is named Leof - beloved - for he is favored most among the OMNI ONE's creations. The woman is called Safa-innocence - for that is a woman's greatest grace.

In these times life is simple and filled with HIS GRACE. In their first moment of LIFE they open their eyes to see one another. Their first instinct is to reach out and grasp the other's hands. That touch gives to them a LIFE separate from ALL of existence - where they are one. Man and woman know that in all that exist there is no force, no creature, no state of being that can long stand between them. Their lips and bodies are drawn to one another. They kiss with a tenderness unlike anything that can be imagined.

The woman Safa knows she is blessed because she feels a love so true that waking to Leof's smile sets a magical twinkle in her eyes. The same is true of Leof for when he awakens to Safa's sun bright smile Leof seems to drown in her reflective love. Usually it is Safa who first takes Leof's hand and urges him from his slumber. The two walk among the creatures of Earth. A frightened calf, who has strayed too far from its mother, is helped home by Leof and quickly the calf seeks the comfort of its mother's teat. Gently Safa pats a lion, who has stepped upon a thorn, while Leof removes the thorn. The grateful lion licks Safa's face. The woman laughs and playfully ruffles the lion's crowning mane. A fallen robin is placed back into its nest.

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The first man and the first woman have taken it upon themselves to be the caretakers of all the creatures of the Earth even though they know not that it is one of their assigned duties.

One might mistake this existence of Safa and Leof for PARIDISIO if not for the fallen angels, who lurk near though apart, and their hellish creations who spy and await their masters command in hopes of stealing the humans joy.

While this day is still in its infancy Safa and Leof gather seeds from every plant and fruit. Side by side they till the land. Taking Safa's soft hand into his Leof caresses it, soothingly. In answer, Safa kisses her mate's lips then returns to her labors. At day's end they find that their muscles ache with the joyous pain of accomplishment. The OMNI ONE gave them bounty, but for them and their generations to come they must replenish it of the Earth. In the quiet of the evening as the purple, orange, red and yellow glow of the sun announces the dying of the active day and the birth of the quiet night they kneel in silent reflection. The time comes when their lips utter words of thanks and praise, "All that we have is by YOUR GRACE and all that we hope to have." Leof and Safa hold their hearts as the grand temples from which their worship rises up to the OMNI ONE. This they do not have to be taught. This they know without being told.

With the stars for a blanket and the grass for a bed Safa and Leof lay side by side. The sound of Leof's voice, whispering words of love, sending shivers coursing through Safa's body before a single touch.

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The soft brown of Safa's eyes, unlike any other color in nature, emotes love that washes over Leof like the evening tide. Each time they kiss it is like the first time. Though it is familiar, it is so unexpected, the power of their passions. The touch of his hand upon her breast, the lingering gentleness of her hand upon his face tells them all that they need to know of love.

Such beauty is always under a cloud of evil. Mere feet away- hidden in the nearby forest - the jealous green eyes of Tisk and Desiree spy constantly upon Leof and Safa. "Why won't the masters unleash us upon those puny humans that we might enjoy ourselves?" Knowingly Desiree shakes her head. "I listen when they speak among themselves. There exist others like them and ONE even more powerful who would punish them if they should do harm to the ones called human." A sly smirk Tisk wears as he proposes to Desiree an alternative to their enslavement, "Why should we serve the weaker masters ? Why don't we seek out the other masters and pledge our allegiances to them and exchange for freedom to follow our deviant natures ?" Laughing Desiree stares at Tisk in admiration for his boldness. "To whisper such heresy is to ask for an end to your existence. The best weapon of the weak is patience. In time the strong will go to war. With luck they both will eliminate one another. In any case our fortunes will change for the better." The two vile creatures turn their attentions back to spying upon Leof and Safa. If the beasts had known that they had actually spied the moment of the conception of the first offspring of humankind their hearts would have most surely burst from envy.

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All in Heaven know what the demons do not and so there is a great celebration. The melodic voice of Karren fills the grand hall. Surprisingly graceful is the dance of the obese Bimbo. The angel Tinsel has designed instruments to accompany any song then plays the tools of melody. Their songs fill the night with magic, their laughter fills each heart with joy and lastly their hope fills every thought with much anticipation.

Meanwhile on Earth there is one who sits alone. The angel Elohim sits upon a hill overlooking the valley that Safa and Leof have chosen for their home. Tears of joy she cries over the news of the human's blessing, but she does wonder, "Why am I alone?" Her doubts are as brief as the time it takes to breathe in and out. With faith unending she knows that whatever the OMNI ONE has in store for her it will be grander than anything she could ever have imagined for herself. Ever vigilant and content to bathe in the afterglow of the Good News Elohim stares into the night.

Come the next morning light the VOICE of the OMNI ONE WHISPERS to Leof and Safa, "The number of humankind has been increased of you, by you."

The soon-to-be parents lead their lives much as they have before. They awake to each other's smiles, tend to the care of the creatures, till the land and give thanks and praise - even more so, to the ONE who created all.

The OMNI ONE looks down upon Safa and Leof and HE is pleased. HE who knows all speaks to the angels, "The

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child Safa carries is a girl. The girl must have playmates and soon after a life mate, so gather ME clay that MY Work may begin again." The six stop from their labors on PARIDISIO and descend to Earth for the first time.

As the six gather clay Karren turns to Tinsel. "Are we foolish to find joy in another being's importance to our FATHER?" Tinsel smiles then answers, "Do you feel any less loved?" hesitating for only a moment Karren answers, "No." The sibling advises her, "Concern yourself not with what others possess. Simply bask in the blessings with which you have been anointed." The six laugh, sing and dance as they continue with the new task they have been assigned.

Not long after the siblings return to the heavens, each carrying a handful of clay. The OMNI ONE takes the precious load from them one by one then breathes LIFE from his nostrils into the clay. First comes the boy, TRUTH, he represents the highest grace of man. After the boy Truth follows the remainder of the generation of the second wave of Human creation, both boys and girls, who will grow to become men and women.

Once again the OMNI ONE SPEAKS directly to Safa and Leof, "I offer you my most precious of gifts - children - love them and teach them, just as if they had come from your very own loins." HE knows that these things HE need not have said to Leof and Safa. These words are to be said that they will be known and understood by ALL, including the evil ones. In the nearby woods again Desiree and Tisk both spy and

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eavesdrop upon the humans. They are annoyed of what the creatures, man and woman, have been given while they are the spawn of wicked creatures who have inbred wickedness into their souls. "Will we ever know such joy," Desiree asks of Tisk. "I don't want for anything outside my reach. Bringing others pain is the consolation I reserve for myself," Tisk lies to himself and Desiree.

Looking up at the sky Safa and Leof see the heavens open up once again. They are greeted by the sight of the gift of the children of the second wave floating down toward them upon their own personal clouds. The two new parents are as happy as they were when the OMNI ONE had told them of their own offspring.

The children of the second wave are made full grown children of the age of seven while Kat has yet to be born. Quickly life lessons begin. The children walk side by side with their surrogate parents as they await their coming sister. Leof turns to the children and begins, "Among your duties is tending to the creatures of the Earth and tilling the land, but Most importantly you will give thanks and praise to the Most High."

The OMNI ONE, Safa and Leof each know that there must be more to LIFE than duty. Yes, duty brings a being fulfillment, but there must be joy to make LIFE complete. The children play alongside Safa and Leof. The hard times have not come yet, so for now they are filled with joy.

The curious children stare in wonder and worry as they watch Safa becoming rounder and fuller. They

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ask, "Are you sick, mother?" Patiently Safa explains, "Someday ... when you are older each girl will become a woman and each boy a man. In that time you will find one you shall love and who shall love you in return then you too will be blessed as we are blessed." Leof places his hand over Safa's belly and she places her hand over his hand. The children smile because they don't know how they understand, but they do.

Nine months seems like nine lifetimes as everyone and everything awaits the blessed event. At last the time has come for the first creation borne of flesh, not clay. The children and the creatures of the valley gather around Safa and Leof. The soon to be mother lies down upon the grass to give birth. An anxious Leof kneels between his mate's legs and helps as the child is delivered into the world. Because of the disobedience that shall follow never an easier entry into this world will be known again.

Proudly Leof holds his baby girl up toward the skies and announces to the world, "This is the first born of Leof and Safa and she shall be named Kat" The children giggle, the obedient angels laugh, the wicked curse and the OMNI ONE is once again pleased.

The fallen angels have established their home in the caverns of a nearby mountain range. In this dark and dreary place they contemplate their place in the world that is. An impatient Kamar gathers the other fallen angels to seek their counsel. "We cannot go among man, but what if we send the beasts to harm them," he questions. "The OMNI ONE will destroy them and us. Did you not try to refuse his command?"

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He is all powerful," Coulier warns. The mother of seduction - Erotis - concocts a plan. "What if we have the beasts seduce the humans into disobedience, surely then the OMNI ONE will withhold HIS protection from them. Once HE has done that instead of revenge on HIS creation why don't we have our creations infect them with their nature," Erotis offers, laughing. The other angels join in on her laughter. "They won't long celebrate this offspring," Kamar assures his followers. After the human's natures have been corrupted we shall then bring them into our numbers for the final war."

While evil plans humans bask in the joy of this moment. Evil procrastinates for fear is the cloak a fool adorns when first he plots against greater power. While evil stalls the children fleetingly do



age. Now that the children of the second wave are older Safa and Leof allow them to play alone. Not yet

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aware of the dangers of the beasts they have no fear. Besides, an infant's needs can be a demanding taskmaster.

As the children play a handsome young boy approaches them. They are startled because they have never seen another human. They still have not for the thing which appears to be a boy is truly a changeling in disguise - come to tempt them. "Can I play?" the changeling asks. An arch of the brow reveals to the stranger that Truth is suspicious. The protective Truth asks, "Who are you? I didn't know that there were other humans. The rapier wit of the metamorphite is too quick for the inexperienced boy. "You are young there is much that you do not know, but I bet that you do know kick ball." The puzzled children all shrug their shoulders and answer in unison, "No. I've never heard of this kick or this thing you call ball." The demon takes the first ball - a creation of Erotis - from behind his back and shows it to all of the children. The children all ooh and aah, for it is something new. Children are easily amazed by that which is novel. That is part of their nature and the most exquisite of their charms.

The demon sees the wonderment in their eyes and knows that he has them now. Placing the ball on the ground he describes the game to them. "I shall kick the ball, like this ..." he shows them what he means. "... and it will roll ..." he continues. The children all laugh when they see the ball move of its own accord. "If it comes to you then you will stop it and kick it to someone else." The changeling kicks the ball first to the suspicious boy, Truth, in hopes of winning him over. The other children

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laugh and yell excitedly. "To me ... no ... to me ... Truth, kick it to me!" Truth kicks the ball then the game begins. All too easily their suspicions are quieted.

All too quickly for most the time passes. After a few hours of play the anxious mother calls for her children. The demon has plans so he tries to convince them to keep him secret, "Do not speak of me or the game to Safa or Leof. This is a surprise we will share with them when they are not so busy with the baby." Wise beyond his time upon this world Truth sees an omission as a lie, so he tries to convince the others to tell their parents, "I think our parents should be told," Truth defies the creature. The demon turns to the others, "If you spoil my surprise I will not come back and play anymore." He threatens. The others beg Truth to be silent. Against his better judgment Truth gives in to his siblings.

A woman's intuition tells Safa that there is something devilish about the giggles and the whispering of the children tonight, so she talks to Leof, "What mischief can they have found now on their own?" Leof laughs and assures his beloved, "Secrets are a part of play. Let them have their secret game." Naively he wonders what harm can possibly come of it. Knowing that Kat needs to be fed and that the children's fruit salad has to be prepared Safa allows Leof to dissuade her from intruding on the children's privacy.

Seldom does evil give the naive time to contemplate upon its trickery. The very next day the demon

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returns. This time he carries a stick as well as the ball. "I have for you a brand new and wondrous game called stick ball. In this game instead of kicking the ball you hit it with this stick then you run to bases." The beast explains to the children as he demonstrates for them. Not very many things bring delight to a child's heart more than a new game.

The children play their new game with their new friend. While the others play the devious demon begins to plant his seed of evil. The first girl of the new wave - Denever - stands next to the changeling, for she is infatuated with the handsome young boy he presents himself to be. The beast draws her away from the others. It begins weaving its deception, "Safa and Leof spent more time with you before the baby, didn't they?" Overjoyed that the boy is talking to her Denever happily answers him, "Yes, they did, but there is so much more to do now. We understand." The creature laughs mockingly. "I don't think you do. You aren't the flesh of their flesh or the blood of their blood. They will never love you as long as they have the child- Kat," he assures her.

Believing the demon a heartbroken Denever walks away from the beast her head down and with tears forming in her eyes. "Can this be true?" she ponders. "It must be ... why would the handsome young boy say such hurtful things if they were not true," she concludes.

The young girl talks with the other children, all except Truth, "What he says makes sense. We must do something or maybe one day soon Safa and Leof might

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send us away. If everyone agrees tonight while Safa, Leof and Truth sleep I will take Kat away and hide her. Once she is gone it will be as it was before. Knowing Truth would never agree Denever tells the others, We must not tell Truth for he would surely tell." They all agree halfheartedly.

As the parents, Kat and the children all settle in for a good nights sleep an oh so wicked game begins. Denever and the other children pretend to have already fallen asleep. The misguided children wait patiently for Safa, Leof and Truth to fall asleep. The hard working Truth is almost always the first to fall asleep. It is when she hears the sound of Leof's snoring she knows that both he and Safa are asleep for Leof is usually lulled to sleep by Safa's light breathing. It is then that Denever knows she has waited long enough. The other plotting children sit up as the older sister walks over to where Kat rests on a blanket of leaves. The young girl picks up the child and carries her off. The other children's hearts grow heavy as they watch Denever and Kat disappear into the woods. The too late repentant children roll over and try to go to sleep. Each pretend that they had no part in this horrible thing that has occurred.

The woods seem creepy and scary to Denever at night. Never before has she entered the woods without Safa or Leof close. Every hoot of the owl or barking of a coyote makes her jump from fear. "Come here. Come here," a familiar voice calls to her. The girl looks around and sees the handsome young boy who had started this mischief. "Oh. I'm so glad to see you. I think I did a bad thing. I took Kat and I was going to hide her in the woods. Like a fool I

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thought that Safa and Leof would forget her and in time love us as they once did." The changeling interrupts her. "That's true. They will." Denever shakes her head and answers in a vehement tone. "No they will not because I won't forget her. I love Kat too," she realizes. Angered the beast shrieks at the girl, "Give her to me! Give her to me! Or I shall slash your very pretty throat!" A frightened Denver takes off running with the baby. The girl stumbles and Kat springs from her arms. Seeming to appear have appeared from nowhere Elohim catches the baby. The girl looks up and sees a blue glow encircling the angel which holds Kat. The demon has caught up. He doesn't know of Elohim. The creature mistakes Elohim for just another Human. "Give me the child or you all will die," he threatens. The girl cries. "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. Don't worry about me. Save Kat," the now unselfish child requests. The angel cannot help, but smile. "Don't worry child. No harm shall come to either of you and you are redeemed," she replies reassuringly.

As is the demon way with out a single forethought the creature swings out his claw at the angel intending to slash her throat. The angel captures the beast's paw in her hand. A blue-white glow emanates from Elohim's hand then flows into the beast's paw. The paw then the remainder of the thing begins to glow a blue-white. Like some ghostly phantom an evil blackish gray aura escapes the beast then fades away into nothingness.

The demeanor of the beast is transformed. It now wears a smile of contentment for the first time that he knows. "I must go back and tell the others what I

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have learned," the saved-demon says to Elohim. "They will not hear you. They will kill you," she warns him. "HIS Will BE DONE," the beast answers then runs into the woods.

The angel, Elohim, starts after the new creature then realizes that the creature is right. Elohim turns to Denever then tenderly she hands the girl the baby. "Now I must get the two of you home," she says. "I may not be welcomed home," the young girl frets. The angel laughs. "You have much to learn little one, but your heart is good," Elohim assures her.

In the time since their exile the fallen angels have made many more demons. In the caves that the evil ones call home the changeling has returned and stands before Kamar, other four fallen and his brethren.

"I see you come back to me empty handed," the frosty threatening voice of Kamar accuses. "That is not true. I have brought to you the gift of eternity." The changeling answers - waving his hand around the cave. "To hide here is ridiculous. I was touched by an angel and she freed me from the nature of the beasts. Now I understand what the OMNI ONE intends for us all and I have come to share that knowledge with you," the changeling replies. The changeling doesn't understand the evil intent of the fallen angel, nor the wicked laughter that echoes throughout the caves, nor the motion of Kamar as he signals with his finger across his throat. It is So'ei who swoops down upon the metamorphite and slits his throat from ear to ear. "I wouldn't want

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you to have to wait for your reward," Kamar mocks the dead saved-one. The caves of the lair are filled with the evil laughter of the fallen angels and the beasts.

Elohim sends Denever and Kat ahead. Meanwhile Safa and Leof stand waiting, frightened annoyed, yet relieved when first they see their missing children. The others are all asleep. "What have you to say for yourself?" Leof demands gruffly of Denever. The girl breaks down and cries. Taking the girl and Kat into her arms, Safa protects one and comforts the other. "We ... I thought that you didn't love me anymore so I took Kat away. I was hoping that you would forget her..." Her words are interrupted by her crying. "... but I love Kat too and I would have missed her also ..." Leof cannot help laughing. "Foolish girl, we love you all the same, not one more than another," he assures her. "But Kat is the flesh of your flesh and the blood of your blood," she repeats the beast's words. "Flesh and blood passes into dust, but all of you are gifts from the OMNI ONE and that is something one can cherish for an eternity." It is only now that the girl begins to understand the true nature of a parent's love.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 3 - TRUTH & KAT

The years pass swiftly and now the infant Kat is a lovely young girl seeming ten years of age while the other children seem a few years older. Kat and the children of the second wave still play kick ball or stick ball. Because of her chronological age Kat is diminutive in size and has a youthful awkwardness. This day as they play Truth pitches her the ball. Repeatedly she swings and misses. When it is the other teams turn and the ball is hit to Kat she drops it or stumbles and falls.

The next day when they are choosing sides Truth again picks Kat, "I'll take Kat" His teammates frown and call out, "We're better off a man short." Smiling Truth answers, "Kat has every right to play and have fun too." Ashamed, the others bow their heads and mumble in unison, "You're right. Come on Kat." The girl smiles and runs to stand at Truth's side.

When they all work in the field Truth doesn't notice that Kat is never more than a step or two behind him. When he does look back Truth almost always finds Kat sowing her seeds right beside his own. It never dawns on him why. The smiling parents, Leof and Safa, see and they do understand.

Life is good, but the demons are still close and watching for another opportunity to exploit the Humans. The beasts are a lot more cautious because now they know that the angel, Elohim, is always close by and ever watchful too.

More years pass and again it is Erotis who comes up

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with a plan. Again the plan is one of seduction for that is this angels basic nature. "There is a way to use this budding young love to lead at least these two astray and plant the seeds for man's fall from Grace," she begins to weave her devious plan. When she is through filling the others in on her plan the caves where the fallen ones and their demons live fills up with evil laughter.

One day as Truth goes for his daily walk, alone, (the young boy being one who is a thinker finds that he likes to be alone with his thoughts at times) a second metamorphite spies the stealthy Kat trailing the boy. Undetected the changeling takes the form of Denever then runs up to Truth giggling gleefully. This is the beginning of Erotis' plan. "Can I walk with you?" the changeling asks. Believing the beast to be Denever and therefore not wanting to hurt the young girl's feelings Truth gives in. "Sure," he answers. Wearing an evil grin of victory the demon takes Truth's hand, knowing that Kat is behind them watching.

After a time the two companions reach a rock at the valley's edge. Hoping to seduce the boy the changeling tries to lure him to where this can best be done, "I'm tired. May we rest here for a time?" It asks. The boy is truly losing his patience, but still unaware that this is not Denever he gives in to the beast's deception again. A now jealous Kat watches and wishes she had been bold enough to ask Truth. The shy Kat tells herself, "It could have been me walking and sitting with him instead." Supposedly to rest Truth and the demon who appears

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to be Denever sit down upon a large rock. The envious Kat makes her way around and behind the two that she has been following. She eavesdrops. "Do you like me?" the changeling asks. Still believing that he is talking to Denever, Truth concedes, "I like you well enough." The demon leans over to kiss the boy. Not feeling that way about Denever, the boy holds up his hand and stops the kiss. Hastily he stands up then reaches down to help the beast up from the rock. "I think that we had better be heading back," he brusquely instructs the creature. Still undiscovered by the ones she has followed Kat smiles over the turn of events. The beast thinks to itself, "Another time a far greater temptation."

At thirteen Kat is becoming a young woman and Truth takes notice. The vigilant parents, Leof and Safa, notice that Truth takes notice. The father speaks to all of the now young adults, "Do not take each other's feelings for granted. If two care for one another it can be a beautiful thing. But to pretend when you do not. To hurt someone when they offer you such a precious gift is truly the greatest evil one person can do upon another. The others look at Kat and Truth knowing that it is to them Leof's message is most directed. Some giggle. Others blush. All understand that things are no longer the same between boys and girls ... no ... young men and young women.

No longer does Kat follow Truth like a puppy-dog. Now she walks side by side with him. Unlike the demon who had intruded on his time alone Truth does not mind spending time with Kat. In fact, he welcomes it.

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After their duties have been tended to the two often walk the same route Truth had previously walked alone. It is Kat who makes him take notice of things he has overlooked all those many times before. Surprisingly, he has never noticed the fawn and the doe who drink at the same brook each day. Neither has he noticed the golden breasted hummingbird that hovers over the same rose bush intermittently. The boy has never stopped to taste the cool mountain waters that run down into their valley stream. Nor has he ever been tempted to dive into those same cool waters, as he does now with Kat.

The two of them swim as the beasts gather in the nearby woods and watch. As the beasts watch Kat and Truth, an angel watches them. Playfully Kat splashes water onto Truth. The young man lifts her into the air and tosses her some three feet away back into the water. The two of them laugh. The laughter stops and they stare into each other's eyes. Like a bass drum Kat's heart thumps as she swims toward Truth. As they wade in the water she kisses him. Their eyes glaze over with passion. They part and stare at one another again. The young woman panics. Turning she swims away from the object of her affection. Jumping from the water she then runs away. Confused, Truth calls after her, but unsure of her actions she does not stop. Wondering if he has done something wrong Truth goes to his friend, the true Denever, to talk to her. As he speaks of what has happened between him and Kat he is oblivious of all else. As you may or may not know, men can be blind, especially the younger ones. The young man, Truth, has never noticed the way that his friend Denever looks at him. Even now he doesn't see the hurt in Denever's

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eyes as he describes how wonderful that first kiss with Kat was. "Obviously she is only teasing you. She doesn't truly like you or she wouldn't have run away," the girl knowingly lies. Unthinking, Denever's words strike home like a knife. Truth is hurt.

Being a proud person, Truth becomes protective of his feelings after this. Although Kat tries to talk to him to clear up her foolish reaction Truth refuses to hear a word that she says. No longer do the two of them walk together. Each avoids looking at the other when they work and especially when they give their daily worship.

The parents, Leof and Safa, notice that something has changed between the two lovebirds and they want to counsel their daughter, but they know that in matters of the heart there is no true counsel to be given. One must know that what is meant to be will be.

The friend, Denever, finds that her plan was only partially successful. To her disappointment Truth does not seek comfort in her arms. The only thing she has truly succeeded in doing is to make three people miserable instead of just one.

In the years that follow, Christen, another young man of the second wave, enters Denever's life. He is the one who shows Denever what it is to truly love someone. Once she is happy she feels far more guilty than before about the wedge she has driven between Truth and Kat. With Christen's help the devious young woman comes up with a plan to bring the two

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fiends back together again.

In the morning Christen and Kat walk together along a babbling brook. They stop at the water's edge for they have spot Denever and Truth frolicking in the water. A hurt Kat turns to leave. Her companion, Christen, grabs her hand. "Why are you leaving? We have just as much right to swim here as they do," he argues. The young girl nods and feigns indifference. The second couple dives into the water. The hurt young man, Truth, sees Kat and no longer cares to have fun with his friend, at least not here.



Truth starts to leave out of the water when Denever

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grabs his hand. "We have just as much right to swim here as they do," she mimics Christen's argument, as the two had planned. With longing in his heart Truth looks over at the beautiful Kat and he knows that he doesn't want to be anywhere that she is not, so he stays.

Unseen by the two estranged lovers Christen and Denver wink at one another. Truth and Kat pretend to avoid one another. The two cupids push them toward one another. Again Truth and Kat play at pretending. This time they pretend that they do not know what the others are trying to do. Soon Kat and Truth find themselves back to back. Their work done Christen and Denever swim away. After so long apart Kat and Truth long to turn and look into each other's eyes and make things right. It is Kat who turns to face Truth first. Placing her hands on his shoulders she pleads, "Look at me." The young man turns around and stares into her eyes. "I'm sorry that I ran away. I've tried to tell you that again and again since then, but you would not hear me," Kat confesses her feelings. Afraid to say what he feels Truth first looks away. "I thought that you were teasing me and that you had no feelings for me at all." Now that the words have been spoken Truth looks at Kat in hopes that she does care for him. Smiling she pushes him playfully back into the water. "How can you be so dense? How could you look at me looking at you and not know that I have always loved you ... and that I always will?" she asks of him. Splashing water onto his love it is Truth who now smiles. "I knew. I just wanted to play hard to get," he teases. Playfully she splashes water onto Truth and chides him in return, "You didn't seem to be playing so

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hard to get with Denever" They laugh. "Or you with Christen," he jokingly reminds her.

The young man dives under the water. Grabbing Kat's feet he pulls her beneath the water. Both beneath the surface, their eyes open, they look at one another with a love that burns as bright as any star. They swim toward one another and without a breath, they kiss. Lips to lips they break the water's surface. They break apart just long enough to take a single breath then they kiss again.

Neither Kat nor Truth see Christen and Denever, who are now at the water's edge. The two plotters shake hands then Christen pulls Denever into his arms and kisses her passionately. The demons watch the foursome. Elohim watches the demons, still.

The two have been courting for some time now, but Kat believes that a love as deep as the one that she and Truth share should be somehow celebrated. This Kat believes with all of her heart, so she goes to her mother and asks if she and Truth can have a ceremony to signify that they are joined in love. Smiling Safa asks Truth if this is what he wants also. The smitten young man answers her, "More than my next breath of air." Leof devises a ceremony which includes an asking of the blessings of the OMNI-ONE upon their joining. All of the offspring of Safa and Leof (that number has once more increased of Heaven and Earth) along with the children of the second wave of creation - who are all young men and women now, all gather in the open field so that the OMNI-ONE, the angels, and all of creation can be witness to this new ceremony - that joins one man to

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one woman. All see and all are pleased, except the fallen angels and the demons.

Time has passed since the WEDDING. Being a thinker and an inventor Truth has built a shelter to live in for himself and Kat. At first the new wife doesn't like that she is unable to look up and see the moon and the stars in the skies, but even she has to admit it is nice to be warm even when the nights are cool or cold. Next, Truth builds a stove, so that they can warm their home even more. It is also to cook the plants and fruits that they pick. It is also he who thinks to turn grain into flour then the flour into bread and even dough for cakes and pies. Life is changing, but the important things remain the same. Humans still care for the creatures of the Earth, still they till the land and still they pay homage to the OMNI-ONE. It is the latter that the fallen angels still seek to end. They feel that only then will they be allowed to recruit humans to their cause.

One day, after the duties have been seen to, Truth tells Kat that he is going off to seek a special rock that he can use to spark a fire faster than the old way of rubbing sticks. Curious, Kat asks, "How do you know these things." Shrugging his shoulders, as is his habit to do when he is unsure of a thing, Truth answers, "When I think on a thing this universal pool of knowledge opens up to me." His beloved doesn't understand, so she pats him affectionately upon his butt then sends him on his way.

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Almost every man and woman has cleaved one to one other. Each of those have done the joining ceremony then each, like Kat and Truth, have built a home that they can call their own.

It is late in the evening and Truth has not returned home. Concerned Kat goes out looking for her mate. Everyone else is sleeping, preparing for the next day. Believing her fears are unfounded Kat does not wake the others. The bold woman seeks out her husband alone.

Again it is a metamorphite - a changeling, who has been sent. This time it is to seduce the woman to break her vow of fidelity. Out of the woods comes the demon in the guise of Truth. "Thank goodness. I was beginning to worry about you." Kat tells the demon as she runs and wraps her arms unknowingly around the beast. The beast kisses Kat, but the kiss is unfamiliar to the woman. Wary she pulls away. "Are you all right?" she asks the impostor. It pulls Kat back into its arms and roughly caresses her breasts. This touch is unfamiliar to the woman so again she pulls away. "Let me take you home and care for you. You are not yourself," she tells the beast. It laughs and grabs at her body, hungrily. "No. I want you ... here and now. Am I not your husband?" the demon falsely proclaims some manufactured right. Hesitantly Kat lies down before the beast, thinking it to be her husband--though not well. It is then that Elohim steps from out of the shadows and grabs the beast by the scruff of its neck. The frightened wife cries out, "Stop ...!" The angel pulls back the hair from the beast's forehead showing the sign of the 666. Elohim tosses the demon through the air.

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The creature changes to its true self then gets up and runs away.

A confused Kat breaks into tears. "What is that ... that thing? And why would it want to have me break my sacred vows?" she asks. At long last Elohim explains all to Kat. After listening intently Kat is more scornful than grateful of the angel. With rancor she chastises Elohim, "I do appreciate that you've watched over us, but that is not what you were sent to do. I was almost tricked because you have not taught us what we need to know. Do your job, angel. Teach!"

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 4 - THE MESSAGE OF ELOHIM

"Do your job, angel. Teach!" An annoyed Kat instructs the-would-be protector. Yet for the first time since coming to Earth Elohim feels as though she knows what she should have been doing all along and must now be about.

A blanket of peace wraps around each of them at day's end when they lose themselves in devotion. With an elation that shines through like a beacon's light in the fog the angel speaks to the humans about the OMNI ONE, PARIDISIO, the other obedient angels and all of creation. Most importantly she speaks of HIS plan for the kind of life filled with wonders, a life that never ends that awaits all. With heartache Elohim tells them of the fallen angels and the demons that they have created. The angel tells the men and the women that the works of this world and the trials that the evil ones present do serve a purpose. This purpose they are all meant to discover on their own. Until such time arrives it is faith in the OMNI ONE that will carry them through these times of trials and learning.

Although the angel is not charged with the labors of man, each morning when each human rises up from slumber so does the angel. Side by side with them she cares for the creatures of the Earth. A newborn colt is delivered by the angel. A wounded eagle has its wing mended. The angel sets aside her mighty powers and gets her hands down into the soil to till the land and sow the seeds. Then at the end of the day she follows as well as leads the daily devotions. That is why her words are heard and taken to heart.

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When Denever and Christen have their first child, Lilly, the angel is there to help with a somewhat difficult delivery. And when many years do pass and Safa's time on this plane does end, the angel cries alongside Leof, Kat, Truth and the others. She cries not for their loss, for she knows they will all be together again before they can dare to hope. Her tears are because she knows that their understanding is such that their hearts will ache for the parting, so her heart aches for their pain.

With Safa gone everyone looks to Elohim to be the surrogate mother.

Humans have learned many things from Elohim, but the demons take only one thing from her lessons. Like everything else that they touch in the whole of their existence this too they have bastardized, distorted and brought low. This one thing, this message, they take back to the fallen angels.

In the cold damp caverns they call home So'ei stands before Kamar and the other fallen angels wearing an evil smirk upon his face. The fallen angels impatiently await his news. "Is there something that we need to know?" Kamar gruffly asks. "It is what we have waited for since the beginning," the demon prolongs his moment of glory. "The angel has told the Humans the OMNI ONE's plans," the vampire continues. "And how will this help us?" Coulier interrupts. "It seems that HE who created you would have you be redeemed," the vampire answers. The angels and the demons laugh, all but Erotis. "HE would save our wretched rebellious souls? What a fool HE is!" the scornful Kamar accuses.

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The angel Erotis doesn't understand. "And how does this information help us?" she asks. The vampire explains, "If it is in HIS plan to save you then you cannot be destroyed or HE will have failed. You have told us that he holds himself up to be infallible. If HE is infallible you must not be destroyed or he will fail," So'ei laughs. "Then the Humans are ours to do with what we will," Erotis concludes. "Then let us have at them!" she exclaims. "Be patient a little longer. We must plan, for still we angels cannot go out among Humans and the demons are no match for the Elohim," Kamar reminds Erotis. And so the plotting begins anew.

Three friends; Elohim, Kat and Truth walk along the banks of a nearby brook. A more tranquil setting one could not have found. "Thank you ... angel. You have taught us much in the years that you've lived among us." a grateful Kat acknowledges. The angel laughs. "I am supposed to be the teacher, but you have taught me as much if not more than I have given to you," Elohim assures Kat "It was you who set me upon my rightful path. I was trying to be your protector when I had been instructed to be your teacher," she reminds the woman. "That's my Kat. Giving orders to an angel," Truth jokes. The three of them laugh.

The humor of the moment is lost. The angel senses the beasts all around them. Something is amiss. But, what did they hope to accomplish, short of their own end? The quiet scene is shattered by the inhuman screams of the demons as they rush from the brush and attack the three friends. Truth rolls out of the way of the first demon. Grabbing a stake like stick

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and without thinking he jabs the weapon into the demon's breast. The beast falls backwards onto the ground, dead. The anguish filled man stares down at what he has done and his soul is sick with it. The magnificent angel Elohim flaps her mighty wings and the beasts are blown back into the woods.

Still standing stone faced over the demon which he has killed is a tortured Truth. Walking over to him Elohim wraps her arms around him. "It is the nature of all things to want to survive. You did what you thought that you must do to protect yourself and Kat," she excuses his actions. Still he holds the stick in his hand. The man stares down at the weapon. Amber is the blood which drips from the stick. With the effort of a tortured man Truth grunts, "Ugh!" then with great effort he tosses the stick as far away as his strength will allow. Kat comes over to Truth, takes her husband's hand and comforts him. The three look about them and wonder to what purpose this evil act was done. "Oohh nooo!" the angel cries. "They knew that they could not defeat me so this must be a distraction," she has finally deduced their purpose.

Meanwhile back at the settlement of Humans Leof and the others battle the beasts armed with sticks, stones and implements made of metal - some silver. In the furor of battle some beasts fall, some humans fall and others the beasts scratches or bites forever change. As Christen watches helpless to change their fates his Denver's throat is slashed and Lilly is changed by the scratch of So'ei. "Nooo ...!" his mournful wail carries across the valley and into the woods.

THE MESSAGE OF ELOHIM

With wings spread wide, from the woods the angel-Elohim flies, a magnificent sight to see, for Elohim has taken her truest form. The great wings of the angel spread out so wide that they block out the sun.

The shadow of her figure falls over the village and so the beasts look up. Their hearts are filled with terror. The beasts make a hasty retreat, the ones made by angels and the humans who have been changed--including Lilly. As Kat and Truth run from the woods to join the battle they see the last desperate act of a fleeing beast. It rips its claws down Leof's back. The father falls forward, his face onto the ground. "Whyyyy ...?" the daughter cries out in anguish as the beast speeds away.

Never before has such horror been imagined nevertheless seen. Bodies of demons and humans alike are scattered over the first battlefield. The humans stare mortified at the horrific scene and wonder, what end does this tragedy serve? Christen kneels next to his wife's remains and weeps as only a broken man can weep. "My Lilly ... My Lilly," he reminds himself. "She is lost to you," Elohim tells Christen. "If you go after her, she will kill you or she will make you kill her," the angel warns. The distraught father stands with his fists raging at the sky. "And where is your OMNI ONE? And why would he let this terrible thing happen?"

Until Christen spoke Kat had been kneeling at her father's side, crying, but she has to stand and answer her friend. "Elohim told us that there would be great trials. I guess this is the beginning of

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those trials. If we have faith an answer will come. If we do not have faith this horror is nothing compared to what we stand to lose come the end of this Earthly existence."

Anguish branded into his face Christen has lost more than he can bear. And to add to his loss he has hardened his heart against the OMNI ONE.

Turning to Elohim, Christen declares, "You have taught us the demon's weaknesses, so I shall have faith in nothing save the sword ... and until the day that I die I shall slay the beasts. Tell your god I have no need of his PARIDISIO for he has condemned me to hell." The angry man turns and pleads to all within earshot, "Who will join me in my revenge?" The angel's heart sickens as many choose to follow Christen as he marches away from the valley he has so long called his home.

Believing with all of their hearts that a better day is coming Kat, Truth and many others have chosen to hold tight to their faith and stay. Understandably they are low in spirit as they clear away the remnants of this war. They bury their dead and burn the bodies of their enemies. They must burn the demons for the demons' remains carry with them pestilence and disease. A foul smell and rancid purple-black smoke fills the air above the burning beasts. The humans cough and choke from the noxious fumes, but this task must be done before they can begin to get back to their lives.

Weeks have passed since that day of horror and some find that even faith is not enough to erase the

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memory of that day. Many feel that they need to start over, away from this valley, so the exodus begins. They head in all directions, except east -- where Christen and the vigilantes have gone.

A short while later Elohim speaks to Truth, Kat and the others who have chosen to stay. "You are strong in your faith and that is good, but many have splintered away from what I have taught you. I must go out to them and bring them back to the word. Keep the faith and know that if you need me I shall come again," the angel assures them.

As the sun sets in the west, Kat and Truth watch as a distant figure grows ever smaller and ever further away. "I hope that we are up to these tests the OMNI ONE has set upon us," Truth expresses his doubt to his wife. "Elohim told us in one of our first lessons that HE will not charge us with more than we can bear." She kisses her husband's cheek. "We just have to endure until we see the light for beyond the light is PARIDISIO," she assures her beloved.

The figure of Elohim fades into the distance, but here her message remains.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE

CHAPTER 5 MEN MAKE WAR

Though most may believe Christen justified in the hatred and revenge that he harbors in his heart for the fallen angels, their creations and even his resentment of the OMNI ONE it is a fools anchor he chooses to bear.

The self proclaimed leader marches far to the east with his ragtag band of vigilantes. Abandoning all that Elohim has taught them they have agreed to make their own laws. The first of these laws is to make war upon the things who stole their peace, their harmony and the ones whom they had once loved.

Christen sits near the fire he has made and looks out over the many mouths he has to feed. "Out here in the wilderness food may be hard to come by, but we will find a way. Until such time let vengeance and hate feed our souls and strengthen our bodies," he hopes to inspire them. The leader is right. They do become strong of spirit, but it is a tainted strength. It is no less evil than the nature born in the demons. Soon, it will corrupt their judgment as well.

After months of travel, Christen's group reaches a fertile valley, near a swift running stream with mountains as a natural barrier against invaders on three sides. This is where they will establish their town and from here they will wage war upon the beasts. "We shall call our town Atogony, *Land of War*, and we shall dedicate ourselves to this cause," Christen declares their intent. A roar comes from the crowd, "Yaaa ...! Atogony ...! Yaaa ...! Atogony!"

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Atogony ...!"

The war mongers set about the task of building a town. First homes are built for all. Then they designate Christen as blacksmith as well as their leader for he knows how to forge weapons and seems skilled in the planning of war. It seems etched into his heart. Much like their lives before the exodus they set about tilling the land and gathering fruit, vegetables and grain for food, but the people of Atogony have changed. One then another decides to kill then cook and eat the creatures they had once protected. They also clothed themselves in the animal's skin to better protect them than leaves strung together. It is almost as if they can hear evil whispers beckoning them to deeds of horror. And to their shame, they listen. The persistent voice calls to them to make fermented drink from the juice of the fruit - in order to dull the brain- so that they will not ask themselves how far they have fallen or dwell on all which they have lost. Worst of all, they hear and obey when the voices tells them to cleave not to just one other - for then the loss is too great to bear- so they choose to fornicate with many and care for none. The angels above do weep for how low the humans have fallen.

In Atogony smoke now spews from the smithy and the Wild Boar Inn. Christen stands with three men of the town as he takes the metal that they have smelted from the rock and holds it with prongs while holding a hammer in his other hand. With this hammer upon an anvil that stands waist high before him Christen does beat the metal. Silver blends with iron, into a strong sword. Meanwhile his apprentice, Dirk, carves

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smaller pieces of the silver into arrowheads. Another worker carves wooden stakes then places silver slivers into the stakes and into the massive maces that he molds. They have created every sort of weapon necessary to kill every sort of demon.

After the day's work is over they march into the field. The townsfolk- every man, woman and child gather for the war lessons. Like some mockery of Halloween Christen has created effigies of the demons. Turning to a young girl, Caroline, the leader asks, "Who is the vampire?" The girl points to the figure resembling a man-bat with wings spread wide and she answers. "That is the evil fiend!" Turning quickly to Dirk, Christen asks, "And how does one kill a vampire?" Dirk lifts the mace with the stake built into it and answers, "Pierce his heart with any wooden stake." Taking the heavy mace from Dirk's hand Christen turns to his son, Cameron - born in Atogony, and asks, "If any wooden stake will do then why did Dirk grab this heavy mace?" The puzzled young boy looks at the mace then at Dirk then smiles and answers, "Because he's stupid." Everyone laughs except Dirk and Christen. The father slaps the boy hard aside his head. "This is not a joke! And you are the one who is stupid. If the mace is not too heavy it is a perfect weapon because it will kill every sort of demon. There is silver built into the wooden stake upon the mace to kill the werewolf. The stake itself will kill the vampire or rip the draillum's heart. The heavy mace will dispense of the changeling or the beast with no name." The people cheer.

The war lessons are over. Skins have been spread out

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on the training grounds. All around children run and play. Some of the more amorous men pull their women down upon the skins and have their way with them right there. Other men and women have meat cooking on a spit. They tear at pieces of the meat and bite into it ravenously. This is all a ritual which builds the humans into a frenzy that they are made ready for a war soon to come.

Preparations are over. The hearts, minds and souls of Atogony are now ready. Out on the open plane a fearsome sight appears. With a lion's skin draped over his shoulder, a mace in one hand, a broad sword in the other and reins gritted between his teeth Christen is seated upon his horse. He leads the people of Atogony off to war.

Days later and miles away from Atogony it is So'ei who leads the angel's army of beasts to prey upon a village of humans. These humans have kept the faith, but left the valley of Kat and Truth. The beasts have claws with which they rip through the flesh of the humans, killing some -- for the sport of it -- changing others. The sound of the carnage can be heard for miles around. "Waaauugghh ...! Naaauugghh ...! Aaaaauugggghhhh ...!" The inhuman cries announce the demons presence. It isn't enough that the demons have all but destroyed this town. Now they put fire to the homes and dance in the light of the flames and the midnight moon. Too soon they celebrate their victory. Very few of the humans have survived the carnage. Unfortunately for some whom did they have chosen to hide in the buildings that the beasts have now set aflame? Their screams color the night with terror. Other survivors

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cower in the nearby woods watching what has become of their friends and their village. They curse having not gone with Christen and his group.

The demons' revelry is silenced by the sound of thunder, or so they believe the sound to be. The beasts see a hundreds of yards long line of fire riding toward them. "What can that be?" So'ei asks of Tisks "I've never seen anything like it, but I don't think it will be to our liking," Tisks answers. Being a coward the leader of the draillums runs away. Through the path in the woods the line of fire and the sound of thunder inches closer. Then from the woods Christen charges on a ghostly white steed with sword and mace raised high. Hundreds of humans on foot or horseback follow their leader. Cautiously So'ei waits. Other demons charge at the humans, thinking these humans to be no different than the ones they have defeated earlier. Arrows fly through the air, piercing the flesh of demons; some fall dead, some are only wounded. The humans take their maces and smash the skulls of the fallen demons. The inhuman sounds of beasts wailing fill the night. There is the whistling of swords as many a demon's head is sliced from its shoulders. Blood of various colors spurts everywhere. Heads roll across this field of battle. Only now afraid the demons try to run, but as swift as the draillum are even they cannot outrun the flight of an arrow. Heeding the flow of the battle So'ei and his vampire brethren take flight, out of range of the Humans' weapons. The Humans who had been hiding in the woods come out and join Christen's band. Showing no mercy Christen's army still bludgeons the fallen demons with their maces, slices at them with their swords

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whether the demons are dead or alive. The Humans wear wretched masks of blood lust as they swing their weapons at a feverish pitch. Those Humans without weapons kick the beasts or retrieve rocks from the ground then beat the beasts' remains. Wherever one looks there are human bodies, beastly bodies, streams of red, blue and amber blood flowing across this battlefield. So dark and so evil is the smile that Christen wears as he looks out over the scene of carnage. "Yessss ... it begins," he warns the un-hearing demons.

The scenes of this terrible night are repeated again and again. The demons attack some unsuspecting, unprepared village. The war mongers, led by the man, Christen, wreak vengeance upon the beasts.

There has always been one clear advantage that the humans have over the beasts and that is that humans have offspring. That is why the numbers of Christen's band is still many while the numbers of the beasts are quickly dwindling.

The vampire, So'ei, realizes that it won't be long before the "Sibling Breed" - the angel's creations - are no more if he does not retreat, so in defeat he leads all that is left of the demon army home to face Kamar's wrath.

For the moment victorious, Christen and his people - whose numbers have been added to by the survivors of the demons' attacks - stand upon a hillside looking far into the distance. The sight they see, the surviving beasts running into the deep woods that lead to the wild frontier. This they deem cause for

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celebration. "Woeeee, yeeeeiiiiihiii ...!" The people yell in exultation. Their leader holds up his right hand signaling for them to quiet down. A cloak of silence falls over the gathering of humans. "Today the beasts are beaten back, but do not let your guard down. As sure as my hatred for them is as deep as any ocean they will return. The beasts cannot live unless they destroy, so for now they will go home, lick their wounds then try to figure out another way to defeat us, or so they think." He laughs. The others laugh. After hooking his mace onto his saddle Christen waves his sword overhead and cries out to the others, "Let's go home!"

With their heads bowed low and bearing the scars of war the beasts trudge through the wilderness. In fits of frustration they turn on one another and their numbers dwindle more. Finally So'ei takes command once more. "The next demon to raise their hand to another shall taste my wrath! We are vulnerable to the humans because our numbers are few. Until we can recruit more of them to our numbers we must protect one another as brothers," he instructs. Draillum hisses at werewolf then the werewolf and changeling growl at the vampire then the vampire snarls at the beast with no name. The sound of the beast with no name is indiscernible to all except his own, but it is clear to all that their survival is interlocked.

After months in the harsh wilderness, the demons drag themselves into the caves of the Sibling Breed then through the labyrinth and into the throne room of Kamar. It is So'ei who leads the beasts. Kamar and the other angels look out upon the obviously

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beaten demons in disgust. "Your touch will bring them low and still you could not defeat the Humans," Kamar accuses. Thinking fast So'ei lies, "We could not contend with the angel" The others grumble in agreement.

"Damn it! If we could leave here I would make short work of this Elohim," Kamar threatens. "If this, if that - the OMNI ONE is the OMNI ONE and for all of your blustering we shall not defeat HIM," Coulier taunts his brother angel. An angry Kamar attacks his fellow angel. His hands glow red-yellow and that light emanates toward Coulier, but unlike Damien this angel is prepared. Coulier's hands glow black - gray and the two beams of power battle one another until Kamar's beam wins out, slamming Coulier into the wall of the cave. "Just as I have defeated you I will defeat the OMNI ONE. It is just a matter of time and that I possess in great abundance," the most wicked one does pledge.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 6 - THE CORRUPTION

As the wicked must taste the lash of Justice, the innocent are doomed to feel the howling winds and torrential rains of injustice. That is the only way that lessons shall be learned.

Years have passed since the first WAR. The cruel either bask in their victories or languish in the pool of their defeat.

Meanwhile there are some who have chosen a gentler and more harmonious way of life for themselves and their offspring. Yes, the beasts were right humans flourish and multiply. In the village of Kat and Truth, far from the beasts and the war mongers these two lovers have borne a child. The child's name is Illeanna. A more beautiful creature one is not likely to come upon in a thousand lifetimes. Surprisingly she is as beautiful inside as she appears outwardly.

The other girls in their village chase after the very handsome Barkus, son of Job and Tawna, but not Illeanna. The daughter of Kat had been taught to wait for a man to reveal his inner nature.

As Illeanna walked alone down the path toward the nearby brook she failed to notice her stalker. Barkus crept up behind her and jabbed one finger into each of her sides. Illeanna was startled and jumped away. "Fool! What you see as humorous others see as annoying," she scolded him. Barkus laughs. "You take yourself and life too serious. One is allowed ... no ... one is expected to enjoy this life the Omni One gave us," he instructs her. "And what

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of duty ?" she asks. "I do not shirk mine ... I do more than my share of work and I never let a day pass without giving thanks and praise to HIM above. Beyond that I enjoy life." Illeanna jabs a finger into each of Barkus' sides then runs away laughing. "Maybe you aren't a dolt," she calls back to him.

Years passed as Illeanna and Barkus grew closer and closer. Eventually, to no one's surprise the two joined in the Wedding ceremony. Truth and Kat couldn't have been happier for they knew Barkus to be a good man. The life here in the village of Kat and Truth could have been mistaken for PARIDSIO itself. Maybe that is why it was doomed to end.

Elsewhere, in the bowels of the earth, in the damp filthy caves and in the thick woods where no man made path from civilization exists the banished ones live out their exile.

As much time passes the other angels grow impatient with their self appointed leader. In a grand gesture Kamar decides to make more spectacular the prison in which he lives. "I shall make this PARIDISIO!" proclaims the arrogant Kamar. Again his hands glow, this time with a purple radiance. The rocks of the mountain begin to move. The earth of the cave and the woods begin to shake. Things begin to transmute to another form. When Kamar is finished with his task what had been merely magnificent is now breathtaking.

The lackeys had not dared to believe themselves capable of such acts, but now they dare to try and

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imitate Kamar despite their doubts. They create smaller chambers, less grand, for that is the limit of their belief in the power of their thoughts. "Did I not tell you that we shall know power?" With newfound confidence Kamar does assure the others. "And this is just the beginning," the fallen angel foretells. Always doubtful is his brother angel, Coulier "And how shall we challenge the other angels and the Most High ... with glowing hands that change rock?" he mocks Kamar. The leader of the banished is growing impatient with this follower. "With numbers my brother with numbers," he answers. Now Coulier laughs. "We five against seven and the OMNI-ONE, your math leaves much to be desired," the skeptic chides. "You are one of little vision. Our numbers shall dwarf the number of the buffalo upon the plain, the grains of sand upon the beach and the drops of water in the oceans." The beautiful Sinsel is puzzled also over the picture Kamar paints, so she asks, "And where will we draw them from?" Like an attorney Kamar points his finger accusingly at each of his fellow conspirators. "Oh ye of little faith ... the OMNI ONE has created our ally for us--Humankind. This time our demons shall avoid the angel, make war only on the Humans who know not the ways of war then you shall retreat from those men who do. And when the demons numbers are made greater then the warriors the fighters will fall too." From Kamar this new plan unfolds.

Like a loving parent instructing his child Kamar places his hand under the chin of So'ei. "Do not concern yourselves with the angel. She cannot be everywhere at once. Like a plague go unseen, infect Humankind with your nature then with stealth be gone

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before they even know you were there. When our numbers are great enough we shall herd the Human like cattle. We shall allow some to breed free of our disease, so that we may continue to increase our numbers until we are so many that we can charge the throne room of the OMNI ONE and rule PARIDISIO—not serve."

Back into the foal the renegade angel Coulier returns his allegiance, but all the while he thinks to himself, "Only for a moment shall I obey you. There can be but one ruler in PARIDISIO. That ruler shall be me." The five rebellious angels watch one another suspiciously for all are thinking the same treachery as Coulier.

Each of the angels dispatch their creations back out into the world. The beasts all have only one objective in mind, corrupting Humankind.

So speedily he moves that Tisk is the first to make it through the wilderness. After their defeat and standing alone he knows to be wary of Humans, so he hides himself on the outskirts of the village of Kat, Truth and the new generations of followers. The demon watches as the humans frolic, eat, and make love. His heart is filled with envy and hate for those who were created by the Most High. The singular object of his lust, hunger and envy is the man, Barkus. In Tisks' mind this human has so much more than any single being is entitled to possess. The beautiful wife, Illeanna, the friendship of all the others, the joy that he shares with those close to him - "WHY ?" does Tisks not deserve these things. I did not ask to be created by the fallen

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ones. i did not ask to be a beast.

Such heavy thoughts will have to wait for hunger scratches at Tisk's belly as the hours turn into days and the days into weeks. The demon has watched as the Humans eat the fruit of some trees. In all of his many years he has only fed on other demons. Now he wonders if he can eat what humans eat. When the village sleeps he slithers up to an orange tree. Taking the ripe fruit from the tree he does more swiftly make his way back into hiding. As he sits crouching in the bushes he does test the food. Examining the outer peel he notes that it is attractive to the eye and touch. Putting the fruit up to his nose he notes that its fragrance pleases him. The demon had not paid close enough attention so then he places the orange in his mouth, whole, without peeling it then bites down. Quickly the beast spits the food out onto the ground. "What kind of creatures are these that they can eat such things?" he asks himself. "... and what is to become of me if I cannot find something that I can eat?" he also ponders.

At that moment Illeanna, daughter of Truth and Kat, and cleaved unto Barkus, moves across the grassy field. The beauty is headed to the brook for a midnight swim. A wisp of a shadow seems to breeze by her. Seeing nothing she knows not enough to be afraid. Illeanna perches herself on the bank's edge then dives into the water. Joyously she splashes about in the water, awaiting her beloved Barkus. There is a splash in the water, but still Illeanna sees nothing. Believing it to be Barkus, swimming beneath the water' surface, Illeanna giggles in

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anticipation. The waters begin rippling swiftly toward her. "Barkus cannot move so swiftly," she tells herself. A feeling unlike any she has ever known engulfs her heart. She is afraid. Barely able to catch her breath for this new smothering sensation which has a hold of her. In an instance another new thing does follow, "Eeeaaaaiii ...!" she screams. As her scream trails off Tisks breaks the surface of the brook's waters. With sharpened nails he does slice open Illeanna's throat. The dying young woman flops backwards upon the water's surface.

The demon Tisks holds her body above the water and begins to feed. Her skin tastes as leathery as the beast with no name to him. The bones are all too gritty, but Tisks does so like the squishy, soft and juicy eyeballs that he eats. No remorse does this evil creature feel ... no regret ... nothing save the satisfaction of a full belly.

As Tisks lies upon the bank of the lake basking in the sensation of feeling full for the first time in weeks Barkus comes looking for Illeanna. Even if Tisks had not been full Barkus would not have met the same fate as Illeanna. The evil creature knows that he must bring back at least one new recruit for his master.

The man, Barkus, sees the demon lying upon the bank then the next moment he sees nothing. Suddenly Barkus feels the hot and moist breath of another upon the back of his neck. Turning his head slightly around the frightened man finds a demon staring him in the eyes. The draillum's nails prick the skin of

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Barkus. Like a fallen tree the man crashes to the ground. Eyes rolling around in his head, his feet kicking out rapidly in convulsion, his skin becomes amber in color - the same as Tisks- another soul has been lost. Barkus is no longer a man. He is draillum. Elated Tisks leads the newly made demon home to the hive. A grateful Kamar rewards Tisks with a medallion of gold. Yes, demons do love bright shiny objects. Gold is among their most favorite of things.

When Barkus and Illeanna disappear, a panic spreads throughout the land of Truth and Kat. The women advise caution. The men now design and build weapons; spears, bows and arrows, battering rams, axes and swords they make. Things that will cut flesh, pierce the heart and things which will bludgeon the skull. The black side of purpose -- destruction, reigns for now.

The six angels look down upon the earth and wonder, "How can this ever be right again?"

Weeks behind Tisks' retreat home So'ei and the others arrive in civilization, but few humans are innocent sheep awaiting the wolf. Despite being prepared, many humans are infected by the creatures and returned to the hive. Unlike Tisks, many of the other demons limp home carrying battle scars with them as reminders of the cost of war and glory.

Despite the changing tide many from the valley of Kat and Truth keep to the faith, but this time they are in the minority so they are the ones who leave.

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Far from their second home and now grieving the lost of their daughter it is Kat who questions all for the first time, "Are these trials too much? Are they fair?" Truth takes Kat into his arms and comforts her. "Before you can blink your eyelids we shall be together again with Illeanna and all those we love. Their will be no more trials and we shall know happiness unending. So dry your eyes and continue to believe.

In the new village of Kat and Truth there is an underlying distrust of all things and persons not of their faith. This is a dangerous seed to plant.

Over the top of a hill a beautiful stranger comes. No one recognizes the angel for she has taken on a new human form. Despite the change in Elohim's appearance seeing this stranger fills Kat's heart with hope, although she knows not why. When the others see the stranger coming they become apprehensive. Maybe this stranger will bring with her unwelcome woes. They no longer trust their own instincts, even though, like Kat, their instincts tell them that Elohim is their salvation. Ignoring her neighbors' warnings Kat invites Elohim to stay with her and Truth and share in their bounty. The others want to have some say in whether or not the stranger can stay. Admonishing them Truth says that they can be fools and fear every shadow that they might imagine, but he and his will enjoy life as before the plagues and welcome anyone not bearing the demons' mark of 666.

Four of Truth and Kat's neighbors; Steven, Sessation, Aloof and Marshal are more particularly

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apprehensive of this stranger for they can not shake the images of the beasts tearing their neighbors apart.

After Kat, Truth and Elohim enter the couple's home the other four stomp frustrated toward Marshal and Aloof's home. As Steven sits down he slams his fist upon the table. "She has no right to put the rest of us in danger. No one named her the leader of this village." Aloof laughs. "No one may not have named her leader, but everyone has considered her such for years now," Aloof reminds her friends of an accepted truth. Marshal wears a stern expression on his face. "Leader or not I am going to get to the bottom of what kind of threat this stranger may be!" he assures the others. "... and how do you plan on doing that, husband?" Aloof questions. "Not just me ... We shall spy upon them," he answers. They look around the room at one another then nod in agreement.

The fireplace burns brightly, providing light and warmth in the home of Truth and Kat. Their guest shares the fruit and vegetables that adorn their table. Outside, the four nosy neighbors, Marshal, Aloof, Sessation and Steven spy to find out what they can of the stranger. Like a crystal xylophone the melodic voice of Elohim does speak, "To hear these words is to remember me - Where I am from there is the MOST HIGH, the ONE who created all things, even you. There were also twelve like me - angels ..." Kat interrupts, "Elohim!" The angel smiles then continues. "Five angels were arrogant and foolhardy. They disobeyed the MOST HIGH and tried to create life. What they created were nothing

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more than abominations. Those things who now infect your people. The ones you call demons." Elohim reminds them. Aloof gasps in horror, "Ohh ...". Kat strikes her broom against the side of their house. The spies scurry away. Brandishing the broom as she walks back over and joins Elohim and Truth, "This is the only civilized tool for chasing off rats, Kat teases." They laugh.

The encounter may have been taken lightly by Elohim, Kat and truth, but the angels words are new information to the generations born after Kat and Truth. The words resonate with horror. In the hands of fools a little knowledge can and will create only chaos.

Quick to act upon their fears Aloof and Marshal go with their friends to their home to discuss what has been heard. The frightened woman - Aloof - speaks first, "The five who send the demons are almost gods. Can swords or axes slay gods?" Steven shakes his head -no. "But what would you have us do Aloof?" almost paralyzed with fear he asks. "Let us find the fallen ones and make a deal for ourselves," she answers. The foolhardy Sessation smiles and speculates, "I bet that we will be given great powers by them and never know the horror of being infected by the demons." The four friends are in agreement. No idea did they have as to the value of what they are willing to freely surrender.

As is the way with humans they wait to slip away under the cover of darkness. It is Steven who takes the lead in suggesting that they follow the broken brush toward the deepest of woods. "Since no human

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has gone this way before, this must to be the demons' trail home - and will lead us to their masters, the fallen angels," he has deduced.

The trek is hard and the weather becomes harsh and almost unbearable over the months that follow. At times the trees are barren and they can find no food. The four companions huddle together under leaves and brush in order to shelter themselves from the cold. Steven's first love, a tired Sessation, turns to him wanting for an answer, "I am cold and hungry. Maybe we should go back." Kissing her tenderly her beloved informs her, "It is as far back as it is forward. If we will perish going forward we will do so going back. Besides, nothing has changed. We either become a part of them or we are destroyed by them." Finding irony in his prediction of doom Aloof laughs, disheartened. "If we do not find some way of protecting ourselves from the elements or food to eat soon it won't matter." Emboldened by desperation Steven decides to act. Grabbing his bow and arrows he declares to the others, "I shall return soon." The three friends watch him curious as he marches deeper into the woods and the darkness alone.

A short time later Aloof, Marshal and Sessation hear the disturbing sound of an animal's death cry, "Aawwuuhhhh ...!" Marshal's wife, Aloof holds tightly to his hand. Fearful of what Steven's fate may be Sessation jumps up and looks about the woods warily. Now she is frightened because she is sure that they have been found by the demons. The brush ahead of her moves and all three of the companion's hearts drop. From the woods Steven comes carrying

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the carcass of a dead animal thrown over his shoulders while his bow and arrows are held in his right hand. "What have you done? ... and why?" a confused Sessation asks. "I have heard that the warmongers eat the flesh of animals," he answers tossing the dead body upon the ground. Taking his knife from its sheath he begins to skin the animal. The others turn away in horror. A leery Marshal whispers to Aloof, "Starvation or the cold has driven him mad." Scraping the last of the blood and flesh from the skin Steven chooses to protect his beloved Sessation. He wraps the skin around her shoulders. At first she recoils away from the disgusting object. Then her tiny hands pull the skin closer to her own. "Oohhh ... it has been so long since I have felt this warm. Thank you my love." Not so long ago Kat had taught Steven what Truth had taught her about making a fire. Remembering those lessons he walks around their camp area gathering broken branches and leaves then places them into a pile. Hoping for the best he bends down then taking two sticks he begins to rub them together. A spark catches on the leaves and a fire begins. Once the flames are blazing the four friends gather close to the fire's warmth.

After a time warming himself Steven gets up once more. Having taken on the role of provider he cuts a hunk of flesh from the carcass of the dead animal then pierces it with a stick. The animal's flesh is held out over the open flame. The others look at this curious act and wonder what will come next. After the flesh has browned he takes it from the flame then tears away a piece and eats it. The others close their eyes in revulsion. "You will not

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be so repulsed when your belly rubs against your back bone," Steven assures them. A hungry Sessation takes a piece of the meat from the stick. Closing her eyes she then slides it pass her lips. To her surprise and delight the taste of it is far more appetizing than anything she has eaten before. "It's wonderful!" she exclaims. Hesitantly Aloof and Marshal accept the offering of meat then eat it. Their faces light up with smiles. "Who would have thought that to eat the flesh of another creature could be so pleasurable?" Marshal adds.

Days later the foursome are adorned in skins, and the carcasses of three more animals lay in their encampment. Sessation looks at her husband, Steven, as they start forward again. She asks, "What now Steven?" His answer is for all of them, "We have dilly-dallied for long enough. Before the Spring we shall reach the fallen angels. Of this I am sure." The four continue their arduous trek.

Near the end of the last Winter's thaw Steven, Sessation, Aloof and Marshal stand at the foot of an unknown mountain range. With some trepidation they peer into the caves and see an unnatural light emanating from within. "Shall we venture in?" Marshal wonders aloud. "We didn't come this far to wait for the demons to drag us in," Aloof assures him. The two men brandish their knives before them as the four enter into the caves.

The four companions make their way down past the jagged edged rocks, through and over the narrowing ledges until they feel their feet are again upon Terra-fir ma. The light grows closer as they move

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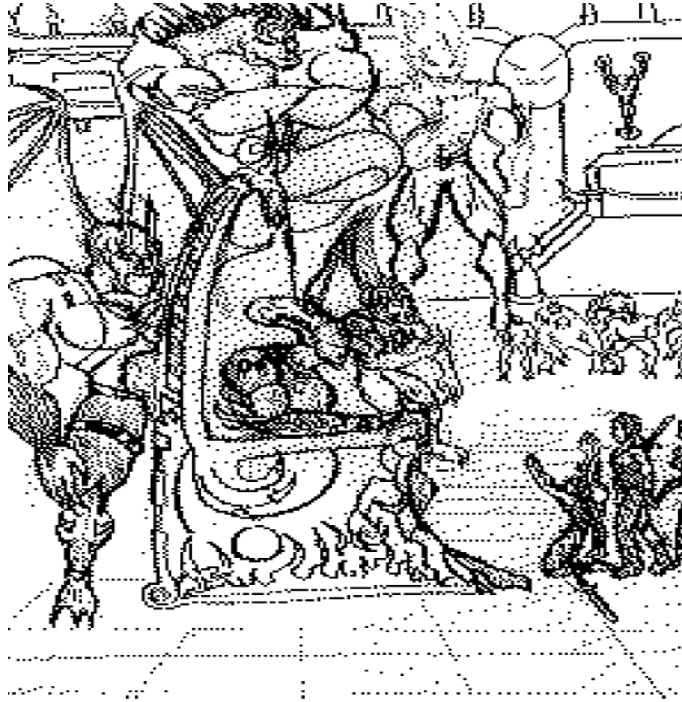
ever downward. A breeze ruffles the skins they wear. A whistling sound fills the air as they feel the presence of some unseen force or being.

A narrow doorway separates the darkness from a bright light. The four walk through and find themselves in what appears to be the throne room of some grand palace. The unseen force whistles by them once again. This time it stops and there before them stands Barkus. A puzzled Marshal inquires, "Barkus? Is that truly you?" As they stare at him they know that he is no longer the Barkus they once knew. The draillum is about to attack when the room begins to fill with demons and angels. The awe inspiring Kamar calls out, "Nooo ...! I am curious what brings humans into my lair." The draillum steps back and the other demons part to allow Kamar to pass.

A wicked smile appears upon the fallen angel's face. The four comrades too late ponder what their fate might be if the angels do not accept their proposal. Like a lover Kamar caresses the faces of first Sessation then Aloof. With an almost whimsical attitude he turns then takes the weapons from Marshal and Steven. "You won't be in need of these ..." Turning to the demons he declares, "After all, you're among friends." Everyone and everything laughs except Steven, Marshal, Aloof and Sessation. Taking a more serious posture Kamar stares at the Human intruders. "Tell me ... ! Why are you here?" Pretending to possess more courage than sense Steven steps forward. "As you may have noticed, when your creatures infect a human our minds and souls are diminished. Is that what you truly seek ... a weakened ally?" he queries the angel. Rubbing his

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chin Kamar ponders the human's question. "If you have examined the problem then you must have figured out a solution." Pointing to Kamar's throne Steven plays upon the angel's obvious love of brashness and



ask, "May I have a seat?" Amused Kamar laughs and answers, "Surely. But do not become accustomed to that seat of power." The now emboldened Steven sits down. "Share with us a reasonable portion of your powers, place us above the beasts and you will find that our souls and minds are very formidable assets,

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Steven offers in answer.

The first and most dangerous of the beasts, So'ei, speaks out, "None are any stronger of mind, body or spirit than the Vampire!" Until now Marshal has kept silent. Now he speaks out, "Then step out into the sunlight, Vampire." So'ei hisses at Marshal while Kamar laughs. "Let me think upon your proposition, human. I shall give you my answer come morning," the angel assures Steven.

Through the night the angels argue back and forth over Steven's words. Coulier, most of all, does not trust Humankind and believes that they would be creating a formidable enemy instead of an ally. The leader of the exiled angels loves the idea that the favored creation is rebelling against the OMNI ONE. He is determined to have them as an ally. In the morning Tisks, So'ei, Desiree and the metamorphite come for the four humans. The fact that the demon with no name is absent is only noted by Kamar. The humans are then led into the throne room where the fallen angels await them. "Each of us shall choose one human and lay hands upon that one only. Humans shall be second to angels and above the beasts. That is what has been decided. That is what shall be," Kamar declares.

Once more slighted by the fates the demons all slink out of the throne room. The five angels make their way to the humans' side. Each in turn place glowing hands upon one human each. Kamar smiles then walks over to Steven then Kamar lays hands on him also. When the laying of hands is over Kamar stands up and shouts out, "Man - you shall be called wizard

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and you - woman, shall be called sorceress, together magicians all! In the end none but the corrupt shall rule PARIDISIO!"

There is a sustained festive mood in the lair of the exiled for much time after the laying on of hands. At first the atmosphere has the aura and pageantry of a coronation, but soon it disintegrates into an orgy of lust and debauchery. Every beast, every angel and every magician do couple in each and every disgusting way one can imagine, to do every foul act. There is even murder and mayhem. Demons are slaughtered for the mere pleasure of hearing their cries and seeing their anguish. This is the lowest point ever after creation.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 7 - WHEN ANGELS WAR

It has been months since Kamar and the other angels transformed the four humans into magicians. In that time everyone has seen how close Kamar grows to the humans. His relationship seems more that of a proud father to his children than a general to his troops. Kamar stands before the new magicians. His smile is brightest when he stares at the one known to him as Steven. "What I am about to show to you no one must know about save us. This magic or power comes from within, a place of torment, which exist in us all. I call this power the black arts." An always suspicious Steven queries Kamar, "And why do we merit this gift ? And what is the price ?" Kamar laughs heartily. "That is why I like you most ... You know that nothing is given freely. If I am to continue to give to you this gift then your allegiance must be to me first and foremost. The WHY is because I do not trust my brethren angels, so after we defeat the OMNI ONE and take PARIDISIO I will need allies to help me overcome the others. The lessons start anew. Marshal and Sessation have trouble calling upon the darkness, but not so Steven or Aloof. The two star pupils call easily upon destructive forces that cause the very earth beneath them to quake. "Alluvium Tess era!" Steven cries out and the ground does open up and swallows the demons that Kamar has given them to use like lab rats. The spell has made the Earth a living thing, a consuming creature. His pupil smiles.

The demon with no name hides in the chamber where the secret lessons are being taught. It sees then it reports back to Coulier in the garble only the angels and other of its kind can understand, "Master

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the one called Steven spoke and the Earth came to life. With its big gaping mouth it ate many like me." The angel shakes his head. "Your kind is a small loss, but the things Kamar teaches the magicians are dangerous indeed, dangerous things indeed," Coulier feels nothing for his lost demons. The demon with no name slinks away.

During the time when Coulier knows that Kamar will be instructing his new pupils, he calls his own secret meeting of the remaining four angels. "Kamar will have PARIDISIO for Kamar. We shall not share in his rule." Erotis laughs her delicate evil laugh. "Tell us something that we do not know." The other two do not take the warning casually. "We all know this, but his power is great and there is little that we can do about it except bide our time," Sinsel points out. Vehemently Coulier disagrees, "While you are biding your time he is strengthening his army of magicians. The evil one teaches the two sorceress and the two wizards things he would not share with us." The other angels are rocked by this revelation.

The weakest of angels, Damien, whines, "We are doomed. In the end Kamar will destroy us after we are of no further use to him." A blast of light emanates from Coulier's hand shocking the cowardly angel. "This is not a time for surrender, but a time for plotting! Together we can defeat Kamar, but it must be now, before his magicians become too powerful." The four shake their heads in agreement. Tonight, when he is alone, we shall strike."

The one thing you can be sure of is that there is no

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trust among the evil. Just as Coulier had sent his minion to spy on Kamar above the heads of the four angels, So'ei, in the form of a man-bat, hangs eavesdropping. The vampire too will report back to his master the things that he has heard.

Trying hard to hide his delight with the plotting of the other angels, So'ei tells all to Kamar. Unlike the demon with no name So'ei has his own motives for relaying this information. Ambition is an infectious disease. The angel, Kamar, turns to face the vampire, So'ei, never suspecting that his vampire is anything except a loyal servant the angel smiles. "You have done well. There will be a reward, my faithful servant. Now go and bring the magicians to me," Kamar instructs the vampire. With malice in his heart So'ei, seeming humble, bows and obeys.

Those who now are magicians - Sessation, Aloof, Marshal and Steven - enter the magnificent bedroom of Kamar. None has been invited into Kamar's sanctuary before this day. The floors are white marble. The bed and furniture are made of the most pure of gold. The windows, which are ornamental only - since there is no view beneath the earth - are made of diamonds. A crystal chandelier hangs suspended in mid-air, held there only by magic. One could not help but be impressed.

"You didn't invite us here to admire what you have created," Steven states more in the way of an inquiry. "When you came to me you spoke of what you could do for me, but so far it has only been I who have done for you." At last the choice. "What unseemly task would he set us to do?" Each of them

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wonders. "It seems my fellow angels are jealous of the attention, the powers and the knowledge that I have showered upon you. They are plotting to destroy us all. What can I expect of you?" Fear is evident on the faces of Sessation and Marshal. The other two, Aloof and Steven, are more confident of Kamar, their gifts and the things that the angel has taught them. "We must dispense of them first," in his arrogance Steven states defiantly. A smile creases the fallen angel's lips. "I was confident that some of you are hungry to test what you have learned. We will have a surprise for my fellow angels," he assures the magicians.

Treachery is a thick soup. The more one stirs it the thicker it becomes. In still another part of the caverns a third meeting is being held. The demons have gathered without their masters. First of all demons, the father of vampires - So'ei commands much respect and so when he calls for this meeting all demons come. "Those who would be our masters bring in outsiders that we may kneel and scrape to more masters. I say NNNOOO!!!" So'ei rebels. The demons cheer. "The five plot against each other. This will serve us well. We will hide and let them fight among themselves. After the battle is over we will pledge our allegiance to the winner, but instead of allegiance we shall be biding our time. We shall be waiting for our opportunity to betray the angel Kamar. When our numbers are great enough we will rise up against our taskmasters. We know nothing of this PARIDISIO that they speak of ... and care even less. Earth we shall rule ... and all that live upon it shall be our food or our amusement," So'ei declares. The demons cheer their accepted new leader.

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There is rustling and scampering and a thundering of hoofs as the demons abandon the lair to the angels and the magicians. There is an electricity of anticipation as each side awaits the coming battle. Each confident that the other is unaware of what awaits them. Outside the caves, in the woods, the demons huddle and wait.

There is little light in Kamar's bedroom chamber as he lies upon his bed. Silently the door creeps open. Four angels slip inside. The door closes behind them. The room brightens and the four see that Kamar and his pupils await them.

"What have we here? What have we here?" an amused Kamar laughs. "It seems as though we are expected," Coulter turns to Damien and states matter-of-fact-like. The cowardly angel-Damien turns and runs toward the door. Anxious to test his new knowledge Steven shouts a command, "Delay Freeze!" The angel is stopped in his tracks. "En com Splay!" a second spell is uttered. Again Damien is the object of the spell. He is encased in a crystal bubble. The bubble and Damien shrink until they are small enough to hold in one's hand. "Angels Firmas!" Kamar shouts. His is a binding spell. An angel can escape a magician's magic unless the spell is sealed by another angel. All can see Damien as he struggles against the clear prison, but to no avail. It is in a moment of distraction that Coulter is able to blast the sorceress Sessation with a beam of red light. The sorceress glows a brighter and brighter red until she bursts into flames. Her body crumbles into ashes. That is when Steven learns what all who

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chooses evil must learn - power is a privilege to be used for good, not vanity. Anguish consumes him. "Nooo ...!" he screams then runs to Sessation and reaches down for her ashes. The ashes of Sessation filter through his grasp. "Grunion Nobles!" Kamar commands, and the air about Sinsel swirls then changes color, a misty gray. The swirling misty air acts like an acid. All see Sinsel's body corroding into a slushy waste. "Alluvium Tess era," Aloof cries out and the Earth gobbles up the slush that was Sinsel.

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The other two angels - Coulier and Erotis - wish only to escape, so they wrap themselves in two golden spheres then float toward the mountain's wall. Kamar watches as the two angels pass into the wall. "Nooo ... ! They must not escape!" Kamar cries out. With his only attack of the evening Marshal fires an impotent blast of blue light at the departing angels. The blast only serves to smash one of the walls of Kamar's bed chamber.

Outside of the caves So'ei and the others can hear the battle cries. They laugh, dance and make merry. The merriment stops when the beast look up and see two golden orbs passing outward from the mountain range then float away.

Meanwhile inside the mountain's caverns a heartbroken, Steven stands staring down at Sessation's ashes. Tears fill his eyes. His friend, Aloof, tries to comfort him, but he refuses to be consoled. Roughly he shoves her away. It is Marshal who holds Aloof's hand as they watch Steven, enshrouded in his grief. The angel seems unaware of the lost ally. His thoughts are on the escape of his two enemies. Picking up the crystal bubble containing Damien the evil Kamar turns. Finally he sees the pining Steven. Icy cold is Kamar's voice as he speaks to his favorite pupil, "Did you think that war and glory came without a price?" List-fully Steven answers him, "This is too high a price for any glory."

The anguish-filled wizard heads toward the chamber's door. "Where are you going?" his mentor questions him. "Away. Just away," he answers. The angel shakes

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his head. "You will come back. There is nothing out there for you anymore. All that you can ever want or need you will get from me." Without speaking the wizard exits then closes the door as he leaves. A disheartened Aloof turns to Marshal. "What does he hope to find...?" she asks. "Peace ... solitude. That is all that is left for him." Marshal answers in despair.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 8 - THE WANDERERS

More than one thousand years has passed since the war of the angels. To the surprise of some very little has changed. Kamar has sent the demons out to make war again and again. The demons have lost again and again, for the loyal one, Elohim, has battled at the Humans' side. Lessons are still being taught to Humans by Elohim. They are taught well about the pitfalls of evil and the rewards of PARIDISIO. Despite her lessons some Humans still falter.

Being ever vigilant the angel, Kamar, wonders what has happened to his brethren angels in their exile. Like a disheartened father he also ponders what fate has befallen his wayward wizard. Yet despite the passing of time mostly Kamar has lost himself in carnal pleasures and has forgotten his quest for PARIDISIO.

The reticent wizard, Marshal, never did care about any quest. This wizard is most content that there has been no more talk of war. He revels in the fact that he is safe from the demons, as his powers are greater.

All in the caverns are not so easily placated. An ambitious Aloof grows bored with the games that they play. She hungers for the glory Kamar had once promised, but she knows that nothing will change while she stays imprisoned in this tomb. The disenchanted sorceress goes to Kamar's bed chamber. Like some slovenly beast the angel lays stretched across his great bed with Desiree's head in his lap and Lily's head upon his chest. Grabbing a golden chair Aloof tosses it across the room at Kamar and

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his playmates. The angel laughs. "There is room enough for you in my bed." Laughing and shaking her head in disgust Aloof answers him, "Don't flatter yourself. I could care less what you do to amuse yourself. What disgusts me is that you who at one time desired to rule Paridisio have lost all ambition. Now you are satisfied with ruling a cave, inside a rock, in a system of rocks ... a mere speck in the universe.

"Aaauuuggghhhh ...!" Kamar roars in anger. He tosses the vampire and the werewolf from his bed. Frightened, the two demons run from the room. The lilt of Aloof's laughter mocks the angel. "I could destroy you with a wave of my hand," he threatens. The sorceress interrupts him, "... but you won't. Because you know that I am right." The angel bows his head in resignation. Looking up once more and staring into Aloof's eyes he answers, "Too easily I have been distracted from my goal. But, what can I do differently? The demons cannot contend with Elohim and I cannot go out among the Humans."

A beaten Kamar sits back down upon his great bed. "That is why you gave to we Humans the gifts of the angels and why you taught us the black art. Let me be your emissary in the world, and I promise the demons numbers shall grow," Aloof offers an answer to both of their plights.

Again the fallen angel smiles and great evil emanates from his being. "How will you accomplish this?" he quizzes the sorceress. Crossing the room until she stands over Kamar she then reaches down and caresses his face. Answering him she says, "By

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offering humans their rewards here and now instead of in some later day, some mythical land they can not see." The two allies cackle - an evil laughter.

Days later, after Aloof has made all her preparations and walks away from the mountain range the solitary and somber figure of Kamar stands upon the mountain top watching. It seems to him like forever, as Aloof walks away. An awful thought embraces him, "For the first time I am truly alone."

While some have frivolously passed the last eon in pursuit of pleasures and hi-jinx others have spent it running and hiding. Each day has been like a living nightmare. Coulier and Erotis imagines Kamar or his emissaries behind every tree or rock they pass.

Now in some distant woods, far from Kamar and the generations of man, Coulier and Erotis wander aimlessly. They are too afraid to settle down, but tiring of this unending wandering. "We can't go on like this," Coulier tells Erotis. "I know, but I am not ready to share Sinsel's fate." Frowning at the thought, Erotis reminds him. "... or to be trapped for an eternity in the confines of a bubble." This Erotis believes an even worst fate. The two nod in agreement. "Together we make it too easy for Kamar's spies to find us. We must part. I shall find a cave so deep in the bowels of the Earth that even the OMNI ONE can't find me. There I will build an army and when I am ready I shall face Kamar again."

Shaking her head, no, Erotis proclaims, "No longer do I wish to rule anything. I shall find a place in

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the deep woods where I can create my own playthings. They shall recruit more playthings and I shall spend an eternity discovering all of the ways a being can pleasure one' self." The two angels gladly part company, confident that they will never see one another again.

For a thousand years Steven has punished himself for the loss of his loved one, Sessation. He thought his isolation a fitting payment for the companionship and love he had so readily gambled for some illusion of power. A cloaked stranger enters into the village of the generations after Truth and Kat. Here Humans still cleave one man to one woman above all others. They still eat only the yield of the tree and land. No Human here has ever killed another of his kind. Still, this generation is wary of those who are strangers, so no one welcomes him. The stranger seeks no welcome and does not stop nor tarry. He moves aimlessly on. The wind blows back the hood of the stranger and Steven's face is revealed for the briefest of moments. It matters not - for the generation which knew of him has long since passed.

As the village fades in the distance and the thick woods come closer with each step the wizard takes this one who seeks solitude is closer to his goal.

The angel Elohim has followed the increasing number of Humans as they have used the eon to scatter across the vastness of this orb, Earth. Teaching and observing both the sweet fruits of her successes and the bitter herbs of her failures. Having left a Human village only days earlier she finds herself nearing the same woods which Steven has chosen as

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his next shelter from companionship.

The wanderers are unaware that demons use these woods as an ambush spot for Humans traveling from one village to another. The very first demon with no name and many of those whom he has infected spot a lone traveler. The evil creatures giggle in anticipation of the fun they will have with the stranger before recruiting him to their numbers. A single Human will be easy prey they tell themselves. As Steven enters the woods the beasts come out of hiding and surround him. Wanting only to be left alone, Steven tries to reason with the creatures. "I do not wish to harm you. You cannot win this battle," he assures them. Some indistinguishable guttural sound escapes the things. The wizard's best guess is that it is a sort of laughter. The wizard's hands appear from under his cloak's sleeves. One hand of flesh becomes metal-silver in color- and it is shaped much like a blade. The demons converge on the stranger anyway. The hand/blade slices through the necks of many of the creatures and heads roll around like some comic game of football. Still the demons will not cease in their attack. The blade slices through the chest of many of the beasts and soon their bodies litter the path through the woods. A mere handful of the creatures remain of what had been hundreds. Finally they surrender. The demons with no name seek to hide in the heavy brush while the stranger moves on making his way deeper into the woods of Banai.

There is a village much like the one of Truth and Kat that by the GRACE of THE OMNI ONE has not tasted the wrath of the demons. To the misfortune of an

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unknown woman has settled among them. The female stranger goes by the name of Aloof and claims to have abandoned the warriors village of Atogony seeking to reclaim the peace of following the old ways. The truth is this sorceress seeks to seduce the Humans to a wicked path. She has established a home among these Humans. On the surface few suspect her intentions for she seems to lead an exemplary life, but secretly she seduces the morally weaker Humans to a lifestyle which would make Kamar blush.

As the village sleeps Aloof knocks on the door of her neighbors, Tildon and Shary. They first put out their light then open the door. Quickly Aloof enters. Just as quickly her neighbors shut the door behind her. A single lamp is lit inside the house. Towels and other cloths are stuck under the door so that no smell can escape. From a secret cellar Tildon takes a half of an animal's carcass, which he had slain some two nights earlier, and places it on their table. After Shary cooks the remaining meat the three eat heartily of the forbidden food. "This is too delightful a treat to deny one's self," Shary admits. "That is only the beginning ..." Aloof promises her all too willing students. The sorceress then leans over and kisses Tildon. The wife frowns. The teacher smiles. Aloof then leans over and kisses Shary. The woman is again surprised at the pleasure she gets from this second forbidden act. The three of them are very inventive in the debauchery they can think to do.

The magician did not come to this town to seduce a single couple. Her goal is to seduce them all then move on to the next village then the next and so on

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until she fulfills her promise to Kamar. It isn't long before the three have others join them. Soon after that more are added to their number. Before anyone realizes what is happening the whole village has adopted this new lifestyle. After that it is easy for the sorceress to convince them to kill their enemies, the demons. Then soon after that, she has Humans plotting to kill other Humans in order to possess what the other owns. And when this village is lost to Kamar, the sorceress Aloof alongside her new apprentices, Shary and Tildon, move on to the next village and then the next and so on and so on. Aloof wanders, but not aimlessly. This evil creature has a purpose to her travels.

The angel Elohim has taken yet another human form and a new name, Gail.
This new role is so the evil ones will not know her to avoid her and make war.

Though she wanders still she too travels with a purpose. Again she casts herself in the role of a peer speaking the word of the OMNI ONE. Everywhere the beautiful creature goes Humans do gather. They are mesmerized by her words. Their hearts are filled with hope. The fear which has consumed them is dissipated into nothingness. In one such village a female rabble-rouser stands and speaks, "Can you show us this PARIDISIO?" The angel answers her, "PARIDISIO will come after ALL have been redeemed, but this you already know Aloof." Uncovering her face the sorceress answers, surprised that this seeming stranger knows her name, "After ...? Isn't that just a fancy way of saying deny yourself what

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can be seen for the promise of what cannot?" Some Humans whisper under their breaths. Some like the words of the sorceress. "You are here because you believe sorceress," the one once known as Elohim accuses. "I believe in the possibility, but I live for today, Aloof replies. "I deny myself nothing, she adds." A fool shouts out, "Now that is something that I can believe in." Using the power of truth the angel rains upon Aloof's misleading words, "You deny yourself the greatest of all pleasures, the light of the OMNI ONE. Without this gift none can enter into PARIDISIO." The crowd is moved by the words of promise, but Aloof responds, "I can taste the flesh of a boar, caress my lover's skin, fill my eyes with the beauty of another-can I do this with the light of this OMNI ONE?" The loyal one has an answer. "Yes ... and so much more. You can even experience senses you have as of yet to know." Throwing off her cloak, Aloof shows her perfect naked body and cries out, "Let us sample your wares, merchant of faith. Here are mine." The humans turn to the angel, hoping to see some proof of what she speaks. "My wares are not of this Earth, but well worth the wait," the angel answers.

A beaten Aloof covers herself again. "So say you." Turning to the crowd the sorceress makes her offer. "What I offer to you can be yours here and now." The villagers turn away from the sorceress and form a circle around the angel then listen for more of her words of hope and goodness.

As is the way of Humankind, under the cover of darkness, many skulk back to the sorceress' door. Smiling, she beckons them into her spider's web, but

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only the weakest of the weak have been swayed away from the truth.

The loser, Aloof, has learned a powerful lesson. Her lies cannot pierce the power of truth, so she tries to stay a step ahead of the angel in her wandering.

Meanwhile, one of the wanderers has found a home. Coulier has settled beneath the Ranier mountain range where he begins to build his new army. He has vampires, draillums, werewolves, changelings, beast with no names. In his heart he believes he is almost ready to seek out his brother once more.

The angel Erotis has also found a home. Her only ambitions are to avoid her brethren and to begin to explore the pleasures of her earthly existence.

The sullen wizard Steven settles only for a moment for he knows that what he seeks becomes harder and harder to find as demons and Humans spread out across this globe. What he seeks is solitude. In this moment he has what he seeks as he sits alone and contemplates his loss.

Strangely enough all of the wanderers have found the same moment to call an end to their wandering.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 9 - A NEW LOVE

Busy are the HANDS of THE OMNI-ONE and the six angels. The task they have kept to all these eons, building a PARIDISIO so grand and beautiful that it will bring tears to the eyes of those who see it for the first time, has begun to show bare its fruit. If I could but explain to you the spiral stairways which shimmer of some metal Earth will never know. If only my words were eloquent enough to describe the structures, so like palaces, that each will have to call his own. Again I say, if my tongue were more skilled than that of a serpent I could speak of the exotic plants and creatures or the colors not found in the rainbow. Forgive me that I cannot tell you of these things, but I am merely a mortal man, relaying what has been discerned to me from the MOST HIGH.

Even with the heavy load of their duties there is still time for the six angels to worry about the occurrences on Earth. Wet is the Earth from the tears that the six angels do cry when they look down and see the broken wizard, Steven. True, he has reaped what he has sown, but Humans are as children in the scheme of things and truly have much to learn. The angels go to the MOST HIGH and plead Steven's case. This is the first plea for mercy ever heard.

The angel who now calls herself Gail rests from her works on the plains of Jordel in her Human form. Since her assigned duty is to teach all she wonders why she has been instructed to wander so far from the lands of humankind, demons and angels.

As she gazes up at the sky she can see past the

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clouds, the moon and the stars. The busy hands of her fellow angels she sees and the results of their works. She is homesick. The VOICE of THE OMNI ONE is heard only by her. "A magician holds the scales of eternity in his fragile hands. Be his guardian, be his conscience. Heal his soul." The angel moves on. Deeper and deeper into the lands of exile and further and further away from civilization she journeys.

Meanwhile, in the caverns of the Sibling Breed, Kamar, misses Aloof. Even the wicked heart of Kamar recognizes that Humankind has the capacity to feel both good and evil then to choose one over the other. The beasts nature is such that they can only do evil. This is why when a Human chooses to follow him over the OMNI ONE the angel feels elevated higher than any of his powers can ever move him. With Aloof gone and Marshal being one of the lowest of men Kamar feels something new. He feels alone. Loneliness is a haunting, aching specter that will not surrender its captive without a fight.

In Kamar's bed chamber, above his mantle place, next to the bubble which holds Damien, is a golden urn. Inside the urn are the ashes that once was Sessation.

The fallen angel walks to the mantle place and removes the golden urn. He pours the ashes upon the floor and calls out, "Phoenil Liban! Rise from the ashes!" The ashes transform into a fiery bird. The flames burn away and as they do the bird takes on the Human form of Sessation. The angel smiles then

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declares, "No longer shall you be known as Sessation, but forever more the Phoenix. Come to me." The Phoenix crosses the few feet between them and embraces her savior. The two kiss and their bodies are surrounded by a flame that does not burn either of these two.

Far from the caves of Kamar a lone female traveler enters into the woods of Banai. Villains lay in wait. So'ei and his fellow vampires wait alongside the first beast with no name and those he has infected. They spy a fragile looking creature. "This is hardly the work for a vampire. You with no name bring her to the caverns as one of your own," So'ei instructs. Then the vampire and his kind fly home to the caves leaving the other demons to their task.

The female sits down to rest. Out of the brush the first beast with no name and his kind appear. A shadowy figure swoops in between the female and the beasts. The awe inspiring figure slices many of the creatures in half. The female jumps to her feet. "No! Do not harm them. They know not what they do." The wizard - Steven - laughs. "That may be true, but you will be no less a beast after their scratch than if they did know." The remaining beasts with no name run away. The creatures have had their fill of this powerful stranger.

The battle is over so the wizard turns to leave. "Stay! I long for the company of another," the unknown woman request. Steven hesitates then speaks, "I am not fit company for Human or beast." Smiling the woman takes Steven's hand and leads him back to where she had sat before the attack. She answers him

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"Maybe you judge yourself too harshly. Maybe you merely have lessons to learn." This stranger sits smiling up at him. The magician sits down next to her and smiles. It is the first time the magician has smiled in more than a thousand years.

"My name is Steven. What is yours?" he asks. "Some call me Gail. They say that I blow in and out of their lives like the wind." He smiles again. "A pleasant breeze which softens the harsh heat of troubled souls," he flatters her. "And you? Are you always the hero of wayward females?" she asks. Steven laughs. "Never before have I been mistaken for a hero." Taking his chin in her hand Gail looks into Steven's eyes. "You risked much to save me," she reminds him. Coolly he turns away. "I risked nothing. Those creatures were no match for me," he assures Gail. Again Gail takes his chin in her hand. She kisses his cheek. "Maybe their master would not look kindly upon you helping me." The magician looks into Gail's eyes. "I care little about the desires of the likes of him." The wizard places his arm protectively and affectionately around Gail's shoulder. "Worry not about those villains for you are now under my protection. Hiding her amusement over the fact the wizard believes she needs his help Gail moves closer to Steven.

Miles away from this tender new beginning the Phoenix and Kamar lay together in each other's arms with their lust fulfilled for the moment. Kissing her body and laughing, the angel confesses, "I thought that I could only have feelings for the one called Aloof, but you touch me in ways I have never dreamed possible." The newly arisen creature answers

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him, "Do not mistake passion for caring. Maybe I touch you because it has been more than one thousand years since I have made love. Maybe it is because having lost life I have a greater appreciation for the pleasures it avails one." Smiling she continues, "Then again maybe there is love between us." The two creatures kiss passionately then wrestle playfully upon Kamar's massive bed.

Hand in hand Steven and Gail exit the woods of Banai. Steven looks back one last time. "I thought that I would spend an eternity in penance there," he admits. "The OMNI ONE has greater plans for you," Gail assures him. "And how would you know that?" he asks. "Because I asked," she answers. The two walk silently side by side, hand in hand. Blessings come to those who keep faith. Yes, Elohim is no longer alone.

Over the years that follow Steven listens as Gail teaches. The message of hope slowly changes his heart. He begins to believe that he must have a hand in the molding of this PARIDISIO. As they lay side by side upon the hills of Lanik he turns to her. "What is my role in all of this?" he asks. "The same as everyone else ... love and you will change the world." Kissing the woman, he asks. "Is loving you enough ...?" Laughing Gail answers, "I believe that for this moment and for this time-yes. It is enough."

Out in the open and under the eyes of those Earthbound and those a world above Gail and Steven make love, unashamedly, as love is meant to be. The

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angels above smile and know that for this time the road grows smoother toward PARIDISIO.

There are many lessons to be learned in the distance between the beginning and PARIDISIO. The most important lesson to be learned is that there is a difference between passion and love. Passion is a fire which consumes all in its path. Love is a flame, confined and controlled and serves to warm all who have the good fortune to share it.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 10 - CHRISTEN'S FALL

A slither of golden sunlight peeks over the eastern horizon to announce the coming of day. Or maybe this day it should be said the coming of the days of man and beasts. These days will be called the Days of Stepping. For the wars that come in these days do take each of us a step closer to destruction or to PARIDISO.

A four year old Nathan lives in the town of Faith. The small boy carries a bucket almost as large as he is. Making his way to the lake he then fills the bucket with water. He struggles mightily, but the bucket will not budge. The determined young boy tilts the bucket. Half of its contents spill upon the bank of the lake. Again he tries to move the unyielding weight, but to no avail. Tilting the bucket again he pours all but enough for a single glass. Proudly he scampers back to his home to show off his accomplishment.

A beautiful Madeline, Nathan's mother, is cooking breakfast. The sweet aroma of sliced apples fills the air. No flesh of any animal will you find cooking in this household or any other household of the town of Faith.

The ruggedly handsome Vanguard, Nathan's father and Madeline's husband, enters their home carrying a load of firewood. Nathan pushes by his father. Gleefully the boy yells, "I did chores! I did chores!" The parents smile. "Let us see what you have done," Vanguard instructs his son. The boy takes a glass and places it on the floor. He then pours the contents of the bucket into the glass. The

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glass runs slightly over. Pride beams on the young boy's face. "See! See! The glass couldn't even hold it all." The parents laugh. "A good job my son." Vanguard replies as he hugs his son then picks him up into the air and twirls him around.

Later that day Nathan, Madeline and Vanguard work in the field alongside the other townsfolk. Nothing belongs to one. All share in the work and in the rewards. A man of little faith, their neighbor-Millen looks up at the sky and instructs Vanguard. "Faith is a wonderful thing, but come war give me a broad sword." The town's leader, Vanguard, shakes his head for he disagrees with his neighbor. "No sword you can carry is as broad or as strong as a single finger of The MOST HIGH," confidently he assures his neighbor.

The two men turn their attention back to their chores. Close by the two men Madeline has heard her husband's words and she smiles proudly at this man of faith whom she loves.

The day's work is done and all of the town of Faith is gathered together in the open field where no work save honoring of the MOST HIGH is allowed at this hour. "It is your turn to speak Vanguard," Millen reminds the shy man. "Then HIS Will Be Done," Vanguard proclaims. Looking out over all who are gathered, Vanguard's heart is warmed. "An angel came and spoke to us of things that have passed and of things yet to come. It is not an easy way that she promises us, but she does promise that after the arduous tasks are done the rewards will be great. I teach my son that doing what is right is its own

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reward, but I am grateful that the OMNI ONE is generous enough to add to our bounty." Each person meditates on Vanguard's words.

Elsewhere, a man, three women and a child travel the Trail of Tears - a road so named because too often the attacks of the beasts come along this road. The man keeps a keen eye upon this dangerous road. He only takes his eye off of the road ahead occasionally to look back and check on the safety of the women and the child. *Wiiisssss* ... goes the sound of the wind, or so the man hopes it to be. *Wiss ... wiiss*. This time the sound comes from the opposite direction. The man now knows that this is no wind. Drawing his sword he swings it wildly through the air. "Auuwggghhhh ...!" some unseen source does cry out. Upon the edge of the man's sword he sees amber colored blood. Running toward the women and the child he waves his arms and yells, "Take cover! Hide ! Take cover!"

One of the women feels a pin-like prick upon the back of her neck. She falls to the ground. Her eyes begin to roll around in her head, her legs kick convulsively and her skin turns amber in color. The second woman trips and falls. Laying in a heap in the middle of the road she curses and wails. A few inches in front of her face appears a draillum, Tisks. The demon leans down and all so gently bites her lip, barely breaking the skin. The second woman experiences the same fate as the first.

Crazed to survive, the man swings his sword at what appears to be nothing more than empty air. His arms tire and he holds the sword in front of him. Behind

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him he feels hot moist breath upon his neck. Turning around he comes face to face with Barkus. The draillum sticks his fingers into the man's eyes and plucks them out. The creature then pops the eyeballs into its mouth.

The first draillum, Tisks, appears before Barkus and the man then shakes his finger in mocking disappointment at his fellow draillum "Tisk ... tisk ... tisk," he jokingly admonishes his brethren demon. As an afterthought Barkus pricks the man's skin with his nails. The man too is changed to draillum ven though now blind he will be left behind.

The third woman has grabbed the child and run into the thick brush. She hides with the young child at her breasts. A horde of draillum beat the brush in search of the third woman. The child begins weeping mournfully. The woman tries all so desperately to hush the child, but to no avail. The brush is parted and the woman looks up to see three of the demons grinning down at her. The last woman takes her knife and plunges it into her very own heart. She slumps to the ground, dead.

"Damn it!" Tisks swears in resignation. "What of the child?" Barkus asks. "... too small a fish to bother ... Toss him back ... today." They leave the child alone and unattended to fend for itself for that is the nature of their evilness.

The lovely Desiree and her pack of werewolves scour the valley some ten miles north of Tisks and the other draillums. There the Humans are in larger numbers and armed to the teeth. The mother of all

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werewolves charges through the mass of humanity, biting and scratching her enemies with her venomous teeth and nails. The stubborn foes stab the she-wolf as she goes by, but these Humans' blades are made of iron not of silver. The other werewolves wade into the battle. Only the wolves whose heads are severed from their bodies are lost. The others will recover from their wounds. Soon the surviving Humans have been infected and are now a part of the pack.

After rejoining one another the menacing sight of Desiree's pack and Tisks' draillums can be seen marching toward So'ei and his vampires, the changelings and the demons with no names. To the evil ones delight the sorceress-Aloof has done as she had promised, she has increased their number also. Now they no longer fear the war mongers.

The assurance is echoed by one demon after another. The angel Elohim cannot be everywhere, they tell themselves in order to build up their courage for the battle to come. The foul pestilence they secrete as they go kills the soil and the plants that had once grown beneath their feet. Their footsteps leave naught, but death.

Atogony is diametrically opposed to the town of Faith. They believe in nothing except the power of the sword and mace as well as the swiftness of the arrow. The hearth of the blacksmith and the ovens of the Wild Boar Inn do spew flames and smoke twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. In this town weapons are always being made. The flesh of animals is believed to be necessary to fuel a fighting man. War is their religion.

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A boy of twelve, Cameron, proudly breaks branches from a tree. He gathers the branches under his arm and runs, heading back toward his home.

The warrior leader Christen is Cameron's father. This reluctant father enters the house ahead of his son. Christen loves his child, but fears that this love may bring him more grief. A dead boar Christen carries over his shoulder. The father drops the animal in the center of the room. A lovely, but hard woman, Claire - Cameron's surrogate mother and Christen's mate--for this week, frowns at the mess he's made. "You could have put it on the table. I'll be cleaning that blood from the floor for weeks," she complains. "Who says I'll keep you that long?" the annoyed man answers. "If not you there are plenty who will," she assures him. Excitedly Cameron tugs at his father's shirt tail. He displays the bounty of branches he has collected proudly. "These will make good arrows," he tells his father. A frown announces Christen reservations as he takes the branches from the boy and inspects them. "I'll be the judge of that, boy," he declares.

In the streets of Atogony, boys and men spar with swords and maces. The women and girls practice with bows, arrows and knives. War is not a choice. It is a way of life.

As night blankets the town the beasts have come to Atogony. They have come many times before and many times before they have been beaten back. This town knows what is needed are blades of silver for the werewolves, stakes of wood for the vampires, ripping the hearts from the draillums and any instrument of

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death for the demons metamorphite as well as the demons with no names. Atogonists know how to kill the beasts.



Months earlier three wanderers had reached the borders of Atogony. The unknown characters are met with hostility by the guards at the border. "Why should we not sever your heads from your bodies?" Quillon asks of the three. These villains have cloaked their true identities with magic. Aloof, Shary and Tildon cloak the three sixes that should be prominent upon

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their foreheads. The border guards believe they see battle scars on each of the villains arms and faces. It is Aloof who answers the one who spoke, "We left the carcasses of ten or more beasts some twenty miles down the road in order to reach Atogony." A second guard places his sword to Aloof's throat, "... and why should we believe you ?" Aloof turns the palms of her hands outward to face the guards. A blackish gray mist is emitted as she speaks, "Because my magic compels you to do so!" The demeanor of the guards change. The men lower their weapons, laugh and smile. "Such strident warriors as you are always welcome in Atogony," Quillon answers as he waves the Sorceress and her apprentices onward toward Atogony.

Because of the battle and drinking skills along with their lustful natures the three villains are quickly and enthusiastically accepted into the warrior community.

A vision has foretold to Aloof that tonight is the night the beast will be victorious over the warmongers. Having made their excuses the three are hidden in closed quarters. They will be interested observers of this battle. Patiently they await the coming of the ungodly legion of the beasts. "Yes, this time the war town will fall," this all evil creatures have sworn.

As the moon shines brightest in the midnight sky there is the sound of a great herd charging toward the town of Atogony. Warriors sleep lightly so they are awakened by their enemies approach. The masses enter the street and look up at the clear Winter's

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sky. Some expect the fireworks of lightning to accompany the foreboding roars. Christen cries out, "That is no thunder. Get your weapons! Prepare for war!" The townsfolk, all except Aloof, Shary and Tildon, do as they are told. The streets are now filled with men and women, boys and girls prepared to defend their homes and this warrior's lifestyle. Inside her home Aloof holds Shary and Tildon protectively in her arms.

In the center of the town stands the familiar unwavering figure of the warrior Christen. The leader brandishes a mace in one hand and a broad sword in the other. "Let them come !" he screams. "It's been too long since I've tasted of their blood!" The other townsfolk scream out in exultation, "YEEEEEESSSSSSSS ...!"

Well above the heads of the warmongers the vampire - So'e'i flies entering the town of Atogony. At the same time beneath the beast most of the Sibling Breed and newborn demons charge on foot. The beasts numbers seem as great as the American buffalo at their peak. The sword of Christen draws first blood. A drailum falls - its heart and amber blood spilling out of its chest onto the ground. The beast swarm. The Humans themselves into the fracas. Swords, mace and arrows strike their targets. Claws, talons and teeth seek into human flesh. Rivers of blood, red , purple and amber blood flow down the streets of Atogony.

Soe'i spots Christen. The beast calls out his name, "Christen ...! I know you and I have come here tonight to kill you myself. Your head shall be a trophy for

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my master !" So'ei exclaims. Christen marches menacingly toward So'ei with weapons in hand. "Many have tried beast, but instead their heads adorn my trophy case. A sword swings at So'ei. The beast lunges out of the way. "I am faster and stronger than any enemy you have faced before," So'ei brags. "That will make me all the prouder to have your head," Christen answers laughing. So'ei bounces toward the man swinging his sharp claws. The creature's claws come so close, but instead only rip Christen' shirt sleeve.

The battle among the other Humans and the other beasts does not go well for the Humans. Although the number of fallen beast is greater the beast had began this battle with twice the number as the Human's. The Humans have tossed down their bows for close combat ill suits this weapon. The sounds of slashing and barrages of blows echo through the night.

Hundreds of the beasts stand staring at a mere handful of surviving Humans. Evil laughter flows from the lips of the beasts.

Inside a frightened, Shary and Tildon quiver with fear as they hear the ear piercing screams of terror coming from outside. This time the beasts' numbers are too many. Like a mother the sorceress comforts her apprentices. Pushing the hair away from their foreheads she reveals the mark of the demon, 666, and tells them, "You are one with me. This mark protects you from those with evil natures. The Humans have done harm to the beasts. Aloof's comforting words are shattered by Human and inhuman

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wailing coming from outside their doors.

With determination and hatred Christen stares into the eyes of So'ei. "Die ... fiend !" he screams as he throws himself at the vampire. This time the vampire does not miss. The vampire ducks Christen's blow and strikes one of his own. His claws rip through the flesh of the Man's shoulder. The leader falls to his knees in anguish. "I would let you live as part of my pack, but you Human are too strong of nature. If I were to let you change you would use those powers to destroy me and my kind," the beast admiringly assures his enemy. "I shall meet you in hell and we shall spend an eternity in battle there," Christen predicts. "I look forward to that day, but don't be disappointed if I tarry a while here in this life," So'ei mocks Christen. "I promise you that you and your kind shall perish at the hands of one who was born Human," again Christen confidently predicts So'ei's fate. Raising his claw then slashing downward So'ei cuts Christen's throat. The leader of the warmongers dies as the other demons swarming over the few remaining Humans of Atogony.

Soon it is silent once more. The three evil ones - Aloof, Shary and Tildon sleep through the remainder of this disquieting night.

In the morning Aloof, Shary and Tildon exit the house. The village is empty. If not for the pieces of Human and beastly flesh alongside the pools of red, purple, blue and amber blood as well as battered buildings and shattered possessions, one would not have known that the Humans had not just quietly walked away from this dead village.

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"Come, my pets. We have many a village more to spoil before our days are done." The sorceress laughs her evil laugh. Shary and Tildon look about and wonder now what they have gotten themselves involved in, but know that it is far too late to choose another path. Heads bowed in abject resignation, the two apprentice magicians follow quietly down the bloodied road.

As they march homeward the legions of demons, Aloof, Shary and Tildon see ahead of them a blue glow encasing the town of Faith. Without understanding why it is they are afraid. Without stopping they pass by this village, leaving all there unharmed.

The villagers of Faith watch as the beasts march by close enough to smell their stench. A surprised Millen stands at the town's edge. Beside him stands Vanguard. The two men watch the legion of So'ei. They are so close the men can smell the rancid cloak of death the creatures wear. Turning to his neighbor, Millen says, "I don't understand. They could have breezed through here like the winds of a hurricane and we could have done nothing except be crushed under their great power." There is an explanation. "If they could have they would have," Vanguard assures his friend, " ... but there is no power greater than the power of the MOST HIGH."

The faith filled town of Faith stands still, but the warmonger Christen and his followers have fallen.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 11 - COULIER'S ARMY

It is time to look back for a moment. Where there is no light, no warmth nor even companionship -- this place is the caverns of Ranier. In this time no one nor any thing exist here save Coulier, the fallen angel. Here he hides, plans and begins to build for yet another war.

In the dank, damp loneliness of these caverns Coulier scoops up handful after handful of mother Earth - the clay which is used to form life. The angel stands the handfuls of clay in a long line reaching deep down into the pit of the caves. He remembers how each demon was formed and repeats the actions of each of the angels, including his own. He breathes life into most and spits upon the others. Soon he has an army of vampires, werewolves, draillums, metamorphites and even the demons with no name. The only thing his army is missing is a magician.

The first of Coulier's new creations, Mognail, is a vampire. The vampire is designated Coulier's right hand and the angel promises him that he can rule Earth once the angel ascends to PARIDISIO. In exchange Mognail pledges his undying allegiance to the angel, such as the pledge of a vampire may be worth. The fallen angel instructs his lieutenant to bring him a Human, unspoiled.

After Mognail has left, Coulier calls the second of his demons, the demon with no name into his chamber. "The first of your kind is still loyal to me even after my defeat at the hands of Kamar and his magicians. The first with no name came to me in my

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exile and told me of a glass case in the lair of Kamar. In this glass case is an emerald encrusted chalice and inside the chalice are the remains of the angel Sinsel You will go to Kamar's lair and steal for me the emerald encrusted chalice and bring it here. If you succeed I shall create for you a house of gold," Coulier promises. The demon with no name makes the garbled noise that could be joyous laughter.

Rolling green hillsides and the small but lush nearby forest belies the sinister night that is afoot. It is night in the town of Faith. Upon the hill overlooking the home of Vanguard, Madeline and Nathan someone sits alone. Their neighbor and supposed friend, Millen, sits there, as he does most every night. For though Millen is cleaved to Tessie as Madeline makes her way from her home toward the lake, the glint in Millen's eyes is unmistakable. He covets his neighbor's wife above all else that he knows is good.

Moving stealthily behind Madeline is her neighbor until they are both hidden from the view of any prying eyes. All so quietly he comes up from behind her. Millen places his hands playfully over her eyes. The faithful wife believes her stalker to be Vanguard. Laughing Madeline teases the unknown culprit, "What if my husband should happen upon us?" The fool thinking this to be encouragement spins Madeline around then kisses her passionately. Just before she is kissed the surprised Madeline sees her friend's face and is stunned. Once she recovers from her shock she pushes Millen away then scratches his face deeply. "How dare you ...?" she asks. A confused

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Millen offers in his defense, "You said ... What if your husband should happen upon us?" Now she thinks she understands his confusion. Tenderly reaching out for Millen's cheek to make amends is the sadden friend. He recoils from her touch. "It was a joke. I thought you were my Vanguard," she explains.

As a gesture of continued friendship and forgiveness Madeline smiles at Millen. "Let us forget this terrible mistake. Bring Tessie and dine with me and Vanguard tonight," she begs of him. "No! I will not forget that I love you and want you!" Millen turns and runs away.

Knowing not what else she can do Madeline makes her way home in hopes that the foolish words and act will be forgotten.

In the heavy brush near the end of town Millen hides in shame. Unnoticed by the troubled man above him in a tree sits Mognail. The vampire laughs. The man looks up in terror at the man-bat. Softly and hypnotically the vampire speaks, "Do not be afraid. I am not here to hurt you. On the contrary ... I am here to make all of your dreams come true." Millen laughs. "Why would a demon want to make my dreams come true?" Swiftly Mognail flies down and lands beside the still frightened man. "... because we can help one another," the fiend answers.

The morally weak man looks around to be sure that no one can see nor hear him as he contemplates making a deal with this demon. "Can you truly make all my dreams come true?" Millen asks. The vampire smiles

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knowingly. "I saw you kiss your neighbor's wife. She can be yours. Any woman you desire can be yours. Power, wealth, comforts and more can be yours. Just come with me." At first he hesitates for a moment then the man extends his hand. The vampire takes Millen's hand and lifts them both into flight.

Meanwhile the second of Coulier's new creations, the demon with no name, walks into the lair of Kamar unnoticed. He is just one more faceless evil among a sea of evil. Down into the belly of hell he slithers. Deeper and deeper he makes his way into a land without hope. The Phoenix takes note of the this demon with no name, for unlike the other demons this one seems to move with purpose. Confident that she must be mistaken - after all these demons are mindless slaves doing Kamar's bidding or the bidding of whomever is in power. She decides to ignore the fiend.

Within feet of Kamar himself the beast does pass. It is too insignificant a being for Kamar to pay any heed. The creature has no fear. The beast takes delight in fooling one so powerful as the fallen angel. It would not have been so brave if it had any idea of how much anguish the angel could have and would have administered to him if he were caught. Ignorance is truly bliss.

The creature makes his way toward the forbidden bedroom chamber of Kamar seemingly unaware of the terrible fate that could befall him.

The door to the bedroom chamber creeps open. Stealthily the thing makes its way inside. The beast

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cannot help but dawdle among the many shiny things in this grand room. It sits upon the golden chairs, juggles the silver spoons like some circus buffoon then he freezes. There, in the corner of the room it stands - the most beautiful glass cabinet. Inside it is a trophy worth a ton of gold, he thinks - the emerald encrusted chalice. The chalice shines almost as bright as a noon day sun. The beast makes it's way over to the cabinet. Just then the knob to the door begins to turn. Quickly the beast does hide himself.

Two new lovers, Kamar and the Phoenix, enter the room. They close the door behind themselves. The Phoenix sniffs at the air, as though she knows that something is amiss. Kamar grabs the beauty into his arms and that quickly her suspicions are forgotten.

So involved in their lovemaking are these two that they do not notice the emboldened creature come from hiding, open the cabinet and steal the emerald encrusted chalice. Only once does Kamar stop his lascivious act, when the door to his chamber opens. A kiss from the Phoenix does distract him once more.

Coulier's second of his new creations moves as swiftly as a draillum as he makes his way past the vampires, the metamorphites and all the other demons of Kamar's lair. His heart does not stop racing until the mountain is far behind him. Stopping for a moment he admires the chalice. For the briefest of moments. He thinks to keep this treasure for himself, but he knows then he would have two angels and two armies of demons pursuing him to his grave. The demon wraps the chalice in leaves to hide its

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shiny face in order to silence his temptation then begins his trek home to Mt. Ranier.

As the beast with no name makes his way home with his ill-gotten gains Millen and Mognail near the lair of Coulier. The man looks down and sees the horde of demons scrambling about beneath them. Too late he begins to have second thoughts. Lightly they land among the beasts. The beasts salivate at the sight of a tasty Human. An angry Mognail opens his wings and slaps aside those who venture too close.

The vampire leads the man into the caves then down into the lair. The horrid sights Millen sees he had not imagined in his wildest nightmares. The true terror isn't felt by the man until he stands in the presence of the awe - inspiring fallen angel, Coulier, himself.

A wicked laughter reverberates throughout the caverns as the angel looks down upon the shivering mass of humanity that is Millen. Then like a patient father he speaks. "Do not be afraid. Think of me as a loving parent. I wish for you all of the things of which you dream. My only purpose is to guide you through this labyrinth we call life." Nervously the man dares to speak. "Everyone promises me my heart's desires, but at what price I must ask?" With malicious forethought the one who would rule PARIDISIO steps upon a beast with no name then turns toward the man and answers him, "The price is complete and total obedience." This is Coulier's ultimatum.

There is the noise of beasts scattering as the

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second beast with no name pushes them aside. It holds up the emerald encrusted chalice. The demons all want this prize, but shy away knowing that something so precious must surely be intended for Coulier himself.

Spotting the chalice, shining above all else, Coulier smiles. The second demon with no name makes his way to the feet of the angel. Without speaking the beast holds up the gift to its master. The angel takes it and admires it for a time. Then he looks down upon the beast with appreciation. "I will give you what I have promised." The beast stands up with open arms. With a biting snap the master instructs his servant. "Later! I have much to do right now!" This demon scampers away.

The clever Mognail looks suspiciously at the chalice and wonders what surprises the evil one has in store for him. The angel turns to Mognail. "Protect the Human while I tend to more pressing matters ... in private!" he orders.

Believing it wise to remove the temptation of human flesh from his fellow demons Mognail and the Human seek the fresh air of the woods outside Mt. Rainier.

For his next task Coulier seeks the privacy of his bedroom chamber. It is not as grand as the chamber Kamar created, but still more grand than any palace Humankind has ever known. The angel holds the emerald encrusted chalice gingerly in his hands. "Sinsel, prepare to live again." Tilting the chalice he pours the green slush upon the floor of his bedroom chamber. "Tilgra Eternil!" he calls out. The

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green slush bubbles then steams. The slush slides away from a mass of flesh. The flesh glows then transmutes. To the angel's delight the beautiful naked Sinsel stands up and looks into Coulier's eyes. They smile. "Aaugh ...!" Sinsel tries to speak. "Rest, sweet angel soon you will be yourself again and we will talk of what has passed and what is yet to come." Almost lovingly Coulier lifts Sinsel and carries her to his bed then places her down to rest.

Nightmares of the past thousand - plus years' ordeal haunts Sinsel's dreams. For days the angel tosses and turns upon Coulier's bed. After some time the resurrected angel awakens. Across from Sinsel, in a silver chair, sits Coulier "How long have I slept?" the angel asks. "Three months more," her fellow angel answers. "Then I have slept long enough. Let us be about our revenge," she speaks with the confidence of one who has been wronged. Coulier's evil laughter fills his bedroom then filters outward throughout the caverns.

Later that day Mognail and Millen stand in the magnificent palace room before Coulier. This time an angel unknown to those gathered, Sinsel, stands at Coulier's side. "This is my sister-angel, Sinsel. She shall help us conquer our enemies and gain the things we each long most to possess," he instructs his followers. Each demon cheers save Mognail. The vampire fears that his position and his rewards will go to this new interloper.

Looking at Millen, Coulier points to him and crooks his finger, beckoning the man to his side. Tentatively, the Human makes his way to Coulier then

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kneels before him. "My sister and I shall give to you three gifts each, that you may be the most powerful of all magicians." Anticipating what is to be the Human smiles. First to lay hands on Millen is the newly awakened Sinsel. After laying hands upon the Human she steps away and watches. The deluge of power is almost more than he can bear. He cries out in agony. The first angel laughs as Millen reels in pain. Before the man can recover Coulier steps forward and places his hands upon the man. Again Millen cries out in anguish. As Coulier steps away the new wizard passes out.

It is days later when Millen awakens in Coulier's bed. Looking up he finds the two evil angels watching over him. "There were times when we didn't think that you were going to make it," Coulier admits. "No one said that I could die," Millen accuses. "For great rewards there must always be great risks," the angel assures the magician. "What are these great rewards?" Millen asks angrily of the angels. "Sit up and feel the power which surges through your being," Coulier instructs. Doing as he is told, Millen sits up.

Strange sensations course through his being. Millen's mind explodes into a kaleidoscope of colors that merge into a single thought, "I feel as powerful as a god." A wicked smile turns the magician's lips upward. "Think of something that you would have," Kamar instructs his new pupil.

There is only one reason that the villain has risked all to be here. Millan concentrates then Madeline appears before him. The human smiles. The beautiful

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woman frowns then fades away. "Nooo ... ! You have cheated me!" he accuses the angels after the object of his lust does fade away.

"Fear not. In time you will learn to control your powers more, then she will not be able to pull herself away from you," the mentor promises, his promise nothing more than one more lie.

The army of Coulier is finally complete. Coulier, Sinsel, Mognail and Millen stand before the many legions of demons. "We shall know power or we shall know oblivion!" Coulier steals the creed of his brother angel - Kamar - to mock him. The beasts roar out the creed, "We shall know power or we shall know oblivion!" The demons with no name grumble some unintelligible garble.

The six angels look down upon Coulier's mischief and their hearts are heavy once more.

Choosing not to dwell upon the shenanigans of the fallen angel Coulier the six angels in heaven busy themselves with the building of PARIDISIO. Still they can't help but wonder if there will ever be any need for such a place. They have seen these clouds before and they know that the storm of war is brewing.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 12 - ANOTHER WAR

Unaware of the plotting of the other angels and pleased with how his army's numbers grow, Kamar languishes in the arms of the Phoenix, free of care.

Now in his own service So'ei and the demons battles rage on. The claws of demons rip through the flesh of Humans - some are killed, some are changed. The swords and arrows of Humans pierce the flesh of demons while mace and ax bludgeon the skulls of the creatures. Some beasts are wounded, some taste of this existence no more.

With beast as well as is the case with Humans even in the most horrible of times there are brief moments of reprieve from the death and carnage. After the latest battle So'ei lies resting in his tent when the flap opens and in walks Lilly, the once daughter of Christen and Denever, no longer Human. A knowing smile creases her lips. The flap drops from her hand behind her then the two lose themselves in one another.

The werewolf is most like man of the demons. They cleave unto one of their own kind for life, as Desiree has cleaved unto Marcus. In the tent of the werewolves you can hear the sound of growling and fighting that accompanies their lovemaking.

Elsewhere the sorceress Aloof stands before an altar which she has made while Shary and Tildon kneel before her. You have served me well and learned much, but having the gift of foresight I have seen my own death so must prepare you to carry on without me." Aloof place's her hands upon Shary and Tildon.

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Her hands glow and some of her powers are transferred. The apprentices are journeymen now, but never will they be true magicians. Only an angel or the OMNI ONE can create a true magician.

Having tasted defeat at his brother's hand once Coulier seeks some greater advantage before waging war on his brother fallen angel. Coulier steps inside the golden home of his second creation again. Because of the demon's diminutive size, Coulier has made the structure small in dimensions. The angel has to bend down, almost folding himself in half, in order to enter the doorway. Inside the house he stands scrunched over. "Do you like my gift?" the angel asks. The beast grunts. "Would you like a larger house of gold?" The beast leaps for joy and grunts again. "Then I have another task for you to perform," Coulier informs the demon.

It is days later when Coulier's second creation slithers back into Kamar's lair. This time this demon with no name notices that there is something very different. The other demons glare at him as though they know that he does not belong. The creature figures that he is just being paranoid so he trudges on downward, deeper into the lair.

The demon has counted only twenty draillums, fifteen werewolves, ten vampires, thirty changelings and fifty of his kind. There were almost a hundred times as many that number when last he was here. They must be off waging war against the Humans, he deduces. This is the perfect time to attack, he believes and plans to inform Coulier.

To the demon's surprise, Kamar and the Phoenix stand

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a few feet ahead of him grinning from ear to ear. "I told you that the thief would return," the sorceress says. The beast looks down then back. He sees that every step he has taken has left a phosphorous blue trail. In desperation he tries to run, but is quickly surrounded by Kamar's demons. "What shall we do with you?" the Phoenix asks herself. "I think we shall all have some fun," she also answers. The demons cheer and raise the intruder above their heads. The torture has yet to begin, but already the beast screams in anticipation of what fate is about to befall him.

The Phoenix and Kamar stand laughing as the demons do their dirty work. Some of the creatures set Coulier's creation aflame, never enough to kill, only enough to maim. Another group tears at its flesh with their teeth and sharp talons. Still others pull at his limbs, as if the limbs will stretch yet stay intact. When the first limb tears from his body the beast does plead for mercy, swearing that he will tell all, in that garbled language only the OMNI ONE, angels, and his own kind can decipher. Kamar holds up his hand. The torture stops. The demon relates all of Coulier's plans to Kamar.

Once Kamar is sure that there is nothing more to learn from this one, laughing, he signals for the torture to begin again. As Kamar and the Phoenix leave the great throne room the sound of the beast's body being ripped into fours is the last they hear of it.

On the eve of all demons' birth day, now known as

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Ole' Hallow's Eve, Coulier greets the one he thinks is his demon with no name. It is actually a metamorphite in the form of the other demon. "Tell me all," the angel anxiously requests. The metamorphite tells the angel all that was true when the other beast was still alive. "Their numbers are few at the lair. The legions of demons are off waging war against the Humans. Now they are most vulnerable." Sinsel remembers the last time they thought they had the upper hand. "Could this be another trap?" she asks.

"They had no reason to hide anything from me. I was just one more insignificant demon," the metamorphite assures Coulier. Still skeptical, Sinsel orders, "Nevertheless, the demons shall lead this attack." Looking at the metamorphite she declares, "And you whom would assure us that this is no trap shall lead their way."

One of Kamar's draillums has been dispatched to bring home So'ei armies.

When the draillum tells So'ei, Tisks, and Aloof of all that has transpired and informs them that they have been ordered back to the lair, the vampire smiles. This is yet another chance for the angels to destroy one another and leave Earth for him, So'ei, to rule. The demons, the sorceress and her apprentices obey and head home.

Still scheming So'ei dispatches one of his fellow vampires to find the teacher - angel. He hopes that any angels who remain will be destroyed by the one who does not wish to rule.

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Ever closer to home So'ei's armies march.

Too late Coulier's armies march. They cannot reach the lair before So'ei's legions.

It is Lilly who returns with the position of the teacher-angel. The devious So'ei intentionally leads his armies close by the position of the teacher-angel. Leery of the sight they see Steven and Gail watch from atop a hill as the legion of demons march by at a blistering pace, seemingly not noticing or not caring about any of Humankind. "What fire do they go to put out?" Steven asks. "They are the ones who start fires. I think we had better be there to extinguish this flame," Gail instructs Steven. The two of them follow a short distance behind the demons.

When Aloof arrives back at the lair she is surprised to find Sessation both alive and on Kamar's arm. She smiles. "And I thought I had been a busy beaver. What other surprises do you have for me?" she asks. Like a jealous lover staking her claim Aloof walks over to Kamar and kisses him on the cheek.

The angel relates all to his sorceress, "Not only does Coulier have an army; he has resurrected Sinsel" Shaking her head in disgust, Aloof chastises Kamar "I told you to leave her remains in the earth that had swallowed her!" Laughing, Kamar answers arrogantly, "What good does it do to win a battle if one doesn't get to display the trophies of one's victory?" Annoyed she asks, "Did he free Damien as well?" The sorceress asks, "No. I guess he believed the coward more of a liability than an asset." Kamar

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answers.

Outside the caves Steven and Gail watch as the demons are deployed throughout the brush. "Who do they prepare to battle?" Steven wonders aloud. "It can only be angel against angel once more," Gail deduces. The wizard smiles in anticipation of what is to come. "Good. Maybe this time they will destroy one another," he regales. "That is not the way it is to be. All shall be redeemed. The OMNI ONE has assured me of this." Looking down at the demons Steven says, "Maybe some are beyond redemption."

Silently Gail watches as the metamorphite leads Coulier's army of demons into the trap. Once Coulier's demons are in the center of the opening, the changeling assumes his original form. From the heavy brush and the trees Coulier's demons converge upon the other beasts.

There is slashing of flesh and the seemingly unending splattering of blood. Soon the demons are so confused and taken by their blood lust that they don't care who is friend or foe. Limbs are being ripped from bodies and tossed about. On both sides the demons numbers are dwindling quickly.

The two who lead in this war, Kamar, on one side of the battle, and Coulier, on the other side, halt the mayhem. It is Kamar who speaks first, "Fallen angels, if we keep this up we will have to start building our armies anew. Why don't we make this battle as before, between angels and magicians?" Sinsel whispers in Coulier's ear, "The last time we were two stronger and yet we lost." Shaking his head

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Coulier answers his sister-angel, "No, we were two weaker. They did not believe, and when you and I saw Damien run it weakened our resolve. That is why we lost. Believe in me and we can defeat him!" Coulier assures Sinsel "Come brother with your magicians. If you dare ..." Coulier challenges.

The demons all run back into the brush. From their vantage point Steven and Gail watch as angel challenges angel. The three angels, Coulier, Sinsel and Kamar flare their magnificent wingspans and hover in mid-air, but again it is a magician, Aloof, who casts the first spell. "Oluk Niials!" Sharp spikes appear from nowhere and rain down upon Sinsel and Coulier. The two angels scream out in pain as the spikes pierce their wings and bodies, but quickly they puff out their chests and flap their wings, and the spikes are expelled toward the magicians and Kamar. Quickly Kamar holds out his hands. His hands glow a fiery red. A red light emanates from his palms and the spikes melt into silver metal raindrops that fall harmlessly to the ground. During the battle thus far the wizard Marshal hides.

The new wizard, Millen, speaks some language known only to the angels and magicians. Having no defense against Millen's attack the other magicians' ears begin to bleed, including those of Steven. It is then that he comes from cover and joins the fight. "Asgra Nomin," he says. Millen's mouth and nose are sealed. He cannot speak nor breathe.

A mistaken Kamar smiles when he sees Steven. "I knew you would return!" he exclaims. His delight changes to fear when he sees Gail, who has now taken her

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true form of Elohim. The other angels recognize the loyal one also. The three angels combine their efforts to attack Elohim. The loyal one spreads her wings and absorbs all that they send. She then flaps her wings and their attacks come back at them with ten times the force with which they were sent. The three angels fall earthbound, wounded. The fallen angels change into three golden orbs of light and make their escapes once more. Millen casts a second spell and the seal is dissolved. He can speak and breathe once more. This wizard makes his escape. Marshal had already made his escape earlier, as soon as Elohim appeared. The demons scatter to the four winds.

The two sorceresses Aloof and the Phoenix have not yet had their fill of battle. Despite foreknowledge of what is to come Aloof has to cast a



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sending swords of ice at Elohim. The ice swords are absorbed by the angel's wings then sent back from where once they came. The sorceress cries out again and again as the swords pierce her skin, but her death cry comes when the last sword pierces her heart. To the ground Aloof plummets.

At that moment Steven sees the Phoenix and thinks it is still Sessation "My love ... I thought you dead." he says with bated breath. "The one you knew as Sessation died some thousand-plus years ago," the Phoenix warns. The sorceress changes into the fiery bird she has become then flings flames at her former lover. Reacting quickly Steven casts a spell and an icy bow with arrows appear in his hands. His frozen arrow flies straight and pierces the heart of the Phoenix. The sorceress plummets to the ground. Both Steven and Elohim land beside the two fallen sorceress. Tears fill his eyes. "How could I lose you twice in a single lifetime?" Steven wonders. The Phoenix, eyes open and she answers him, "The Sessation you loved was lost long ago, but the Phoenix shall always rise from the ashes." The arrow melts. The Phoenix burns away into a pile of ashes.

The angel changes into her more human like form, Gail, once more. She takes Steven's hand. "I shall never be jealous of your love for her but, know that my love burns truest." The two walk away, hand in hand.

When it appears that the battlefield has been deserted Shary and Tildon appear from the heavy brush. Above their heads appears the spirit of Aloof. The spirit speaks to them. "Do as I instruct

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you, first gather the ashes of the Phoenix, then venture down into the caverns and find the crystal bubble containing the angel Damien. Do as I tell you and I may yet join you again."

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 13 - THE TIMES OF STEALTH

Two golden globes containing the angels Sinsel and Coulier, float off toward the east. The wizard Millen follows, for he knows now that he has much to learn if he is to survive in this new world of magic.

A single golden globe, the angel Kamar, floats off toward the west.

The wizard Marshal follows Kamar for he wants only to enjoy the debauchery of the lair and to hide from the prospect of war. It is his earnest hope that this last battle has taught Kamar a final lesson. The vampire So'ei has gathered most of the remaining demons and follows the single globe also. The eldest vampire believes his best chance to rule Earth lies with his creator.

Three fiends; Shary, Tildon and the first metamorphite grow their hair long to cover the sign of 666. They decide to hide among Humankind until the time is right for the two to resurrect their mentor and to enjoy other lustful games.

The fallen angels and the demons decide the next war will be one of stealth, so quietly they hide and rebuild their armies.

This time of quiet reflection for one of a wholesome nature is used by Gail to teach more humans the Truth of the OMNI ONE.

More than one more eon has passed since the second angel war. On the outskirts of London a convent

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stands as a monument to those who claim to teach the word of the OMNI ONE. Inside the walls of the convent earnest young women have pledged their lives to serving the OMNI ONE.

A novice to the order, one who has yet to take her vows - Claire enters the office of the mother superior. The mother superior faces the mantle place upon which, oddly enough, a golden urn sits. Excusing herself Claire speaks, "Mother superior ... I didn't mean to disturb you. You said that you wanted to speak to me in private." Turning to face Claire is Shary, who has found a perfect hiding place to make her mischief. With a lascivious smile the journeyman of magic instructs the girl, "Later my dear when the others are asleep." The puzzled young woman exits.

Later that night Claire is awakened by the light from an oil lamp. The door to her room closes. *It is* Shary making her way across the room then sitting on the edge of Claire's bed. The nervous young woman starts to speak. The evil creature places a finger to the young woman's lips. The mother superior blows out the lamp's flame, climbs under the covers with Claire then tenderly kisses the innocent girl's lips.

Others hide elsewhere. In the palace of the Duke of Lynch the cardinal Clarence Tildon's heels click as he makes his way down the marble hallways. The cardinal is one of the leading figures in the religious tribunals. Many noblemen fear his wrath more than that of the king.

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The cardinal enters the bedroom chamber of the Duchess of Lynch, a French noble woman named Antoinette De'Monet. The king himself selected her for the Duke. The Duchess is adorned in only a slip. She feigns modesty, covering herself with her hands. "Excuse me madam. I seem to be lost," the cardinal plays their game as he walks toward the woman, who sits on the edge of her bed. "It's a mistake that can lead you to my husband's guillotine," she says to him laughing. "... or lead your husband to the torture chambers of the tribunal as a wizard or such," he counters. The hussy stands and wraps her arms around her lover's neck. They lose themselves in a passionate embrace.

Hours later, after their passions have been satiated, the cardinal's men burst into the room followed by the Duke himself. Startled and afraid the woman demands to know what is going on. "Your husband wishes to marry another. You have been accused of casting a spell upon a holy man ... me. And so you see you will meet your death in the torture chambers of the tribunal," Tildon answers her.

Antoinette cries and pleads for mercy. "No. I confess my wrongs. Let me die swiftly and mercifully under the blade of the guillotine." The cardinal laughs. "Of course we must offer you the opportunity to confess, but we fear what your public words may be, so we must insure that no confession is forthcoming." Tildon then signals his men. Two of the cardinal's men hold the woman down while a third takes out his knife then he slices her tongue from her mouth. A fourth of the cardinal's men takes a

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hot poker from the fireplace and cauterizes the Duchess' tongue.

The young woman has mercifully long since passed out from her ordeal. "A pity to waste such a fine piece of tail," the cardinal proclaims. "But she had the manners of a pig and the mouth of a sailor. Too many times she has embarrassed me at court," the Duke reminds the cardinal.

The cardinal gets up from the bed naked. Immodestly he dresses in front of the other men. "I shall expect my payment, half of the next tax collection," he informs the Duke of his price. The Duke nods in agreement, assuring the cardinal that he knows what fate awaits him if he does not meet his obligations.

Business concluded Tildon returns to London. Once home he stands in the office of the grand cathedral in which he delivers mass each Sunday. Upon his mantle place sits in plain view a crystal bubble with an angel frozen inside.

Still others find other places of power to hide. The first metamorphite has assumed human form and takes the name of Daniel Brandt. It is under the guise of law keeper that he chooses to conceal his true identity. The fiend is the High Justice of the courts of England. His ability to assume anyone's form has allowed him to gather dirt with which to blackmail his way to the top of his chosen profession. His greatest weakness is that this one wants to believe he is the object of every mortal female's lust. If they do not succumb to his advances Brandt is compelled by his evil nature to

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end their lives, after all he is the creation of Erotis-the mother of seduction.

The chief of police for Scotland Yard has a most beautiful wife. Because of their professions, on many an occasion the police chief along with his beautiful wife, Michelle, attend the same social affairs as the High Justice. The cousin of an Earl has just been given a new judgeship, so of course there must be a celebration. The Earl himself is throwing a ball and most of the legal community is obligated to attend. When Brandt enters the ballroom almost every person is dancing the minuet.

There is a bounty of beautiful women and far too many stuffed shirt aristocrats attending the Earl's ball. The chief justice has arrived and is announced. As usual he attends these types of events alone. The female population of London considers him one of the best catches still available. The very beautiful niece of the Earl, Charmaine, decides that she will make him her husband or her lover. Lady Hilder is asked by Charmaine to make the polite formal introductions.

Considering herself quite the matchmaker Lady Hilder gladly introduces Charmaine to Brandt. The young woman is surprised that the High Justice shows no interest in her in the least. Maybe it's her youth or her flighty disposition, but quickly she realizes that his interest lies elsewhere. His eyes bore a hole in the back of Michelle's neck. The annoyed young woman, Charmaine, is unaccustomed to being ignored, especially not in favor of an older woman. "Beautiful isn't she?" Charmaine lets Brandt know

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that she knows that his interest lies in a married woman. Feigning disinterest he replies, "I was thinking of a case I have before me tomorrow. Will you excuse me?" He begs Charmaine's pardon then walks curtly away.

Later that evening Brandt hunts the estate grounds until he finds Michelle walking alone in the garden. He startles her when he quietly approaches and without permission takes her hand. "Ohh ..., Mr. Brandt ... you startled me." In a facetious act of chivalry he bows to her. "I apologize. It's just that I was about to leave when I realized that we had not danced together tonight." A wary Michelle looks about the empty garden and frowns. "Here a dance can be misconstrued," she offers. "Do you question my motives?" the demon asks. Now on the defensive, Michelle answers, "It is just a dance."

The music plays and the demon dances until the unsuspecting married lady finds herself moving deeper and deeper into the garden. The music stops. Michelle looks up into the beast's eyes and she is afraid. "Thank ... you," she nervously speaks. The fiend grabs her roughly into his arms and hungrily kisses her mouth. The faithful wife pulls away and slaps his face. The monster laughs, grabs her around her waist with one hand and tears open her dress with the other. Neither notice that Charmaine is a mere few feet away watching the attempted rape of Michelle. The foolish girl is enthralled instead of abhorred. Tears come to Michelle's eyes. A puzzled Brandt speaks, "You truly do not want me?" Vigorously Michelle shakes her head no. The beast changes to its true form. "Then I shall not take

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you," he surrenders. The changeling rips open Michelle's throat as he holds her in his arms. Blood spurts from Michelle's lovely neck all over the beast.

A now terrified Charmaine unleashes a set of ear piercing screams, "Aaaaeeeeei... aaaaeeeeei...!" Men come running from all directions with their swords drawn. Some wound the beast and the beast wounds and kills some of the men, but the creature does manage to escape. Moments later the police chief weeps as he stands over his dead wife. "What happened here?!" he demands. Charmaine babbles almost incoherently, "The creature is Daniel Brandt. I know not what witchery he uses but I did see him change into a monster. I saw him kill her." The men scale the palace wall and give chase into the street but, by now the changeling has assumed another form. The pursuers run right by him and do not recognize him. No one notices that the stranger bleeds.

While one villain hides for his life another hones his mystical skills. Over the eon that has passed Millen has learned well under the tutelage of the two angels, Sinsel and Coulier. The angels stand watching as he works spells he has been taught. Proud of their pupil are Sinsel and Coulier, but it is not enough. They know that they cannot create enough demons. Clay is in limited supply and after their defeat they are afraid to send their demons out into the world of man again. It is Millen who must go. He must corrupt Humankind for them as Aloof has for Kamar.

They speak to Millen about his task, "A demon spy

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has told us that men have spread themselves across this great orb. There is a new land where the words of Elohim may not have yet reached. Go there and place greed, larceny, lust and all weaknesses of the heart, mind and soul into Humankind."

At the docks of London a rich merchant, Millen, boards a ship to the new land. The first mate of the ship, Brandt-the changeling, asks the wealthy man, "With your wealth, why leave the comforts of London for the hardships of the new world?" The wizard answers, "There is more to life then comforts young man. I go for the adventure and the glory that adventure often brings." Brandt shakes his head. "Adventure often brings death also my foolish friend." Misplaced hairs on Brandt's forehead reveal too much. The older man sees one of the sixes which is now uncovered from beneath Brandt's hair. Holding back his own hair he exposes his markings of 666 to Brandt. "There are worse things than death my brother." The two evil creatures look back longingly at the shores of England as the ship pulls further and further out to sea.

Still other villains corrupt the innocent. The novice Claire lies sleeping in her bed when the door opens. Two who would take advantage of her naivety, Shary and Tildon, enter. The cardinal closes the door. The young woman pulls back the covers and smiles,. The girl is not so innocent anymore.

There are things one can teach another and there are things which each of us must learn for ourselves. The white magic of redemption and reflection are easily taught by Gail to Steven, but his heart is

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made of a stone which can't be breached by a mere message. Elohim would have him learn that all will be well ... and every being shall be redeemed. The wizard redeemed, now a Hunter, grows frustrated for he sees the corruption of man growing and he knows that the old enemy has learned new ways. Where the demons once charged in with blades and claws, they now stealthily find their ways into the hearts and souls of Humankind.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 14 - WHEN MAGICIANS BATTLE

Though the "Word" is now preached in huge cathedrals or grand temples, Gail (Elohim) still preaches wherever two or more are gathered.

In these times Steven is a little known play write. His plays teach the lessons that Gail preaches - that there is a conflict between the forces of good and evil. It is at one of his plays' performances that he and Gail had first met the chief of police and his wife Michelle. The four of them had become great friends. On many an occasion the four would debate the Day of Judgment versus the concept of total redemption. The two women, Gail and Michelle, believe in the latter. The men hold strongly to the idea of a payment due for your choices. It is like a dagger through Steven's heart when he hears the news of Michelle's death.

The couple chooses to seek out their friend - the chief of police - to comfort him. The police chief relates the events of the night of the party to his friends. When he describes the beast as Charmaine and the others had related it to him Steven knows and Gail knows of what he speaks. You can see the husband's heart ache as he speaks of the terrible scene of his wife lying in her own pool of blood. Like so many things man has forgotten the monsters, demons and such. The creatures have been relegated to myths and fairy tales, so the chief of police can't understand why they have been unable to find this Daniel Brandt. The friends are of no comfort to the bereaved.

Silently they ride home in their coach. It isn't

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hard for Gail to discern what is in Steven's heart. She also knows that it is something he will have to work through alone. No words will dissuade him from the course he is about to take. The loving companion kisses his cheek and climbs from the coach. It is no surprise to her when the coach door closes behind her and Steven stays on board.

In a gentleman's garb Steven travels the back streets of London's poorer sections. A man jumps from the shadows brandishing a knife. "I would have your purse, kind sir. I wouldn't want to have to slit the throat of such a fine gentleman as yourself, but I do have bills to pay," the scoundrel mocks his would-be-victim. To the thief's surprise Steven grabs the knife in his hand. The hunter's hand glows and the knife melts into droplets upon the pavement below. The thief laughs and brushes aside the locks of hair that cover his forehead, revealing the mark of 666. "Sorry brother. It's hard to know these days." The thief then brushes aside the hair of Steven's forehead. There is the mark of 666 there, but it is so faded that it has all but disappeared. "I've never seen markings like this before," the thief marvels. The hunter's hand becomes a silver blade and he places it at the demon's throat. "And you won't live to see it again unless you tell me what I wish to know," Steven warns.

The werewolf tells Steven about demons walking the halls of the palace of the Duke of Lynch. Continuing his tale he assures the hunter that these demons will know the creatures of power of whom he speaks. The demon is tired of the type of life he has led

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and is willing to change, so Steven casts a redemption spell, exorcising the foul disease that had infected the man. The 666 fades away. The once-man-then-werewolf is a man again. The man is a stranger to these times and not sure how he will survive. Understanding the man's plight Steven sends him to Gail then heads for the palace of the Duke of Lynch.

The Duke is poised in between the bare legs of the king's virgin daughter when the door to his bedroom chamber swings open. Naked butt exposed, he grabs his sword from the floor and turns to face the intruder. The Duke calls out for his protectors, "Guards ... Guards!" The hunter laughs. No one is coming to your aid." The duke stands, bare butt, then swishes his sword through the air several times. "Then I shall have to make short work of you myself," The arrogant Duke replies. Again Steven laughs. "Hold back the locks of your forehead," he instructs the man. The Duke stops, he is curious of this madman's motives. His highness does as he is instructed. This is not the one Steven seeks for there are no markings on his forehead. "Now may I get back to my recreation or do I still have to kill you, madman?" Walking toward the Duke with his hands extended outward, Steven smiles. "You are not the one I seek, but I am sure that you have information that shall lead me to him." The extended hands of the hunter change into blades.

The cowardly man tosses down his sword. "Do not kill me. It is the cardinal who ordered his men to murder my wife. I had little choice in the matter."
Reaching out and taking the Duke's face in one now

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normal hand Steven asks, "Does this cardinal have a name?" The Duke slyly reaches for the knife below his pillow. "His name is Tildon. Cardinal Tildon!" Then swiftly the Duke stabs his knife into the hunter, but when he looks down he finds that the hand holding the knife is coming out of Steven's belly and he is stabbing himself.

The Duke falls to the floor dead. The king's daughter looks up in fear at the stranger. "Put on your clothes girl. Hurry you home and count yourself lucky that you will not bear children from the likes of him," Steven counsels the girl.

Days later, upon the mantle place of the office in Shary's convent sits the golden urn with the ashes of the Phoenix. Also there sits the crystal bubble which contains a frozen angel. These artifacts being displayed together means that Cardinal Tildon is visiting the convent and nothing holy will be done here this day.

It isn't often that Shary travels without her golden urn, but the mother superior, is gone to London only for a part of the day. She is to meet with well placed demons to make plans for the building of another more grand church for the city of London. Humans do so like their monuments and the building enhances the prestige of the demons hiding in this society.

In Claire's bedroom chamber she and the cardinal Tildon romp upon her bed. The curtain is blown open by a disquieting wind. The light shows in. In the light the silhouette of the hunter - Steven - can be

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seen. The cardinal ceases his carnal act, sits up and glares across the room at the stranger. "If blackmail is your game you have chosen the wrong target. If I call out ten of my men shall rush in and slice you into a hundred pieces," he threatens. "Call them fake priest!" Steven demands. Tildon calls out, "Guards!" His men burst into the room, swords drawn. The mystical creature's altered hands slices through one man after another, until all ten lay dead upon the bedroom floor. The young woman cowers against the headboard of her bed. Defiantly Tildon stands. "So ... a wizard has come to take what is mine." The hunter laughs. "You know me not and you have nothing I desire except a name." Puzzled, the journeyman wonders if he might bargain his way out of this predicament. "And what name is that?" he asks. Slowly, Steven crosses the room then stops mere inches away from the cardinal. "Which demon killed the fair Michelle?" Amused Tildon laughs. "So it's revenge for a Human life you seek? What a waste of power," Tildon notes. The hunter holds the journeyman's face in his hand. Steven's hand glows and the journeyman cries out in agony. "Aaeiii ... Brandt ... Daniel Brandt!" the coward surrenders a name. Laughing Steven demands, "Not his human name, his demon identity." Tildon pauses in fear. "He is the first metamorphite, Erotis' creation." Again the hand glows and the cardinal screams, "Aaeiii ...!" Glaring into the Journeyman's eyes Steven asks, "... and where can I find it?" Tildon raises his arms in defeat. "A demon ship owner has told me that he has signed on as first mate on a ship called the San Montego, headed to the new land. That is all that I know," he swears.

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The Human side of Steven sees the once innocent young woman and his heart is filled with rage, then his hand glows brighter. The journeyman screams then his body decays into dust. The dust filters through the magician's fingers. Brushing aside the locks of the young woman's hair Steven finds no markings so he walks away.

A shroud of mourning and distrust hangs over the convent as the mother superior's coach clip-clops, clip-clops up the brick driveway. The coach stops. Weeping nuns open the door and assist Shary from the coach. Impatiently, the fake woman of God cries out, "In God's name what curse has befallen you all in the few hours I was away?" After relaying their tale of woe to the mother superior - a tale of the cardinal's disappearance and his men's deaths - the nuns are taken aback. The woman runs in the heavy shoes she wears, not to the novice's room - as she has been told was the scene of the havoc - but to her office instead. Curious, some follow and watch as her expression becomes one of relief when she looks up and sees that the urn and the crystal bubble are still upon her mantle place.

"Mother superior ... mother superior ... Claire's room is where the cardinal's men were killed," a young nun does insist. "Of course my child, I just hoped that the cardinal might be in here, hiding." No one buys her excuse, but no one is sure what her true motives are either.

Cautiously, they all make their way down the great hallway of the convent until they stand outside of

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the young novice's bedroom chamber. Easing open the door Shary peeks into the room. The soldier's bodies are strewn about the room. Some have heads while the others their heads are detached. A petrified Claire still cowers against the headboard of her bed, weeping. The women move quickly to the bed and assist the girl, taking her from the bed. Covering Claire with a blanket and scurrying her away from the scene of carnage is an elderly nun.

The journeyman looks about the room trying to deduce what events have transpired here in her absence. Nothing makes sense. No human could have accomplished such a feat and Aloof had told them that the 666 would protect them against their own kind. It seems there is something the sorceress has forgotten to tell them about. For this oversight the journeyman curses her mentor.

There is a pile of ashes at her feet. Immediately, she knows, "My Tildon, my dear Tildon, a magician's wrath you have incurred." Then she remembers. "There was one who stood with the teacher-angel. He defeated another magician and the Phoenix. A powerful one indeed, he is." Now standing alone in the room Shary feels free to let loose her frustration. She tosses a bolt of lightning at the nearest wall, smashing a hole through it. "This I promise you my Tildon. It shall be I who sees to his torturous demise," she vows.

Elsewhere the once-werewolf, once-bandit, Melvin, works hard as he moves props around the theater while Gail waits for the return of her love, Steven. Sitting upon the stage looking out anxiously upon

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the empty audience she wonders how soon he will return. The doors to the theater swing open wide. A frightened Melvin screams, "Help me dear lady!" and he dives for cover. The amused Steven and Gail can't help but laugh at the pitiable man. "If I had wanted you dead you would already be so," the hunter assures Melvin. A relieved Melvin climbs from behind the seats he had dived into. "That is always good to know," the man notes sardonically as he exits from the room.

A relieved Gail runs to the man she loves. Wrapping her arms around his neck she showers his face with kisses. A more reserved Steven steps back and looks into her eyes. The loved one is bothered by his distant mood. She asks, "What is wrong?" He turns away as he answers her. "I know that you disagree, but I must leave this place. I must find the one who killed our friend and destroy it." The angel kneels down before the one she loves.

"There are some things you will have to learn for yourself, but whatever path you may choose know that I will be always at your side," she assures Steven. The hunter lifts the one he loves up then he kisses her passionately. Melvin re-enters and sees them kissing. "Oops. Sorry. I will come back later." He then leaves out. The two lovers ease down into a theater chair, still in their embrace.

Months later in the sprawling seaport of Annapolis, a ship, The Lady Anari, docks. Three newcomers disembark. Melvin acts as porter for Gale and Steven. He unloads their trunks from the ship then onto a carriage which Steven has bought. The heavy

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laden vehicle, carries three weary travelers and their possessions. It heads away from the seedy docks.

Under the cover of darkness the journeyman of magic, Shary, exits from below the deck of the same ship. She has tracked down and is now following the wizard. Two sailors had secreted her away in a storage area of the ship. Their price had been her favors. Shary makes her way quietly toward the boarding plank. The two sailors notice for the first time that the woman that they had hidden carries two objects which appear of great value- a crystal bubble and a golden urn.

One of the men steps in front of Shary. "What do you have there, girly ...? ... valuables you stole from the ones you worked for in England?" Both sailors laugh. "I've enjoyed our time together boys, but I advise you to step aside before you make me do something that you will surely regret." The second sailor slaps Shary to the deck. The urn and bubble are crashing toward the deck. Quickly Shary casts a spell which holds the two objects hovering in mid-air. As she gets to her feet the sailors are frozen with fear. Wiping the blood from her lip, she sucks it from her finger then glares at the two men. "And what shall I do with you two rascals now that you know my secret?" The journeyman takes the urn into one hand and the bubble into the other hand. She fires a blast of light from her eyes which engulfs the two men. The sailors melt like metal into a heap of molten silver upon the ship's deck. Turning and walking away she with evil laughter she taunts them even though they are dead, "I told you that you would regret it." The sailors are beyond hearing her

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or heeding her words of mockery.

The wealth that magic and long life brings affords Gale and Steven a huge estate on the outskirts of Annapolis which they for now call home. In the city of Annapolis itself Shary runs the most popular whorehouse of all. There are rumors that things occur in Shary's whorehouse that are not for the faint of heart. Having heard rumors of this den of inequity Steven knows that sooner or later demons will be drawn to such a place so he keeps a close eye on this new madam and her establishment.

One night, while Steven keeps watch from across the street, he hears a woman's scream. The hunter walks through the walls of the building then floats upward



through the floors until he stands only a few feet away from the changeling, Brandt, feasting on some

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whore's remains. Brandt looks up at the wizard. "She refused my attentions," he excuses.

The hunter starts to cast a spell when instead he is hit by one. The magician Millen has been brought here by Shary in hopes of him defeating the other mystical being. The spell which hit Steven is another speaking spell, the voice of forever. (Time takes a physical form with the force of a hundred hurricanes.) The hunter's astral form is not hurt by the winds, but it is hurled through the walls of the building and time. Mere moments later, from beneath the floor where Millen stands, Steven's hands reach up then pulls the magician down into the ground with him. The metamorphite and the journeyman do not wait to see who will be the victor. They beat a hasty retreat.

Hours later Gail comes to what remains of the whorehouse. Upward from the ground Steven rises. His beloved runs to him. "Did the wizard have to fall?" she asks. "No, but the world is safer because he has. He is slush. And from where I put him no one will recover him," Steven answers. "And the one you sought ... the metamorphite?" she asks. "The wizard saved him," Steven answers as he looks around. "Have you seen the madam?" Steven wonders. Looking around Gail shakes her head, no. "I think she intended for the wizard to destroy you," the angel speculates.

"I shall hunt her and that demon to the ends of the Earth ... no ... I shall hunt all demons and magicians. Those who will not be redeemed will be destroyed!" the hunter loudly pledges.

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Evil hearts do quiver with fear upon hearing the hunter's words. They warn their brethren of the former wizard who is now a hunter of evil. Some continue hiding in plain view. Most seek refuge, away from man.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 15 - SHARY'S TALE

Never will Shary be mistaken for anyone's fool. Watching the confrontation between the two magicians and the changeling from a safe distance she is surprised. The journeyman can't believe that the hunter has prevailed over the two supernatural beings. It is time to go back into hiding, she concludes. With a wave of her hand she vanishes.

An observant person may have noticed footprints in the soft dirt of the road, but those who are out at this time of night have other things on their minds.

The journeyman magician moves on in hopes of finding safety. Her next refuge is Garrett Town. It is a small, quiet and moral town. They live by a code close to the faith of Kat and Truth. This is not at all the kind of place one as wicked as Shary would ordinarily choose to hide out, unless there were some corruptible mortals to be found. At first the evil creature does try to tempt some. The few she tries to tempt here resist her. Soon she understands that this is not the place for her.

The wild-wild west -- as it is called by Humans of this age -- that is the place for the journeyman. She hears that there are few rules and fewer to enforce them in this frontier. There is one problem. A woman traveling alone in these times will bring notice to herself and she has not assumed that the hunter has given up or forgotten her. The evil creature needs a male companion.

One person is noticed above the others in this mundane town by Shary - the widower - Tim Roth. He

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is a man of faith, but he has one weakness, the wanderlust. This good man needs to know what is over the next hill. Even though Tim has a thriving grocery store in Garrett Town, he longs to join those going west. Anyone who spies him can see the far-away look in Tim's eyes as he stares across the open field at the end of town. "It's a big world out there... isn't it?" The widower is startled by Shary's intrusion. After Tim recovers his wits he laughs and answers, "Oh yeah, that it is." Like most men do he can't help staring at the beautiful newcomer to his town. "Thought I was the only one who came out here," Tim points out. "No. Believe it or not, a woman can long to see other places too. It's why I came to America," she answers. "I know why I don't go any further, but why don't you simply journey on?" the curious man asks. "I'll tell you why I don't if you tell me why you haven't," she offers to trade tales of woe. "I simply ran out of courage. It was hard times building my business here. I lost my wife ... and now I'm afraid of starting over again," he exposes his true self to the evil creature. "Now you," he insists.

"It's not the same for a woman. I'm sure you've heard lies about me, even here. That's what happens when a woman is alone. She is branded a whore or worse," lies color her tale.

"I must confess that I wanted to talk to you before this, but I heard the rumors and foolishly wondered if they were true," he chooses to unburden himself. "See. So, what would become of me traveling the wilderness alone?" Shary offers in her defense. In an attempt to comfort her Tim takes her hand. Knowing

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what is expected of her Shary feigns being offended. "Mr. Roth! What are you doing?" she asks. "Do not take offense. My intentions are honorable. What if you were to marry me? You could be my courage and I your strength. Together we can see the world!" the man excitedly offers. Once again the evil creature has stolen victory from defeat.

The townsfolk of Garrett are surprised when one of their leading citizens marries a woman with a terrible reputation. They whisper that they pity for what will become of him. The adventurous Tim and evil Shary don't wait long after their small beautiful wedding before they sell all of Tim's holdings, buy a wagon and team then pay their toll to travel with a wagon train going west to California- the most rugged of the frontier lands.

The newlyweds have only been traveling a few days when the wicked spirit of Shary becomes restless. At night when most of the others in the wagon train sleep Shary walks down to the nearest lake or brook - when one is close by. Once there she then strips down naked and swims under the midnight moon.

Early into one such venture the journeyman can feel eyes upon her so she calls out, "If you know what's good for you then you will come out of the shadows." Winslow Mudd, the husband of one Gloria Mudd, steps from the shadows laughing. "That sounds like a threat," he accuses Shary. "It is worse. It is a guarantee of harm," the woman assures him.

Ignoring her threat Winslow begins to take off his clothing. Intrigued Shary laughs. "You have no idea

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what kind of trouble I can be," she warns him again. "The same is true of me," the man warns her as he enters the water then swims closer. Stopping only inches away from Shary the daring Winslow stares at her lasciviously. The water has matted down Winslow's hair. Now Shary can see the mark of 666. Laughing, Shary pulls the hair back from her forehead revealing her mark. The two evil creatures laugh.

"What are you?" she asks. The changeling transmutes into the image of Shary. "A metamorphite. And you?" he answers and asks. "A journeyman magician," she replies. "I've lived for eons and never have I heard of such a thing." the changeling admits. "I was apprenticed to a sorceress and at death's door she made me more than mortal," Shary explains. The changeling changes back to Winslow and moves closer still to Shary. Still naked beneath the water's surface he kisses her lips. "Then I guess we are two of a kind," he suggests their evil tie. "Truly we are ..." the wicked female answers. Then she unashamedly sinks beneath the water's surface.

After that night Shary begins accessing how much more fun it would be to travel with something of a like mind then to travel with her present straight laced husband. Together the journeyman and the changeling plot. Several nights later, after the others have gone to sleep, Shary talks Tim into going for a walk with her. The shopkeeper had no misgivings about his wife's feelings for him. That is why the smitten man jumps at the chance to win his wife's affection. As they walk Tim begins to speak, "I know that you didn't marry me for love,

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but I think that we can learn to love one another."

Cackling comes from above the husband's and wife's heads. A curious Tim looks up to find a lizard-man like creature sitting in the branches of the tree. "Think again human," Winslow screeches at the man. The demon pounces upon Tim then rips his throat open. The journeyman uses her powers to lift the dead body high into the trees. With no remorse she also gives Tim the face of Winslow Mudd. "I was just starting to get used to that face," the demon tells Shary. "Get over it. We have to get back before anyone starts to get suspicious," she instructs him. Winslow changes himself into the image of Tim. Taking Shary's hand the changeling walks back with her to the wagon that Tim had bought for himself and Shary.

The next morning Gloria Mudd complains to the wagon master that she hasn't seen her husband since the previous night. The group puts together a search party. The search party finds the body wearing Winslow's face. They suspect that Indians have killed him and placed him up in the tree as some kind of warning. The wagon master instructs Gloria that they can't take time to get him down and bury him because whomever did this may return with larger numbers.

The wagon train moves on with the weeping widow, Gloria Mudd, along with the impostor of Tim Roth and the wicked journeyman.

There is one thing about evil that remains constant and that is that its thirst for wickedness can't be

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quenched. The wicked creature, Shary still searches for souls to seduce. Shary befriends Gloria Mudd. At first they laugh together and speak of innocent things two newly weds had in common. Later there banter become more lewd, still they laughed -as if it were a harmless game they were playing. When the evil seductress believed she had laid the groundwork she invited Gloria to come walking with her and the changeling into the woods after all others were asleep.

The changeling - appearing as Tim - laid upon a blanket beside the two women. Shary stood up and began taking off her clothes. Gloria looked shyly away then stared up at her new friend giggling. "Come on ... take off your clothes and come swim with me," Shary requested crooking her finger invitingly. "The changeling places his hands playfully over his eyes. "I won't look," he promises. Swiftly Gloria undressed then ran and jumped into the water next to Shary. Of course the lascivious changeling had taken his hands away and spied the beautiful body of his once wife. He had forgotten how just how beautiful the one he had abandoned was.

After frolicking in the water the three had gathered upon the blanket. Under the pretext of warming them the changeling had pulled the blanket tightly around the three of them. Their bodies now pressed together the two fineds used this as an excuse to explore Gloria's body with their hands. The woman was overwhelmed by the sensations and surrendered.

Before their journey's end the wicked threesome had seduced the wagon master into joining into their

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lascivious couplings. This evil was not enough for either of the wicked creatures. They murdered Gloria and the wagon master in a most gruesome fashion.

Weeks later the fake Tim Roth and his cruel wife Shary Roth, as they now call themselves, open a gambling house-whorehouse on the rough frontier. The Humans who swagger into their establishment are usually halfway home to losing their way already. The demon and the journeyman just give them a little push further in the wrong direction.

Along the wilderness trail, the hunter and Elohim travel. They follow the Annapolis madam's trail to Garrett Town where they are told that she had married Tim Roth, a local grocer and a good man. Fearing for Tim's safety they speedily follow the wagon train's planned route.

It is only two weeks into their journey when they happen upon the rotting carcass of Tim Roth, still in the tree, being fed upon by scavenger birds. The hunter uses a spell to bring the body down from the tree. A second spell causes the body to descend into the earth. The angel prays over the deceased man's remains.

Five more weeks and they reach the end of the wagon train's route. What they find there almost angers even Gail. The two fiends have tortured and ravaged the bodies of the wagon master and Gloria Mudd. They are stretched out between two trees and tied with cowhide. Lacerations, spike holes, bite marks and scars whose origin no one would even care to venture a guess at mar the remains. Disgusted by the evil

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one's deeds Steven shakes his head then viciously digs his heels into his horse's sides, urging it ever forward.

Meanwhile a man of god, the missionary, Mr. E. Jacobs -- he never told anyone what the initial stood for -- has come to California to do the Lord's work, as he put it. Mr. Jacobs is making a difference. The men are going to Roth's gambling house and Shary's bed in fewer numbers than before he came, but Jacobs is a man -- just flesh, and the flesh is weak.

A month after E. Jacobs arrival the changeling goes to Shary. "In little more than three weeks that preacher has started cutting into our profits, he informs her. "Do you truly care about the money?" she quizzes him. "Naw, but I do care that Humans are finding redemption because of him," the changeling laughingly replies. "I will take care of the preacher," Shary assures the changeling.

The preacher has entered the saloon -whorehouse in hopes of his message of redemption being heeded by at least one soul this night. Hary crosses the room then greets Jacob, "I'm truly offended preacher ...". Flustered the man wonders aloud, " ... and why is that?" Knowing by his nervous demeanor that the preacher finds her attractive she smiles then answers, "All of these other sinners you have at least tried to save, but me you seem to find beyond redemption." The preacher knows that the woman doesn't seek redemption. He also knows that what she wishes to do is tempt him. There is only one question Jacob asks himself, "If I do not try to

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reach her am I a worthy servant of the OMNI ONE?" Nodding his head he replies, "If you will hear me I will speak to you." Shary takes Jacob's hand and leads him upstairs to her quarters.

Once Shary has closed the door to her quarters behind herself and Jacob she pulls him into her arms and kisses him. For a moment he surrenders then regaining his composure he pulls away. "Get thee behind me Satan !" the preacher demands of the evil creature. Mocking him Shary moves around behind Jacob pulling his body tightly against hers. "Is this what you want preacher ?" she laughs and questions. The sorceress places her hands upon the front of the preachers pants and begins to caress the area through the fabric. The man is lost. He turns around, pulls her to him and kisses her hungrily.

The changeling-Roth sits at the table stealing the hard earned gold of the prospectors with his crooked deck and loaded die. The saloon doors open and the metamorphite's heart runs icy cold with fear. In the doorway stands the menacing figure of the hunter. The changeling jumps up from his seat and pulls one of his Human weapons - a gun - from the holster at his side. The patrons in the bar never see what happen next. They are too busy running for cover or the exit.

The hunter puts the palms of his hands outward. The whole room glows red-orange. The bullets from the changelings weapon melt in mid air then fall to the floor as gobs of melted iron. The changeling's body glows then bursts into flames. The beast's body

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burns until there is nothing left but ashes. The ashes crumble to the floor then are blown out the door by a mystical breeze. No one shall mourn it. No one shall even know of this changeling's origin.

Upstairs the missionary E. Jacobs lies in between Shary's legs when the commotion starts. When she hears the gunfire she pushes the man of the cloth onto the floor. The journeyman starts to go downstairs to investigate when the floor begins to glow a red-orange. It never occurs to her to help her new husband. Instead, Shary walks to the window, opens it then chants two words, "Flight Asay." The preacher sees the journeyman as she morphs into a bird then flies away.

The missionary man E. Jacobs goes mad and never preaches another sermon his whole life long.

The decades pass and Shary moves all around the great expanse of the colonies. When the oppressed people of the colonies throw the tea into the Boston harbor she is delighted. War is always froth with opportunities for her kind of mischief.

The journeyman has traded in her whore's disguise for that of a prim and proper schoolmarm. Under this mask she pretends to be a loyalist to the American rebellion, but in reality she takes their plans back to a grateful and generous British general.

One night as Shary creeps out of the back door of the general's manor she is met by patriots. They grab Shary, cover her head with a hood and knock her out with the butt of a pistol before she can work

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any of her magic.

The traitorous Shary awakens in a damp cellar that has bars on the windows and huge rats running across her feet. From where she lies, chained to a wall, she can hear the patriots planning her punishment.

Though some think hanging is too good for her and would opt for tying her to four horses and quartering her, the rope wins out. When the patriots come to get the wench they find her clothing lies in a pile where she had been chained. "I told you she was a witch and we should have burned her when we captured her outside the general's house," Bill Doptin, the patriot reminds them of his words.

Nearly a century has pass since the colonies became a nation. The journeyman has settled in the South. Now the journeyman is the wife of a plantation owner. She so loves the concept of slavery, one human bonding another to their will, such pure evil. What she loves more is that as a white woman, the strong black men are forbidden fruit to her. When she sneaks into the barn or their sheds or sometimes out into the field where they work and has her way with them, it is so much sweeter than any act she has ever known.

Now she sits remembering the first time. She had sat on her porch looking out over her husband's grand estate the first time she saw Carl. The slave was a mountain of a man. He stood six feet four inches tall in a time when four inches less was consider a giant. Shary was mesmerized by his rippling muscles

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for he was not wearing a shirt. His woolen hair reminded her of the soft fleece of a lamb. More handsome than any other man she had ever known - and she had known many. Like chiseled ebony stone was his features. Have him she must. This she told herself. Soon after that day she did. Her husband had gone into town for supplies. The few white workers on the plantation were busy trying to keep track of the efforts of their far too many charges. When Shary spotted Carl beside the barn chopping fire wood she rushed over, grabbed him by his hand and pulled him inside of the barn. The shy man looked timidly at his master's wife. "What can I do for you mam ?" the puzzled man asks. Without answering him Shary pulls the big man's face downward then kisses him passionately. Frightened Carl pulls free of her embrace. "Yah gonna get me kil't Ms. Shary !" he exclaims. "If I tell massa you made a pass at me yah dead anyway. Ain't it better to die for somethin' yah done and enjoyed then do die for a lie - for nothing. Angry, Carl slams Shary against the barn wall. He reaches beneath her skirt and rips off her panties. Shary is excited and breathless as she awaits what she know will come next. As Carl enters her she bites her lip so not to scream out in pleasure. Looking into the evil creatures eyes as he thrust again and again as hard as he could manage the man felt ecstasy and fear. A few of the slaves noticed the disheveled mistress of the manor and the lumbering slave as they exited the barn. They mourned for the fate they knew would eventually befall the man, but none spoke of it to anyone.

Hush whispers soon started among the white workers

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because Shary became more and more careless in her pursuit of Carl and other black slaves. Eventually the whisper reached the ears of her husband.

Under the full moon in the tobacco fields of the plantation the harlot Shary's nostrils are inflamed by the musk of a man who has worked sixteen hours in the blazing sun. Her mouth hungrily bites at Carl as she pulls the powerful black man down upon her small soft frame. Before the night's pleasure can be consummated her husband, the overseer and several other white men burst through the tall grass and pull the man from her grasp.

"You wench!" the husband cries out, slapping her to the ground. "You're gonna watch your lover die, then you're gonna follow him," he promises Shary. The evil creature stands. Her eyes glaze over with a lust none but the evil can understand. As she stands watching the whip tear the flesh from the dark man's body her body quivers from the pleasure she receives from watching. When the men gathered move on to tarring and feathering this poor soul none of them there could deny her screams of exultation. They expression of evil that Shary wears when they end the man's life by dumping him into a vat of boiling oil could freeze a man's soul.

Shary's husband had been too preoccupied with torturing the black man to notice his wife's disposition. Turning to her with whip in hand Mark Cooper threatens, "Now it's your turn, witch!" Never truer words had Mark spoken and they were his last. There is fear in each man's eyes when they see the delight upon the evil creature's face. Absolute

SHARY'S TALE

panic sends them running in all directions when the journeyman chants an evil spell, "Torran! Torran!" and her husband bursts into flames.

After all of the lust and carnage she has created the next hundred or so years are rather quiet for the evil Shary, a few souls seduced, a murder here and there, but for this evil thing quiet in comparison to any hundred years before. Tired of the running and the threats to her own existence, she has settled into a once familiar and safer lifestyle, or so she believes.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 16 - WHEN DEMONS WAIT

Kamar's stronghold is in the northwest frontier of the new land - America. This territory will someday be known as Oregon. Despite his defeat at the hands of the angel Elohim and the magician Steven, some of his followers still believe him their best bet to protect themselves from their enemies and to achieve their evil goals. That is the only reason the vampire So'ei chooses to exile himself with the cruelest of angels.

In frustration the fallen angel seeks out the changeling, blaming him for the failed trap, not knowing he's long gone. An exasperated So'ei watches while Kamar slowly burns one metamorphite after another. "I know you are there among your kind. Don't make me kill you all to get my vengeance upon you, changeling!" the angel screams.

Tiring of the angel's ranting and the loss of good soldiers the vampire lies. Grabbing the first changeling within his reach So'ei calls to Kamar "This is the one!" The vampire slyly cuts the demon's leg, unseen by most. Pointing to the cut So'ei speaks, "This is the mark I placed upon him so that we would know him perchance he did not please you."

The angel laughs. "My So'ei, first of my creations, it is always you who brings me what I need most." Affectionately Kamar caresses the vampire's face. "I shall not leave you here upon this dismal world when I have taken Paridisio. You shall stand at my right hand," he promises. The vampire thinks, "Just close enough for a mystical blade to pierce your back ...

WHEN DEMONS WAIT

I hope."

The metamorphite that the angel seeks has hid among men. He has killed, thus inflaming the hunter-Stephen's wrath. He has run, but not far enough, from the one time wizard's hatred. The demon had found another wizard and a journeyman to plot Steven's death with, but too strong an adversary was he. The almost pitiable beast now hides in the wilderness, mere miles from where the hunter almost ended his worthless existence.

At the present time not much of an existence does the changeling know. The cold, damp and rugged woods of Maryland are far from the perfect hiding place, but the hunter will not think him so bold as to hide so close. Besides, this is a hell hole. Surely the hunter believes that one with his lust for comfort as well as pleasure will not long be hiding in such a place -- what the wizard can not know is how patient a demon can be. The demon believes that if he can avoid being destroyed, he has an eternity to enjoy the pleasures of this world and maybe even the next.

A horseman comes. Afraid, the metamorphite hides. The beast spies the man, a messenger for the rebels. Too long he feels that he has been without any sport. The demon tosses a rock at the horse's rump. The horse rears up unseating the rider. The rider's pouch is thrown into the brush. The messenger looks up and sees a creature straight out of his nightmares grinning down at him. Jumping to his feet he runs. The demon laughs as he pursues the man into the woods. There are twigs and branches breaking

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beneath the messenger's feet. Bushes and limbs are shoved aside as the man tries his best to escape. Then he falls. He has tripped over the protruding root of a tree. When he looks up the demon stares down at him once more. "It has been so very long since I have had any fun. You could have put out a better effort. Oh well," the demon sighs then it slices open the messenger's chest.

No one will ever know what message the man had carried. Would it have saved a life or swayed the war one way or the other, this too will never be known.

Far away from this scene of cruelty the wizard Marshal returns to Kamar, following in the footsteps of So'ei. The wizard makes no excuses and seeks no favor with the angel. The only reason he is here at all is that he knows not where else to go.

Soon the defeat is put behind them and the plotting of the next war begins. The wizard wonders what kind of fools are these creatures that they so seek glory that they would risk all else they have. A metamorphite can be almost any creature it desires to become. With magic some can create almost anything their senses want or demand. "Ambition, love, revenge, envy and the other albatrosses that the creatures burden themselves with will only lead to their end," Marshal believes. "Instead of love - favor lust, instead of ambition - a golden chain around one's neck, instead of revenge - a dance, instead of envy - a stolen possession to balance the scales, this is reason's dictate," Marshal tells himself. How empty is his life and empty is the echo

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of his soul.

The one time man looks around at all he has and cares not for what he does not have or at least that is what he has told himself. He has even long forgotten the woman whom he had followed to this fate, his wife Aloof. All he needs now is a time of peace in which to enjoy these gifts, such as they are. At least that is how he rationalizes his shallow existence.

While others languish in idle pursuits So'ei decides that he must arm himself with the knowledge of the outside world if he and his demons are to conquer it and the arrogant angels who have too long kept them in bondage.

How long has it been for the vampire? Has it been two thousand, three thousand or more years since he has seen the workings of humankind. Time has little context in the caves of the Sibling Breed.

It is a strange world he sees beneath him as he flies under the cover of night. What are the parallel metal bars that lay across the landscape like some winding serpent? The vampire's heart is filled with fear as he spots this large noisy beast charging toward him along the metal bars. He is captured by bewilderment. As the beast roars by and he sees into the belly of the beast it seems to have eaten the humans whole. Yet they seem unharmed. Later the vampire will find out that it is a form of transportation, a train.

What clever magicians these Humans seem to be.

WHEN DEMONS WAIT

Their magic rivals that of the angels. Both the vampire and the metamorphite keep watch over this new magic men call science. Among Humankind the vampire now ventures every night. The changeling gets his news from the few who stray upon his path.

On one particular night So'ei wanders into a hospital by mistake. Antiquated by today's standard, but still the vampire sees something that amazes him beyond belief. A draillum has scratched a boy. The boy's mother has brought him to this place that So'ei does not understand. A man gives the boy a potion to drink and the amber colored skin returns to its original flesh tone once more, the convulsive kicking stops, the man has prevented the change.

The Humans have found a cure for the diseases of the beasts.

More years pass. A man talks to a lonely hermit, not knowing the evil nature of the demon, Brandt. The demon's eyes bulge with wonder at the tales of metal birds that carry men, and the horrid tale of a weapon more powerful than a thousand hurricanes. The demon almost regrets slitting the stranger's throat and feeding upon his innards ... almost.

As time passes, So'ei sees the huge buildings and the artificial stars of many colors that light the Humans' night.

A fearful Brandt sees the woods around him slowly disappearing as men replace them with homes and malls that come closer and closer to where he hides.

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Curiosity has brought the wizard Marshal from his caves to stand upon the mountain top. He looks out upon the growing Human world. The cities and towns come ever closer. The frontier is growing smaller and smaller. Soon the Humans will be upon them and the wars will begin again. Their kind numbers are as Kamar had once predicted that they would be, as many as the sands on the beach. The troubled wizard wonders, "Where can I ever go that I will find peace? Simple peace is all I've ever longed to possess."

While the demons have waited, the humans have changed the world. Soon it will be too late to turn the tide. So'ei knows, Brandt knows, even the cowardly Marshal knows the waiting must be over. They must act now or be erased from the pages of the BOOK OF LIFE.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 17 - MAN TRESPASSES

More than two hundred years have passed since the times of slavery in America. The demons have taken positions of power in politics, business and religion. Man does his fair share of ruthless acts without the aid or urging of demons. One of those acts is to destroy the woodlands to build suburban communities, away from the urban blight he has already created.

In Maryland one such community, Columbia, has been born. The metamorphite, Brandt, has hidden close to where the hunter once almost destroyed him, but man's intrusion on these woods now forces him out into the open.

One night a police officer, Keith Durrant, drives though one of the quieter areas of this new community. Spotting some strange animal ducking into the woods, or so he believes it to be, he calls in to his dispatcher, "Dispatch, this is officer Durrant. I'm solo in car 123." The demon's ears are acute, so now he knows the name of his would-be-prey. The officer on duty calls back, "This is dispatch. Is it too quiet out there for you Durrant?" The two officers laugh. "That it is, except I saw something or maybe someone crossing over into one of the wooded areas near Jones Avenue." The skeptical dispatcher says, "Probably a deer or some other animal. Just forget it." A young, eager officer wants something to do. "I think I'll investigate it anyway."

As Keith exits his car he hears dispatch answer back, "If you're that bored knock yourself out." The

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young officer shines his light into the woods. To his surprise he sees what he believes to be a naked young woman crying. He lowers the flashlight and talks softly and supportive to her. "Are you alright Miss? Did someone hurt you?" He moves cautiously toward the woman, not wanting to scare her. Claws reach out and slice Durrant's throat. The demon laughs and mocks the dead man. "I'm fine. No one hurt me. Can you say the same?" The demon removes the officer's clothing then tosses his body into a deep, wide sewer drain pipe. Afterward it transforms itself into a replica of Durrant then returns to the officer's police car.

There is yelling over the box. "Durrant ... this is dispatch! Where the hell are you, Durrant? Are you all right, son?" the concerned dispatcher demands. After taking a moment to figure out the device the demon answers his superior. "I'm fine dispatch." A sigh of relieve is breathed by the other officer. "Why did it take you half an hour to check out a runaway deer?" the flustered superior wants to know. The demon laughs. "I don't know what it was. I couldn't find anything then I guess I just lost track of time," he excuses. The dispatcher answers, "It's time for you to report in anyway."

The demon takes a manual and a map from the glove compartment and study them. The evil creature quickly masters the human knowledge. Now he knows how to operate the car and where he's headed.

In hopes of learning more about the life he has assumed the demon goes through the young officer's wallet which he has taken from his pants pocket.

MAN TRESPASSES

There is a single picture of a blonde, his ID with his name and address on it and lastly he finds three hundred dollars in cash. "You didn't lose much of a life Keith Durrant. I promise to have more fun with your life than you ever did." The demon's laughter accentuates the evilness of its nature.

Two weeks later the Columbia police department holds its annual picnic. Policemen bar-b-q steaks on a grill, play games with their kids and just relax from the tense nature of their chosen profession. It is here that Keith is first introduced by detective Adam Skoles to Adam's partner William Hart and Hart's beautiful wife, Joan. The first time Keith sees Joan Hart it is Michelle all over again. The beautiful Joan touches him in ways his wicked heart can never begin to understand. The policeman's wife tries being polite to the young officer, but his lascivious stares make her uncomfortable, so she begins to frown at him and to avoid him. The husband, William, notices that Joan is not herself. He goes to her side. The detective sees his wife look over at Keith then quickly away. "Is everything alright?" he asks. Joan laughs nervously, but answers "Nothing I can't handle." An annoyed William gives Joan a big kiss then glares knowingly at the young officer. The evil creature turns away.

Too often humans are not aware of their surroundings. The housewife doesn't notice that everywhere she goes the beast is shadowing her. It waits and hopes for an opportunity to put its horrific plan into action. For two months Keith takes every opportunity to trail Joan, but she seems always to be with friends or her husband. Finding

MAN TRESPASSES

its patience at an end, the demon decides, come what may, this day is the day that she will be his.

While exiting the beauty parlor of a busy strip mall Joan is grabbed by Keith and dragged toward his police car. Female friends see the kidnapping and yell for help. Men in the parking lot come to the housewife's aid. The beast slaps the first man some ten feet through the air. It slices the throat of the second man. The second man falls backwards onto the asphalt surface of the parking lot. A third man stuns the beast when he hits it with a tire jack which he has taken from the trunk of his car.

Only because of the help of the three men is Joan able to escape Keith's grasp. She runs across the parking lot, jumps into her car then locks the car door. The third man is sliced open in the gut by the beast. It then runs after Joan's car, changing into its true form as it goes. To her good fortune Joan is able to start her car and drive away just as the creature reaches her rear bumper. The woman cannot believe what she sees in the mirror as she drives away, the beast's true self.

Now in the safety of her husband and other police officers a hysterical Joan tries to explain to her husband and the other police officers what had happened. All that they understand or are willing to believe is that Durrant had attacked her. "Yes it was Keith, but he wasn't human! He wasn't human, I tell you!" she screams again and again. Believing Joan is suffering from shock Adam Skoles advises his partner to take his wife home. Uniformed policemen accompany them.

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The demon has the blood lust now. Unable to secure Joan it breaks into the homes of several other housewives. It rapes and slaughters them. This does little to satisfy the creature. All Keith can think of now is Joan, but he knows that the police will be protecting her until he is caught. Still he is obsessed with her. No matter the consequences it must have her.

The rain pours down in buckets upon the two policemen who stand outside of the Harts' residence. Inside two other officers and William sit, drinking coffee. "I want to thank you guys. I know you aren't getting any overtime for this duty." William tries to thank them. Gus, one of the other cops, shoves William playfully. "Shut up man. You'd do the same for any one of us." A domestic Joan comes from the kitchen carrying a second pot of coffee. "I'm going to take some coffee out to the other guys," she offers. A protective Gus jumps up from the sofa and takes the pot from Joan. "No you're not. That madman could be still hanging around out there. I'll take it out," Gus insists.

Is it the wind, his imagination or something else altogether? One of the officers outside believes that he has heard something moving in the bushes. "What is that?" he asks. The second officer looks over at the bushes. "... the rain or the wind ...now stop that. You're starting to make me jumpy," the second officer confesses. Before they know what has happened, the beast swiftly runs pass the two policemen, slicing each of their throats as he goes. The two officers plop down dead upon the muddy lawn.

MAN TRESPASSES

An unsuspecting Gus opens the door to take the coffee out to the other men. Before he can step outside the door the demon rushes in slitting his throat as it passes by him. The policeman falls backwards into the living room, dead. William quickly reacts, but he gets off only one shot, which wounds Keith badly. The demon still manages to kill William, Joan and the other officer before the beast passes out from loss of blood. Before passing out the demon is clever enough to take his human form once more. When the officers don't check in Skoles and other officers immediately go out to the house to find out what is going on.

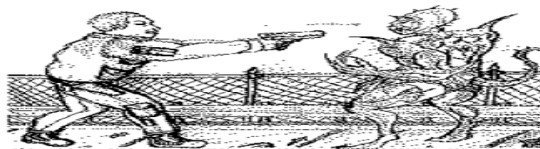
They are heartbroken over the scene that they find. Skoles handcuffs the demon before sending him to the hospital. The other officers tell Skoles he should have just let him bleed to death. The veteran policemen answers, "No. I want to be in the gallery when they gas this bastard."

Finally Keith awakens in the hospital, but only to find himself both handcuffed and chained to a hospital bed. At the end of the bed that the beast lies in the detective - Skoles - sits grinning. "We found evidence in your house that ties you to the murders of at least three other women." The evil creature laughs. "Is that all? They pretended like they didn't want me. She pretended, but they all want meeee!" he screams. Out of character for the professional policeman Skoles walks around to the other side of the bed, pulls out his weapon then slams it against the monster's head. The insanely evil creature laughs once more.

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Days later wearing leg irons and handcuffs, Durrant is escorted by two other policemen from the county hospital. The officers become careless. Once outside Keith Durrant shoves the first officer, knocking him down then he grabs his keys and pushes past the second officer. The officer who is still standing pulls his gun and fires. "I'm gonna save the county the cost of a trial," he states with an icy edge to his voice. Two bullets hit the fleeing demon. His body is jolted in first one direction, then the other. It drags itself to the nearby bridge. The two policemen have recovered their wits and stand a few feet away from Keith.

The bridge is some sixty feet high. No human can survive such a leap, the policemen believe. The young officer coaxes Keith to jump. "Don't be a wussy! Jump! Are you scared? ... like those women were scared? Jump! Damn you, jump!" The creature changes into its natural form. The policemen back away. Teeth bared, it laughs one last time then it turns and jumps. The younger officer turns to the older one and asks, "What the hell did we just see?" Matter-of-fact like the older officer answers, "A suspect dived off of a bridge killing himself."



MAN TRESPASSES

There are strange things happening in the deep woods of Oregon. The evil So'ei, Kamar and the magician Marshal have hidden there from Elohim and the hunter- Steven. Yet it seems fate favors the patient at heart. Although Kamar cannot go out among man, man can and does trespass on the angel's exile.

The wood company, Edliv, builds a logging town - Skutz, Oregon. It isn't long before the loggers come face to face with the evil. A deal is struck. Any outsiders that come to Skutz will be sacrificed and become demons. In return the townsfolk will be allowed to live in peace. Any attempt to inform others or to leave will be considered a breach of the treaty and carry dire consequences.

Through the brethren of demons, the metamorphite - Keith hears of the town of Skutz and believes it is the perfect place for him to hide and heal. Though it is the new lair of Kamar there is no way for the angel or the others to know that he had once abandoned a defeated Sibling Breed.

The six angels look down upon this latest episode and wonder how this unholy agreement between Human and fallen angel will play out in the grand scheme of things.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE-
CHAPTER 18 - THE HUNTER

While evil pacts are being made a bright shining new star appears on the New York literary scene. His name is Steven Walsh IV and he is the great-grandson of a little known early American playwright. At least that is how Steven is being sold to the public by his friend, the flamboyantly gay publicist-agent Bruce Downe.

The horror fantasy books, or so the public perceives them to be, is about a wizard who hunts and kills demons. They are selling like hotcakes. His latest novel, *Where Monsters Hide*, has only been out for two weeks and it has already sold more than two hundred thousand copies.

Walking the streets of New York Gail and Steven present the picture of a normal, loving couple. They have just had dinner at one of New York's posh eateries and are headed toward 42nd Street to a stage play. Fame brings with it a price. A fan of Steven's work sees the writer and recognizes him. Over zealous, the fan runs up to Steven bumping into Gail and almost knocking her off of her feet. "Excuse me," he is quick to apologize as he grabs her arm to steady her. The fan then turns his attention back to Steven. "Mr. Walsh ... I love your work. It's the most realistic fantasy work I have ever come across. I can almost see the battles between you ... I mean Kurt Dragon, and the demons." The young man excitedly rants on. Steven interrupts the accolades. "Would you like an autograph?" he asks. Smiling the boy offers his notebook to Steven to be written on. The hunter laughs, but signs the notebook, then hands it back to the young man.

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In the shadows of a doorway across the street from where the exchange between fan and icon has completed a metamorphite whom Steven has come close to catching many times hides. Recognizing the look of the hunter upon his face, Gail sighs. Surrendering to the inevitable she says, "Go on, but you had better make intermission or you and I are going to do battle," she kids. "That's one fight I can never win," he laughingly assures her. He kisses his new bride on her cheek. (Yes, after all these centuries, the two recently took their vows.) Steven then runs across the busy street.

The shadowy figure of the beast speeds away. The creature is sure that it has lost itself in the crunch of the crowd, but the hunter has stalked demons for over fifty eons now and he knows their little quirks. A draillum smells of lemon orchids. A hunted demon with no name will leave a phosphorous blue trail when the tracker spell is cast, the werewolf has only three toes-even when in human form, a vampire shuns natural sunlight and if the temperature is less than fifty degrees the changeling cannot hold its transformation. The warm Spring weather quickly changes when the hunter casts a cold weather spell then watches the thermometer as it quickly drops, degree by degree. There are metamorphites all around, but the one Steven seeks has a lightning shaped scar on its left shoulder from the last time he encountered it. His blade-hand cut the shape into the beast while the creature fed on an innocent young boy. It managed to escape.

It is predictable that when faced with something unfamiliar Humans panic. As the true selves of the

THE HUNTER

many metamorphites become visible to the people around Time's Square the Humans scatter in all directions, screaming as they run. The changelings have no interest in anyone, for the moment. The demons want only to escape into the warmth and protection of the city's heating pipe tunnel system. The changelings scramble down below the surface. Too late for one Steven spots the beast, the one who bears the lightning scar. Casting still another weather spell, a freezing spell, he captures the creature. The hunter walks over to where the beast is frozen inside a resulting block of ice. Taking a picture from his pocket Steven holds it up, showing it to the metamorphite "Tell me, do you remember him?" he asks. The unfeeling creature mocks the vengeful hunter. "I've killed a thousand or more like him. What reason would I have to remember this one?" Swinging his blade/hand he slices the demon's head from its body while still in the block of ice. Answering the beast Steven says, "Because this one cost you your very existence."

At the theater Gale sits patiently sipping on her hot rum toddy in the mezzanine area during intermission. The husband comes running up the theater's stairs. He spots his wife then smiles. "Did I miss intermission?" the hopeful spouse asks. Kissing him she assures him that this time his task didn't totally spoil the evening that they had planned. To all around the two their lives seem almost normal.

The next day the couple receives a phone call from Steven's agent, Bruce Downe. The agent has called to remind them that there is going to be a gala that

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evening in Steven's honor. Bruce admonishes them to not be late and expresses anticipation over finally meeting the woman behind the man. Knowing her husband a frustrated Gail begs of Steven, "Please don't be late this time. You know that if you are late everyone is going to blame me."

The hunter's past experiences has taught him that though he means it when he promises sincerely that he will not be late his wife should not place stock in this particular vow.

As many women will attest to a formal elegant event calls for a new formal elegant outfit. This is what Gail tells herself as she goes to meet her dearest friend, Brenda. Walking in a daze down Broadway she can't help but notice a poster of her loving husband in a bookstore window. She's drawn to the reminder of the object of her affection.

While the wife daydreams the hunter hunts. A few blocks away inside the main library reference department mischief is afoot. Head librarian Miss Snodgrass watches a man who wears a flared collar trench coat, gloves and a hat down over his eyes. The dodgy looking man darts in and out of aisle after aisle of books. "I hope that he isn't trying to steal any books or even worse still wanting to vandalize them," are her concerns. There's only one other patron in the reference department, so the matronly Miss Snodgrass comes from behind her desk then goes up and down the aisles of books hunting for the very suspicious looking character.

The other man in the reference department is Steven.

THE HUNTER

The hunter has followed the scent of the lemon orchid here. The suspected vandal is none other than Tisks himself, first of the draillum. An overly confident Tisks believes that he has seen the hunter - Steven - as he has whisked around the reference department, but this game of cat and mouse that he is playing with the librarian is too much fun for him to abandon on a maybe. Shrugging off his sighting the draillum relates his present paranoia back to the demons talk of the attack on the changelings the night before. *Wiiisss ...* the draillum speeds by the librarian unseen. Her dress blows up in the wind created by the speeding beast, exposing the modest woman. "Whaaa ...? My imagination is getting the best of me," the librarian excuses. "*Wiiisssss ... wiiisss*. This time the draillum undoes the hair tie that holds the librarian's ponytail in place. Grabbing a hold of her loose hair Snodgrass looks for something to blame "Darn drafty building," she accuses.

The scent of the lemon orchid grows closer for the hunter. The librarian walks through the small gate then back behind her desk. The draillum hasn't seen the magician except that unsure glance earlier, so he decides to create some more mischief before he has his feast. He whisks about the reference department. The wind from his speed is blowing papers and magazines all over the room. The scared Snodgrass is now sure that a poltergeist has taken over her library. "Ohh. Noo. Hellllppp!" she moans and screams. The mischievous demon appears in front of her desk. The librarian calms down, now that there is something that she can see. "Where did you come from?" she questions the odd looking man, or so

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she believes him to be.

The arrogant Tisks tips his hat. Seeing the amber skin of the beast for the first time she tells herself, "I'm going crazy ... that's all there is to it." The demon laughs. "It's amusing how differently you Humans all react. Yet all are terrified just the same." Reaching out Snodgrass touches the draillum. His skin moves like a balloon filled with water. "Uuuggghhh!" is the old maid's reaction. Tisks mocks the librarian by touching her wrinkled skin and saying, "Uughh to you too." Trying to seem unafraid, Snodgrass asks the draillum, "May I help you?" The horrid creature sticks its sharp nails into the librarian's eye sockets then plucks out her eyeballs. A heart chilling scream echoes through the stacks of books, "Nneeiiiiiggguuhhhh ...!" She faints to the floor. The draillum first pops the eyeballs into its mouth then it chews them. Afterward it then leans over the counter to relish the results of its handiwork.

Instead of finding the librarian, he has his neck ceased in the grip of the hunter. The two mystical beings rise above the reference desk counter top together. Now it is the draillum who feigns courage. "If it isn't the writer, the one who would be a magician or a wizard or some other such thing ..." Tisks tries to hide his fear with sarcasm. "Didn't you know that you aren't supposed to cause a disturbance in the library?" the hunter chides the demon. "So sue me," Tisks snidely remarks. "I'll do better than that ...!" With blade hands the magician scissors the demon's head from its shoulders. The head rolls across the library floor, then stops.

THE HUNTER

Steven looks down at the head and speaks to a still alive Tisks, "I'm only sorry that I didn't deprive you of that last meal. I shall replace the woman's eyes and deprive you of any more." The head talks back. "You will have to do better than cutting off my head," the draillum advises Steven. Like some comical movie creation Tisks' body walks clumsily toward the head. With his left hand Steven stops the body then looks down at the head once more. "I intend to draillum," he warns.

The human hand of Steven is shoved into the draillum's chest then rips out its heart. The heart still beats whole in the palm of the hunter's hand. "Die, demon!" Steven commands. The draillum's head growls up at Steven, "My master will come for you!" The head and body turn to liquid then evaporates as a gas. "... then like you, your master will die!" Steven predicts.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 19 - THE MONSTERS COME

As Gail stands staring at her husband's poster outside a Manhattan bookstore her dear friend Brenda Thomas sneaks up behind her and places her hands over Gail's eyes. The angel feigns surprise, jumping as if startled. "Haven't you got the real thing at home?" Brenda laughingly inquires. The friends face one another and laugh. "I guess I can't get enough of a good thing," the wife playfully gloats. They hug one another then they turn to face the poster once more. The poster reads, "WHERE MONSTERS HIDE!"

The two women stand in front of the store talking about the joys of newly-wed life versus the drag of still searching for Mister Right. Wanting what she has for her friend Gail tries to convince Brenda that she would find Mister Right if she would stop looking for him in the meat markets she calls dance clubs. Laughing, Brenda insists that she must have some fun while she searches. The friend is determined to help her friend. A brainstorm hits the angel. Gail insists that Brenda go with her and Steven to the gala tonight. This has to be the worst proposition she has gotten in a while, Brenda believes, so she shakes her head vigorously. "There is no way that I am going to be a third wheel to a newlywed couple," Brenda assures her friend. Convinced she knows what is best for her friend Gail insists that it won't be like that. "This gala is going to have half of the most eligible bachelors in New York in attendance," Gail exaggerates. Suddenly the invitation seems a lot more appealing. The single and still searching friend changes her tune, "If you put it like that ... with bells on."

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As the two women laugh and kid about the great time they expect to have neither seems aware of the strange man who watches them from across the street. The stranger is the demon - metamorphite - now still in the form of Keith. Along with others he is on a mission from Kamar.

Thinking back it remembers. After diving from the bridge, the changeling known then as Keith Durrant impacted the water like a Mack truck slamming into a steel-reinforced wall. "Uuuggghh ...!" It felt as though its rib cage had been smashed and was now pressing against the wall of its belly, but the truth was that he was only badly bruised inside. The bullet wounds had opened slightly. Blood colors the waters red as the demon makes its way to shore. Once there it takes the keys and unshackles itself.

For two hours the beast simply lay on the banks of the river and stared up at the sky, unable or unwilling to move. The bleeding has stopped and he slowly regains some strength, but he needs more time. Time seems a commodity that he is in short supply of as the sound of a search party comes ever closer. Spurred on by his fear the beast rises up and struggles away. When darkness comes the metamorphite dares to enter the backyard of a human home and steal clothes from the line. Headlights blind the demon as car after car passes by the youthful looking man who is hitch hiking--the new identity the demon has assumed.

The night has passed without a single car stopping to pick him up. He curses the lot of Humankind. Just

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then a young woman pulls off the road ahead of him to let him catch up. The youthful hitchhiker sighs then runs to the passenger side of the car and peers in. "I don't usually give rides, but you look so beat," the young woman - Julie - empathizes. The demon opens the car door then climbs in. "You don't know the half of it ..." the demon begins weaving his lies. "I'm on my way back to school. I thought the fewer things that I carried the easier hitching would be, but no one trusts anyone anymore. I was out there all night," a grain of truth he mixes with his tapestry of lies.

The conversation between the young woman and the beast is lively, but riddled with lies on his part. The young woman, Julie, is headed home to Michigan and tells the youth that he can ride with her as far as she goes. "No good deed goes unpunished ...," it is said. When they reach Michigan the beast twists Julie's head from her body then tosses both into the woods just off the side of the road.

The demon laughs and makes crude jokes about the dead girl to amuse itself while playing Julie's music on the remaining ride toward Skutz, Oregon. Days later it resumes the role of Keith Durrant - one it favors - as he crosses over the Skutz county line. A police car pulls up behind him.

The wary Sheriff Weaver doesn't care much for strangers passing through Skutz. The cowardly man feels that outsiders can accidentally disrupt the delicate balance of peace between townsfolk and demons. A peace that they have accustomed themselves to in Skutz, such as it is.

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The demon's first thought is that he should just kill the policeman and be done with it. He then decides to find out which way the wind blows with "Johnny Law" in a town rumored to be run by demons.

Cautiously Weaver walks up to the driver's side of the vehicle then taps on the rolled-up window. The changeling rolls the window down. "This vehicle is on my hot list," Weaver says with his hand at the ready on his gun handle. Casually Keith brushes the hair from his forehead, revealing the 666. The sheriff steps backwards. "Are you new to these parts?" The Sheriff asks, "As new as an innocent babe." The demon replies. The sheriff instructs the creature, "Leave the car then head up the road two miles until you reach a pathway barred by an iron gate. Beyond the gate follow the pathway which leads to the foot of the mountains and the caves. Then and only then will you find out if you're welcomed in Skutz." Looking the sheriff up and down the metamorphite asks, "... and what if I'm not?" A stone faced Weaver answers him, "Then you won't be coming back down."

The changeling has barely gone some twenty feet up the pathway toward the mountain when he is surrounded by demons. So'ei stares at the other beast. "What brings you here?" Wary, the changeling looks around at the other demons. "The Humans almost killed me. I need a place to hide and to heal," it answers. Brushing the hair from Keith's forehead So'ei reveals the mark. "We shall see if Kamar thinks you are worth the bother to us," is So'ei's cryptic reply. The vampire leads Keith and the others up the pathway to the caves then downward in

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deeper and deeper into the lair.

Inside the lair an obviously hurt Durrant stands before Kamar. The fallen angel laughs. "A stranger always offers us an opportunity for sport," he offers a vague threat. "I am a demon. All I need is a chance to heal. I can be of service to you," Keith pleads his case. "Five of the beast with no name could feast on you for a meal," Kamar thinks out loud. The beasts with no name make the noise most assume is cheering.

"I have seen much of the world these many centuries and may bring you great insight into the ways of the modern Humans." Kamar likes this creature. "This one has a sharp mind," Kamar thinks. The mind is where strength is born and directs the heart and soul. This the angel knows. "We shall talk and if you please me I shall find a place for you. If you do not please me I shall find a plate for you." The demons all laugh, except Keith.

The changeling speaks of the human's science as the new magic. He describes the power of their atom bombs as the breath of God. Durant tells the angel that the humans can even cure the infection of body and nature from a demon's scratch, something So'ei hadn't shared. Their greatest weakness is that with this new magic they have forgotten the old times.

They speak of us as if we were phantoms conjured by the weak or diseased mind. In this world of science our greatest enemies are our oldest enemies, the wizard turned hunter and the loyal one.

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The arch of Kamar's brow marks that Keith has touched a sensitive subject. "He was like unto a son to me. All that he is he owes to me. Now he tries to destroy all that I have taken eons to build." The changeling laughs. The angel is annoyed. "Do you mock me with your laughter?" Shaking his head the demon answers, "Never ... my lord and master. It is just that I have news that will please you." A smile lights Kamar's face. "So tell me! Please me!" Kamar commands. The beast slinks closer, so that no one else can hear. "The hunter is vulnerable now. He has taken a Human wife," it whispers. Keith does not know that Gail is the angel Elohim. The angel's evil laugh echoes throughout the caverns of the mountain. "I shall find a place for you," Kamar notes that day.

Remembering still more, the beast recalls the start of this errand his once again master has set him upon. At a small gas station on the near empty mid-west Interstate highway the windows of an SUV are tinted dark black. An unfortunate youth, Tyrone, a gas station attendant, walks out of the station and up to the driver's side window. "Can I fill it up?" he asks. Keith laughs. "Yeah, Opie ... you can fill it up." Frowning, Tyrone says, "My name is Tyrone, not Opie." The werewolf Marcus laughs and remarks, "I think you hurt Opie's feelings." Ignoring them, Tyrone walks to the rear of the SUV and begins to pump the gas. The sun is beginning to go down and the moon to rise up in the evening skies as Desiree exits the SUV wearing the skimpiest of cut-off shorts. The attendant's jaw practically drops to the ground when he sees this beautiful half dressed creature walking toward him carrying a purse. The

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pump stops then Tyrone takes the nozzle from the gas tank and places it back onto the pump. The werewolf Desiree smiles her heart-breaking smile. Stuttering, Tyrone asks for payment. " Uhh ... uhh ... th-th-that'll be twenty six dollars, Miss." The werewolf takes the money from her purse to pay Tyrone then with a flirtatious air she asks, "What do you do around here for fun ... Tyrone?" He smiles and shyly looks away from the beautiful woman. "Not much to do." Laughing, Desiree tells him, "That must mean all you do is make out with the local girls. Are you a womanizer Tyrone?" she teases. The man laughs. "Me? No!" he assures her. "That's too bad Tyrone, because I need to be serviced," she propositions him. The attendant turns and walks away. Grabbing his arm Desiree asks, "What's wrong?" It is clear that the man is annoyed. "No man can stand to be teased," he accuses her. The evil creature pulls Tyrone close and kisses him passionately. Then she releases him and asks, "Who's teasing?" The demon takes Tyrone's hand and leads him behind the gas station.

The sun disappears from the evening sky. The moon looms bright as the mistress of the night. The sound of growling and a human's screams sing the death song of tranquility for this quiet stop along the interstate.

A human Desiree returns to the SUV with money in hand and blood dripping from her lips.

The wizard Marshal is in charge of this expedition. He tells the others, "If you wish to hunt do it now, because it's going to be slim pickings between here

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and the big city." The beasts take off in different directions. The vampire So'ei flies east while Marcus and Desiree gallop toward a nearby diner. The wizard turns to Keith. "I would have thought that you most of all would be anxious to get back to the hunt." The changeling laughs. "I like a different sort of game," he answers.

That is what the beast in the guise of Keith Durrant thinks of as he watches Gail and Brenda walk away from the bookstore.

Later that day - after the ladies have finished shopping for their outfits for this evening's gala - they decide to treat themselves to an expensive lunch at one of the posh New York eateries. Still the ladies seem unaware of the beast that dogs their every footstep.

The patrons of this eatery are the elite of New York. The bartenders, waiters and waitresses are as handsome and beautiful as their clientele. There is a smorgasbord of eye candy to titillate Brenda's roaming eye. Turning to her friend out of the blue Brenda declares that Gail has a secret admirer. Looking around the restaurant Gail expects to find some lecher making goo-goo eyes at her. "No. Not here," Brenda clarifies. "At our office ... where you left me alone and abandoned." Shaking her head the newly-wed asks, "Do I dare ask who?" Laughing, her friend is all too anxious to divulge the identity. "Martin. He has asked about you every day since you've been gone." Gail makes light of Martin's interest. "He just hates that I am the one who got away." Making trivial her dalliances Brenda

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admits that she has helped Martin through this transition with some rebound sex. The friend tries to advise Brenda once again that guys like Martin are simply users. The glib friend tells Gail that everyone you meet isn't about forever.

The two friends are rudely interrupted by a waitress who comes over to their table. To earn the large tip Keith has given her she ignores common courtesy. The woman points across the restaurant to the bar where the handsome man, Keith Durrant, sits waving. "The gentleman at the bar would like to buy you two ladies a drink," she informs the friends. They look over at him as he waves. Turning away from the stranger and toward Gail the friend fans herself facetiously. "That one is a hottie," she admits her attraction. Her friend frowns and warns her. "And he is looking for a mid-day tryst." The wise angel turns to the waitress. "Tell the gentleman thank you, but no thanks." The waitress walks away. Glaring at her friend Brenda kicks her under the table. "Owww!" Gail responds. "Just because you have what you want at home doesn't mean that you have to spoil it for the rest of us. A mid-day tryst with a guy as good looking as that doesn't sound too bad to me," the friend assures the angel. "His type is bad news. Trust me on this." A hidden warning lies in Gail's words.

Taking one last shot at involving himself with either of the two women Keith has crossed the room and stands next to the friends and their table. He stares down longingly at Gail. "I want to apologize if I offended you ladies in any way. I'm new to the city. I saw two beautiful women sitting alone and

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decided what the hell, I'll take a shot. I took a chance and got shot down," he explains himself. Giving Keith the polite brush-off, Gail tells a small lie. "We weren't offended. We're simply otherwise involved." The demon looks from one lady to the other and back again. "Two very lucky individuals," he answers, smiles then turns and leaves.

As Brenda watches the handsome stranger walk away she slams her fist into her friend's right shoulder. "Ouch! You've gotten meaner since I've been gone," Gail accuses her friend. "And you've become too much of a mother hen," Brenda points out. Little did Brenda know how close she had come to making a fatal error. Monsters have come for the magician and his mate, but some innocents have already fallen prey to the beasts.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 20 - THE GALA

It is late afternoon in New York City. The lovely Brenda has gone home to prepare for this evening's gala, but Steven has other early plans for himself and his wife.

Hand-in-hand Gail and Steven walk. The yellow, orange, red and purple colors that surround the setting sun merely act as a crown for the beautiful Central Park scene. The two are seemingly oblivious to the threat which looms perilously close. The husband tickles his wife as they walk along. Laughing, she pulls away from his grasp, but waits a few feet away for his pursuit. His eyes twinkle with the light of new love, even though their love is centuries old. They run around trees and leap over benches. They act more like two teenagers experiencing their first crush than comfortable old-shoes lovers. To her delight Steven catches Gail, or maybe she allows herself to be caught; neither care which it is. When he holds her tenderly in his arms and kisses her passionately those who walk by glance at the two with envy. This is a love that singers will sing about, writers must write about and dreamers can only dream about. Their eyes meet when they break from the kiss and no spoken words are needed. The two laugh, grab each other by the hand and run home toward their Central Park East apartment.

Once inside the apartment the door has barely been shut behind them when they melt into each other's arms. His hands slide under her blouse. With a feathery touch his hands caress her silky skin. As they kiss two breaths become as one. Gingerly, her

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hands test his girth. Lovingly, she is lifted into the air and carried into their bedroom. A mist of true happiness fills her eyes as her husband eases her down upon their bed. "I love you," she whispers, as the last of her clothing floats to the floor. Her hands hungrily explore her husband's body. Their lovemaking becomes more urgent with each passing moment. "I have lost myself in you and I pray never to be found," he confesses to the woman he loves.

Hours later, the two still lay together in each other's arms. When Gail moves to rise from the bed Steven pulls her back into his arms and showers her body with a thousand little kisses. Nervously she laughs then tries to escape his grasp again, but not with any great true effort.

Almost with a whimper the loving wife pleads, "Steven ... we don't have time for this. We should be getting ready ...!" She then takes her watch from the bed side table and glances at it. "... right now!" she exclaims. The husband laughs then pushes his new bride flat upon her back. He pulls down the straps to the slip that she had just pulled up. He kisses her shoulders. Reluctantly she pleads with him, "We shouldn't. Everyone is waiting ...," she pauses. "Mmm ... this is your night," she moans. Kissing her he looks into her eyes and tells her, "Yes. It is my night and there is nothing more important to me in this world than you ... so let them wait." The contented wife breathes a sigh of surrender then gladly makes love to her husband again.

In lower Manhattan two demons, a man-bat and a

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changeling glare at one another from opposite sides of the warehouse which they use as their temporary headquarters. Distrust and treachery are the lifeblood of these evil creatures so they can't help but wonder what end purpose is served for the other by this dangerous endeavor. It is So'ei's dream that the day will come when he is rid of the angels and rules Earth. Durrant hungers only for the lustful companionship of human women he must seduce. The other's reasons are their own.

Later, outside of the Walsh's Central Park East apartment a conspicuous red convertible corvette is parked. Two werewolves have stolen the sporty car for demons are enchanted by bright things. They sit, waiting for the magician and his mate to exit. Keith had followed Gail home earlier then informed the others of this location. The werewolves wait and wonder what mischief they will find to get into in this circus that men call a city.

At the Waldorf Astoria, in the main ballroom, the New York literary elite are gathered. The guest of honor and his bride are noticeably absent. Many of the persons of the press are annoyed and have chewed on Bruce's ear, figuratively speaking. The agent makes light of his client's tardiness. Dressed in a shocking pink linen tuxedo, pink bow tie, white ruffled shirt and bright red shoes, Bruce glances again and again toward the door.

In an elegant Armani suit, and -- in Bruce's words -- looking more delicious than tasty-cakes, Marshal Dumont enters. All eyes are drawn to the charismatic wizard. Suave is his manner as he seems more to

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float than to walk across the ballroom floor toward the outrageous Mr. Downe. The two men quickly find themselves engaged in conversation.

Meanwhile across town the two lovers finally tear themselves apart from one another. They look at one another and laugh like mischievous children. "That was incredible," a satiated Gail admits. "You be sure to let me know if it ever stops being incredible," Steven cajoles his lovely wife. Playfully she slaps his arm.

A short time later Marcus sits up straight in anticipation as he spots the couple exiting their building. "At last," Marcus complains. "Let the games begin!" a gleeful Desiree yelps her delight. A limousine pulls up in front of Gail and Steven then they climb inside. The limo pulls off. The red corvette follows.

After cruising across town the limo containing Steven and Gail makes another unscheduled stop. The werewolves become more and more impatient when the limo makes another stop somewhere other than the gala. The friend, Brenda, exits the building in a beautiful sleek cream colored gown. The chauffeur opens the door for her. She climbs in. In the red corvette an agitated Marcus notes, "I hope that they are finally headed to the gala." The limo pulls off then the red corvette follows once more. "That's what the changeling overheard," Desiree reminds her Marcus.

At the gala the women are more than a little bit annoyed that the gay agent has all but monopolized

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the time of the very handsome stranger, Marshal. Oblivious to the women there Marshal has more important matters on his mind than mortal flirtations. Still even a wizard's patience has an end. "I was truly looking forward to meeting your star writer, but it looks as though it will have to be another time." The wizard has decided to leave. "I must apologize," Bruce says. "He's a newlywed. Right now his priorities are a bit askew."

The wizard still hopes for some insight into the workings of the mind of his one time friend- now enemy- so before taking his leave he pumps the agent for more information. "His new book gave me pause. The direction he's chosen. I was looking forward to discussing it with him." Reluctantly the agent admits, "I'm not really a fan of the genre, but this one seems at least as chilling as any of his other works." Explaining what he has taken from the new books Marshal goes on to break down to the agent the differences which he perceives. The infatuated Bruce hears hardly a word. The agent's thoughts are more in the way of a question, "Is he or isn't he ...?" Marshal's commentary does manage to get through the haze of infatuation. The agent answers, "Maybe love makes one view things in simpler terms." The wizard replies, "Then I must meet the woman who has affected my favorite writer so profoundly."

Between flirtations the gay agent looks out across the mass of humanity in the ballroom in hopes of finally finding his client. The nearly exasperated agent is delightfully surprised. At last he spots his client. On Steven's arms are two women, Gail and

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Brenda. Bruce turns to Marshal. "It seems that you are in luck after all. The writer has arrived," he trumpets Steven's arrival. The tight fist of fear grips Marshal as he looks for his onetime brother magician. Instead he spots the beautiful face of the writer's wife, Gail. "I assume that one of the two women whose hands he is holding is his wife. The other woman ... must be a friend of the couple," Bruce speculates to his new confidant. With the eyes of a smitten schoolboy, Marshal gazes across the room at the angel. "To look at her is to know that she is a remarkable woman." The wizard has assumed correctly, which of the two women is Steven's wife.

A now disappointed Bruce scowls at the obviously straight Marshal. "I truly wouldn't know," the gay man admits in a testy tone. Noting the agent's annoyance the wizard laughs.

The writer and his two guests make their way deeper into the ballroom. Many of the party goers mob the writer. The two women and their escort are separated. The writer now finds himself surrounded while his wife and her friend are being pushed further and further away from him.

The agent and the wizard cross the ballroom together until they stand next to Gail and Brenda. The bold Marshal reaches his hand out and takes a hold of the wife's hand. Feigning surprise, she looks up to stare at the man who has a hold of her hand. They look into each other's eyes. For one of the two there is a smile of attraction for the other a smile of familiarity. So alike are the two wizards, this

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the angel can see.

"You are Steven Walsh's new bride ... are you not?" Playing innocent the angel asks, "Have we met?" In her human form the wizard does not recognize the angel. Modestly, the magician answers, "I'm afraid that I have not had that pleasure." As he holds Gail's hand Marshal all so subtly caresses it. He introduces himself and the agent-Bruce then explains how Bruce was the one who had deduced who she was. The two men barely acknowledge the existence of the stunning Brenda. The friend finally tugs on Gail's dress. Turning to her friend the wife introduces Brenda to the two men. The gay agent has only eyes for Marshal and Marshal only has eyes for Gail. Noting the situation for what it is Brenda shakes her head in resignation.

As it goes with these types of events Steven finds himself cornered by someone who finds fault with his work. The priest, Father Connors, has engaged the fantasy writer in a heated discussion of the blasphemous implications of Steven's writings. In the middle of this debate the husband notices and recognizes the wizard with his wife. With disregard of the priest's feelings the hunter abruptly excuses himself then leaves the priest standing alone in mid-sentence. He then rejoins his wife and Brenda, who stand beside Marshal and Bruce.

Looking directly into Marshal's eyes Steven doesn't try to hide his utter disdain for the man, "Surprised to find the likes of you here," he almost threaten. The party crasher offers his hand in greeting, but Steven ignores it. "Dumont ... Marshal

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Dumont." He plays the role of a stranger. "I didn't think any of you would dare to come." A confused Bruce asks, "Who is coming? Is someone else invited ...?" Steven turns to Gail and Brenda. "Would the two of you mind getting us drinks?" he asks. "... of course not," the wife answers for her friend, recognizing her husband's subtle hint. She turns to Marshal and Bruce. "Excuse us. We will be right back." Turning away, the wife takes her friend's arm and leads her toward the bar. An ever hopeful Brenda turns around and calls back to Marshal, "Yes. We will be right back." Gail tugs insistently at her friend's arm.

Once the two women reach the bar Brenda turns to her friend glaring at her in anger. "What the hell is going on?" she demands. The friend shrugs her shoulders and answers, "You know how men are." Brenda looks at Gail, still puzzled over the turn of events.

"Must the beasts be destroyed?" Marshal and Steven begin to make subtle references between the hunter and the demons new relationship. "... only if they refuse to be redeemed," the hunter answers. The outsider stares at the two men. "The two of you talk as if these creatures truly exist outside of the written word." Feigning disbelief Marshal laughs. "When you're a fan of the genre, the work takes on a life of its own," the wizard makes his excuses.

The two women return carrying drinks for all. The angel hands her husband his drink. Brenda first offers Marshal then Bruce a drink. The two men refuse. "Thank you sweetheart," the hunter seals his

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thank-you with a kiss. "No, thank you," first Marshal then Bruce answer Brenda.

An angry Steven faces Marshal once more then informs him, "I have other guests that I have neglected." The husband takes his wife's hand and her friend's hand then starts to lead them away. Not yet ready to give up on her flirtation with the wizard the friend turns to Marshal. "Mr. Dumont ... !" She is interrupted by Steven. "Brenda, there is someone that I want you to meet." Without breaking stride Steven issues one last veiled threat. "I hope that you will heed my advice Mr. Dumont." He then tugs on Brenda and Gail's hands.

Not wanting to cause a scene Brenda waits until the three of them are away from other people, then she turns and lights into husband and wife, "What the hell is wrong with you people? Do I look like some five year old child who needs your protection?" With the pretext of innocence Steven merely looks at the two women blankly. "I don't know what's going on between you and Dumont, but the next time you can leave me out of your little pissing contest," Brenda adds.

The hunter warns the friend, "Dumont is not what he pretends to be." The friend has had enough. She turns to the wife and lets her know exactly what kind of impression her husband has made. "Your husband is an arrogant ass and I have had enough for one evening." Brenda then storms away. Knowing the danger that lurks Steven turns to Gail. "We had better see to her safety." Hurriedly the couple exits the ballroom chasing after Brenda.

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A disappointed Marshal sees the three leaving and realizes that Gail and Brenda are probably beyond his reach tonight, but as he turns and spots Bruce an alternate plan comes to mind. Walking over to the dejected man, the magician asks, "Would you like a drink?" Not thinking much of the offer Bruce answers, "A punch would be fine." Now it is Marshal who does the flirting. "No. I meant something a little harder, maybe in a place a little more private." Happy and surprised by Marshal's flirtation Bruce smiles in anticipation of the implications of the invitation. "I got the impression that you are into women," Bruce begs explained. Making a phony excuse for his earlier behavior the wizard replies, "Just so we are clear on things ... I like variety." Laughing, Bruce throws up his hands and declares, "Viva la difference!" The two men leave the gala side by side.

The sweet odd little man doesn't understand that he has just become a pawn in a horrible game of power.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 21 - THE PAWN

The changeling has tired of the vampire's company and has decided to attend the gala also. He arrives at the Waldorf Astoria just in time to see an angry Brenda exiting the hotel with Gail and Steven in hot pursuit. "Let us take you home!" Gail calls after her friend. "Can't the two of you understand that I don't need any more of your help nor do I want any more of your help?" At that moment unseen the angel casts a rain spell. Looking up at the skies in exasperation, the friend wonders what test will come next. Looking over at her friend, Brenda sees the hurt expression on Gail's face and she softens in her demeanor. "Okay! You can take me home, but I'm still mad at both of you!" Pointing toward Steven the friend makes clear her displeasure, "Especially you!" The three of them make their way to the limousine which awaits them in front of the hotel.

The metamorphite looks around and spots the two werewolves. He runs and jumps into the stolen Corvette. Now sitting on the storage area of the two-seater is Keith. Marcus is surprised when the metamorphite shows up. "What?" the changeling questions. "I decided that I needed some fun too," the changeling explains. The other demons, Desiree and *Marcus*, laugh.

The limo carrying Steven, Gail and Brenda pulls away from the hotel. The red Corvette follows. Like some wild teenager Keith stands waves his hands gleefully in the air. An annoyed, Desiree pulls him down from the back of the car and in between her and Marcus in the small car. "We're trying to kidnap someone. It would go a lot better if we didn't draw attention to

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ourselves." The she-wolf reminds the changeling. Durrant laughs. "Then maybe you should have started by getting a car which wouldn't stand out so much," is his answer.

Just ahead of the three demons the limo pulls up in front of Brenda's building. In the car the wife asks Brenda to let Steven walk her up, but Brenda insists that she doesn't need a babysitter.

The corvette stops a block behind the limo with its occupants. The demons watch with great interest to see what unfolds. What happens and what the demons see are two different things. The demons see the hunter and Brenda exit the car then enter the building. The changeling tells the werewolves that he is going to follow Steven and the friend inside and that once the hunter drops her off he will kidnap the friend instead of the wife. On this course they all agree for they believe the hunter will still have to follow to save the friend.

It is the changeling who acts upon what the three perceive. All so stealthily the changeling exits the car then slips inside the building, still believing the illusion to be real. Even when he sees the two enter Brenda's apartment not to return he still suspects nothing. Patiently he waits in the hallway for the hunter's exit.

What really happens is that Brenda refuses to let Steven walk her to her door, so he creates an astral projection to fool the demons. Soon after Steven sees the changeling go inside the building he instructs the limo driver to take him and Gail home.

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The two werewolves have been fooled also. Believing the wife is alone in the limo they follow it.

Minutes later the limo arrives at the Central Park East apartment building that the couple calls home. The werewolves receive their own surprise when Steven exits the car with his wife. They decide to go back to the warehouse in hopes that the other wizard can explain the hunter's magic to them.

After a lengthy wait Keith tires and decides to rejoin the two werewolves. When he exits the apartment building he is surprised to find that they have left without him. Tired and bored the metamorphite decides to return to the warehouse also.

Meanwhile a taxicab pulls up in front of the downtown warehouse. A now wary Bruce tentatively exits the cab. The agent looks around the seedy neighborhood. "Well. Hmmpf," he nervously comments. Marshal laughs. "You are going to be very surprised. I promise." Marshal points Bruce toward the warehouse in which he and the others are staying.

Inside the warehouse So'ei is amazed as the dirty dilapidated hideout goes through a magical metamorphosis. Marshal has cast a spell. The cobwebs, cockroaches and rats vanish to another plane. The ripped up planks in the floor morph into the finest of pine wood floors. Modern appliances and beautiful, luxurious furniture appear everywhere. The cranky old elevator which barely ran becomes a well kept antique freight elevator. As the warehouse door opens So'ei hears the sound of voices

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- one familiar - the other not - he flies up to a downstairs ceiling and hangs by his bat like feet.

"I could faint dead away," Bruce declares as he first sees the inside of the warehouse. It appears to be a luxurious loft. "I am impressed. Though I must admit that when you brought me to this neighborhood I thought ... Oh dear God, I have made a terrible mistake," Bruce admits. A wicked smile curls the magician's lips. "What makes you think that you haven't?" Marshal cruelly teases. First Bruce frowns then he bursts into laughter. Playfully the gay man slaps Marshal's arm. "Very funny, ha ... ha," not even beginning to suspect the truth.

A few minutes later upstairs in the warehouse Marshal lights a gas fireplace and two candles, providing a romantic ambiance. Then the magician retrieves from the kitchen an ice bucket which holds a bottle of champagne. Also, on his fingers he carries two champagne flutes. Smiling wickedly at his intended prey he puts down the ice bucket and flips over the glasses, offering one to Bruce. The man smiles back in anticipation of things to come. "Don't mind if I do." Taking a corkscrew from his pocket Marshal opens the champagne. *Pop!* The cork shoots across the room. The two men laugh as the bubbly overflows onto the hardwood floors.

After his glass is full Bruce takes his drink then begins to walk around the magnificent appearing luxury loft. "You mind if I look around ...?" he asks. The wizard sits down on the edge of his huge Victorian bed, which is the centerpiece for the main

room of the loft. "I can't believe that a gem like this exists in this neighborhood. One would be hard pressed to find any place this great even on the Upper East Side." The gay man rants on and on. It is beginning to annoy Marshal how taken this fool is with a mere illusion. "Things and people aren't always what they seem," he warns.

Wearing an amorous expression Bruce glances over at the handsome man. With mischief in his heart Marshal crooks his finger, beckoning Bruce over to the bed. "Come and sit down. I won't bite. Unless you want me to ...". They both laugh as Bruce makes his way across the room to the bed and sits down beside Marshal.

Reaching out Marshal instructs his all so willing victim, "Let me hold your hand." The trusting man places his right hand into the palm of Marshal's hand. "Your hands are as soft as a woman's hands." The wizard's demeanor suddenly changes. With evil intent he separates one finger from the others on Bruce's hand. Quickly and powerfully he bends the finger backwards, until it snaps. The gay agent grimaces in pain and screams a scream that could have awakened the dead. "Aaaaaaaiiii ...! Dear God. Why did you do that? Oohh ... uugghhh!" he questions as he groans in pain.

The injured man collapses to one knee beside the bed. The evil creature still holds the hand as he looks down at Bruce in disgust. "Your friend needs to be taught a lesson. I find you an abomination, so you are the logical choice to be the pawn," he explains his evil motivations.

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With glowing red eyes the wizard glares at his prey. "Are you afraid of pain, Mr. Downe?" he asks. Trying to display some degree of defiance Bruce refuses to answer. It is then that Marshal breaks yet another finger. "Aaaaaeeeeiiii ...!" Bruce's anguish echoes throughout the near-empty warehouse. "I only ask because I intend to hurt you badly before I kill you," the evil tormentor promises Bruce. Smiling he breaks another of Bruce's fingers. "Nooo ... !" Like the mad man that he is Marshal laughs a maniacal laugh as on and on he continues to torture this vulnerable man.

Releasing his hold on Bruce's hand for a mere second does the wizard as a prelim to sport. The hopeful man leaps to his feet and flees in the direction of the freight elevator. Laughter escapes the evil one's lips. "Do make this sporting," Marshal taunts.

As he runs Bruce stumbles and falls, but quickly picks himself back up and runs again. It seems like forever but less than a minute has passed when he finally reaches the elevator. There he stands punching the buttons again and again. He doesn't want to know, but needs to know, so Bruce looks back. The agent is surprised to see Marshal walking ever so slowly, but ever closer toward him. Not daring to wait any longer the agent speeds to the stairs then down them. Even though his hand is bleeding and he is in great agony Bruce leaps down the stairs two, three and then four steps at a time. When he reaches the lower level he heads for the main door. Fearful he looks back again. Satisfied that he has outrun his tormentor, he breathes a sigh of relief then opens the front door. In the doorway

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in demon form are the werewolves, Desiree and Marcus, with fangs exposed. "Nooo ...!" he screams again then slams the door shut. The quivering mass that is Bruce stands a few feet away from the door, crying and shaking with fear. "No. No. This isn't happening. This isn't even possible. I'm having a bad dream or a drug flashback," he tries to explain the inexplicable.

The door rattles and the sound of banging is constant outside the door. To Bruce's horror the door gives way and the two demons smash through. The gay man turns to flee, but Marshal bars his way. The sound of a snarling laughter comes from behind Bruce. The laughter pushes him to his limit. A courage born of utter frustration makes Bruce act. Desperately he pushes Marshal aside and runs toward the back of the warehouse.

There is no more need for pretense, so Marshal allows the spell he had cast upon the warehouse to fall away. As Bruce runs he begins to see this place as it truly is. The floors are ripped and aging. Rats, cockroaches and other vermin infest the place. Cobwebs hang like some old nightmarish drapes throughout the warehouse. It is then that Marshal yells at Desiree and Marcus, "Get him fools, but don't hurt him ... yet. We must have some fun with him then he will be the bait for the hunter." The sound of Desire and Marcus' hoofs beating against the aged wood reverberates in Bruce's ears as he runs as fast as his legs will allow. A floor board splinters under the agent's weight. His leg is forced down beneath the floor. The leg of his pants rips, his flesh tears and he cries out once more ...

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"Uuuggghhhh ...! As he manages to pull his leg free from the floor blood pours from the gash he has suffered. It is something that he will have to worry about later. Now he must escape.



The rear door to the warehouse appears mere feet away. What is that swooshing sound that he hears? Curiosity gets the best of Bruce. Stopping he looks up. A mask of pure terror he wears as he spots the vampire, So'ei, for the first time. The foul creature swoops down, grabbing Bruce under his arms and lifting him into the air. The demon bares his fangs and prepares to feed upon the Human. A voice in the vampire's head instructs him, "Soon enough So'ei, but for now release him." The voice in So'ei's head is that of the wizard - Marshal. He is

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eldest of all vampires doesn't care much for being ordered around by the cowardly wizard. "I am So'ei, eldest of the Sibling Vampires. If I wish to feed then feed I shall," he answers the voice in his head.

The wizard chants, "Tiomai, aso, danai. Tiomai, aso danai," then he continues to repeat the chant. Blood begins to fill the eyes of the vampire and So'ei cries out in pain, "Aauugghh ...!" The vampire and the human come crashing down to the warehouse floor. The two look up to see the werewolves and the magician standing over them. In a most pitiable whining voice Bruce asks Marshal, "What are you going to do to me?" In a voice coated in icy dispassion Marshal answers him, "Kill you, of course." Again the frightened man screams, but for the last time, "Nooo ...!"

Having tired of the very nature of his prey the wizard declares, "I don't care for that feminine shrieking of yours." Then Marshal's fingernails grow longer, he reaches inside of Bruce's mouth and with a single swift motion he rips the tongue from there. The pawn is of little use to him anymore. His head plops over. Bruce is dead.

All the demons and the wizard are disappointed. "I thought you wanted him alive?" So'ei reminds the wizard. Shrugging his shoulders Marshal shakes his head in disgust. "Damned weak mortal ...! Who would believe that such a little thing as losing his tongue would kill him?"

The demons and the wizard stare at the corpse,

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frustrated. Now entering the rear of the warehouse is Keith. Seeing the dead human he laughs. "I guess I missed out on all of the fun," he makes light of the human's death. "What now?" the vampire asks. "We no longer have any bait, so we shall wreak a little havoc upon this city tonight and tomorrow we shall go back to our original plan to kidnap the wife," Marshal lays out their strategy. The metamorphite is delighted until Marshal turns to him. "Except you ... I have a task for you to perform." The wizard disappoints the changeling.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 22 - NIGHT OF THE WEREWOLVES

It is a Monday night. The Humans have just returned to their work week, so at twelve midnight the streets are as barren as an old maid's womb, except for the young and the villainous. The moon shines as bright as the noon day sun. The queen of the night skies is as full as any lover's heart. This is the time of the wolf. Every open ear can hear the beast baying. Each Human heart beat is quickened by a fear so ancient its origins have been forgotten.

Eyes can be deceived by the vision of loveliness that walks the mean streets of the city. In her human form the beautiful Desiree walks by the entrance to an alleyway. Two hoodlums, Mike and Joe, hide themselves in the shadows. They spot this vulnerable appearing vision as she passes by their point of attack. To their surprise their prey enters the alleyway. Stepping from the shadows behind her, Mike is the first to speak. "Lady, someone as beautiful as you shouldn't be hanging around alleyways. It isn't safe." He laughs. The werewolf entices the villain further. "I dropped a diamond earring and it rolled into this alleyway. I can't seem to find it anywhere." The second scoundrel, Joe, moves out of the shadows and menacingly toward Desiree. "I don't know which excites me more ...," he begins. "... the diamond earrings or having your beautiful spoiled butt all alone in this alley," he contemplates. An arm's length from Desiree, Joe stops. Reaching out and ripping open the front of her blouse he reveals her beautiful full breasts. All so quickly the tables are turned. The would-be victim becomes the hunter. Now it is Desiree who reaches out then grabs Joe by his throat. The would-

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be villain gasps for air as she holds him, feet kicking in the air, above the ground. Her delicate female hand has changed into a paw with long sharp nails and covered in an animal's fur. The demon raises Joe higher into the air as Mike stands frozen with fear. In an animal-like growl she speaks, "Who said that I was alone?" From behind a dumpster, in his full werewolf form, Marcus steps into the light of the street lamps.

At last finding his courage Mike takes a jagged knife from his pocket. "What the hell is going on here?" he demands. Then the thief stabs his knife into Desiree's arm, hoping that she will release his partner in crime. Desiree laughs and with little effort pulls the knife from her arm. The fear returns as he stares in disbelief. "Holy shit ...!" With an evil cackle Desiree takes the knife out then slits Joe's throat as she holds him in mid air. She then releases his body and lets it fall to the ground with a disheartening thud.

It is only then that Mike abandons his friend, turns and flees from the alleyway. Heart racing like a jackhammer, the would-be-criminal runs down the city streets. Fear makes him dare to take the time to look back ... to see if the beasts are in pursuit. What he sees fills him with repentance, but far too late to change his fate. In their werewolf forms Desiree and Marcus pursue him through the nearly empty city streets. The would-be-robber runs to the far side of a parked car. The female demon runs around the car while her mate leaps over the car. Face-to-face with the werewolf, the villain rears back. Like some comedic act Mike tumbles down the

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hill and into the park. The only sound to be heard in the night is Mike's screams. "Help me! Help! Help! Anybody, please help!"

A police car pulls up beside the park. Two police officers, Karen and Phillip, jump from their patrol car after hearing the yells for help. They spot the two demons, Desiree and Marcus. The astonished police officers pull out their guns then turn to one another. "What the hell are those things?" Phillip questions. "I don't know, but I think we had better stop them first and figure out what they are later," Karen reasons.

After his tumble Mike jumps up and starts to run. The werewolves pursue him into the park. Phillip runs to the trunk of the patrol car and takes out a shotgun. The two police officers pursue the beasts. The beasts, in turn are still in pursuit of Mike.

Tears falling from his eyes Mike does run hard through the park. Trying to escape the monsters behind him. Mike leaps over bushes, pushes back tree limbs, but all to no avail. The werewolves close in on Mike as the two police officers close in on them. A large unseen rock trips the would-be-robber. Mike stumbles then falls to the grass. Now lying on the ground Mike is afraid to move or even to look up as he struggles, out of breath. When he finally does open his eyes above him are Desiree and Marcus, in werewolf form, menacingly glaring down at him. They snarl at Mike.

To Mike's delight the policemen, Karen and Phillip, have caught up to the threesome. Gun drawn Karen

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shouts out a command, "Don't move!" The demons turn in Karen's direction. Recognizing his would be rescuers, Mike greets them warmly. "I never dreamed I would ever be so happy to see the two of you." Phillip spots Mike and laughs. "If it isn't Dirty Mike ... Where is ugly Joe?" Phillip pauses. "Now I'm faced with a dilemma, I don't know if I should shoot you or them things." Mike sits up. "Very funny pig ...". After his ordeal, Mike is not amused. The she-wolf turns her attentions back to Mike. "I said, don't move!" Karen commands. The demon ignores the lady cop and marches over to Mike and slices her nails across his face. "Aaaauugghh ...! Shoot her ass!" Mike groans then yells at Karen.

The sound of a shot echoes through the night. Desiree is hit. The demon is knocked away from Mike. Not thwarted, Desiree recovers then strides toward her prey once more. This time Karen fires again and again. Each time she is hit Desiree stumbles. After several shots she even falls to the ground, but she gets quickly back up and still marches toward Mike.

The werewolf's mate charges toward Karen with his claws raised high to attack. The other policeman, Phillip, fires round after round into Marcus, but also to no avail. The female cop turns just in time to see Marcus strike. Fear is the last emotion Karen ever knows. Claws slice through the flesh of her throat like a hot knife through butter. Blood gushes everywhere. "Nooo ...!" Phillip screams. The remaining officer takes the shotgun from his shoulder and empties several rounds into Marcus. Once the shotgun is empty Phillip charges at Marcus like a madman. He hits the demon again and

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again with the butt of his weapon

The werewolf is unscathed. The demon hits Phillip with the back of its paw and slams him through the air and against a nearby tree. Slowly Phillip slides down the tree into a heap then dies. "Aaaauugghh ...!" Mike screams as Desiree feeds upon him. Kneeling down Marcus joins his mate. Looking ravenously down at the would-be-thief Desiree swings her paw, knocking out cold the scoundrel that she feeds upon.

Passers-by flee in terror at the horrific sight of the two werewolves dragging the unconscious body of Mike through the park. In a clearing in the park, surrounded by trees, the two demons clean the remaining flesh from his bones. Soon there is little remaining of the once evil man save his head upon his skeleton. After the two have finished their meal they begin a sensuous dance around the remains. The female werewolf wraps her body around Marcus' body seductively. She slithers against him like a snake. The demon winds her body around then down his body, kissing him everywhere as she descends toward the ground. Gyrating with his body Marcus howls at the moon. The male wolf kneels before his mate and they snap at one another, love bites which actually tear at each other's flesh. They snarl with a passion that cannot be mistaken. The two lovers then lick each other's furry bodies. This is undoubtedly disgusting to the human senses, the wet fur and bloodied scars, but erotic beyond human understanding to the demons themselves.

Two naked animals are silhouetted by the moon. They

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were and are forever children of the moon. They thrust at one another with the fervor of beasts. Unrelentingly they strive for a seemingly unobtainable apex. "Wwooo ... wwooo ... wwooo ...!" The night sings their passions.

Each ear that hears is inflamed beyond reason. Animalistic instincts are now set into motion. Human outcries of passion soon mingle with the moans of the beasts. "Oh ...!Yess ...! Wwooo ...! Oohhhh ...! Wwwooo ...! Uuugggghhh ...!" A quiet evening's stroll becomes an invitation for raw public acts never dreamed of before.

As if this is all some very bizarre universal ballet and choreographed to end in a symphonic harmony, final thrusts bring all pirouetting over the chasm of ecstasy together. The sounds are beyond description, but the mere memory will serve to incite the flesh to quiver on some distant occasion.

The night is done and the beasts take on their human forms once more. They exit the park wearing the uniforms of the dead police officers. No one would guess what evil deeds the werewolves have committed this night.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 23 - TO DANCE WITH DEATH

In the nightclub named The Black Cauldron the yuppie suburbanites, from the counties just outside of Manhattan, gather to enjoy the city's nightlife. The music is blaring. Inordinate amounts of alcoholic beverages are consumed. Strangers quickly become more familiar than caution would suggest is reasonable. Most of the patrons of this club are regulars, so cliques form, even in so small a place as this. There is the quiet crowd. They are seeking to meet that special someone who will end their feelings of isolation - a by-product of the big city. There is the dance crowd, who seek to stand out in the big city by demonstrating their state of coolness. There is the wild bunch. They moved to the big city in search of a freedom they never knew in the small towns where most of them originate.

Occasionally a stranger enters the club. An unfamiliar face warrants some attention. The women are all taken aback by the two handsome strangers that enter this night. The women of the wild bunch are thinking, "Prime beef like this doesn't usually make a Monday club scene." Hearts swoon in the quiet crowd. The dance crowd is unimpressed. They assume guys who look this good probably aren't "Cool."

The two strangers, So'ei and Marshal, make their way deeper into the bar. They have one drink together. After that one drink Marshal notices a beautiful woman, Susan, sitting alone in a booth. He wishes So'ei good hunting then makes his way across the bar. The wizard smiles charmingly down at the woman then asks her, "Would you mind if I join you?" The woman warmly returns his smile and waves her hand

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toward the empty seat then answers, "I welcome the company." This lady is a member of the quiet crowd.

The vampire decides to try the concoctions he has seen men partake of for ages. So'ei is pleasantly surprised by the taste of these human drinks. The vampire's tolerance for alcohol is superhuman and soon draws some attention to him. One drink after another he gulps down like water. The bartender starts to cut him off, but it is plain to see that he is unaffected by his consumption of the drinks. "Man what kind of system do you have?" the bartender asks. "Is it unusual to like these drinks?" So'ei questions him. "Nooo ...!" the bartender laughs. "... but to like them as much as you do and still be standing, yes, that is unusual." The fact that he is stronger than the Humans in one more way pleases So'ei.

The vampire watches the Humans writhing and jerking about the dance floor. He has seen them dance before, but he never understood what purpose it served ... until now. It seems obvious that it is part of some sort of mating ritual.

As the evening progresses, the Humans dance closer together. The more they dance and the more of the strange drinks they finish off the more they touch one another then lean in to talk to one another.

One couple that So'ei has watched, Kevin and Blair, start out the evening as total strangers. Then Kevin brings over glasses of the concoction. The two talk, maintaining some distance between them. They dance a wild and fast dance which keeps them apart from one

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another. As the evening progresses Kevin brings many more glasses of the drink over to Blair. The two have continued to drink. They still talk, but now the distance between them has evaporated. Blair laughs and touches Kevin's arms and face as she talks to him. Now when the music plays they dance slower and their hands roam over each other's bodies. Another hour later and many more drinks, the talking has all but ceased. They now kiss - an intimate kiss, tongue battling tongue. As they dance Kevin caresses Blair's rear end through the fabric of her dress. The two moan into each other's mouths. Taking her hand he leads her into a more secluded part of the club, where the contact becomes even more intimate.

As So'ei continues to watch he notices that this scenario is being repeated again and again among the Humans in the club. The bartender at one point teases him. "You have to put down the drinks and get out there and get you some action." The vampire understands, but the kind of action he has in mind few here would ever forget.

It is hard to stand out among this crowd, but one woman does, Danielle. The woman is a tall, young, blonde statuesque beauty. The demon, So'ei, knows that this is the woman whose vitality will please him most. The men in the club are intimidated by her beauty, so Danielle finds herself in the middle of the dance floor dancing alone. The vampire makes his way across the club. His and Danielle's eyes are locked upon one another. Finally he reaches her side. "Would you care to dance?" he asks. "I'm already dancing," Danielle answers, putting So'ei's

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resolve to the test. "No. I'm asking will you dance with me?" he repeats his request.

The very sensuous and confident woman doesn't answer him. Instead she moves up close to him and begins grinding her body against his all so provocatively. The demon uses all of his will power to restrain from drinking her essence right there in the middle of the dance floor. The hot rhythms of the music sway the demon and his prey. Others in the club are mesmerized by their movements. It is almost as if the two seductive beings are hypnotizing everyone with their sensuous aura. The temperature in the club seems to rise. The music joins in on the seduction. The horns moan. The drums thrust. The piano tickles. The words caress.

Then all too suddenly the music stops. Everyone stands frozen for a moment. There are flashes of heat still burning inside their loins. The two dancers stare into each other's eyes feeling the passion flow from one to the other. "My name is So'ei," the demon speaks first. "I'm Danielle. I love your accent. Is it real?" she asks. Reaching out, So'ei takes Danielle's hand into his. The vampire caresses her hand. He then places his hand against the side of her face. Down to her neck his hand slowly moves. The beast can feel the vitality of her heartbeat in the rhythmic throbbing of the veins of her neck. "You are so beautiful," he compliments Danielle. "You don't have to feed me lines," the beauty assures her suitor. "Feed you lines ...? I am afraid that I don't understand." So'ei is confused. Looking into his eyes, Danielle can see that his words are sincere. Still she wants

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them both to be clear as to where this night is headed. "If I like you ... and I do ... then I really like you. If you know what I mean?" The hint of suggestion in her voice explains all. If the vampire still has doubts after Danielle unbuttons his shirt and runs her fingers across his chest those doubts are gone. "There is something so refreshing about the honesty of American women," the demon notes. Leaning down he tenderly kisses Danielle. The passionate woman returns his kiss with a good deal more fervor and heat.

From across the room Marshal has watched all that has transpired between the two. He is almost jealous as he sees the beauty and So'ei walk across the club toward the back door which leads to the alleyway. Many couples have exited out that door tonight and when they return the dreamy expression of satisfaction is upon their faces.

An old boyfriend of Danielle steps in between the couple and the doorway. "I think that we can still have something good Danielle." Horace tries to plead his case. "Is that why you were in my bed with your old girlfriend? Telling her how great things were between us," A sarcastic Danielle dismisses her ex. She takes So'ei's hand. A foolhardy Horace pulls her hand free of So'ei's grasp. "If you know what's good for you fella, you will take a walk," Horace threatens. "I do know what's good for me ... and I am going to take a walk ... with Danielle," So'ei informs the ex. The jealous man swings on the beast. The demon catches and holds the fist in mid-blow. The two adversaries look into each other's eyes. Fear is a mask which has molded itself to Horace's

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soul. The ex is lost in the pure evil he finds in So'ei's eyes. "Please let him go. He's just an overgrown boy," Danielle excuses Horace.

Laughing, So'ei releases Horace. "Of course I'll let him go. After all we are civilized men, not animals or demons," he mocks them both. "You will regret picking him over me," Horace predicts. Hastily he turns and leaves out of the front entrance of the club. An impressed Danielle kisses So'ei on the cheek. Taking his hand she leads him out into the alleyway.

The lights of passing cars strike Danielle and So'ei. The woman laughs. An unexpected surrender has the lovely young woman allowing So'ei to pin her against the wall of the outside of the club in an alley. Her hands are over her head while a man she has only just met tonight has his hands beneath her blouse caressing her naked flesh. The usually intelligent young woman can't help but wonder if she has lost her mind. The beast kisses her passionately. Their tongues battle one another. They move against one another. The demon's hand lifts the hem of her skirt and caresses the back of her thigh. Moans escape her lips. "Ohh ...!" The lights of another car flash on them as it passes by. Tearing her mouth away from his she offers some feeble resistance. "I never dreamed in a thousand years that I would make love to someone in a public place." The beast spurs her on. "Doesn't it heighten the experience?" Laughing she answers breathless, "Yes. Yes it does. This is so hot." The vampire laughs. "This is nothing. Would you like a totally mind - blowing experience?" he entices her further.

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"Without a doubt ...," she admits. Leaning in close to Danielle's neck the demon bares his fangs then sinks them into the jugular vein of her neck. Trickle of blood run down the beautiful long white neck of Danielle. The woman moans in ecstasy. "Ooohhh ...!" Danielle slumps down into So'ei's arms, undead. The creature looks down at the beautiful lifeless body of Danielle and speaks. "Now wasn't that an experience worth dying for my dear?" His evil laughter fills the night and any caring heart with a chill.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 24 THE KISS OF MAGIC

Despite the sometimes blaring music some are able to find a softer side to the club Black Cauldron. Susan and Marshal watch all of the hot action around them, but they maintain a cooler but intense attraction of their own.

The wizard takes note of the classic beauty of this thirty-five year old woman. His best guess would be that she believes him to be about the same age, not the fifty-five thousand or more years that he actually is. He has loss count. They steal little glances at one another between sips of their drinks.

"This isn't real." The woman thinks. The almost gun shy Susan stares at Marshal suspiciously. To say she has had bad luck would be an understatement for the description of her ventures into relationships, but no one wants to be alone, so she continues to dare to dive into the deep waters. "What is wrong with this dreamy, well mannered hunk of a man?" experience tells her that this is something she should ponder.

"It has been a long time since I have enjoyed the company of a woman so very much," Marshal honestly compliments this lovely lady. Smiling, Susan answers, "Thank you." She pauses. "... not just for the compliment, but for restoring my faith in the fact that there are still a few good men out there," she compliments him in return. A puzzled Marshal, questions, "How did I manage to accomplish that?" Like a shy little girl Susan looks away when she answers Marshal. "Just by being a gentleman," she begins. "I don't fool myself. I know that most of

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the men in here tonight are here for one reason ... they view women as pieces of meat. They don't offer any real conversation or treat you with any degree of respect. It's all about them rushing you out of the club and into their beds," she vents her frustration. "Then they are fools who don't understand that the appreciation of a fine wine begins in the savoring of the experience." This ingratiates him even further with the smitten woman. With the most charming laugh Marshal can recall, Susan brightens his night. "Are you married or gay? Because you seem too good to be true," the skeptical woman half-jokingly questions. It is Marshal's turn to laugh. "I've been called a lot of things over time, but never good," the wizard warns. "I find that hard to believe," Susan doesn't recognize the warning. The two settle into a comfortable silence.

A sweet slow ballad is played by the DJ. The wizard could not have resisted the music's allure if he had wanted to and he didn't. Taking Susan's hand he leads her out onto the dance floor. Like a long time lover Susan leans her head against his shoulder and the two melt into each other's arms. "This is very nice; pleasant company and pleasant conversation." The wizard begins to seduce his prey. "Why else would two people like us be here?" Susan questions. "Pure unadulterated sex," he kids. They laugh. "Let's not rule that out altogether," Susan kids him in return. Again they rock silently in each other's arms. The contented woman leans in close and whispers into Marshal's ear, "Take me home, please." The wizard fears he has lost the hunt. "Of course, you must be tired," he feigns understanding. "No. I meant to your home." Susan surrenders to undeniable

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feelings of attraction. The evil creature kisses her gently then takes her hand and leads her from the club.

The unsuspecting woman drives to the seedy downtown area of the city. They arrive at the warehouse where the demons are staying. Again Marshal casts a spell upon the place - repairing the door and returning the warehouse to its earlier illusion of luxury inside. Looking at the warehouse Susan turns to Marshal. "I wouldn't have guessed you to be the Bohemian type." Susan speculates on what she will find inside. "I'm not. You will be very surprised at just how conventional this space is," Marshal assures her.

Once inside Susan is as taken with the illusion of the luxury loft as Bruce had been. "What you've done with this space is unbelievable," she compliments the magician. "Unbelievable is the most accurate way of describing this place," he subtly taunts his prey. Moving around the loft Susan is like a schoolgirl discovering something new. "Wow! How did you get this great gorgeous bed up here?" she asks, bouncing on the bed and laughing gleefully.

Meanwhile Marshal lights the fireplace and breaks out the bubbly once more. As he tosses a couple of throw pillows onto the throw rug in front of the fireplace he looks across the room and crooks his finger at the totally delighted woman. "Come here," he requests in a deep sexy bass voice. Smiling, she moves slowly and sensuously over to him. Taking her into his arms Marshal kisses her deeply. The two

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seem almost to float to the rug below. It isn't the drinks, but the feel of Marshal's weight upon her that is so very intoxicating to Susan's senses. "Will you think me awful if I say that I have never wanted a man as much as I want you right now?" the enamored woman asks. "Only if you don't mean it," Marshal easily lets the lie flow from his lips.

The two are in no hurry tonight. They lay there in front of the fireplace sipping champagne and talking. Opening up to this fiend Susan shares the stories that make up her dull but very real life. On the other hand Marshal weaves a tale which represents the life he thinks will most put his soon to be victim at her ease. If he were not an evil creation, this could have been the beginning of a love story for the ages. Instead it is what it is ... a prelude to evil.

As the night slips slowly away, there comes the sound of clattering from the floor below. "What was that?" a startled Susan asks. "It's probably only mice. As lovely as I've made this place it is still a warehouse and mice do tend to find this a suitable place to live," Marshal tries to explain. Seeing the frown on Susan's face he gets up. "I'll go check. You make yourself more comfortable," he suggests, as he looks over toward the bed. Feeling at ease Susan smiles and nods her head. "I'll do just that," she replies suggestively.

The wizard makes his way down the stairs only to find the grinning Keith standing there. Angry, Marshal demands, "What the hell are you doing here?" He is fearful of the wizard's wrath, so the lackey

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steps back. "I missed out on the earlier fun. I thought you might let me share the woman. She seems the demure type I so adore." The beast salivates at the prospect of sharing Susan. The wizard's hand glows red. He places his hand on the demon's shoulder. The beast tries to scream, but no sound escapes his lips. "Go and handle the task that I gave you earlier or I will see to it that you suffer this scream less agony for an eternity," the magician promises the demon.

As soon as Marshal releases his hold upon the changeling, Keith swiftly runs from the warehouse. "Marshal ...!" Susan calls to him. Smiling wickedly he anticipates delights to come.

A few minutes later, Marshal stands at the edge of the great bed. Looking down at the radiant beauty that is stretched out across his bed. He sighs, "Hhhhhmmm ...". Under the silk sheets Susan is bare. Staring up at him she lifts the edge of the sheet, inviting him to join her. Slowly Marshal eases his shirt over his head. As he had said to Susan earlier ... there is no hurry. He wishes to savor this experience. The usually shy woman is surprised at how much she is enjoying watching Marshal as he undresses. Boldly she sits up with the silky covering barely hiding her breasts as she watches him.

Eagerly she awaits him. Finally he joins her, naked, beneath the sheets. The night that they share is unlike the raw animal passions of the werewolves. This night is more like two people in love sharing the physical face and the emotional faces of that

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love with one another. After hours they are finally satiated. Susan falls quietly and contentedly asleep. Like a man in love Marshal watches her every move. It is the most content Susan has ever been in her life.

The small remnants of a conscience still alive in the wizard taunts him as he lies there watching this wonderful woman sleep. What a vision she makes. Her sleep is as innocent as a newborn babe. Her creamy white shoulders and back exposed for her lover to see. The silk sheets hugging the curve of her small round hips. A face as lovely as Safa, the she-wolf Desiree or Elohim the three most beautiful creatures Marshal has ever known. Drinking her in with his eyes he can't help but smile and asks himself, "What if? In another lifetime, a different universe, different choices made she could have been - the one." But foolishly he chooses the evil that he is here and now.

In the morning the wizard leans down and kisses the woman's naked back. Susan awakens. Opening her eyes she finds Marshal staring at her lovingly. A smile creases her lips. "Good morning," she greets him. He doesn't return her greeting. Instead he says in a melancholy tone, "You are a very beautiful woman." The cruel magician has filled her heart with wonderful expectations. "A woman never tires of hearing that," she assures him. As Marshal leans down toward Susan he says, "I'm truly sorry." All that this man has done has brought her nothing save joy, so a puzzled Susan asks him, "Sorry for what?" The unsuspecting woman opens her mouth in anticipation of his kiss. Their lips never meet. A

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light blue cloud is sucked from Susan's mouth into Marshal's mouth. Desperately Susan gasps for air then tries to push Marshal away. Her life force is being drawn from her body. Rapidly her body decays into a lump of dust which crumples upon the sheet. "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust," the magician sardonically notes.

As Durrant stands beside the dumpster at the rear of the warehouse about to retrieve Bruce's body. He fumes over the fact that the magician wouldn't allow him to join in on the wicked creature's fun when all the others are out for a night of malicious mischief. Left to his own devices, the changeling decides to first have some fun, despite the magician's orders. After all he has all night to run this simple errand.

The evil creature takes the dead body of the agent back into the warehouse. He sits it up on a stool, leaning it against a wall for support. From the refrigerator he takes a cherry, which he uses as a clown's nose for the corpse. He also takes whipped cream from the refrigerator, which he uses as white face. Laughing, the demon tosses knives into the already dead body. The corpse falls to the floor again and again. Each time the demon laughs, crosses the room, places the corpse back upon its perch then begins his macabre game again. Quickly he tires of this game and decides to play a more vicious game. With a hand saw the demon cuts through the flesh and bones of the dead man. Blood splatters everywhere. It's like a gory scene from some B-horror movie. Still not satisfied, the changeling cuts the flesh and bones of the agent into smaller and smaller pieces. The demon holds a piece of the bloody flesh overhead and calls out to the dead man, "Bruce ...! For once the agent has to pay. I was wondering ... is this ten percent?" The sickly evil Keith amuses himself. "What else can I do with you Bruce?" he asks himself. "Ah hah ...! I've got it!" he exclaims.

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Minutes later the metamorphite has bagged most of Bruce's remains to use in the trap that Marshal has ordered him to set, but there is still enough left of the bloody flesh for one last horrific demon's game. Holding the set of knives from his first game the changeling baits his trap with pieces of Bruce's flesh. He tosses the meat out into the middle of the floor. The demon waits patiently. After a time his prey sneakily peeks its head out from beneath the worn floor boards of the warehouse. A cruel smile the demon wears as his prey creeps closer and cautiously toward the meat. A whirling noise announces doom for the rat. The knife Brian has thrown sticks in the back of the rat which had been feeding on Bruce's remains. The wicked creature throws more and more of the dead man's flesh out into the middle of the floor. Again and again he waits. Again and again his patience is rewarded with another target for his sick game. Soon the demon creates what he has wanted all along, a stomach wrenching scene of dead rats with knives in their backs surrounding the rotting flesh of the dead agent.

"I should be giving the orders," the changeling thinks. "After all, it was I who came up with the plan to bait the other wizard in the first place," he reasons. "Who's to know ... if I should find myself just one lovely lady before I go on my errand?" he asks himself then leaves for his hunt.

The hour is late when the lovely nun exits the church. This nun has accustomed herself to applying her vocation in the ominous hours of a night which puts fear in most men's hearts. As she sometimes

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would say to her parishioners, "If you seek to reach the wicked you must be willing to walk in their footsteps."

Hookers, pimps, dope dealers and plain old street hustlers prowl the boulevards of the big city after dark. This night a changeling prowls with them. The loose morals of the street trash hold no attraction for this creature of darkness. For this demon innocence is the flavor that wets his appetite. The demon spots the nun. He laughs. "Where could I find a more innocent target?" he ponders.

The nun stops and whispers in the ear of a hooker. The hooker laughs. "You are one crazy nun, Millie," the hooker teases the nun. Millie was not always this nun's name. "I would have to be, to think that I'm going to save anyone in this city," the nun answers as she walks away. "You be careful out here. We need you," the hooker Carol assures the young woman. Still Millie doesn't notice the stealthy demon who is tracking her through the city streets. The shadows aid the changeling, cloaking him from the victim he seeks. The heavy shoes the woman wears go clickity-clack, clickity-clack against the concrete pavements. It makes it easier for the demon to track his prey while staying hidden. The sound marks where she is while he can maintain his distant until he is ready to strike.

The changeling notes that every freak and low-life in the city seems to know Millie and they hold her in high regard. Pimps whistle at her, then laugh lightheartedly when she kids them back, saying that they can't afford her. As the demon watches her from

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afar he becomes more and more intrigued by this woman of the cloth. His resolve to have her grows with his interest.

A tingle up her spine alerts Millie to the fact that someone is lurking in the shadows behind her. The nun is sure that it is some purse snatcher or other petty thief. This bold woman steps into an alleyway and awaits her pursuer. Wondering why his prey would step into a dark alleyway this time of night Keith follows. At first he doesn't see Millie. Then the nun steps into the light. The demon laughs. "What do you want from me?" the nun asks. "I wish for all that you have to give; body, heart and soul," the demon answers. Millie, who is the one formerly known as Shary sees the 666 upon the demon's forehead. "Fool!" she accuses him. Not understanding the intent of her words, the demon takes it as a rejection. As Shary raises her hand to lift her hair away from her forehead the demon slits the journeyman's throat before she can complete the act.

The people of the night believe it is the wind that howls so pitiably that night, but it is not. It is the spirit of Aloof, crying out for the loss of her last pupil and almost any hopes that she may have held of being resurrected.

In Millie's room at the humble church where she has served there is a crystal bubble and a golden urn that now sit undisturbed. Maybe they will sit there until Judgement Day.

The cruel creature metamorphite has for tonight satisfied his lust for blood. Although he has not

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satisfied his carnal lust he returns to the warehouse to retrieve the remains of the hapless agent. Failing to complete his errand could incur the wizard's wrath and that he was not willing to chance.

Nearly daylight now the evil Keith now trudges through the streets of Manhattan with a trash bag over his shoulder. The wretched remains he carries are beginning to exude a foul smell from them. Passersby are wary of the strange man and his offensive load. There it is! This is the one place where the corpse is sure to be found. An amused Keith creeps closer to the police station. Two officers exit the precinct. The demon ducks back into the shadows. The first officer sniffs at the night air. What in the hell is that ...?" he asks his fellow officer. "It could be anything. This city is an armpit," the disillusioned younger cop answers. The two men climb into their patrol car and drive away.

A bum comes up behind Keith. The bum holds out his hand. "Hey mister can you spare a buck for a veteran? I want to get me a sandwich," he pleads with the demon. With no patience for Humans that he see as forgotten souls Keith pushes the man away. "Get lost you bum. You're a waste of Human flesh," he accuses. The derelict grabs the demon's arm and becomes loud as he defends his honor. "You can't talk to me like that! Men like me put it all on the line so that jerks like you could attend your Ivy League schools and avoid the draft." The bum goes into a tirade. The demon laughs. "Stupid old fool. Do I look old enough to have been around for the

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draft?" The demon points out his youthful facade. "Look mister it's just a buck. You can spare a buck, you cheap bastard," the bum becomes angry. The demon has had enough of him. Besides, this man is drawing far too much attention to him and his package. The changeling's claws are bared. He swipes his claws across the man's throat. The lost soul falls backwards into the shadows, dead.

The changeling runs across the street, lifts the top to the police station's dumpster, and drops the remains inside. He then takes off running down the street. Two more officers exit the station. They see the beast running away. "Now what do you think that's all about?" the first officer asks, pointing to the running Durrant. "Don't know. Don't care. It's too early in the shift to worry about anyone we have to chase," the lazy partner admits. Seemingly oblivious to the foul odor that fills the night air these two officers get into their patrol car and drive away.

In the rafters above Marshal's head the vampire roosts. The time of the sun nears, so the vampire has found a protected place to hide from its deadly rays. The young woman Danielle has already been forgotten, for this demon has no conscience, knows no mercy, so regrets nothing. The wizard Marshal sits sipping his coffee. With a spell he disposes of the sweet Susan's remains. Hearing the downstairs door open and the werewolves returning he sits up in his bed. The wolves bound up the stairs. They stare across the room at the quiet wizard. The two of them are delighted with their evening's conquests. "Two policemen and two thieves, both sides of the same

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coin, we spent them like so much loose change." Marcus boasts. Desiree sniffs at the air then laughs. "I think I smell the scent of a well satisfied woman. Pray tell, what mischief have you been up to this past night magician?" she asks Marshal. In deep lament, the wizard answers, "Ecstasy and agony ... they seem my lot in life." The wizard then turns his back to the demons.

Once more the downstairs door opens. This time it is the metamorphite returning. The changeling makes his way up to the room where the wolves watch the wizard. "It's a shame that we don't get to the city more often. Humans are such good sport," Marcus makes light of their wicked deeds.

"I'm glad that you had a good time, but don't underestimate them. They almost eliminated the Sibling Breed more than 2000 years ago with only swords and arrows," he reminds them. "And the magic of traitors," Desiree accuses the wizard and the angel. "And the treason continues today. Isn't that why we're here?" Keith questions. "Indeed it is changeling. Indeed it is," the wizard confirms.

Keith looks up and spies a sleeping So'ei. "Why did we bring him along? He's no good to us in the day and that's more than likely when we will find the wizard's wife alone," the changeling points out. "A beast as powerful as he should not be left alone to plot," Marshal instructs the metamorphite. "I am so hungry," the changeling complains. "I would have thought you would have used your time alone last night to return to see Ms. Brenda Thomas." The wizard is puzzled. "I did but the hunter guarded her all the night," Keith whined. The magician informs Durant that it's doubtful that what he saw was anything more than an astral projection. The wizard and the werewolves laugh. "He made a fool of me. I shall have my revenge soon," the changeling promises. An angry Marshal screams, "You shall have what I say you may have and nothing more. We shall lure the hunter back to the fortress where our numbers shall insure us victory."

A concerned Desiree wonders, "This plan of yours ... are you sure that my Marcus will be safe?" A confident Marcus answers for the wizard. "I will be fine." The magician is quick to jump in, "If you do as I say, the hunter will be afraid to harm you for fear of reprisals upon his bride." The concerned mate Desiree turns to Marcus, both in human form, and kisses him tenderly. "You still be careful my love." she instructs him.

Like a gentle hand, the sun caresses Gail's face, urging her from her slumber. Turning over she looks at her husband's face and she smiles. The couple had taken up where they had left off before going to the

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gala last night. It was nearly the break of dawn before either of them finally fell asleep. Steven's eyes open. He smiles at his beautiful wife. "I would love to lay here in your arms all day like this, but I have a million errands to run," the angel excuses. Languidly she crawls out of her husband's arms and from their bed. Watching the pristine beautiful vision disappear into the bathroom Steven can only sigh.

Though Gail is anxious to be about her day Steven has decided that today he will be a sloth. Rolling over onto his stomach he buries his head under a pillow. The shrill voice of the phone calls out to him announcing that fate has other plans for the hunter, this day. Steven answers the phone, "Ward's residence."

The caller speaks as Steven listens attentively to him. "I will be there within the hour," he answers. Having heard the phone ring, Gail returns to the bedroom just in time to hear the end of Steven's conversation. Watching as her husband's eyes fill with tears Gail is concerned. The loving wife crosses the room to her husband. Taking his head into her hands she places it by her side, comforting him. "Who was that? And where will you be within the hour?" she inquires. Sitting up and swinging his legs over the side of the bed Steven answers her, "That was the police." Steven stands. An anxious Gail wonders aloud, "What in the world do they want?" As the husband heads for the bathroom he begins, "It seems that we were worried about the wrong person last night." The alarmed wife interrupts her husband. "Who?" Nearly choking on the

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words the hunter tells all. "The police found Bruce's dead body this morning. He had one of my business cards on him so now they want me to come down and ID the body." In little more than a whisper the angel ponders, "Dear God, when will they learn?" A vehement Steven answers her, "Never! That monster, Marshal Dumont, is sending me a message. That is his first mistake ... and it will be his last!" A wistful Gail replies, "I truly believed that I saw a spark of goodness in him." The patient husband answers, "That is your strength and your weakness. You want to believe that everyone can be redeemed." Shaking her head Gail answers, "No! I know that everyone can and will be redeemed because HE promised me." A disenchanted Steven answers, "He didn't promise me."

At the bathroom door Steven stops and turns toward his wife. "I want you with me today," he tells her. His wife laughs. "Don't be silly. You know that isn't necessary, besides I've already told you that I have a million errands to run." The wizard shakes his head in resignation. "I love you, but you are so stubborn," he relays his frustration. Walking over to her husband Gail playfully pats him upon his butt. "Go shower so that I can get dressed and get out of here." The husband knows this discussion is over. He turns then he enters the bathroom.

Approximately forty five minutes later Gail exits the apartment building. Steven has already left for the police station. A short older man with a pot belly stomach greets the angel. "How are you doing this morning Mrs. Ward?" Ralph the doorman asks. Not wanting to burden the seemingly always happy man she lies, "Just fine Ralph ... and you?" As is the way

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with older humans Ralph is all too eager to share with the tenant his latest ailment. He grabs his leg. "My old sports injury always bothers me on cold days like today," he informs her. Hailing a cab she acknowledges the man's complaint, "Well take care of that leg Ralph."

The cab pulls up in front of the building, Opening the door then climbing into the cab is Gail. The cab drives away. As the cab pulls away it drives by a parked SUV. Inside the parked SUV is the wizard, Marshal along with Keith, So'ei, Marcus and Desiree.

A few minutes later the demons; Keith, Marcus and Desiree use their stealth to slip pass the doorman Ralph and up to the Ward's apartment. Once inside they sit patiently awaiting the wife's return. Outside, Marshal watches for the hunter and will signal them if he should return first.

After two hours of waiting the demons are at their patience end. "Where in the hell is that bitch!" an antsy Durrant demands. "I had my heart set on humping her through the floor before we take her back to the master." the changeling warns the two wolves, "The master said, she is not to be harmed." Marcus reminds the changeling. Keith laughs. "What's the harm in a good screwing? They all love it. They pretend that they don't because they're married, but a man knows," the deluded beast rants on. The she-wolf hates the changeling and can't resist the opportunity to belittle him. "You were a limp prick delusional man and now you're a limp prick delusional beast. I guess the more things change the more they stay the same," she laughingly taunts him.

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The metamorphite takes his man - lizard - like form. He growls at Desiree. "How little you know. I was never a man. If proof you need of the power of my instrument then I could hump you, rip your heart from your body and eat it," he threatens. A protective Marcus steps in between them. He growls at Keith. "Grrrrrr ...! If the two of you don't quit the bull crap the master is going to eat both of your hearts," Marcus warns.

Finally there is the sound of keys in the door. The three of them scurry for places to hide. The door opens. Pretending to be unaware of the demons Gail enters her home. Her arms are filled with groceries. After entering she takes her right foot and kicks the door shut with it. When the door closes she sees the werewolf, Marcus, for the first time. He stands there with fangs bared. The werewolf places one hairy paw over the angel's mouth and the other around her neck. She lets the packages fall to the floor. "Be quiet. No one is going to harm you. At least not today," he qualifies his promise. Now sure that it is the wife, Keith and the she wolf come out of hiding. The angel has a redemption plan which includes allowing the demons to take her. For her plan to work her capture cannot seem too easy, so she mildly resists. The seemingly frail woman knees the werewolf in the groin. This is enough to cause him to double over then fall backward onto the floor. "Uhh!" the beast groans. Quickly Desiree comes to the aid of her mate. She grabs Gail from behind in a bear hug hold. A not so angel-like Gail kicks backwards and down. The sickening sound of Desiree's leg snapping fills the room. "Aaaauuggghh ...!" the demon screams. The always sly

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sneaky Keith breaks off a table leg and hits Gail aside the back of her head. It seems she has been knocked unconscious.

Still downed Desiree is on the floor wallowing in agony. It is then that Marcus recovers and stands up looking out over the scene of chaos. Then he sees what the angel has done to his mate. Enraged he charges toward her. "I'm going to kill her!" he declares. This time it is Keith who is the voice of reason. Wrapping his arms around Marcus he attempts to calm him, "Don't be a fool. Like you said, it's folly to disobey the master. You will surely pay with your existence." The demon quiets down. "Of course you're right, but I would truly enjoy nothing more than making her pay for what she has done to me and my Desiree." The changeling knowingly falsely predicts, "After the husband is dead the master will most likely give her to us to use as a toy." The two evil creatures laugh.

Not wanting to run into the hunter Keith cracks the door to the apartment and spies down the hallway. It is as quiet as a ghost town. Turning toward the others Marcus questions Keith, "Will you be able to carry my mate and the woman?" The doubtful werewolf asks. An arrogant changeling laughs. "Of course I can." Walking over to the limp body of Gail he casually tosses her over one shoulder then with a strut of bravado he carries the woman over to where the she-wolf, Desiree, lies. Reaching down he grabs Desiree up in his hand like she was a sack of potatoes. Carrying the two women easily Keith heads for the door. A suddenly concerned Marcus calls to

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his brother demon, "If I should fail to return home, for whatever reason, make sure the woman's death is an anguish filled one my brother." A wicked smile the metamorphite wears. "With pleasure my brother," he assures the werewolf.

The changeling makes his way to the back window of the apartment building. With a single hand he manages to scale down the wall of the building still carrying the two women. When he reaches the alley below Durrant then hog-ties and tosses Gail into the back of the SUV that Marshal has parked there. Taking the she-wolf from his shoulder he tosses her into the passenger seat of the SUV. For a moment he does contemplate his earlier threat of humping and killing the she-wolf, but knowing that the alliance that exists between demons is a tenuous one he decides that act would be foolish. The metamorphite also understands that the she-wolf has lost enough. Once her mate tells the hunter that they have taken his prize the hunter shall surely kill him. The werewolves seem to be the only ones oblivious to this fact.

It is a wickedly cold Winter day as Steven drives across town to the 13th police precinct. The heartbroken friend is expecting to view his friend and agent's body. "Bruce is dead." Those words echo through his mind. A chill, which has nothing to do with the weather, sends shivers down his spine. Never again will that funny little man tell his off colored jokes. Bruce will never again prepare one of those incredibly delicious pasta dishes for Steven. No more will his friend be a buffer between Steven and some arrogant little piss-ant 26 year-old editor who knows better what the writer meant to say than he does himself. Yes, it is bitter cold even for the month of December, but it is going to be cold forever more -- now that his friend is gone.

The hunter sits in his car outside of the police station contemplating his revenge upon the Sibling Breed. Humans pass by him as he sits there. Mankind is oblivious to the secret war that wages right under their noses every day. He would like to shout out to them, "Rise up with weapons and wipe out the beasts!" But he knows that it would do no good. Most would think him mad. Some would wonder, as he once had, what can be gained by joining the demons. For the rest, their world of order would degenerate into mayhem. So instead he sits there thinking about all of these things because doing so means that he doesn't have to walk into the station and close the chapter of his life which included his friend, Bruce Downe.

Inside the 13th precinct station - police officers, criminals and victims mill about or sit awaiting

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disposition of their cases. Behind a huge desk a mountain of a man, Sergeant Milnos, sits overseeing the disorder. He barks orders at officers who leave their charges too long alone. Milnos screams at a lineup of ladies of the evening, telling them that they will keep it down or they will find themselves transferred to the tombs (a dirty downtown holding facility where paperwork is so backlogged a one night stay may become a week) An icy silence falls over the hookers.

Totally out of place, the uptown writer enters the ghetto precinct. Looking around Steven shakes his head. "Where is the hope for this Paridisio that Elohim speaks so fondly about?" he asks himself as he walks up to the large desk and looks up at sergeant Milnos. "May I speak to an officer Keith Durrant?" he asks. You're gonna have to take a seat and wait your turn, sir." Milnos instructs Steven. The impatient man resigns himself to his situation, sits down and begins his wait.

Some two hours later the sergeant looks over at Steven then crooks his finger, signaling for him to come over to the desk. The writer gets up and walks over to the desk. The sergeant looks behind himself at the duty roster. Shaking his head he informs Steven, "Durrant ... I'm afraid that name doesn't sound at all familiar to me." Double checking, the thorough sergeant looks up and down the duty board again and again. Turning to Steven, he questions him. "Are you sure you have the right precinct? I don't have anyone on my board by that name and I don't remember any new guys that might have been mistakenly left off." Steven is losing his patience.

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The flustered man looks down at the piece of paper on which he had written the information. "This is the 13th precinct, isn't it?" Steven asks. Milnos nods his head, yes. "It is the right precinct, but no Durrant ... Keith or otherwise."

At this point a detective Skoles walks by. The sergeant turns to Skoles. "Hey Skoles, you've been around here longer than anybody else have you ever heard of a cop by the name of Durrant?" Turning to Steven the sergeant asks, "What's that first name?" Steven turns to Skoles. "Keith ... Keith Durrant," he reiterates. The detective shakes his head and keeps walking. Suddenly Skoles stops. "Oh shit. I had almost forgotten him. He was never here. In fact it was down in Maryland. Quite a few years back ... rogue cop. Got himself arrested for kidnapping, raping and murdering housewives. The dumb bastard tried to escape by jumping off of a sixty foot bridge. They never did find the body, but hell ... no one could have lived through that." Skoles continues walking.

The sergeant turns to Steven. "I guess it was a bad joke." Skoles stops again. "What was a bad joke?" Milnos turns to Skoles. "Someone called this guy claiming to be your dead cop." The detective turns his attention to Steven. "What exactly did this person want with you?" he asks? "He claims that my friend was killed and he needed me to come down and ID the body," Steven explains. The hunter is beginning to smell a rat - a demon anyway. Hurriedly he turns and heads toward the door. All that he can think of is that they must have wanted to get him away from his wife.

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The detective calls to the writer, "Hey mister!" Steven stops and turns to the detective. "Your friend ... the one who was supposedly killed, what's his name?" Skoles asks. "Bruce, Bruce Downe." After answering him Steven turns and heads again for the door. " ... and your name?" Again Skoles calls after him. Without turning around or stopping this time Steven calls after him, "... Steven Ward. Sorry, but I have to go." Hastily he exits the station. The detective takes out his notepad then jots down the two names.

The desk sergeant looks over at Skoles. "Why give that guy the third degree ... Skoles? You don't think that milk toast is up to something, do you?" the sergeant asks. "People don't generally joke about people being dead or about deceased mass murderers. If that isn't enough to start warning bells ringing, this Durrant was bad news, so if there is any chance he's still alive I'm going to get him off of the streets ... for good this time." Skoles then turns and walks away. "This time ...? What do you mean this time? Skoles ... Skoles ...!" Milnos calls after the detective, but Skoles is years away in another place.

Like a Chinese water torture, the minutes and seconds seem to wear on the werewolf's nerves as he waits for the husband's return. He paces back and forth, the length of the apartment. Sitting back down his right leg kicks nervously in the air. The groceries lying on the floor agitates him to the point that he jumps up again and begins kicking the items around the room. Nothing seems to settle his nerves.

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Meanwhile, the road home seems longer for Desiree than the same route traveled only days before. It isn't the throbbing pain from her broken leg which contributes to her anxiety. Her heart is heavy with worry over her mate. Would the hunter's anger be tempered by his concern for his wife? Magicians are as unpredictable as the path of a hurricane and equally as dangerous. The vampire and the metamorphite are more concerned with the safety of their prize. The two demons know that if the woman is harmed there will be hell to pay. They all can hear Gail thumping around in the trunk of the car and an occasional groan which satisfies them that she is still alive. They do not know that these are merely pretext to make them believe that they are in control. It can't be too soon for any of them that they see the welcoming sight of Skutz.

The door man Ralph stops Steven Ward as he heads for the building's front door. "Nosy Miss Carrows said that there was some sort of ruckus coming from your apartment earlier. I went up to check on your wife. She didn't answer, but there was no disturbance either," the doorman informs the husband.

Brusquely, Steven thanks him then pushes pass Ralph. Rushing to the elevator he nervously begins jamming the elevator's button again and again, as if that would somehow make it come faster. The anxious husband wonders if and why Gail might let herself be taken. "Too much faith she places in this being who has allowed so much pain," Steven assesses. He cannot believe as Elohim believes. None can. That is why she was chosen to lead the way.

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The jangled nerves of Marcus are rattled further by keys jingling at the door. The door opens. Steven enters. Across the room he sees the wolf sitting in his favorite leather chair. The hunter closes the door behind himself. "Wolf if you being here means what I think it means then you should prepare to die," the angry husband warns. "An empty threat seeing that we have your wife," the wolf answers confidently. "My master instructed me to tell you that you will find your wife in the small town of Skutz, Oregon. His decree is that you should come with me quickly or she will surely die." The wolf does as he has been told.

Steven laughs. The wolf jumps to its feet. "What is so amusing wizard?" the demon asks. "Your master has sacrificed you to achieve his end. Before you die know this, a wizard is what the fallen angel created. I have not been that for eons," Steven denounces what he was. The hunter marches menacingly toward the beast. When he stands in front of it he reaches out and grabs it by the throat then lifts him easily into the air. The wolf kicks his feet in mid - air. The beast chokes, gasping for air. Taunting the beast, Steven places his hand in front of the demon's face. The hand changes into a silver blade at the end of Steven's arm. The wolf manages somehow to speak, "What are you then ...?" Then Steven answers, "I am one of the most ancient of men, one of the first corrupted, a monster redeemed by love who became a new thing, a hunter." The blade swishes through the air. One of the demon's arms drops to the floor. "Aaaaauuuuggghhhhh ...!" The beast screams. "I shall not plead for mercy," the defiant wolf assures him. "I could care less," is the

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the hunter's icy reply. The blade swishes through the air again. One of the wolf's legs is severed from its body. It thumps to the floor. "Wwwuuuuhhh ...!" the demon wails. "I cannot die like this," the demon cries. "How many have you slain monster? How many pleaded with you for mercy? How many, the last sound they heard before a cruel and torturous death, was your heartless laughter? How many beast ...?!" Steven demands. Tears fill the creature's eyes. One who had seen less of the suffering of the world may have felt mercy for this thing, for its nature was not of its own choosing, but the hunter has seen too much pain.

Raising his right arm with the silver blade into the air Steven swings downward. Swiisshh ... goes the blade. Marcus' head rolls across the living room floor and what's left of his body drops to Steven's feet.

At the moment of Marcus' death miles away in the SUV on the road back to Skutz the she-wolf's heart drops in her chest. "We must go back! We must go back! My Marcus needs me," she cries. "Even if that is true, by the time we reach him there will be nothing that we can do to help him," Marshal assures Desiree. "Do not worry. He will be fine," the changeling knowingly lies. The vampire thinks, "Since the beginning we have been, but pawns to sacrifice in this war between the angels, but soon we demons shall have our revenge."

Most of the desks in the 13th precinct detectives' station are empty. Only Skoles and his partner - Angie Bennett sit at their desk. The older man leers at the beautiful young cop. An annoyed Angie snaps at her partner, "Would you stop that shit!" He tries to appear innocent, failing miserably. "What?" he responds. "You're such a pig," she continues her tirade. "Give me a break. So what If I find you attractive and find it impossible to hide my feelings. Damn girl ... you are about the hottest woman I have ever known," he admits. "First of all I'm nobody's girl! Secondly, you're old enough to be my father. And thirdly, you are my partner. I can go on, but you get the gist of what I'm saying," Angie responds. Reticently Skoles nods his head because he does agree with much of what she says.

The phone rings. Skoles answers it. "Yeah ... yeah. I told you to let me know ... where ... we're on our way. Don't let anyone else touch anything until we get there," the detective instructs the person on the other end of the phone. Hanging up the phone he turns to Angie. "Remember that guy I told you about from earlier today?" His partner nods her head. "Well, Terrelli down at the 2 - 4 called me because they just fished his agent from the dumpster right out back of their station ... pieces of him anyway." The two jump up from their desks and rush out of the station. Stopping at the door Skoles allows Angie to exit first. Like a mischievous teen he watches her from behind and shakes his head in admiration then he exits the station after her.

It takes the two detectives only ten minutes to get

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across town. They have run red lights, flashing their warning lights and sirens blaring all of the way. The seasoned detectives exit their unmarked car two feet clear of the crime scene. Both grab their noses. Neither can remember ever smelling anything as foul as the rancid smell that is coming from this dumpster. They slowly make their way across the alleyway. Patrolman Terrilli, who had been the one to discover Bruce's remains, calls to Skoles, "Hey Skoles, your boy couldn't have dumped this crap down at the 13th?" By now Skoles has reached the dumpster and peers in. Already thousands of maggots and flies are feasting on Bruce's remains. Angie looks in. Quickly she turns away then bends over heaving volumes into the alley. Officer Terrilli shakes his head disapprovingly then he scolds the police woman, "Damn! It wasn't bad enough already, your partner has to add her own stench to the pile?" A protective Skoles grabs Terrilli by the back of his neck and whispers in his ear, "You little shit ... don't you give her a hard way to go or I might decide to give you a hard way to go." Smiling he releases his hold on Terrilli. Knowing Skoles' reputation as a hard ass the man grimaces then walks silently away.

After concluding their investigation of the crime scene Skoles and Angie drive over to Park Avenue East. The two are staking out the address he had gotten from DMV for Steven. "What are we doing here?" Angie asks. "This guy's friend turns up in a dumpster mauled and tortured after this guy shows up at our precinct claiming that a dead killer cop told him to come in and ID the body. I may be reaching, but somehow I think that Durrant is still alive."

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His partner shakes her head no. "That doesn't answer my question. We're not homicide. I don't want to be homicide. It's bad enough worrying about some burglar with a gun now you want me to chase after maniac ghosts." Angie wants no parts of this vendetta.

The veteran cop stares his partner in the eyes and lays it out plain for her, "I'm going to nail that cop killer. If you want out, pull on that door handle beside you." The lady cop knows the unspoken code - You do not bail on your partner. Glaring at Skoles she turns to face up the street toward the Ward home. "God I hate you!" Angie assures her partner. Skoles laughs. "Join the club. Join the club," he sarcastically instructs her.

As the two angry partners sit cursing one another in their minds Steven exits his apartment building. Appearing anxious he looks up and down the street for the valet to bring his car around. Finally the car pulls up to him, the valet exits the car then walks around the car and hands Steven his keys. The hunter hands the driver money then climbs into his car and drives away. The lead detective gives Steven a short head start then he follows in the unmarked police car.

The blue sedan that Steven drives does not stop at the city limits, neither does the unmarked police car that follows it. Hours later the two cars cross over the State line. A light snow begins to fall as Steven hits an obscure part of the interstate that leads west. Angie looks at her partner in disbelief. With disregard for Angie's feelings Skoles simply

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sips his harsh black coffee and continues to follow his only lead. As the sun begins to set the snow begins to fall harder. The blue sedan is little more than a blur up ahead of them. "Shit, Skoles. How damn far are you and I going to follow this guy on what could be a wild goose chase?" his partner demands. "... to hell and back if necessary. That sick mother, Durrant, killed several cops before he escaped - one of 'em was my partner," he explains. "And exactly when were you intending to fill me in on this ... at the review board? You're such a bastard! After this we are through as partners. You're just too f---ing selfish to be anyone's partner," she accuses him. Neither dares to speak for fear that they will say something that they won't be able to take back, so they travel along the nearly barren icy highway in silence.

First Steven's car then the unmarked police car passes a road sign which reads CORBIN INDIANA 100 MILES. The hunter becomes apprehensive of the now disintegrating road conditions so he pulls over into a roadside motel-gas station along the interstate. A few moments later the unmarked police car pulls in also, but they pull around to the back of the establishment, hoping not to be seen. Exiting his car Steven walks over to the door to the office. After entering he closes the door behind himself.

A bell rings as Steven enters and an Anthony Perkins-like character, Bo, comes from the room behind the reception desk. "Ain't fit for man or beast out there tonight, is it?" Bo comments on the weather. The husband is preoccupied with the well being of his wife so he stares blankly at the man.

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The clerk takes Steven's distance as snobbery, so he forgets the pleasantries and gets down to business. "What can I do for you?" he asks in a gruff voice. "I need chains for my tires and a room for the night," Steven answers. "... don't have no chains. I can sell you a set of snow tires though. Got plenty of rooms, but they're kinda expensive," The annoyed owner decides to gouge this snobbish man he assumes is from some big city. Knowing what the man is doing, all Steven can do is laugh and ask, "How much for the tires and how much for the room?" Bo smiles and answers him, "I only carry the best tires ... \$150.00 for each, \$600.00 for the set. And because you're buying the tires, I will only charge you a hundred for the room per night." Not caring about the money, Steven takes out his credit card and hands it to the man.

Meanwhile, outside the motel Angie and Skoles wait to see what the writer is going to do. The detective turns to Angie. "Get out and call the captain from that payphone. Let him know what's going on," he instructs her. Angie grabs the car door handle. "Tell him that I'm gonna bring Durrant back in handcuffs or a body bag," he adds. "You know damn well that he's going to chew my ass off, don't you?" Angie asks as she opens the door and begins to exit. "Why the hell can't you call him?" she wonders aloud. "Because if I get out of the car the writer might see me and get spooked. He already knows me," Skoles answers her.

Slipping and sliding across the already icy and darkened gas station lot Angie makes her way toward the payphone. At one point she almost falls on the

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slick pavement. Catching her balance she curses her partner, "Damn him! Damn him! I can't stand that man, but I swear this is the last time. As soon as we get back I'm going to request a new partner." Gathering herself together she makes it over to the payphone and calls their captain. As she waits for the captain to answer she thinks back on her previous bad luck with partners. "Why do I always get the assholes for my partner?" The operator comes onto the line. "Yes, operator ... I'd like to make a collect call ..." Angie waits again. Laughing, she admits to herself that despite being an asshole Skoles is a good cop and the best partner she has ever had.

After the phone call the female detective makes her way back to the car. Just as Angie and Skoles are getting settled in for the night they see Steven cross over to a room. Tired, angry and frustrated Steven settles in for the night. Angie turns to Skoles. "Do you at least have a blanket in the trunk of this car? Reaching over the back seat Skoles grabs his heavy coat and hands it to Angie. "Here ... you rest up. I'll keep an eye on him tonight and tomorrow you can drive." The detective concedes the easier task to his partner.

The next morning Skoles tries to sleep while Angie navigates the rough roads of this little-used Interstate. "We've been following this guy for more than two days now. I've got to tell you that the only reason the captain has allowed this and the only reason that I'm still here is because this guy's friend turns up in a dumpster and before they even bury the friend this guy leaves town. Something

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is up and it's not a dead cop killer." The veteran cop shrugs off the novice and the captain's theories. In his gut he knows that Durrant is alive. Rolling over onto his side he tucks his head under his light jacket and tries to get some rest.

After four days of travel, Steven's car passes a road sign which reads SKUTZ OREGON 15 MILES.

The unmarked car with Skoles and Angie inside passes the sign soon after him. Their journey is over. The three hunters have finally reached the town of Skutz. Though the streets are barren Steven can feel the eyes of the townsfolk upon him. From behind each curtain or shade the scared populace of this town watch and worry. Now, not as far behind as before, Skoles and Angie reach the township of Skutz. In the middle of town an odd sight is seen. There is an old man, Mr. Cobber, who sits alone on a bench.

"Why isn't he afraid?" Steven wonders. "I guess age brings with it a bravery borne of knowing your days are numbered no matter what choices one may make," Steven concludes.

The hunter pulls his car over and stops in front of the old man. "Hey old man, aren't you scared of me?" Steven teases. "When you've lived as long as I have son the only thing that frightens you is out-living your usefulness," the old man assures Steven. "Then you're the one to help me," the hunter states hopefully. "If I knew anything I would, but they keep me pretty much in the dark around here." Then as older people have a tendency to do, the old man's conversation begins to meander to times past ... "

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When the first one of 'em came ... in '42 ... I told them, let's get our rifles and run their butts right out of town, but even then they were afraid. Passed that fear on to the young 'uns. Now the whole darn town has made a pact with the devil. I'm not just saying that. It's true," he warns.

The old man looks down the road and spots the unmarked police car with Angie and Skoles inside. Steven steps out of his car. The old man continues talking, "Fear will make people do terrible things." The hunter nods his head, for he agrees with the seemingly likable old guy. "Did you know that you are being followed?" Cobber asks Steven. "Yeah. I thought that they might be of some use, but now I think that they are just one more thing for me to worry about." Wearing a look of concern Steven stares down the street at the two policemen. "I can slow them down for you." Cobber offers. "Na. I think that I had better keep an eye on them, for their sake." the regretful man answers more to himself than in answer to the old man.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 29 CAPTURED?

Once more there is a wild party going on in the fortress of the Sibling Breed. Most of the fools believe that they have reason to celebrate. The vampires, draillums, werewolves, metamorphites and the demons with no name dance and frolic. There are orgies and murder being done, laughter and wails of agony fill the caverns for this is the macabre way the demons do celebrate.

Only the angel Kamar is absent from this frivolity and in his absence the wizard - Marshal - sits upon his throne. Standing to Marshal's right is So'ei. While the demon Desiree stands to his left. The three look out over the merriment, but unlike the other demons these three know that what they have had here will soon all come to an end. "He is close!" Marshal's voice rings out a warning. "I can feel his power!" The wizard declares. "... and what of Marcus," Desiree asks. Her question goes ignored.

Meanwhile in Kamar's bedroom, the guest of the Sibling Breed, Gail, lies on Kamar's bed. She is still pretending to be unconscious. Her outfit has been changed. Now she wears a white diaphanous nightgown and is bare beneath the garment. The door opens slowly. It appears that she has been found. In the doorway the figure of Steven appears. Something is wrong for he creeps across the room. Lying down beside Gail he tenderly kisses her face. For now it serves her end to pretend she is unaware of this masquerade. The man pulls the gown down and away from her full beautiful breasts as he kisses her lips. Suddenly the man is snatched by the neck and slammed into one of the walls of the bedroom chamber

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His human guise is revealed. It is Keith Durrant--the changeling.

A furious wizard stands beside the bed. The angel pulls the gown up and over her naked breasts feigning modesty. "Impatient fool ...!" The magician accuses the changeling. "Do not risk your very existence for lack of willpower," he instructs Keith. The metamorphite climbs to his feet, glaring at the wizard. "I just wanted ..." Marshal interrupts the changeling, "Yes. I know what you wanted. And although I do not blame you, make no mistake; try any more of your demon trickery and you will be destroyed." Durrant cowers away. I'm sorry." The demon pretends that he is repentant.

Meanwhile in the center of town Steven leaves his car. Following the old man's directions he heads for the sheriff's station. Giving him plenty of room, but still following him in their car are the two policemen, Angie and Skoles. The old wooden steps creak as Steven makes his way up the stairs. When he reaches the top of the stairs he crosses the porch, opens the door then enters the sheriff's station.

One block away the two detectives stop, park and survey the town, especially the sheriff's station. There appears to be only one way in and out of the rickety old wooden shack of a station. "This town is creepy," Angie admits. "I know what you mean. I've heard of towns like this, where they are stand-offish to strangers, but this is ridiculous," Skoles agrees. The lady cop looks around and makes other observations. "No cars -- hell, no vehicles at all, at least none in plain sight. Telephone wires ... "she

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hasn't seen a single one. "Skoles ... no telephones?" she points out to him. "What do you mean? They have to have telephones," he assures her. "Then where are the telephone poles and the lines?" She poses the question to him. Shaking his head he is puzzled. "Maybe the town has only been around as long as cell phones. I tell you what, when that Ward fella comes out of that station we'll question him then get the hell out of here, pronto! This town is too spooky for my taste also," Skoles agrees. Angie nods her head vigorously in agreement. "That's the first thing that you've said that has made any sense in the last four days," she scolds as much as agrees with him.

In the caves of the Sibling Breed the festivities have quieted down some. The beleaguered host - Marshal - finally enters the throne room ahead of his *questionable* captive and Brian. The wizard continues on to the throne then sits down upon it. Tugging on the chains that Gail wears Keith leads her to a pillar in the center of the throne room then he attaches her chains to the pillar. Some of the other creatures mill about the angel, poking at her. Still feigning modesty and vulnerability the angel covers her almost bare private parts with her hands. Laughter emanates from the throne. "Among monsters and her only concern is for her nudity. The fairy princess who kissed a monster and changed his heart is shy. You dared to change him into a betrayer of his own kind." the magician accuses her. Defiantly, Gail puts her hands down to her side revealing much through her diaphanous nightgown. "I think maybe you should kiss me and change my heart," the wizard offers as a sarcastic remedy to

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their situation. "If that were all you needed I would gladly do so, but what you need is to be humbled," Gail informs him. "And who would be the one to take on that awesome task? ... your husband, maybe?" he laughingly questions, not yet discerning to whom he speaks. "I can. If you'd like," the angel offers. A ruckus laughter emanates from Marshal and the horde of demons over the threats of this wisp of a creature before them. "You are a defiant little thing, but that will change after your husband is dead," Marshal assures her.

"You haven't the guts or the power and I should know of what I speak," the angel continues to hint at her identity. The arch of his brow speaks volumes to the wizard's bewilderment. "You speak in riddles. I find you an enigma, but know this hunter's wife alone I may not be a match for your husband, but together the Sibling Breed is more than the hunter's equal." Gail laughs. "Come here wizard," she beckons Marshal. Puzzled, he crosses the throne room and stands over Gail. "Lean down," she instructs him. Cautiously, he does as he is told. Looking closely at his face she laughs once more.

Annoyed he jumps to a standing position. "What is it you find so amusing woman?" He demands. "You don't know anything." Again Gail puzzles over the wizard's ignorance. "I just wanted to take a real good look at your very handsome face before my husband rips it from your head. T'is a pity though. It's not a half bad looking face," she taunts Marshal. The angel is able to do something no one has ever done before, she makes the wizard angry. Leaning down he slaps her face.

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Not yet ready to reveal her identity she pretends to fall backwards upon the floor. Annoyed that the fool has dared to strike her, the angel then jumps to her feet. A trickle of blood comes from the corner of her human mouth. The angel glares at Marshal. "Make that the last time that you or any of your lackeys touch me or there will be nothing left alive for my husband to destroy when he gets here," she warns. For all to see Marshal wears fear like a mask. After a moment of reflection, the magician believes his fear is foolish, so he smiles - relieved. Turning his back to the angel he then heads across the room to the throne and sits down again. "You had me going there for a moment. Your threat sounded so genuine. Without a doubt you are truly something special. I can see why your husband betrayed us," he applauds the woman he perceives Gail to be.

Marshal pauses as if in deep meditation. "I do want to apologize for losing my temper. It is so unlike me," he assures her. "You should be more fearful that I might lose my temper," again she warns him. Then the angel turns to Desiree. "How is your leg?" she reminds them of the consequences. The werewolf snarls. "What you can break my magic can mend." Getting up and crossing the room Marshal lays his hands upon the werewolf. The leg begins to glow with a golden light. Almost immediately Desiree jumps to her feet, healed.

Now that the pain doesn't cloud her mind any longer, Desiree thinks of her mate. The she wolf turns to Marshal. "Where is the master?" she asks of Marshal. "He will be back soon," the magician tells her. "What of my Marcus? Shall he return soon also?" she

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demands. "I'm afraid that Marcus won't be coming back to us at all, my dear," he finally makes known." The demon releases an earth shattering scream for her loss, "Nooo ...!" The Werewolf Clan skulk from pillow to post. Gail turns to Desiree. "Ask him- Why was your mate sacrificed?" she instructs Desiree. The she wolf moves from Marshal's side. Curious, she walks up close to the angel. "What do you mean?" she wants answered. "He knew that my husband would kill him. Still he left him there to die."

She discloses the betrayal. Snarling with claws bared Desiree turns to Marshal. "Grrrrr... tell me that she is lying," Desiree asks of Marshal. Mocking her and her kind he laughs. "Each choice I make is for the good of the Sibling Breed," he answers without truly answering. "Werewolves are the least mystical of the Breed, so you are the most expendable," Gail explains the magician's reasoning. Several wolves begin growling, "Grrrrr ... grrrr ... grrrrr!" The wizard waves his hand in a grand gesture. "I must think of all of you," he excuses his actions.

Spurred on by vengeance Desiree leaps through the air. On his guard Marshal holds up his glowing red hand. The she wolf is frozen in mid-air. The wizard ventures closer. "Can you see the rage in her face?" He turns and faces the other demons. "I do believe it was her intent to kill me." Walking among the other demons he tries to sway them from their allegiances. "She intended to kill me, your protector. Why? Her reason being, I took away the source of her carnal lust." Gail will not allow him

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to get away with this trickery. "Liar! You killed the one thing in this world that she loved," she rebuts his claim. The magician is amazed. He turns to the she wolf. Tears fill Desiree's eyes, but the sorrow is not for her. It is for her lost mate. The wizard laughs. "You sacrifice eternity for love? How stupid can you be?" he mocks her once more.

Standing Gail faces the other demons. This is why she allowed them to bring her here ... as she had been instructed to do ... to teach, "The she-wolf finally knows the truth. You all know the truth. Without love there is no chance for eternity." The beasts are mesmerized by the angel's words. "Noon ...! Do not let her trick you. At the end of time, the Breed shall number more than the sands of time. It is then that we shall tear down the gates to Paridisio and destroy all those within. Eternity shall go to us, the victors of the final battle," Marshal tries to persuade the beasts. The chains which held Gail fall away and she walks over to Desiree. The beasts gasp for they know now that she is more than human. "Then why does she cry?" the angel asks. The wizard shouts out, "Because she knows what I am about to do." He shoves his fist into Desiree's chest and pulls out her heart. "Nooo ...!" the anguish filled angel screams. Though she could have stopped him there is a lesson to be learned for the demons. Yes, Desiree has reaped what she has sown.

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CHAPTER 30

WORST THAN DEATH

Noooooooo ...!" the angel's plea reverberates throughout the mountain, the woods and the town of Skutz. A shroud of foreboding descends upon this hapless town.

The door to the sheriff's station opens and Steven enters. The first person the wizard sees is the cowardly deputy, Carter. The man sits at his desk whittling on a piece of wood. Carter looks up and spots the stranger. Shaking his head in discontent which soon changes to fear when the officer of the law looks down. On his desk is a novel. On the back cover is the picture of the hunter. Looking up at Steven again Carter excitably notes, "You ... it'sss youuuu!" Standing up, the deputy drops his knife and the piece of wood onto the floor. Still nervous and stammering the policeman orders, "Youu jusstt tuurn around and go home. Gooo homme!" The foolish man draws his gun from its holster and points it at Steven.

Meanwhile the streets of Skutz are as quiet as a dead man's song. The policeman, Skoles, sips on a cup of coffee while Angie taps her fingers on the dashboard of the unmarked police car. At his patience end Skoles grabs Angie's hand and screams at her, "For God's sake woman ... this town is nerve wracking enough. I don't need to listen to your nervous tapping as well." Angie takes her hands down from the dashboard and clasps them together. "I'm sorry. I didn't even realize that I was doing it," she apologizes. The two observant detectives don't know where he came from, but suddenly Mr. Cobber is standing next to their car. "You really should go ...

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go...," Cobber advises them. The startled cop spills some of his hot coffee into his lap. "Damn it! Who are you? Where the hell did you come from?" Skoles drills the old man. "I was saying that you should be leaving. None of this concerns you," Cobber warns. Looking over at Angie an exasperated Skoles asks. "Now we're being run out of town by a little old man, don't that beat all." He turns to tell Cobber off, but just as suddenly as the old man had appeared he is gone. Baffled Skoles reiterates their plans, "Just as soon as that writer comes out of there we are gone ...!"

Inside the sheriff's station the cowardly deputy tries to intimidate the hunter, "You hear me ... go home! We don't want no trouble!" Carter bellows. Having heard all of the shouting going on in the front of the station Sheriff Weaver lumbers out of his office to investigate. "Carter, what the hell is going on out here?" He questions his deputy. Weaver stops cold when he sees Steven. "The monster hunter ... so you came. We were kind of hoping that you wouldn't," the sheriff informs the husband. "Did you people actually think there was a chance in hell that I wouldn't come?" Steven asks in disbelief. "I guess we've lived with fear for so long that we convinced ourselves that you might be afraid too." The sheriff admits. Still Carter stands there holding his gun on Steven. The deputy's hands shake like a ninety year old widow's hand. The sheriff walks toward the hunter. "Look mister, we are truly sorry for your loss, but we have a very tenuous peace with those things. We've already sacrificed a lot ourselves to maintain this peace and you being here is a threat to what we have. I'm afraid that

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unless you leave now my deputy will put a bullet in your head and we'll bury you in these Oregon woods," he threatens Steven.

Unaware of all that is transpiring Skoles looks up at the coffee he has been drinking which now sits on the car's dashboard. The detective fidgets in his seat. Now it's Angie who is becoming annoyed. "Can't you sit your butt still! You're like an eleven year - old kid who's been made to sit in the corner too long," she chastises him. The man climbs from the car then undecided he climbs back into the car. "Should we just go on in there?" he asks. "No. Let it be in our time and on our terms when we question him," Angie reasons with him. "You are right. First rule of interrogation, be in control of the situation," the detective reminds himself.

Inside the deputy and the sheriff stare nervously at



the hunter. Each hoping that they can intimidate the man into leaving. Any lesser man would have known no empathy for the cowardly men, but he remembers how he first became what he was. Instead of unleashing his mighty fury upon the two men Steven holds his

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hands out toward Carter. His hands glow with a red light. Waves of red hot heat emanate from his hands toward Carter's gun. The gun begins to glow red hot. "Aaeiii ...!" the deputy screams. Somehow Carter is able to fire off two shots before he drops the gun. The bullets travel in slow motion toward the hunter. The bullets melt and the liquid metal drops to the floor before reaching the hunter. The frightened man, Carter, runs behind his desk. He wants a barrier between him and the mystical being. Waving his hand Steven causes the heavy mahogany desk to fly aside like a strand of straw in a hurricane. "He's one of them!" Carter declares. "No shit Sherlock." The sarcastic sheriff mocks his deputy. "If I were one of them the two of you would be dead and I would be picking the meat off of your rotting corpses. Instead I'm going to share a little secret with you ... there are worst things than death."

The two police officers stare at the mystical being. An indignant Carter wonders, "How can something like you judge us?" Steven's answer is simple, honest and direct, "Easily, I don't lay down with pigs." Walking toward the door Steven tells the two men. "The problem with you is that you think that because you aren't a pig you can lay next to them in the muck without getting dirty." Walking out Steven closes the door after himself. Turning to Weaver the deputy asks, "What the hell does that mean?" An annoyed sheriff instructs his deputy, "Shut up!"

In the car outside the station Skoles watches as Angie starts to eat her jelly doughnut. "Are you going to eat that doughnut?" he asks with pleading eyes. Taunting him Angie bites down into her jelly

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doughnut. "Didn't you eat all of your doughnuts in peace?" she questions him. "Don't bite my head off. I just asked," Skoles defends himself. He sips his coffee. "Roadside coffee is always the worst," he complains. "Give me a break. Can't you stop bitching for a moment even?" Angie tires of his seemingly unending tirades. "That's a term that you should never use," Skoles answers her suggestively. "F--- you Skoles," she curses her partner. "Anytime, anyplace lady," he implies more. "... only in your dreams, old man, only in your dreams," Angie insults her partner.

The detective starts to take another sip of his coffee when Steven sticks his head into the passenger side window. Startled Skoles jumps back and spills the hot coffee into his own lap for the second time that day. "Aaaaaeii ...!" he screams. Angie is startled also. She shoves Steven's head out of the car then she climbs out the driver's side of the car. Climbing out of the passenger side of the car Skoles screams, "You are one stupid bastard." The detective glares at the hunter. "Was that supposed to be funny?! It wasn't funny! Damn it!" The lady cop has a few choice words for the hunter as well, "Christ ... are you crazy or something? I almost literally pooped in my pants!" Walking around the car Angie stops next to Skoles and in front of Steven. The lady cop looks at Steven. Puzzled, she looks at the sheriff's station then back at Steven again. "How in the hell did you get out of the sheriff's office without either one of us seeing you?" she asks him. "I guess the two of you were asleep on duty. That doesn't matter. I came over here to tell you to go home. I shouldn't have let you follow me in the first place. You won't be safe

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here and this doesn't concern you," he warns them.

An angry Skoles grabs Steven by his collar and tells him what he expects to happen. "We're going nowhere until you lead us to that cop- killing Durant!" With ease the mystical being peels Skoles' hands away from his collar. The policeman stares at Steven in amazement. "If that's your only reason for being here then you can leave. If this Durrant that you speak of is here he will never hurt anyone again," Steven promises. Cynicism laces Skoles next words, "I'm not going to depend on some vigilante writer to bring to justice a vicious killer like this." The policeman also warns the writer, "All you'll do is get your name added to his list of victims. Besides, I get paid \$62,384.29 a year to risk my life," the policeman facetiously adds to his tirade. "There are worse things than dying," Steven assures him. "Like what ...?" Skoles begs answered. With Gail on his mind the husband ignores the question. Instead he instructs the two detectives, "It's your choice - stay or go, but if you want to stay alive you had better stay close to me until we leave this town."

Having said all that he wants to say Steven then turns and walks away. To Angie's surprise her partner follows Steven. She follows him. "What the hell are you doing?" she asks her partner. "Staying close," he answers. The two men take large strides leaving Angie behind. Running to catch up Angie reaches out in frustration and grabs Skoles by his arm, stopping him. "Why don't we just talk to the local law enforcement about some assistance?" she asks. "Something tells me that there is a hell of a lot more going on here than we can understand. And I

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believe him when he says that we are going to need him to stay alive," he answers. Taking out her gun Angie looks around. "Why in the heck would we need him?" The police woman wonders aloud. "When he took my hands away from his collar ... don't think I'm crazy ... I felt more strength in those hands than any man could possibly possess," the weird-ed out cop replies. The woman looks at Skoles with the skepticism that four years of police work has taught her. "Are you saying that he isn't human?" She waits for Skoles to answer. Instead of answering his partner he runs to catch up to Steven. Angie runs after Skoles screaming, "You've lost your damn mind!"

As if it isn't hard enough and miserable enough going already the snow changes to rain. The hunter and the two detectives trek through the snow and slush-covered woods. Steven is being led by instincts only. Through the clearing he spots a cabin. Without understanding how he knows, he does know that all he needs to do is wait here and the demons will find him. Under her breath Angie curses each step that they take. When she sees the cabin she feels a sense of relief. Maybe someone will allow them to come in to warm up. Maybe the same person might even have a drink to help in that warming up process. The last to spot the cabin is Skoles, but all he wonders is if this is where he will finally find that madman, Keith Durrant.

The door to Keith's cabin opens. Yes, Steven's instincts have led him to the cabin given to the metamorphite by Kamar. It is the connection to the policeman, Skoles, which has touched the hunter, bringing them here. The three companions enter the cabin. Two are cold, wet and frustrated. Lightning flashes behind them, a storm is coming. "I hope that there are some frigging lights in here," Angie says as she reaches through the dark for a light switch. Without hesitation Steven finds the switch and turns on the lights. "Good." Angie remarks. One wouldn't suspect that this warm and inviting cabin is the home of a demon. In the middle of the main room there is a large fireplace. In front of the fireplace is a comfortable looking sofa and a love seat. "A fireplace ...!" The delighted Angie hollers with glee. "Now we can dry off and warm up," she says to the others. Her partner has other things on

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his mind. "I don't know about the two of you, but I am starving. I don't know where the people are who own this cabin, but I hope that they don't mind if I scrounge around and eat up their food. Even if they do mind it doesn't matter I'm going to find something anyway," he admits. Down the hallway and out of sight of the others the detective goes in search of sustenance.

Empathetic, Steven turns to the tired, distressed, cold and soaked Angie. "I saw some logs stacked outside. I'll bring some in and start us a fire." Angie smiles for the first time. "That would be nice." There is an implied thank you hidden in her statement.

As Steven heads for the door he hears Skoles hollering from the back of the cabin, "I've found a kitchen in here." There is a pause then the detective yells again, "We're in luck, there is plenty of food ... and a few surprises." He laughs. The door closes behind Steven.

Alone, Angie stands in the middle of the main room. The police woman talks to herself, "I need to get out of these wet clothes." Looking up she sees herself undressing in a mirror. The police woman stops then heads in the opposite direction of the lecherous Skoles. Up a staircase that she finds Angie climbs. The lady detective finds her way to the master bedroom closet. Inside the closet she finds lots of men's clothes, but no women's clothing. The men's pants simply hang off of her, so she decides ... to hell with Skoles, she wears nothing except her undergarments and a plaid shirt

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back downstairs. She also carries a medium sized towel around her wet hair.

As Angie reenters the main room of the cabin Steven stands in front of a blazing fire. He stokes the fire with a poker. For the first time the lady cop notices and has to admit to herself that the writer looks very handsome standing there. The blaze burns bright and high. Crossing the room until she reaches the fireside she stops next to Steven. Somewhat flirting Angie takes the towel from around her hair then bends over until her hair is touching the floor. Running the towel through her hair she tries to finish drying off. At that moment Skoles reenters the room carrying a tray filled with food, three glasses and a bottle of wine. Beneath the tray he carries two candles between his fingers. The cop freezes in his tracks when he sees the very beautiful sight of the plaid shirt riding high on Angie's hips as she is bent over. "Damn Bennett! I thought I knew how beautiful you are, but I had no idea before this moment," he offers an unwelcome compliment to his partner. Realizing how much of herself that she must be exposing to her lascivious partner Angie snaps to a standing position then turns and throws the damp towel at Skoles. "I hope that you got your cheap thrill for tonight," she accuses, hoping to make her partner feel guilty. Instead he laughs and answers her unapologetic, "Indeed I did." The detective puts the tray down onto the couch. Skoles then offers Angie and Steven glasses. The hunter isn't thirsty or hungry. "No thank you," he politely refuses. "Suit yourself ...," the cop concedes. Meanwhile Angie takes a glass.

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An oddity had gone unnoticed by Skoles and Angie until now, despite the rain and snow Steven is the only one among them who is totally dry, both he and his clothing. "How in the hell did you dry off so fast?" the incredulous man wonders. "You wouldn't believe me if I told you," the hunter answers. Shaking his head in disbelief, Skoles turns to Angie. "There is some weird crap going on around here and the writer is smack dab in the middle of it all," the policeman proclaims.

Moving toward the couch Angie tells her partner, "Right now all I care about is that I need a drink to help warm me up." Smiling mischievously, Skoles opens the bottle of wine and first pours Angie a glass full of the amber liquid then he fills the second glass for himself. What a vision the lovely policewoman makes as she sits down upon the end of the plump cushion of the couch, crossing and exposing her very beautiful and voluptuous legs. Ignoring the grinning Skoles she sips from her glass of wine. The older man just cannot help himself. Sitting in the love seat opposite Angie he leers at the lovely lady. Taking ingredients from the tray which he has carried to the love seat with him he begins making a sandwich. Losing herself in the ambiance of the fire lit cabin, she speaks without thinking. "Umm, if I had different company I could easily forget why I'm here." Flirting she smiles at Steven. "Don't forget! And you better not get too comfortable," A brusque Skoles commands. "Knight is a maniac and he won't care that you're a woman or that you're a cop," he reminds her. Now annoyed, Angie snaps at her partner, "I know my job!" They are

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surrounded by a stifling silence. Each of them eyes the other waiting for the next criticism or accusation. The silence is broken when Angie notices how comfortably Steven navigates the cabin. "You seem at ease here. Do you know whose cabin we've commandeered?" she practically accuses. By now the mystical being has deduced where he is and how he has come to be here. "You'll love this," he starts. The two detectives nervously await the bombshell. "It's Keith Durrant's cabin," he informs them. "I thought you didn't know Durrant?" Skoles points out. "I don't, but now that I'm among them I can better sense each of their individual presences," he tries to explain. "What the hell does that mean?" An exhausted Skoles demands. The skeptical Angie laughs. "Our protector seems to believe that he has some sort of psychic powers." Not wanting to believe his partner, Skoles turns to Steven and asks, "What are you, some kind of a nut case?" Steven turns toward the fireplace and begins stoking the fire once more."

Nooo ... you're no nut case. I can tell by the air of you. You are a hunter. And you're here to hunt Knight, but not just him," he surprises the hunter with his powers of deduction. No answers does Steven offer the inquisitive detective. The concerned husband continues to wait and continues to stoke the fires. Getting up from his seat and pacing the room Skoles attempts to figure out this mystery. "So why are you just sitting and waiting instead of out there searching?" Steven tires of Skoles' speculations. "We won't have to look for them. The Sibling Breed will come looking for me soon enough," he answers. "What is the Sibling Breed? ... some kind

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of cult?" the detective continues to try to pump Steven for more information. "As I told you earlier, some things you will have to see for yourself. If I told you everything you wouldn't believe me. But before this night is over I promise you will believe anything," he predicts. Frightened and pissed off Angie glares at Skoles. "What the hell have you gotten me involved in?" she questions her partner, but he has no answers.

A mere mile away in the cavern of the Sibling Breed Gail stares at Marshal with pity. Returning her stares he wonders what has he brought among him and his kind? The demons encircle the now free angel who is still in her human form. An unexpected intrusion occurs when Sheriff Weaver makes his way pass some of the demons and into the throne room. The man looks around for Kamar "Where is the master?" he asks. Marshal strikes Weaver with a blast of blue light, knocking him to the ground. "I am your master," Marshal instructs him. Humbly Weaver kneels. "Get up!" the wizard commands. The two mystical beings, Gail and Marshal, stare at the pitiable human.

While Elohim's drama plays out the mood in the cabin is tense. Skoles sits alone on the couch. Steven now sits in the love seat. Angie returns from down the hallway. The female cop carries two cans of beer. "I found some more treasures. That wine was fine, but I'll cheer for a beer," she kids, trying to put everyone at ease. The joke works, Steven smiles and Skoles laughs. "I knew you weren't a total tight ass," her partner notes. Ignoring his left-handed compliment Angie walks over to the couch and hands

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Skoles a beer. Turning to Steven she explains. "I didn't bring you one because you don't strike me as the beer type." Nodding in agreement Steven answers, "You were right." Playing the role of the tough cop, Angie pulls the tab from the beer can, throws the tab onto the cabin floor, holds her head back then guzzles the beer down in straight gulps. Staying in character she belches then tosses the empty can down next to the tab. Now more at ease she sits down next to Skoles and crosses her legs, revealing more than she should have to the married man. "Just 'cause you're a cop doesn't mean that you have to stop being a woman," Steven tries to impart some wisdom to the lady cop. Turning to Skoles she remarks, "You didn't tell me that he was a shrink too," she mocks Steven's tutelage. "I know you're listening to me. Stop overdoing the tough guy routine. I bet that you are quite a woman when you let yourself be one," he compliments her. The ice is broken between the two. Angie smiles. "Are you coming on to me?" she asks. "Not that I mind or anything," she hastily adds. Steven laughs. "No. I'm a happily married man, but if I wasn't and you acted like the woman you keep hidden inside of you, the answer would be a resounding yes," he assures her. "I'm flattered," Angie admits. The green eyed monster - jealousy - rears its ugly head. "If the two of you want to be alone I could take a walk for fifteen minutes. You'll probably only need five of those," Skoles comments crudely. Taking one of the pillows from behind her head she throws it at Skoles. Quickly he ducks. "You're a classless pig!" she admonishes her partner.

The horseplay is the quiet before the storm.

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Suddenly the night is filled with the sounds of the beasts howling, an awful banging against the walls of the cabin, scratching of claws and the flapping of wings. Getting up Steven stands preparing himself for the upcoming battle. Fear is chiseled into the expressions Angie and Skoles wear. "It begins," Steven quietly announces. The older detective tries to pretend he isn't afraid. "Why should we be scared of wolves howling in the woods? That's what wolves do," he excuses the sounds. Turning to Steven, Angie asks him, "There's something more, isn't there?" Nodding his head he answers, "These wolves walk on two feet and they are not alone," Staring at Steven as if the man has gone mad Skoles accuses, "You're the one that we should be worried about. You're as crazy as a loon." With a look of determination Steven heads for the door. The older detective stands in the center of the main room of the cabin. The terrified Angie watches both men from her position, curled up on the couch. Before Steven reaches the door the cabin begins to shake, the door creaks, as if about to give under great pressure and the wood from the sides of the cabin sound as if it is being ripped away layer by layer. An apprehensive Skoles takes his gun out of its holster. The scared Angie takes her gun from her purse, which has been lying beside her. The sounds get louder. Now there's stomping on the roof. "What in god's name is happening ...?!" The lady cop screams in terror. "There's a perfectly rational explanation," Skoles tries to convince himself. "I just need to think of what it could be," he admits being bewildered. Reaching the door the hunter swings it open. There Steven finds himself face to face with a werewolf. Inside another werewolf and a changeling have burst

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through the wooden shutters and the windows of the cabin landing a few feet away from Skoles and Angie. The woman screams. Skoles shoots the changeling in the head, killing it.

Angie fires her weapon upon the werewolf. The shots knock it backwards--but with lead bullets--it is barely harmed. The magician grabs his beast by the throat, lifts it into the air, chokes the life from it then tosses it back out into the night. The hunter then runs back into the main room of the cabin where the two detectives try to stave off the demons' attack with mere guns. Vampires, werewolves, draillums, changelings and demons with no name burst through the windows and walls and crash down from the ceiling. The angel's husband begins to throw blast after blast of blue light all through the room. The beasts charge at the detectives and the hunter. Some burst into flames, some crumble into dust and are swept away. To the amazement of the two policemen Steven's hands become silver blades then he wades into the heart of the mass of demons and slices away head after head of the evil creatures. "What's happening?" Angie cries out. "Shut up and keep shooting!" Skoles yells back at her.

Soon the room is still. All around the cabin bodies of dead creatures lay, some decapitated, some nothing more than dust or some sort of primordial sludge. The three comrades in battle can hear the few remaining demons scampering back into the deep woods.

As Steven stands at the front door staring after the creatures Angie and Skoles walk over to

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him then stand behind him. "I don't believe what just happened, but thanks for saving our butts," a grateful Skoles acknowledges Steven's help.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 32 THE PROMISE

In the lair of the Sibling Breed an astonished Gail stares at the town's sheriff. "You're the law in this town are you not?" she asks of him. Marshal and the demons all laugh. "Yes mam," Weaver answers. "... and you know that I'm being held against my will?" she continues to question him. "I do. And I am truly sorry lady, but I do what is necessary to save my town," the sheriff excuses his lack of action. "You haven't saved them. You've condemned them," she assures the man. Walking over to his two guests Marshal places himself in between the sheriff and the angel. "You will have to excuse our guest. She is prone to sermons and condemnations of the soul," Marshal half jokingly instructs the sheriff.

In town the groveling, frightened townsfolk come out of hiding. In the middle of the street they gather. Old man Cobber sits on his bench and watches all that transpires. The mayor speaks out first. "A hunter of demons has come to our town. I believe that it's a sign from God that this horror can now end." The cowardly Deputy Carter hollers out, "Where was god these last 60 plus years mayor?" Some of the misguided townsfolk laugh while others shake their heads in agreement with the cowardly deputy. Cobber stands up. "You know what they say ... in HIS time, not ours," the old man cites. The mayor claps his hands. "That's right Mr. Cobber. I couldn't have said it better myself." Cal and Marge Dempsey hold hands as they make their way to the front of the crowd. "I don't know about you, but the only reason me and Cal haven't had any children is because we won't raise them in this hell hole and until now we've been afraid to leave," Marge Dempsey offers to

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her neighbors. "Look people, the hunter may not be strong enough to defeat the demons, but from what the sheriff has told me about him he sounds strong enough to keep them busy long enough for us to get a head start away from here. Can we ask for more than that?" the mayor asks. Carter turns to the crowd. "I ain't got no kids nor do I have any intention of trying to outrun them things, but if you got it in your fool heads to do this thing you had better make up your minds quickly." Old man Cobber echoes the deputy's sentiment, "You better make up your minds "quicker" than quick. If you are wrong, there will surely be hell to pay," the old man warns.

While the town's people make a choice Steven peers out into the night. The darkened woods are lit by the moon and the lightning. The light rain mixed with snow continues to fall, blurring the image of the demons as they duck in and out of the heavy brush. In the doorway of the cabin the hunter turns to the two detectives. "You stay here. I have to follow them back to their lair," he instructs them. "I want to go with you. Especially, if you think that there's any chance that Durrant is one of those things," Skoles volunteers. "He is," Steven assures him.

The lady cop is crying hysterically. "I don't want to chase after those things, but I don't want to stay here alone either," she pleads with the two men. "What if they come back?" she begs. Pulling the frightened woman into his arms Steven comforts her, "I will place a protective spell around the cabin. Don't worry. Nothing and no one will be able to enter unless you open the door for them." Puzzled,

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Angie asks, "After what I've seen, why would I let them in?" So that Angie will be on her guard Steven warns her, "The changelings can give the illusion of being anyone. Do not open this door for anyone. Not me. Not your partner. Not anyone. When we return I will take down the spell and let us in." The two men exit the cabin. Angie closes the door behind them.

A few yards away from the cabin Steven stops and turns. Curious what will come next Skoles stops and watches. The mystical being raises his hands into the air. "Crisna Yani!" he calls out. After his words comes a golden light which encases the cabin. Inside the cabin Angie can see the golden aura and her mind is at ease. Outside the cop turns to Steven and declares, "No one will ever believe any of this."

In the cavern of the Sibling Breed the wizard Marshal becomes impatient with the sheriff. "So ... why are you here?" he asks. "The hunter has come. He has taken over Durrant's cabin," he informs the wizard. "Trespassing is against the law. Why don't you go arrest him?" Marshal mocks the sheriff. The demons all laugh. Walking over to the sheriff it is clear to Marshal the man's demeanor has changed. He leans in close and whispers into Weaver's ear. "You wouldn't be hoping that the hunter destroys us. Now would you, sheriff?" The sheriff turns to the wizard and glares into his eyes; his expression is now one of defiance. "If he does I will throw a party so impressive that they will be talking about it in Washington, D.C. mister." Again the wizard laughs at Weaver. "I'm delighted and surprised to find that you haven't completely lost your manhood," again he

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belittles the sheriff. Giddy as a school boy Marshal grabs one of the female demons, in her human form, and dances around Weaver in a circle. "You know what? A party isn't a bad idea." Releasing the female follower he spins her in Weaver's direction. As she spins toward the sheriff she changes into her demon form once more then lands in the sheriff's arms. The demons all laugh. Weaver drops the werewolf, letting her fall to the ground. The beast snarls up at him. He backs away from it. Continuing to dance and spin Marshal turns to face Gail. "After we kill the hunter, our guest and you townsfolk will join us in a celebration," he declares. A disheartened sheriff Weaver turns to the wizard. "Neither me nor any of my town want to be involved," he tells Marshal. "Don't fool yourself. The first time that you and your worthless little town looked the other way you became involved. Now get out of my sight! Your cowardice offends me," the magician insults the sheriff.

Head carried low and spirit even lower, the sheriff starts to walk away. The angel, Elohim, moves to him and takes the sheriff's hand. The lilt of her voice lifts the soul of the man. "You can still save your town. Leave this wretched place and never again enter into a pact with evil," she instructs him. Enraged, Marshal points an accusing finger at the man then screams, "If any of you leave we will hunt you down like animals, drag you back here and do the most unspeakable atrocities upon you." A tingling begins in Weaver's hand and works its way through his entire body. The sheriff looks down and sees Gail's hand glows a blue - white. He then looks up and into her eyes. Speaking softly but powerfully

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she says, "I promise you no one will follow you." The man somehow knows that she is able to keep this promise.

Tears of hope and joy fill the man's eyes as he turns and walks away. Somehow Marshal knows that all is lost, but he won't admit it, not even to himself. Instead he roars after Weaver, "I will hunt you down! I will hunt you down!" Trying to save face in front of the demons whom he leads, Marshal turns in the direction of the angel and admonishes her, "You shouldn't have done that. I will hunt them down and I will kill them all." Gail smiles at him. "You know that isn't true. The time for evil here has passed," she foretells.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 33 THE EXODUS

An elated Sheriff Weaver returns to the townsfolk of Skutz. Today he is the bearer of good news, "Besides the hunter there is another with mystical powers who has come also and she has promised me that the evil ones will not follow us," he informs his town.

It has been six decades that the town of Skutz, Oregon has lived under a cloud of evil so even though it makes little sense it is no wonder that instead of packing their things and making haste to leave they decide to celebrate. Every car, truck or other vehicle that had been hidden is now in the streets. Streamers, cans, banners and balloons are tied to those vehicles. People stand beside and some sit on top of their vehicles laughing and drinking and making merriment. The streets are filled with people dancing. Car radios, boom boxes, small hand-held radios and anything that can make music plays as loud as the ear can bear. At long last the children feel that they can run and play in the street, laugh and scream with joy. It is a sight that lights all of the hearts above.

Old man Cobber sits on his bench and watches the townsfolk make merriment. Although it is another puzzle without an answer; he can barely conceal his loathing. A glee filled Marge walks over to Cobber then takes him by the hand and lifts him from his bench. "Come dance with me Mr. Cobber. We will soon be free and that is cause to celebrate," she tells the old man. A half smile is all that he can manage as he lets himself be led out into the street. "I have always been free," is his grumpy reply.

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While Skutz celebrates just ahead of Steven and Skoles some demons run, heading back toward the caves and the home of the Sibling Breed. A cautious Steven turns to Skoles. "Be wary. The demons are making it all too easy for us to follow them," he warns. "I had already noticed that," Skoles answers as he reloads his pistol. The ominous figure of the vampire So'ei stands in the heavy brush with several of his brethren vampires. It watches as the creature called Kevin Durrant doubles back to his cabin and away from the hunter. "As always it is we, the vampires - the strongest of the Sibling Breed, who must deal with our enemies," he tells his fellow vampires. A demon with no name walks up behind the vampires and speaks - his garble translated means, "We will bring him to his knees." Laughing, So'ei lifts the demon into his arms, flies with it to the highest tree branch and deposits it there. "Let's see if you can stay out of our way up here," the vampire mocks his fellow demon. The other vampires laugh.

Meanwhile, the mayor and the sheriff sit on the porch of the sheriff's station looking out over the town. Although the hour is getting late the people are still celebrating in the streets.

A flash of bright lights in the night sky startles the mayor. It's not lightning. The townspeople are shooting off fireworks. Children run carrying sparklers. A few teenage couples are even parked behind buildings making out for the first time. Something they would never have dared to do before tonight.

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"We shouldn't still be here. Celebrating could have waited," the mayor warns. "If you cage an animal up for sixty years you have got to expect it to run a little wild when it first escapes its cage," the sheriff explains. "People have tried leaving before. They always hunt them down and bring them back," the mayor reminds his friend. "No one ever fought back before." the sheriff tells the mayor. "Men can't fight magic," the mayor insists. "If that's true why are they hiding here in the woods?" The sheriff gives the mayor something to ponder.

Hours later the celebrating has died down. The streets are silent. Everyone is in their homes packing to leave. In the Dempsey home the husband and wife, Marge and Cal, rummage through drawers, trunks and old memories.

With a touch of melancholy Marge takes their wedding album from a steamer trunk. She flips through its pages. A photo of their first kiss after their vows brings tears to her eyes. Cal laughs then tenderly wipes the tears from her cheeks. "The good times aren't behind us, they're straight ahead," he assures his beloved. A rattling noise comes from the back room startling them. They laugh a nervous laugh. "I guess we have a right to be a little jumpy," Cal excuses. He stands up. Marge grabs his hand. "Let's just go. Let's leave all of these things and just walk right out that door right now," she suggests. "Don't be silly. We don't have to start over empty-handed. Just a couple of hours of packing and we will be on our way," the practical Cal comforts his wife. More at ease Marge releases his hand. To relieve their anxiety Cal goes down the

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hallway to investigate the noise that they had heard. A few minutes later Marge calls to him, "Cal ... Caaall ...!" She looks up from where she is seated and finds Mr. Cobber grinning down at her.

All over town, the same scene is being repeated again and again in household after household. People pull out clothes, pictures, valuables, anything that they may want to carry with them or feel they can't possibly leave behind. Tears of heartache are cried for loved ones who had not survived to see this day and tears of joy and relief that they have. Even so hearts also ache over what could have been. Souls sing for the promise of what is to come.

The demons stand at the woods end watching as some of the towns people begin to load their cars and trucks with the possessions they will carry with them. The beasts grumble among themselves. "How could the master allow this to happen? How much further into the wilderness must we hide in order to survive this creature man?" they ask. Some of the demons head back to the caves. Others head for the higher woods. Still others simply wait here at the woods' edge to see how this drama will play out.

There's a sense of impending doom in the lair of the Sibling Breed as Marshal turns to Gail and glares at her. "What have you done?" he demands of her. "Only what I was asked to do, teach," again she hints as to her identity. The wizard is too consumed with anger to hear her words. "I don't know which will bring me the greater joy ... your death or your husband's death," his words lash out. Gail reaches out to him. "Neither, but if you let me I

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can give you what it is that you truly need," she promises. The wizard hesitates then he pulls away from her. "You will not bewitch me!" he denies her.

One concerned - the other consumed - two companions make their way deeper into the woods. A rumbling and roaring sound fills the night. The ground beneath them shakes. Skoles wonders what supernatural fiend they will next have to fend off. "What is it?" he asks the hunter. Laughing with joy Steven answers him, "The rumbling of salvation." The detective has no idea what the man means, but he deduces and is delighted that it means it is not another mystical enemy.

As Sheriff Weaver and the mayor stand in the middle of Main Street the caravan of vehicles begins to roll out of the town of Skutz. "Don't be dilly-dallying. Move it Mr. Sutter!" Weaver directs one of the stragglers. A few cars break down. The cars haven't been well maintained. Since no one was allowed to leave there wasn't much need for a car. The mayor helps some of the persons abandoning their clunkers to find rides with others. More things had to be left at the side of the road, but a small sacrifice for what they stand to gain.

Atop a hill and at the wood's edge many of the demons watch the mass exodus of the humans from Skutz. "Would they warn others? Would others come to rid mankind of us?" these things they ponder as they sit perched above the world of man or at their world's edge. They had heard the tales Knight had brought back with him of the God's breath weapon, so their hearts are filled with fear.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 34 THE LAST ATTACK

Slllloooosshh ... slllloooppp ... slllloosshh ... slllloopp!" The hunter - Steven and the detective - Skoles run after the demons through the muddy and snow covered woods. Suddenly Steven stops then Skoles stops. The two men listen. The man wonders what has made the hunter stop. Extending his arms and hands toward Skoles the hunter then changes them into silver blades again. Ordering the policeman he offers the blades, "Take them!" The detective looks at him puzzled. "What do you mean?" the confused man asks. "Take the blades," Steven orders. The cop looks down at Steven's arms and the blades that have replaced his hands. The reluctant man grabs a hold of Steven's wrists and pulls at the blades. The weapons come off easily. In the place of the blades new hands grow. Shaking his head in awe Skoles remarks, "I'm glad that you're on my side." The hunter laughs then comments, "I would have given you these earlier, but at that point you wouldn't have believed that they are more effective than your guns." The detective concedes the truth of Steven's statement.

Meanwhile, the mood has become bleak in the lair of the Sibling Breed. The wizard's patience wears thin with many things, but at the top of the list is the lackeys who refuse to follow orders. Sitting upon Kamar's throne Marshal stares out at the human form of Gail not yet remembering. Standing next to the marble pillar to which she had once been chained still in human form she stares in return. The magician also watches the horde of demons which mill about aimlessly.

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More confusion follows when Tilan, another werewolf, rushes up to the throne and kneels at Marshal's feet. The beast barks out the failings of the changeling, Durrant. "The metamorphite had us go to his cabin to confront the hunter. The hunter killed many of us, so we returned." Bounding up from the throne Marshal roars his discontent, "Aauugghh ...!" A shroud of silence falls over the lair. The magician paces up and down, down and up. "The changeling and the rest of you were told to keep an eye on the townsfolk then report back to me when the last of the deserters had gone. Nothing more," he reminds the demon. "Where is the changeling?" he asks the werewolf. Tilan answers, "He doubled back for the woman." Marshal can't help but laugh in resignation. "Mark my words, women will be the end of him." The bad news for Marshal has no end. There is more for Tilan to relate, "Master, I saw So'ei and some of his clan waiting in the woods for the hunter." The wizard smashes his fist into the cavern wall next to him. The rock crumbles under his mighty blow. The laughter of the angel only serves to anger him further. "I gave everyone simple instructions, but no one seems to care what I say. Never mind that. I shall deal with them later, if they are still alive," he talks more to himself than to the others. As if in search of answers he walks among the demons. "I had no doubt that together we could have defeated the hunter, but it seems the odds will be a little more even than I had counted on."

An angry Marshal walks over to Tilan. Changing one of his hands into a bronze blade he then slices off the werewolf's head. The head bounces on the ground. A demon with no name pounces on it. The beast plays

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with the head like a rubber ball. Ignoring the frivolity that goes on around him, the wizard predicts and cheers the coming death of the vampire and his kind. "Though they may have been of great help in the coming battle I shall celebrate the death of So'ei and his arrogant vampire brethren."

The quiet of the woods is like a third companion to Steven and Skoles, but they have no misgivings; they know this companion will soon abandon them. It comes ... a swooshing sound. A sound Steven has heard many times when battling hordes of the demons. So'ei swooshes by the two comrades. In the form of a man-bat the vampire slices at Steven's arm. The hunter falls to the ground, but all so quickly recovers, bouncing to his feet. His arm glows blue-white as it heals itself. A second vampire swooshes by Skoles. The detective jumps out of the way, but slices the creature with the silver blade as it flies by him. The man-bat crumbles into dust. The man jumps into the air raising his fist in victory. "All right!" he exclaims. All around Steven and Skoles the man-bats swoop. The human slices the beasts again and again discharging them from this world to the next. The hunter both slices and blasts the demons with his mystical powers. Of all the vampires that began this battle only So'ei and his Lieutenant, Lilly, still stand.

Heart wrenching for So'ei it is to look around at the numbers of his kind who have fallen. The vampire unleashes a horrible screech. "Aaaeeiii ...! This cannot be. The vampires of the Sibling Breed were here before any demon and we shall be here beyond the end of time," the vampire claims. "Surrender the

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beast within you and you shall be," Steven promises the demon. "Without the beast I am not So'ei. I want nothing if I am not to be me. Eeiii ...!" the demon screams as he charges at Steven. At that same moment Lilly charges at Skoles. Steven hits So'ei with a blue blast of light. The first vampire falls, mortally wounded. Lilly slices across Skoles' face as she rushes by him. Skoles throws one of the knives. The knife sticks into Lilly's back. The one time daughter of Christen and Denever crumbles into dust. The knife drops to the ground. The hunter marches over to So'ei. He stands over him. "You have a choice. Surrender the beast!" he demands. The vampire resumes his human form then looks up at the hunter. "I am So'ei - first and last of the vampires of the Sibling Breed, I will be nothing else," he declares. "So be it." Steven realizes the beast does not wish to be redeemed. The wizard swings his blade hand and cuts off the vampire's head. The body turns to dust. The hunter and the detective stand staring at the dust that was once the mighty vampire So'ei. "What did you mean - surrender the beast?" Skoles wonders. My wife believes that all these evil creatures will be redeemed, so I give them the chance to release their evil nature," he explains.

Suddenly Steven is aware of mischief he had been too preoccupied to sense before now, so he screams out his frustration, "Nooo ...!" The detective turns to his new ally puzzled so he asks, "What's wrong?" Shaking his head in resignation the hunter answers, "I was distracted and didn't realize ..." Skoles is apprehensive of what has gone undetected by this powerful creature. "Didn't realize what?" he asks. "Your partner may not heed my warning," he answers.

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"Shit!" Skoles curses the impetuous woman.

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CHAPTER 35 TRICKERY

The lady cop is frightened out of her wits as she waits peering out of the window of the cabin and into the night. Only the golden aura which encircles the cabin gives her any comfort at all. From where she stands she can see a fallen tree just yards from the cabin. Suddenly she sees Skoles running and jumping over that same tree. Staring at him in disbelief she wonders, "Where is the writer?" It is then that the writer's words echo in her mind, "Do not open the door for anyone. They can make themselves appear and sound like any other."

Her partner is no longer in her line of sight. There comes an urgent knocking at the door. Angie runs to the door. As she stands staring at the doorknob again the writer's words echo through her mind. "Do not open the door for anyone. They can make themselves appear and sound like anyone." Then she hears a familiar voice. "Angie! Angie! Hurry! Open the door!" The frightened woman moves closer to the door. As she reaches out for the doorknob caution begs her stop. "How do I know you are Skoles?" she asks. "Damn it hurry. Those things are almost upon me," he pleads. Still Angie hesitates. "I got separated from the writer and now those things are after me. For God's sake woman, don't leave me out here to die!" Then the sound of the werewolf's howl fills the night. "Wooo ...wooo ...!" Again he pleads. "Angie! Angie! You can't leave me out here to die!" Slowly her hand grabs a hold of the knob and twists. Slowly she pulls the door open.

To her utter regret the sight of Keith in his man-lizard-like form greets her grinning. The woman

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freezes for a moment. "I lied. There's only me," the demon taunts Angie. She tries to slam the door shut, but it is too late. The demon's foot stops the door from closing. Then he forces his way into the cabin. Staggering backward she screams, "Nooo ...!"

The wizard and the detective run through the woods. Both are praying that they will not be too late. A demon with no name reaches out from the brush and trips the detective. Many of the demons with no name rush out of the brush and leap from the trees onto Steven and Skoles.

Precious moments are being lost in this scuffle.

As Angie backs away from the demon the creature speaks softly to her, trying to seduce her with its words. It is the game he loves most. "I'm not going to hurt you. Trust me." The woman is drawn to stare into the demon's eyes. They glow a bright blue-green. The police woman's eyes are transformed too. Her eyes glow a glassy white. The lady cop stops, frozen to the spot where she stands. The demon changes to his human form. The very handsome Durrant moves slowly toward her. "Don't be afraid. I'm not a monster. The writer is a hypnotist. He plays tricks with your mind." In a daze Angie speaks, "Like a magician's illusions?" The clever beast agrees. "Yes! Exactly ..!" She shakes her head. "It all seems so real," she answers. The demon laughs. "What makes more sense, that monsters exist or that you have been fooled?" Knight asks. The lady cop laughs. The beast moves ever closer. Reaching out he caresses Angie's face. "I just want to take away all of your fears," he promises. For the first time Angie

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tonight Angie is not afraid. The human form of Keith caresses Angie's long beautiful neck. He then gently grasps her neck and pulls her closer. The fiend kisses her mouth. Aroused she moans.

The battle between the demons with no name and Steven and Skoles wages on. The hunter battles more fiercely because he knows that the woman cop is running out of time. Throwing up his hands he begins to chant, "Noolie Shamma Lignnnt!" Bolts of lightning begin to strike the demons with no names. Those not hit scurry into hiding. The two allies hurry on toward the cabin.

The demon has taken his beastly form, but still it holds Angie in its arms and kisses her with its demon's mouth. The monster eases Angie down to the floor. The demon takes its human form. Durrant is unbuttoning the plaid shirt that Angie wears as he kisses her lips. Easing the shirt from her shoulders he exposes her beautiful nude body. The monster form leans down and licks her bare body with its demon-slaver tongue. The human Keith lies naked beside a naked Angie on the floor licking her body as she moans and writhes beneath his touch. "Oohhh ... oohh ... oohh ...!" The beast finds amusement in changing itself back and forth between its human self and its beastly self. The monster lies next to Angie while its huge slobbering tongue caresses her. The woman is repulsed and excited at the same time. Bewildered because she doesn't understand why she sees a monster then the good looking man, but she surrenders to her baser feelings. The human-Durrant kisses Angie's mouth passionately. His hands caress her naked body. The monster's grotesque face once

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more is pressed against Angie's face and his paws caress and scratch the woman's body.

In the woods the hasty steps of a desperate twosome hurry through the darkened and enemy infested woods marking the urgency of their mission. Skoles reprimands himself for getting Angie into this predicament to begin with, "If they catch the monster, Durrant, but at the price of another partner's life can he live with that? Worse yet is if he loses another partner while the beast slips through their fingers?" The detective slaps the blades together as he increases his pace.

The lewd scene of the animal like gyrations of the monster's hips between Angie's legs is the setting for Angie's requiem. The police woman responds, "Yesss ... yesss!" As if possessed the woman cries out in ecstasy. The human, Keith, is now looking down at her. "Grrnnngghh ...!" he sounds more like the beast. Angie rolls the human form over onto its back and sits over him, her breasts heave and her hips gyrate. Oh yes ...!" she cries out one last time. The monster stares up at her, then takes its claws and slices across Angie's throat. Blood gushes everywhere. Slumping over onto the creature's chest Angie is dead.

In the woods, mere yards away from the cabin, Steven stops and screams out in a rage, "Aaaaauuuuggghhhh ...!" Skoles stops and stares at his companion. He doesn't know how the hunter knows, but he is sure that the writer does know that Angie is dead. Not willing to give up yet Skoles turns and runs even harder than before. First Steven stares

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after him then he follows.

In the caves of the Sibling Breed, Marshal grows ever more impatient. Watching the magician Gail wonders how she is to reach him before his soul is lost. The wizard walks among the myriad of damned creatures. Stopping he turns to the angel. "I grow impatient with your husband. If he doesn't come soon then I may have to find my amusement in torturing you," he threatens. The angel laughs at the foolish wizard, who refuses to see what is plainly before his sight. "To try would be a terrible mistake," she warns him. "One I'm willing to live with," he assures her. "The question is ... Is it one that you are willing to die for?" Again she warns Marshal.

The magician clasps his hands together and blows into them. When he opens his hands again inside them sits a palm-sized hour glass. He turns the hour glass and the sands begin to flow then he faces Gail. "Your empty threats are becoming tiresome. I do not know what your husband has taught you, but if he isn't here by the time the sands have finished flowing through the hour glass I shall watch while my Breed have their way with you," he makes her one last promise.

Out into the clearing just before the cabin Skoles comes running while brandishing the two blades. There sits the cabin, but it glows golden no more. The detective rushes the few remaining feet to the cabin then kicks open the door. Cautiously, Skoles steps into the cabin. The man freezes in horror and rage at the sight which greets him. The monster is feeding on the remains of his partner. It turns its

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gruesome head and grins up at the policeman. His anger pushes Skoles to a hasty action. Charging across the room he then dives at the beast. Durrant rolls out of the man's way, but reaches back and slices Skoles with its claw. The detective drops one of his knives. The evil creature gets to its feet in human form. The beast laughs as he looks down at the man. "You are a policeman too. I can smell the stench of righteousness upon you." It pauses as he walks toward Skoles. "It has been a long time since I've killed a cop, now I get to kill two cops in the same night. I do so appreciate this gift," he taunts the man. Defiantly, Skoles climbs to his feet. "You have that wrong creature. I am going to kill you!" he exclaims. "It's not that easy, cop. Many have tried."

The demon marches toward Skoles changing into its monstrous form as it moves. Still without care Skoles rushes toward the beast. The two charge at each other like two animals in the wild. Frantically Skoles swings his blade through the air. The demon flares its arms, sharp claws on each paw. As they pass by one another the demon strikes the first blow, cutting deeply into Skoles' chest. The man is hurt badly. He bends to one knee. The changeling turns and walks back to Skoles. It then kneels down beside the detective. The beast holds the man's head bowed low. "Are you ready to die?" the monster asks. The detective looks over toward the doorway where he spots Steven. Relieved, the man yells out in triumph, "Not before you, monster!" the metamorphite turns in the same direction as Skoles is looking and sees the hunter. Steven unleashes a blast of blue-white light. The light engulfs the beast. It bursts

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into flames. "Wauugh!" the changeling screams as it releases its hold on Skoles and finally meets its just end. The cop watches with a smile upon his face as the creature is reduced to ashes.

The hunter and the policeman exit the cabin. The night is brightened by the flames of the fiery cabin. The two allies face one another. "Thanks again," the policeman says as he falls to the ground, hurt. The mystical being lays hands upon the man and heals him. As Skoles climbs to his feet again the hunter speaks, "You're welcome. I just wish that I could have saved your friend." Skoles nods his head in agreement. "You did what you could. Now let's go get the rest of those bastards," the angry man declares.

The husband of Elohim contemplates their next move then answers the policeman, "Something bars my power of sight. I think it's about time the sheriff told us all that he knows."

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 36 MAKING AMENDS

The man Weaver knows he hasn't been much of a sheriff to this town. Hell, truth-be-told he has been just as scared as anyone else in this town of the demons. Well maybe not as scared as Carter, but that was the one who he had chosen as his deputy. Any way you look at it, he owes this town a huge debt.

The town seems almost a ghost town. Only a few stragglers remain and some of the townsfolk don't plan on leaving unless the hunter comes down and tells them face to face that the demons are all dead. The sheriff and deputy Carter are making one last round in their patrol car before pulling out themselves. That is when Weaver spots old man Cobber still sitting on his favorite bench. The odd thing is though Weaver is now over fifty he remembers the old man sitting there when he was a boy. As a matter of fact, he thinks, he appeared then as he does today. The sheriff shrugs it off to a boy not truly paying attention to an old man. "How are you doing Mr. Cobber?" the concerned sheriff asks. "Never better sheriff. Never better ... and yourself?" the old man politely inquires. Weaver laughs then says, "Just great, but freedom will do that to a man. Now won't it?" The old man shakes his head. "Wouldn't know the difference sheriff, I've never been a slave to fear ... always been free. Didn't sell out like the rest of you," he snidely remarks. The sheriff ignores the old man's comment. "So where are you going Mr. Cobber?" the sheriff wonders. "Ain't going no dang where son," Cobber insists. "But you were the main one saying that we should go," he reminds him. "One man's joy is another man's hardship, son."

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Carter, who has sat quietly next to Weaver listening to the conversation, isn't sure what the old man means. "What?" the deputy asks. The sheriff and Cobber ignore the deputy. "What are you going to do when they come looking for the rest of us?" the sheriff wants to know the old man's plans. "I'm going to be sitting in my window box with my two shotguns and my three pistols by my side. That is if the stranger doesn't kill them first," Cobber answers. "Do you think he can?" the hopeful sheriff asks. The old man smiles a cruel and evil smile and answers, "More than likely, within the week them things will have dragged most of you back here and things will be pretty much the same as they were yesterday, before the stranger came." The sheriff shakes his head in disagreement. "You're wrong Mr. Cobber. They will have to kill me 'cause I ain't never coming back here alive," the sheriff assures Cobber. Again Cobber smiles then answers Weaver, "Life is full of choices Sheriff ... full of choices."

Carter leans over the sheriff and talks to the old man. "We are gonna do one more sweep of the town Mr. Cobber then we're out of here," the deputy informs him. "Thought you were too scared to run deputy?" the old man reminds Carter. "I'm not ashamed to admit it..." Carter begins, "... but I sure ain't staying here by myself," he ends it. Weaver waves and tells Cobber, "You take care, old man." Cobber nods his head then answers, "... been doing that since before your daddy was born, son."

Before the police car can pull off Steven and Skoles reach the car and block its path. "Get out of the

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car Sheriff," Steven demands. A wary Weaver exits the car. The cowardly Carter stays behind. In fact, he slides over and behind the steering wheel with the only thing on his mind being a quick getaway. "What do you want hunter?" Weaver asks as he walks toward Steven and Skoles. "We need you to show us where their fortress is. I could find it in time, but I don't have any more time nor patience." Again Steven demands, not asks. The reticent sheriff argues, "There are thousands of those things. What can one man do?" The hunter confidently tells the sheriff, "I am more than a man and what I can and will do is destroy them all." There is a decorative boulder that sits in the town's square. Steven demonstrates his awesome power to the sheriff. With a blast of blue white light from his hand he smashes the boulder into a pile of dust. In the patrol car Carter is bouncing around in a state of hysterics. "Oh God ... we're gonna die, we're gonna die. I don't care how powerful he is, I'm not going after those things," Carter whines. The old man, Cobber, points at Carter and shouts, "You damned coward. Never could stomach a coward." Steven gives both men a choice. "I'm not going to force anyone to do anything, but you have to live with the choice that you make."

The deputy smiles, relieved that it has been left in his hands to decide. "I'll live with it just fine because I'll be alive," he calls out to the others. The sheriff decides it is time for him to redeem himself. Turning to the patrol car with Carter inside Weaver says, "You take the patrol car. Just make sure that everyone is gone before you leave Carter!" The deputy has one last message for the man

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he has worked so long under. "I'll do that much for you then I am out of here." Turning his back on his onetime friend Weaver admonishes him. "We get the message Carter."

The patrol car pulls away with the deputy at the wheel. Facing Steven and Skoles the sheriff wears an expression of stern resolve. "If we're gonna do this thing I guess we had better get going." he tells his new allies then he takes off running towards the woods. The hunter and the policeman follow.

If any of them had bothered to look back they would have seen that the bench where the old man had sat only moments before is now empty.

While on patrol Carter parks the car, exits then enters the schoolhouse. In spite of the terror he's had to live with all of his life this place does offers some fond memories. The wind blows through the empty building knocking a poster from the walls. When the poster clunks to the floor Carter jumps. He pulls out his gun and turns in the direction of the sound. When he sees that it is only a poster board he laughs, relieved. Continuing his walk through the school and down memory lane he only remembers the good times.

Fear and guilt drives the sheriff as he leads the other two through the woods and toward the fortress of the Sibling Breed. There is strength in his stride and a comfort of spirit about the man that he hadn't possessed mere hours before. A few feet back Skoles turns toward the angel's husband and asks, "How do we know that he isn't leading us into a

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trap? It wasn't that long ago that those things had him under their thumbs." Understanding the detective's skepticism Steven laughs. Usually he is the skeptic, but not now. It is clear that Weaver is a different man than he had been when Steven walked into his office. "Look at him. He isn't afraid anymore. That's the only real power that they had over this town," Steven answers Skoles. The sheriff has overheard their conversation. Turning to face the two warriors he says, "I don't blame your friend. If the tables were turned I sure as hell wouldn't trust you." The three proceed in silence.

In the quiet of the woods you never know from where the next attack may come. The demon with no name, the one that So'ei had placed up in a tree, sees the detective, the magician and the sheriff walking below where he was placed by the vampire. It snickers for it deduces the fate of the vampire and believes his fate well warranted. The creature releases its hold on the branch. It pounces onto the shoulder of the hunter after missing the sheriff who passed by first. The demon bites down into Steven's shoulder. Steven falls carrying the beast with him to the ground, the demon still with his teeth lodged in his shoulder. Weaver takes out his gun and blasts the beast's head off. What remains of it falls away from the hunter. Still amazed at the hunter's powers, Skoles and Weaver watch as Steven's shoulder heals itself.

The sound of other demons with no names scurrying about in the brush gets the three allies attention. Steven shoots several blasts of the blue - white light into the heavy brush. Sounds of unintelligible

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groans and growls of pain follow. It lets them know that some of the enemy has been hit. To their surprise a draillum whisks by and slices Weaver's leg as it swiftly passes, as in a blur. The sheriff goes down to one knee. The hunter rushes to his side. He places his hand upon the sheriff's leg. The hand of the hunter and the leg of the sheriff glows as the leg is instantly healed.

The sound of snickering comes from the brush. Randomly Weaver fires several shots toward the snickering. The laughter stops. "Got ya!" the sheriff triumphantly shouts. The draillum whisks by again. This time his target is the hunter, but to the beast surprise Steven moves just as swiftly as he does out of his reach. The evil creature seeks refuge back in the brush. "If only that thing would just slow down a little I would ..." Steven interrupts the detective. "Don't worry about our pesky friend. He will bother us no longer." The mystical being raises his arms into the air and chants, "Drasho! Drasho! Drasho!" The quiet of the woods is broken by the sound of limbs rustling as they bend to the will of the angel's spouse. The limbs crawl along the ground, roots reach up from beneath the ground, roots and limbs stretch out to grab a hold of the draillum and pull it down beneath the ground. "Aughh ... aauugghh ... aaauuuggghhh!, the demon screams as he is lost to this world. Knowing the true battle is near Steven turns to the sheriff and hands him a blade. "This will do you better than that gun." The sheriff answers, "Thanks." The three allies look at one another. "Let's get going. If I know my Gail about now she's wondering where the hell I am. "Who's Gail?" Skoles

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asks. The sheriff looks at him with disbelief. "His wife, don't you know what's going on here?" The detective turns away and heads down the path. As he walks away he comments under his breath, "Evidently not."

The mood is tense inside the fortress of the Sibling Breed as the time grows near to the end of the sands in the hourglass. Disappointed Marshal turns to the angel. "It doesn't look like your husband is going to make it in time," he issues a veiled threat. With compassion in her voice Gail implores the wizard, "You can still save yourself. Ask me and I will change your heart." An angry Marshal demands, "Save me from what? You ...?!" He turns to his demon brethren and begins to preach, "She wants me to change my heart." The demons laugh. "What's so funny?" the angel asks. "My black heart is the source of all of my powers," Marshal answers her. Now it is Gail's turn to laugh. "And who sold you on this lie? Whose lackey have you become?" she questions him. Facing the angel, the wizard opens the palm of his hand, revealing to her that the sands of the hourglass have flowed to the bottom, signifying that her time is up. "The only truth that should concern you now is that your time is up," Marshal points out.

Outside the fortress of the Sibling Breed the sheriff has led Skoles and Steven to the opening. The sheriff turns to them. "This is it. I hope that you are as powerful as you say you are because those things are going to be swarming all over us like bees on honey," Weaver warns. The hunter pushes the

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man aside and enters the cave first. Once inside he instructs the others, "Stay close." Weaver and Skoles follow. "You don't have to tell me twice," the two men assure Steven.

The wizard leans in close and kisses Gail on the cheek. "I am truly sorry my dear," he assures her. At that moment Steven rushes into the throne room slicing and blasting the beasts as he goes. The two former friends face one another. It is now that Marshal changes to his true mystical appearance - that of a half human/half lion-like creature. He raises his arms into the air and roars an animal growl. "RRrrrr ...!" A mystical wind blows Skoles, the beasts and Weaver about the throne room. Steven, Marshal and Gail stand unmoved. Just as suddenly the wind stops. Everyone and everything is still.

The arrogant man-lion shouts, "I'm so glad that you could join my party. Your wife and I were about to start without you," Marshal taunts the hunter. The beast stands beside the wife awaiting the husband's first move.

The sheriff looks around him at the demons, the detective, the wizard, the hunter and the angel. He says a silent prayer to the OMNI-ONE that his spirit doesn't fail him as he tries to redeem himself.

Nothing moves in the ominously silent streets of Skutz, Oregon except the lone patrol car carrying the cowardly deputy. There is only one thought on his mind, "I can sneak out right now. Who would know?" The patrol car passes by the home of Marge and Cal Dempsey. Their car is still parked in the open garage. The front door to their home is open. "Shit!" the deputy is annoyed. Backing his patrol car up Carter then parks it in front of the Dempsey home. "They would have to still be here. I was gone," he admits to himself. Carter had fully intended to go back on his word. After this house he still would. This is the last time he intends to press his luck.

Timidly Carter exits the patrol car. Cautiously he looks around then takes his gun from its holster. "Cal ... Marge!" he calls out without going closer to the house. "Cal ... Marge! They should be able to hear me." Reluctantly, Carter walks up to the door and knocks. Slowly he enters the house with his gun still drawn. "Cal ... Marge ... is anybody here?" The cautious policeman closes the door behind himself. He walks further and further into the house. "This is the last house I'm going to check. After this I am out of here. Screw anybody else who is left behind." The man admits surrendering to his cowardice.

There are a few others who consumed by their fears have stayed. They cower in their homes praying the night and the beasts will soon pass them by, but not the frail little old man, Mr. Cobber. This one hobbles down the Main street of Skutz on his rickety

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worn oak cane. As he looks around he remembers how the recent years have gone, learning to co-exist with the others, fearing less than before and having hopes for what the future may hold. "How quickly things can change," he thinks to himself as he leisurely strolls down the street. An occasional head peeps around a closed drape bringing a laugh to his lips. "They are too cowardly even to run. What kind of life is that?" he wonders. So he walks and he looks and he remembers.

The little old man reaches the isolated stone building at the edge of town, the place that he calls home. As he looks at the building he notes, "Not a palace. Some would say barely comfortable. "After all he's been through doesn't he deserve better?" he asks himself. As he nears his front door his steps become a little livelier, his stature a little more erect. Reaching for the door his strength seems a little more vibrant. The knob turns and he enters his home. Oddly enough, except for his curtains and shades the place is Spartan. Cobber closes the door behind himself. Something feels very wrong here. Making his way throughout the house he searches every nook and cranny of the place. With only one room left to search he has found nothing out of the ordinary -- if one can use that term in Skutz. Cautiously he throws open the door to the last room and enters. The room is bare. He turns to leave, but then he hears a scratching noise coming from the closet. Using his cane to lift a floorboard of the room Cobber then removes a shotgun and a pistol from beneath the floor. Scrrrr ... scrrrr ... scrrrr ... the scratching continues as he crosses the room to the closet. He flings open the door to the

CARTER'S LAST PATROL

the closet. He raises his shot gun to chest level. Unflinching, the old man finds himself face to face with a snarling werewolf.

Very near to Cobber's home the frightened deputy tries to hide the truth of his fear from himself. The deputy walks through the Dempsey home as though he has not a care in the world. The pretense goes even further. As Carter makes his way into the kitchen he casually opens the refrigerator door. Looking inside he sees that Cal has left behind almost a whole six pack of beers. There is also plenty of food in the refrigerator, including the makings for sandwiches. As odd as it may seem, he picks this moment to remember that he hasn't eaten today. With the coming of the hunter, food was the last thing on his mind or agenda, but now seems as good a time as any to chow down before he hits the road. Once on the road he has no intentions of stopping until his car runs out of gas. Taking the beer and the food from the refrigerator he places them on the counter.

After making his sandwich, Carter pours a frothy glass of beer. "Umm. That looks so good, but I better hurry. Ain't no sense in tempting the devil." Finally admitting to himself the chance that he has been taking hanging around. The man looks like the beasts he so fears as he voraciously gobbles down the sandwich and takes slob like gulps - downing the beer.

It is then that he hears a sound. Frozen, Carter stops eating and drinking then puts down the sandwich and the beer. He listens intently. It sounds

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sounds like a dog or cat scurrying through the house. The problem is he knows that Marge and Cal have no pets. Making his way into the hallway he listens again. There seems to be nothing. "Marge ... Cal ..." he calls out. No answer comes. Further down the hallway he ventures. To put himself more at ease he tells himself that the door was open when he came in so a stray cat or dog probably came in. Still his curiosity pushes him to investigate further. Down the hallway he walks. Stopping at the bathroom door he reaches out and opens it. Again he finds nothing. He calls out more to reassure himself than because he believes anyone is still here he says, "If there is anyone here, this is Deputy Carter. I think you should be leaving." Again there is no answer.

Relieved to find nothing, the deputy decides to check the Dempsey's bedroom then leave. When he opens the door he stumbles backwards, aghast at what he has found. A more horrific scene he could not have imagined. The once beautiful Marge Dempsey hangs from the bedroom light fixture, having been hung with her own innards. Her eyes have been burned into two black jellylike lumps. The woman's body is bare and she has been split down the middle, gutted like a pig. It takes all of his control to keep from vomiting. Steadying himself he then runs to the closest door, the back door. As he heads down the hallway, after turning the corner, he finds Cal's body. Again, what he finds fills him with terror. The husband - Cal - has had his head, arms and legs severed from his torso. The deputy leaps over the remains and sprints for the back door.

The terror filled deputy stops at the back door.

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Cautiously he turns the knob then opens the door. Peeking out into the yard he sees nothing. He releases a sigh of relief then steps out into the back yard. Still with gun in hand he looks around. Hoping not to be surprised he looks everywhere, first under a tarp that lays in the yard then behind garbage cans, boxes or any other impediments to his view. He is glad not to find anything. Then it comes. The thing he's dreaded most since agreeing to this last patrol. The sound of one of the beasts, all too close for comfort. Spinning around in a circle he still sees nothing. His heart begins pounding against the wall of his chest. His breath catches in his throat. The deputy is in the clutches of total terror once more. "Oh my God. Oh my God. I knew I should have left earlier," he reprimands himself. Then from the other side of the backyard gate he hears laughter. Slowly he walks toward the gate, but before he reaches it he hears the loud snarling of a beast behind him. Turning around he looks up to where the sound is coming from. Perched, ready to attack is a snarling, teeth gnashing werewolf on top of the Dempsey's house roof.

The demon leaps through the air at Carter. The man jumps out of the creature's way. It rolls as it hits the ground then pounces to its feet. The werewolf and the man face one another. With lead bullets Carter fires again and again into the werewolf. "Aaauuggh ... aaauuuggghhh!" the beast cries out in pain, but the bullets cannot stop it for they are not made of silver. Again the werewolf leaps through the air. Again Carter moves out of its way. This time the beast does manage to rip open the deputy's shoulder. To the ground the deputy falls. Beside him

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lies a shovel.

The werewolf marches slowly toward the man. The beast wants to savor the kill. With evil intent in its heart it stands over the man. Desperate to live Carter rolls over onto his back then reaching out he grabs the shovel then whacks the werewolf aside its head. Caught by surprise the beast stumbles backwards. The deputy jumps to his feet and hits the creature again and again. Just when Carter starts to smile, believing that he is winning this fight, the werewolf stops backing up. The creature grabs a hold of the shovel and wrestles it from Carter's grasp. "Nooo ...! I don't deserve this," the deputy pleads with the heartless beast. The werewolf takes human form for a moment, all but the clawed paws, in order that she might mock the man, "What does deserve have to do with anything?" Then the mostly human appearing demon slices across Carter's throat with its clawed paw. The blood gushes and the man falls backwards onto the grass, dead.

The laughter from the other side of the gate begins again. Creaking, the gate opens and old man Cobber enters the back yard laughing an evil laugh.

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CHAPTER 38 HUNTER VS WIZARD

Hoping to enrage the hunter and insult his wife Marshal reaches out and caresses Gail's face with his lion like paw. Disgusted by the less than human feel of it she slaps his paw away. "This one is going to be a delight in my bed. Don't you think?" he taunts Steven. "You bastard!" the husband screams as he unleashes a blast of blue fury. The wizard, Marshal, is able to deflect this first attack, but the result is that the blast ricochets through the throne room and strikes a demon. The demon bursts into flames. A second blast follows from Steven's hand. This time Marshal cannot defend against it so he flips out of the way of the blast. A chunk of the wall is ripped from the mountain's base.

The detective tires of sitting on the sidelines. He throws one of the blades at the evil wizard. Laughing Marshal puts up his hand and the knife begins to slow down, moving now in slow motion. The blade stops in mid-air inches away from the wicked wizard. Reaching out he takes a hold of the impotent weapon. Taking the knife which Skoles has thrown Marshal throws it back at him. Too swift for the magician's attack Skoles jumps out of its way. The knife like Steven's previous spell finds an unintended victim. Into a werewolf's heart, who had just happened to have been standing behind the man, is where the blade goes. It was fortunate for Skoles because the demon had been about to attack him. The werewolf crumbles into a pile of dust then Skoles reaches down and picks up the blade.

The relieved husband makes his way to his wife's side. A few feet away, the wizard Marshal stands

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grinning at the couple. The chains still hang from Gail's wrists. Tenderly Steven removes the chains. Clinching his fist he then squeezes the metal in the palm of his hand. The links crumble into dust and filter through his fingers then down onto the floor. The man-lion throws a golden ball of light at Steven and Gail. To the wizard's surprise the hunter is able to catch the ball of light in the palm of his hand, unharmed. Stepping away from Steven, the wizard Marshal admits, "I may have underestimated your powers old friend. I didn't think that was even possible."

Having been distracted Marshal is taken off guard when Sheriff Weaver jumps onto his back. "Nooo ...!" Gail screams, afraid for the sheriff's safety. Repeatedly Weaver stabs Marshal with the blades which Steven had given him. The man-lion laughs as the wounds quickly heal themselves. Reaching back with ease he snatches the mortal from his back and slings him across the room. The hunter casts a spell that slows the mortal's flight. When the sheriff hits the cave wall it is barely with enough force to knock the wind from him. "I'm not some gnat to be dispensed of with a fly swatter," Marshal loudly proclaims. "Though I am glad to see that the sheriff has found his courage before he dies," Marshal proclaims. Weaver glares across the throne room at the creature he had feared for so long. Defiantly Weaver yells back at the wizard. "Not only am I going to throw that party I told you about, but I also intend to dance on your grave wizard." Angered by the man's words, Marshal turns to his demons and commands them, "Kill him!" Several of the werewolves and other demons charge toward

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Weaver. The detective jumps on the back of one of the demons and stabs it with the mystical blades. The demon crumbles to dust. The policeman then begins to swing the blade like a whirling dervish, slicing demon after demon. A wolf knocks the sheriff to the floor and swings its poisonous claws at the man. Weaver rolls out of the way then jumps to his feet. Once on his feet the sheriff stabs the wolf. It dies.

Coming to the aid of his allies, Steven throws a blast of blue - white light all around the throne room. The light engulfs many of the beasts. The ones hit crumble into dust or burst into flames. Many of the others flee. Marshal places his paws onto the floor of the cave. "So you would abandon me!" he accuses the demons. "Kelon! Kelon!" the evil wizard chants. From the bowels of the earth giant insects emerge. They grab the werewolves, the draillums, changelings and beasts with no names. The insects crush some and pierce the bodies of others with their sharp claws.

The angel finally enters the battle. Elohim grabs two of the insects by their claws and slams them against the column to which she had once been chained. An insect grabs Skoles and has him in its grasp. It is Weaver who jumps onto the giant creature and stabs it again and again until the thing succumbs releasing Skoles and falling to the ground dead. Turning to the sheriff, Skoles thanks him.

The wizard sees the war turning badly against him. "Where is Kamar?" he wonders. He decides it is time

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to retreat. The magician moves to the far wall of the mountain. Then he stops long enough to challenge his adversary. "You have won the battle my friend, but do you dare to follow me into my domain and continue the war?" The wall of the mountain opens up. Beyond this plane there is darkness. Marshal steps inside the wall. It closes up behind him. The husband turns to Gail. She nods her head. "Bring him back. I can save him. Remember you were once friends," she reminds Steven. "I'll try," Steven promises. "You take the sheriff and the detective away from here," he instructs his wife. With a tender kiss upon the husband's cheek she assures him, "I will," then bids him to be on his guard.

As Steven crosses the room he slices through the few remaining demons that bar his way until he reaches the wall. Placing his hand upon the wall he is able to pass inside.

Turning to Skoles and Weaver the angel speaks, "I had better get you out of here." The two men smile, look at her and note, "You aren't mortal either, are you?" She laughs and shakes her head. "No. I'm an angel," she answers. The policeman nods his head in agreement. "Yes you are." The three companions laugh then turn and head out of the caves.

In this universe of ours there are other planes of existence. Men think that dreams are a world outside of reality but they are not. They are just one more level on which we all exist. Behind the wall, a part of the wall, apart from the wall, however you may choose to perceive it, there exists a world seemingly devoid of matter. As Steven steps into this

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this plane he begins to fall seeming endlessly. In a short time he manages to get his bearings and

rights himself for this plane. Then like Marshal, he too floats in the dark gray void.

A villain doesn't give quarters. Marshal knows his friend hasn't seen him yet so he unleashes a mystical barrage. Giant maggots with teeth fly



toward Steven, but he manages to move out of their way. The hellion creatures turn around and head at him again. Despite his efforts one of the creatures manages to attach itself to his face. The hunter's

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hand glows a fiery red. With the burning hand he grabs a hold of the maggot and it bursts into flames then falls away. The hunter then creates a great red fiery ball and throws it at the remaining maggots, destroying them all. His one time friend disappears in between planes then quickly reappears; slicing Steven with his lion-like claws then vanishes in between the planes once more. Warning his ex-friend, Steven calls out. "You will have to do a lot better than that." The hunter raises his hands over his head. "Arkai Domei Talle!" he commands. Suddenly the evil Marshal appears in the gray void with numerous insect-like creatures covering his entire body, biting away at his flesh faster than he can heal himself. "Aaaaeeeeiii ...! Damn you!" the wizard curses his former friend. In answer to this attack Marshal glows with a golden light. The creatures Steven had created fall away, dead. "I'm going to kill you Steven!" the wizard screams at the top of his lungs. In a rage he flies at the hunter. The battle rages on as Steven hurls a ball of blue-white light at Marshal. The ball strikes Marshal, sending him hurling backwards. "Rrrrrrrrr ...!" the magician roars. A rumbling sound fills the void. Huge slabs of the non-matter gray material of the void fall upon Steven, burying him. Gloating Marshal floats above the debris. Triumphantlly he roars. "Rrrrrrrrr ... I warned you traitor." The gray material explodes outward then Steven floats upward, unharmed. "You should be dead," the evil one whines. "I have been to more planes and seen more things than your small mind can begin to imagine. More creatures than the sands in your hourglass have tried to destroy me and as you can see I am still here." Steven gloats. The hunter hurls himself at

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Marshal. When the angel's husband slams into his adversary, he knocks him back through the wall and back to our plane of existence.

A defeated Marshal lies upon the floor of the throne room, with the weight of his loss upon him. Out of the wall Steven steps. A blue light emanates from the hand of the victorious wizard and envelopes the other. "Aaeiii ..." Marshal screams. The victor walks closer. Steven looks down at his former friend. "I no longer wish to destroy you." The evil one looks up. "To hell with you!" he exclaims. "No. It will be to hell with you, if you don't make the right choice." The frightened, conquered wizard asks, "What choice do I have? A monster can only be a monster and nothing else." His friend explains, "You were first a man then like me you chose to be tempted by fools, but you can choose again. Choose life."

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 39 THE LAST DUTY

It had seemed like only a few seconds had passed while the wizard and the hunter battled on the other plane, but hours have gone by and much has come to pass on our plane.

Three companions; Gail, Skoles and Weaver are feeling great as they make their way back to town. The sheriff speaks of plans to get the people back and make his town what it should have been. The angel and the detective can feel his optimism and his new loving spirit.

One truth about karma is that when compromise has been your staple it is hard to reap good fruits. His optimism is not to last. As the three of them near the woods end they can see smoke bellowing over the tree tops. "What's going on?" a concerned Weaver wonders. The sheriff takes off running. The angel hollers after him, "Wait!" She runs as fast as her human form can manage. Fearing for what the sheriff will find Skoles takes off running and passes the angel. By the time Gail reaches the edge of the woods the two men are half the way up Main Street and stand in the middle of the town's square. Her gait slows to a walk as she catches up to them. All of them stare disheartened at the homes ablaze. The demons have lost, but they have decided that if they can't have this town then there will be no town. The power to put this right lies within the angel, but that is not why she is here. There is a lesson to be learned for humankind if they will examine all that has happened here and so she lets it stand as is.

Turning to the others Weaver instructs them, "Let's

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look for survivors." Although Gail already knows what they will find she walks alongside the two men anyway.

They begin in the schoolhouse. It's one of the few buildings that is left untouched. The door opens and the three companions enter. They find nothing save an eerie silence. Walking the corridors, the images of ghosts of children past runs through the sheriff's mind. He can almost hear his buddy Herman calling his name. "Eric Weaver! Jenny Smith is in love with you!" Herman would tease. Jenny Smith, it has been a long time since he has thought about her. With all of his heart he had wanted to marry her. The two had even planned on sneaking away, but one of the demons took a liking to Jenny and before they could execute their plan the creature had changed her. It was the one and only time he had killed one of those things before the hunter came. A part of his reluctance to kill the demons was because he had seen her changed and didn't know which one of those things might be her. After a time he was just scared, like everyone else.

As they exit the school house Weaver says, "I guess there won't be any more children running through these halls." Taking the sheriff's face in her gentle hands the angel looks him in the eyes and assures him, "That's up to you and the other townsfolk." The door closes behind them as Weaver answers, "I think I just want to move on and forget."

House-to-house of the few remaining homes they do search. They find a few dead bodies, which they set

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aside for burying later. When they reach the Dempsey house Gail grabs the sheriff's arm and pulls him back. "This one is the worst. I don't think you really want to go in there," she advises him. "I wasn't much of a sheriff but tonight I will be performing my last duty as sheriff for this town so come what may I intend to see it through," he answers determined to do what is right.

First they find Marge Dempsey's body. The sheriff and the angel weep over her loss and the terrible fate which had befallen her. The detective is just angry and repulsed. They venture further into the house and find Cal's body. "They were going to leave. Why didn't they just forget about all of this stuff and just get in their car and go? Why ...?" the sheriff asks. No one has an answer and he really doesn't expect one. Then they make their way out into the back yard. What they find there is the hardest for Weaver to live with because he knows that Carter would have left before this had happened if he hadn't ordered him to do that one last patrol. "Some of them are still around. Let's go find them!" Weaver asks for the others help. The angel goes to protect the humans. She will only kill the beasts if she finds that she must. Unfortunately with the beasts such is usually the case.

All he had wanted was to start over, but now as the patrol car that Carter had left at the Dempsey house rolls down the streets of Skutz the sheriff has a brand new agenda, kill every one of those damnable things he can find.

It is Skoles who spots the werewolf entering the

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school house. "There!" he points. Weaver screeches the car to a halt. The two men are quick to jump from the car. Again Gail hesitates. The detective looks back at the angel. "Are you coming? If not I think we can handle one of those things by ourselves," he boasts. Looking up at the detective with pleading eyes she says, "He doesn't want to do this. I promise you." A hidden warning resides within her words.

Weaver returns to the car just in time to overhear Gail. "I don't know what you think that you know, but you're wrong. Not only do I want to do this, I need to do this," he explains. Reticently, the angel exits the car.

Once more the doors to the local school house opens and the three companions enter seeking their prey. They hear scurrying, like a dog or cat's nails scraping across the marble floors of the school house. The two men brandish their blades as they charge down the hallway toward the sounds. A tear forms in each eye as Gail follows them.

An angry Weaver throws open the doors to the high school gym. There in the center of the gymnasium stands a werewolf. "Grrrrr ...! Grrrr ...," The werewolf growls. The two men enter the gym. Skoles and Weaver circle around and around the creature. The werewolf spins frightened and confused. It tries to keep an eye on both of its adversaries. It is then that Gail enters the room. The angel's presence touches the beast. The werewolf changes into its human form. It is as it once was - Jenny Smith. "You didn't protect me Eric," she accuses.

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Not a single year has she aged in the forty some years since. "Jenny? Oh God no. Not you." A surprised Eric ponders his dilemma. She mocks him with her laughter. "What did you suspect had happened to me? That I had stopped being a demon?" she questions. "I ... I ... I just ... I didn't dare to think on it," he stutters, unsure of what to say. "Did you kill Carter?" is all the detective wants answered. "... and many others. That's what demons do whomever you might be," she confesses. The policeman turns to Weaver. "I don't know who she was to you, but now she's one of them. She needs to die," he warns his new friend.

"Nooo ...!" the angel yells as she marches toward Jenny. "This I can make right. I can redeem her. If that is what she wants," The angel offers an answer. Eric Weaver turns to Jenny Smith. "We can't get back the years we've lost, but we can make the most of whatever time we have left," he pleads. What human that is left in the werewolf cries. "I don't want to live like this anymore." The angel has reached Jenny's side. She whispers, "You don't have to ... it's going to be alright." The mystical creature's hands glow blue - white as she lays them upon Jenny's head. The beastly aura is exorcised from the woman. With a love that never died Jenny looks up at Weaver. Invitingly she opens her arms beckoning him to her. Hesitantly he crosses the room, helps her up from the floor then wraps his arms around her. The sheriff caresses her youthful face. "Could you still care about an old codger like me?" he asks. The woman kisses his wrinkled cheek. "No I couldn't ...". An expression of despair shows upon the sheriff's face. The woman continues, " ... just care for you,

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because I love you. I always have and I always will."

The faith inspiring sight of Eric and Jenny exiting the gym the same as they had entered it some forty years earlier, hand in hand, reminds us of a plan of redemption. This time though they are followed by a detective and an angel.

The sheriff accepts the help of the detective, but mystical help is not wanted to bury the many lost to this town. The two men's muscles ache as they turn the ground and lower the bodies into the somewhat shallow graves of the townsfolk and the friend-Angie Bennett, whose grave is marked in order that her body can be recovered later.

Everyone except Elohim wonders if there is something that they could have done differently that would have given them a better outcome. Their hearts offer a hundred scenarios, but fate had laid the tracks and they were mere hostages to its will.

The last shovel of dirt is thrown upon the last body. Their heads bowed low Elohim offers up a simple prayer, "May the good outweigh the bad of your heart and may your soul have been redeemed, so that when we meet again it may be in PARIDISIO, Amen."

Hand-in-hand Skoles, Jenny, Weaver and Gail walk away from the graveyard that will go unattended. The graveyard, like the town of Skutz, will all too soon be covered over by the grass, weeds and wild flowers, reclaimed by the untamed frontier. And no

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one but the angels above will weep for the loss of it.

The mortal Weaver had not been much of a sheriff for years, but he does proud his last duty.

Now there are four companions as they head for Weaver's patrol car. Needing to explain what she has been Jenny speaks of the horrors of years passed and today. Unwittingly she reveals information which sets the stage for a dramatic confrontation. "It was old man Cobber who led me into the trap where I was attacked by the beasts and changed into one of them those many years ago. It was also him who ordered me to kill Carter." The other three turn to Jenny, shocked. "How can a man have power over a werewolf," Gail wonders aloud.

The three survivors and the angel seek answers. Outside of the stone house at the edge of town the angel and the three mortals have come to find out what part the old man plays in all that has occurred. They stand on the porch. The sheriff rings the bell. There is no answer. Angry, Weaver kicks the door open. Skoles peeps inside. Pulling his head back out the detective turns to the others, again surprised. "It's empty," he tells them. "We figured he was gone," the sheriff answers. "No. The whole place is empty. And from the looks of it I would say that it always has been," Skoles deduces.

"Tell me about the old man," Gail asks. "Cobber has always been pretty much a loner. Even when I was much younger he was the only one who would speak out against the beasts," Weaver answers.

Now suspicious, Gail cautiously enters the doorway to Cobber's house leading the others inside. There is not a stitch of furniture anywhere. There isn't even a mark on the floor where a piece of furniture

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may have been moved. "This guy didn't believe in overdoing it, did he?" the detective makes light of the old man. "What's your earliest memory of the old man?" the angel persists. "He's pretty much always looked the same," Weaver starts his tale. Jenny nods her head in agreement. "I was a teen. I guess he was about seventy. Sat on that same bench the whole day long," Weaver continues. "That can't be. The old man I met today couldn't be much more than seventy, seventy-five at the most. If you were a teenager ...and that was ... thirty five ... forty or more years ago. He would be more than a hundred by now," Skoles calculates. "He is the one who has been keeping me out of his heart," Gail blurts out. "Cobber is one of those things?" the sheriff asks. "No. He is a lot more. All of you have to get out of this town. Now!" the angel instructs.

The patrol car with Skoles, Jenny and Weaver pulls away from the town of Skutz. From the backseat of the car Jenny looks back one last time and weeps for the life that could have been if not for the beasts and poor choices made by humans.

In the fortress of the Sibling Breed the wizard Marshal looks up at his one time friend and asks, "How does one choose life?" Steven smiles at the one he would redeem then answers, "Just say it." Climbing to his feet Marshal looks into his friend's eyes and yells out exuberantly, "I choose life!" To his surprise Marshal begins to glow with a blue-white glow. Laughing gleefully he repeats his declaration, "I choose life!" The evil aura floats out of his body. The mark of 666 fades from his head. The wizard is free again. The friend walks

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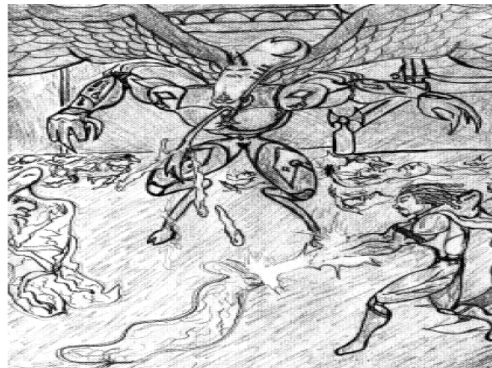
over to the ex-wizard now once more a man yet more than a man and wraps his arms around him. "This is just the beginning," he tells his friend.

Just as the two friends are beginning to have hope for the future the ground beneath their feet begins to rumble and roll. The two are having trouble staying on their feet. The ground explodes upward and outward. Debris flies everywhere. Then from beneath the ground the old man, Cobber, rises into mid-air holding his cane. "I take it you aren't a kindly old man," Steven displays his wit. The human flesh falls away from the fallen angel, Kamar, and he grows to three times the size of a man with the great expanse of wings that belongs only to an angel. His voice booms out. "I have never understood this human thing called humor. It flies in the face of logic. You humans seem to put a lot of stock in it though. You seem to find amusement in most anything, but believe me when I say that there is nothing amusing about facing Kamar!"

The two former wizards look at one another and nod. There is an unspoken plan. They move in opposite directions of one another. Their plan is for one of them to flank Kamar. The fallen angel glares at Marshal. "Dumont! I made you master of the Sibling Breed. It was I who protected you for all of these eons. Like I had promised I provided you with every sort of pleasure imaginable. How do you repay my gifts? You surrender to his lies. You consort with the one who betrayed us all. He is the one who came here to destroy you!" Trying to distract Kamar, the wizard challenges his assessment. "You made me nothing! My powers made me the master of the Sibling

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Breed. You protected me from none. You hid by my side that I might help you if enemies came. You gave me nothing. Whatever pleasures I experienced I took them as my whims compelled me." Marshal laughs at Kamar. The angel contradicts Marshal continuing his tirade. "It was I who whispered ancient secrets into your ear and put the black hate in your heart that is the source of your power. It was I who tempted you to black deeds which stole your grace." Over his last words the angel laughs. "And now I have back my grace," the redeemed wizard acknowledges. "Once lost, grace can never be recovered," Kamar lies. It is then that Steven throws a ball of blue-white light. At the same time--from the opposite direction-- Marshal throws a ball of golden light. Steven screams, "Liar!" The two balls of light surround and encase Kamar. The angel laughs and scorns his two enemies. "No matter what you think you have become you are just men while I am one of the five who would be God!" he declares.



The angel opens his mouth and flicks a huge slimy

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green tongue across the room. Green droplets drip from his tongue onto the floor. Each drop grows into a large jelly-like mass. The green masses slither across the floor toward Steven and Marshal. Still cable of much magic the two men toss all their tricks at the things, but with no affect. The first of the creatures reach Marshal. The former wizard

elevates himself into the air. The slimy green glob elongates itself into the air and encases him. A whimpering Marshal falls to the ground inside the diaphanous green creature. Steven can see his friend's skin dissolving. Three of the creatures come nearer to Steven. It occurs to him that most spells are fire based and these creatures Kamar has probably conjured from the earth's molten center, so to other fire spells these creatures are immune. Steven calls out, "Oshim, Danir, Okham." Large snow crystals fall from above. As the crystals land on each green mass they are frozen, including the one encasing Marshal. The friend rushes to the aid of the other. Slamming his fists against the frozen creature. Steven shatters it and frees Marshal. The wounded man is too far gone. "Thank you my brother. I shall see you again on Judgment Day," his friend turns to dust then crumbles and is whisked away by a mystical wind.

WHERE MONSTERS HIDE
CHAPTER 41 ELOHIM VS KAMAR

"He shall never be again. I shall be god and all who do not worship me shall perish!" Kamar predicts. An angry Steven threatens the angel, "Only you shall perish!" Steven flips across the floor until he stands within an arm's length of Kamar. The hunter strikes Kamar's huge chest sending him slamming into the wall of the caves. The angel gets up slowly then brushes himself off. Laughing Kamar faces the hunter again. "You mortals do surprise me with your strength of spirit," the angel compliments the man. Flipping again across the room, Steven strikes out at Kamar once more. This time his arm is absorbed into the angel's flesh. "Aaaugghh...!" the hunter cries out. Changing his hand on the other arm into a sliver blade he then slices off the arm which is pulling him inside the angel. Then he pulls away. The stubborn courageous hunter lies on the floor as another arm grows in place of the one he has severed. Impressed again with his protegee Kamar laughs with prideful respect as he stares down at him. "Of mortal or angel you have always been my favorite. None except you match my spirit. Ask me and I will make you a god alongside me. Just like me!" the arrogant angel promises. Defiantly, Steven climbs to his feet. "There is only one God- THE OMNI-ONE, so like my friend before me I choose life," he defies the angel once more.

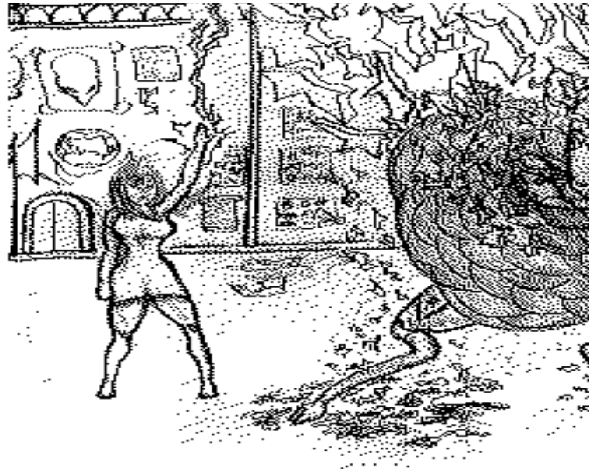
An enraged Kamar spreads his mighty wings and bellows out his threat to the magician, "Nooo ... you choose death!"

The enraged angel stands poised to unleash his unbridled fury upon the courageous human. Suddenly

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whirling winds, torrential rains and blasts of large jagged hail knock the fallen angel from his stance. When he rights himself he turns to see what appears to be a frail human female, Gail. "You've existed since before time itself and yet you have learned nothing." He laughs and asks, "And who are you?" As the woman marches toward Kamar her true self shows, Elohim - a beautiful woman and a majestic eagle combined, as tall as the angel Kamar in his true form.

One can see the fear on Kamar's face. "Elohim!" he calls her name. "First of the Twelve and Honored of the Seven, yes, I am Elohim," she reminds her fellow angel. The fallen angel wishes Elohim had abandoned her loyalties and come with him. Even now he dares



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try to tempt her, "What honor is there in being a slave?" he asks. "A slave doesn't have the choice to serve or not to serve," she answers his accusation. The two angels are an arm's length apart. "We were born to rule. Together the universe can be ours," he promises. Even if the evil one could fulfill his promise he would as quickly betray Elohim as he has the OMNI-ONE. Yet that is not Elohim's answer.

"The universe already is ours Kamar. What have you asked for that you have been denied?" she asks of the foolish angel. "To be god," he answers. "Then you ask for the one thing that cannot be given. The OMNI-ONE is who HE is just as you are Kamar. HE can no more make you HIM as HE can become Kamar. Accept what is offered ... Grace and Life Eternal," she instructs him. "I shall be god or I shall not be," Kamar insists. "That too is your choice," Elohim gives Kamar his final lesson.

With a tear in her eye Elohim stretches out her hand with open palm. A small egg-like bubble is there. The bubble floats above her hand then toward her fellow angel. It grows as it moves. The fallen angel reaches out to swat the egg away, but instead he is absorbed into the egg. From the confines of the egg Kamar struggles against it. The egg does not budge. Then the egg begins to shrink.

"I curse you and your god!" Kamar screams at Elohim. The Honored of the Seven weeps for Kamar. The egg shrinks crushing him. "Nooo ...!" the fallen angel screams. Then the egg disappears into nothingness.

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The angel walks over to the wounded Steven. He looks up at her and asks, "Why did you let them take you?" Elohim smiles down at him. "It is my duty to save you all," she answers. "If that's true can Kamar and the others truly be lost?" Reaching down she picks Steven up and into her arms. Elohim gives Steven a lesson which her heart knows to be true, "None are ever truly lost to the OMNI-ONE - but only HE KNOWS for sure."

"It is time to go home," she tells her husband. Elohim spreads her mighty wings then chants, "Elo, shan, da, ra!" The top of the mountain opens up. "I shall take you home and make you whole again," she tells her one and only beloved. "I love you," Steven responds. "From before the beginning of time until beyond the end of time I too have and shall love you always." she answers. The angel Elohim flies away, carrying her beloved Steven in her arms.

*And so ends the first chapter in the STORY OF
LIFE!!!*